

That most frivolous band of players

The English Class in Performance

does with much joy and satisfaction present

the most capricious and beguiling comedy of

A Midsummer Night's Dream

penned by that fanciful playwright

Master William Shakespeare

and edited by that somber curmudgeon

Shawn Peters.

Dramatis Personae

Theseus: ruler of Athens

Hypolyta: queen of the Amazons. Recently defeated by Theseus and now engaged to him.

Philosstrate: their servant. (Props: a hunting horn to sound offstage, a list to present to Theseus)

Lysander: a young man of Athens, in love with Hermia.

Hermia: a young noblewoman of Athens, in love with Lysander.

Demetrius: a young nobleman of Athens; once in love with Helena, but now in love with Hermia.

Helena: Hermia's friend, still in love with Demetrius.

Egeus: Hermia's father, who wishes her to wed Demetrius.

Oberon: jealous king of the fairies. (Props: antidote flower to give to Puck)

Titania: proud queen of the fairies.

Puck: (aka Robin Goodfellow) shapechanging fairy and mischief-maker, servant to Oberon (Props: purple love flower)

Fairy: nameless fairy that meets with Puck; could be played by one of the other fairies if desired.

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed: fairies, attendants to Titania; come on stage with her in most scenes. (Props: Cobweb needs a sack or bag of honey. Moth needs some hay.)

Nick Bottom: weaver, overconfident actor who plays Pyramus. (Props: a donkey head or ears)

Peter Quince: carpenter, director of their play, plays the Prologue. (Props: scripts to give out)

Francis Flute: bellows-mender, plays Thisbe. (Props: a dress and a cloak for when he appears as Thisbe)

Robin Starveling: tailor, plays Moonshine. (Props: lantern)

Tom Snout: tinker (pot-mender), plays Wall.

Snug: joiner, plays the lion. (Props: lion's mane)

Staging:

- There must be a region near the back-centre stage where the fairies can go to become invisible. This can be lit with a different colour or a forest-pattern. Titania must also have a couch or bed to set up in this area, as she spends a lot of time asleep on stage. When the fairies are in the “invisible area,” the human characters cannot see them.
- There is quite a bit of singing in this play. Music could be written for it if desired, but the songs could also be dramatically recited as poetry.
- Two benches or other sitting implements are needed for the last act.
- It is traditional to stage the performance of Pyramus and Thisbe as speaking through Wall’s fingers. I have chosen to have them speak through Wall’s legs, as implied by the line “right and sinister,” and because it makes the jokes about chinks and stones and holes that much funnier.

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ACT I**SCENE I. Athens. The palace of THESEUS.**

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, and PHILOSTRATE

THESEUS Fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour draws on apace. Four happy days bring in another moon.

HIPPOLYTA: Four days quickly steep themselves in nights. The moon, like a silver bow, shall behold the night of our solemnities.

THESEUS: I woo'd thee with my sword, and won thy love doing thee injuries, but I will wed thee in another key. *(to Philostrate)* Go, Philostrate. Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments.

Exit PHILOSTRATE. Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS

THESEUS: Good Egeus. What's the news with thee?

EGEUS: Full of vexation come I, with complaint against my daughter Hermia. *(to Demetrius)* Stand forth, Demetrius. *(To Theseus)* My noble lord, this man hath my consent to marry her. *(To Lysander)* Stand forth, Lysander. *(To Theseus)* And my gracious duke, this man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child! I beg the ancient privilege of Athens: as she is mine, I may dispose of her, which shall be either to this gentleman *(pointing at Demetrius)* or to her death.

THESEUS: What say you, Hermia? Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA: So is Lysander. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

THESEUS: Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA: I do entreat your grace to pardon me. I know not by what power I am made bold, but I beseech your grace that I may know the worst that may befall me in this case, if I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS: Either to die the death or to abjure forever the society of men.

