

ANALYSING THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING A DISTINCTIVE REHEARSAL
PROCESS AND INNOVATIVE FINAL PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO THE
DIRECTOR'S VISION FOR THE PLAY

By

Sarah Lucy Walker

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College of Arts and Law
School of English, Drama, American and Canadian Studies
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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship that a theatre director has with a play text. This is examined through looking at rehearsal techniques of established directors Peter Brook and Katie Mitchell, and analysing four professional productions; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Peter Brook (1970) and Peter Hall (2010), *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Rupert Goold (2010) and *Juliet and Her Romeo* directed by Tom Morris (2010.) Through analysing these Shakespearean productions in relation to the comments from critics on how well each director's interpretation was received, I will show why the director's vision is important when re-inventing classical texts. In relation to Brook and Mitchell, this study will show how their individual methods were incorporated into my own rehearsal room environment to create two unique interpretations of the same scenes from William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The overall findings of this practical and written study will show how a distinctive rehearsal process, combined with a new vision or adaptation for the text will create an innovative performance of even the oldest of works.

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List of Definitions or Abbreviations

The Dream or *Dream* is an abbreviation of William Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In Chapter One, references in brackets that do not include a page number have been obtained from an online source. Full URLs are stated in the list of works cited.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since Aeschylus supervised the presentation of his tragedies at the Athenian festivals of the fifth century BC, it is safe to assume that someone has had overall responsibility for the rehearsal of any play that has reached the stage

(Braun, 1982 p.7).

As Braun states, there have always been individuals responsible for putting on a performance, but the official role of the theatre director only ‘appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century’ (Pavis and Shantz, 1998 p.104). This study looks at the work of the director and examines how each process, by every director on any performance piece, will be carried out in a different way. As Martin Esslin states:

Each play script can be interpreted by a director in an infinite number of ways. Using the play script as a touchstone, the director creates a hypothetical production in her mind that is made concrete by the work of the theatre artists through the mise-en-scene (Esslin, as cited in Whitmore, 1994 p.15).

The key aim in my research is to look at how each production of selected play texts is individual and unique due to the artistic vision of the director. In order to show this, I began researching well known play texts and decided to focus both my practical and written thesis projects on texts by William Shakespeare. With my research, I wanted to look at two of the texts that I find allow the director to be creative in terms of their directorial vision, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The popularity of these texts enabled me to

find and access numerous adaptations and interpretations to use as examples of innovative ways to portray the text.

The productions I will be discussing are Peter Brook's 1970 and Peter Hall's 2010 productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Rupert Goold's and Tom Morris' 2010 productions of *Romeo and Juliet*. The reason behind choosing these particular productions was because of the individuality of each director's vision and how they use the text to make their performance original. These four productions were more innovative compared to others that came out from the research, such as John Caird's (1989) and Gregory Doran's (2005 and 2008) productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Michael Boyd's (2000) and Nancy Meckler's (2006) productions of *Romeo and Juliet* (RSC, 2008). In Chapter One I will discuss the critical reception of these performances in relation to how each director's vision complemented the text and how they were created through a distinctive rehearsal process. I will discuss these texts with reference to the following statement by W.B. Worthen (1997 p.72;): 'how much of a piece can he (the director) make of that vision which he sees staring back at him when he gazes into the ruffled pool of Shakespeare's play?'

Chapter 2 will focus on a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between directors, the text and the way in which it is worked on during each director's own individual rehearsal process. In this section I will be analysing the incorporation of the practices of two directors into my rehearsal process in order to create two distinctive performances of the same text. I chose to study the directing practices of Peter Brook and Katie Mitchell; my reasons for choosing these two directors were because they have very determined opinions on the way in which a text

should be approached, interpreted and reflected on the stage. A large number of Brook's rehearsals (particularly when referring to Shakespearean texts) focus on training his actors to deliver the dialogue in a specific way – the effect which Brook believes the playwright wanted to achieve.

On the other hand, Katie Mitchell's directing style relies on substantial research and in-depth knowledge of both the play and playwright. Her approach is individual because of the importance placed on historical accuracy to ensure her actors are fully aware of their characters' histories and motivations for each scene, of the specific location of each scene, and most importantly, that any questions they have about the text as a whole are answered in the rehearsal process to ensure an accurate portrayal of the character.

In this essay, I will demonstrate the importance of the role of the director in the world of theatre, and the substantial impact that they have due to their unique visions. Through analysing four professional performances and their directors, and using my own practical performance project as a key example, I will show how, if an audience member were to watch a different production of the same play, the experience would be different each time due to the specific directorial interpretations that have arisen through distinctive rehearsal processes.

CHAPTER ONE

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Peter Brook

Once in a very rare while, a theatrical production arrives that is going to be talked about as long as there is a theatre, a production that, for good or ill, is going to exert a major influence on the contemporary stage (Barnes, 1970, cited in Halio, 2003).

For Clive Barnes, Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, was one of those productions. Produced for the RSC in 1970, Brook's *Dream* was full of originality and vibrancy due to the innovative staging brought out of Brook's directorial concepts. His main aim was 'to reclaim it as an adult's play of celebration, but also of fright and darkness, desire and dream and magical powers which really were powerful' (Kustow, 2005, p.187). Brook's *Dream* was set in a large white box, 'ladders lead up the walls and on the top are scaffolds and rostrums from which actors can look down on the playing area like spectators at a bullfight.' (Barnes, 1970) 'The forest trees were coiled wires which fairies dropped from above, encircling the lovers, entangling them as they struggled on their way' (Croyden, 2003 p.59). This white box worked as a setting for Brook's piece as it allowed him to communicate his vision to the audience, and as Sally Jacobs, the designer for the production explained:

The white space provided both intimacy and distance; in addition it invited the audience to join in the fun. Or, as Brook said, the set became "a white opening" into which the audience's imagination could pour. (Jacobs, cited in Halio, 2003 p.58).

Each aesthetic element that was incorporated into the production was used to communicate Brook's aim of redefining the celebratory messages to ensure that 'magic was the key to the

production' (Halio, 2003 p.51). Brook's way of portraying this was to have the fairy characters as 'acrobats and jugglers. They swing in on trapezes; they amaze us with juggling tricks and Tarzan-like swings across the stage' (Barnes, 1970). The concept of a magical and some-what circus-like performance was further emphasized through Jacobs' design and use of costume:

The male lovers wore baggy trousers, and the females' tunic dresses. The fairies also wore simple tunics, except for the 3 leads...Oberon and Titania wore satin gowns and Puck a baggy jumpsuit, like a clown (Jacobs, cited in Halio, 2003 p.59).

Brook proved his passion for Shakespearean texts with *The Dream* through not changing or cutting any dialogue; 'for the simple reason that it seemed to me an absolutely perfect play' (Brook, cited in Croyden, 2003 p.52). Brook was able to create a new world and a new aesthetic vision of *The Dream*. As Charles Marowitz observed, 'Brook used Shakespeare's text as a trampoline on which to display some dazzling effects. It was still saying what the dream always says, but in a much flashier context' (Marowitz, 1970 cited in Halio, 2003 p.70).

Another way in which Brook used the text as a theatrical advantage for his vision was to use the convention of doubling with the following characters; Titania and Hippolyta, Puck and Philostrate and Peter Quince and Egeus (RSC, 2007). Clive Barnes described this convention as a point in which:

The play takes on a new and personal dimension. The fairies take on a new humanity and these human princelings, once so uninteresting, are now endowed with a different

mystery. (1970)

There has often been debate amongst scholars about Shakespeare's intended connection between the characters of Oberon and Titania and Theseus and Hippolyta, as Harold Bloom commented:

The relationship of Oberon and Titania forms a counterpoint with that of Theseus and Hippolyta in the other world. It appears that Titania has been a kind of guardian to Hippolyta and Oberon to Theseus. (2008, p.200)

Brook's production enhanced the mystery of this apparent connection between the two sets of characters, and by doubling other roles also, he allowed the audience to think about other potential links that Shakespeare may have intended.

