

## Proscenium's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

George Woollands and Margaret Rendle founded Proscenium in 1924. The company's first production was the now little-known *The Tide*, by Basil McDonald Hastings. Since then the company has performed nearly two hundred and fifty plays, using Harrow as a base since 1945. In this time Proscenium has built up a strong reputation for performing challenging plays (both classic and contemporary) to a high standard. Our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1999 will be marked with a number of events, including publication of a commemorative brochure, a summer party for current and past members, and a gala dinner towards the end of the year. As we enter the new Millennium, we look forward to our next quarter of a century!

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### Our Next Production

#### **Blood Wedding**

By Federico Garcia Lorca

*Blood Wedding* is the earliest of Lorca's "Spanish Earth" trilogy, preceding *Yerma* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Lorca wrote the play from a 1928 newspaper report of a Granadan bride who had eloped with her lover on her wedding night. Behind the violence of the resulting story lie old family vendettas, and above it preternatural forces: blood, death and time. Lorca's use of poetry and music, and his belief in the crucial importance of rhythm, combine to form "dramatic poetry or poetic drama unsurpassed by any writer of our time".

"Lorca's emotional depth, imaginative scope and technical power make him not only one of modern Spain's greatest writers but also one of the few supreme creative artists of this century"

*Paul Binding*

At the Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre, November 3<sup>rd</sup>-6th 1999

For further details contact

**Proscenium Box Office      0181 954.7169**

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**In accordance with the requirements of the Council:**

**"Persons shall not be permitted to sit or stand in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any of the other gangways."**

**PROSCENIUM**

## **A Midsummer Night's Dream**

**by William Shakespeare**

May 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> 1999

Travellers Studio, Harrow Arts Centre

## A Midsummer Night's Dream

By William Shakespeare

THE COURT	
<b>Theseus</b> , <i>Duke of Athens</i>	David Pearson
<b>Hippolyta</b> , <i>his betrothed</i>	Angela Sutherland
<b>Egeus</b>	Morris Suckling
<b>Hermia</b> , <i>daughter of Egeus</i>	Clare Wooster
<b>Lysander</b>	Charles Anthony
<b>Demetrius</b>	Tim Taylor
<b>Helena</b>	Emma Davies
<b>Philostrate</b>	Morris Suckling
DENIZENS OF THE WOOD	
<b>Oberon</b> , <i>King of the Fairies</i>	Michael Williams
<b>Titania</b> , <i>Queen of the Fairies</i>	Isabelle Cartwright
<b>Indian Boy</b>	Sam Williams
<b>Puck</b>	Paul Davis
<b>Peaseblossom</b>	Susi Thornton
<b>Cobweb</b>	June Watkins
<b>Moth</b>	Crystal Anthony
<b>Mustardseed</b>	Linda Hampson
THE ARTISANS	
<b>Peter Quince</b>	Roderick Jones
<b>Nick Bottom</b>	Colin Hickman
<b>Francis Flute</b>	Sam Thornton
<b>Tom Snout</b>	David Watkins
<b>Snug</b>	Jim McDonald
<b>Robin Starveling</b>	Robert Ewen
<b>Directed by</b>	Kathleen Jones
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Margaret Rudolph
<b>Assistant Stage Managers</b>	Grainne McConnell, Michael Kilroy and Philip McCusker
<b>Set Designer</b>	Alan Glover
<b>Backstage Helper</b>	Thomas Glover
<b>Wardrobe &amp; Properties</b>	Jenny Glover
<b>Music</b>	Duncan Sykes and Alan Taff
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Colin Tufnell
<b>Dances</b>	Susi Thornton

The play takes place in Athens and in a wood nearby.

There will be one interval of fifteen minutes.

## A Stage History

Although the 1600 edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* claims that the play had "beene sundry times publickly acted", the first performance of which there is a definite record was at Court on New Year's Eve 1604. Restoration audiences did not take to the play – Pepys described an unsuccessful revival in 1662 as "the most insipid and ridiculous play that I ever saw in my life. I saw, I confess, some good dancing, and some handsome women, which was all my pleasure.." In its true form the play was virtually absent from the stage for over 200 years, although the play's memory was kept alive by a series of adaptations, most notably *The Fairy Queen* (1692) which had music by Purcell and text by Betterton.

