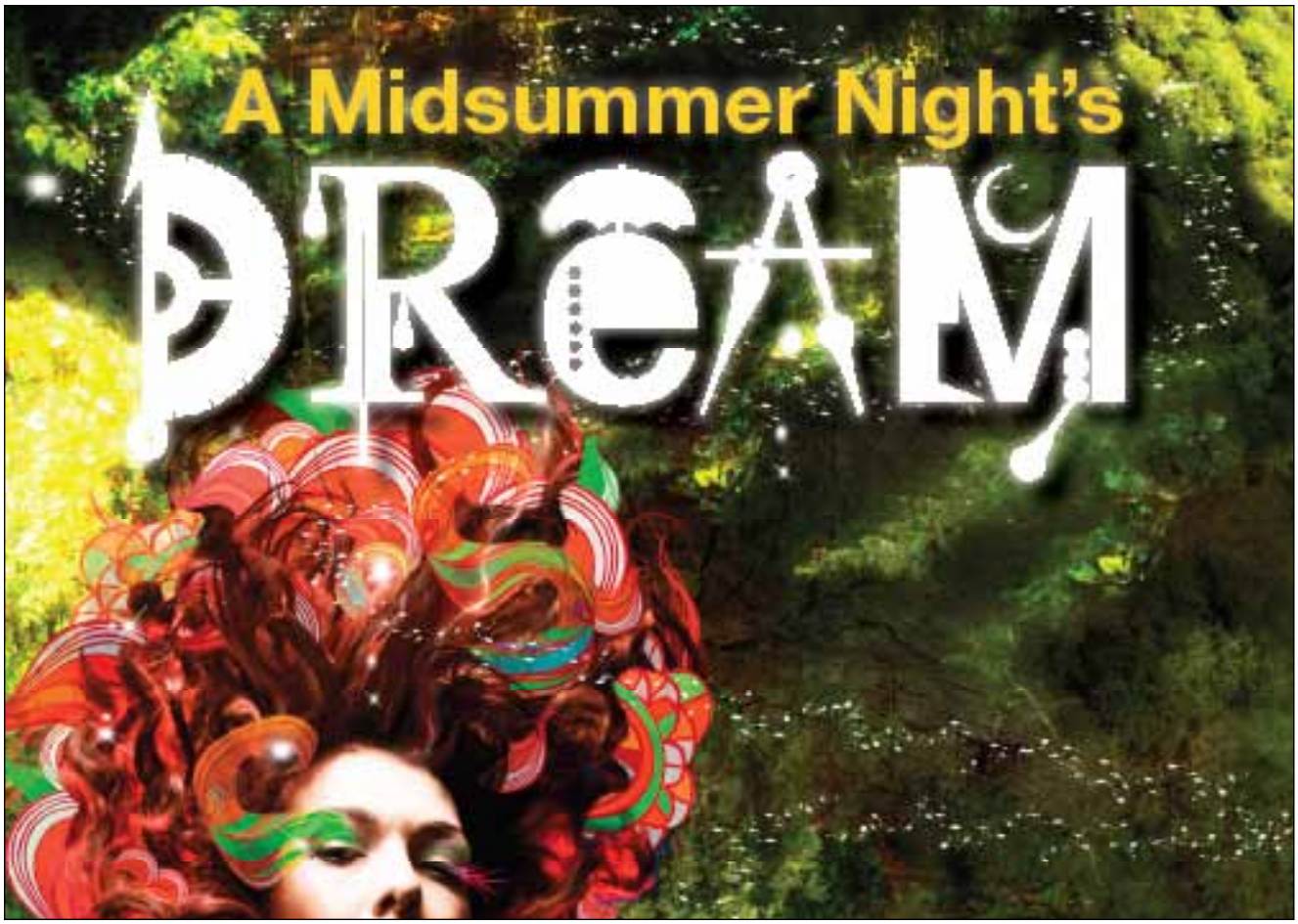
South Coast Repertory

Study Guide for the 2010-2011
Production of



by William Shakespeare
directed by Mark Rucker

Prepared by Assistant Literary Manager Kimberly Colburn

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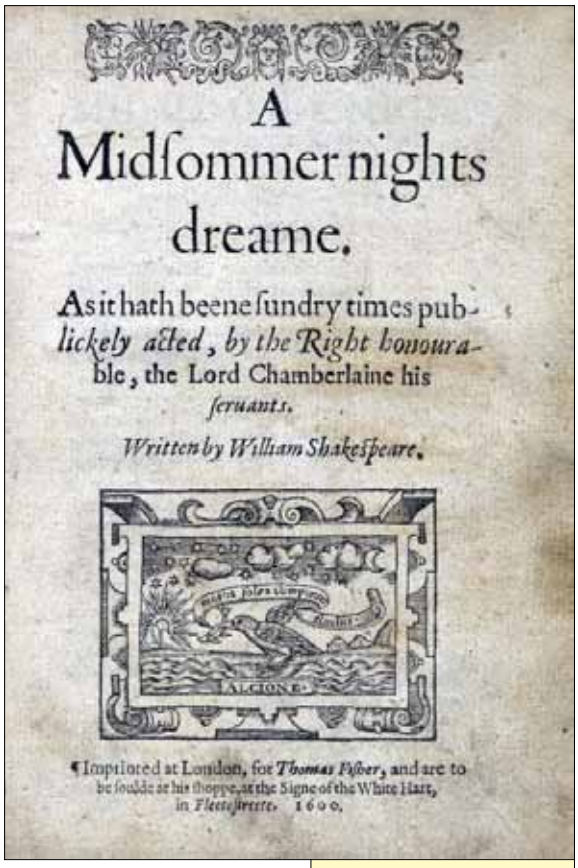
Part I: The Play

THE CHARACTERS

THESEUS, Duke of Athens
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons
EGEUS, an Athenian citizen
HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander
LYSANDER, in love with Hermia
DEMETRIUS, in love with Hermia
HELENA, in love with Demetrius
OBERON, King of the Fairies
TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies
PUCK (or Robin Goodfellow, Oberon's lackey)
PETER QUINCE, a carpenter
NICK BOTTOM, a weaver
FRANCIS FLUTE, a bellows mender
TOM SNOUT, a tinker
SNUG, a joiner
ROBIN STARVELING, a tailor
PHILOSTRATE, master of the Revels to Theseus
MOTH, PEASEBLOSSOM, MUSTARDSEED, COBWEB, and Others: fairies, minions of Titania


A
Midſommer nights
dreame.
As it hath beene ſundry times pub-
lickely acted, by the Right honoura-
ble, the Lord Chamberlaine his
ſeruants.
Written by William Shakeſpeare.
¶Imprinted at London, for Thomas Fiſher, and are to
be ſolde at his ſhoppe, at the Signe of the White Hart,
in Fleetſtreete. 1600.

William Shakespeare. *A midsommer nights dreame.* London, 1600.