There are many aspects of this production that made it different from other performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* due to the distinctive directing techniques of Brook, especially the vocal and physical exercises he devised and ran, (as explained in David Selborne's book *The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream: An Eye Witness Account of Peter Brook's Production From First Rehearsal to First Night*). Without this stylised vocal training and his strong opinions on both textual and aesthetic elements of each moment within the piece, this production may not have been as well received by the public and theatre critics and would not stand out as a new and innovative approach to *The Dream*. I will be explaining more about the techniques illustrated in Selborne's book in Chapter Two, particularly in relation to the exercises that I used for my own rehearsal process, such as singing the verse lines to extract a more lyrical side to the text.

In reference to W.B. Worthen's comment in relation to a director's intentions for a piece (quotation cited on page two), Brook's production of *The Dream* explored a new approach of how to represent the fairies and of their Athenian wood environment. By bringing out the fluidity of the language in order to enhance Shakespeare's story, Brook is demonstrating the importance of his audience understanding what the actors are saying, and reminding them that this is a fun and uplifting text.

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Peter Hall

Judi Dench, who played the role of Titania, was initially the main attraction of Hall's production, due to her star status. Dench was reprising the role from Hall's previous *Dream* produced for the RSC in 1962. Hall began his Elizabethan period performance by emphasizing the important characterisation of Dench's fairy queen character. As Benedict Nightingale (2010) observes, 'Hall sees Titania as Elizabeth I of roughly the year 1595: an ageing monarch with the passions of a much younger woman':

The idea is that Dench evidently fancies moonlighting as the Queen of the Fairies in addition to her capacity as Queen of England. In a short wordless prequel, she sweeps into a room where the Elizabethan actors are preparing, snatches up a part-script and signals that the performance proper may begin (Taylor, 2010).

This prologue by Hall instantly lets the audience know when and where the performance is set, making it a very simple and effective way to achieve his directorial aims of both setting and characterisation at the same time. By beginning the performance in this way Hall has made the production a play-within-a-play, the primary focus of which will be to allow

Dench's characterisation to shift between the roles of Elizabeth I and Titania in order to convey fully the contrast between the two characters that Hall seeks. The decision to portray Titania in this way symbolizes how important Hall considers this character to be; by having Dench dressed to look like Elizabeth I, Hall is symbolizing not only the importance of her fairy queen status, but is identifying that Titania should be treated with a higher level of respect than the other characters. There was originally a lot of speculation about Dench playing the role as it is often played by a much younger woman. However, the critics were proved wrong, as Michael Billington comments:

After a night spent with the ass, Dench skips and skitters around with post-coital glee and giggles delightedly at her loved one's every jest. Without any of the physical explicitness you sometimes find in modern productions, Dench simply conveys the ecstasy and ardour of a brief, if misplaced, passion. (2010)

Having played the role previously, Dench would have been in a position to re-enact the youthful side of this character and draw on her own experience, as she commented in an interview with Tim Teeman:

I could do it tonight. I played her at school, then the first fairy, then Hermia. Then I played Titania for Peter in 1962, then the film. If it's not stuck in there — “pointing to her head” — it's never going to be. Shakespeare is like a song, it keeps a very strong meter in your mind. (2009)

One of the reasons that this approach to the role was successful with the critics was due to the clear contrast between Dench's characters; the fact that she is dressed as Elizabeth I, yet has the mannerisms of a young and adventurous fairy Queen gives the audience the ability to

understand Hall's characterisation aims. Hall's directorial aim of creating a play-within-a-play concept incorporated the necessary separation between the two and ultimately allowed Dench to defy the age stereotype, making the character relate to her own youthful past. Charles Spencer (2010) commented that 'there is a radiance and humour to her performance that simply refuses to acknowledge her years.'

With regards to Hall's other directorial aim of telling Shakespeare's story in its original context, Hall set his production in the Elizabethan era, allowing his audience a glimpse of how the play would have been performed in the sixteenth century. This was emphasized through the use of authentic Elizabethan costumes, as John Thaxter commented:

Hall's staging is handsomely Elizabethan – black and silver costumes for the fairies, creamy whites for the lovers and rust shades for the nobles to match Queen Elizabeth's red wig. (2010)

Having produced numerous Shakespearean plays in his career, Hall knows what the important aspects of producing his plays are. His reasoning behind setting *The Dream* as Elizabethan is explained by Horatia Harrod:

Hall calls himself a "classicist": his reverence for the text is absolute. It has been the work of a lifetime trying to get across on stage what Shakespeare intended, to allow the playwright to speak. (2011)

Hall's set further emphasized this concept; 'the stage is mostly bare, but polished to a gleam, resembling an antique mirror, and around it are cut-outs that import the crowding shadows of

the forest — and of history’ (Hitchings, 2010). The simplicity of the staging works for Hall in two separate ways. It conveys a place as well as a time in history that is accurate for the character of Elizabeth I, but is also minimalistic so as not to ruin the image of the wood.

In reference to W.B. Worthen’s comment on a director’s intentions for a piece, as Hall had previously directed *The Dream*, this 2010 production allowed him to re-establish his original aims for a contemporary audience. Hall’s approach was to portray the importance of the fairies in relation to the other characters, due to how their environment of the wood affects people in numerous ways. The effect of having Judi Dench reprise her role allows Hall to show the audience that he still believes everything he had previously stated, but is now demonstrating this in a contemporary society through the use of a play-within-a-play concept, in order to represent how his directing techniques can alter the playing text to demonstrate a new element to his original interpretation.

Romeo and Juliet: Rupert Goold

As one of the most well-known of Shakespeare’s plays, *Romeo and Juliet* will always play to large audiences, but it is the way in which it is continually adapted and interpreted that keeps people interested year after year. Each production of this text will have something distinctive and unique that will make it stand out from the others. The importance and significance of the director is even more essential with such a widely performed text, and both of the productions explained in this chapter have a unique selling point which makes them memorable.

Rupert Goold's 2010 production stood out due to his decision to incorporate two different time periods on the stage together. Goold's directorial aim of contemporising the title characters in contrast to their Elizabethan families was evident through his choice of design elements and textual changes. His use of costume was an essential aesthetic component in relating his vision to the audience:

The entire supporting cast are dressed in lavish Elizabethan costume, right down to the last doublet and hose. Romeo and Juliet, however, are played in modern dress. Our gawky Juliet sports Converse trainers and t-shirts, and in our first glimpse of Romeo he is wearing a hoody and crumpled jeans (Spencer, 2010).

This convention of separating the two lovers from the other characters allowed Goold to represent his interpretation for the play to be set in two separate eras, in order to separate the two most important aspects of the production that represent Goold's vision, the feuding families, and the forbidden love between the two title characters.

The set for Goold's production, designed by Tom Scutt, worked alongside these different elements of costume to enhance this concept. Scutt used simple scenic objects that were not specific to either time period, such as 'a central platform as a domestic table and tomb; hanging braziers for the golden Capulet ball, and a stairway up to the balcony and down to the mausoleum' (Coveney, 2010). These simple scenic elements symbolize important scenes and locations of *Romeo and Juliet*, but also aesthetically convey Goold's specific vision of setting his piece in both the Elizabethan era and modern day.

Aside from the aesthetic components, Goold also used the text itself to portray his aims. The play begins with a young man walking onto the stage, 'who turns out to be Romeo wandering into a candlelit church while an electronic tour guide tells him he's in "la Bella Verona"' (Nightingale, 2010). The candlelit church can represent any period within history whereas the electronic tour guide immediately puts Romeo into the modern day. His directorial intentions are made evident throughout by his emphasis on the differences between the lovers and the rest of the cast, for example, as Fiona Mountford (2010) comments, 'the couple's illicit meeting at the Capulet's primal masked ball is a pitch-perfect blend of heightened romance and snogging at the school disco.' These decisions made by Goold capture the audience and lead them to his final twist at the end of the play:

As soon as Romeo and Juliet are dead the remaining characters appear in modern dress. We're no longer seeing them through the protagonists' eyes. The whole play moves into the modern world and police radios start crackling as if we're watching a CSI cop show (Spencer, 2010).