HERMIA: So will I live, so die, my lord, ere I will my virgin patent up unto *his* lordship (*pointing to Demetrius*).

THESEUS: Take time to pause; and, by the next new moon either prepare to die or else to wed Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS: (*to Lysander*) Lysander, yield thy crazed title to my certain right.

LYSANDER: You have her father's love, Demetrius. Let me have Hermia's. Do you marry *him*.

EGEUS: Scornful Lysander!

LYSANDER: My love is more than his, my fortunes every way as fairly rank'd.

THESEUS: Demetrius, come. And come, Egeus. For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself to fit your fancies to your father's will, or else the law of Athens yields you up to death.

Exeunt all but LYSANDER and HERMIA

LYSANDER: Hear me, Hermia. I have a widow aunt of great revenue. From Athens is her house remote seven leagues. There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee, and to that place the sharp Athenian law cannot pursue us. Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night, and in the wood will I stay for thee.

HERMIA: My good Lysander! I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow, to-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Enter HELENA

HERMIA: God speed, fair Helena!

HELENA: Call you me fair? *Your* eyes are lode-stars, and your tongue's sweet air more tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear. O, teach me with what art you sway the motion of Demetrius' heart!

HERMIA: I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA: O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

HERMIA: Take comfort: he no more shall see my face. Lysander and myself will fly this place.

LYSANDER: To-morrow night, through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

HERMIA: And in the wood -- There my Lysander and myself shall meet and thence from Athens turn away our eyes. Farewell, sweet playfellow. (*to Lysander*) Keep word, Lysander. We must starve our sight from lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

LYSANDER: I will, my Hermia. Helena, adieu.

Exit HERMIA and LYSANDER, separately

HELENA: Through Athens I am thought as fair as she. But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so. (*thinks for a minute; comes up with a plan*) I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight. Then to the wood will he to-morrow night pursue her. Herein mean I to have his sight thither and back again.

Exit

SCENE II. Athens. QUINCE'S house.

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING

QUINCE: Is all our company here?

BOTTOM: You were best to call them generally, man by man.

QUINCE: Marry, our play is the most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

BOTTOM: A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry.

QUINCE: You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM: That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes: I will move storms!

QUINCE: Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE: Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE: You must take Thisby on you.

FLUTE: Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

BOTTOM: Let me play Thisby too! I'll speak in a monstrous little voice.

QUINCE: No, no. You must play Pyramus. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

STARVELING: Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE: You must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

SNOUT: Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE: You, Pyramus' father. Myself, Thisby's father. Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part.

SNUG: Have you the lion's part written? I am slow of study.

BOTTOM: Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me.

QUINCE: You can play no part but Pyramus! (*handing out parts*) Masters, here are your parts. I am to entreat you to con them by tomorrow night, and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight.

BOTTOM: There we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains! Be perfect! Adieu!

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. A wood near Athens.

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy, and PUCK

PUCK: How now, spirit! Whither wander you?

Fairy: Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.

PUCK: The king doth keep his revels here to-night. Take heed the queen come not within his sight, for Oberon is passing fell and wrath, because that she as her attendant hath a lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king, and jealous Oberon would have the child. But she perforce withholds the loved boy, and now they never meet in grove or green.

Fairy: Either I mistake your shape and making quite, or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he that frights the maidens of the villagery? Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck, are not you he?

PUCK: Thou speak'st aright: I am that merry wanderer of the night! I jest to Oberon and make him smile when I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile. *(tellings a story as an example of his mischeif)* The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale, sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me. Then slip I from her bum, down topples she! *(spotting Oberon coming)* But, room, fairy! Here comes Oberon!

Fairy: And here my mistress!

Enter, from one side, OBERON; from the other, TITANIA, with her servant fairies.

OBERON: Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

TITANIA: What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence. I have forsworn his bed and company. *(to Oberon)* Why art thou here, come from the farthest Steppe of India, but that the bouncing Amazon to Theseus must be wedded, and you come to give their bed joy and prosperity?

