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Cast:

Puck/ Philostrate- Ryan Vo
Oberon- Sean Kelley
Titania- Sarah Newby Halicks
Helena- Destiny Thompson
Demetrius- Glenn Lorandean
Hermia- Kirsten Chervenak
Lysander- Jake West
Bottom- David Sterrit
Quince/ Egeus- Kenneth Wigley
Fluttre- O'Neil Delapenha
Snout- Kirstin Calvert
Snug- Gabi Anderson
Starveling- Cameryn Richardson
Fairies- The Ensemble

Director:

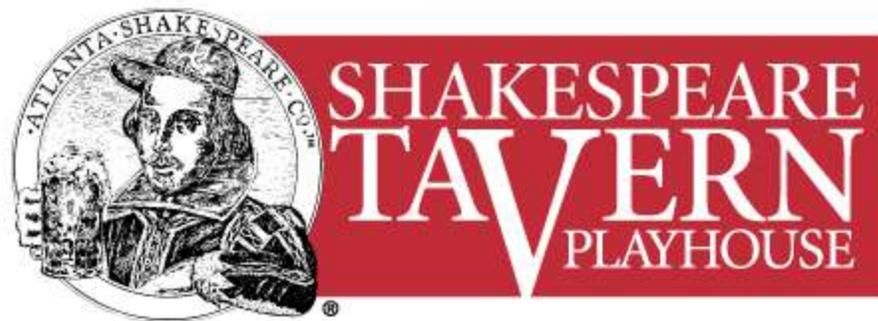
Kati Grace Brown

Music Director, Fight Choreographer and Lighting Designer:

Mary Ruth Ralston

Costume Designer:

AC Butler



A Midsummer Night's Dream

The Atlanta Shakespeare Company





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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare (1564-1616) wrote thirty-seven plays, which have become staples of classrooms and theatre performances across the world.

The son of a glove-maker, Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he received a strong education in Latin and rhetoric at the local school. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, and they had three children: Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith.

By 1592, Shakespeare had journeyed to London, where he became an extremely successful playwright and actor in the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He profited from being a shareholder in the Globe after its construction in 1599.

Shakespeare's plays were popular with all types of people, including the two monarchs who ruled England during his lifetime: Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and James I (1566-1625).

Shakespeare found both artistic and commercial success through his writing. He amassed a sizable fortune, acquired valuable real estate in Stratford, and purchased a coat of arms, which gave him and his father the right to be called gentlemen. Shakespeare was well-known in England at the time of his death in 1616, and his fame only increased following the publication of his plays in *The First Folio* in 1623.

2016 was the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and celebrations honoring Shakespeare's contribution to literature took place around the world.

“He was not of an age, but for all time.”
- Ben Jonson on Shakespeare

Understanding the Elizabethan Era

"I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too..."

- Queen Elizabeth I to troops at Tilbury facing the Spanish Armada in 1588

The Elizabethan era refers to the period of time in which Queen Elizabeth I ruled England from 1558–1603. The Elizabethan era is often referred to as the Golden Age of England. Elizabeth's reign saw a substantial decrease in the political and religious turmoil that defined the decade before she assumed the throne. Under her rule, England asserted its power, famously triumphing over the invading Spanish armada in 1588. While Elizabethans did endure plague and some unrest, conditions of the era were reasonably favorable.

Playwriting flourished under Elizabeth's reign; Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare found great success during this time. Theatre during the Elizabethan era was a touchy subject; theatres themselves were not allowed to exist within the city limits and moralists decried the frivolity of theatrical outings and the numbers of unsavory characters and pickpockets attending public theatres. However, Queen Elizabeth enjoyed theatrical performances when the actors came to her court. Moreover, she actively involved herself in theatre of the age by forming and serving as the patron of The Queen's Men in 1583. Elizabeth I died in 1603 and was succeeded by her Scottish nephew James I.



ELIZABETHAN LONDON WAS...