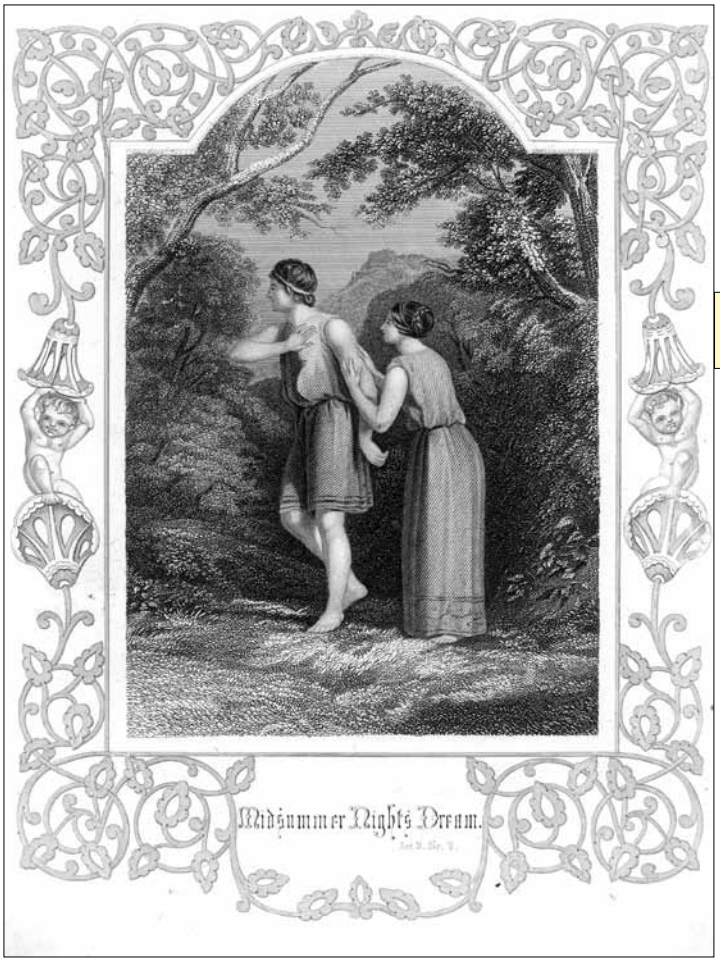
SYNOPSIS

In Athens, Duke Theseus and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, are looking forward to their wedding four days hence. Their anticipatory musings are interrupted by Egeus, an angry citizen. His daughter Hermia refused Demetrius, her father's choice of husband for her, pleading her true love for Lysander, in every way as worthy a suitor. Now Egeus wants Theseus to uphold Athenian law, which would punish Hermia's disobedience with death. Keenly aware that his bride-to-be is disturbed by the harsh sentence, Theseus softens its severity, allowing Hermia the choice of single life as a cloistered nun. She has until the day of Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding to decide.

In desperation, Hermia and Lysander decide to flee to the forest outside Athens that night, and they tell Hermia's friend, Helena. Demetrius courted Helena before transferring his affections to Hermia and she still pines for him. Hoping to gain some favor with her former lover, Helena tells Demetrius what is going on. They follow their friends into the woods.

Things aren't any better in the forest. Oberon, King of the Fairies, and Titania, his Queen, have been quarreling bitterly over the possession of a changeling boy, and their domestic strife is spilling over into the natural world. Rivers flood, crops rot in the field, and livestock are dying from a virulent disease. Oberon resolves to punish Titania for her failure to relinquish the changeling to him. He is her lord, after all. He sends his messenger, the mischievous Puck, to seek a magic flower, love-in-idleness. When its juice is applied to the eyelids of anyone sleeping, it causes the person to "madly dote" on the first creature seen upon waking. Oberon will administer the juice of the flower to Titania as she sleeps. Oberon has also overheard Demetrius rejecting Helena and orders Puck to dab some flower juice on his eyelids so that he will wake and return her love.

With night coming on, Hermia and Lysander find a wooded bank on which to rest. Hermia modestly insists that



Lysander lie a respectable distance from her. Their sleeping arrangement fools Puck into thinking that Lysander is the disdainful Athenian youth who is supposed to receive the magic juice. He applies the flower juice to Lysander's eyelids. When Helena finds him and wakes him, she is startled by his immediate and passionate protestations of love.

Midsummer Night's Dream Act 2. Sc 2.

In another part of the forest, a group of local artisans have gathered to rehearse a play they hope to perform for the Duke during the wedding festivities. What they don't know is that they are very close to Titania's bower. Their homespun thespian attempt—disrupted by the desire of Nick Bottom, a weaver, to play every part—catches the attention of Puck, who is passing by. Puck can't resist a good joke and outfits Bottom with a donkey's head. His appearance so terrifies his companions that they flee. Bottom's forlorn braying wakes Titania who sees and falls hopelessly in love with an ass.

Puck reports his progress to Oberon, who is pleased about Titania and Bottom, but very grumpy indeed when he finds out that Puck anointed Lysander and not Demetrius. Puck immediately sets about rectifying his mistake and applies the magic juice to Demetrius' eyes. Demetrius wakes to see Helena, fleeing Lysander's unwelcome attentions. Both men are now enthralled with Helena, who suspects she is the object of a cruel joke. She turns on Hermia, accusing her of being in league with the boys. Hermia, who is now the real object of scorn, lashes out at her erstwhile friend. Demetrius and Lysander decide to fight a duel.

The mortals' confusion and unhappiness spark something akin to pity in Oberon. He commands Puck to sort things out, which Puck does by applying an antidote to Lysander's eyes and leading the young men on a wild, moonlit chase, closely followed by Hermia and Helena. Oberon releases his Queen from the enchantment (but not before he secures possession of the changeling boy) and, when Puck is done with the lovers, orders him to restore Bottom to his human form.

Everything is now as it should be. Lysander has Hermia, Helena has Demetrius, Oberon has Titania and Bottom has a human head. In the morning, the young couples are awakened by the sound of hunting horns as Theseus and Hippolyta ride into the woods with a hunting party. They cannot explain to the Duke how their enmities have dissolved, "by some power." Theseus overrules Egeus.

At Theseus's court, three weddings are celebrated. The highlight of the evening is "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisby; very tragical mirth" as presented by Bottom and his fellow artisans. Although it is not the most polished production, it does while away the hours until bedtime. At midnight, the lovers go off to bed and the fairies come, "hand in hand, with fairy grace," to sing and to spread blessings throughout the palace in honor of the newlyweds.

Written by Beth Bardossi, Colleen Curran for Oregon Shakespeare Festival, at http://www.osfashland.org/browse/production.aspx?prod=87