By choosing to bring the play into the world of the title characters, Goold's directorial aim has been achieved by revealing that the remaining characters can now understand how their families can live in peace in the modern day, as this is what the two lovers had been doing throughout. Goold leaves his audience with a sense of hope, that even though the protagonists did not survive, no one else will have to die in order for these two families to co-exist. This message of unity between the families comes across strongly, leaving a sense of compassion and regret, rather than simply loss:

This clever device gets to the heart of our modern experience of the play. Romeo and Juliet is set in a world remote from our own, where religious faith runs deep and

society has firm – if frequently breached – rules. But, in its portrayal of the wonder, passion and pain of first love, the play feels timeless. When we read *Romeo and Juliet*, we are simultaneously in the past and in the present, caught up in the drama itself and our own vivid memories of teenage love. Goold's staging allows us to experience this jolting double-take in the theatre (Spencer, 2010).

In order to create this illusion of the characters living in separate time periods, a lot of rehearsal room procedures would have been centred on making this connection believable to the audience. Goold's rehearsal room techniques will have had a substantial impact on the connection between the actors, as Patrick Stewart commented:

He will often watch a rehearsal not from the front, where traditionally directors sit, but from the side, or the back, or a corner - he doesn't sit in the power seat. He doesn't stamp himself on everything (Stewart, cited in Clapp, 2010).

Goold is a critical example of how a rehearsal process shapes the final performance, as, through his rehearsal room procedures of viewing the piece from all the different angles of the stage, he made his vision present in each textual and aesthetic element, which ultimately created a real sense of love and devotion between the two actors playing the lovers; *Romeo and Juliet* has always received criticism in performances due to critics not believing in the obsessive love of the title characters, as Charles Spencer comments:

The thrill of young passion is caught with beautiful warmth, tenderness and humour. The scenes between Sam Troughton's open-hearted, superbly spoken Romeo and Mariah Gale's deeply touching Juliet, who really does seem like a gawky teenager

suddenly illuminated and defined by love, achieve both rapt poetry and a palpable sexual charge. (2010)

This aspect of Goold's production is essential to conveying his directorial aim, as by choosing to set the protagonists in another era to the rest of the cast, Goold is focusing on their relationship as the main theme of the piece, and therefore his concept is reliant on the audience believing in their infatuation. Spencer also commented on the characteristics of Mariah Gale's Juliet, and how Goold's staging and overall concept had enforced more urgency into her portrayal of the character through her added obsession with death:

If Gale's performance is the finer of the two, it is because Juliet goes on the longer, harder dramatic journey, betrayed by her parents, let down by Friar Laurence and forced to fake her own suicide before enacting it for real. The sight of an actress who really does look 13 holding a knife to her throat and screaming "I long to die" chills the blood. (ibid)

The importance of Juliet's journey through the play signifies how much her feelings for Romeo have affected her, further emphasizing the importance of a credible connection between the two actors.

Overall, through his main directorial vision of setting the title characters in a separate time period to the rest of the cast, he was able to portray their love as separate from all the other themes of the play, making the audience believe it to be a real true love. In reference to W.B. Worthen's comment about a director's intentions, Shakespeare's lovers put themselves in another world when they fall in love, leaving behind their feuding families. Goold makes

them stand out in this piece so even though the story remains the same, the significance of their sacrifice is more apparent.

Juliet and Her Romeo: Tom Morris

This production was renamed in order to acknowledge the fact that it is an adaptation of the original text; '*Juliet and Her Romeo* is Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* turned upside down – or sideways. It sets the thwarted lovers in Verona all right, but Verona is the (peculiarly convincing) name of a care home for the elderly' (Clapp, 2010). Morris' directorial vision for his production is to show this iconic love story in a new light. People always see *Romeo and Juliet* as teenagers who don't understand love and rush into marriage and suicide. What Morris has done with this text is to change the nature of their love and the way in which their relationship is criticised.

The set for Morris' production sets the scene of the Verona care home for the elderly:

The day room of the home is furnished with objects cobbled together from most of the decades of the 20th Century. 1930s armchairs sit next to 60s Formica tables. A 70s standard lamp, a 1950s radiogram. At the same time there's evidence of medical paraphernalia; commodes, walking frames, oxygen tanks (Morris and O'Connor, 2010 p.11).

By incorporating furniture from diverse decades, Morris is creating his environment as a modern day care home, using costume to distinguish between those on the Montague (public)

and Capulet (private) wings: ‘the Montagues are humbly dressed in tartan dressing gowns and barefoot. The Capulets are visibly smarter wearing creased pyjamas, silk dressing gowns and carpet slippers’ (ibid p.13). The concept of having the characters in pyjamas and dressing gowns makes them look frail to the audience, so that the relationship between these two individuals is more moving as we see them not as vibrant teenagers who have their whole lives to be together. In *Juliet and Her Romeo*, the urgency and haste of their relationship seems more understandable, due to the age and physical condition of the couple; ‘they know just how to pull on the audience's collective heart-strings without over-doing things’ (Fraser, 2010).

The lovers are separated in this home initially because they reside in different wards, Romeo in the ‘NHS Montague’ (ibid) and Juliet residing in the ‘Private Health Care Capulet wing’ (ibid). Morris adapted some of the characters from the original text in order to fit in with his concept of the elderly. The characters in this production were adapted as follows:

Juliet (a widow), Tybalt (Her brother), Paris (wealthy but senile), Doctor (chief medical officer), Nurse, Rosaline (Young trainee nurse), Lawrence (Young chaplain), Ms Capulet (Juliet's daughter, forty-something businesswoman worried about the cost of her mother's care, and her inheritance) (Morris and O’Connor, 2010 p.10).

In order for Morris’ newly adapted characters to fully form throughout the play, some of the smaller storylines had to also be adapted; ‘there’s an explanatory prologue. Some passages – including, obviously, the nurse’s ramblings about Juliet as a tot – have been excised’ (Clapp, 2010).

Morris has still kept the characters and their relationships the same with the exception of Ms Capulet. His aim was not to change the messages of love and loss that Shakespeare conveys, but to emphasize them to further demonstrate the importance of realising the pressure on society to care for the elderly. Juliet's parents have always been portrayed as the villains, so this character twist reverses the roles and helps to make Morris' directorial aim clear to his audience:

It's clear why Juliet is under pressure to marry the rich Paris: Ms Capulet wants her mother off her hands so that she doesn't have to keep shelling out the home's fees (Clapp, 2010).

Understandably, the death of some of the key characters had to be reworked; instead of a sword-fight between Mercutio and Tybalt, for instance, 'a smack around the chops leads to a heart attack and Romeo smothering Tybalt in retaliation' (Fraser, 2010). The advantage of Morris being able to portray his vision with as few changes to the story and text as possible is to allow the audience to still experience *Romeo and Juliet* and empathise with the characters as they are expected to do, due to the emotional nature of the text.

Morris' concept creates a new central meaning for the text that:

examines the issues surrounding the UK as an ageing nation. Where will the money come from and who will provide us with care when we get older? Should the responsibility lie with the government or our children? (Fraser, 2010).

The directorial vision and intended messages are explained to the audience by the Nurse in the newly-written prologue:

Imagine for a moment we're in a country a bit like ours – but a few years in the future – and we're all their worrying like mad about how to look after our parents as they get older and frailer and the cost of care gets higher and higher (Morris and O'Connor, 2010 p.13).

