

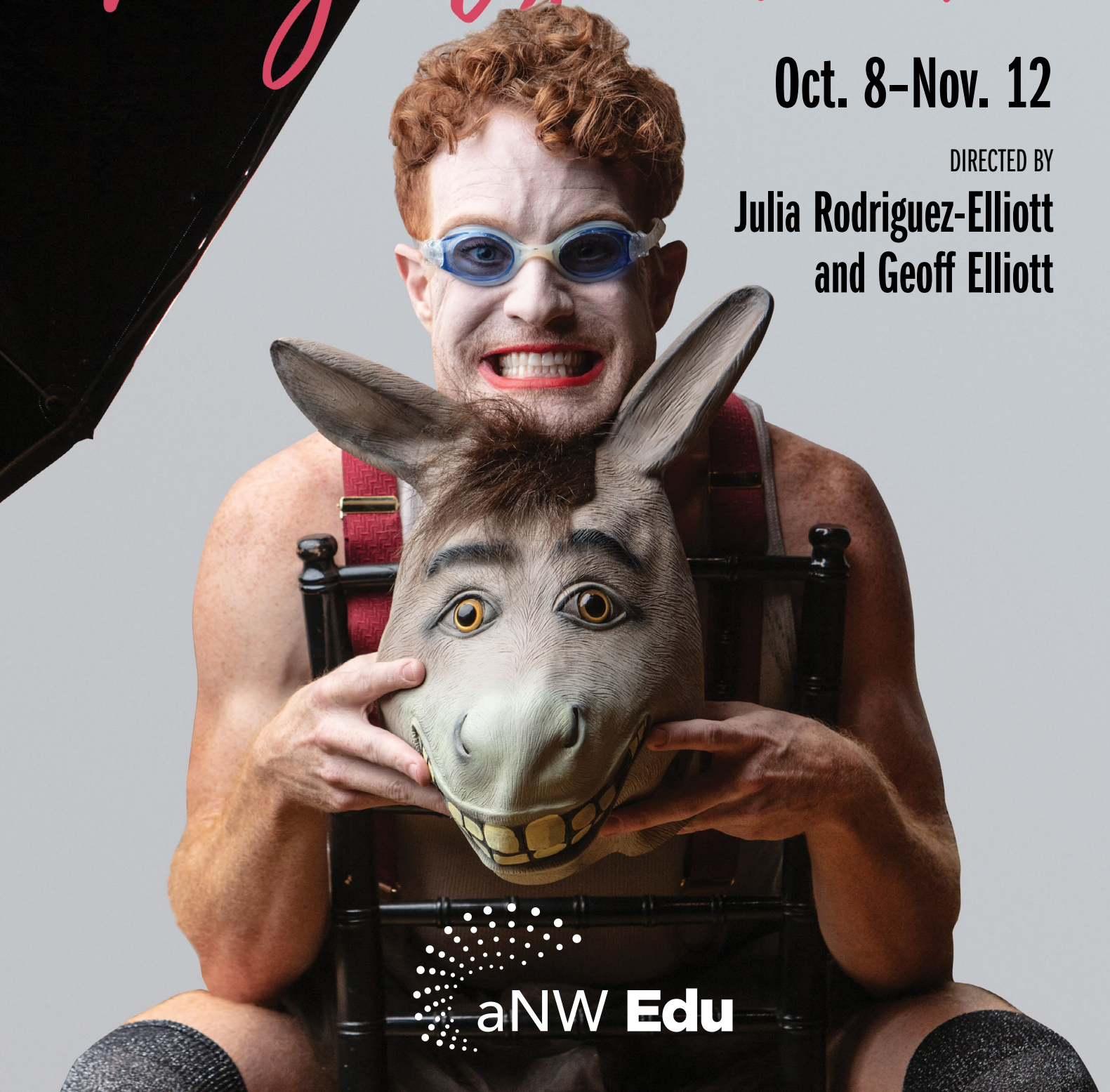
A MIDSUMMER

Night's Dream

Oct. 8–Nov. 12

DIRECTED BY

**Julia Rodriguez-Elliott
and Geoff Elliott**



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Pictured: Erika Soto, *Much Ado About Nothing* Spring 2023.
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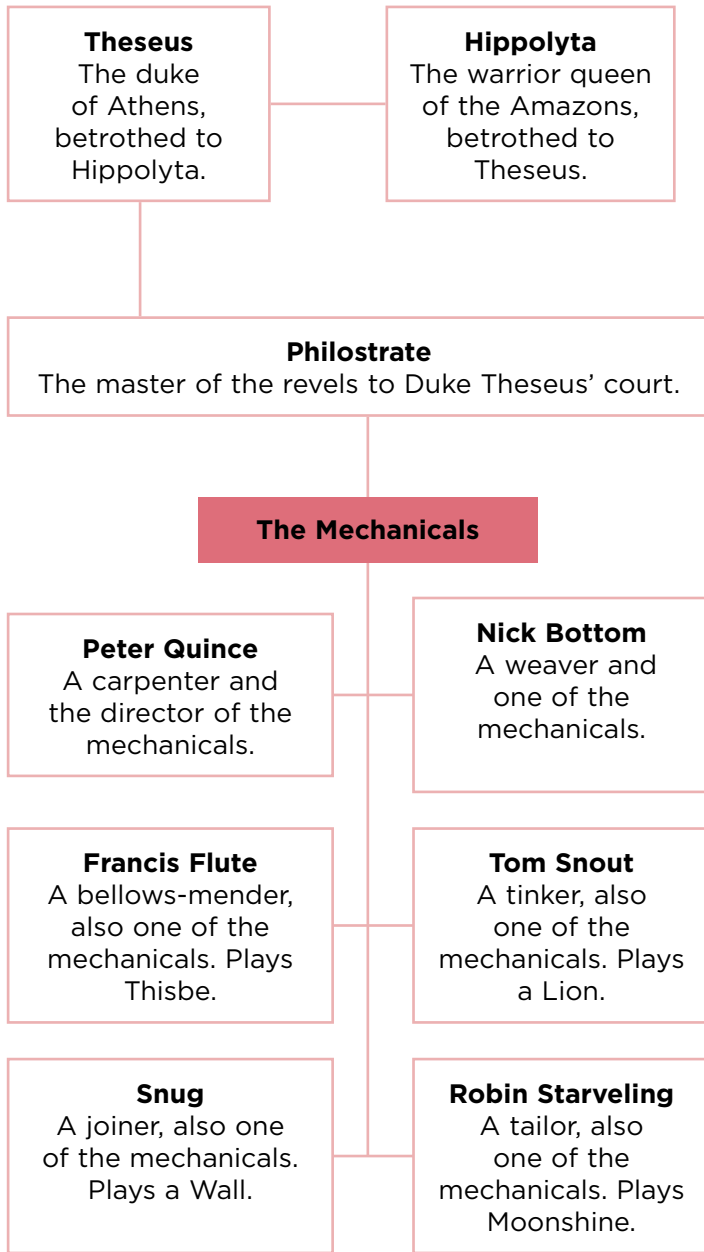
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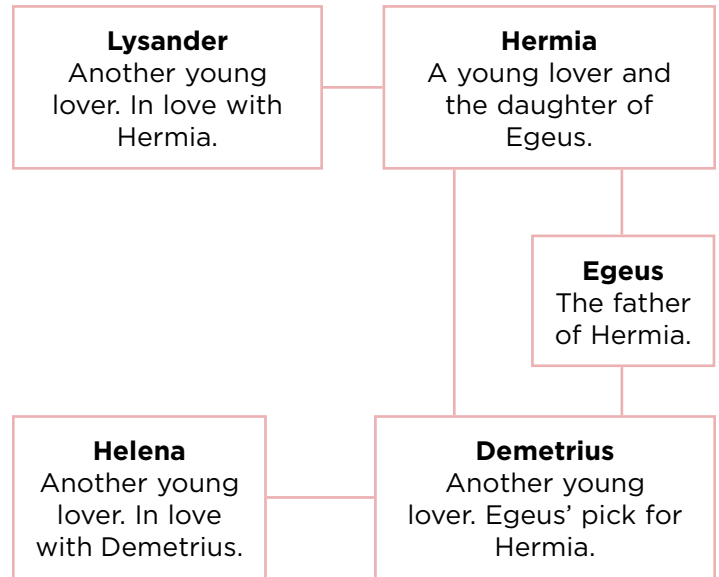
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CHARACTER MAP

