

Lyric

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

by William Shakespeare



Education Pack



A Lyric Hammersmith and Filter Theatre Production

A Midsummer Night's Dream

This production is a reinterpretation of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by the Lyric Hammersmith and Filter Theatre Company. Reimagining one of Shakespeare's most well-known and eccentric plays, the Lyric and Filter Theatre present *A Midsummer Night's Dream* featuring original live music, this classic tale of young lovers and warring fairies is given a unique and irreverent twist.

This Education Pack aims to support drama teachers in exploring *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, both before and after the performance, giving practical and written responses to the show. It is set out with three main components DIRECTORS, PERFORMERS and DESIGNERS; this information can be for students studying Shakespeare in their GCSE and A Level Drama as well as for those studying English Literature. It also seeks to encourage exploration of contemporary adaptations of classical text and support understanding of different elements of Theatre.

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Teacher Consultant: Mary Ling

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Photography by Tristram Kenton

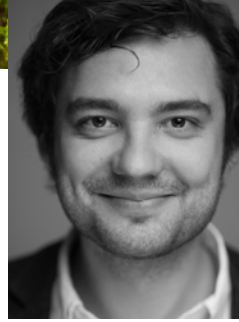
Cast



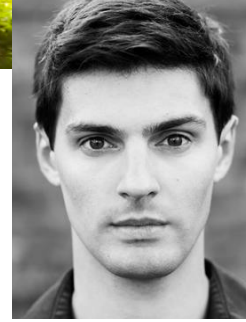
Allyson Ava-Brown
Hippolyta/Titania



Rebecca Birch
Hermia



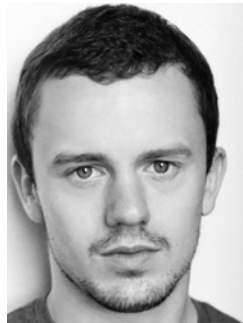
George Fouracres
Peter Quince



Daniel Fraser
Demetrius



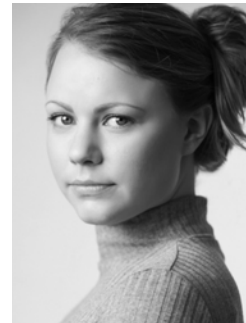
David Ganly
Bottom



Harry Jardine
Theseus/Oberon



Matt King Smith
Mechanical



Amy Marchant
Helena



Kayla Meikle
Egeus/Puck



Alan Pagan
Mechanical



Michael Palmer
Mechanical



Darmesh Patel
Lysander

Creatives

Created by **Filter Theatre**
Directed by **Sean Holmes**
Assistant Director **Anna Crace**
Designed by **Hyemi Shin**
Lighting by **Olivier Fenwick**

Sound Design & Original Music by **Chris Branch & Tom Haines**

Starting Points

Before bringing your students to the theatre you may want to give them some information on the plot, characters and themes of the play as well as some background on this particular version of the play.

Who's who?

There is an extensive number of characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and some roles are traditionally dual roles and played by the same actor. But the characters belong to several groups which will help you recognize them. Below is a breakdown of all of the characters and their main storylines and purposes throughout the play.

Friends and lovers from Athens

Helena: A young woman, childhood friends with Hermia. She is in love with Demetrius but this is unrequited. Helena is referred to as being tall and she is very self-conscious about that.

Hermia: A young woman, childhood friends with Helena. She is engaged to Demetrius, as demanded by her father Egeus. But she is in love with Lysander, who loves her back. Hermia is referred to as being short.

Lysander: A young man who is in love with Hermia.

Demetrius: A young man, once engaged to Helena, but now in love with Hermia.

Rulers of Athens

Theseus: Duke of Athens, engaged to Hippolyta. Represents power and order and only appears at the beginning and end of the play.

Hippolyta: Queen of the Amazons, (warrior women), engaged to Theseus. She does not appear willing or keen to marry the Duke.

