Education Pack

Pack written and compiled by
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# Contents Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>About Propeller</td>
<td>p. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Teachers</td>
<td>p. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production Credits</td>
<td>p. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synopsis</td>
<td>p. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Shakespeare</td>
<td>pp. 7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Very tragical mirth’ -</td>
<td>pp. 9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A note on the play by Roger Warren</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with David Acton -</td>
<td>pp. 11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor playing Peter Quince and Egeus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Exercise 1 -</td>
<td>pp. 14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finding the rhythm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Exercise 2 -</td>
<td>pp. 16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finding the thoughts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Exercise 3 -</td>
<td>p. 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finding the antitheses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Exercise 4 -</td>
<td>pp. 19-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placing the focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovers and Madmen</td>
<td>pp. 21-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with James Tucker -</td>
<td>pp. 23-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor playing Titania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Laura Rushton -</td>
<td>p. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costume Supervisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview with Michael Pavelka -</td>
<td>p. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairy Concept Drawing</td>
<td>p. 27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Propeller is an all-male Shakespeare company which seeks to find a more engaging way of expressing Shakespeare and to more completely explore the relationship between text and performance. Mixing a rigorous approach to the text with a modern physical aesthetic, they have been influenced by mask work, animation and classic and modern film and music from all ages. Productions are directed by Edward Hall and designed by Michael Pavelka. Lighting is designed by Ben Ormerod.

Propeller has toured internationally to Australia, China, Spain, Mexico, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Cyprus, Ireland, Tokyo, Gdansk, Germany, Italy, Malta, Hong Kong and the U.S.A.

As our times have changed, so our responses to Shakespeare's work have changed too and I believe we have become an ensemble in the true sense of the word: We break and reform our relationships using the spirit of the particular play we are working on.

We have grown together, eaten together, argued and loved together. We have toured all over the world from Huddersfield to Bangladesh. We have played in National theatres, ancient amphitheatres, farmyards and globe theatres. We have been applauded, shot at and challenged by different audiences wherever we have gone.

We want to rediscover Shakespeare simply by doing the plays as we believe they should be done: with great clarity, speed and full of as much imagination in the staging as possible. We don't want to make the plays 'accessible', as this implies that they need 'dumbing down' in order to be understood, which they don't. We want to continue to take our work to as many different kinds of audiences as possible and so to grow as artists and people. We are hungry for more opportunity to explore the richness of Shakespeare's plays and if we keep doing this with rigour and invention, then I believe the company, and I hope our audiences too, will continue to grow.

Edward Hall, Artistic Director.
To Teachers

This pack has been designed to complement your class’s visit to see Propeller’s 2013/14 production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, on national and international tour.

Most of the pack is aimed at A-level and GSCE students of Drama and English Literature in the UK, but some of the sections, and suggestions for classroom activities, may be of use to teachers teaching pupils at Key Stages 2, 3 & 4, while students studying in other countries and those in higher education may find much of interest in these pages.

While there are some images, the pack has been deliberately kept simple from a graphic point of view so that most pages can easily be photocopied for use in the classroom.

The production is being toured alongside Propeller’s production of The Comedy of Errors; there is a separate education pack relating to that play which can also be downloaded from the Propeller website.

You can also find video clips, trailers and other resources on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/PropellerVideo and at propeller.org.uk/play and follow the company on tour by keeping up with our blog: propeller.org.uk/blog

Your feedback is most welcome. You can make any comments on our Propeller Theatre Company facebook page or by email to caro.mackay@propeller.org.uk.

Workshops to accompany the production are also available.

I hope you find the pack useful.

Will Wollen
Education Consultant
Propeller
A Midsummer Night’s Dream
Production Credits

DIRECTED by Edward Hall
DESIGNED by Michael Pavelka
LIGHTING by Ben Ormerod
MUSIC by Propeller
SOUND by David Gregory
TEXT adapted by Edward Hall & Roger Warren
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR Dugald Bruce-Lockhart

Theseus/ Fairy    Dominic Gerrard
Hippoloya/ Fairy   Will Featherstone
Egeus/ Quince/ Fairy David Acton
Hermia/ Snug/ Fairy Matthew McPherson
Demetrius/ Fairy   Arthur Wilson
Lysander/ Fairy    Richard Pepper
Helena/ Fairy      Dan Wheeler
Bottom             Chris Myles
Flute/ Fairy       Alasdair Craig
Puck               Joseph Chance
Snout/ Fairy       Lewis Hart
Oberon             Darrell Brockis
Titania            James Tucker
Starveling/ Fairy  Matthew Pearson

PROPELLER

Artistic Director - Edward Hall
Executive Producer - Caro MacKay
General Manager - Nick Chesterfield
Development Manager - Cathy Baker
Marketing and Publicity - Clair Chamberlain & Stephen Pidcock at The Cornershop pr

Propeller’s Board of Trustees
James Sargant (Chairman), Lydia Cassidy, Gillian Chimes, Susan Foster, Andrew Hochhauser QC, Lynne Kirwin, Jodi Myers, Peter Wilson MBE DL

Joseph Chance in rehearsals
Photo: Dominic Clemence
Synopsis

We are in Athens. The Duke of Athens, Theseus, is getting ready for his marriage to Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Egeus seeks the Duke’s intervention because his daughter, Hermia, will not agree to his choice of Demetrius as a husband: she’s in love with Lysander, who has swayed her heart by wooing her with gifts. The Duke rules that Hermia should obey her father, or either die or accept a life as a nun in Diana’s temple.