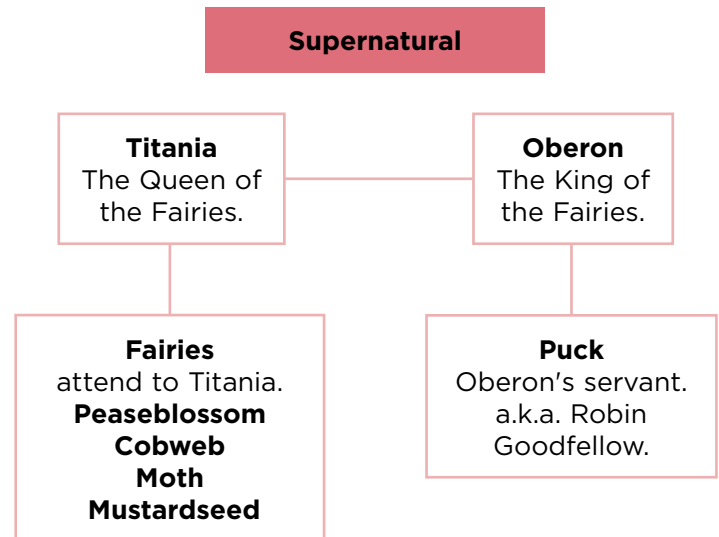
ATHENIAN COURT



THE LOVERS



THE FAIRIES



SYNOPSIS

After conquering the Amazon warriors in battle,

Theseus, the duke of Athens, finds himself conquered by his affection for the Amazon queen, Hippolyta, and plans to marry her. To pass the time until their wedding night, Theseus orders amusements to be staged. In the spirit of loyalty, Bottom the weaver and other tradesmen prepare a play for the Duke and his bride.

The preparations are interrupted by the Athenian Egeus, who presents his daughter Hermia and her two suitors to Theseus, entreating him to command Hermia to wed Demetrius. Hermia begs for consent to marry her beloved Lysander instead. The duke orders Hermia to obey her father under penalty of death or confinement in a convent. Hermia and Lysander agree to secretly meet in a nearby forest and escape to another city. They reveal their plans to Helena, Demetrius' former lover and current admirer. To win back his love, Helena informs Demetrius of Hermia and Lysander's escape plan.

Meanwhile in the forest, the fairy king and queen Oberon and Titania are at odds. To spite Titania, Oberon demands that his servant Puck obtain a special love potion to pour on the queen's sleeping eyes, causing her to fall in love with the first thing she sees upon waking. As he plans, Oberon spots Demetrius looking for Hermia and Lysander's meeting place. Instead, Demetrius meets Helena and rejects her once again. Upon seeing her distress, Oberon asks Puck to smear Demetrius' eyes with the love potion so that he falls in love with Helena. When Lysander and Hermia arrive, Puck mistakenly smears Lysander's eyes with the love potion and, as Helena wanders by, Lysander falls in love with her and abandons Hermia.

Bottom and his company of tradesmen choose the same enchanted spot in the forest as the site for the final rehearsal of their play. The mischievous Puck magically crowns Bottom with the head of an ass, which terrifies the other players into running away. Puck takes Bottom near Titania, who awakens and



A Midsummer Night's Dream by Robert Fowler, c.1900

instantly falls in love upon gazing at this human-turned-ass.

The four lovers are greatly confused. Oberon finds that Puck put the potion on Lysander's eyes and not Demetrius', so Oberon uses another potion to break the spell. When Demetrius wakes up, he sees the neglected Helena being wooed by Lysander. His love for her returns, and he is ready to fight Lysander to win Helena back. Helena, having been so rejected, thinks that both men are mocking her, and Hermia is dazed by Lysander's rejection. The fairies prevent further conflict by causing the four to wander around in the dark forest until they tire and fall asleep. Puck corrects his mistake by smearing Lysander's eyes to undo the love potion. This way, when everyone wakes up, Lysander loves Hermia and Demetrius loves Helena.

Titania entertains Bottom as her true love until Oberon, whose anger has subsided, removes the spell from her eyes. Bottom is restored to his human form and rejoins his friends in Athens. On an early morning hunting trip, Theseus comes upon the four lovers in the forest. When all is explained, Theseus withdraws his order to Hermia and grants permission for her to marry Lysander, also allowing Helena to marry Demetrius. A wedding feast for all three couples is spread at the Duke's palace. Bottom's acting troupe comes to the wedding feast and presents the "comic" tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. After the company retires for the night, the fairies dance through the palace to spread blessings and goodwill on the three couples. ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

In April 23, 1564, in the English town of Stratford-Upon-Avon, poet, playwright, and actor William Shakespeare was born to parents John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. Despite his enduring legacy, very little documentation of Shakespeare's life exists beyond public records of his birth, death, marriage, and financial transactions.

Today, Shakespeare's works are taught in schools around the world, but Shakespeare's own education began at home. He would have grown up hearing fairytales and fables from his parents and would have been taught to read the Bible. Shakespeare's mother was the executor of her father's will, suggesting that she was literate, which was no small feat for a woman of her time. In addition to his home education, Shakespeare most likely attended the King's New School, a grammar school in Stratford, where his studies would have been almost exclusively in Latin.

When Shakespeare was 18, he married Anne Hathaway, who was 26 years old. The two had a rather rushed engagement; Anne was already pregnant at the time of the wedding. The couple welcomed their first child, Susanna, six months after the ceremony. Anne later gave birth to twins Hamnet and Judith. Tragically, Hamnet died when he was just eleven years of age.