Philostrate: Theseus' event manager for the wedding

The Fairies (who have magic powers)

Titania: Queen of the fairies, married to Oberon. (Traditionally doubles as Hippolyta)

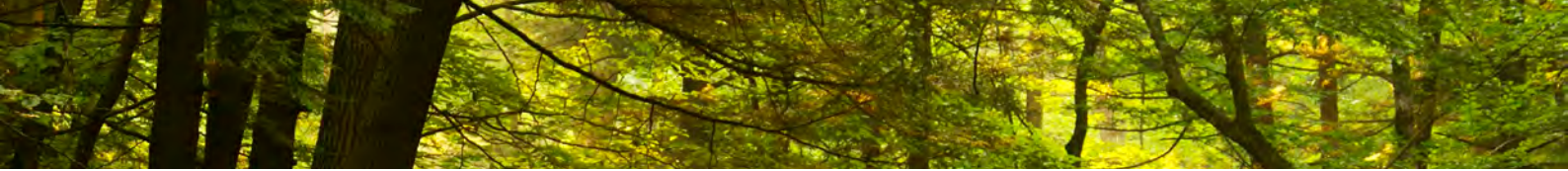
Oberon: King of the fairies, married to Titania. (Traditionally doubles as Theseus)

Puck: Oberon's jester, a cheeky and playful fairy who plays tricks on the humans. This version plays with the stereotypical playing of Puck.

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mote, & Mustardseed: fairies who serve Titania. In this production they are represented by sounds.

The Mechanicals (Workmen)

Nick Bottom: A weaver who makes up one of the 'Mechanicals'. He is overconfident in his acting abilities and wants to play all of the parts in the play for the King and Queen



Peter Quince: A carpenter in charge of creating Theseus' wedding play. He plays the Prologue.

Francis Flute: A bearded craftsman playing a young girl in love in Theseus' wedding play.

Robin Starveling: A tailor chosen to play Thisbe's mother in Theseus' wedding play; ends up playing Moonshine.

Tom Snout: A tinker (metalworker) chosen to play Pyramus' father in Theseus' wedding play; ends up playing the Wall that divides the lovers.

Snug: A joiner (carpenter) worried about playing the lion in Theseus' wedding play

**please note that in this production the mechanicals are played by the musicians on stage and do not take on specific roles.*

Why are we still performing Shakespeare?

Shakespeare is globally performed and studied in both classical and contemporary performances. He wrote thirty seven plays including Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Othello, The Tempest, and A Midsummer Night's Dream as well as 154 sonnets. Shakespeare's plays explore multiple themes such as love, jealousy, power and revenge that still resonate in contemporary society. His plays continue to be reworked, reinvented and performed as they explore human condition and audiences find parallels with the subject matter and their own lives.

What makes this version contemporary?

This co production takes a very fresh approach to playing Shakespeare, so what's different?

- The play starts with a prologue from Peter Quince who introduces the play, the actors and ad libs the opening scene.
- Egeus is no longer Hermia's father but mother and played by a female actor
- Puck is also female which we discover from the fairies asking 'Are you not she?'
- The original language has been tweaked, changed and interrupted with modern verse.
- The mechanicals do not play specific characters but are actually musicians playing the mechanicals playing parts in Pyramus and Thisbe
- We know that within *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there is a play within a play. In this production, whereby Peter Quince and the musicians are outside the play, it is referred to as 'metafiction' and the audience are reminded of the conventions that are being used. It becomes a parody of the 'play within a play'.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: synopsis

Act One

Scene one (Athens Palace):

Theseus, Duke of Athens and Hippolyta are approached by Egeus, a citizen of Athens with his daughter Hermia. They are joined by Lysander and Demetrius, who both love Hermia and want to marry her. Egeus has already promised Hermia to Demetrius. However Lysander and Hermia are deeply in love. Egeus has come to Theseus so that Hermia can be punished for disobeying her father under Athenian law.

Lysander and Hermia come up with a plan to elope and marry at Lysander's Aunt's house which is outside of Athens, therefore they won't be disobeying the Athenian law. They decide to leave the following night.

Hermia and Lysander tell Helena of their plan to elope. Helena, who is in love with Demetrius, tells him of their elopement, hoping that he will follow them into the woods. She plans to follow Demetrius into the woods and try to win back his love.

Scene Two (Peter Quince's house):

Peter Quince, is holding a meeting to organise a play for Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding. Peter Quince begins to allocate the parts. He is continuously interrupted by the outspoken weaver Nick Bottom who believes that he has the ability to play all of the parts. They agree to meet in the woods the following night to rehearse.