Lysander and Hermia make plans to run away together. The two lovers confide in Helena, who is in love with Demetrius, but her love is futile – Demetrius can’t stand her but loves Hermia. The lovers run away from Athens but get lost in the woods. They are pursued by Demetrius, who has been informed of their plan by Helena. The desperate, and slightly masochistic, Helena follows them into the woods.

Oberon, King of the Fairies, has quarrelled with his queen, Titania, over an Indian boy she refuses to give him. In the woods Oberon overhears Helena and Demetrius arguing and sends his spirited servant, Puck, to fetch a magical flower whose juice has the effect of making people fall in love with the first creature they see. He orders Puck to put some drops on Demetrius’ eyes while he sleeps. Puck, however, makes a mistake and puts the flower juice on the eyes of the sleeping Lysander. Lysander is woken by Helena, falls in love with her, and spurns Hermia.

Meanwhile some local craftsmen are rehearsing a play about the tragic love-story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the hope of being allowed to perform it to Theseus on his wedding day. Puck overhears their rehearsals in the wood and he plays a trick on them by giving one of the actors, a weaver named Bottom, an ass's head. As soon as they see their transformed friend the other actors are terrified and run away. Oberon has applied the flower potion to Titania in her sleep, and it is engineered that Bottom is the first thing she should see upon waking. She falls completely in love with the hideous Bottom and attends to him with her fairies. When Oberon returns Titania to her senses she is appalled at herself and is reunited with Oberon and agrees to hand over the child.

Bottom is also returned to normal and rejoins his friends just in time to prepare to perform their play. Meanwhile the lovers’ arguments rage. When Demetrius rests, Oberon puts magic juice on his eyes. Now both he and Lysander pursue Helena until the four lovers fall asleep from fatigue. Puck puts juice on Lysander’s eyes before the lovers are woken by the sound of Theseus and Hippolyta’s hunting party. Lysander sees Hermia first and the two happy couples agree to share the Duke’s wedding day. The artisans perform their woeful play of Pyramus and Thisbe in front of a mocking wedding party. When festivities are over Puck and the fairies return to bless the palace.
The person we call William Shakespeare wrote some 37 plays, as well as sonnets and full-length poems; but very little is actually known about him. That there was someone called William Shakespeare is certain, and what we know about his life comes from registrar records, court records, wills, marriage certificates and his tombstone. There are also contemporary anecdotes and criticisms made by his rivals which speak of the famous playwright and suggest that he was indeed a playwright, poet and an actor.

The earliest record we have of his life is of his baptism, which took place on Wednesday 26th April 1564. Traditionally it is supposed that he was, as was common practice, baptised three days after his birth, making his birthday the 23rd of April 1564 – St George’s Day. There is, however, no proof of this at all.

William’s father was a John Shakespeare, a local businessman who was involved in tanning and leatherwork. John also dealt in grain and sometimes was described as a glover by trade. John was also a prominent man in Stratford. By 1560, he was one of the fourteen burgesses who made up the town council. William’s mother was Mary Arden who married John Shakespeare in 1557. They had eight children, of whom William was the third. It is assumed that William grew up with them in Stratford, one hundred miles from London.

Very little is known about Shakespeare’s education. We know that the King’s New Grammar School taught boys basic reading and writing. We assume William attended this school since it existed to educate the sons of Stratford but we have no definite proof. There is also no evidence to suggest that William attended university.

On 28th November 1582 an eighteen-year-old William married the twenty-six-year-old Anne Hathaway. Seven months later, they had their first daughter, Susanna. Anne never left Stratford, living there her entire life.

Baptism records reveal that twins Hamnet and Judith were born in February 1592. Hamnet, the only son died in 1596, just eleven years old.

At some point, Shakespeare joined the Burbage company in London as an actor, and was their principal writer. He wrote for them at the Theatre in Shoreditch, and by 1594 he was a sharer, or shareholder in the company. It
was through being a sharer in the profits of the company that William made his money and in 1597 he was able to purchase a large house in Stratford.

The company moved to the newly-built Globe Theatre in 1599. It was for this theatre that Shakespeare wrote many of his greatest plays, including, in 1611, The Winter’s Tale.

In 1613, the Globe Theatre caught fire during a performance of Henry VIII, one of Shakespeare’s last plays, written with John Fletcher, and William retired to Stratford where he died in 1616, on 23rd April.