LANGUAGE

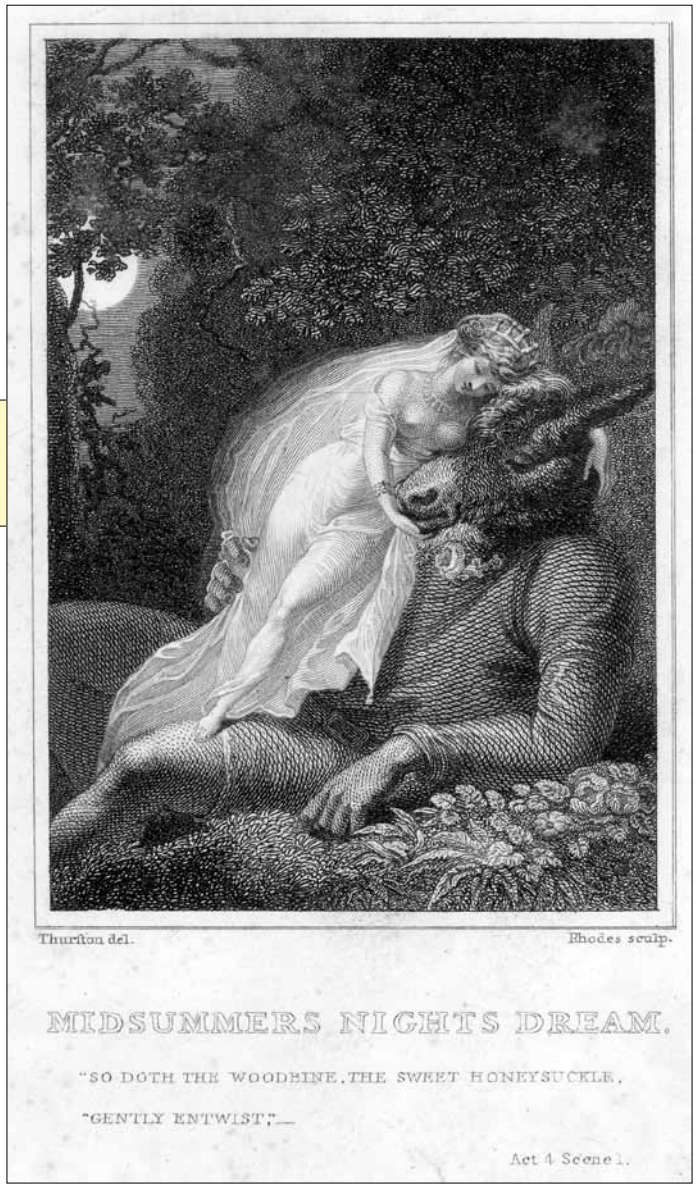
Blank Verse

Shakespeare wrote most of his plays in blank verse. Blank verse is a type of poetry distinguished by having a meter but no rhyme. In English it is most commonly unrhymed iambic pentameter. (Note: his sonnets were also written in iambic pentameter, but the lines had a rhyming scheme.) To understand iambic pentameter, you first need to understand the term "iamb." An iamb is a unit of rhythm consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. The words "annoy," "fulfill," "pretend," "regard," and "serene" are all iambs because the first syllable of each word is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed (or accented). Iambs can also consist of one word with a single unstressed syllable followed by another word with a single stressed (accented) syllable. In addition, they may consist of a final unstressed syllable of one word followed by an initial stressed syllable of the next word.

The following lines from Act IV, Scene I of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demonstrate the use of iambs. The stressed words or syllables are underlined:

Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.—
Egeus, I will overbear your will,
For in the temple by and by, with us,
These couples shall eternally be knit.
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our proposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens. Three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.

When a line has five iambs, it is in iambic pentameter. The prefix "pent" means "five." The suffix "meter" refers to the recurrence of a rhythmic unit (also called a "foot"). Thus, because the above lines contain iambs, they are "iambic." Because they contain five iambs (five feet) they are said to be in "iambic pentameter." Finally, because the words at the end of each line don't rhyme, the lines are said to be in "unrhymed iambic pentameter."



Titania quotes "So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle, Gently entwist," Act 4 Scene 1. John Thurston, 1774-1822, Artist. Richard Richard, 1765–1838, Engraver

Blank verse was modeled after ancient Greek and Latin verse. It was first used in 1514 in Renaissance Italy by Francesco Maria Molza. In 1539, Italian Giovanni Rucellai was the first poet to label the unrhymed iambic pentameter in his poetry as blank verse (*versi sciolti* in Italian). Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, first used blank verse in English in his translation of Virgil's epic Latin poem, *The Aeneid*. The first English drama in blank verse was *Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex*, by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, staged in 1561. Later in the same century, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare turned blank verse into high art when they used it in their plays.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare helps delineate the characters with their language. The lovers regularly speak in rhymed verse, while the mechanicals speak in sometimes bumbling—and often humorous—prose. The fairies speak not only in iambic pentameter, but like other supernatural creatures in Shakespeare's work (the witches in *Macbeth* or Ariel in *The Tempest*) they often speak in rhymes as well.

Verse Forms

To clarify what can be a confusing play, Shakespeare has used more variety in the form of the dialogue than in most plays. Indeed, the amount of dialogue which is in rhyme is only exceeded by the earlier comedy *Love's Labours Lost*. In *Midsummer* blank verse frequently gives way to rhymed couplets or more elaborate stanza forms. Good examples of this use would be in the middle part of 1.1, where Theseus tests the seriousness of Hermia's love for Lysander, 4.1, before Bottom wakes, and Theseus's "lunatic...lover...poet" speech in 5.1.

Prose Dialogue

It is a mistake to think that prose, in Shakespeare's plays is simply the limited speech of uneducated or "low" characters. (For example, Hamlet, Prince Hal [in *Henry IV, Part I*] and Romeo all speak sometimes in prose.) The idea that prose is a homogeneous indicator of class is not supported by this play, where a great variety of prose forms is used. Interestingly, even the great Theseus, addressing the mechanicals at the end of their performance puts them at ease by speaking in sober but witty well-balanced prose: "Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed." As the nobles watch Pyramus and Thisbe they engage in bewildering word games: "Not so, my lord, for his valor cannot carry his discretion; and the fox carries the goose"… "His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valor; for the goose carries not the fox", as well as plain comment: "This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard." Humorous errors arise out of misuse of language: "He goes but to see a voice...", especially the malapropism: "there we may rehearse most obscenely" or "he comes to disfigure...the person of Moonshine."

"Verse forms" and "Prose dialogue" from http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/shakespeare/midsummernightsdream.htm#36

FAERIES

Today's children are brought up to think of fairies as diminutive beings of kindly disposition. However, accounts of medieval fairies show them to have been neither small nor particularly kindly. For many people, fairies were spirits against which they had to guard themselves by ritual precautions. By the Elizabethan era, town dwellers seem to have consigned such beliefs to the realms of childhood but there is clear evidence that the country people of the British Isles continued to show an 'astonishing reverence' for the fairies and dared not 'name them without honour'

— from "Fairies and Their Kin," by Bob Trubshaw
At the Edge No.10, 1998

Puck and the Fairies from William Shakespeare: "The Works of Shakspere, with notes by Charles Knight" (1873)

Although the 16th century witnessed the most astounding use and glorification of the fairies in literature and the creation of a literary conception of fairyland, it was understood by poet and scholar that the fairies, with certain notable exceptions, were not figures of literary invention of or a literary inheritance, but were the traditional fairies of rural belief, a race of English and Elizabethan spirits, indigenous to the country

19th century print: The fairies' song: Midsummer night's dream, act II, sc. 2, drawn and etched by Robert Dudley, 1858-1893.

and the century, who made their way into scholarly recognition and into literary records . . . from the fields and forests of England and from the living traditions and contemporary belief of the English folk. . . . They concerned themselves with pleasure and the joys of love, and used their power to shift their shapes, to build enchanted dwellings, to fashion magic objects, to take dire revenge on mortals who offended them, and to insure for their mortal lovers youth and never-ending bliss as long as they remained in fairyland. . . . As to the particular nature and race of the fairies and their origin, 16th century opinion was divided. In one point only was there complete agreement. Whoever or whatever they were, they belonged to the category of wicked spirits. . . .

In spite of the fact that they were known to belong to the rank of evil spirits and devils, both in folk tales and in treatises of scholars, a curious uncertainty is evidenced in regard to the exact nature of the fairies' wickedness, and, in some cases, a perceptible reluctance to condemn them utterly or to brand them irretrievably with the stigma of infernal spirits, possibly because of their notorious generosity and their habits of bestowing good fortune and rich gifts on their favorites. . . .