Act Two

Scene One (Forest):

Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, argue about Titania giving up her changeling boy* but she refuses. Vowing to get revenge but making a fool of Titania, he sends Puck, to find a white and purple flower called love-in-idleness which was once struck by Cupid's arrow. He plots to rub the flower's magic juice on Titania's eyelids while she sleeps, and when she wakes, she will fall in love with the first person she sees.

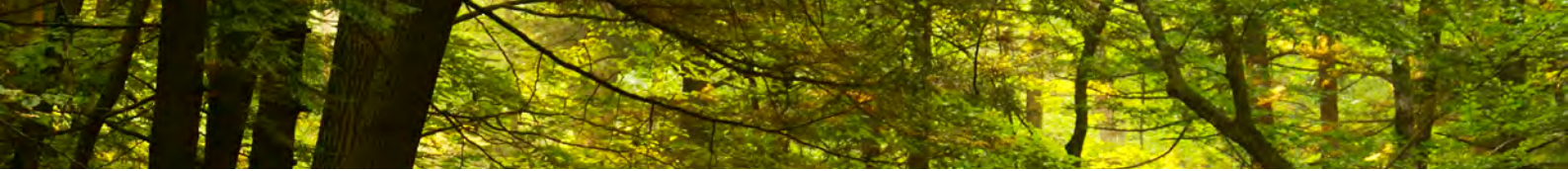
**A changeling child refers to a child who is believed to be a fairy child, this boy was said to have come from the furthest part of India*

Scene two (Forest):

Oberon makes himself invisible so he can eavesdrop on Helena and Demetrius. Helena is pleading for Demetrius to love her, but he tells her to stop following him and that he does not love her. When Puck returns with the flower, Oberon orders him to find an 'Athenian youth' and put juice on his eyelids. Oberon puts the juice on sleeping Titania's eyelids and leaves.

Hermia enters with Lysander who has forgotten the way to his aunt's house. They agree to go to sleep, but Hermia is too modest to sleep too close to Lysander. Puck enters, sees Lysander and assumes he is the "Athenian youth" so he puts the juice on his eyelids while he sleeps. Helena enters chasing Demetrius who tells her again to leave him alone. She notices Lysander and wakes him. The spell takes hold and Lysander falls in love with Helena. She is in shock, reminding him he is in love with Hermia. She thinks he is taunting her and leaves, upset, Lysander follows. Hermia awakes, panicked that Lysander has gone and sets off to find him.





Act Three

Scene One (Forest):

The mechanicals meet in the forest to rehearse their play. While they are rehearsing, Puck enters and places a spell on Bottom who frightens off his fellow actors as they see him return with the head of a donkey. Titania awakes and seeing Bottom instantly falls in love with him.

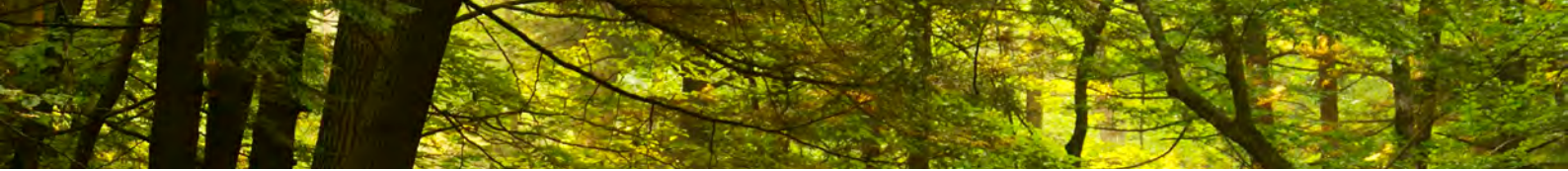
Scene Two (Forest):

Oberon and Puck notice that Hermia is with a different Athenian boy than earlier, and realise that Puck gave the potion to the wrong Athenian boy. The lovers fight in confusion. Helena thinks all three have ganged up to make fun of her and fights with Hermia, while the boys threaten to fight each other for Helena's love. The men leave to fight each other and Helena and Hermia both storm out. Oberon sends Puck to stop the fighting.

Scene Three (Forest):

As Puck leads the lovers through the enchanted forest they all fall asleep. Puck puts the juice on their eyelids to rectify the mistake.