The years 1585-1591 are often referred to as the "lost years," as not much is known about Shakespeare's life during this period. However, it is clear that he moved to London to pursue theatre at some point during this time, likely around 1587. By 1592, Shakespeare had established his reputation as an actor and playwright in London. That year, it is believed that the Lord Strange's Men, a prominent acting company at the time, performed one of Shakespeare's plays—probably *Henry VI, Part I*. Shakespeare later became an original member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, one of the two theatrical companies legally approved to perform within London city limits at the time. During his time as a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare wrote prolifically, producing his most notable works.

In 1599, Shakespeare became the chief shareholder in the Globe Theatre, a newly built performance space in London. His plays were regularly performed there until 1613, when a fire began during a production of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, destroying the theatre. The Globe was rebuilt by 1614 but was



William Shakespeare associated with John Taylor, c. 1600-1610.

later closed, along with all other theatres, by the Puritan government in 1642, and subsequently demolished to make way for tenement buildings in 1644.

Over the course of about twenty years, Shakespeare created a staggering body of work, including 154 sonnets, three narrative poems, and 38 plays that are still performed around the world today. Sometime between 1610 and 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford-Upon-Avon, where he died in 1616 at the age of 52. It is believed that he died on the same day that he was born, April 23rd. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Stratford-Upon-Avon. ♦

TIMELINE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

- 1564** William Shakespeare is born on April 23 in Stratford-upon-Avon to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden.
- 1582** William Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway. Their marriage license is issued on November 27th.
- 1583** Shakespeare's first child, Susanna, is born in May, just six months after the wedding of Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. Susanna is baptized on May 26th.
- 1585** Anne Hathaway gives birth to twins, Hamnet and Judith. They are baptized on February 2nd.
- 1585-1591** "The Lost Years." No records of Shakespeare's life during this period exist. At some point, he moves to London.
- 1590-1592** Shakespeare begins to write plays during this time. His earliest works are *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Richard III*. The exact dates these plays were written and first performed is unknown.
- 1592** While it is unclear when Shakespeare left Stratford-upon-Avon, by this time, Shakespeare has established a reputation in London as an actor and a playwright. A plague breaks out in London and theatres are closed.
- 1593** Shakespeare writes *Venus and Adonis*, a long, narrative poem based on Book 10 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.
- 1594** Theatres re-open after the plague. Shakespeare becomes a founding member of The Lord Chamberlain's Men. *The Comedy of Errors* is performed for the first time.
- 1596** Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, dies at age 11.



Shakespeare's Birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon.

- 1599** The Globe Theatre opens in London. Shakespeare becomes a shareholder in the theatre.
- 1600-1610** Shakespeare writes several of his most widely performed tragedies, including *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*.
- 1603** Queen Elizabeth I dies and King James I ascends the throne. He becomes the patron of Shakespeare's theatre company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who change the name of their company to the King's Men in honor of King James I.
- 1604** Shakespeare writes *Othello*, which is performed for the first time in court on November 1st by the King's Men. Richard Burbage—the leading actor of the company—originates the role of Othello, presumably wearing blackface makeup to indicate Othello's race.
- 1609** Shakespeare's sonnets are published. Shakespeare is believed to have written the sonnets at some point during the 1590s.
- 1613** The Globe Theatre burns down during the first performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*.
- 1614** The Globe Theatre is rebuilt.
- 1616** Shakespeare dies at the age of 52 in Stratford-upon-Avon. It is believed he died on April 23rd. He is buried in the Church of the Holy Trinity.
- 1623** John Heminges and Henry Condell collect and publish Shakespeare's plays in *Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*. This publication is also known as the First Folio.



The Original Globe Theatre, artist unknown.

SETTING AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT: **ELIZABETHAN SOCIETY**

Many of Shakespeare's plays take place in cities that would have been considered exotic to Elizabethan society. He plays upon the audience's expectations of a location and either validates or subverts its reputation. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is set in and outside of Athens, Greece. The setting is particularly important to the play, as Athens was viewed by Elizabethans as a paragon of law and order. It is telling that Shakespeare chooses to hold all official and legal proceedings in the city itself while the amorous confusion and magical whimsy takes place in the woods, which was seen as a place of chaos and mayhem.



"Queen Elizabeth I" (The "Darnley Portrait") by an unknown artist c. 1575.

Social Structure

Shakespeare was a prominent playwright during the late Elizabethan Era. This historical era began in 1558 when Queen Elizabeth I became the ruling monarch of England. During this period, the structure of English society was rigid; it provided little opportunity for social mobility for members of the lower class. Opportunities for social advancement for women and people of color were even more limited.

In Elizabethan society, a person's birth often determined their social status. During this period, many people operated according to the Great Chain of Being. This concept is rooted in the idea that all things have a proper place in an overarching social hierarchy—from the smallest grain of sand up to the highest angel. The tiers of Elizabethan social structure can be broken down as follows from highest to lowest status:

The Queen

The Court—Made up of the English nobility.

Merchants—Well-off citizens without royal connections. Individuals in this social class often took positions in town councils and local government.

Livery Companies—Institutions that controlled what was bought and sold. Companies specialized in certain products such as wine, cloth, and jewelry.

Apprentices—Young men who paid workers in livery companies in exchange for experience learning a trade.



"Civitates Orbis Terrarum" Map of London by Georg Braun, Frans Hogenberg, and Joris Hoefnagel, c. 1600-1623.

The Poor—The lowest-status citizens. By 1569, a welfare system was in place in the city of London to help the able poor find food and work.

Art and Culture

The Elizabethan Era is considered a "golden age" of art and culture in English history. During this time, there were two trends in art and communication that caused significant shifts in the country's cultural landscape—the popularization of printed materials and the popularization of live entertainment. Johannes Gutenberg, an inventor who was politically exiled from Germany, invented the Gutenberg Press over one hundred years before the start of Elizabeth's reign in England. Printed materials were among the most important commodities actively produced and sold in Elizabethan London. Advances in printing technology made it possible to churn out printed pamphlets, sermons, plays, poems, proclamations, and diatribes at a remarkable rate. The increased popularity and accessibility of printed materials allowed for stories and ideas to circulate among English urban centers faster than ever before.

Live entertainment proved to be a cultural staple in Elizabethan society. Despite the disparity among social classes in the era, live entertainment provided members of all social classes the opportunity to gather and experience anything from stories to songs to sports. Theatre proved to be particularly popular with members of all social classes. From the poor, who stood on the ground level of theatres during productions and were thus called "groundlings," to the nobility who sat in the higher tiers of seats, theatre was accessible to people from all ranks of society. ♦

Edited from:

Picard, Liza. "The Social Structure in Elizabethan England." The British Library, The British Library, 17 Feb. 2016, www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/the-social-structure-in-elizabethanengland and Rasmussen, Eric, and Ian DeJong. "Shakespeare's London." The British Library, The British Library, 2 Oct. 2015, www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeares-london.