Propeller’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream 2013
Photo: Dominic Clemence
A Midsummer Night’s Dream is one of Shakespeare’s most original, eloquent, and skilfully constructed works. Although he took hints from various written sources — from Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale and Plutarch’s Lives for Theseus and Hippolyta, Ovid’s Metamorphoses for Titania’s name and for the mechanicals’ play Pyramus and Thisbe, perhaps Apuleius’ Golden Ass for Bottom’s transformation — the basic narrative seems, unusually for Shakespeare, to have been his own invention. And although it is a comparatively early play, probably written around 1595, close to Romeo and Juliet, which seems to be parodied in the play scene, it is entirely confident in its execution.

Largely because of the subject matter and style, it has been suggested that the Dream might have been written for the celebration of an Elizabethan court marriage; but if so, it was also given at the public theatres, since the title-page of the first printed edition (1600) says specifically that it was ‘sundry times publicly acted ... by the Lord Chamberlain’s servants’, the company to which Shakespeare belonged.

The Dream is about love and marriage; and Shakespeare adroitly interweaves four distinct groups of characters — the court, the lovers, the mechanicals, and the fairies — in order to dramatise various aspects of lovers’ experience. The wedding of the former adversaries Theseus and Hippolyta is the event towards which the stories of the four groups move, and which finally unites all four in the final scene: the mechanicals have prepared their play Pyramus and Thisbe to celebrate the occasion, which also marks the marriages of the four young lovers after their quarrels in the wood, and the fairies’ blessing of the palace at the end of the play is a potent image of the harmony, the ‘concord’, to which the whole play has been moving.

But that concord has only been achieved by characters who have endured extreme discord. Commenting on the apparently contradictory description of the mechanicals’ play as ‘very tragical mirth’, Theseus asks, ‘How shall we find the concord of this discord?’ The answer seems to be, as always in Shakespearian comedy, to look potential disaster straight in the face. It is as if Shakespeare feels that the resolutions of comedy must be put to the test of harsher experiences if they are to be convincing: the happy ending is the more appreciated if both the characters and the audience are aware of the things that threaten it. Such awareness in no way weakens the humour of the play, but intensifies it by contrast. When Bottom and his companions perform their ‘tedious brief scene’ before the court, the fatal love of Pyramus and Thisbe is directly relevant to the experience of the four lovers in the wood: without Oberon’s benevolent intervention to restore them to their correct pairings, this is how they might have ended up — and an awareness of this may be why they heckle the mechanicals’ play so mercilessly.

If the play scene is the climax of the Dream as a whole, the climax of the first half is the meeting between Titania and Bottom. Shakespeare’s characteristic
technique of juxtaposing contrasting extremes is in full operation here, as the fairy queen falls in love with the ass-headed weaver.

And in the process the scene contributes to the play’s dramatisation of love in all its forms: its joys and sadness, its idealism and its selfishness, and the way in which people may fall in love with external appearances — which is why Oberon and Puck squeeze the love juice on to people’s eyes.

Between the extremes of love in the Dream stands Theseus. He has had a wild past, including, according to Oberon, an affair with Titania as well as with numerous other mistresses; and he himself acknowledges that he has wooed Hippolyta ‘with my sword / And won thy love doing thee injuries’. But now he has become a figure of reason, balanced (possessing a nice sense of irony), a fair law-giver — but a law-giver who can pragmatically bend that law a little when it is in the interests of his subjects to do so. This is made clear in his final judgement on the lovers: towards the end of the play, he does what at the beginning he said he was not able to do, and over-rules Egeus’s insistence on the strict application of the Athenian law when he sees that the two pairs of lovers are properly and happily matched.

‘The Athenian law’: the play, technically, takes place in Athens, and the fairies have come ‘from the farthest steppe of India’; but a more English play it would be hard to imagine. This is strikingly apparent in Shakespeare’s dramatisation of the fairy kingdom, and in the lyrical language in which he evokes the rural world which the fairies inhabit and from which they draw their power — from potent natural resources like the wild flowers and the ‘fair blessèd beams’ of the sun. That relationship is a reciprocal one, and when Oberon and Titania quarrel, nature itself is thrown into chaos. This is the point of the longest, and arguably the finest, speech in the play, Titania’s evocation of the bad weather that has resulted from her quarrel with Oberon, a speech which builds to a general confusion of the seasons:

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

But if Titania’s speech culminates in such grandeur, it can accommodate much more down-to-earth language too: she can communicate the wretched summer the mortals are enduring by alluding to a rural game, cut out of turf that has now become waterlogged: ‘The nine men’s morris is filled up with mud.’ This muddy image summarises Shakespeare’s daring in this play: the fairy queen, far from being remotely ethereal, expresses herself in terms of everyday country experience. It is this quality which gives the Dream its characteristic flavour, and why, despite the references to Athens or India, it seems to be taking place in an English rural community. From the farthest steppe of India to rural Warwickshire: these extremes focus the range of the play.