Though the dress of the fairies might vary, their essential characteristics and idiosyncrasies remained always the same. In the first place, they were inordinately addicted to dancing. . . . If they appeared otherwise than tripping, according to most of the representations of them, they were sure to break into a dance before much time elapsed, and to take their departure in a mad whirl of gay steps. . . . With dancing as their characteristic gesture, it is no wonder that the appearance of the fairies was accompanied 'with noyse of musick and minstralsie.' . . .These two attributes of dancing and singing may, in part, account for the fairies' popularity in the age of Shakespeare when rounds and catches, airs and madrigals, corantos and galliards were all the fashion. . . .

Who wished to see the fairies dancing or to hear their songs must be out of doors. With the exception of the water fairies, they held their revels and made their visible appearances in the forests and meadows and on the small green hillocks of a summer England. At no time had they any relish for the houses of mortals, and only entered them on the pressure of important business after their human inmates were asleep, or made their way inside through force of great necessity to steal human children.

The fairies' hour was usually at twelve midnight and noon. . . . The night, however, was peculiarly the fairies' own. This preference seems to have been emphasized in the 16th century when, according to [Thomas] Nashe, "The Robbin-good-fellowes, Elfes, Fairies, Hobgoblins . . . did most of their merry prankes in the Night."

—excerpted from *The Elizabethan Fairies*, by Minor White Latham

Part II: The Production

The Design Process
by Josh Marchesi, SCR Production Manager

Before starting, the designers first have individual discussions with the director to talk through the "concept," the setting and interpretive choices that the director has chosen. In these conversations, the director and designers create a description, through words and research images, of the world which the play happens. *Midsummer* is challenging because the designers actually have to create three worlds: the aristocratic world of the Athenian Court, that of the Mechanicals, who represent Elizabethan society's working class, and the magical forest, home of the Fairies.

After they've agreed with the director on an approach, the designers go to work sketching, modeling and creating "renderings," pictures that show what they think the play should look like. If the show is a realistic play, then this can be relatively easy, with the designer adapting existing locations or clothing to suit the needs of the play. Shakespeare plays can be a much bigger challenge, since directors often develop a concept to help illustrate the deeper meanings of the text, and to translate its ideas into a visual language that modern audiences will understand.

The images below are the set and costume designers' preliminary renderings for *Midsummer*, showing their original ideas. After these are submitted to the theater for feedback, some changes get made for practical or creative reasons, and the final version, which you will see when you come to the show, often can be significantly different from the original vision.

SETS

First let's take a look at Set Designer Cameron Anderson's images. Often the first designer to work with the director will be the set designer, and this was the case for *Midsummer*. For a show set mostly in in a fantasy world, the set design often acts as the framework that guides the other designers' choices. Mark Rucker, the director, and Cameron had several discussions before the full team got together. He described the overall concept as being "not so much a period (like 60's or 70's); it is more made-up modern. It's hard to capture in an image—think more modern-hippie with the Fairies like contemporary 'burning man' circle drumming creatures. They steal things from the mortal world (clothes, yarn, keys, shoes, jewelry) and fashion them into recycled creations to wear. Extremely eclectic, handmade stuff." Mark's vision was based on the idea that the Fairies of Shakespeare's time were not the gentle, delicate vision of fairies we have today. Instead, fairies in the Renaissance were looked upon as frightening, manipulative figures who stole things and caused problems. As a result, the jumping off point for the design was that the Fairy world is constructed out of things stolen from the human world, but re-purposed and reconfigured to create magical objects


Press Conference

with strange functions. After presenting the rough sketches to the full design team, Cameron incorporated the ideas the meeting generated. She created these images that capture a world of extremes: the artificial and controlled Palace of the Royals set against the magical, wild and wildly creative forest of the Fairies, and bridged by the creative but clumsy Mechanicals.

Starting with an approach that sets the human world as generally contemporary, Mark wanted Cameron to capture the sense that modern royalty is often presented to the public in uncomfortable, artificially grand settings. They looked at a lot of images and discussed this first scene taking place at a press conference or a portrait sitting. Cameron's version of this, with its oversized couch and grand painting of a jungle captured and contained in a perfect circle, nicely communicates that sense. The entire stage is also draped in white china silk, creating a very controlled and sterile environment.

We first see the world of the Mechanicals as they enter in their home-made touring truck. While the Fairies take their stolen objects and create graceful, magical things with them, the truck that the human Mechanicals have constructed is made up of hammered together junk—including a motorcycle, a cello, a bathtub, random furniture parts—and is decorated with dozens of brightly colored bottles that light up. Fun and creative, for sure, but definitely not magical!


Mechanicals

This is our first view of the Fairies' world, as Titania makes her grand entrance accompanied by music and dance. After a magical trick that reveals the forest to us as the first Fairies enter (sorry, you'll have to come see it to find out what!), we find ourselves inside a large tree, covered with moss. A ramp curves around, and a close look reveals it is made out of drawers stolen from the humans. The rings of the tree fly out to reveal Titania, backed by a giant glowing structure made up of hundreds of stolen light bulbs, all somehow magically lit up without any electricity.


Fairies' World

After Oberon enters and kills the party, the light bulb sculpture disappears and is replaced by tree branches that move about, floating in the air; the glowing branches appear to be covered in pale bark, but look closer – the bark is actually glowing pages from books. This is also the first time we see that the giant mossy wall also acts as a perch for the Fairies, who climb up and around on it on a series of hidden hand and footholds.

Into this world stumble the young Athenian lovers, immediately observed and set upon by the invisible fairies.

The bower is an old fishing boat, which flies in carrying the moon, and then floats in the air carrying the slumbering Titania.

As Titania woos Bottom, a series of umbrellas glides in, and as the other fairies open them they are revealed to contain a light which then floats gently in the air as a romantic mood setter.

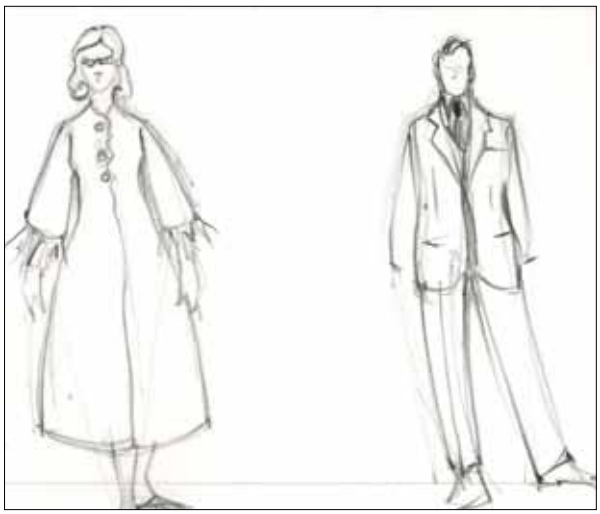

Umbrellas

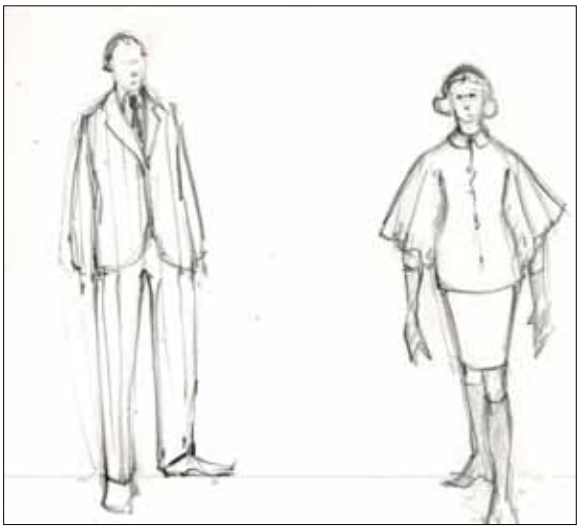
COSTUMES

Costume Designer Nephelie Andonyadis' challenge was then to take the concepts worked out by the director and set designer and to translate that into the clothing worn by the many characters in the play. The images here represent her first rough drafts, along with some of the research she shared with Mark to give him an idea of what she was thinking of before attempting to create the sketches. Most designers will start with these research collages, showing a variety of choices that communicate some of their ideas visually. The director and designer then go through the images and make choices about what in the images works and what doesn't.