LOVE TROUBLE **THE LIGHT AND DARK OF A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM**

CHARLES ISHERWOOD | *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

It should not be strange to encounter any of Shakespeare's plays at any time of the year, so firmly ensconced are they in the canon. And yet there's something a little startling in the arrival of a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" opening in November, as Julie Taymor's upcoming production at Theater for a New Audience will. The play is among Shakespeare's most beloved and most frequently produced, but it has mostly become a rite of summer, often performed outdoors, with picnickers sharing bottles of wine and children romping on grass.

The title, naturally, has something to do with the play's usually being relegated to the sticky months. But "Dream" is also one of the most surefire comedies ever written, and it features not one, not two, not three, but four journeys (of sorts) ending in lovers' meeting. Shakespeare comedies often conclude with nuptials in the offing, but this play offers a stage full of contented lovers, gathering to watch a hilariously amateurish enactment of a love story—the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe—that ends rather more unhappily.

That scene is among the most reliably hilarious in any Shakespeare play, and so is the scene in which Lysander and Demetrius, now both passionately declaring their love for a bewildered Helena, are joined by a dumbfounded Hermia, and a four-way game of verbal fisticuffs ensues. These passages rarely fail to engender merriment, which is another reason why "Dream" has become so popular: it's the rare production, amateur or professional, that doesn't nail at least these bits.

Plus: fairies flitting around the stage, the wonderfully dopey Bottom, perhaps the greatest of Shakespeare's comic doofuses, and a fairly breezy running time.

But what struck me most upon a recent re-reading of the play was not the dizzy joyousness of its



Oberon, Titania and Puck with Fairies Dancing by William Blake, c. 1786

comedy, and the sunlit ending, but instead the darkness from which all this benevolence emerges. "A Midsummer Night's Dream" may have earned its high berth on the Shakespeare hit parade because it's a bundle of high-spirited hijinks, but its view of love—the primary theme of the play—is decidedly divided. I noticed, among other things, how variations on the word "hate" recurs with startling frequency, and how each of the four romances depicted is shadowed by moments of betrayal, cruelty, deception—or worse.

Consider the often-breezed-by opening moments, in which Theseus, the Duke of Athens, and his beloved Hippolyta, are preparing for their nuptial festivities. Rather bluntly, in what is just his second speech, Theseus recalls, "Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword, and won thy love doing thee injuries." (Some versions of the story have Theseus capturing Hippolyta while waging war on the Amazons.)

Yikes! Not exactly what you'd expect a fellow to bring up during the wedding planning. Of course his next lines are a gallant vow to wed her in "another key," but the strange note of violence between men and women that has been so quickly struck will recur again and again throughout the play.

LOVE TROUBLE CONTINUED...

It is only moments later, in fact, that Theseus is threatening a young woman with death, when Egeus comes to the Duke to demand that his daughter Hermia obey his wish that she marry Demetrius, a desire she insists on flouting due to her love for Lysander.

Love, it appears in this most love-struck play, can get you in deep, potentially fatal trouble. As in much of Shakespeare, the human heart and its movements are depicted as arbitrary, fickle, unreasonable and prey to outside influences. But few of his works offer as many and as memorable examples of the manner in which love can go awry.

In the realm of the fairies, too, love is inconsistent and inspires brutality when it is thwarted. The fairy king and queen, Oberon and Titania, are already mid-quarrel when they arrive on the scene. The primary beef between them is Oberon's rather arbitrary demand that Titania hand over one of her young attendants. The boy means much to her—in a moving, lyrical speech she describes how his mother, a great friend, died in childbirth—but Oberon's insistence on being given the “changeling boy” seems motivated only by a desire to assert his power.

And of course the method by which Oberon punishes Titania for her refusal to grant his whim—by bewitching her into making love to an ass—is peculiarly perverse and humiliating (albeit, of course, very funny).

While you might chalk up the discord in these relationships to the usual spats between long-partnered adults, the play shows that young lovers can be equally wanton in their loves, equally brutal in their passions. An uncomfortable note of humiliation is struck again when Helena pleads to Demetrius, “Use me but as your spaniel—spurn me, strike me.” He'll have none of that, even: “For I am sick when I do look on thee.”

Small wonder, then, that when Lysander and Demetrius, under the influence of that fairy dust, both suddenly switch their amorous desires from Hermia to Helena, Helena believes their oaths of love are cruel jokes. “Can you not hate me, as I know you do,” she wails, “but you must join in souls to mock me, too?”

In the playing, of course, much of the venomousness

comes across—as it should—as hyperbolic, and therefore comic. And it's of course true that Titania, Lysander and Demetrius have all been led into their romantic follies not by the yearnings of their own hearts, but by the manipulations of magic.

After the young lovers have been put to sleep and the proper love matches made by another sprinkling of the magic potion, Oberon says, “When they next wake, all this derision shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,” and so of course it does. The play's last two acts enact a reconciliation between all the warring lovers, and the fatal follies of love are merrily mocked when the Rude Mechanicals make such a delightful hash of the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe.

The genre of romantic comedy would not, of course, exist if the progress of love were depicted without a few speed bumps along the road; the speed bumps supply the jokes. But seeing “Romeo and Juliet” and “Midsummer Night's Dream” in close proximity, illuminates how differently love is depicted in both plays (despite their being written in close proximity).

In the tragedy, love is depicted as an ennobling emotion, one that brings Romeo and Juliet to a sudden maturity and inspires them to flights of superlative lyricism. Their love is pure and uninflected by doubt, thwarted only by outside circumstances and the enmity between their families.

In the comedy, by contrast, the lovers spend as much time warring with each other as they do offering lyric speeches of devotion. (Actually, the play is rather short on those). Love is depicted as a volatile thing, a source of confusion and contrariness as much as harmony.

It's only after many trials have been endured—and the female characters, in particular, have been subject to considerable amounts of humiliation and abuse—that the men and women of “Midsummer Night's Dream” can rest easily in the arms of their romantic partners. Or should I make that uneasily? ♦

Edited from:

Isherwood, Charles. “Love Trouble, The Light and Dark of ‘A Midsummer Night's Dream’.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 31 Oct. 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/10/31/theater/the-light-and-dark-of-a-midsummer-nights-dream.html.

A 16TH CENTURY OVID: **THE INFLUENCE OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY** ON THE UNDERSTANDING OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

EMILY GRAY | INQUIRIES JOURNAL, VOL. 9

William Shakespeare is commonly believed to be the single greatest writer and poet of the English language, as well as one of the most distinguished and esteemed dramatists in the entire world. With the majority of the writing of his known works occurring between 1589 and 1613, both Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies were heavily influenced by the resurgence in popularity of classical mythology, particularly the works of the Roman writer, Ovid, that took place during the early-Elizabethan period.

Following Arthur Golding's "monumental translation" of the fifteen books comprising the *Metamorphoses* in their entirety in 1567, the English people began to regard Ovid as an unparalleled mythographer and a valuable source of literary inspiration (Roe 32). As Shakespeare's plays are fraught with mythological allusions, it is obvious that the great English playwright is no exception to this way of thinking.