OBERON: How canst thou thus for shame, Titania, glance at my credit with Hippolyta, knowing I know thy love to Theseus?

TITANIA: These are the forgeries of jealousy. Never, since the middle summer's spring, met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead. Therefore the winds have suck'd up from the sea contagious fogs, which falling in the land have every pelting river made so proud that they have overborne their continents. And thorough this distemperature we see the seasons alter their wonted liveries, and the 'mazed world, now knows not which is which.

OBERON: Do *you* amend it then. I do but beg a little changeling boy to be my henchman.

TITANIA: His mother was a votaress of my order, but she, being mortal, of that boy did die, and for her sake do I rear up her boy. And for her sake I will not part with him.

OBERON: Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

TITANIA: Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!

Exit TITANIA with her attendants.

OBERON: *(to Titania, though she can't hear him)* Thou shalt not from this grove till I torment thee for this injury. *(to Puck)* My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest that very time I saw,

young Cupid's fiery shaft quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon? (*Puck nods*) It fell upon a little western flower, now purple with love's wound. Fetch me that flower The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid will make or man or woman madly dote upon the next live creature that it sees.

PUCK: I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes.

Puck runs off.

OBERON: Having once this juice, I'll watch Titania when she is asleep, and drop the liquor of it in her eyes. And ere I take this charm from off her sight, I'll make her render up her page to me.

Enter DEMETRIUS with HELENA following him. Oberon steps back, becoming invisible, and they play the scene without noticing him.

DEMETRIUS: I love thee not, therefore pursue me not. Where is Lysander and fair Hermia? The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.

HELENA: You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant.

DEMETRIUS: Do I speak you fair? Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth tell you I do *not* love you?

HELENA: And even for that do I love you the more.

DEMETRIUS: I am sick when I do look on thee!

Demetrius storm offstage. Helena runs after him.

HELENA: And I am sick when I look not on you!

Both exit, leaving Oberon alone. Re-enter PUCK

OBERON: Hast thou the flower there?

PUCK: Ay, there it is. (*gives him the flower*)

OBERON: I pray thee, give it me. I know a bank where the wild thyme blows: there sleeps Titania sometime of the night. With the juice of this I'll streak her eyes, and make her full of hateful fantasies. (*gives a bit to Puck*) Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove. A sweet Athenian lady is in love with a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes, but do it when the next thing he espies may be the lady.

PUCK: Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

Exeunt in opposite directions.

SCENE II. Another part of the wood.

Enter TITANIA, with her fairy attendants. They place her bed or couch in the invisible area and she sits or lies down on it.

TITANIA: Come, now a roundel and a fairy song.

The fairies step up in front of Titania to perform for her.

Peaseblossom: You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.

Cobweb: Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Titania falls asleep.

Moth: Hence, away! Now all is well.

Exeunt Fairies. Oberon enters silently behind Titania and

squeezes the flower juice over her eyes.

OBERON: Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wakest, it is thy dear.
Wake when some vile thing is near.

Exit Oberon. Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA, panting and tired from a long hike.

LYSANDER: *(looking around)* To speak troth, I have forgot our way.

HERMIA: *(sitting down)* Be it so, Lysander. Find you out a bed.

LYSANDER: One turf shall serve as pillow for us both.

HERMIA: Nay, good Lysander. Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

LYSANDER: By your side no bed-room me deny.

HERMIA: *(firmer)* Gentle friend, for love and courtesy, lie further off.

LYSANDER: *(picks a spot a few feet away)* Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

They sleep. Enter PUCK, looking around. He spots Lysander and grins.

PUCK: Weeds of Athens he doth wear. This is he, my master said.

He bends over Lysander and puts love potion on his eyes.

PUCK: Churl, upon thy eyes I throw all the power this charm doth owe.

Exit, giggling. Enter DEMETRIUS, running from HELENA, who follows.

HELENA: Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS: I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus!