Act Four

Scene One (Forest):

While the lovers sleep, Titania enters still in love with donkey-headed Bottom. They fall asleep and Oberon and Puck enter, amused at the revenge, but undoes the spell to wake Titania and take her away to dance. Puck undoes the spell on Bottom as well.

Theseus, his servants, Hippolyta and Egeus enter the glade, waking the lovers and demanding their story. They discover that Helena and Demetrius love each other and Hermia and Lysander love each other. Egeus' is overruled so the 3 sets of lovers can be married.

Scene Two (Peter Quince's House):

The mechanicals worry about their friend Bottom in the woods and discuss how the play can go on without him. Bottom bursts in, everyone is excited by his arrival and relieved that he is back in his human form. They quickly head to the palace to perform.



Act Five

Scene One (Palace):

All the guests take their seats to watch the play, a comically clumsy performance by the mechanicals. They watch the play, ending with a dance, and then all head to off to bed.

Scene Two (epilogue):

Puck enters and implies that the whole play was possibly just a dream and wishes the audience a goodnight.

Themes and Symbols

Unrequited Love

This is a theme throughout the play, and clearly depicted through Helena. Whether this be spell induced or truthful, Helena is in love with Demetrius who does not love her back. They are in love by the end of the play, but it isn't clear if he is actually in love with her or this is the effect of the experience in the forest. The same goes for Lysander and Demetrius being put under the spell, as Helena does not return their love back to them during that period. A distraught Hermia is greeted by Lysander's unrequited love while he is briefly under the spell. This experience of unrequited love also leads to broken friendships and verbal and physical fights between the lovers. The magic controls their relationships throughout.

Revenge and Jealousy

'These are the forgeries of jealousy' Titania

Throughout the play, all of the actions and turning points stem from either or both revenge and jealousy. Helena is jealous of Hermia and Lysander, as well as Demetrius' love for Hermia, which provokes her leading Demetrius into the forest. Oberon seeks revenge on Titania for taking an Indian changeling boy. These acts are the catalyst for subsequent events that occur throughout the rest of the play.

Mortals v Spirit World

Throughout the play we are taken to both worlds; the actors playing Hippolyta and Theseus become Titania and Oberon, they take on dual roles of royalty both in Athens and in ruling the forest and fairies. There is an imbalance of power within these two worlds as we see Puck and Oberon using magic to shift and guide the lovers through their journey. The lovers become pawns in their game, when they enter the forest it is an unfamiliar territory that is governed by the spirits. The dispute between Titania and Oberon has upset nature, causing strange floods, storms and unseasonal weather.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Unrequited love:

Egeus gives Hermia an ultimatum of marrying Demetrius, becoming a nun or death.

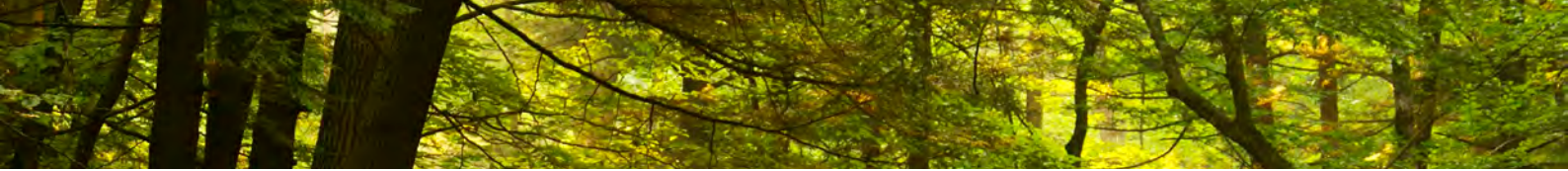
- Does this parental influence still exist on our society today?
- Should parents exercise power over their children?
- Did Hermia have any alternative apart from fleeing Athens?

Helena's love for Demetrius is initially unrequited, by the end of the play we see him now in love with her.

- Do you think that they actually love each other in the end or is it just circumstantial?
- Do these kind of relationships exist today?

Oberon and Titania use the changeling boy as a symbol of power to play against each other.

- Why do these two characters exist in a constant power struggle?
- Does either ever come out on top?



TRY THIS...