The abundance of mythic allusions present in nearly all of Shakespeare's works are evidence of the continued cultural influence of Greek and Roman mythology in the period during which he wrote. At the same time, they highlight the importance of the readers' previous knowledge of classical mythology in order to fully experience Shakespeare's work. When examined with special attention to the classical mythological influence, Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* epitomizes the dynamic role of classical mythology in literature of both providing context for the events of the play and helping the reader to come to a fuller understanding of the implications associated with Shakespeare's chosen allusions.

Believed to be written between 1590 and 1595, this play is representative of the humorous and playful treatment of mythology that characterizes Shakespeare's earlier works composed when the influence of Ovid is most evident within his writing. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare found in Ovid, and by extension the whole of classical mythology, a "treasure-house of fascinating stor(ies)" with previously established and easily recognizable plots and morals (Root 8). The influence of these selected allusions, although treated whimsically, adds a deeper level of meaning to an otherwise light-hearted production, while simultaneously affecting the readers' interpretation of this comedic work.

Easily the most prominent and well-developed allusion in all of Shakespeare, the presence of the



Pyramus and Thisbe by Lucas van Leyden, 1514

rude mechanicals' version of *Pyramus and Thisbe* leads to the "delicious burlesque" of an originally somber Ovidian story (Root 11). As told in Book Four of the *Metamorphoses*, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe is the tragic tale of the two most beautiful Babylonian youths who have fallen in love with each other and desire to move towards marriage. Because their fathers have forbidden their romance, the young lovers are resigned to communicating solely through the hole in their shared wall.

This separation and secrecy only makes their passions burn hotter, finally causing them to make plans to meet under cover of night outside the city. When she reaches the rendezvous point, Thisbe is frightened by a lion and drops her veil. Pyramus, seeing the blood-stained shawl lying on the ground, assumes his beloved to have been killed and commits suicide. Shortly thereafter, Thisbe returns and, finding Pyramus's corpse, follows suit and kills herself (Kline). While the gravity of this story is undeniable, Shakespeare manipulates and satirizes the same features that cast Ovid's original as a romantic tale to show the production of the tradesmen as a complete farce, thereby forcing readers to confront the wider implications and influence the presence of this myth wields over the remainder of the play.

Shakespeare introduces the inversion and manipulation of traditional mythology from the first moment Bottom and his fellow tradesmen begin contemplating performing a play for the Duke's upcoming wedding. When searching for a suitable

A 16TH CENTURY OVID CONTINUED...

drama, Peter Quince proposes that the hodgepodge troupe put on a play entitled "*The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*" (1.2.8-9). This obvious combination of paradoxical adjectives in the title of mechanicals' play can be viewed as Shakespeare's deliberate attempt to add an element of humor to the otherwise grave narrative, accordingly setting the stage for the rest of the group's equally entertaining and disastrous performance. Shakespeare goes on to include such verbal absurdities as Bottom's line, "I see a voice; now will I to the chink/ to spy an I can hear my Thisbe's face" (5.1.190-191) and his unnecessary description of the night as being "ever art when day is not" (5.1.169).

By making it impossible for Bottom and his colleagues to be taken seriously as their respective classical characters, Shakespeare forces readers to search for echoes of Ovid's classical mythology in a different source within his own play. In the gauche version of the myth presented by Bottom's ensemble of rude mechanicals, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe parodies the relationship of Lysander and Hermia. Just as Pyramus and Thisbe's youthful love has been prohibited by their fathers, Hermia's stern, controlling father, Egeus, has proscribed her from marrying her chosen suitor and is insisting that she submit to his will by marrying Demetrius (1.1.22-27).

Throughout the drama, Shakespeare's repeated and extensive incorporation of elements from classical mythology into *A Midsummer Night's Dream* adds a second level of meaning to that already present in the text of the play. By calling upon iconic characters from antiquity in the forms of Theseus and Hippolyta, Shakespeare is able to successfully invoke the influence of these characters' respective and entangled myths to not only give readers a truer sense of his own characters, but also to provide context for their actions within the comedy.



Scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Titania and Bottom by Edwin Landseer, c. 1960

Through his inclusion of the distorted and caricatured telling of Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe, the playwright requires readers to look elsewhere for the gravitas traditionally associated with this tragic tale. In doing so, Shakespeare lends a sense of seriousness and legitimacy to his account of the relationship between Lysander and Hermia that would otherwise be overshadowed by the lunacy and hilarity of their misadventures in the woods. Ultimately, the influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* over the writings of Shakespeare is neither confined to his casting of Theseus and Hippolyta nor to the theme of young love depicted by Hermia and Lysander but is felt, albeit in varying degrees of significance and strength, over the course of the entire play. ♦

Edited from:

Gray, E. (2017). "A 16th Century Ovid: The Influence of Classical Mythology on the Understanding of Shakespeare's Plays." *Inquiries Journal*, 9(02). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=1545>

THEMES

Theme refers to the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The principal themes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are: The Difficulties of Love • Magic • Dreams • Order and Disorder • Jealousy

The Difficulties of Love

The most apparent example of the difficulties of love is the plight of Hermia and Lysander. Indeed, Lysander and Hermia discuss the problem in Act 1, Scene 1, when Lysander remarks:

The course of true love never did run smooth

But there is also potential trouble between Theseus and Hippolyta, the soon to be married Duke of Athens and Queen of the Amazons. This courtship was unconventional, to say the least, since Hippolyta became the intended bride of the Duke only after he defeated her in battle and took her from her homeland in Southern Russia. While Theseus states:

Hippolyta, I wooed thee with my sword,
And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key
With pomp, with triumph, and with reveling.

—Theseus, Act I, Scene I

We never hear Hippolyta's answer due to the entrance of Egeus stating his problems with Hermia and Lysander.

And let us not forget the other couple made unhappy due to the conflict raised by Egeus. Hermia has been promised to Demetrius, who dotes on her. But, Hermia's friend, Helena, also dotes on Demetrius, who had once pledged his love to her before he fell in love with Hermia and won Egeus' approval to marry her.

The last illustration of the difficulties of love is within the fairy community where Oberon and his wife Titania are fighting and estranged. The wrongs and accusations that are talked about between the two seem to be many, but the major conflict in the action of the play has to do with a changeling boy that Titania has and which Oberon wants.

Magic

There is magic afoot in the fairy kingdom. Oberon wishes to make use of his magic to torment Titania for the injuries she has done him in denying his request for the changeling child and for reconciliation.

Oberon sends Puck, his servant, to find a certain flower which was struck by Cupid's arrow:

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.

—Oberon, Act II, Scene I

While Oberon is planning to use this magic to get revenge on Titania, he overhears a conflict between Helena and Demetrius, during which Helena pledges her love and Demetrius begs her to leave him alone to pursue Hermia. Oberon unintentionally complicates the human plot by commanding Puck to

Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.

