

PLAYS FOR
New Audiences

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

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

by William Shakespeare

Adapted by Toby Hulse

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Eric who plays **Theseus, Oberon** and **Snout (Wall)**

Peter who plays **Lysander** and **Flute (Thisbe)**

Robert who plays **Demetrius** and **Bottom (Pyramus)**

Cecil who plays **Puck** and **Snug (Lion)**

Phyllis who plays **Hippolyta, Titania** and **Quince**

Joan who plays **Hermia**

Nancy who plays **Helena**

NOT LICENSED FOR PRODUCTION

An Edwardian nursery.

Seven children – Eric, Peter, Robert, Cecil, Phyllis, Joan and Nancy – are trying to decide what play to put on.

Phyllis But why should we always do plays about soldiers or knights? Or about people killing each other?

Eric We did one about pirates.

Robert It's because I am very good at dying. And, as I am the oldest, I get to decide.

Phyllis I don't think that's quite fair.

Robert And I am the best actor.

Phyllis I think that, for once, we girls should get to decide what the play is about.

Eric I suppose it will be all about love.

Phyllis And since you said that, yes, it will. And queens.

Joan Beautiful maidens.

Nancy Magic and fairies!

Robert That sounds like absolute rot.

Peter I am not going to be a girl.

Eric I am not being a fairy.

Robert And I won't be in love. Even if it is pretend.

Eric And I do not want to get married.

Phyllis I think by the end everyone is going to get married.

The Boys No!

Phyllis Today you are going to do as I say. Or we girls will simply refuse to put on a play with you. Then think how disappointed Nanny will be when she comes to be the audience.

Robert All right then. For Nanny's sake.

Phyllis Good.

Robert But can I die in it? Please.

Phyllis If it means that you will join in...

Robert I will.

Phyllis Then you can die.

Robert Thank you.

Cecil I would like to do a play about animals. I could be a lion.

Joan Oh Cecil, your voice is not loud enough.

Cecil Yes it is – listen.

Cecil roars pathetically. The others laugh.

Phyllis We shall see what we can do. Now let's get started. In the first scene I am going to be Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, and Eric, you can be Theseus, the Duke of Athens.

Eric Theseus? Do I get to kill a minotaur?

Phyllis No. You get to marry me.

Eric I said that I was not getting married.

Phyllis You have to, it's in the story.

Eric All right, but only at the end of the play.

Phyllis In four days' time.

Eric At least I'm not a fairy.

Phyllis We'll see... Joan, you can be Hermia.

Joan Is Hermia a fair maiden?

Phyllis She is. And Nancy, you can be Helena.

Nancy Is Helena a fair maiden too?

Phyllis Of course.

Joan Only not quite so fair as Hermia.

Phyllis Peter, you will be Lysander. You are in love with Hermia.

Peter In love!

Phyllis Yes, in love. And Hermia loves you too.

Peter Well, at least, I'm not playing a girl.

Phyllis And Robert, you will be Demetrius.

Robert What's he? A wicked king?

Phyllis No. He is in love with Hermia as well.

Robert Absolute rot!

Joan But I can't love Lysander *and* Demetrius.

Phyllis Exactly. You want to marry Lysander, but your cruel father is forcing you to marry Demetrius.

Nancy Isn't anyone in love with me?

Joan No, because Helena is not quite as fair as Hermia.

Phyllis You are in love with Demetrius. But he doesn't love you back. He only has eyes for Helena.

Joan What did I tell you?

Nancy Then how will I end up getting married at the end?

Phyllis That's what the story's about.

Cecil Phyllis?

Phyllis I haven't forgotten you Cecil. You shall be our lion.

Cecil I should like to be a fairy as well.

The other boys glare at him in disbelief.

But a really naughty one, who gets up to all kinds of mischief.

Phyllis Then you can be a fairy. Now, are we ready to start? In the first scene Theseus is trying to get Hermia to follow her father's wishes and marry Demetrius, even though she doesn't want to. The story takes place a long, long time ago, so you have to speak in olden days language. And there's no killing.

The Palace of Theseus, Duke of Athens.

Theseus What say you, Hermia? Be advis'd fair maid.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Hermia So is Lysander.
If I refuse to wed Demetrius,
I do beseech your Grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case.

Theseus Either to die the death –

Phyllis – I said, no killing –

Theseus – or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Take time to pause –

Demetrius Relent, sweet Hermia; and Lysander, yield –

Lysander You have her father's love, Demetrius:
Let me have Hermia's; do you marry him.
[To **Theseus**.] I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
And, which is more,
I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia.
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul: and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatory,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

Theseus For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself

To fit your fancies to your father's will.

Hermia and Lysander apart.

Lysander The course of true love never did run smooth.
Hear me, Hermia. I have a widow aunt,
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee.
Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night;
And in the wood, there will I stay for thee.

Hermia I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow,
Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lysander Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter Helena.

Hermia God speed, fair Helena! Whither away?

Helena Call you me fair? That fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves your fair.
O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motions of Demetrius' heart.

Hermia Take comfort: he no more shall see my face.

Lysander Tomorrow night
Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

Hermia And in the wood
There my Lysander and myself shall meet.
Farewell, sweet playfellow; pray thou for us.
Keep word, Lysander.

Lysander I will, my Hermia. Helena, adieu.

Helena apart.

Helena Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.
But, ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine.
I will go and tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he, tomorrow night,
Pursue her; and for this intelligence

If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.

Joan I thought the play was going to be about fairies.

Phyllis It is, as well. I am going to Titania, the Queen of the Fairies. And Eric, you are Oberon, the King of the Fairies.

*The boys laugh at **Eric**.*

Eric I said that I wasn't going to be a fairy.

Phyllis Nanny...

Eric Then Oberon and Titania are in the middle of a fight...

Phyllis That's right.

Cecil Can I be a fairy too?

Phyllis In just a moment...

The woods at night.

Oberon Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

Titania What, jealous Oberon?
I have forsworn your company.

Oberon Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

***Titania** exits.*

Well, go thy way; thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.
My gentle Puck, come hither.

Phyllis Cecil, that's you: Puck.

***Puck** enters.*

Oberon Fetch me that flower; the herb I show'd thee once.
The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids 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