Actioning the story

With your students in a circle and using the synopsis notes go through the storyline getting students to take on different characters, as they take on this character they enter the space and improvise the storyline given. As the teacher you act as the joker and narrate throughout. This can also be done with props and pieces of costume so that characters can be interchanged. For example, Puck may have a brightly colored scarf that is used every time he is in a scene.

Outcome: this should give your students a basic idea of the storyline and plot of the play.

Exploring characters

Divide your students into small groups and give each group a character (Helena, Hermia, Oberon, Demetrius, Lysander, etc.)

Ask them to create a character trait list or diagram based on

- what others say about them in the play
- what they say about themselves in the play

This can also be extended by making a drawing of what they believe is internal to their character and what we see then see externally.

As a collective group of one character and armed with these facts they can then be hot seated by the rest of the class, anyone can respond in role.

After each group has had their turn, discuss what they have discovered about these characters and if needed log these.

Outcome: students will explore central characters both from how others perceive them, and how they perceive and position themselves.

The Love Triangle

Throughout A Midsummer Night's Dream, several characters fall in and out of love with several other characters, creating a very confusing, spell and magic-induced "love triangle". Here is a breakdown of the characters and their love interests throughout the play.

At the beginning...

DEMETRIUS loves HELENA
HELENA loves DEMETRIUS
LYSANDER loves HERMIA
HERMIA loves LYSANDER

In the forest

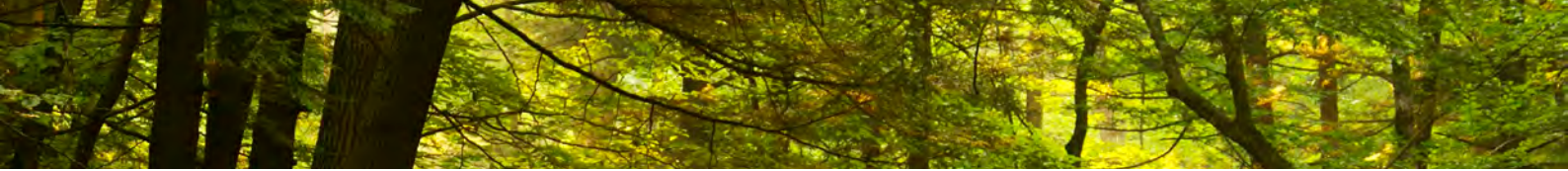
DEMETRIUS loves HERMIA, hates HELENA
HELENA still loves DEMETRIUS
HERMIA and LYSANDER love each other

After being affected by the love potion...

DEMETRIUS loves HELENA
LYSANDER loves HELENA
HERMIA still loves LYSANDER
HELENA loves ??????

After the spell has worn off...

HERMIA and LYSANDER love each other
HELENA and DEMETRIUS end up together



TRY THIS...

In groups of four ask your students to create the four different states that happen with the lovers throughout the play through freeze frames.

They must use gestures, levels and spacial proximity to communicate these. Ask the students to share back, the audience should be able to guess each character and what stage of the play through their freeze frames.

Extension: Without using the original text ask the students to bring each one to life- what would the characters say to each other to express how they feel in that moment? How could they use the space to explore these relationships?

Outcome: Through practically exploring the lover's relationship they gain understanding on how this shifts and changes throughout the play.

Love Web

Ask your students to get in two rows facing each other. With their partner they will have two minutes to improvise their own contemporary response to the following scenarios:

- Helena is rejected by Demetrius as he no longer loves her
- Hermia refuses to marry Demetrius because she loves Lysander
- Oberon concocts a plan with Puck to put a spell on Titania
- Helena rejects her friend Hermia

Pairs can be spotlighted and scenes played out to the rest of the class. They will then try a different scenario with a different partner. Discuss the different relationships and how these scenarios impact each character.

Outcome: Students start to explore the relationships and try out different interpretations of the characters. They will gain an understanding of some of the key moments of the play and find a contemporary relevance.

Directorial Interpretation

Sean Holmes, Artistic Director of the Lyric talks about his vision and process for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:



In this adaptation one of the key themes is in extracting the comedy from the play, this becomes the driving force throughout and informs artistic decisions in the piece. Key moments that are usually played for dramatic effect are played for comical effect, this light hearted take allows the show to be incredibly accessible for an audience experiencing Shakespeare for the first time. Shakespeare's own audiences were very mixed, and included people with little or no education, as well as those of high class. The comedic aspects of the play may well have been vital to the success of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* then too!

