



## If music be the food of love, play on

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### **Duke Orsino:**

If music be the food of love, play on,  
Give me excess of it; that surfeiting,  
The appetite may sicken, and so die.

### *Twelfth Night Act 1, scene 1, 1-3*

Duke Orsino of Illyria, presiding over the merry, mixed-up world of Twelfth Night, opens the play with these festive sentiments, soured though they be by the affected airs of the melancholic lover. He has convinced himself that he's insanely in love with a wealthy and resistant lady, who is in mourning for her brother and only annoyed by Orsino's inappropriate attentions. The duke's idea of a cure for his disease is to stuff himself sick with his own passions.

Orsino's brand of self-indulgent pouting comes in for much ribbing here and elsewhere in Shakespeare, most vividly in *As You Like It* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. For melancholic poseurs like Orsino, who are actually expected to make spectacles of themselves, affecting gestures are more important than sincere emotions.

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