The introduction of a new section of text allowed Morris to communicate his directorial vision from the start of the performance. The Nurse helps to set the scene and introduce the audience to the care home, the wards and some of the characters, but also helps to set up the rivalry between them, due to the fact that there is no longer any family loyalty to feud over; the nurse explains how:

When this lot were young, it was torn apart by a horrific civil war. The world has moved on, but in here, they still feel it, the ones that are left. They haven't forgotten – or forgiven. And they all know whose side they were on (ibid p.14).

The final message of direct address that the audience are left with is the key point which symbolizes Morris' directorial vision, demonstrating the importance of care for the elderly. Morris' interpretation is to put this across in a light hearted way, so that he is not telling his audience what they should do in their own future, but emphasizing this problem as well as conveying a new way of looking at this classic love story. As the nurse comments, 'whatever you do, don't look away. We'll all end up in here one day' (ibid p.14). In Morris' own words, the aim of creating this adaptation is to show how:

Some kind of taboo has developed about what older people are allowed to feel and behave. It seems quite poignant and transgressive in an odd way to dare to allow people who are older to fall in love (Morris 2010, as cited in *The Guardian*, 2010).

By changing the nature of this love story from teenagers to the elderly, Tom Morris has modernised the text in a different way to other productions. Care for the elderly is something that has become more of a prominent issue in society in recent years, and something that a lot of audience members will be able to relate to whether directly or indirectly. Morris has made this text relate to society today instead of hoping individual audience members will be able to relate to a specific moment or character, making his revised version of this play text widely accessible.

Morris' rehearsal process for this piece would have been considerably different from other productions, due to the fact that Morris has adapted Shakespeare's original work. Even though not much has been documented about Morris' own directing style, we learn a lot about his approach to directing through the final outcome of the performance. Morris is a director that sees something different in a text and plays on this in order to produce a successful and innovative adaptation.

In reference to W.B. Worthen's comment in relation to a director's intentions for a piece (quotation on page two), Morris' adaptation of the text communicated his vision to the audience from the beginning by changing the title, traditional setting and prologue. By adapting the original text instead of just changing the meaning and appearance of it, Morris

has made this production unique to his directing ability and contemporary within today's society in a way that is unexpected of a classic text.

CHAPTER 2

Peter Brook

After researching information on Peter Brook's own production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the previous chapter, I became intrigued by the directing approaches of Brook overall, and in particular his aims and intentions for *The Dream*. My directorial aim for the first of my two pieces was to test some of Peter Brook's techniques to see if they were successful in further developing an actor's understanding and relationship to the language of the text. For my practical project I selected sections from the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to make a shorter performance text.¹ I had two separate casts, one which I would work with on the text using rehearsal methods by Peter Brook, and the other group using Katie Mitchell's methods. My practice of using some of the rehearsal techniques of these two directors is to show how a director's vision and individual style within the rehearsal room can produce a new and exciting adaptation of a classic play text. The way in which a director works with the actors to create the final piece that the audience will see is what makes a piece individual; no two directors work in the same way and Brook and Mitchell are two key examples of the influence a director has on the text.

Peter Brook's *Dream* focused on emphasizing the magic of the production in relation to the characteristics of the fairies, and the actors' relationship with the language. As John Kane, who played the role of Puck in Brook's production explains:

¹ See appendix 1

What was novel in working with Peter was that he wanted the play to do things with us. It was very difficult for us to break down our desire to immediately seize on scenes and characters and start doing things with them (Kane, cited in Mitter, 1992 p.31).

What Kane is explaining here is the alternative approach that Brook took to his rehearsal process. In order for the actors to fully convey Brook's aim and interpretations, the rehearsals centred on learning about the text, what Shakespeare is trying to convey through the language and the best ways to convey this to the audience. As David Williams (1998 p.114) commented, 'in all his work, Brook is looking for a renewed theatre language as rich and alive as that of the Elizabethan theatre in general and of Shakespeare in particular.' To achieve this, Brook spent a large part of the rehearsal time preparing the actors vocally for the performance, (all of the exercises are explained in David Selborne's account *The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream: An Eye Witness Account of Peter Brook's Production From First Rehearsal to First Night.*) The main aim of using these specific vocal exercises was to try to enhance the nature of the story through allowing the audience to note how the actors actually speak the lines, and not just what the line itself means. This is an element that makes Brook's approach different from other theatre directors as he does not focus as much on characterisation and the intention behind the lines, but on their meaning, significance and importance within the scene. Robert Speaight commented on the quality of the spoken language in Brook's production:

Brook's way of approaching a Shakespearean text and working with the actors throughout the rehearsal process allows him to encourage them to say their lines how he believes they should be repeated in order to allow the audience to fully appreciate the fluidity of Shakespeare's verse. (cited in Halio, p.71)

In order to demonstrate how Brook's techniques bring out the fluidity of the language, in my own rehearsal process I incorporated the exercise of the actors singing the verse lines. For Brook, 'word singing was principally a means to discover lyrical impulse' (Selborne, 1982 p.21). This exercise was intriguing to me as a means of developing an interesting rhythmic way to speak the language fluidly.

I used this technique near the start of the rehearsal process when we were primarily focusing on text work. I chose a passage of verse for each actor from the script and gave them time to think about what their character was saying and how they could communicate this through tone and pace in a song. Trying to do this exercise early on in rehearsals proved difficult for the actors as they were still getting used to the text and trying to learn who their characters were, and they did not feel the benefits of developing a renewed and more informed way of speaking Shakespearean verse. However, towards the end of the rehearsals I went back to this exercise whilst doing a run through of the piece, and used it as an added convention to demonstrate my intentions if the meaning of a particular line was not being communicated in the best way or if it could be expressed with more fluidity. I felt that it was important to come back to this exercise as the language proved to be a barrier for some of the actors in the early stages of rehearsals. The more exercises that were incorporated, the easier it became for them to stay in character due to their increased ability to understand what Shakespeare is communicating through the verse. By incorporating the word singing into a practical rehearsal, the actors felt a lot more comfortable as they were actively playing the role and felt the lines flowing more naturally. I found that this exercise worked particularly well for the

female characters in the parts of the text when they are tired, as the singing provided a rhythm which they remembered and helped to make the lines drift more easily into a sleeping state.

Another exercise described by Selborne that I tried in my own rehearsal process was using non - verbal language as a means of communication and storytelling:

Brook declares the actor must exercise himself to communicate by sounds which are not verbal. This is to be done by throwing a sound from person to person, catching it, using and passing it on together (Selborne, 1982 p.11).

This was a warm-up exercise for my actors in the later stages of rehearsals. We passed a noise around the circle that represented an emotion that was felt by a character and anyone could change that emotion by changing the sound that was communicated. This became a highly effective task that the actors took to instantly and was easy to develop over time as it allowed them to build a level of understanding with each other which was essential throughout the performance itself. It was also a further way to encourage the actors to think about the characters' emotions throughout the piece, which ultimately enhanced the audience's understanding and relation to the story.

Both of the exercises explained above brought a new element to the way in which the actors vocally told the story, and worked well within the overall rehearsal process as activities which the actors felt helped them to develop their roles, and develop a deeper understanding of the meanings behind the language. As Brook himself commented, 'it is not necessary to follow

the lines intellectually. One must feel the passage of the words slipping in and out of plot, and in and out of action' (Brook, cited in Selborne, 1982 p.23). Brook's reasoning behind his rehearsal techniques is to train his actors in an innovative way; he described his thoughts on the relationship between actors and their text to John Heilpern in *Conference of the Birds*. It was this relationship between the actors and the text that I was able to create through the rehearsal process:

A cat actually thinks visibly. If you watch him jump on a shelf, the wish to jump and the action of jumping are one and the same thing. There's no division. A thought animates his whole body. (Brook, cited in Heilpern, 1977 p.146),

As Heilpern explains:

It's in exactly the same way that Brook's exercises try to train the actor. The actor is trained to become so organically related within himself, he thinks completely with his body. Brook is referring to that ideal state where there exists no time lapse between inner and outer reaction: impulse and action are one.