Breaking the Fourth Wall

This term refers to an imaginary wall between the actors and the audience where we hold the illusion of theatre and believability that what an audience is seeing is real. The audience are then privy to the action in a 'fly on the wall' capacity. When an actor steps out and address the audience, this illusion is then broken and thus breaking the fourth wall. This direct address is an aside to narrate the story; it can also be used (as indeed it is in this play) as an opportunity to express how they feel to a third party. During the show most actors and relevant plot points break the fourth wall, inviting audience members to engage in what is happening on stage in an even more intimate way. It is certainly a style that is embedded in this version.

In the video below, Harry Jardine talks about playing Oberon:



TRY THIS...

In this production we see how Sean Holmes has challenged stereotypical playing of Shakespeare's well-known characters. Traditionally Oberon is played having a high status, especially in relation to Puck but in this adaptation we see Puck having higher status and Oberon playing the fool.

Exploring status and stereotypes

In pairs ask your students to look at playing out the opposite status to what we see traditionally in the play. Give each one of the scenarios below:

- Egeus telling Hermia she is to marry Demetrius (Hermia high status)
- Oberon informing Puck of his plans to put a spell on Titania (Puck high status)
- Helena pleading for Demetrius' love (Helena high status)

Ask them to create a short scene and show back to the class. Discuss how this changes the meaning and context of the scene.

Outcome: Students act out alternative versions of key scenes and characters and explore different interpretations and possibilities of the play.



Design Elements - Set (Hyemi Shin)

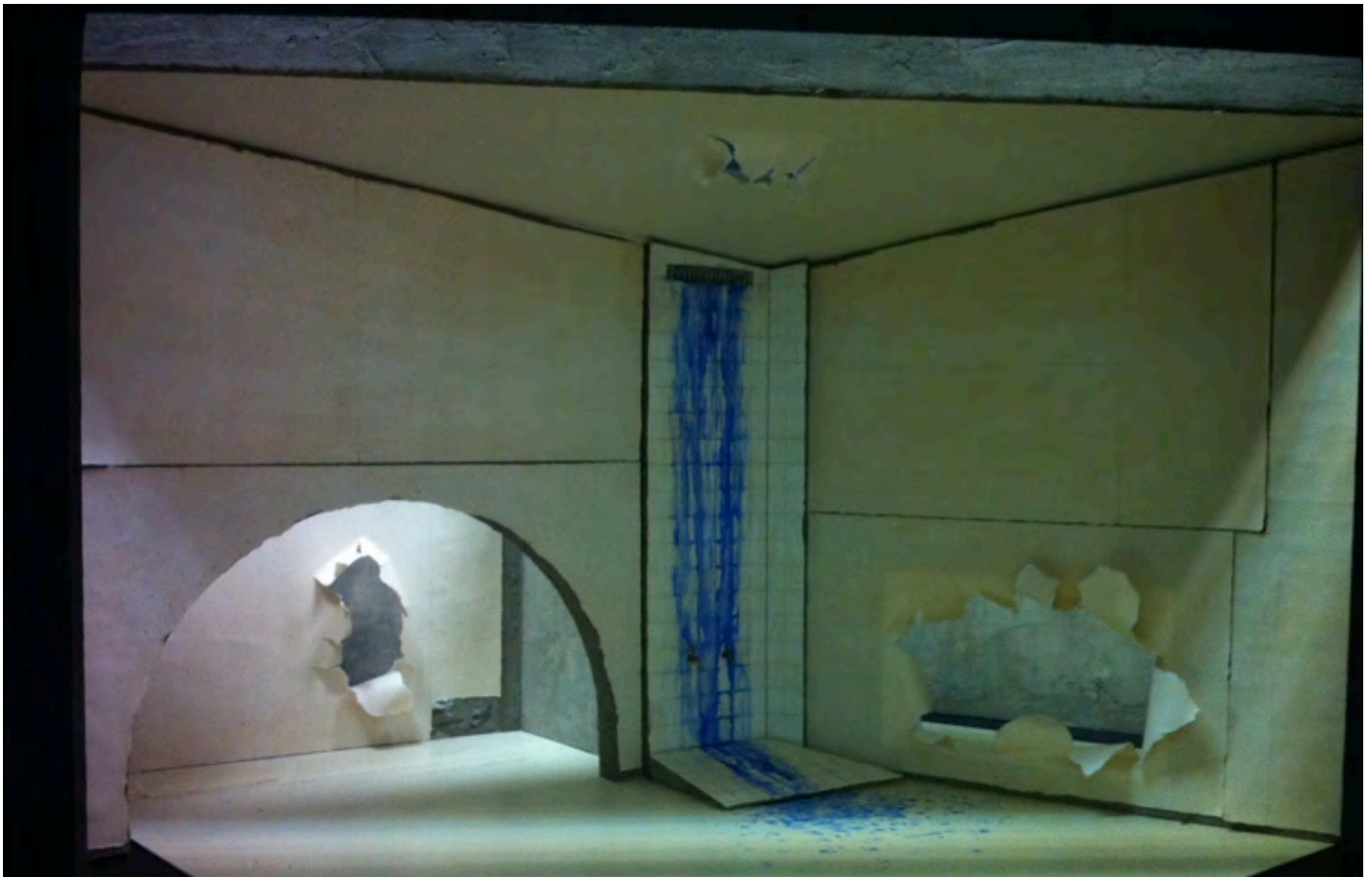
The set is contemporary but does not refer to a specific time period, there is a white stage made with paper and a live band seated on the stage who also play certain characters within the performance. Stage left we see a bath within the wall of the set with running water, as the set represents a room the bath shows part of this.