ROGER WARREN
Interview with David Acton – Actor playing Peter Quince and Egeus

Have you acted in this play before? I’ve done the play before, but not with Propeller. I did it with a company called Actors on the London Stage in a five-handed version of the piece. I played Theseus, Puck, Peaseblossom and Snout! That was in 1998 – a long time ago.

How have you approached playing Peter Quince? Quince is a smashing part. Although right now we’re four weeks into rehearsal I still haven’t quite found him, I haven’t found someone to base it on. I’m still not sure which person he’s supposed to be. I have found a voice – but I haven’t found the person the voice is coming out of yet! Roger Warren, the script editor, suggested it might be good in a Birmingham accent, so I have been trying the Birmingham accent and that’s been great. So that’s been the angle of attack on the part – through the voice. I thought I’d persevere with that and actually it works pretty well. And then you’ve got to find which Birmingham accent, or what tone of voice with it. When does he get sharp? When is he trying to be like a teacher with a class of unruly children trying to calm them down? But I’ve yet to find the whole person and, although we’ve only got a week to go, I’m not worrying about it yet. If you ask me in a week’s time I’ll really be worrying about it. There’s going to be a particular physicality that goes with that voice, but I haven’t yet found physically exactly which person I’m being. But I will find it and I’m allowing it to come from the voice as a starting point.

What’s Quince doing in the play? Well he’s written a play! He’s got permission for it to one of the suggestions for the Duke to have performed at this wedding. There’s a list of people that have been allowed to perform the play. They’re all amateurs, but Quince is the writer; he’s the bright one. He can read and write; he’s a carpenter and a poet. He’s written and he’s going to direct the play.

Do you think he’s done it before? No – first time! I think he’s written a few pieces for himself, but they’ve all gone into the bottom drawer, they’ve never actually gone this far yet. This is a big occasion for the
Duke - and he thoroughly admires the Duke – a great man, a great warrior – and Quince is going to do his best. So at the beginning of the play he’s feeling pretty hopeful. A bit nervous, but pretty hopeful.

So what changes? Well – what happens is that they lose Bottom! They’ve rehearsed it in secret so that people can’t steal their ideas and steal their story, and then Bottom is transformed! He disappears entirely! So all their hopes are dashed. There’s going to be no play. There’s no chance of being chosen to do the play in front of the Duke. Then he suddenly reappears and there’s a chance that they might be chosen! For some reason the usual Master of Revels isn’t there and Peter Quince is pushed on to give the list of the possible plays and entertainments to Theseus. And Theseus chooses his! He’s so excited and very nervous.

And how does it go? For him? Well, there are mistakes! But the audience seemed to enjoy it! And the Duke gives them all a lot of money so they’re delighted.

You’re also playing Egeus. Yes. Egeus is just in two scenes at the beginning of the play. You think A Midsummer Night’s Dream is just going to be comedy, comedy, comedy, but it starts off with this man who dearly and desperately loves his daughter, has arranged a marriage for her, and then suddenly in comes Lysander to their lives. Lysander tricks his daughter with knacks and trifles, seduces her; she thinks she’s in love with him and Egeus is desperate because suddenly his daughter, who’s always been lovely, obedient and good, is refusing to get married to Demetrius. Egeus is absolutely desperate about it and he goes to the Duke and demands that his daughter be punished. It’s lunacy, really. It’s beyond good sense. Cruelty comes out. I don’t think that he’s essentially a cruel man, but he’s so impassioned and so furious at this point that he loses sense. Even though Lysander is to blame he says that either she marries Demetrius or he wants her dead. There’s a law that allows for that, so kill her.

You’ve worked for Propeller before? I did the early days. I did Henry V, Comedy of Errors and Twelfth Night in 1997 to 1999. I’ve done a couple of the ‘Pocket’ Propeller shows more recently as well.

Is working for Propeller different? Well, the big difference is we’re an all-male cast. So yes it is very different. How is it different? I don’t know! Maybe it’s not that it’s all-male. What is different is that the rehearsal room is very free and open where everyone can pitch in ideas. We all work off each other and make suggestions for each other the whole time. It’s unusually relaxed. I mean, all the best rehearsal rooms are relaxed, but there’s sort of a guarantee that the Propeller rehearsal room will be relaxed and easy, with lots of ideas floating around, and good fun.

You’re just about to go off on a long tour. As an actor how do you deal with being away from home for that length of time? Well, I have children, but they’re almost grown up now. The hardest time is when the children are young. It’s a balance. You have to find that balance. My wife is an actress so she understands. And my family is so used to me being away for long periods a lot of the time. It’s just the way it is and the way our life
has been. And I love touring! The great thing about being an actor is the variety of work – theatre, television, film, radio – but I think the essential work for an actor is doing theatre and touring. I love touring; I like the transport; I like hotel rooms and stations and loading my motorbike; I like being in a different place every week.