(Heilpern, *ibid*, p.147)

This analogy from Brook helped me to understand the thought process behind his rehearsal techniques and further allowed me to encourage the actors to work within this way in order to create a performance that had a clear story and obvious relationship with its audience. I used Brook's analogy of the cat to mean that the actors need to live the situation for the first time in the final performance as if it were real to them. The vocal exercises that were used added to

the physicality of their movement around the theatre space, so that the essential element that was being portrayed to the audience was the story itself.

As referred to in the previous chapter, Brook's own production of *The Dream* involved an innovative use of staging which focused on the way in which the fairies used acrobatics and circus props to create the environment of the wood. This was how Brook emphasized the playfulness of the text, by creating a space that allowed them to be more mischievous, a concept that I was keen to echo in my own performance, but in a different way. My decisions as a director on the aesthetics of the performance were influenced by Brook's approach of ensuring that the story is the clearest message communicated to the audience. It was important to aid the actors through having a set that resembled the environment, costumes that distinguished the characters from each other, and sound and lighting that would enhance the overall setting and environment. I decided to set this section as a promenade performance as it involved the audience more in the journey of the text both physically and mentally through the visual and sensual components. This concept would also emphasize the story to the audience, as they would feel more involved within the piece. The idea of using non-conventional staging was emphasized by Brook in *There Are No Secrets*:

A play in the round, or in any non-proscenium space where the audience surrounds the actors often have a naturalness and a vitality quite different from what a frontal, picture-frame theatre can offer (1993 p.37).

I realised that in relation to using non-conventional staging the use of promenade would be the most effective way to achieve my aims for the piece, to allow the audience to experience

the wood environment along with the actors. Brook's analogy of the cat also helped in relation to the blocking of this promenade piece; each section of text took place in a separate area of the space which was a natural move for the actors, so that it was more believable as a journey through the wood. The use of green lighting and the scenic dressing of leaves around the performance space also helped the audience to understand that they were being taken on a journey with the actors. The costumes that the actors wore were a combination of Elizabethan and modern dress. This was because the piece did not need to resemble any particular time period throughout by not committing to a particular style of costume; the audience are given the impression that the action could take place at any time.

The other theatrical elements I included to emphasize this were the bracelets that were given by Puck to Lysander and Demetrius once under the spell. These were used as a constant reminder to the audience that their affections, the play and the environment have all been manipulated and enchanted. The instruments that were played by the actors throughout allowed them to be more involved in creating this other world for the audience and added an extra element of a sense of community for the characters in the wood as they become a part of its atmosphere.

Finally using the character of Oberon as a voiceover changed the nature of the relationship between the two fairies. By not having Oberon as a physical presence, the actress playing Puck had to relate to the voice and react to the way in which Oberon was speaking. The reactions of Puck to the voiceover allowed the audience to see her opinion of him; I decided

that having Puck react in a scared or worried manner would help the audience to feel the same way about him, making the character more mysterious and further questioning the atmosphere of the wood itself. Oberon was thereby given a lot more authority when giving orders to Puck, and made the wood which the actors and audience were standing in a more surreal environment as they are all hearing voices as if from nowhere. All of these decisions were a combination of my directorial vision and the theatrical practices of Peter Brook and worked alongside the rehearsal approaches to the text to create a performance with a new interpretation.

Katie Mitchell

As Katie Mitchell states in the introduction to her book, *The Director's Craft: A Handbook for the Theatre*, the director must be 'interested in building an imaginary world for the actors to inhabit, using ingredients from real life and circumstances suggested by the text itself' (Mitchell, 2009, p.2). In order to create this world for the actors the director has to have a comprehensive knowledge of all the aspects of the performance. Mitchell places a lot of emphasis on the director to study the text, beginning with writing lists of facts and questions based on all aspects of the story and the text in order to note any research that needs to be undertaken.² For Mitchell, the key aspects which the director and actors should be fully aware of are the lives of their characters, the location/environment and the characters' current and past relationships. I undertook the tasks outlined in *The Director's Craft* before the rehearsal process began, which included research into the life of the playwright³, the immediate

² See appendix 2

³ See appendix 3

circumstances before each scene⁴ and the key events that happened before and during the play⁵. This entire process benefited me as the director by developing my understanding of the text, allowing me to be more confident in portraying my directorial aims successfully, the aims for this piece being to correctly communicate the knowledge gained of the environment, period, time and character relationships in order to make a difference to each actor's overall performance ability.

The rehearsal process for this piece was largely built around the actors completing their own research and incorporating this into the final performance. The first few weeks of the process involved reading the play frequently and discussing where the characters were and how they were thinking at specific times, and also their character back histories and relationships. As Mitchell states:

Getting the actors to read the play for back history facts and questions is the most efficient way of establishing a rehearsal room culture in which everyone thinks about the play precisely and objectively (2009, p.143).

The reason why I wanted to focus so strongly on the actor's research was because I had gained so much information from completing the pre-rehearsal tasks, such as looking into the lives of the characters prior to the beginning of the play, how their friendship/relationships influenced their behaviour throughout the text and how the wood environment could be portrayed on the stage. I strongly believed Mitchell's statement that the best way for the actors to get the most out of this experience was for them to fully commit to researching and developing a real life character in their minds whom they could embody:

⁴ See appendix 4

⁵ See appendix 5

It helps them to go on a journey to find the information, and the discovery can be satisfying. This feeling of personal satisfaction means that the information lodges in their thoughts more strongly (ibid, 2009, p.146).

I watched many film adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, (such as the 1935 adaptation directed by William Dieterle and Max Reinhardt, the 1981 BBC adaptation directed by Elijah Moshinsky and the 1999 film directed by Michael Hoffman). These film adaptations benefited me when discussing how the characters would interact with each other, and also how they moved around the space purposefully.

The reason why Mitchell's approach is unlike other directors is due to the way all of this research is incorporated into the rehearsals during the blocking stages. The main concept that I had to focus on during this stage was to create a more realistic environment for the piece, but I also had to ensure that the blocking did not limit the actor's creative input. Katie Mitchell's approach to blocking focuses on:

Balancing well focused action for the audience with fluid and unselfconscious movement by the characters in the situation. If you bluntly tell an actor where to stand so that the audience will see them, it can increase their thinking about the audience and therefore reduce their thinking about the character in the situation (2009, p.179).

In order to commit to this style of blocking I spent my time outside of rehearsals looking over the main pieces of action and where all of the actors needed to be at specific moments; however some of the passages of dialogue, for example, the scene when Lysander awakes and falls in love with Helena, I felt would benefit from some input from the actors playing those roles. In the rehearsal for this particular scene, I first let the actors walk it through and see

what options the space gave them, and then we looked in more detail at what worked and did not work. The key things that were important to portray were the almost obsessive nature of Lysander's affections, and Helena's confused reaction to this. This approach really benefited the actors, as with their increasing knowledge of the environment, and of their characters, I did not wish to impair the way in which they performed the scene due to not being completely confident in their movements. The actors gave me the input on what felt natural for their character, and I thought about the aesthetic of portraying Lysander's over the top emotions. By allowing the actor playing Lysander to demonstrate how she felt her character would behave in this moment, I was able to choreograph their movements around the space in order to provide the audience with a visual representation of their feelings.

I carried this concept of the importance of the characters knowing their environment, place and setting when thinking of ideas for staging. My aim was to:

Build a complete picture of the place or places in which the action of the play occurs to help the actor to enter and believe in the world in which their character exists (ibid, 2009, p.147).