The set is kept the same throughout the entire show, with the addition of minimal props and extravagant actions that add/destroy elements of the pristine space. The use of paint and food within the production changes this sense of calm and purity into a chaotic mess. There is never an alternative space provided for the forest but the forest comes into the room and is created by props and sound. An additional space is revealed under the stage used by Oberon at one point in the play that sees him jump through and play with different levels.



Design Elements - Props (Hyemi Shin)

The props used in this show are contemporary and minimal, the main props being used for the forest scene. A tent and camping chair are placed on stage and stay there throughout the act. The use of food items during the food fight plays a substantial part and at times even involves the audience in this act of play and chaos. The blue paint signifies the love potion that is used and we see this smeared onto the set and indeed the actors.



Design Elements - Costume (Hyemi Shin)

The costumes in this production keep in line with the overall concept. They are contemporary but without being time specific. The Lovers are all dressed in modern day clothes.

The character of Oberon, however, is dressed in a superhero costume, differentiating him from the rest of the cast. The costume enhances his character as we see Oberon performing 'superhero' gestures throughout the play. This plays to the comic aspects and again challenges the perception of how the King of the fairies should be visually represented.



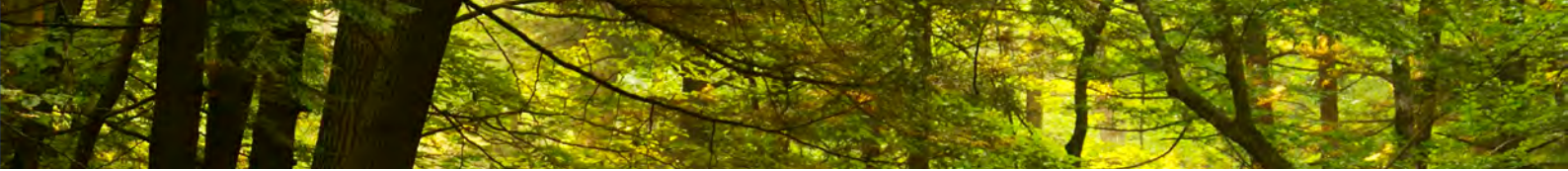
Puck's costume opposes any sense of 'fairy' or 'spirit' and instead is fully grounded in a more traditional 'mechanicals' dress as we see the character in overalls. This once again challenges any preconceptions on the characters and how people expect to see them played.

A challenging part of costume for this show is in creating the donkeys head, in Filter's production we see this transformation is created by music. When Bottom scratches his Donkey ears it is a musical sound that informs the audience of his change.



DISCUSSION POINTS

- How do you think these design elements add to the play's aim?
- What do you assume about the characters based on their costume (i.e. Oberon; what does him being the only one to be in a super hero costume mean to you?)
- The costumes are contemporary but timeless- what are the challenges of this for the director in order to communicate meaning?



