

A Midsummer Night's Dream – Audition Notes

Auditions: Thursday June 13, Holy Trinity Church Hall, rue du Mont-Blanc 14bis, 19:00-22:00

Production: November 26-30, Théâtre de Terre Sainte, Coppet

Director: Neil-Jon Morphy

A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of Shakespeare's most performed play. It is a joy for the audience to watch and a great pleasure for the actors to play a wide variety of interesting characters.

In order to provide an extra interest for the actors, in this production, we are doubling about half the actors. As well, Puck and the "rude mechanicals" other than Bottom can be played by either men or women.

The production will be rehearsed in a different way than normal in that rehearsals will start in the second week of September with a workshop followed by three weeks of 1-1 sessions between the director and the actors. The number of sessions required for each actor will obviously be dependent on the size of each part and a certain amount of flexibility will be possible in the timing of those sessions. After that, the rehearsals will settle into a normal pattern of rehearsals with all the actors for each scene. There will be a break in rehearsals the last two weeks of September.

Auditions:

The auditions are being co-coordinated with DISGRACED auditions scheduled for Wednesday 12 June. Any actor who can't make the scheduled audition can audition on the 12th of June instead.

Important: Each auditionee will be required to prepare 10-15 lines of their choice from the character of their choice. There are many versions of the play online to access. This speech does not need to be memorized, but the actor/actress should have a good understanding of the meaning of the speech which should be demonstrated in their performance.

In addition, the auditionees will be required to read certain scenes with other auditionees.

The Characters.

Theseus - The duke of Athens, most probably in his 40s or 50s. In his past, he was a great warrior and there are indications in the text of his violent sexual conquests. However, in the play, we are presented with a much more civilized character in a time of peace - the self-regarding, well-disposed, patriarchal ruler bringing order to play. He is also very much in touch with the common folk although, in the end he does take part in the jeering remarks about the workmen as they present their play. (doubling with Oberon)

Hippolyta - Theseus's bride won by him in battle. She should be of a matching age to Theseus or slightly younger. She was an Amazon queen, but little is left in the play to indicate that power other than her discussion about her hunting exploits in the past. However, that power needs to be intrinsic to the character. In the end, her initial coolness has changed to a genuine affection for Theseus. (doubling with Titania)

Philstrate - the master of the court entertainments (40s to 60s). An officious court official not overly impressed by the workmen's play. (doubling with Egeus)

Egeus - a courtier (40s to 60s). A strong-willed and authoritarian father willing to see his daughter killed rather than allow her to disobey him. (doubling with Philstrate)

Hermia - Egeus's daughter (20s to 30s). She is described in the play as dark and short. This is not an absolute as long as she is shorter and darker than Helena. She is a strong-willed young woman willing to defy her father and even stand up to the Duke in order to be with the young man she loves - Lysander. Later in the play, when he deserts her, certain feelings of inferiority about her appearance are revealed. She is still willing to fight her rival for her love. When Lysander is restored to her towards the end of the play, there is a certain ambivalence in her reaction. (not doubled)

Helena - A young noblewoman (20s to 30s). She needs to be equivalent in age to Hermia as they were school mates and needs to be taller and blonder than Hermia according to the play. She is in love with Demetrius who had played with her affections in the past. She is a single-minded as Hermia in pursuing Demetrius even to the point of self-abasement. But a certain feeling of inferiority appears when under the influence of magic both men start to pursue her. She cannot believe that the men are in love with her and accusing them of making fun of her. When she thinks Hermia is in on the joke, she turns viciously against her. (not doubled)

Lysander - A young nobleman (20s to 30s). Probably on the younger side as he is a hopeless romantic. He has a strong character as he stands up to Egeus about Hermia and is willing to elope. He is surprisingly nasty to Hermia, his former love, when he is enchanted. (not doubled)

Demetrius - A young nobleman (20s to 40s). Probably on the more mature side as he has more experience in love. He has played with Helena's affections. It is unclear about his feelings for Hermia. He has been betrothed to her. Does he fight for her because she is now his "possession" as she is her father's or does he have actual affection for her? (not doubled)

Nick Bottom - An artisan weaver, male, any age. He plays Pyramus in the play within the play. Bottom can be considered as the clown of the play and provides a lot of the comedy. Full of false self-confidence but constantly making errors. His lack of self-awareness allows him to be a likable comic character who is also irrepressible. (not doubled)

Quince - An artisan carpenter, male or female, any age. Quince oversees the group of artisans so must have a certain amount of authority on stage. All the other artisans bow to his/her word. He/She writes the play within the play and speaks its prologue. He/She is as guilty of malapropisms as Bottom. He/She must be patient because he has to deal with Bottom. (not doubled)

Flute - An artisan bellows mender, male or female, any age. He/She plays the role of Thisbe in the play within the play. There is perhaps a certain timidity in his/her character (doubled with Moth)

Snout - An artisan tinker, male or female, any age. He/She plays the role of The Wall in the play within the play. The most assertive of the workmen outside of Bottom. (doubled with Peasebottom)

Snug - An artisan joiner, male or female, any age. He/She plays the role of The Lion in the play within the play. (doubled with Cobweb)

Starveling - An artisan tailor, male or female, any age. He/She plays the role of Moonshine in the play within the play. He stands his ground under the heckling of the courtiers during his performance. (doubled with Mustardseed)

For **Flute, Snout, Snug** and **Starveling**, there are minimal character hints given within the play. It will be up to the actor/actress to bring these characters to life.

Oberon – King of the Fairies, in his 40s or 50s. He is a king so must dominate the stage whenever he is onstage. He has two sides to his character. He can be cruel and domineering in dealing with Titania. On the other hand, when he sees Helena being mistreated by Demetrius, he resolves to make Demetrius fall in love with her. When he achieves his goal with Titania, he is magnanimous in his victory. (doubled with Theseus)

Titania - Queen of the Fairies, 30s to 50s. As a queen, power should be evident in her demeanour. She is independent and will not bow to Oberon's requests. However, once she is enchanted, we can see how romantic she can be. It is only by enchantment that Oberon gets his way. Titania is arguably the most powerful woman in the play, but like all the other women, is subject to the machinations of men. (doubled with Hippolyta)

Puck - Supernatural creature in service to Oberon, male or female, any age. He/She is of a mischievous nature precipitating most of the problems in the play. He has no regrets for all the conflict he causes, in fact he is amused by it. He is a typical Shakespearean fool showing us the dark side of life. (not doubled)

Peasebottom, Cobweb, Mote and **Mustardseed** - (doubled as indicated above) This is the ensemble group of fairies in Titania's service. Outside of one scene with Mustardseed alone, most of the time they work as a team. Again, it will be up to the actor/actress to provide individual characteristics to the fairies.

The role of Theseus/Oberon is a major undertaking. Hippolyta/Titania, Hermia, Helena, Lysander, Puck and Bottom are large roles. Quince, Flute/Moth and Demetrius are medium roles. Egeus/Philstrate, Snug/Cobweb, Snout/Peasebottom and Starveling/Mustardseed are smallish roles. All the roles are of equal importance, but this is just to give an idea of the work required when taking on one of these roles.

For further information, you can contact the director at morphyn@bluewin.ch. He will not always have internet connectivity but will answer any questions as soon as possible.