HIERARCHICAL

A sense of hierarchy dominated the Elizabethan worldview. Elizabethans believed in the Great Chain of Being, in which God and the angels were superior to humans, who in turn were superior to animals and the natural world. On earth, the English monarch was superior to all his or her subjects, and nobles were superior to people of lesser socioeconomic stations. Everything from the clothing that people wore to where they sat in a playhouse--if they attended public theatres at all--showed their status.

PATRIARCHAL

Despite having a female queen, the world was very patriarchal, with men controlling many if not all of the actions of their female relatives.

CROWDED AND DIRTY

200,000 people lived in London when Elizabeth took the throne. Without modern conveniences, the city was overflowing in certain places and ripe with the smell of people and animals.

Playing Shakespeare Through the Ages



The Globe, built in 1599 on the south side of the Thames, was an open-air theatre where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed. The Globe likely was able to hold up to 3,000 tightly-packed audience members. Poorer spectators paid a penny to stand during the performance while richer theatre-goers paid two pennies for a seat and another penny for a cushion. Audience members, especially those standing in front of the stage, were loud and opinionated, often talking to each other or even voicing their thoughts on the play to the actors onstage. Performances took place at 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. to take advantage of the day light, but the time of day meant that many people skipped work to attend the plays, which contributed to conservative politicians' dislike of theatre. While the original Globe does not exist today, a reconstruction, seen in the picture to the left, was built in 1997 in Southwark, London.



The Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, built in 1990 on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia, features a stage with similar features to the Globe's stage. ASC strives to create productions that are also very similar to the ones that Shakespeare's audience would have seen. All ASC productions incorporate Original Practices, which involve the active exploration of the Elizabethan stagecraft and acting techniques that Shakespeare's own audiences would have enjoyed nearly four hundred years ago. Performances at the Playhouse feature period costumes, sword fights, sound effects created live by the actors rather than pre-recorded sounds, and live music played on the stage. ASC's actors are trained to speak Shakespeare's words directly to the audience instead of using the more modern acting convention of ignoring the audience's presence as if there was an imaginary "fourth wall" separating the actors and audience. Audience members at the Playhouse should gain a better understanding of Elizabethan style, language, and drama by seeing it performed as Shakespeare's own company might have performed it.



The ASC touring set, which is used in the production of *Midsummer: 80* is a playhouse-inspired unit with three curtained entrances from which actors can enter and exit. Like a production at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, all touring productions employ Original Practices. However, the connection between ASC's productions and the performances Shakespeare's contemporaries would have seen is not limited to period-inspired costumes and direct address to the audience. The act of taking a performance like *Midsummer: 80* on tour echoes the Elizabethan practice of actors touring the countryside when outbreaks of the bubonic plague forced theatres, which fostered the spread of disease by enclosing many people in a small area, to close. Elizabethan theatre companies often brought a condensed set, props, and costumes to perform at country estates for noble families or at inns for the common people when the London theatres were closed. In bringing *Midsummer: 80* on tour, ASC strives to carry on this Elizabethan tradition of bringing live theatre to people outside the city.

Characters

Theseus: The Duke of Athens, Theseus is engaged to Hippolyta and marries her at the end of the play. While he initially demands that Hermia marry the man of her father's choosing, Theseus relents and allows Hermia to marry Lysander.

Hippolyta: Hippolyta is Queen of the Amazons, a group of warrior women, and she marries Theseus at the end of the play.

Egeus: Hermia's father, Egeus demands that Hermia marry Demetrius, but he eventually relents and allows his daughter to marry Lysander.

Lysander: Lysander is in love with Hermia and flees with her to the woods to escape Theseus and Egeus, who disapprove of their relationship. Although Lysander temporarily falls in love with Helena because of Puck's meddling, his affections ultimately return to Hermia, whom he marries.

Demetrius: Demetrius once loved Helena but claims at the beginning of the play that he only loves Hermia. With some help from Puck, Demetrius ultimately falls back in love with Helena and marries her.