A sweet Athenian lady is in love

With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes;

But do it when the next thing he espies

May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man

By the Athenian garments he hath on.

Effect it with some care, that he may prove

More fond on her than she upon her love.

—Oberon, Act II, Scene I

Puck uses his magic further to transform Bottom, an actor in the play within the play—which will be performed for the Duke's marriage celebration—giving him the head of an ass. As a combination of this magic and the act of Oberon in spreading the magic potion on the eyes of Titania, Bottom becomes the creature most beloved of Titania as the fairy queen awakes.

THEMES CONTINUED...

Dreams

The contrasting of dream and reality in Shakespeare's world is clear in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the forest world there are dreams abound and reality is suspended as Oberon and Puck begin to influence the behavior of the Athenian couples, Helena, Lysander, Hermia, and Demetrius.

They all fall asleep in the forest and Puck influences the behavior of Helena, Lysander and, Demetrius. Hermia awakes, deserted by the others, and declares:

Help me, Lysander, help me! Do thy best
To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!
Aye me, for pity! What a dream was here!
Lysander, look how I do quake with fear.
Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.
—Hermia Act II, Scene II

Indeed, the dream reflects the reality of Lysander's transferred affections, thanks to Puck's magic.

Titania awakes from her potion induced "dream" believing she has been

Enamored of an ass
— Titania, Act IV, Scene I

which has indeed been the case as she doted on Bottom, transformed by Puck. And leaving no doubt, Puck ends the plays by cautioning:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear,
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding than a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend,
If you pardon we will mend.
—Puck, Act V, Scene I

Order and Disorder

A Midsummer Night's Dream also deals with the theme of order and disorder. Egeus' family is threatened by his daughter's wishes to marry against his will; however, the social order to the state demands that a father's will should be enforced. When the city dwellers find themselves in the wood, away from their ordered and hierarchical society, order breaks down and relationships are fragmented. Puck aided in this disorder when he put the love potion on the incorrect people. The relationships, however, are soon rebuilt in the free atmosphere of the wood before the characters return to society.

The order of nature is also broken and restored within the fairies' realm. The argument between the fairy king and queen result in the order of the seasons being disrupted:

The spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world
By their increase knows not which is which.

— Titania, Act II, Scene I

Only after Oberon and Titania's reconciliation can all of this be made right. Without the restoration of natural order, the happiness of the play's ending could not be complete.

THEMES CONTINUED...

Jealousy

The theme of jealousy is most notable between the four lovers. In the beginning of the play, Helena becomes jealous of Hermia because she manages to gain the affection of both Lysander and Demetrius, while Helena is in love with Demetrius. Demetrius is then jealous of Lysander, who Hermia is in love with. When the love potion makes Lysander fall for Helena, Hermia falls into her own jealous rage.

Jealousy is also present in the Fairy world. In Act II, we learn that King Oberon and Queen Titania have fallen in love with Hippolyta and Theseus, respectively. They both accuse each other of loving another person:

Titania:

But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,

Oberon:

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?

—Act II, Scene I

This ends with Oberon commanding Puck to cast a love potion on Titania so that she falls back in love with him. This is the catalyst for the rest of the chaos.

For Discussion:

Have students follow the five themes throughout the play as they read the text, to determine where the themes intersect and where they become confused.

Ask students to determine which, if any, is the main theme and which are the sub-themes. When are the themes used to move the action along and when are they actual pieces of the storyline which are necessary for our understanding of the tale Shakespeare is telling? ♦

The discussion points suggested here relate to the English-Language Arts Content Standards Grades Nine & Ten, Sections 3.0 Literary Response and Analysis and 3.1 Structural Features of Literature

VERSE AND PROSE

VERSE is language with a set rhythm.

The majority of Shakespeare's plays are written in verse for two primary reasons: tradition and memorization. Since the beginning of western theatre, plays were written in verse, which is easier to memorize than prose. Shakespeare was one of the first playwrights to utilize both prose and verse when it suited him. Shakespeare used verse to denote members of the nobility and the upper class.

Shakespeare used a verse form called blank verse. While blank verse does not contain rhyme, each line has an internal rhythm and a regular rhyme pattern, like a heartbeat.

Shakespeare is known for utilizing iambic pentameter. An iamb is a poetic foot with one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable. A pentameter means that there are five feet in a line. An iambic pentameter is then five iambs, forming a ten-syllable line with a total of five stressed and five unstressed syllables per line.

Verse Example:

Lysander:

One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

Hermia:

Nay, good Lysander.
For my sake, my dear, Lie further off yet. Do not lie so near.
—Act II, Scene II

One **turf** shall **serve** as **pil** low **for** us **both**
One **heart**, one **bed**, two **bo** soms, **and** one **troth**

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lovers talk to one another in rhyming couplets. When Hermia speaks to her father, Theseus, she does not speak in rhymes.

PROSE is language without a set rhythm or structure.

Prose is the form used by the common citizens in Shakespearean drama. There is no rhythm or meter in the line. It is everyday language that Shakespeare's audience would recognize as their own. In Shakespeare's plays, prose is rarely used by nobility or members of the royal family. Prose is what someone speaks when they are reading aloud or when they are either insane or are pretending to be.

Prose Example:

Bottom:

Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quince:

Why, what you will. Bottom: I will discharge it in either your straw-color beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-color beard, your perfit yellow.
—Act I, Scene II

Note that all of the mechanicals speak in prose.

WORDS COINED BY SHAKESPEARE

Accused—*Richard II*, Act I, Scene I

How Shakespeare used it: To describe the person being charged with a crime or offense. This is the word's first known use as a noun. In this case Henry Bolingbroke and Thomas Mowbray are the accuser and the accused—Bolingbroke (the accuser) argues that Thomas Mowbray (the accused) is “a traitor and a miscreant.”

“Then call them to our presence; face to face,
And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear
The accuser and the accused freely speak:
High-stomach'd are they both, and full of ire,
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.”—King
Richard II

Modern definition: someone charged with a crime or offense (particularly relating to a criminal case).

Addiction—*Othello*, Act II, Scene II

How Shakespeare used it: meaning a strong preference for or inclination towards something. The herald encourages everyone to take pleasure in whatever most delights them or in whatever they are most inclined towards (their addictions.)

“It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph; some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him.”—Herald

Modern definition: noun—an intense and destructive need to have or do something excessively.

Assassination—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene VII

How Shakespeare used it: The word assassin was already known, but Shakespeare used assassination to describe a murder, or deed done by an assassin. In this soliloquy, Macbeth contemplates the murder or assassination of Duncan.

“If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come.”—Macbeth

Modern definition: The act of assassinating someone, where assassinate means to kill someone who is usually famous or important, often for political reasons.