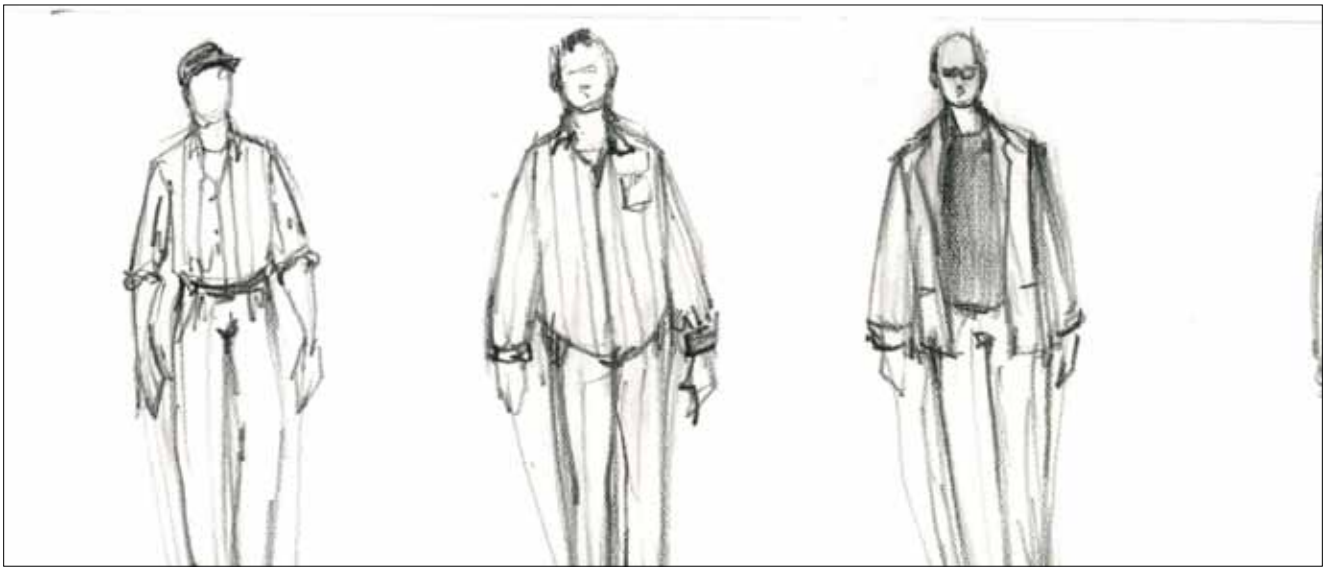
A collage of images of modern royalty, especially focusing on portrait sittings, which often still look the same as they did in Renaissance times, with overdressed royals sitting in staged settings. The second image represents what Nephelie did with those ideas, and how she saw the two royal figures at the top of the show at their press conference.

Here we see Nephelie's inspirations for the four lovers who get lost in the woods, along with her first versions of their looks. Notice the slightly retro approach to the images—some are older, and some are modern but have an older flair. The designs will try to capture this sense of timelessness that Nephelie and Mark really liked.

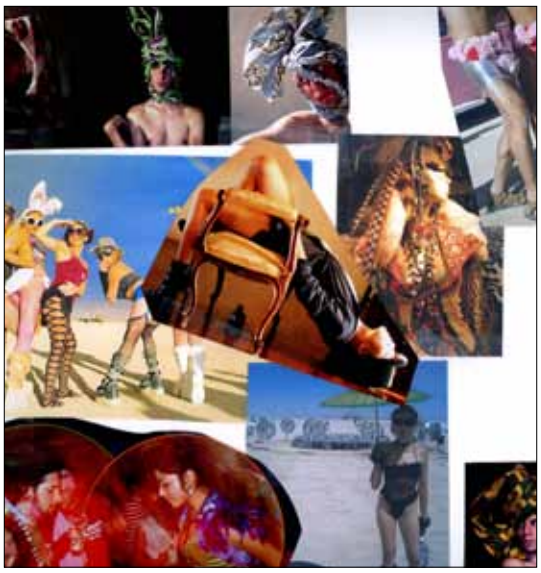




An early look at the mechanicals, all of whom dress like like the working men that they are. In addition to this, Nephelie will design a set of costumes for them to wear when performing the play-within-a-play at the end.



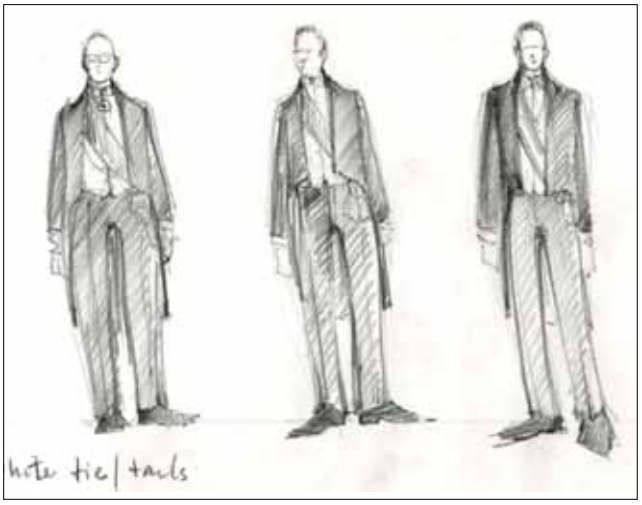
In keeping with the set, the fairies' costumes feature elements that are made of found or stolen human objects, capturing a sense both of the alienness of the fairies and of their creativity in recreating the world around them in a form more to their liking. The research shows a variety of ideas that Nephelie was attracted to, and the sketch shows some of those ideas taken to the next step, featuring elements like hats made from shoes and umbrellas that are both silly and beautiful.



This is Nephelie's first draft of the king and queen of the Fairies. Notice Titania's enormous skirt—here Nephelie suggests that it might be made of woven together soles of shoes.

Here we see the lovers after they've been in the forest for a while. Because the Fairies love to steal human objects, they've been slowly stripped down over time. The objects that were stolen will reappear in the play, re-purposed by the fairies into magical objects. Bottom, the leader of the mechanicals, will also undergo this transformation, although this isn't shown here.

These sketches represent the humans' looks for the end of the play, the big wedding scene when all conflicts are resolved. Their looks reflect more grace and classical elegance than what they wore at the top of the play, reflecting the peace that again reigns in Athens.



Part III: The Playwright

BIOGRAPHY

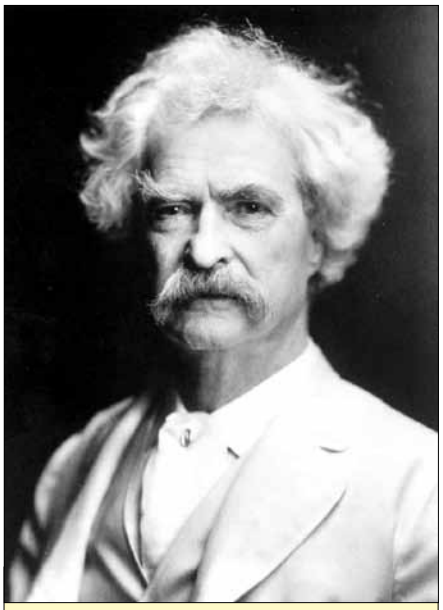
Chandos portrait, 1600-10. Most likely to resemble the real Shakespeare. The sitter bears a resemblance to Droeshout engraving of c1623, which Ben Jonson and others authenticated. Within living memory of Shakespeare it was regarded as his portrait. 'But it's not absolutely watertight,' says Tarnya Cooper, of the National Portrait Gallery.