Demetrius runs off the opposite way. Helena stops to catch her breath.

HELENA: O, I am out of breath in this fond chase! *(sees Lysander)* Lysander! on the ground! *(shaking him)* Lysander if you live, good sir, awake.

Lysander wakes, sees Helena, and is overcome with love.

LYSANDER: *(takes her hand)* And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake. *(looks around, suddenly angry)* Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word is that vile name to perish on my sword!

HELENA: *(restraining him)* Do not say so, Lysander! Hermia still loves you: then be content.

LYSANDER: Content with Hermia? I do repent the tedious minutes I with her have spent. Not Hermia but Helena I love. Who will not change a raven for a dove?

HELENA: *(outraged)* Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born? O, that a lady, of one man refused, should of another therefore be abused!

She turns from him and storms offstage.

LYSANDER: *(to the gods)* All my powers, address your love and might to honour Helen and to be her knight!

He runs after Helena. Hermia wakes, looks around and finds herself alone.

HERMIA: Lysander? (*gets up and looks for him*) Alack, where are you? Speak, of all loves! I well perceive you all not nigh. Either death or you I'll find immediately.

She exits the wrong way. Titania remains sleeping on stage

ACT III

SCENE I. The wood.

Titania is still sleeping. Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING, with their scripts.

BOTTOM: Are we all met?

QUINCE: Here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. We will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

BOTTOM: Peter Quince, there are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide.

STARVELING: I believe we must leave the killing out.

BOTTOM: Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed.

QUINCE: (*making a note*) Well, we will have such a prologue!

SNOUT: Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

BOTTOM: To bring in a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing.

SNOUT: Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

BOTTOM: Nay, you must name his name and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

QUINCE: Well it shall be so. But there is two hard things, that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber, for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

SNOUT: Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM: A calendar, a calendar!

QUINCE: One must come in with a lanthorn, and say he comes to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

BOTTOM: Some man or other must present Wall!

QUINCE: If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin.

Enter PUCK into the invisible area. He crouches in front of Titania, watching the players.

PUCK: What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here?

BOTTOM: *(clears his throat and completely overacts his lines)* “Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear. *(pretends to hear something)* But hark, a voice! By and by I will to thee appear.”

Exit, leaving their pretend stage. Puck sneaks off after him.

FLUTE: *(also clears throat and completely overacts)* “Most radiant Pyramus, as true as truest horse that yet would never tire, I'll meet thee at Ninny's tomb.”

QUINCE: 'Ninus' tomb,' man. Pyramus, enter. Your cue is past.

Re-enter PUCK, sneaking into the invisible area, and BOTTOM nearer the front, wearing a donkey head or ears.

BOTTOM: *(acting)* “If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.”

The players gasp at Bottom's appearance.

QUINCE: O monstrous! Fly, masters! Help!

Exeunt QUINCE, SNUG, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING, terrified. Puck laughs at them all.

PUCK: I'll lead you about a round!

Exit after the fleeing actors.

BOTTOM: Why do they run away? *(thinks for a minute)* I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me, but I will not stir from this place, do what they can!

Titania wakes up, blink, sees Bottom and falls madly in love.

TITANIA: *(aside)* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

BOTTOM: *(singing)* The finch, the sparrow and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay—

He spots Titania looking at him, and stops abruptly.

TITANIA: I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again. Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note. So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape.

BOTTOM: Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days.

TITANIA: Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

BOTTOM: Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

TITANIA: Out of this wood do not desire to go. Thou shalt remain

here, whether thou wilt or no. (*calls for her attendants*)
Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED

PEASEBLOSSOM: Ready.

COBWEB: And I.

MOTH: And I.

MUSTARDSEED: And I.

TITANIA: Be kind and courteous to this gentleman.

They all kneel before Bottom.

TITANIA: Lead him to my bower. Tie up my love's tongue. Bring him silently.