**If you had to give any advice to someone wanting to be an actor?** It is such a difficult business and such a vastly overcrowded business. If they really can’t do anything else then go for it and go for it all out. But probably best not to! I was listening to someone on the radio the other day who was saying that in all fields, if someone has a determination and a passion, whatever field it is – teaching, medicine, science – they will, barring any disaster, rise up the ladder and achieve something towards what they set out to do. In all fields except the performing arts! Nearly all people who go into performing arts do not achieve what they set out to do. It doesn’t have that ladder to it, that route. So if you’re going to go into it you just have to accept that it’s a very difficult life and you may not achieve what you hoped for!
Text Exercise 1 – finding the rhythm

Much of Shakespeare’s work is written in blank verse based on iambic pentameter. Blank verse does not rhyme but much of A Midsummer Night’s Dream is written in rhyming couplets – a useful comic device. For the most part it still uses the standard rhythm of iambic pentameter. The iambic pentameter is a regular rhythm that runs through the verse.

Iambic pentameter means that each line of verse can be broken into five ‘feet’, and each foot is made of one unstressed and one stressed syllable.

So a regular line of blank verse will have ten syllables. The rhythm of the stressed syllables helps drive the text along and give sense to the words. You can mark the text with its rhythm.

Conventionally we use / to mark a stressed syllable and ˘ to mark an unstressed one.

Here’s a bit of regular verse marked up:

```
This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus’ tomb, there, there to woo.
```

The fairies and lovers in Midsummer Night’s Dream use a great deal of rhyme. Rhyme can add to the comedy.

The fairies also sometimes use verse which has four feet to a line instead of five. Shakespeare uses rhyme and rhythm to create a magical dreamlike world.

Where in the play do the lovers start rhyming? What has just happened?

What are the fairies doing when they use the four feet lines?
The first thing the Propeller actors will do in rehearsal is work to find the rhythm of the text and the meaning of the words. Often the rhythm will help them find the meaning!

Have a look at Egeus’ speech below. We’ve started marking the rhythms. Where you really can’t use the iambic pentameter rhythm Shakespeare is helping you to emphasise a word. See if you can finish off marking the rhythm.

Use this speech or another one you have marked.

Now read the speech out loud and emphasise the rhythm.

De-Dum-de-Dum-de-Dum-de-Dum-de-Dum!

Put a tiny pause at the end of each line.

Practice the speech until you can get the rhythm flowing fluently.

What does the rhythm do to the pace and the flow of the lines?

Rehearsal 2013
Photo: Dominic Clemence
When someone speaks they have already thought the words that they are going to use. They’ve probably thought the exact words in the split second before they speak. But they haven’t thought of all the exact words they are going to use for the next five minutes. Written language is also broken up into thoughts and subthoughts with punctuation marks. The actor’s job is to say their words as though for the very first time so that they are fresh and alive on the stage. To do this it is not enough simply to remember their lines. They need to think their character’s thoughts too!

Some thoughts are long and rambling. Some are short and definite. Some are incomplete. Some lead coherently one to the next. Some are disconnected and unsystematic. Looking at thoughts can tell us a huge amount about our character’s state of mind.

Sentences are thoughts, divided by full stops and semicolons. Their subclauses between the commas condition and qualify the thought. They are new thoughts that come as the main thought is being articulated. Thoughts may cross the rhythm of the verse.

**Exercise 1: Sentences**

Choose a speech from the play. Rewrite it in sentences ignoring the verse. Read each sentence in your head before pausing to imagine it. Then speak the sentence.

**Exercise 2: Sub-Thoughts**

Using the same speech read it out loud. This time stop speaking whenever you reach a punctuation mark. Then walk quickly and purposefully somewhere else in the room. Read out loud until the next punctuation mark. Then stop and move again. Carry on in this manner.

**Exercise 3:**

Read the whole speech out loud again.

What was the effect of the exercises?
Here is Egeus’ speech divided into thoughts:

Full of vexation come I, with complaint against my child, my daughter Hermia.

Stand forth, Demetrius.

My noble lord, this man hath my consent to marry her.

Stand forth, Lysander: and my gracious duke, this man hath bewitch’d the bosom of my child;

Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes, and interchanged love-tokens with my child: thou hast by moonlight at her window sung, with feigning voice verses of feigning love, and stolen the impression of her fantasy with bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits, knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers of strong prevailment in unharden’d youth:

With cunning hast thou filch’d my daughter's heart, turn’d her obedience, which is due to me, to stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke, be it so she will not here before your grace consent to marry with Demetrius, I beg the ancient privilege of Athens, as she is mine, I may dispose of her:

Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

And sub-thoughts:

Full of vexation come I, …with complaint against my child,… my daughter Hermia…. Stand forth,… Demetrius…. My noble lord,… this man hath my consent to marry her…. Stand forth, …Lysander:… and my gracious duke,… this man hath bewitch’d the bosom of my child;… Thou, …thou, …Lysander, … thou hast given her rhymes,… and interchanged love-tokens with my child;… thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,… with feigning voice verses of feigning love,… and stolen the impression of her fantasy with bracelets of thy hair,… rings,… gawds,… conceits,… knacks,… trifles,… nosegays,… sweetmeats,… messengers of strong prevailment in unharden’d youth:…. With cunning hast thou filch’d my daughter's heart,… turn'd her obedience,…which is due to me,… to stubborn harshness:… and,… my gracious duke,… be it so she will not here before your grace consent to marry with Demetrius,… I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,… as she is mine,… I may dispose of her:… which shall be either to this gentleman… or to her death, according to our law immediately provided in that case.
Text Exercise 3 – finding the antitheses

**What are antitheses?** Antitheses are opposites and Shakespeare uses them often in his speeches to create tension, rhythm and meaning. By examining the text and finding the antitheses an actor can emphasise them and ‘bang them together’ to create drive and sense.

Here’s a speech from Egeus with some antitheses marked and linked:

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**EGEUS**

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius, My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.

Stand forth, Lysander, and my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong prevainment in unhardened youth:
With cunning hast thou trick’d my daughter’s heart,
Turn’d her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she; will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

---

**HELENA**

O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.
Happy is Hermia, wheresoe’er she lies;
For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.
How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:
If so, my eyes are oftener wash’d than hers.
No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;
For beasts that meet me run away for fear:
Therefore no marvel though Demetrius
Do, as a monster fly my presence thus.
What wicked and dissembling glass of mine
Made me compare with Hermia’s sphery eyne?
But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
Lysander if you live, good sir, awake.

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Choose either speech and read it out aloud. Then just read the antitheses in pairs. Make a gesture or body shape for each word or phrase in each pair. Then read it again and emphasise the antitheses. Hold the thought of the first until you reach the second. Sometimes there are others in between!
Text Exercise 4 – placing the focus

This is similar to a technique that great orators use all the time. If they mention a particular object they place it with their eyes or their hand in a particular place. Every time they refer to it again they bring their eyes or hand back to the same place. It helps their audience follow them. For an actor the exercise helps to clarify thoughts.

Exercise 1:

Use Egeus speech that we have been using. (See next page.) This time read it out loud.

- Every time you use words like "I" or "me" (i.e. words referring to Egeus) point to yourself.
- Every time you use words which refer to Hermia point and look to the same place by your side and imagine Hermia there.
- Point and look forwards for words referring Theseus.
- Point and look to a place for Lysander and a place for Demetrius.
- Repeat the exercise a couple of times.

Exercise 2:

Once you've done the speech pointing for references to people you can do it for things as well. Place everything somewhere. The moonlight, the knacks, the nosegays, everything!

Read the speech again.

What effect has the exercise had?

Is it clearer?

Would it clearer to an audience?

Try it!
EGEUS
Full of vexation come I with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius, my noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her
Stand forth, Lysander: and my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch’d the bosom of my child;
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong prevailment in unharden’d youth;
With cunning hast thou filch’d my daughter’s heart,
Turn’d her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she; will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her.
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.
Lovers and Madmen exercise

Lysander, Hermia, Helena and Demetrius form part of a theatrical tradition of ‘lovers’ that was well-established even in Shakespeare’s time. Lovers were stock characters in the Italian Commedia dell’Arte tradition and they had easily-recognised character traits that Shakespeare develops in A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Lovers were typically:
- In love – with another lover; with themselves; and with the idea of being in love
- Very highly strung
- Relatively unconcerned with anything that didn’t relate directly to them
- Inclines to extremes of emotion

Much of the comedy of the lovers in A Midsummer Night’s Dream is derived from the lightning speed at which happiness and passionate declarations of love can switch to despair and tragedy, or vicious loathing.

Exercise
- Take the following piece of dialogue
- Allocate parts and read it aloud
- Read it again, but this time make a non-verbal noise before you speak. Non-verbal noises can be any noise that isn’t an actual word. Try and use noises that show how you feel! Add actions too.
- Once you have the scene

Things to watch out for:
- Try and make sure that you make your noise immediately after your cue line.
- Make the noises and actions BIG! If you are happy – be ecstatic; if you are sad make sure your noise reflects the very pit of despair!
- Try and make sure your lines follow on immediately after the noise
- It really does help if you go to extremes – if you need some inspiration here are a list of noises that might help: Growls, whimpers, whoops, raspberries, squeals, roars, snarls, cries etc.
- You almost can’t go too far with this exercise – dancing round the room, banging on the floor with your fists are all acceptable

Extra exercise

Try improvising a ‘modern day’ lover’s scene in the same way!
HELENA
Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood.
To Athens will I bear my folly back
And follow you no further: let me go:
You see how simple and how fond I am.

HERMIA
Why, get you gone: who is't that hinders you?

HELENA
A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA
What, with Lysander?

HELENA
With Demetrius.

