

NAXOS
AudioBooks

CLASSIC
DRAMA

William Shakespeare
A Midsummer Night's Dream

With **Warren Mitchell • Michael Maloney**
Sarah Woodward and full cast



NA315012D

1	Music and opening announcement	1:21
2	Act 1 Scene 1	6:20
3	Act 1 Scene 1: LYSANDER How now my love, why is your cheek so pale?	5:11
4	Act 1 Scene 1: HELENA How happy some o'er other some can be!	1:51
5	Musical interlude	0:49
6	Act 1 Scene 2	6:05
7	Musical interlude	1:06
8	Act 2 Scene 1	2:50
9	Act 2 Scene 1: OBERON Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania!	4:43
10	Act 2 Scene 1: OBERON Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove	2:20
11	Act 2 Scene 1: DEMETRIUS I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.	3:10
12	Act 2 Scene 1: OBERON I know a bank where the wild thyme blows	1:09
13	Musical interlude	1:43
14	Act 2 Scene 2	4:50
15	Act 2 Scene 2: PUCK Through the forest have I gone...	1:12
16	Act 2 Scene 2: HELENA Stay though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius!	3:32
17	Act 2 Scene 2: HERMIA Help me Lysander, Help me!	1:08
18	Closing music	1:49
19	Opening music	0:50
20	Act 3 Scene 1	7:29
21	Act 3 Scene 1: BOTTOM I see their knavery. This is to make an ass of me	5:16

22	Act 3 Scene 2	2:14
23	Act 3 Scene 2: DEMETRIUS O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?	2:38
24	Act 3 Scene 2: OBERON What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken...	1:44
25	Act 3 Scene 2: LYSANDER Why should you think that I should woo...	3:52
26	Act 3 Scene 2: HELENA Lo, she is one of this confederacy	8:41
27	Act 3 Scene 2: OBERON This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st...	7:15
28	Closing music	0:58
29	Opening music	1:05
30	Act 4 Scene 1	2:52
31	Act 4 Scene 1: OBERON Welcome good Robin.	4:45
32	Act 4 Scene 1: THESEUS Go, one of you, find out the forester...	5:21
33	Act 4 Scene 1: BOTTOM When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer	1:44
34	Musical interlude	0:49
35	Act 4 Scene 2	3:05
36	Musical interlude	1:34
37	Act 5 Scene 1	5:28
38	Act 5 Scene 1: PHILOSTRATE So please your grace, the Prologue...	15:13
39	Act 5 Scene 1: PUCK Now the hungry lion roars	1:05
40	Act 5 Scene 1: OBERON Through the house give glimmering light	1:29
41	Act 5 Scene 1: PUCK If we shadows have offended...	0:47
42	Music and closing announcements	1:33

Total time: 2:19:21

William Shakespeare
A Midsummer Night's Dream

CAST

Theseus, <i>Duke of Athens</i>	Jack Ellis
Hippolyta, <i>Queen of the Amazons</i>	Karen Archer
Lysander, <i>in love with Hermia</i>	Benjamin Soames
Demetrius, <i>suitor to Hermia</i>	Jamie Glover
Hermia, <i>in love with Lysander</i>	Cathy Sara
Helena, <i>in love with Demetrius</i>	Emily Raymond
Oberon, <i>King of the Fairies</i>	Michael Maloney
Titania, <i>Queen of the Fairies</i>	Sarah Woodward
Puck, <i>in the service of Oberon</i>	Ian Hughes
Quince, <i>a carpenter</i>	John Moffatt
Bottom, <i>a weaver</i>	Warren Mitchell
Flute, <i>a bellows-mender</i>	Peter Kenny
Snout, <i>a tinker</i>	Don McCorkindale
Snug, <i>a joiner/Egeus, father of Hermia</i>	David Timson
Starveling, <i>a tailor</i>	
Philostrate, <i>Master of the Revels</i>	John Rye
Peaseblossom] <i>fairies attending on Titania</i>
Cobweb	
Moth	
Mustardseed	
Fairy, <i>in the service of Titania</i>	Daisy Donovan

William Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream

A Midsummer Night's Dream must be one of the most enduringly popular of Shakespeare's plays, and it is not difficult to see why: the work blends several kinds of comedy with a powerful atmosphere of magic and mystery and a satisfying set of contrasts – between city and country, reason and imagination, love and infatuation.