Titania rises and walks offstage. The fairies gather around Bottom and force him off after her. He tried to speak and they muffle him. Two fairies carry off Titania's bed.

SCENE II. Another part of the wood.

Enter OBERON

OBERON: I wonder if Titania be awaked. Then, what it was that next came in her eye, which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter PUCK

OBERON: How now, mad spirit!

PUCK: My mistress with a monster is in love. While she was in her dull and sleeping hour, a crew of patches, rude mechanicals,

were met together to rehearse a play. The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort, forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake when I did him at this advantage take -- an ass's nole I fixed on his head!
(*laughs*)

OBERON: This falls out better than I could devise. But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes with the love-juice?

PUCK: That is finish'd too.

Enter HERMIA running away, with DEMETRIUS

OBERON: Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

They retreat into the invisible area.

PUCK: This is the woman, but not this the man.

DEMETRIUS: O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?

HERMIA: If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep, plunge in the deep, and kill me too. Wilt thou give him me?

DEMETRIUS: I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA: Out, dog! out, cur! From thy hated presence part I so. See me no more!

Exit

DEMETRIUS: There is no following her in this fierce vein. Here therefore for a while I will remain.

Lies down and falls asleep.

OBERON: (*to Puck*) What hast thou done? About the wood go swifter than the wind. Helena of Athens look thou find. By some illusion bring her here.

PUCK: I go, I go.

Exit. Oberon steps forward and squeezes juice over Demetrius' eyes.

OBERON: Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.

Re-enter PUCK

PUCK: Captain of our fairy band, Helena is here at hand.

Enter HELENA, followed by a love-struck Lysander

LYSANDER: Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?

HELENA: These vows are Hermia's!

LYSANDER: I had no judgment when to her I swore.

Demetrius wakes, sees Helena, and falls madly in love.

DEMETRIUS: O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!

HELENA: O spite! I see you all are bent to set against me for your merriment.

LYSANDER: *(to Demetrius)* You are unkind, Demetrius. Be not so, for you love Hermia.

DEMETRIUS: Lysander, keep thy Hermia, I will none. If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.

Re-enter HERMIA

HERMIA: *(sees Lysander and breathes a sigh of relief)* Lysander, why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER: Why seek'st thou me? The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so.

HERMIA: *(shocked)* It cannot be!

HELENA: *(Aha!)* Lo, she is one of this confederacy! Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three to fashion this false sport. Injurious Hermia!

HERMIA: *(to Helena)* I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

HELENA: Have you not set Lysander to follow me and praise my eyes? And made your other love, Demetrius to call me goddess, nymph, divine?

HERMIA: I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA: Ay, *do* persevere! Counterfeit sad looks!

She turns to leave.

LYSANDER: Stay, gentle Helena.

DEMETRIUS: I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER: *(to Demetrius, in anger)* Hang off, thou cat, thou burr!

HERMIA: *(to Lysander)* Why are you grown so rude?

LYSANDER: *(to Hermia, in anger)* 'Tis no jest that I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA: O me! *(to Helena, in anger)* You thief of love! What, have you come by night and stolen my love's heart from him?

HELENA: Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA: Puppet? Thou painted maypole!

She attacks Helena.

HELENA: Let her not hurt me!

Lysander and Demetrius both step between her and Hermia, each trying to be the hero.

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

DEMETRIUS: No, she shall not.

HELENA: Though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA: *(struggling against the men, striking at Helena)* Let me come to her!

The men push her back.

LYSANDER: *(to Hermia)* Get you gone, you dwarf.

DEMETRIUS: *(to Demetrius)* Let her alone: speak not of Helena. Take not her part.

LYSANDER: *(challenging him)* Follow, if thou darest, to try whose right is most in Helena.

DEMETRIUS: Follow! Nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

Exeunt LYSANDER and DEMETRIUS, posturing to fight each other.

HELENA: *(to Hermia)* I will not trust you, I, nor longer stay in your curst company.