LYSANDER
Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

DEMETRIUS
No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

HELENA
O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
She was a vixen when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA
'Little' again! nothing but 'low' and 'little'!
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

LYSANDER
Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.

DEMETRIUS
You are too officious
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone: speak not of Helena;
Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

LYSANDER
Now she holds me not;
Now follow, if thou darest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS
Follow! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jowl.
Interview with James Tucker – Actor playing Titania

What’s Titania up to at the beginning of the play? How’s she feeling?

She’s a having a ‘domestic’ with her husband, Oberon. They are King and Queen of the Fairies and they have had a falling out over a child that he is accusing her of snatching from India, which is where they are ‘based’. Titania had a very good friend – she refers to her as the ‘votaress’ in the play as Titania is like the leader of a religious order – and the votaress had a child and died in childbirth. So Titania has taken this child to look after it and bring it up, but Oberon wants it. They are a childless couple – because they are fairies – and I think - from my beginnings of interpretation – that that’s quite a big issue for her, not to have children. Her ‘children’ are the fairies and there are quite a lot of them, but the idea of being barren and the desire to have a child is very rooted, I think, in her body and mind, which is why she’s not giving up this baby.

What happens to her during the course of the play? She and Oberon arrive from India for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta. There’s some history there; in earlier times both of them had a bit of a roving eye. I don’t think Titania has much time for Hippolyta and Oberon doesn’t have much time for Theseus, but they’ve come to bless the wedding. They’re not in a very good place though, emotionally and the elements have gone a bit wild. Titania’s first moments are spent berating Oberon, who has been interrupting their masques and dances (which they do as part of their day-to-day business as fairies to make good in the world). He’s been interrupting their work so the world has gone to pot; the oceans are swelling up; the rivers’ banks have burst; everything’s muddy and cold though it’s still the middle of summer.

Oberon plays a trick on her, doesn’t he? Yes, because they’ve fallen out. It’s quite a harsh trick. She’s no longer in love with Oberon so he casts a spell on Titania and says that when she wakes up she’ll fall in love with the next thing she sees. And Puck, Oberon’s servant, changes one of the actors who are rehearsing in the wood into an ass, giving him an ass’s head. All the other actors run away, because they’re so freaked out by seeing this half-man-half-beast, and Bottom is left on his own. To cheer himself up he starts singing and wakes up Titania, so she sees him, this rather odd-looking animal and falls in love with it straightaway. She calls all the other fairies round and the kind of get their hands on him and he’s not allowed out of the wood. He
doesn’t really have a choice! She’s totally in love. It’s quite beautiful, quite sweet really. But, of course, it doesn’t last.

**How does she feel when the spell wears off?** She’s horrified by what’s happened. She doesn’t understand why she would have chosen this freak of nature to be in love with. I think she knows that Oberon’s had a hand in it, but any explanation about that is saved for later on. She’s so pleased to see Oberon that she gives up the changeling child. It’s actually when she’s still under the spell a bit when that happens so that’s a little unfair, but peace is restored in the end. She realizes who her husband is and where she is in that relationship.

**Everyone’s got an idea of what a fairy is. What’s a fairy in this production?** It’s set in a Victorianesque world, almost like an attic where this box of magic is opened. The fairies, these spirits, are like children with doll-like faces, sleepy children. Titania’s a bit more rock’n’roll that that actually. We’ve been playing around with the visual stuff today, the make-up, and we’ve been looking at things from Amy Winehouse to Natalie Portman in Black Swan! So again she’s facially very pale and white, but there’s a lot of black. Gothic, really. And that ties in with the Victorian gothic make-up. She’s quite sprightly. We’re still working out who she is [this is four weeks into the rehearsal process], but I think she’s a stronger character than I’d thought at first. She’s not as motherly as I’d thought she was.

**How much input do you have on things like make-up and that sort of thing?** Quite a bit. I suppose it was my idea about Amy Winehouse, but we have inherited quite a lot from the previous production – it is a revival – but they are great ideas that are already in place. So we are adapting things. They had similar make-up before, but not as decorative as we have this time. And for my character it’s a little bit sharper.

**Have you acted in this play before?** I have actually! I played Peter Quince about ten years ago in Sheffield. So I know the play very well and I’m really enjoying watching the ‘mechanicals’ in our rehearsals.

**You’ve worked for Propeller before. Is it different this time?** Yes. It’s different this time because we’re reviving a production. The three productions I worked on previously were new, so although we had the same length of time as a rehearsal period there was a lot more investigation into how we would stage a scene, whereas we’ve kind of got the picture frame here and we’re working backwards from the end picture, working out what the process is to get there. On the others we were sort of starting with a blank piece of paper. It’s no less enjoyable for that, though. There are lots of people in the company I haven’t worked with before and I’m fifteen or sixteen years older than when I started so it’s interesting seeing the people who are playing the younger parts now. The musical side has always been very strong, but there seems to be a huge range of instruments now that people are playing. Titania doesn’t play anything at all! I think she gets to ring a bell. I really do have to learn an instrument!