The play dates from 1595-6, and therefore belongs to Shakespeare's early maturity as a dramatist. There is some disagreement about whether *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was specially written for an aristocratic wedding. No direct evidence for this speculation exists, although the festive and optimistic emphasis at the end – the fairies blessing the 'bride-bed' – would certainly be appropriate. One senses, too, a celebratory delight in the young writer's new-found richness of ideas and mastery of form, and it is interesting to see from what a wide range of sources Shakespeare drew in order to create what is nevertheless a highly original work.

The Sources

The anticipation and completion of Theseus' and Hippolyta's wedding, which frames the action, is taken from Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*. Puck's origin, on the other hand, owes more to folklore than literature; the 'mechanicals' or 'clowns' (Bottom, Quince et al) are clearly caricatured Elizabethan working men, while the story of Pyramus and Thisbe came to Shakespeare through Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. No single source, however, can account for the miraculous transformation Shakespeare works upon these diverse materials.

Synopsis of the play

Act 1, Scene 1: The setting is Athens. Theseus and Hippolyta look forward to their wedding in four days' time. Egeus enters, angrily demanding that his daughter Hermia be forced to marry Demetrius, while Hermia defiantly asserts her love for Lysander. Lysander and Hermia, left alone, decide to elope the following night: they will meet in the wood outside the city. Helena enters,

lamenting her unrequited love for Demetrius, and the lovers reveal their plan to her. Scene 2: A group of Athenian workmen plan to perform 'Pyramus and Thisbe' before the 'Duke and Duchess on their wedding-day at night'. They agree to rehearse secretly in the wood on the next night.

Act 2, Scene 1: The action moves to the wood on the following evening. Puck, Oberon's servant, meets a fairy belonging to Titania: then master and mistress appear, and quarrel violently over a 'little changeling boy' with whom Titania will not part. Oberon sends Puck off to fetch him the flower 'love-in-idleness', with the juice of which he will compel Titania to fall humiliatingly in love with the first creature she sees on waking. Demetrius enters, pursued by the lovesick Helena; Oberon, seeing this, instructs the returning Puck to anoint the eyes of the 'disdainful youth', Demetrius, so that he will again love Helena. Scene 2: Titania, in her bower, prepares for bed. Once she is asleep, Oberon squeezes the juice on her eyes.

Lysander and Hermia enter and lie down to sleep. Puck, mistaking one Athenian youth for another, anoints Lysander's eyes. Helena, still pursuing Demetrius, stumbles

across the sleeping Lysander who awakes, declares his passion for her and runs after her. Hermia wakes to find herself abandoned.

Act 3, Scene 1: The Athenian 'mechanicals' enter to rehearse their play. Bottom, awaiting his cue offstage, is mischievously transformed by Puck: he reappears with an ass's head. His colleagues flee in terror, leaving Bottom to confront the ardour of the waking Titania who is 'much enamoured' of his 'fair shape'. Scene 2: Puck and Oberon confer. Oberon, seeing Demetrius and Hermia, realises Puck's error. He despatches Puck to bring Helena to him, meanwhile anointing the sleeping Demetrius' eyes so that he may wake and see Helena. Lysander enters, protesting his love to Helena; their noise awakes Demetrius who thus joins Lysander in passionate courtship of her. Hermia enters sadly and then cannot understand Lysander's coldness. All four fall to bitter quarrelling. Oberon therefore instructs Puck to lead the couples apart and then use the juice on Lysander's eyes so that his love for Hermia will be restored.

Act Four, Scene 1: Titania cossets the bemused Bottom before they sleep. Oberon undoes the 'hateful imperfection of her

eyes' and she accepts his victory in the quarrel. Dawn arrives, and with it Theseus, Hippolyta and Egeus, out hunting. They discover the sleeping couples. Once awake, their obvious happiness together moves Theseus to overrule Egeus and propose a triple wedding. Bottom, alone, wakes to wonder at his 'dream'. Scene 2: The 'clowns', in despair at the loss of Bottom, are overjoyed at his return.

Act 5, Scene 1: The wedding rites completed, Theseus calls for entertainment and chooses the clowns' play, which is presented with ludicrous incompetence but sincere intention. All retire to bed at midnight, and the fairies enter to bless the house.