Bedazzled—*The Taming of the Shrew*, Act IV, Scene V

“Pardon, old father, my mistaking eyes, that have been so bedazzled with the sun that everything I look on seemeth green.”—Katherine

Dwindle—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: In this scene from *Macbeth*, the First Witch tells the other two witches that she has been torturing a sailor whose wife was rude to her and explains to him how she will “drain him dry as hay” until he starts to “dwindle, peak, and pine”. Dwindle in this sense is used to mean waste away.

“I myself have all the other,
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I' th' shipman's card.
I'll drain him dry as hay.
Sleep shall neither night nor day

Hang upon his penthouse lid.
He shall live a man forbid.
Weary sev'n'nights nine times nine
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine.” —First Witch

Modern definition: to gradually become smaller.

Fashionable—*Troilus and Cressida*, Act III, Scene III

How Shakespeare used it: Ulysses describes time through a series of metaphors and similes. One of the comparisons he makes is to a fashionable host. In this context, fashionable means a host who abides by the most current etiquette—who follows customs that are of the current fashion.

“For time is like a fashionable host that slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand, and with his arms outstretch'd, as he would fly, grasps in the comer: welcome ever smiles, and farewell goes out sighing.”—Ulysses

Modern definition: Representing a popular trend or influence, particularly regarding personal styles.

Inaudible—*All's Well That Ends Well*, Act V, Scene III

“Let's take the instant by the forward top; for we are old, and on our quick'st decrees the inaudible and noiseless foot of Time steals ere we can effect them.”—King of France

THE ART OF THE **SHAKESPEAREAN** INSULT

When we think of Shakespeare, we usually think of his plays and poetry. However, Shakespeare has also penned some amazing insults. Far more interesting and colorful than the curse words we usually hear in modern conversation, the witty and acerbic Shakespearean insult is truly an art form. Next time you feel additional color is required in your conversation, go ahead and try something Shakespearean!

Below are a few of Shakespeare's well-known insults:

"Thou art a boil, a plague sore, an embossed carbuncle in my corrupted blood."

"Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell"

"I do desire we may be better strangers"

"I am sick when I do look on thee"

"Poisonous bunch-backed toad!"

"Thou lump of foul deformity"

ACTIVITY

Make Your Own Insult! Combine one word from each of the three columns, then preface your combination with "Thou" to create your own Shakespearean Insult!

COLUMN 1

Artless
Bawdy
Bootless
Churlish
Clouted
Craven
Currish
Dankish
Dissembling
Droning
Errant
Fawning
Fobbing
Forward
Frothy
Gleeking
Goatish
Gorbellied
Infectious
Jarring
Loggerheaded
Lumpish
Mammering
Mangled
Mewling
Paunchy
Pribbling
Puking
Puny
Qualling
Rank
Reeky
Roguish
Ruttish
Saucy
Spleeny
Spongy
Surly
Tottering
Unmuzzled
Vain
Venomed
Villainous
Warped
Wayward

COLUMN 2

Base-court
Bat-fowling
Beef-witted
Beetle-headed
Boil-brained
Clapper-clawed
Clay-brained
Common-kissing
Crook-pated
Dismal-dreaming
Dizzy-eyed
Doghearted
Dread-bolted
Earth-vexing
Fat-kidneyed
Fen-sucked
Flap-mouthed
Fly-bitten
Folly-fallen
Fool-born
Full-gorged
Guts-gripping
Half-faced
Hasty-witted
Hedge-born
Hell-hated
Idle-headed
Ill-breeding
Ill-nurtured
Knotty-pated
Milk-livered
Motley-minded
Onion-eyed
Pottle-deep
Pox-marked
Reeling-ripe
Rough-hewn
Rude-growing
Shard-borne
Sheep-biting
Spur-galled
Swag-bellied
Tardy-gaited
Tickle-brained
Toad-spotted
Urchin-snouted

COLUMN 3

Apple-john
Baggage
Barnacle
Bladder Boar-pig
Bugbear
Bum-bailey
Canker-blossom
Clack-dish
Clotpole
Coxcomb
Codpiece
Death-token
Dewberry
Flap-dragon
Flax-wench
Flirt-gill
Foot-licker
Fustilarian
Giglet
Gudgeon
Haggard
Harpy
Hedge-pic
Horn-beast
Hugger-mugger
Lewdster
Lout
Malt-worm
Mammet
Measle
Minnow
Miscreant
Moldwarp
Mumble-news
Nut-hook
Pigeon-egg
Pignut
Puttock
Pumpion
Ratsbane
Scut
Skainsmate
Vassal
Whey-face

WOMEN'S FRIENDSHIPS IN *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

by Dr. Miranda Johnson-Haddad

William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written around 1596, marks a new stage in the playwright's development, one that reflects his growing confidence in his own abilities. With *Dream*, Shakespeare begins to experiment more boldly with both the comic form and with his source materials. The result of these experiments is a play that, for all its humor and magic, also addresses complex themes with significantly more depth and resonance than we observe in the earlier comedies. In particular, Shakespeare's exploration of female friendships and, even more daringly, of the toll that men and heterosexual romance sometimes takes on those friendships, was remarkable in a work by a sixteenth-century male author.

From the opening act of *Dream*, Shakespeare makes it clear that women's friendships must often be abandoned when they are replaced by a romantic relationship with a man. When Hermia explains to Helena, her dearest friend since childhood, that she and Lysander will run away from Athens together, she notes: "And in the wood, where often you and I / Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie, / Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet, / There my Lysander and myself shall meet." Hermia adds that she and Lysander will "thence from Athens turn away our eyes / To seek new friends," thereby eliminating any doubt that this will mean the end of the women's friendship. (Significantly, it is Lysander, not Hermia, who makes the decision to reveal their plans to Helena.) Later, during the confusion in the woods, Helena scolds Hermia for what she supposes to be her mockery by describing, in extravagant terms, their years of close friendship, comparing the two friends to "Two lovely berries, molded on one stem; / So, with two seeming bodies but one heart." By the play's end, however, both women are happily married – and neither one of them speaks another word in the final scene of the play. There is seemingly no room for their friendship within their new lives as married women.

It turns out that female friendship is imperiled not only in the human world, but in the fairy world as well. Titania and Oberon, the fairy queen and king, are quarrelling because of Titania's refusal to give Oberon a changeling boy whom she is raising and whom he covets, for reasons that are not clear. But Titania's resistance is far from arbitrary. She movingly explains to Oberon that the child's "mother was a votaress of my order," and in one of the loveliest passages in this linguistically beautiful play, she recalls with deep affection the time that the two of them spent together. But Titania's friend, "being mortal," died in childbirth, and "for her sake" Titania is determined to "rear up her boy," whom she refuses to part with. Nevertheless, by the end of that same night, Titania easily relinquishes the boy to Oberon; thanks to his trickery, she has become so besotted with Bottom that apparently, the child and his mother no longer mean anything to her. We cannot help but wonder whether Oberon may have wanted the child so strongly in the first place because he perceived that Titania's devotion to her friend was a threat to his own prominence in her affections.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is unquestionably one of Shakespeare's most delightful, funny, and magical comedies, yet it can leave us with a sense of uneasiness that is similar to what we experience with many of the mature comedies and with the so-called "problem plays" that follow. There is always a cost to happiness: for example, Malvolio's humiliation in *Twelfth Night*, or Antonio's isolation at the end of *The Merchant of Venice*. In performance, it is possible for Hermia and Helena to be allowed some degree of agency in the final scene, despite the fact that they have no lines to speak. But even with these performative "corrections," it is difficult not to conclude that in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it seems to be the women's friendships that pay the price for the happy ending. ♦

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **RESEARCH**

Purpose:

These research prompts will help students develop an understanding of the historical and social context of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Prepare:

To prepare for seeing *Midsummer*, have students break into small groups and research the following topics, either as groups or individually. When they are finished, have students present their findings to the class.