The theatrical vogue for elaborate scenery during the nineteenth century led to a resurgence of interest. Productions by, among others, Charles Keen, took pains to create realistic settings using dioramas and gauze screens, and involving meticulous archeological research. Herbert Beerbohm Tree's 1911 production became the apogee of sumptuous Victorian stagecraft, notoriously employing live rabbits to reproduce English woodland. However in 1914 Harley Granville-Barker's groundbreaking Savoy Theatre production initiated a reaction against Victorian excesses. Working with an uncut text, Granville-Barker placed the emphasis on poetry and drama rather than scenic illusion. Twenty years later there was a return to magical effect with Max Reinhardt employing all the latest cinematic techniques in his Hollywood extravaganza starring Mickey Rooney as Puck and James Cagney as Bottom.

In 1954 George Devine provided a darker staging with metallic trees, bird-like fairies and an ape-like Puck. In 1958 Peter Hall conceived the play as part of a marriage feast inside an English manor house. Perhaps the most memorable and influential of recent productions was that of Peter Brook in 1970. In the tradition of Granville-Barker, Brook attempted a truly radical staging with an emphasis on theatricality rather than illusion. The result was a sexually charged adult reading of the play which was rapturously received by both critics and audiences around the world. The impact of Brook's *Dream* has allowed subsequent productions to display a greater awareness of the play's darker elements. In 1992 Robert Lepage turned the National's Olivier stage into a muddy shallow pool which physicalised the idea of being bewildered in a nightmare.

James Shaw  
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

## *Shakespeare's Sources*

Although *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is almost certainly an original play, Shakespeare has woven together strands from classical myth and popular folklore. For Theseus and Hippolyta he may have turned to North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* or to Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" (which also supplied material for *The Two Noble Kinsmen*), while the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe is found in Ovid, and the transformation of Bottom has obvious links with Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. Puck was a native English spirit well known in Warwickshire folktales.



### *Date*

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is generally agreed to have been written in 1594/5, probably to celebrate a wedding in a noble family, and perhaps one at which Queen Elizabeth herself was a guest. It was first printed in 1600.



### *Text*

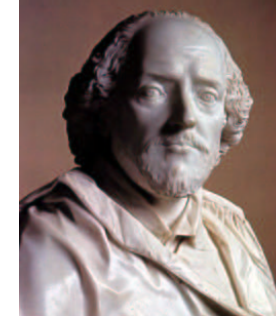
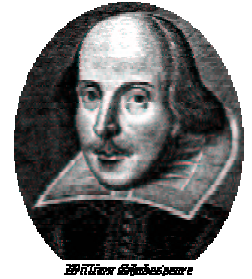
The text used in this production is the New Penguin Shakespeare, and is uncut.



## *Dreams*

*Dreams are rough copies of the working soul  
Yet uncorrected of the higher will  
So that men sometimes in their dreams confess  
An unsuspected, or forgotten self...  
Since Dreaming, Madness, Passion are akin  
In missing each that salutary rein  
Of reason and the grinding will of man.*

**Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600-1681)**

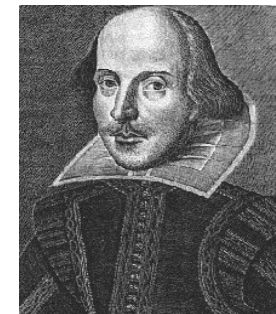


*Wise and sometimes terrible hints shall in them be  
thrown to the man out of a quite unknown  
intelligence... Sleep arms us with terrible freedom, so  
that every will rushes to a deed. A skillful man reads  
his dreams for his self-knowledge. However  
monstrous and grotesque their apparitions, they have  
substantial truth*