Stage History

We can be fairly sure that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed at court in 1604, but the next recorded occasion is in 1662 when Samuel Pepys saw a production and described it as 'the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life'. From this date until the 20th century *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was only known in radically adapted versions.

Its musical potential was first exploited by Purcell in *The Fairy Queen* of 1692. The

dominance of spectacle, dancing and music in this production was maintained throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, including (for example) Garrick's 1755 version (*The Fairies*). Mme Lucia Vestris' 1840 production restored most of Shakespeare's text and at least restricted the number of songs, although the operatic style still predominated, with lavish special effects and a huge cast. Mendelssohn's incidental music, composed in 1843, became de rigueur for all performances in the Victorian period – Max Reinholdt's 1935 Hollywood version still maintained the tradition.

Harley Granville-Barker's 1914 production restored the full text and stripped away Mendelssohn's music and the overblown staging, thus emphasising 'dramatic rather than scenic illusion' (R.A. Foakes, introduction to the New Cambridge Shakespeare edition). Benjamin Britten's 1960 opera based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* featured disturbingly vivid sets by John Piper and fairies more sinister than innocent, but it was Peter Brook's 1970 production of the play which seemed at last to provide a truly 20th-century reading of the text. His set consisted of a bright white box in which the actors performed like

circus artists, bringing out the 'dark and powerful currents of sensuality' (John Kane) within an apparently playful context.

Commentary

Certain themes stand out with obvious clarity in any reading of the play. Varieties of love abound: there is the naive infatuation of the young lovers, counterbalanced by the mature and rational affection between Theseus and Hippolyta; darker currents of lust are suggested by the Titania/Bottom liaison; and there is the innocent intensity of the mechanicals' comradeship as they struggle to achieve pathos in their presentation of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', itself a story of tragic love in the mode of Romeo and Juliet.

The play, then, might be seen as a study of the blind power of love modified and ultimately blessed by the experience of suffering, albeit artificially condensed into one night of madness. How seriously we take these ideas will vary: Jan Kott famously drew attention to the dark and sinister aspects of the 'fairy' world, while cynics might point out that the happy resolution of the lovers' difficulties is only achieved by the 'artificial' intervention of Oberon. Indisputably, the idea of transformation informs almost every part of the play:

Bottom is 'translated' into an ass; the lovers see each other afresh when they wake from their dream ('And I have found Demetrius, like a jewel,/Mine own, and not mine own'); Theseus is suspicious of the transforming power of the imagination, yet Hippolyta reminds him that 'all the story of the night told over,/And all their minds transfigured so together,/More witnesseth than fancy's images...' Something real and important, then, has occurred.

The mechanicals strive for dramatic realism and fall laughably short – yet their failure actually draws attention by contrast to the triumphant success of the play as a whole in seducing the audience into that 'willing suspension of disbelief...which constitutes poetic faith' (Coleridge).

Notes by Perry Keenlyside



Jack Ellis (Theseus) has played Orsino in *Twelfth Night* and Horatio in *Hamlet* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as many other Shakespearean roles for theatres across the country. His television appearances include *Wycliffe*, *Beck*, *Prime Suspect* and *The Knock* and his film credits include *A Dangerous Man* and *Didn't You Kill My Brother*.



Karen Archer (Hippolyta) has worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company in *Nicholas Nickleby* and as Mrs Eryllynne in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, as well as across the country in plays such as *Ghosts*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Her television appearances include *The Chief*, *Ruth Rendell Mysteries*, *Casualty* and *Chancer* and she has been seen in the films *The Secret Garden* and *Forever Young*.



Benjamin Soames (Lysander) trained at LAMDA. Since then he has appeared in the TV series *Sharpe* and *Absolutely Fabulous* as well as the TV films *Heavy Weather* and *England, My England*. His theatre credits include *Measure For Measure*. He has also recorded numerous children's stories for Naxos AudioBooks.



Jamie Glover (Demetrius) trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama and has since played title roles in *Hamlet* and *Henry V* and a number of other roles in, amongst others, *Tartuffe* and *The Rose Tattoo* for Sir Peter Hall. His TV appearances include *A Dance to the Music of Time* and *Cadfael*.