**Do you have a favourite moment in the play?** Discovering Bottom and falling in love. Seducing Bottom. She’s completely under the spell.
Interview with Laura Rushton – Costume Supervisor

What does a costume supervisor do? I work alongside Michael [Pavelka], the designer, to help realise his designs. Because we’re working on a ‘revival’ of a previous production it’s a bit different; a lot of the costumes still exist from previous tours. But if we were starting afresh it would be working alongside Michael to but, hire or make the costumes according to his designs. And then I’d fit them, alter them and do anything that needs to be done to get them to the stage.

So as this is a revival you’ve had to be doing more alterations? Yes, though there’s actually not been as much to do as I’d expected on ‘Dream’. Comedy of Errors is a different ball-game as it’s a bit more eclectic. Dream has a very defined style; it’s almost as though there’s a ‘uniform’ across the whole company so we’ve fitted everyone into previous cast members’ costumes. There’s been a fair bit of alteration and a few new purchases but not too much on this one.

So once you’ve got the actors into the costumes and the show has started, is your job over? Pretty much, yes. I would run with it through to ‘press night’ if it was a new show, but with this I’ll be with it till the end of tech week. Then Bridget [Fell] carries on as Wardrobe Manager and she will look after the costumes on a day-to-day basis on tour. I will pop in a few times during the tour, just to check everything’s still holding together and looking good.

So what will Bridget need to do? She does the day-to-day maintenance. Anything that gets damaged she will repair; anything that needs replacing she’ll replace; she washes and irons and makes everything look good for the shows.

How did you get into doing this work? I did a degree in Costume for the Performing Arts at the London College of Fashion, which was a combination of designing and making. Then a spent a bit of time after Uni doing lots of different jobs in costume. I did some designing and a lot of assistant designing. I did quite a lot of making in studios in places like the Royal Opera House, working within theatres and in external workrooms. Then, by way of luck I suppose, it all merged and I got a few different opportunities and ended up supervising. And that’s what I’ve done for the last few years.

What sort of skills would you say a good costume supervisor needs? It’s mostly to do with organisation, because you’re responsible for making sure everything’s in place when it should be in place. You have to liaise a lot between the designer and other people, whether they be makers or hire houses or that kind of thing. I think it’s also very important to have a making background because when you’re dealing with makers they often ask questions, and if you don’t really understand how something comes together then you can’t really answer very well.

What advice would you give to someone who was thinking about going into costume? To do as much work experience as possible. If it’s theatre they want to get into then they need to get involved and get a real idea of how theatre works and understand how everything comes together. You might follow a supervisor or get sent out on little errands so you get an idea of where to find things. It’s knowing on paper what you have to find and then finding the best places to get it from. You develop a whole library in you head of where the best places to get things are.

Sounds like an episode of The Apprentice! Exactly. The one where they go round and have to find the ten things in a time limit for the cheapest possible price!
Dream Design Q&A with Michael Pavelka - Designer

Where did the idea for the visual world of this production come from?
I approached this play from the end and worked backwards. In the final scene, Puck talks of the dust in a ‘hallow’d house’, so we thought about an attic where spirits could play. That led to how a toy box and make-believe might help tell the different strands of story. Rather than starting inside and moving to the wood, the whole story is invented in the same location. The wood of strange, pale weightless chairs is covered and uncovered. Ben Ormerod’s lighting design fills the misty room with ghostly colours. The set became a space for running, climbing and perching - dollies in a punch up: Propeller’s physical performance style.

Talk us through the different elements of the fairy costume.
When we’re thinking through our first ideas for a production, I always try to look for ways in which the actors, as a group, might have common identity or image. The group then tells the story to the audience by adding to the basic clothes – in this case Victorian underwear. All the actors represent a chorus of fairies who, as we know, are immortal – and in our production, are also neither male nor female. They are a sort of dressing up doll – all as identical as possible in long johns and corsets, with tiny lacy wings on the cuffs. We also gave all the actors the same doll-like make-up and hair style. The audience could then see the fairies putting their mortal characters’ clothes on top: pretending to be human to discover what real love and pain means through the night of dreaming.

What advice would you give someone wanting to go into theatre design?
Go to the theatre as much as possible and, if you find the design interesting in some way, try to contact the designer to ask some questions and find out what it’s like as a profession – but keep it short... designers are very busy people! Practice drawing. Draw anything. Understand that drawing (and I include making images on the computer in this) communicates your thoughts or feelings – designers work with lots of different people to make a show happen, so your drawings will be an important way of sharing ideas. There are now lots of courses for theatre design, in acting schools and art colleges – they all have websites that give you a flavour of each. Theatre’s websites also sometimes have features on design that have interviews with designers and videos of their work in mid-process.

MICHAEL PAVELKA TEACHES THEATRE DESIGN AT WIMBLEDON COLLEGE OF ART
Fairy Basic Costume Concept Drawing
by Michael Pavelka