Exit after the men.

HERMIA: I am amazed, and know not what to say.

Exit after the men. In the back, Oberon is frustrated. Puck is still quite happy with the mischief he's made.

OBERON: This is thy negligence.

PUCK: Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook. So far, am I glad it so did sort as this. Their jangling I esteem a sport.

OBERON: Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight. Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night.

Puck works some magic and the lights dim. The humans will be blinded by the dark and unable to see.

OBERON: Lead these testy rivals so astray as one come not within another's way, till o'er their brows come death-counterfeiting sleep. *(gives him a different flower – an antidote)* Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye, to take from thence all error. Whiles I in this affair do thee employ, I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy.

PUCK: My fairy lord, this must be done with haste, for yonder shines Aurora's harbinger. *(referring to the dawn)*

OBERON: Make no delay.

Exit

PUCK: I will lead them up and down.

Re-enter LYSANDER. Puck may run around the whole stage unseen during this part, if desired.

LYSANDER: Where art thou, proud Demetrius?

PUCK: *(mimicking Demetrius)* Here, villain, drawn and ready!

LYSANDER: I will be with thee straight.

Exit LYSANDER, as if following the voice. Re-enter DEMETRIUS

DEMETRIUS: Lysander! Where dost thou hide thy head?

PUCK: Come, recreant. I'll whip thee with a rod.

DEMETRIUS: Yea, art thou there?

Puck runs off one way, and Demetrius follows, thinking it's Lysander running away. Re-enter LYSANDER, tired from running through the dark.

LYSANDER: When I come where he calls, then he is gone. Here will rest me.

Lies down and falls asleep at the front of the stage. Re-enter PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

PUCK Ho, ho! Coward!

DEMETRIUS: Thou shalt buy this dear, if ever I thy face by daylight see. By day's approach look to be visited.

Lies down and falls asleep at front. Re-enter HELENA.

HELENA: O long and tedious night! Sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye, steal me awhile from mine own company.

Lies down and sleeps at front.

PUCK: Yet but three? Come one more.

Re-enter HERMIA.

HERMIA: My legs can keep no pace with my desires. Here will I

rest me till the break of day.

Lies down and sleeps at front. Puck creeps up towards the sleeping Demetrius, with the antidote flower.

PUCK: On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
To...

He stops, realizes he's about to put the antidote on the wrong person, and moves over to Lysander.

PUCK: ...your eye.

He squeezes the juice on LYSANDER's eyes

PUCK: Jack shall have Jill. Nought shall go ill.

Exit. The four lovers remain on stage, sleeping. Lights come back up for next scene.

ACT IV

SCENE I. The same.

Enter TITANIA and BOTTOM; PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, MUSTARDSEED. Again, two fairies bring out Titania's bed. OBERON enters behind, unseen

TITANIA: *(to Bottom)* Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed.

Bottom sits down.

BOTTOM: Scratch my head Peaseblossom. *(he does)* Mounsieur Cobweb bring me the honey-bag. *(he does so)* Mounsieur Mustardseed, help to scratch. I must to the barber's, monsieur, for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face.

TITANIA: Say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

BOTTOM: I could munch your good dry oats. I have a great desire to a bottle of hay. *(Moth produces some hay and Bottom munches on it)* I have an exposition of sleep come upon me.

TITANIA: Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. Fairies, begone.

Exeunt fairies. Titania sits with Bottom and Bottom falls asleep on her shoulder. Titania sleeps as well. Enter PUCK. Oberon steps up from the invisible area.

OBERON: Her dotage now I do begin to pity. When I had at my pleasure taunted her and she in mild terms begg'd my patience, I then did ask of her her changeling child, which straight she gave me. I will release the fairy queen.

Oberon spreads the antidote on Titania's eyes.

OBERON: Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower hath such force and blessed power. Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.

TITANIA: *(waking)* My Oberon! What visions have I seen! Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

OBERON: *(pointing to Bottom)* There lies your love.