Sound & Live Music (Chris Branch & Tom Haines)

Sound and music play a prominent part in this production both to support the artistic concept of the play and punctuate action and key moments. With a live band on stage, the musicians are completely immersed in the performance and use sound to relay emotions and events happening in each scene. The musicians also take on the role of the mechanicals in the play. They transition from musician to actor, this echoes the 'play within a play' that we witness later at the Duke and Hippolyta's wedding nuptials.

At times performers will come and take the microphones and launch into song which enhances the mood of the scene. A key example of this is Lysander and Demetrius singing about their feelings for Helena. The songs are there to convey the mood and feeling of certain key moments.

Example of one of the upbeat songs?

Sound is also used to denote characters that are not present on stage such as the fairies, there is a buzzing sound made to imply the fairies movements.

TRY THIS...

Song pong

In Act Three we see Demetrius and Lysander convey their feelings to Helena through song. Divide your students into two groups, they will now go head to head in conveying feeling through song. Using different titles e.g. LOVE, POWER, JEALOUSY, MAGIC they must communicate how this through a well-known song.

Give each group one minute to think of some ideas on their given theme and potentially songs they could use.

The first group deliver two lines or more to the opposing group. This can be done accompanied or using phones and playing the songs.

The second group must now respond with their song, this can continue until one group cannot think of a response.

Please note that if your students feel uncomfortable singing they can chant the words instead. Do encourage them to physically respond to the words also!

Outcome: students explore using music to communicate meaning, this is a key feature of Filter's work.

Lighting (Oliver Fewick)

The bright lights in this production keep all of the action at a focus and even more so immerse the audience in the reality of this world. This allows for a continuum of action throughout. We see some key shifts when lights are used to create effects such as the forest scene. Through dimmed lights Lysander and Demetrius use nerf guns to fight each other as if in a computer game, this creates a comic effect but also takes us into the world of a video game momentarily and out of the forest.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What effect does using live music have in the production?
- How does the play use sound effects (both through instruments and voice) to enhance the piece?

TRY THIS...

Creating environments

Put your students into two groups; one represents Athens and the other the forest. Firstly ask them to discuss what those environments look and feel like.

Ask them to create a soundscape that depicts these environments, then using the space they are in ask them to physically create the place using whatever is in the room. This can also be using themselves.

They need to create an experiential environment that they can lead the other group through. Their aim is to allow their audience to experience what it might feel like to enter a forest or Athens through sound and visuals.

Outcome: Students explore these environments through the use of different theatrical techniques and learn about different settings in the play.

EDUCATION



The Lyric is pleased to offer a variety of packages and ticket offers for schools and colleges across London.

TICKETS

We offer tickets at £15 per student with one free teacher ticket for every ten students for main house shows*. For more information please call the Box Office on **020 8741 6850** or email **schools@lyric.co.uk**

*Subject to availability

BACKSTAGE TOURS

Our backstage tour offers a unique insight into the workings of one London's leading producing theatres. Tours offer the opportunity to explore non-performance routes into Theatre and gain a deeper understanding of all of the backstage roles. These are tailored to the age, study requirements and the interests of your students.

WORKSHOPS

We offer workshops around our main house programme to enhance your students' knowledge and understanding of the show. We also deliver bespoke workshops around Theatre styles, techniques and practitioners.

These are all delivered by our Lyric directors and creatives. For Primary Schools we offer curriculum based workshops and enrichment days at Key Stage 1 & 2.

TEACHER SUPPORT

Every main house show is accompanied by an Education pack which is available online before your visit. Join our Teachers' Network to receive emails about CPD workshops, teacher networking events and special offers for your students.

SEND SCHOOLS

We are committed to ensuring the Lyric is accessible for all young people. Our facilities include a state of the art sensory space, fully accessible building and relaxed performances to accommodate all students' needs.

For any more information or to book any of the above please contact **marilyn.rice@lyric.co.uk**

JOIN OUR TEACHERS NETWORK

Join our Teachers Network to receive emails about CPD workshops, teacher networking events and special offers for your students. Contact our Producer of Education marilyn.rice@lyric.co.uk to sign up.