William Shakespeare was born and educated at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, the eldest son of a prosperous maker of gloves who had married into the local gentry. Little is known (though much is conjectured) about Shakespeare's early life. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway and possibly supported her and their children, Susanna (born 1583), and the twins Hamnet and Judith (born 1585), by working as a schoolmaster. At some unknown date, maybe in the late 1580s, Shakespeare moved to London. The narrative poems with erotic themes, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), with dedications to Lord Southampton, were Shakespeare's first published works, but he had already had several plays produced (the three parts of *Henry VI, Richard III*, and the Plautine *Comedy of Errors*). He was also probably writing sonnets, about which speculation has continued to rage since their publication in 1609. From 1594 Shakespeare's theatrical company was the Lord Chamberlain's Men, for whom in the next five years he wrote the plays of his early maturity, among them *Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado about Nothing, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice*, and the history plays *Richard II*, *Henry IV (parts 1 and 2)*, and *Henry V*. In 1596 his father acquired a grant of arms, a mark of higher social standing. The following year Shakespeare purchased New Place at Stratford, both evidence of the family's standing and prosperity.

The Globe Theatre at Bankside, south of the Thames in London, was opened in 1599, and for it Shakespeare wrote his seven great tragedies (*Julius Caesar, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*). Apart from *Twelfth Night*, his comedies of the period 1599-1608 (*Measure for Measure, All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Troilus and Cressida*) are more somber and ambiguous than those of the 1590s. In 1608 Shakespeare's company, known since 1603 as the King's Men, took over the indoor Blackfriars Theatre, for which Shakespeare wrote the romantic comedies *Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*; the last, probably written in 1611, is generally read as the playwright's farewell to the stage. Shakespeare retired to Stratford, where he died in 1616. In 1623 his old friends and colleagues in the theatre, John Heminge and Henry Condell, published the first collected edition of Shakespeare's works, known as the *First Folio*; it contained thirty-six plays, of which only nineteen had been printed during the playwright's lifetime.

Queen Elizabeth's Procession to Blackfriars, c.1600. Robert Peake, the Elder. Sherborne Castle.

IS SHAKESPEARE DEAD? BY MARK TWAIN



Mark Twain,1900s. Photographer, A. F. Bradley, New York.

"How curious and interesting is the parallel—as far as poverty of biographical details is concerned—between Satan and Shakespeare. It is wonderful, it is unique, it stands alone, there is nothing resembling it in history, nothing resembling it in romance, nothing approaching it even in tradition. How sublime is their position, and how overtopping, how sky-reaching, how supreme—the two Great Unknowns, the two Illustrious Conjecturabilities! They are the best-known unknown persons that have ever drawn breath upon the planet. For the instruction of the ignorant I will make a list, now, of those details of Shakespeare's history which are FACTS—verified facts, established facts, undisputed facts."…

"So far as anybody actually KNOWS AND CAN PROVE, Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon never wrote a play in his life."

"So far as anyone KNOWS, he received only one letter during his life."

"So far as any one KNOWS AND CAN PROVE, Shakespeare of Stratford wrote only one poem during his life. This one is authentic. He did write that one—a fact which stands undisputed; he wrote the whole of it; he wrote the whole of it out of his own head. He commanded that this work of art be engraved upon his tomb, and he was obeyed. There it abides to this day. This is it:

Good friend for Iesus sake forbeare
To digg the dust encloased heare:
Blest be ye man yt spares thes stones
And curst be he yt moves my bones.

"In the list as above set down will be found EVERY POSITIVELY KNOWN fact of Shakespeare's life, lean and meager as the invoice is. Beyond these details we know

"NOT A THING about him. All the rest of his vast history, as furnished by the biographers, is built up, course upon course, of guesses, inferences, theories, conjectures—an Eiffel Tower of artificialities rising sky-high from a very flat and very thin foundation of inconsequential facts."

Read the entire essay at http://users.telerama.com/~joseph/shake.html

SHAKESPEARE AND THE GLOBE

The Globe Theatre has come to be known as the most famous London playhouse in Elizabethan times largely through its close association with the plays of William Shakespeare. Though its exact site was disputed for centuries, we know that the Globe was situated on the south bank of the River Thames in the area known as Bankside, which was outside the jurisdiction of the City of London but easily accessible by bridge and by boat. Other well known playhouses such as the Rose and the Swan were also on Bankside, as well as the Bear Garden, an amphitheater for bull and bear baiting.

London's first professional playhouse, known as the Theatre, had been built in 1576 by the father of one of Shakespeare's fellow actors, Richard Burbage, near the northern gate to the city. When difficulties arose in 1599 over the lease of the property, Richard and his brother, Cuthbert, forestalled the demolition of the theatre by their landlord by pulling down the building and transporting all the materials to the south side of the Thames. The new theatre they built was called the Globe, with a portion of the construction cost being met by Shakespeare and other share holders.

The exact design and equipment of the Globe have been the subject of much speculation and considerable difference of opinion. But one fact is certain—the roof above the stage was thatched. It was the igniting of this roof during a performance of *Henry VIII* in 1613 that resulted in the Globe burning to the ground in less than an hour. The structure was rebuilt in 1614 and remained an integral feature of the London entertainment scene until it was demolished in 1644.

In 1997, London's new Globe Theatre opened its doors with a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Situated near the south bank of the Thames, the new Globe is near the site of the original Elizabethan Globe.

H T Great Buildings: The Globe Theatre
http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Globe_Theater.html

Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre by Andrew Gurr
http://www.britannica.com/shakespeare/esa/660005.html

Shakespeare's Globe Online Reference Library
http://www.shakespearesglobe.org/navigation/frameset.htm

Shakespeare's Globe Research Data Base
http://www.rdg.ac.uk/globe/home.htm

1616, The Globe Theatre at Bankside, London.

THE STAGE AND THE ELIZABETHAN AGE: Excerpt from Shakespeare: Court, Crowd, and Playhouse by Francois Laroque

London in the 16th Century

When Shakespeare moved to London it was in the throes of expansion. Artisans and shopkeepers were still quite strictly regulated and looked after their employees, who often lived on the premises with them. Work was gruelling, with long hours and few distractions—at any rate within the City walls, as the City Fathers maintained a close watch over public morals. Theatres and other places of entertainment were kept outside the precincts, relegated to Shoreditch or Bankside, or to liberties (areas

Visscher's Panoramic View of London, 1616.

of land outside the City jurisdiction), such as Blackfriars, which before the Reformation had belonged to religious orders. The City nonetheless did have inns and taverns in which plays were performed: the Bull, the Bell, The Cross Keys, identified by their brightly painted signs.

William Kempe (left), also spelt Kemp, was an English actor and dancer specialising in comic roles and best known for having been one of the original players in early dramas by William Shakespeare.