TITANIA: *(jumps away from him)* O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

OBERON: Robin, take off this head.

Puck takes Bottom's costume, leaving him looking normal again.

OBERON: Come, my queen, take hands with me. Now thou and I are new in amity.

TITANIA: Come, my lord, and in our flight, tell me how it came this night that I sleeping here was found with these mortals on the ground.

Titania and Oberon leave together, followed by Puck. Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS and PHILOSTRATE.

HIPPOLYTA: *(making conversation)* I was with Hercules and Cadmus once, when in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear with hounds of Sparta.

THESEUS: My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind. *(sees the four lovers lying on the ground)* But, soft! What nymphs are these?

EGEUS: *(pointing to them)* My lord, this is my daughter here asleep!

THESEUS: *(to Philostrate)* Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.

Philostrate goes off. A horn sounds. LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA, and HERMIA wake up.

THESEUS: Good morrow, friends. How comes this gentle concord in the world, to sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

LYSANDER: My lord, I swear I cannot truly say how I came here. I came with Hermia hither: our intent was to be gone from Athens.

EGEUS: Enough, my lord. I beg the law upon his head. They would have stolen away.

DEMETRIUS: Fair Helen told me of their stealth. I wot not by what power, my love to Hermia melted as the snow. And all the object and the pleasure of mine eye is only Helena.

THESEUS: *(a bit confused)* Of this discourse we more will hear anon. *(to Egeus)* Egeus, I will overbear your will, for in the temple by and by with us these couples shall eternally be knit.

Exeunt everyone but Bottom. Bottom wakes up, yawns and stretches.

BOTTOM: *(addressing Quince, who isn't there)* When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer! *(looks around, finds himself alone)* I have had a dream. Past the wit of man to say what dream it was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called "Bottom's Dream" and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke!

Exit

SCENE II. Athens. QUINCE'S house.

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING

QUINCE: Have you sent to Bottom's house ?

FLUTE: If he come not, then the play is marred.

Enter SNUG

SNUG: Masters, the duke is coming from the temple!

FLUTE: O sweet bully Bottom!

Enter BOTTOM, as if nothing had happened

BOTTOM: Where are these lads?

QUINCE: Bottom!

BOTTOM: Not a word of me. Get your apparel together, for the short and the long is our play is preferred. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath. Go, away!

Exeunt. The lighting changes as the invisible area is no longer needed.

ACT V

SCENE I. Athens. The palace of THESEUS.

*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE.
Philostrate and perhaps other servants set up benches for everyone
towards the back.*

HIPPOLYTA: *(making conversation)* 'Tis strange my Theseus,
what these lovers speak of.

THESEUS: More strange than true. I never may believe these
antique fables.

HIPPOLYTA: But all the story of the night told overgrows to
something of great constancy.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, and HELENA

THESEUS: Joy, gentle friends! *(to Philostrate)* Come now, what
revels are in hand?

Philostrate presents him with a list.

PHILOSTRATE: Make choice of which your highness will see
first.

THESEUS: *(reads the list, then points to one)* "A tedious brief
scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe." Tedious and brief!
What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE: Hard-handed men that work in Athens here.

THESEUS: And we will hear it. Go, bring them in.

Exit PHILOSTRATE

THESEUS: Our sport shall be to take what they mistake.

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE

PHILOSTRATE: So please your grace, the Prologue is address'd.

*Enter QUINCE as the Prologue. All the rude mechanicals
should act badly – too loud or over-dramatic, with ridiculous
accents or fumbling through their lines.*

Prologue: *(a halting voice)* If we offend. It is with our good will.
Our true intent is. All for your delight we are not here. That you
should here repent you. The actors are at hand.

LYSANDER: He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt.

Enter Pyramus and Thisbe, Wall, Moonshine, and Lion.