Hermia: Egeus' daughter, Hermia is in love with Lysander, whom she eventually marries at the end the play.

Helena: Hermia's childhood friend, Helena is love with Demetrius, who once loved her but professes that he no longer has feelings for her. Helena marries Demetrius after Puck helps him rediscover his feelings for her.

Philostrate: Theseus' Master of the Revels, Philostrate organizes the entertainment for Theseus' marriage celebration.

Peter Quince: A carpenter, Peter Quince leads the group of mechanicals, another name for craftsmen, who perform the play *Pyramus and Thisbe* as entertainment after the marriages of Theseus and Hippolyta, Demetrius and Helena, and Hermia and Lysander.

Nick Bottom: A weaver, the outspoken Bottom plays Pyramus in *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Puck transforms him to have the head of a donkey, and Titania falls in love with him while under the influence of magic.

Francis Flute: A bellows-mender, Flute plays Thisbe in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Tom Snout: A tinker, Snout plays the wall that divides Pyramus and Thisbe in the play that the mechanicals perform for Theseus, Hippolyta, and the four lovers.

Snug: A joiner, Snug plays the lion in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Robin Starveling: He is a tailor who plays moonshine in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Oberon: The King of the Fairies, Oberon has been arguing with his wife, Titania. To get back at his wife, Oberon uses a magic flower to make Titania fall in love with the next person or creature she sees, and he delights in watching her fall in love with Bottom until he releases her from the spell.

Titania: The Queen of the Fairies, she falls in love with Bottom. When she is released from the effects of the magic, she reconciles with Oberon and gives him the little boy he wanted to join his court.

Puck: A mischievous fairy sprite, Puck, also called Robin Goodfellow, serves Oberon. He causes a great deal of confusion in the play by accidentally putting the magic flower juice on the eyes of both Lysander and Demetrius, causing them to fall in love with Helena, much to her confusion and distress, until Puck sorts everything out.

Cobweb, Peaseblossom, Moth, Mustardseed: Four fairies who attend Titania.



Plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*



"I say I love thee more than he can do!"
-Demetrius

In ancient Greece, Theseus, the Duke of Athens, anxiously awaits his marriage to Hippolyta and instructs Philostrate to organize entertainment for after the wedding. Theseus is called upon to solve a dispute between Egeus and his daughter Hermia. Egeus demands that Hermia marry Demetrius, the husband he has selected for his daughter, but Hermia refuses because she is in love with Lysander. Theseus declares that after a period of a few days Hermia must make the decision to obey her father and marry Demetrius, become a nun, or die for refusing to follow her father's command. After Theseus and Egeus leave, Lysander proposes to Hermia that they run away through the woods to his aunt's house outside of Athens and get married. Hermia shares their plan with her best friend Helena, who has been very sad lately because she is in love with Demetrius, who used to love her but now claims he only loves Hermia. Helena tells Demetrius of Hermia's plan and decides to follow him into the woods as he pursues Hermia and Lysander.

A group of mechanicals, another word for craftsmen, gather to prepare an entertainment for Theseus and Hippolyta. Peter Quince, a carpenter, declares that they will perform a play about the death of two lovers named Pyramus and Thisbe. Quince assigns his fellow craftsmen--Snug, Bottom, Flute, and Starveling—their parts in the play and instructs them to memorize their parts and meet in the forest the following evening.

In a wood near Athens, the mischievous fairy sprite Puck talks with Peaseblossom, another fairy, about how Oberon and Titania, the fairy king and queen, have been

arguing. When Oberon and Titania appear, they begin arguing again about a little boy whom one of Titania's human attendants gave birth to before dying. Titania wants to care for the child while Oberon wants the boy to attend on him. Titania and Oberon angrily part ways, and Oberon plots with Puck about how to humiliate Titania by putting a magical juice from a flower on her eyes that will make her fall in love with the next creature she sees.