The World of the Theatre

Thanks to a wide range of prices offered by the 'box offices' of the time, theatres were places of popular entertainment. Entrance to the pit—standing room round the stage—cost only a penny; prices rose to sixpence for seated places in the covered galleries. The first were within reach of all pockets, representing scarcely one-twelfth of a London worker's weekly salary. The second were the preserve of rich city merchants and nobility. (Sixpence also happened to be the price of a quarto edition of a play.)

Audiences were highly diverse. The Puritans railed at the rogues, pick pockets and prostitutes to be found in their midst, and regarded the theatres as a place of ill-repute, no better then the neighboring brothels. The motley and bustling crowd of spectators ate and drank during the performance and gave free rein to their emotions, roaring with laughter, dissolving into tears. They had a relish for language and were much stirred by the long speeches delivered in verse by such actors as Alleyn or Burbage, stars of the Rose and the Globe.

The Actors

Professional actors were a novelty in late 16th Century England, and often much admired. Until then players had been amateurs, members of guilds who acted in Morality Plays and Mysteries on the feast of Corpus Christi, supplemented by the traveling jugglers and mime artists who performed at fairs and on village greens.

The situation changed when the government began to take measures to control vagrancy and delinquency. An order was passed in 1572 that made an actor into a potential suspect, liable to be thrown into prison and branded with a hot iron if he were caught. This made it essential for a player to join the company of a prominent figure and bear his livery and arms.

On the title page of Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* the scroll (like a comic strip balloon) records the lines spoken by several characters in a scene where Hieronymo and Isabella discover their son murdered.

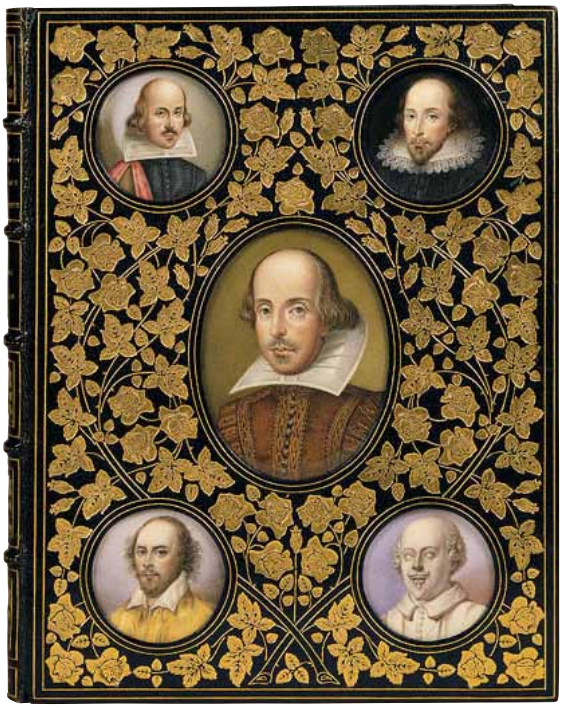
Hieronymo: Alas, it is my son Horatio.
Isabella: Murder, helpe, Hieronymo.
Lorenzo: Stop her mouth.

Female Roles

The theatrical companies included five or six boys or adolescents trained to play female roles until such time as their voices broke. They learnt their trade from the practiced actors and were well paid as long as the theatres flourished. But their prospects were uncertain; at puberty when they could no longer wear wigs and dresses, they often had no future other than as humble company employees.

These youths were nonetheless true professionals, who from a very young age learnt singing, dancing, music, diction, and feminine gestures and intonation. Contemporary audiences found them wholly convincing. Their parts were difficult, however, as well as specialized. It is therefore no surprise that, given the preponderance of adults in the companies, Shakespeare's plays had fewer females than male characters.

Part IV: Questions for Discussion



BEFORE THE SHOW

1. Imagine this: your teacher walks into the classroom one day holding tickets to a production of a Shakespeare play—not *Midsummer Nights Dream*, but one you've never even heard of. What is your initial reaction? You know you're going to have to go, so think about the sorts of things you'll be thinking about as you sit in the theatre waiting for the lights to go down. Make a list of your concerns and feelings. Share your list with your classmates and see if others share your attitude. Save your list and see if you feel the same way after seeing the performance.

2. Make a list of character names, town names, emotions, basic plot devices, etc. from *Midsummer*. Put this list on the board and have students write a story or scene using a specified number of these pre-selected elements. Do not provide any extra information about the play. Students should use only the given elements. When students read their versions aloud, comment on how many possibilities an author has, i.e., tone, symbols, characters, etc. Save the pieces to discuss more fully after seeing the performance, comparing and contrasting their stories with Shakespeare's original.

3. Choose any scene from *Midsummer* and imagine that you are the director. Your task is to add written stage directions to Shakespeare's text, which might include significant movements, pauses in the action, changes in tone, use of props, music, or special effects. The revised scene should be accompanied by a short rationale explaining your choices. As you watch the SCR performance, compare Mark Rucker's directorial decisions to those you made.

AFTER THE SHOW

1. Three worlds are represented in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Theseus's court in ancient Athens (with many references to gods and heroes of greek and Roman mythology), the world of the rustic workmen drawn from Shakespeare's own environment, and the supernatural universe. How do they interrelate in the text? How do they connect on stage? What aspects are particularly relevant to our present times' perceptions?

2. Discuss the significance of the woods in Shakespeare's comedy. What importance do forests have in the plots of other plays or stories with which you are familiar? Conversely,

discuss the urban setting (the court especially) in this and in other related works by Shakespeare. How do you link such thematic elements of the Renaissance to the contemporary world-view?

3. In what way are the young lovers in the comedy changed by the trials they experience in the woods? What happens to them to effect this change? Discuss the scenes which, in your view, reveal key points about human psychology and underscore the characters' emotional growth.

4. Trace the references to dreams and dreaming in the play. What do "dreams" represent? Who presides over the dream world (the forest at night)? What is the power of dreams? Can dreams have an effect on reality?

5. The adventures of the four young lovers—Demetrius, Helena, Hermia and Lysander—lie at the core of the comedy. In what ways does the production of the play define them both as individual characters and as a group?

6. What aspects of the bonds between actors and audience, theater and the public emerge in the comedy when the mechanicals rehearse and perform their play for the wedding festivities?

7. What do you find amusing and funny in this play and the production? Support your answer with specific examples. What elements contribute to the humor—The situations? The language? The actors' performances? The staging?

8. How did the theatrical elements of this production—music, movement, set, costumes, lights—bring the play to live action, exploring and enhancing Shakespeare's comedy, communicating its rich connotations?

9. In this production, how are poetic text and theatrical imagery (what you seen on stage) intertwined?

10. Discuss the music in this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. What did the various songs add to your experience of the performance or to your understanding of the story and ideas of the play?

11. Describe the set and costumes for the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. How did they define the court, the environment of the wood, and the identity of the characters? What are your impressions of the way sets and costumes change as the action of the play unfolds?