The Elizabethan Era

- Social structure and hierarchy
- Social norms and morals
- The role of women and women's rights
- Theatre and its role in society
- Prominent theatre companies and playwrights
- Prominent political figures

Greek and Roman Mythology

- Theseus and Hippolyta
- Zeus and Hera
- Eros and Cupid
- Pyramus and Thisbe in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

A *Midsummer Night's Dream*

- Shakespeare's source material for the play
- Performance history

Love

- The psychology behind love and marriage
- Typical patriarchal roles

William Shakespeare

- His life
- His work
- His legacy

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES**

Purpose:

These activities will prompt students to think critically about the themes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Rewrite Shakespeare

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to use their creative writing skills to engage with the text of *Midsummer* by translating a speech from the play into contemporary language.

1. Have students read Shakespeare's *Midsummer*, or provide students with a contextual overview of the events in the play.
2. Pass out the text of a speech from the play to students. Possible speeches include the following:
 - Helena's Act I, Scene I speech beginning with "How happy some o'er other some can be!..."
 - Pucks Act V, Scene I speech beginning with "If we shadows have offended..."
 - Bottom's Act IV, Scene I speech beginning with "When my cue comes call me, and I will answer..."
3. Facilitate a class-wide discussion about the overarching meaning of the speech.
4. After the discussion, have students break into groups, and rewrite the speech line by line using contemporary language.
5. Allow students to present their translations to the class.
6. Lead a discussion about the differences between Shakespeare's original text and the translations. Some questions to ask during this discussion include
 - What is added or lost in the translations?
 - Is the meaning of the speech still clear? Is the meaning of the speech more clear?
 - How does the process of translating the text add to your understanding of the speech?

Detective Love

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore the difficulty of love in *Midsummer* by creating a visual guide to keep track of the different love triangles.

1. Facilitate a class-wide discussion about love.
 - How do you define love?
 - How has the definition of love evolved?
 - What are different types of love?
 - Why is love difficult?
 - What is the psychology of love?
2. Assign groups of students to each act. Have each group create a board with pictures of each character.
3. After reading each act, allow students to connect the pictures of the characters with different colored strings of yarn or arrows to represent who is in love with whom, much like a crime scene investigation board.
4. Allow each group to present their completed love board as if they were presenting a case. Ask students to provide reasoning of why the characters are together. Ask students to explain how Puck played a role in the relationships.

PRE-SHOW PREPARATION: **ACTIVITIES** CONTINUED...

Dream Journal

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to discover the role that dreams play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by creating short scenes that unpack how different characters view them.

- Facilitate a class discussion about dreams.
 - What is the psychology of dreams?
 - What are different definitions of dreams?
 - What are your dreams?
- While reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, have students notate quotes from characters when they speak about dreams in a journal.

Optionally, allow students to also keep track of their own dreams in the journal.
- After reading the play, have students choose one character and their quotes and create what they believe would be that character's dream. It can be a visual representation, a story, a monologue, a scene, etc.
- Encourage students to consider how the character views dreams; do they see them as helpful or hurtful, do they believe in them?
- Allow students to present their creation.

The Green-Eyed Monster

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore how jealousy manifests by creating a visual representation of their understanding of jealousy.

- Facilitate a class-wide discussion about jealousy.
 - What is the definition of jealousy?
 - What is the psychology of jealousy?
 - What are some images that come to mind when you think of jealousy?
- After the discussion, instruct students to create an image of how they each view jealousy. This image can be hand-drawn, a collage or collection of printed images, or a combination collage-drawing.
- In creating their images, ask students to incorporate any images they believe are iconic to jealousy.
- Allow students to present their work to the class.

Telephone

In this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore the speed with which information can be distorted as it is spread.

- Have students sit in a circle.
- Designate one leader. This person will come up with a phrase and then whisper that phrase to his or her neighbor in the circle. That person will then pass what they heard on to his or her neighbor.
- Each person in the circle will pass what they hear from the previous person in the circle onto the next person in the circle.
- When the phrase has made its way around the circle, the last person to hear the phrase will say what he or she heard.
- Often you will discover the phrase changes as it is passed around the circle.
- Play through these steps a few times.
- Facilitate a discussion about the tendency for information to be distorted or changed as it is passed along.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. How are different aspects of love shown within the different relationship pairings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Hermia and Demetrius, Hermia and Lysander, Oberon and Titania...
2. What is the purpose of the different settings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? Describe each setting, then choose one, such as the woods, and detail its significance.
3. Describe the parallels between Athens and the fairy realm. What is the significance of the fairies and magic? Why did Shakespeare introduce them into the plot?
4. To what extent does the fairies meddling in the relationships of the Athenian lovers and fairy lovers affect your idea of the relationship between love and free will?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES:

Folger Digital Texts' free online publication of *A Midsummer Nights Dream*: <https://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/download/pdf/MND.pdf>

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Educational Resources:

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>

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Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare by Stephen Greenblatt. Published by W.W. Norton in 2005.

Beyond a Common Joy: an Introduction to Shakespearean Comedy. By Paul A. Olson Published by University of Nebraska Press in 2009.

A Midsummer Night's Dream : an authoritative text, sources, criticism, adaptations by William Shakespeare and Grace Loppolo. Published by W.W. Norton in 2018.

FILMS:

A Midsummer Night's Dream directed by David Kerr (2016)

VIDEO CLIPS:

SHAKESPEARE UNCOVERED | The Lovers Untangled in A Midsummer Night's Dream

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQSr_SAF79A

Why should you read "A Midsummer Night's Dream"? - Iseult Gillespie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCl6o-kbqrs>

ABOUT THEATRE ARTS: **KEY THEATRICAL TERMS**

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

After this *A Noise Within* performance, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

blocking: The instructions a director gives actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

character: The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

conflict: The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

dramatic irony: A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

genre: Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce, or social drama.

motivation: The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

props: Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

proscenium stage: There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

set: The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

setting: The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

stage areas: The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

theme: The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

thrust stage: A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

ABOUT **A NOISE WITHIN**

A NOISE WITHIN produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue.

In its 30-year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 45,000 individuals attend productions at A Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 18,000 student participants to its Education Program. Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides.

Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: www.anoisewithin.org. The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, the Common Core, and 21st Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

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