**Ralph Waldo Emerson (1883)**

*There is however a kind of profundity in sleep and it  
may usefully be consulted as an oracle in this way. It  
might be said that the voluntary power is suspended  
and things come upon us as unexpected revelations,  
which we keep out of our thoughts at other times. We  
are not hypocrites in our sleep.*

**William Hazlitt**



*Many and many a dream is mere confusion, a  
cobweb of no consequence at all. Two gates for  
ghostly dreams there are: one gateway of honest  
horn and one of ivory. Issuing by the ivory gate are  
dreams of glimmering illusion, fantasies, but those  
that come through solid polished horn may be borne  
out, if mortals only know them*

**Homer *The Odyssey***



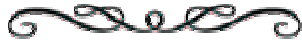
## *On Fairies...*

It is clear that before Shakespeare, fairies were traditionally regarded as beautiful but often malevolent beings, and of stature not dissimilar to that of adult men and women. And Dr Latham holds therefore that though all other references to fairies in the plays, with the exception of Mercutio's Queen Mab, agree or can be reconciled with this tiny conception, the tiny butterfly-like fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are "spirits of another sort". To quote his summing up:

"Whatever is homely or substantial or dangerous has been removed from the picture of them which Shakespeare paints, and only their rulers are still invested with formidable powers and uncertain tempers. Diminutive, pleasing, and picturesque sprites, with small garden names and small garden affairs, associated with moonbeams and butterflies, they present themselves as a new race of fairies."

And he claims that the influence of the *Dream* was so great that, at any rate in literary productions, Shakespeare's fairies almost completely took possession of human imagination with the result that the previous existence of their life-size malevolent predecessors is now forgotten.

*John Dover Wilson*



Through Titania and her train Shakespeare emphasises the fairies' innocence and delicacy; in Oberon and Puck, he expresses their darker side, potentially malevolent in the lore of the time... Oberon is not harmless; he is a prince from the furthest step of India, shadowy and exotic. Titania is a powerful force – "The summer still doth tend upon my state" – and Bottom is virtually her prisoner. The marital disturbances of these beings effects the weather and the natural cycles and results in floods, droughts and famines. Their benevolent presence in this play serves to emphasize the comic context only if they are recognised as potentially dangerous.

*David Young*



## *On Clowns...*

..Next come the clowns. It is necessary, I am ashamed to say, to remark that Clown does not, first of all, mean a person who tries to be funny. A clown is a countryman. Shakespeare presumably knew something about countrymen, and he made the simple discovery and put into practice for the first time in this play that, set down lovingly, your clown is better fun by far than mocked at; if indeed, apart from an actor's grimaces, he had then been funny at all. Later on Shakespeare did this, as he did most other things, better, but he never did it so simply. If Dogberry is as good, he hasn't, for me, quite the charm. There are little sketches in the last plays; that delightful person, for instance, at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra* with his "I wish you joy of the worm".

But from the moment Bottom, glowering mistrustful of Snug, asks, "Let me play the lion too," from that moment they have my heart, all five, forever. It is a little puzzling to find out just how bad their play is meant to be. Did Quince write it? If he is guilty of "Now am I dead", then is not the prologue a plagiarism? But a good deal of more respectable playwriting than this was plagiarism, as who knew better than Shakespeare? I suspect he was of two minds himself on that point, if of any at all...

*Harley Granville-Barker*



## *..And Lovers*

The *Dream* is the most erotic of Shakespeare's plays... A feature peculiar to Shakespeare is the suddenness of love. There is mutual fascination and infatuation from the very first glance, the first touch of hands. Love falls down like a hawk; the world has ceased to exist; the lovers see only each other. Love in Shakespeare fills the whole being with rapture and desire.

*Jan Kott*

Theseus and Hippolyta suggest not only mature love but a general principle of balance; he disbelieves the lovers but she is more open-minded; conversely, he is the more tolerant with the players. Each corrects the other's excesses but with tact and affection. They are not the play's final spokesmen for they have no means of comprehending what goes on in the woods; but their cool wisdom is as necessary to the play's total harmony as the desire of the lovers or the earnest good intentions of the clowns.

*Alexander Leggatt*