The decision to have the performance in the round, with the audience sitting at each point on the circle came from wanting to create the sense of unity that arises when actors have to work in a small performance space with audience all around them. The space restricted their ability to wander and they always knew that they were either in the wood, or in the city of Athens, due to the divide of the stone wall used to represent the location of the city. The first scene where the lovers discuss Hermia and Lysander's elopement takes place within the audience and therefore behind the stone wall, indicating their location, whereas Puck and Oberon

remain inside the performance space at all times, showing how they remain in the wood.

Having this wall as a visible divide served as a constant reminder of the threat of the Athenian law for the lovers.

The space required the actors to be on stage throughout, which caused problems in relation to what they would be doing whilst other characters had lines. I decided to use the actors playing the lovers to create the wood, as it gave them a purpose when they were not needed in a scene, and also allowed the fairy characters to further exert their influence over them, to represent their authority within the wood. In order to show the change from the actors playing lovers to becoming part of the wood being controlled by Puck and Oberon, the actors all had a theatre mask which they decorated themselves. This was a very interesting task for the actors, as it was important that the mask represented how they perceived their characters which fitted in with them needing to do research and create character biographies as Mitchell states. Each actor also had a stick that represented the wood, which they used throughout the piece when ordered by the fairies, to create obstacles and pathways to add an extra element of mystery to the scenes. This concept came about through the theoretical part of the rehearsal process when I would encourage the actors to do warm up activities to get them thinking about what it would feel like to walk through a wood at night, when they are tired and scared. The way that they adapted to these surroundings allowed me to see how the research tasks had helped them to develop their thoughts on the piece at a very early stage, which is why I thought they would be able to relate well to the concept of both being the wood, and being a person walking through it.

The characterisation of the fairies was crucial in conveying the intended concept to the audience. A lot of emphasis was put on creating a balance between the mischievous and strict sides of the character of Oberon by representing how the relationship between him and Puck changed throughout the piece. The authority of this character was evident throughout due to the other actors' responses to his gestures. All of this was set up clearly for the audience during the newly-written prologue⁶ in which Puck used direct address to introduce the characters, and the convention of manipulating the lovers. A key moment in the piece that represents the effect the fairies had on the lovers is during the fight scene. Puck was able to control the lovers so that they would start and stop fighting at her command. She could also manoeuvre them around the space so that they could all sleep.

The idea to have the actors in traditional Elizabethan costumes also came from Mitchell's belief in setting a text in its original time period. The only characters not in traditional dress were Puck and Oberon, as it did not make sense to have them dressed the same as the lovers. I thought the idea of moonlight would fit in well with the fairy characters, as it is an important theme throughout the original script and represented their ability to manipulate the wood and its inhabitants after night fall; this is why I had the fairies dressed in silver clothing.

In keeping with all of these ideas, the music was another theatrical element which created the atmosphere for both actors and audience. The sounds of birds were played from the moment when all of the lovers entered the forest until the end of the piece to further transport the audience and actors into the atmosphere of the wood environment. I also incorporated

⁶ See appendix 6

occasional instrumental music for specific sections of the text like the lover's fight scene, to add tension that certain elements of the text would benefit from. The use of instrumental music enhanced the overall performance by creating a different atmosphere to the bird sound effects that were played throughout; for example, the maze scene where Puck travels through the forest became more prominent in relation to the overall performance as the music enhanced the effect and mystery of the character and the environment.

The overall impact of Mitchell's specific rehearsal strategies was evident throughout the final performance in the way that the actors related to each other and to their environment. This is a unique way of approaching a text as there is an equal number of textual and physical ways for the actors to become their characters.

CONCLUSION

Researching past Shakespearean productions and their directors allowed me to focus on the different ways in which the text can be translated on the stage to convey new meanings to an audience. The overall concepts and visions of the productions discussed were made clear through the aesthetic elements of set and costume, the acting styles and the text itself, which complemented each other to communicate the desired time period and underlying messages. By comparing and contrasting two productions of the same play, I was able to show how adaptable a play text can be, and how there are endless possibilities for different portrayals which allow the director to make a piece his or her own and show the text in a new light through a new directorial vision. Each of the productions discussed in Chapter One helped me to draw upon my own aims and visions for each of my own practical pieces.

The aim for my practical performance was to demonstrate how directors have a distinctive rehearsal process that is individual to their way of working, and that through their individual rehearsal techniques they can produce a new innovative performance of a classic text. For Piece One, my directorial vision was to incorporate the theatrical beliefs and rehearsal techniques of Peter Brook to produce a performance that takes the audience on a journey with the language and enables them to fully understand the story. In Piece Two, on the other hand, I aimed to incorporate the approaches of Katie Mitchell to produce a piece that told the story of the characters and the environment they inhabit. By incorporating rehearsal techniques of these directors into my own rehearsal room environment, I was able to create two performances of the same sections of text that each showed a different meaning and

significance. My vision and aims for the separate performances provided two different experiences of *The Dream*. This process enabled me to understand the individuality of directing theatre, and how each process of each production will be unique to the way that the particular director chooses to work. By researching and developing Brook and Mitchell's directing techniques, my two pieces were different in terms of the key themes and messages.

Brook's directing style allows the text to be freer and less canonical. By doing numerous vocal exercises with his actors to ensure that the verse language felt natural to them, the story was able to flow and be the most prominent aspect of the performance. On the other hand, Mitchell has a more systematic and structured approach, which involves a lot of work outside of the rehearsals for the actors, as Mitchell believes the only way characters can be correctly portrayed on stage is for the actor to research everything they can so they are fully informed about the characters' past and present lives. Brook and Mitchell both have very distinctive rehearsal processes, as my practical project demonstrated; in my opinion, both of their techniques work well in a performance context; and depending on the desired outcome of the performance both of these approaches will create a successful production. Brook and Mitchell have opposite styles and opinions on how a piece of theatre should be created; if I were to direct a piece in the future with their ideas in mind, I would incorporate aspects from both of their styles to create a performance that centres around the importance of the story, the characters and their environment all in one.

Finally, to refer back to the statement by W.B Worthen, (1997 p.72) 'how much of a piece can he (the director) make of that vision which he sees staring back at him when he gazes into the

ruffled pool of Shakespeare's play?' Through my own Shakespeare performances, I successfully demonstrated the importance of the director in contemporary theatre. My aim was to tell the story of the fairies' relationship with the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in two contrasting ways, and to show how unique interpretations of how this play text can be portrayed differently due to the approach and interpretation of the individual director.

Appendices

1. Full script of my Scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performance text.
2. Facts and Questions lists on the play, environment and characters as part of my pre-rehearsal research for the Katie Mitchell piece.
3. Research into the life of William Shakespeare as part of my pre-rehearsal research for the Katie Mitchell piece.
4. The immediate circumstances that happened before the play and before each separate scene described as part of my pre-rehearsal research for the Katie Mitchell piece.
5. The main events to portray within the play, described as part of my pre-rehearsal research for the Katie Mitchell piece.
6. Two prologues written by myself that introduced the new adaptation of the text, and the characters to the audience on the night of the performance.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Scene One

LYSANDER

The course of true love never did run smooth;
therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;

HERMIA

My good Lysander!
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow 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 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

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA

O that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA

His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

HELENA

None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

HERMIA

Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did Lysander see,
Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me.

LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:
To-morrow night, when Phoebe doth behold
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,
Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

Exit HERMIA and LYSANDER

HELENA

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so.
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
Then to the wood will he to-morrow night

EXIT HELENA

Scene Two

OBERON

I fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
Which maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:
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.

DEMETRIUS

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
Here am I, and wode within this wood,
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

HELENA

You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

DEMETRIUS

Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

HELENA

And even for that do I love you the more.

EXIT HELENA AND DEMETRIUS.

OBERON

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: thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love:

ENTER LYSANDER AND HERMIA

LYSANDER

We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA

Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

They sleep.

PUCK

Through the forest have I gone.
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love.
Night and silence.--Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:
This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul! she durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wakest, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon.