Cathy Sara (Hermia) has worked for the New Shakespeare Company in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as the Stephen Joseph Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse and *King Lear* at the Hackney Empire. Her television appearances include *Kavanagh QC*, *Beck*, *The Detectives* and *Heartbeat*, and she has worked extensively for the BBC Radio Repertory.



Emily Raymond (Helena) has played Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Royal Shakespeare Company as well as a number of other roles in plays such as *The Changeling*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *The Beggar's Opera*. For other theatres she has appeared in *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Seagull* and *Of Mice and Men*. Her TV credits include *Robin Hood* and *Highlander* and her film credits, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *A Murder of Quality*.



Michael Maloney (Oberon) has worked extensively for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National Theatre and in the West End, in taking leading roles such as Romeo, Prince Hal in *Henry IV Parts 1 & 2*, Peer Gynt and Hamlet. He is also active in film, and is known for his roles in *Truly, Madly, Deeply* and Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet*, *Henry V* and *In the Bleak Midwinter*.



Sarah Woodward (Titania) joined the Royal Shakespeare Company after leaving RADA and has since appeared in many Shakespearean roles including Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. Other theatre credits include *The Sea*, *Kean* and *Wild Oats*.



Ian Hughes (Puck) has played Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as other roles in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Venetian Twins* and numerous other plays. His TV credits include *Death of a Salesman*, *Survivor's Guide* and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*.



John Moffatt's (Peter Quince) distinguished theatre career encompasses two hundred roles across the UK, 42 major London productions and two Broadway appearances. He has played Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* at the Open Air Theatre, Regents Park, appeared in Ingmar Bergman's production of *Hedda Gabler* and in *Married Love* directed by Joan Plowright. Film credits include *Prick Up Your Ears*, and he has been seen on UK TV in *Love in a Cold Climate* and *Maigret*.



Warren Mitchell (Nick Bottom) is well-known for his performance as Alf Garnett in the TV series *Till Death Us Do Part* and *In Sickness and In Health*. He has also played Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* at the Royal National Theatre (a role he later recreated for the BBC), and the title role in *King Lear* at the Almeida Theatre. He has worked extensively in theatre in Australia where his credits include *The Homecoming*, *Uncle Vanya* and *Hello Dolly*.



Peter Kenny (Francis Flute) trained at RADA and his various Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National Theatre, The Orange Tree and other theatres across the country, have included Feste in *Twelfth Night* and Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*. He has also worked extensively for the BBC Radio Drama Company.



Don McCorkindale (Tom Snout) has performed numerous leading roles during a theatre career which has taken him all over the world. His roles have included Prospero in *The Tempest* and Rosencrantz in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Other plays include *Shiver Breathing* at the Royal National Theatre and *The Mousetrap* in London's West End. His TV credits include *Edwin Drood* and *Coronation Street* and he often records for BBC Radio.



David Timson (Snug/Egeus) has performed in modern and classic plays across the country and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode* and *The Seagull*. He has been seen on TV in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*, and in the film *The Russia House*.



John Rye (Starveling/Philostrate) has performed in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Cymbeline*, *Henry VI* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, in London's West End, as well as *The Comedy of Errors* for the Royal Shakespeare Company. His television appearances include *The Bill* and *Spycatcher*.



Daisy Donovan (Fairy) trained at LAMDA where she performed in a number of productions including *Barbarians*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Duchess of Malfi*.

Emma Lindars (Peaseblossom), **Sophie Nakhimoff** (Cobweb), **Laura Sheldon** (Moth) and **Dominic Kraemer** (Mustardseed) are members of The Finchley Children's Music Group in London.

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

PURCELL THE FAIRY QUEEN
The Scholars Baroque Ensemble

8.550660-1

Music programmed by Neville Jason

Cover picture: Titania Awakes, 1793-4 by Henry Fuseli (1741-1825).
Kunsthaus, Zurich/Bridgeman Art Library, London.

The New Cambridge Shakespeare

William Shakespeare
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Dream**

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Sarah Woodward** and full cast

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Snug/Egeus	David Timson
Starveling/Philostrate	John Ryan

**Daisy Donovan • Emma Lindars • Sophie Nakhimoff
Laura Sheldon • Dominic Kraemer**

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