Demetrius rebuffs Helena's expressions of her affection for him as they walk in the woods, and he runs away from her in his search for Hermia. The exasperated Helena continues to follow Demetrius anyway. After observing how sad Helena is, Oberon instructs Puck to find Demetrius and put the juice in his eyes so that he will fall in love with Helena. After finding Titania asleep, Oberon puts the magic juice on her eyes and hopes that she will fall in love with an awful creature. In yet another part of the wood, Lysander and Hermia, weary after walking all day, decide to go to sleep and continue their journey in the morning. Puck stumbles upon Lysander and Hermia and, believing them to be Demetrius and Helena, mistakenly puts the magic juice on Lysander's eyes before returning to Oberon. Lysander wakes up when Helena runs past him, and he immediately falls in love with her. Helena thinks that Lysander is mocking her when he tells her that he loves her and she angrily runs away. Lysander runs after Helena and when Hermia wakes up she goes to search for Lysander.

The mechanicals meet in the woods and rehearse their play. Puck discovers them and decides to cause some trouble by using his magic to give Bottom a donkey's head. When they see him transformed, Bottom's companions run away in fear. Bottom begins to sing and wakes Titania, who immediately falls in love with him. Oberon and Puck revel

in the humor of Titania falling in love with a donkey-headed man. They observe Hermia arguing with Demetrius, accusing him of killing Lysander, and Puck realizes that he put the juice in the eyes of the wrong Athenian man. When Demetrius lies down to sleep, Oberon puts the juice in his eyes. The noise from Helena rebuking Lysander for mocking her by pretending to love her wakes Demetrius, who immediately falls in love with Helena. Helena is incredibly distressed by Demetrius and Lysander's protestations of love for her, and when Hermia enters Helena accuses her of working with Demetrius and Lysander to mock her. Hermia and Helena fight, and Demetrius and Lysander run off into the woods to fight as well. Oberon instructs Puck to fix the situation he has caused, and Puck successfully squeezes the magic juice on Lysander's eyes so that he will fall back in love with Hermia, while Demetrius will remain in love with Helena. Oberon releases Titania from the effects of the magic juice and, after expressing her disgust at having fallen in love with Bottom, she and Oberon reconcile.

Theseus and Hippolyta discover the four lovers asleep in the woods. Demetrius explains that he is now in love with Helena, and Theseus decrees that Hermia and Lysander and Helena and Demetrius will be married alongside him and Hippolyta. In another part of the wood, Bottom expresses his confusion about what he believes to be a dream. After the lovers and Theseus and Hippolyta are married, Bottom and the rest of the mechanicals rather ineptly perform *Pyramus and Thisbe*. With all the fairy and mortal couples happy once again, Puck encourages the audience of Shakespeare's play to clap their hands.



For the short and the long is: our play is preferred!

-Bottom



Discussion Topics

Before the performance, think about...

What is wrong or right about parents deciding whom you marry? What would you tell your parents if they picked someone for you to marry? Check out Act I, scene 1, lines 130 to 155 or so and see what Lysander and Hermia have to say about it. Are there cultures and societies today that allow or encourage arranged marriages? What other famous play by Shakespeare involves parents who want a child to marry their choice of husband, and not hers. How does that play end?

During the performance, think about...

This play has a lot of rhyme in it. How does rhyming poetry in this play work for you? Does it help your understanding? Does it make you laugh? Does it sound dramatic? Check out these lines before you see the play and then discuss how they work in performance.

Hermia and Helena, Act I, scene 1, lines 183 to 209.

Oberon, Act II, scene 2, lines 252 to 199.

Bottom/Pyramus, Act V, scene 1, lines 270 to 276.

After the performance, talk about...

Scholars know Shakespeare's actors doubled in roles; they played more than one character in the play. How does doubling work in this play? Did you notice any really quick changes? How would you double your favorite role?

Original Practice Theatre:

Does directly addressing the audience affect how you think or feel about the characters? Does it affect your understanding of what is going on onstage? Does it interfere? Why do you think Shakespeare wrote his plays this way? What are the benefits to the actor and/or audience? What are the risks?

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