

# CHS Play Gives Shakespeare A Rad Update

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Twelfth Night—one of Shakespeare’s most popular plays—is about to get big hair, bold fashion, and an even bigger reboot as the Conant High School Theatre Department reimagines the classic tale through the vibrant lens of the 1980s. With a soundtrack packed with retro hits, electrifying costumes, and an aesthetic that’s totally rad, this production promises to make the script more fun for all ages.

The play, originally set in the fictional land of Illyria, tells the story of two shipwrecked twins, Viola and Cesario, and how they find themselves in a love triangle. But this version trades the Renaissance for rock-and-roll, as the Conant cast embraces the flashy, rebellious spirit of the ‘80s.

“A lot of people roll their eyes at Shakespeare, because they think, ‘Oh, it’s boring, and it’s a whole lot of words,” says senior Anna Drone. “So when it came to Twelfth Night, I was unsure about it, but the 80s twist... it makes the show a lot more relatable, fun, and colorful than it would have been if we just followed it based straight on the original play of Shakespeare’s.”

Just a quick glance backstage will advertise what’s about to unfold; there’s neon animal-print shirts, oversized denim abound, and a punk rocker rocking a classic teased side part, all in front of the backdrop of a large boombox and a DJ setup.

“The costumes,” says the head of the costume department, junior Miles Lazic, “are on their second or third iteration out there. The whole goal was to make it bigger—bolder silhouettes, as rambunctious as possible.” The energy is high, the colors are loud, and the anticipation is even louder—this is Twelfth Night like you’ve never seen it before.

But that’s not all that’s unique about this show. As fans of the original drama can attest to, the original script is not lacking in musicality—and the 80s has made a mark of its own in that arena.

Sophomore Jessica Mikel, who plays Viola, thinks one of the best parts about the show is how it utilizes music, especially 80s music, to elevate the audience’s experience.

“It definitely helps further the plot, because music is so important in Shakespeare’s version, and it also really helps to understand characters like Orsino and Olivia and their whole love triangle, and how Cesario plays into it. But it also gives a newer feel to the show, because having the Fool come in and singing all the songs. It makes the whole experience really fun.”

Beyond the eye-catching costumes and nostalgic soundtrack, the goal of the production is finding new ways to connect with Shakespeare’s timeless themes of love, identity and transformation.

“At its heart, this play is about people figuring out who they are and who they love,” says senior Dan Gorr, one of the student directors of the performance. “And that’s something that never goes out of style, whether it’s the 1600s or the 1980s.”

Performances of Twelfth Night will run February 7, at 7 p.m. and February 8, at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. at Conant’s Plate Auditorium. Tickets cost \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors, and \$7 for students and can be purchased online at <https://gofan.co/app/school/IL15447>.