Scene Three

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA

HELENA

Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS

I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

HELENA

O, wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

DEMETRIUS

Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go.

Exit DEMETRIUS

HELENA

O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!
The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

She sees LYSANDER sleeping

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
Lysander if you live, good sir, awake.

LYSANDER

[Awaking] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.
Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

HELENA

Do not say so, Lysander; say not so

LYSANDER

Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd;
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo.
But fare you well: perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady, of one man refused.
Should of another therefore be abused!

Exit LYSANDER

HERMIA

[Awaking] Lysander! what, removed? Lysander! lord!
What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?
Either death or you I'll find immediately.

Exit HERMIA

OBERON

But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

PUCK

I took him sleeping,--that is finish'd too,--
And the Athenian woman by his side:
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed.

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS

OBERON

Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

PUCK

This is the woman, but not this the man.

HERMIA

If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.
What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

DEMETRIUS

I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Exit HERMIA

OBERON

What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:
About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find:

All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear:
By some illusion see thou bring her here:
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

DEMETRIUS sleeps

Scene Four

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA

LYSANDER

Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?

HELENA

These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

LYSANDER

I had no judgment when to her I swore.

HELENA

Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

LYSANDER

Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS

[Awaking] O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

HELENA

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,

When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:

LYSANDER

You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part;
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

DEMETRIUS

Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,
And now to Helen is it home return'd,
There to remain.

Re-enter HERMIA

HERMIA

Why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER

Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA

What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER

Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all you fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA

You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

HELENA

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!

Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
To bait me with this foul derision?

HERMIA

I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

HELENA

Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare.

LYSANDER

Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life my soul, fair Helena!

HERMIA

Sweet, do not scorn her so.

LYSANDER

Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYSANDER

Away, you Ethiopie!

HERMIA

Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left
me.

LYSANDER

Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?

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.
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him.

ALL exit/freeze

PUCK

Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garment he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise,
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes;
And 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:
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
When they next wake, all this derision
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.

PUCK

Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town:
Here comes one.

Scene Five

Re-enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER

Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

PUCK

Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER

I will be with thee straight.

PUCK

Follow me, then,
To plainer ground.

Exit LYSANDER, as following the voice

Re-enter DEMETRIUS

DEMETRIUS

Lysander! speak again:
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?
Yea, art thou there?

PUCK

Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here.

Exit.

Re-enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER

Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite.

Sleeps

Re-enter DEMETRIUS

PUCK

Come hither: I am here.

DEMETRIUS

Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited.

Lies down and sleeps

Re-enter HELENA

HELENA

O weary night, O long and tedious night,
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.

Lies down and sleeps

PUCK

Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds make up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad:
Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.

Re-enter HERMIA

HERMIA

Never so weary, never so in woe,
I can no further crawl, no further go;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.

Lies down and sleeps

PUCK

On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.

Squeezing the juice on LYSANDER's eyes

When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight

In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown.

Exit

Scene Six

OBERON

I pray you all, stand up.
I know you two are rival enemies:
How comes this gentle concord in the world,
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

LYSANDER

My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
I came with Hermia hither: our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of the Athenian law.

DEMETRIUS

My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,--
But by some power it is,--my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena.

HERMIA

Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When every thing seems double.

HELENA

So methinks: And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

DEMETRIUS

Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think?

Katie Mitchell Pre-Rehearsal Research

Questions on the text:

How long have Helena and Hermia been friends?

Why are Hermia and Lysander not able to get married in Athens?

How long has Helena been fighting for Demetrius?

How old are the 4 lovers?

Are the lover's important people in Athens?

Were Demetrius and Hermia together before Lysander?

When did Oberon become King of the Fairies?

How old are Oberon and Puck?

How many fairies are there?

How long have Hermia and Lysander been together?

Where is the wood in Athens?

Do all fairies live in the wood?

How many times has Oberon used the flower for his own amusement?

What is the town in which Lysander's Aunt lives?

Why does Hermia dislike Demetrius?

Why does Demetrius keep trying to win over Hermia?

Why does Helena tell Demetrius about Hermia and Lysander eloping?

How has Oberon heard of this flower?

Why does Helena follow Demetrius into the wood?

Why is Demetrius horrible to Helena?

Why does Oberon care about making Demetrius love Helena?

Why does Helena not wake Hermia instead of Lysander?

Appendix Two

Does Lysander question why his feelings have changed from Hermia to Helena?

Why does Hermia assume Demetrius has hurt Lysander?

Why does Oberon decide to anoint Demetrius' eyes so he too falls in love with Helena instead of ensuring Lysander's affections are returned to Hermia before they all quarrel?

Why does Helena not choose to believe Demetrius?

Why is Lysander unfriendly to Hermia?

Why does Helena think her friend Hermia is behind all of this?

Why does know one remember the incidents of the night before?

Are Helena, Hermia and Lysander shocked by Demetrius' revelation of love for Helena?

Where is Hermia's mother?

Katie Mitchell Pre-Rehearsal Research

Facts from the text split into character sections.

Demetrius Facts

- Hermia's father wants her to marry Demetrius and not Lysander.
- Demetrius loves Hermia but she does not love him.
- Helena loves Demetrius but he does not love her.
- Helena Tells Demetrius of Hermia's eloping.
- Puck meets the four lovers in a forest.
- Humans can't see fairies.
- Puck makes both Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena.
- Helena does not believe that Demetrius and Lysander are in love with her.
- Puck enjoys watching the lovers quarrel.
- When the lovers awake they do not remember what happened the night before.

Helena Facts

- Hermia and Helena are close friends.
- Helena loves Demetrius but he does not love her.
- Helena Tells Demetrius of Hermia's eloping.
- Puck meets the four lovers in a forest.

Appendix Two

- Humans can't see fairies.
- Puck makes both Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena.
- Puck enjoys watching the lovers quarrel.
- Helena does not believe that Demetrius and Lysander are in love with her.
- When the lovers awake they do not remember what happened the night before.

Lysander Facts

- Hermia and Lysander are in love.
- Hermia's father wants her to marry Demetrius and not Lysander.
- Hermia and Lysander enter the wood at night.
- They are running away from Athens to get married.
- Puck meets the four lovers in a forest.
- Puck enjoys watching the lovers quarrel.
- Puck makes both Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena.
- Helena does not believe that Demetrius and Lysander are in love with her.
- When the lovers awake they do not remember what happened the night before.

Hermia Facts

- Hermia and Helena are close friends.
- Egeus is Hermia's father.
- Hermia and Lysander are in love.
- Demetrius loves Hermia but she does not love him.
- Hermia's father wants her to marry Demetrius and not Lysander.
- Hermia and Lysander enter the wood at night.
- They are running away from Athens to get married.
- Puck meets the four lovers in a forest.
- Humans can't see fairies.
- Puck enjoys watching the lovers quarrel.
- When the lovers awake they do not remember what happened the night before.

Oberon Facts

- Oberon is the king of the fairies.
- Humans can't see fairies.
- Oberon is Puck's boss.

Puck Facts

Appendix Two

- Puck is a fairy.
- Oberon is Puck's boss.
- Oberon is the king of the fairies.
- Puck meets the four lovers in a forest.
- Humans can't see fairies.
- Puck makes both Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena.
- Puck enjoys watching the lovers quarrel.

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a small country town. He was the son of John Shakespeare, a successful glover and alderman from Snitterfield, and of Mary Arden, a daughter of the gentry. They lived on Henley Street, having married around 1557. The date of his birth is not known, but his baptismal record was dated 26 April 1564. This is the first official record of Shakespeare, as birth certificates were not issued in the time of Queen Elizabeth. Because baptisms were normally performed within a few days of birth it is highly likely Shakespeare was born in April 1564, although the long-standing tradition that he was born on 23 April has no historical basis (baptisms at this time were not invariably performed exactly three days after birth as is sometimes claimed). Nevertheless, this date provides a convenient symmetry because Shakespeare died on the same day in 1616. It is also the Feast Day of Saint George, the patron saint of England, which might seem appropriate for England's greatest playwright.