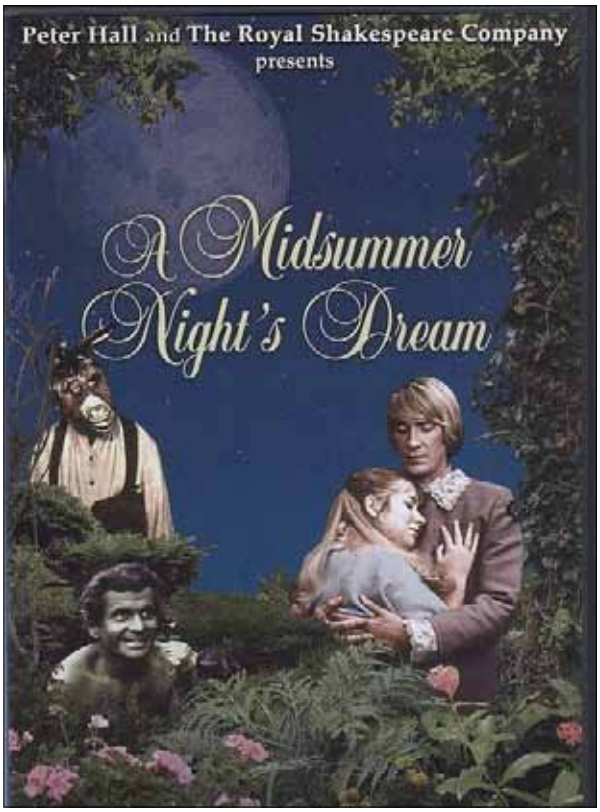
Previous page top: James Boaden, *An Inquiry into the Authenticity of Various Pictures and Prints of Shakespeare,* 1822, with miniatures by Miss C.B. Currie.

Previous page botton: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [act III, scene 1] 19th century engraving by John Gilbert.

Left: *The Fairy Queen Titania.* Painting by Johann Heinrich Füssli, 1780-1790.

Part IV: Resources

FILM VERSIONS OF *MIDSUMMER*



1935: Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle direct a cinematic version of Reinhardt's famed Hollywood Bowl production, starring Dick Powell, Olivia de Havilland, Joe E. Brown, Mickey Rooney, Jean Muir, Victor Jory and Verree Teasdale.

1968: Peter Hall directs the Royal Shakespeare Company. Stars Diana Rigg, Judi Dench, Ian Holm, Helen Mirren, Ian Richardson and David Warner.

1981: Produced by BBC films and Time-Life, as part of "The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare" series. Helen Mirren, Peter McEnery, Pippa Guard, Brian Glover and Phil Daniels star.

1999: Hermia (Anna Friel), Lysander (Dominic West), Demetrius (Christian Bale) and Helena (Calista Flockhart)—run into the forest in pursuit of one another in director Michael Hoffman's adaptation of William Shakespeare's comedic love story. Amid the feuding fairies Oberon (Rupert Everett) and Titania (Michelle Pfeiffer), mischievous Puck (Stanley Tucci).

OTHER STUDY GUIDES

Very comprehensive study guide from the Guthrie Theatre:
http://www.guthrietheater.org/sites/default/files/studyguide_MidsummerNightsDream.pdf

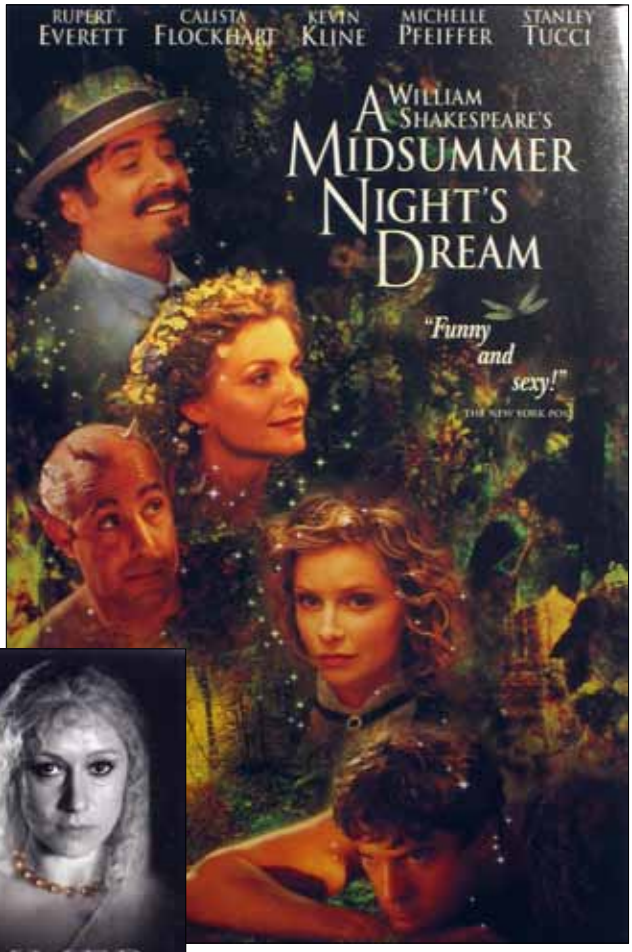
An advanced level study guide (intended for GCE Advanced level students in the UK, but suitable for university students and the general reader who is interested in Shakespeare's plays):
http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/shakespeare/midsummernightsdream.htm#31

"Surfing with the Bard"
http://www.shakespearehigh.com/library/surfbard/plays/mnd/mnd_guide.html

Spark Notes Study Guide
http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/msnd

Study Guide from Glencoe McGraw Hill
http://www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/midsummer_nights_dream.pdf

WEB RESOURCES



About Midsummer

BBC Animated summary of *Midsummer* (10 minutes)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCZndWMALOo

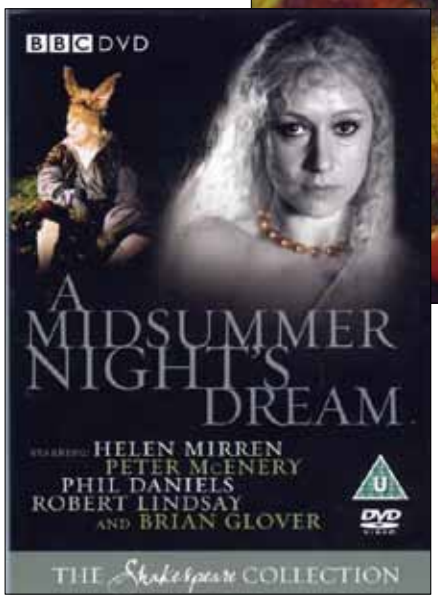
Disney version of *Midsummer* with Mickey and Donald (modern English)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMIAGXDyN-s&feature=related

Midsummer Summary and Essays
http://www.enotes.com/midsummer-nights-dream/

Studying *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
http://www.universalteacher.org.uk/shakespeare/dream.htm

Online Edition of *Midsummer*
http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/full.html

Midsummer with Explanatory Notes
http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/midsscenes.html



About Shakespeare

General web resources for Shakespeare and Elizabethan England
Electronic Shakespeare: Resources for Researchers
http://www.wfu.edu/~tedforrl/shakespeare/

Folger Shakespeare Library: Shakespeare for Kids
www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=588

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet
http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/

Shakespeare in Education
http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/educational.ht

Shakespeare Resource Center
http://www.bardweb.net/

Stratford-upon-Avon: Shakespeare Country
http://www.stratford-upon-avon.co.uk/

The Collected Works of William Shakespeare: Internet Resources
http://www.dlhoffman.com/publiclibrary/Shakespeare/other.html

Encyclopaedia of the Renaissance
http://www.xrefer.com/entry/253079

Encyclopedia Britannica article
http://www.britannica.com/shakespeare/macro/5009/50.html

Shakespeare & Elizabethan England
www.webenglishteacher.com/shakesgen.html

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/

Shakes Sphere: A Comprehensive Study Guide to the World of William Shakespeare
http://sites.microlink.net/zekscrab/index.html#top

Talking to Shakespeare
http://www.talkingto.co.uk/ttws/index.asp

Tools for Studying Shakespeare and Contemporaries
http://fteague.myweb.uga.edu/wordcrun.html