Prologue: Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show. *(points)*
This man is Pyramus, this beauteous lady, Thisby. This man doth
present Wall, and through Wall's chink they are content to whisper.
This man, with lanthorn, presenteth Moonshine. This grisly beast,
Lion by name, the trusty Thisby did scare away.

Exeunt Prologue, Thisbe, Pyramus, Lion, and Moonshine

THESEUS: I wonder if the lion be to speak.

DEMETRIUS: One lion may, when many asses do.

Wall: In this same interlude it doth befall that I, one Snout by
name, present a wall, that had in it a crannied hole or chink. And
this the cranny is, *(points to his legs, right then left)* right and
sinister, through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

*He stands in centre-stage, facing towards where Thisbe will
enter, with his legs and arms spread, like a wall.*

DEMETRIUS: It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard
discourse, my lord.

Enter Pyramus

Pyramus: O night, which ever art when day is not! O night, O night! (*comes to the wall*) O sweet and lovely wall, show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eye! (*kneels down and puts his eye close to Wall's back end*) No Thisby do I see! Cused be thy stones, for thus deceiving me!

THESEUS: The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again.

Pyramus: (*breaking character and talking to Theseus*) No, in truth, sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me' is Thisby's cue.

Enter Thisbe, who kneels on wall's opposite side.

Thisbe: O wall, often hast thou heard my moans for parting my fair Pyramus and me! My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones.

Pyramus: I see a voice: now will I to the chink. (*looking almost directly into Wall's behind*) Thisby!

Thisbe: My love!

Pyramus: O kiss me through the hole of this vile wall!

Thisbe: I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

Pyramus: Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway?

Thisbe: 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay.

Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe

Wall: Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so. And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.

Exit

HIPPOLYTA: This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

Enter Lion and Moonshine

Lion: You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear, know that I, one Snug the joiner, am a lion-fell. If I should as lion come in strife into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

THESEUS: A very gentle beast, of a good conscience.

Moonshine: (*holding up his lantern*) This lanthorn doth the horned moon present, myself, the man i' the moon do seem to be.

LYSANDER: Proceed, Moon.

Moonshine: (*confused*) All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon.

Enter Thisbe

Thisbe: This is old Ninny's tomb. Where is my love?

Lion: (*roars*)

Thisbe runs off, screaming. She leaves her cloak behind.

DEMETRIUS: Well roared, Lion!

THESEUS: Well run, Thisbe!

HIPPOLYTA: Well shone, Moon!

The Lion bites and shakes Thisbe's cloak, and exits. Enter Pyramus

Pyramus: Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams. (*sees Thisbe's torn cloak*) But stay, O spite! What dreadful dole is here! (*crying dramatically to fate*) O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions

frame, since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear? Out, sword!
(pulls out his sword and stabs himself) Thus die I! Now am I dead!
Now die, die, die, die, die!

Dies loudly and with much expression.

THESEUS: With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Re-enter Thisbe

Thisbe: What, dead, my dove? O Pyramus! Come, trusty sword.
(takes Pyramus' sword and stabs herself) Thus Thisbe ends.
Adieu, adieu, adieu!

Dies, also loudly.

THESEUS: Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

DEMETRIUS: Ay, and Wall too.

Bottom sits up speaks to Theseus

BOTTOM: No assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue?

THESEUS: No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve. *(to the young lovers)* Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.

Exeunt all. Enter PUCK, behind the benches. Lights dim for the fairies.

PUCK: Now it is the time of night
That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
And we fairies, that do run
From the presence of the sun,

Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic.

Enter OBERON and TITANIA, hand in hand, with the fairies following.

OBERON: Through the house give gathering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire:
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier.

TITANIA: First, rehearse your song by rote
To each word a warbling note:
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place.

OBERON: Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be.

Exeunt OBERON, and TITANIA and all the fairies. Puck leaps over the benches and comes down to centre, to address the audience directly.

PUCK: If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.