Shakespeare's parents had eight children: Joan (born 1558, died in infancy), Margaret (1562–1563), William (himself, 1564–1616), Gilbert (1566–1612), Joan (1569–1646), Anne (1571–1579), Richard (1574–1613), and Edmund (1580–1607).

By late 1594, Shakespeare was part-owner of a playing company, known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men—like others of the period, the company took its name from its aristocratic sponsor, in this case the Lord Chamberlain. The group became popular enough that after the death of Elizabeth I and the coronation of James I (1603), the new monarch adopted the company and it became known as the King's Men, after the death of their previous sponsor. Shakespeare's writing shows him to indeed be an actor, with many phrases, words, and references to acting, without an academic approach to the art of theatre.

By 1596, Shakespeare had moved to the parish of St. Helen's, Bishopsgate, and by 1598 he appeared at the top of a list of actors in *Every Man in His Humour* written by Ben Jonson. He is also listed among the actors in Jonson's *Sejanus: His Fall*. Also by 1598, his name began to appear on the title pages of his plays, presumably as a selling point.

There is a tradition that Shakespeare, in addition to writing many of the plays his company enacted and concerned with business and financial details as part-owner of the company, continued to act in various parts, such as the ghost of Hamlet's father, Adam in *As You Like It*, and the Chorus in *Henry V*.

Rowe was the first biographer to pass down the tradition that Shakespeare retired to Stratford some years before his death; but retirement from all work was uncommon at that time, and Shakespeare continued to visit London.

He died on 23 April 1616, at the age of 52. He was married to Anne Hathaway until his death and was survived by two daughters, Susanna and Judith. His son Hamnet had died in 1596. Susanna married Dr John Hall, and his last surviving descendant was their daughter Elizabeth

Appendix Three

Hall. There are no direct descendants of the poet and playwright alive today, but the diarist John Aubrey recalls in his *Brief Lives* that Shakespeare was the real father of the poet William Davenant, his godson. Davenant was brought up as the son of a vintner at the Crown Tavern in Oxford, on the road between London and Stratford, where Shakespeare would stay when travelling between his home and the capital.

In the chancel of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. He was granted the honour of burial in the chancel not on account of his fame as a playwright but for purchasing a share of the tithes of the church for £440 (a considerable sum of money at the time). A monument on the wall nearest his grave, probably placed by his family, features a bust showing Shakespeare posed in the act of writing. Each year on his claimed birthday, a new quill pen is placed in the writing hand of the bust. He is believed to have written the epitaph on his tombstone.

What is the play about?

The play is about a wood in Athens where fairies live, and how, in one night, the acts of the fairies change the lives of four young Athenian lovers and a company of mechanicals rehearsing in the woods for a play.

What is the genre?

The play is a comedy, as the actions of the play, especially the relationship between Titania and Bottom, and the play 'Pyramus and Thisbe' put on by the Mechanicals in the last act of the play.

Translate the Genre into things we can see the actors do:

- Puck mistaking Lysander for Demetrius
- Lysander and Demetrius both falling for Helena
- Helena blaming Hermia for their sudden change in affections
- Puck sending the lovers to sleep

Immediate Circumstances

Before the start of the play:

Lysander and Hermia have just been told by Theseus that they are not allowed to get married in Athens. Hermia would however be allowed to marry Demetrius if she wishes too. Helena is upset because she is in love with Demetrius, but he does not feel the same way.

Before Each Scene:

Scene 1

Demetrius has changed his affections from Helena to Hermia, but Hermia wants to marry Lysander. Her father Egeus takes her to Theseus, the Duke of Athens, and he tells her that she is not allowed to marry Lysander in Athens. Helena wants Demetrius back.

Scene 2

Oberon, King of the fairies, has had an argument with his wife Titania. His servant, Puck, does everything for him. He has seen Demetrius and Helena arguing in his wood, and this reminds him of a magic flower that he has in his wood. Lysander and Hermia have managed to sneak out of Athens into the wood.

Scene 3

Puck has mistaken Lysander for Demetrius, now we have to hope that Lysander does not see someone or something else before he sees Hermia.

Scene 4

Appendix 4

Hermia has awoken in the wood and noticed Lysander is not near her. She has been wondering through the forest, looking for him. Demetrius and Lysander are both following Helena through the forest. Oberon has found out about Puck's mistake and decides to fix the situation himself.

Scene 5

Puck, after his talk with Oberon has gone through the wood to find the lovers and fix the mess he has created. Lysander and Demetrius have both sworn their love for Helena and they are trying to find each other in the wood to fight each other.

Scene 6

Oberon and Puck have left the lovers sleeping in the wood. Egeus, Theseus and Hippolyta meanwhile have been searching for the lovers throughout Athens, and when they come across them in the wood they wake them up.

Events of the play

Solution to the Athenian law - Lysander and Hermia agree to elope.

Into the realm of the fairies - Demetrius follows Lysander and Hermia into the wood. Helena follows Demetrius.

The magic flower - Oberon tells Puck to anoint Demetrius' eyes so he will fall in love with Helena.

The Confusion - Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and anoints his eyes instead.

Unwanted Love - Helena awakes Lysander and he falls in love with her.

Love Triangle - Demetrius awakes and falls in love with Helena.

A woman scorned - Lysander tells Hermia he no longer loves her.

The resolution - Puck brings all the lovers to a clearing in the forest to send them asleep once again.

A Happy Ending - The lovers awake, Demetrius still loves Helena, and Lysander loves Hermia, as before.

The key event that happened before the play began:

Demetrius changing his affections from Helena to Hermia.

This ultimately causes Hermia and Lysander to elope so that they could be together, and made all the lovers enter the wood on this night.

Prologue For Brook Piece

Puck

Through the gates of Athens you all have come tonight

On Midsummers Eve, looking for true delight

Our tale is one of fight and flight

When four young Athenians entered the wood at night

Tonight's show is one you won't have seen before

As it includes fewer characters than the original score

But the text is still just as pure!

Let me introduce you to the other four

The young lovers who are here to tell you more

About the perils of the Athenian law

Which will drive them all to the wood, as mentioned before

Meet Demetrius, whose intentions to marry fair Helena were made clear

Until he saw her friend Hermia, who he now holds dear

But Hermia does not want him anywhere near

For Lysander is the one that makes her heart cheer

Their quarrels in love will lead them away

To the place where all the fairies play

And for one night only you too can come and see

How this tale turns out to be

So follow me, Robin Goodfellow,

And through the forest we will go
Were the antics I will show
Will give you all a warm and happy glow!

Prologue For Mitchell Piece

Puck

Through the gates of Athens you all have come tonight
On Midsummers Eve, looking for true delight
Our tale is one of fight and flight
When four young Athenians entered the wood at night
Tonight's show is one you won't have seen before
As it includes less characters than the original score
But the text is still just as pure!

Let me introduce you to the other four
The young lovers who are here to tell you more
About the perils of the Athenian law
Which will drive them all to the wood, as mentioned before

Helena and Hermia have been friends for years
They both fell in love with men they hold dear
But then Demetrius fell for Hermia, that was Helena's greatest fear.
Hermia's beau Lysander tried to sway Demetrius' love
But his affections are for Hermia, like the wings of a dove

Appendix Six

All 3 wish Demetrius would change his affections back
But love for Helena is something he does lack
Watch carefully to see if his affections change
And you will see why the memories of this night will all be a daze

And now I introduce you to the most important two
Who make them behave like animals in a zoo
King Oberon of the fairies, whose sadness for Helena grew
As he wonders around the forest watching them with you
And me, well of course I am Oberon's slave
The one, they say, that always misbehaves

So let me take you back to the beginning of our tale
And see how I will make this story unvale

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