

AUDITION NOTICE

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

Director: Francesca Ellis

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Transported to the early 1970s, Shakespeare's riotous tale of magic and mayhem unfolds over a single summer's night. Four lovers, a feuding king and queen of the fairies and six amateur actors become embroiled in each other's stories as confusion reigns in the woods.

Key dates - Please list all dates you cannot attend on your audition form

- Reading:** **Monday 31st March 7.30pm** at the Mary Wallace Theatre.
- Auditions:**
1. For the roles of Theseus/Oberon, Hippolyta/Titania, Egeus, Bottom, Quince, Flute, Snug, Snout and Starveling: **Sunday 6th April 11:00am** at the Mary Wallace Theatre.
 2. For the roles of Puck, Philostrate, Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, Helena and Fairies: **Monday 7th April 7:30pm** at the Mary Wallace Theatre.
- Rehearsals:** **From Tuesday 6th May**, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday evenings 7:30; Sunday afternoons 2:30.
- Get in/Tech:** We build a theatre in York House Fountain Gardens on **Friday 11th July**, with as many of the company as possible called to help. Daytime and evening calls on **Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th July** for tech and dress rehearsals.
- Playing dates:** **Monday 14th to Saturday 19th July.**
- Get out:** Full company call on **Sunday 20th July.**

Characters

Theseus/Oberon Yin and yang. Two sides of the same coin. Both masterful, charismatic rulers: Oberon an ancient, timelessly powerful being whose grievances play out cosmically; Theseus a modern politician juggling state and personal life. In both cases, love for their spouse is deep and genuine – and in one case millennia old.

Hippolyta/Titania Similarly, both rulers in their own right, chafing against attempts by their spouse to have it all their own way. Hippolyta is modern, smart, a match for Theseus. Titania is earth mother, with sympathies and passions running deep. She both speaks some of Shakespeare's most beautiful verse and lands some of his broadest comedy – I need someone equally able to handle both.

How each represents two sides of one character – day and night? The dream or the nightmare version? – is to be discovered in rehearsals.

Athenians:

Egeus Long-time senior statesman of Athens, used to getting his own way and ready to invoke the letter of the law when his daughter disobeys him. *Possibly doubled*

Philostrate 'Master of mirth' for Theseus – Artistic Director? Party-planner? Or a bored bureaucrat who hates theatre? A scene-stealing cameo anyway. *Possibly doubled*

Hermia Defiant daughter of Egeus, more than ready to give up her sheltered, privileged upbringing for a romantic elopement to the woods. Used to things going her way and 'fierce' when they don't. Crucially – shorter than Helena.

Lysander Suitor to Hermia – rejected by Egeus. Affectionate, sensitive, poetic. Riding the gender and sartorial experimentation of the early 1970s, which feeds Egeus's conviction that he's not suitable for his daughter.

Demetrius Suitor to Hermia – preferred by Egeus. Also recent seducer of Helena. What led him to dump his first choice for her friend, and how the reunion with Helena can be a genuine happy ending for him, is a key to the character to be puzzled out in rehearsal. Bold, boastful, traditionally masculine.

Helena Childhood friend of Hermia, heartbroken (and baffled) by Demetrius's switch of affection. Various bitter and dejected, fearless and determined, she both feels things strongly and makes things happen, pursuing Demetrius and refusing to take no for an answer. Crucially – taller than Hermia.

The 'Rude Mechanicals' Over-60s Drama Group:

Quince Early facilitator of the burgeoning 1970s community theatre scene. Likely quite a bit younger than their over-60s company – visionary, enthusiastic, endlessly patient.

Nick Bottom Star amateur-thesp of the group – has played all the parts in his time. Passionate, pedantic, wildly over-confident... his apparent lack of self-awareness conceals depth of feeling and, despite his strong and spacious personality quirks, he is well-loved by the rest of the company and, of course, the audience.

The rest of the 'Mechanicals' characteristics are more up for grabs, and I'll predominantly be looking for strong offers and good comic instincts to assemble this glorious gang, but some points on each are:

Flute doesn't want to play a woman, but is cast as one

Snug is 'slow of study' (forgetful of lines?) and needs encouragement before stealing the show as the lion

Snout bluff, contributions are to-the-point

Starveling a dignified presence who doesn't waste words

In the woods:

Puck Timeless mischief-maker, fascinated by mortals, intends to do a good job when Oberon (bafflingly) employs them to sort out the lovers' differences. Loves accident and drama too much to be sorry when chaos ensues.

Possibly doubled with an Athenian

Fairies Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed Timeless spirits of the forest, proudly attendant on Titania but with powerful magic in their own right. Bemused (but amused) by the arrival of Bottom. Physical roles likely to include some movement, at least one will also sing. *May double to create the Athenian Court*

A note on gender

This is a 1970s Dream, and I am broadly open to cross-casting any part for the right actor, though the gender-politics of the play will mean some characters are harder to shift.

Could be any gender: Puck, Quince, Snug, Snout, Starveling, Philostrate.

Feels like masculine energy to me, but open to alternatives: Bottom, Egeus. Lysander comes into this category, and certainly is distinguished from Demetrius by a more modern take on gender/masculinity, with the important notes that Lysander a) is mistaken for Demetrius by Puck and b) loves Hermia.

Feels like feminine energy to me, but open to alternatives: Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed.

Would have to be an exceptionally convincing alternative offer: Theseus/Oberon, Hippolyta/Titania, Hermia, Helena, Demetrius, Flute.

The production will use a movement and intimacy director, who will work with the cast to establish physical relationships. The roles of Titania and Bottom will certainly involve physical intimacy. Hermia, Lysander, Helena and Demetrius likely will. Oberon may. Perhaps there's a burgeoning love story among the mechanicals? If you are considering one or more of these roles and would like to know more, please email Francesca.

The RSS actively encourages diversity and casting will not be constrained by any perceived ethnicity of the roles being auditioned

While auditions are open to all, please be aware that, if cast, you will be expected to become a member of the R.S.S. before the first rehearsal.

Audition application forms are available in the theatre, can be downloaded from the auditions page of the R.S.S. website, or can be completed online: www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk/acting.

Please return these to the Hon. Secretary at the theatre or by e-mail to secretary@rss-mwt.org.uk

Audition pieces are also available on the RSS website.