

# PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

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## *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

by  
**Toby Hulse**

Adapted from the Play by  
**William Shakespeare**

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## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

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

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

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

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

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

**Joan** who plays **Hermia**

**Nancy** who plays **Helena**

*An Edwardian nursery.*

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

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

**Eric** We did one about pirates.

**Peter** And our first play was about Red Indians.

**Phyllis** They still had quite a lot of killing in though, didn't they?

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

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

**Robert** And I am the best actor.

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

**Eric** I suppose it will be all about love.

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

**Joan** Beautiful maidens.

**Nancy** Magic and fairies!

**Robert** That sounds like absolute rot.

**Peter** I am not going to be a girl.

**Eric** I am not being a fairy.

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

**Eric** And I do not want to get married.

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

**The Boys** No!

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

**Robert** All right then. For Nanny's sake.

**Phyllis** Good.

**Robert** But can I die in it? Please.

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

**Robert** I will.

**Phyllis** Then you can die.

**Robert** Thank you.

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

**Joan** Oh Cecil, your voice is not loud enough.

**Cecil** Yes it is – listen.

***Cecil** roars pathetically. The others laugh.*

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

**Eric** Theseus? Do I get to kill a minotaur?

**Phyllis** No. You get to marry me.

**Eric** I said that I was not getting married.

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

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

**Phyllis** In four days' time.

**Eric** At least I'm not a fairy.

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

**Joan** Is Hermia a fair maiden?

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

**Nancy** Is Helena a fair maiden too?

**Phyllis** Of course.

**Joan** Only not quite so fair as Hermia.

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

**Peter** In love!

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

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

**Phyllis** And Robert, you will be Demetrius.

**Robert** What's he? A wicked king?

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

**Robert** Absolute rot!

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

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

**Nancy** Isn't anyone in love with me?

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

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

**Joan** What did I tell you?

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

**Phyllis** That's what the story's about.

**Cecil** Phyllis?

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

**Cecil** I should like to be a fairy as well.

*The other boys glare at him in disbelief.*

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

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

*The Palace of Theseus, Duke of Athens.*

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

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

**Theseus** Either to die the death –

**Phyllis** – I said, no killing –

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

**Demetrius** Relent, sweet Hermia; and Lysander, yield –

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

**Theseus** For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself

To fit your fancies to your father's will.

*Hermia and Lysander apart.*

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

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

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

*Enter Helena.*

**Hermia** God speed, fair Helena! Whither away?

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

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

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

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

**Lysander** I will, my Hermia. Helena, adieu.

*Helena apart.*

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

If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.

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

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

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

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

**Phyllis** Nanny...

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

**Phyllis** That's right.

**Cecil** Can I be a fairy too?

**Phyllis** In just a moment...

*The woods at night.*

**Oberon** Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

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

**Oberon** Why should Titania cross her Oberon?

***Titania** exits.*

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

**Phyllis** Cecil, that's you: Puck.

***Puck** enters.*

**Oberon** Fetch me that flower; the herb I show'd thee once.  
The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,  
Will make or man or woman madly dote  
Upon the next live creature that it sees.

**Puck** I'll put a girdle round about the earth

In forty minutes.

**Puck** *flies off.*

**Phyllis** Well done, Cecil.

**Oberon** Having once this juice,  
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,  
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes:  
The next thing then she waking looks upon  
(Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,  
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape)  
She shall pursue it with the soul of love.

**Demetrius** and **Helena** *enter.*

**Demetrius** I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.  
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?  
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

**Helena** I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,  
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you.  
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,  
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,  
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.

**Demetrius** Oh, I am sick when I do look on thee.

**Helena** And I am sick when I look not on you.

**Demetrius** I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,  
And leave thee to the mercy of the wild beasts.

**Demetrius** *runs off.*

**Helena** The wildest hath not such a heart as you.  
Fie, Demetrius!

**Helena** *runs after him.*

**Oberon** Fare thee well, nymph; ere he do leave this grove  
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.

**Puck** *enters with the flower.*

Hast thou the flower there?

**Puck** Ay, there it is.

**Oberon** I pray thee give it to me.

*During the following **Titania** enters and sleeps.*

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night.

***Oberon** approaches the sleeping **Titania** and smears her eyes with the juice of the flower.*

What thou sees when thou dost wake,  
Do it for thy true love take.  
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.  
Wake when some vile thing is near.

*He hands the flower to **Puck**.*

Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:  
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.

**Puck** Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.

***Oberon** exits.*

***Lysander** and **Hermia** enter.*

**Lysander** Fair love, you faint with wand'ring in the wood,  
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way.  
We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good.

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

***Hermia** lies down. **Lysander** lies next to her.*

Do not lie so near.

*Lysander moves.*

Lie further off.

*He moves again.*

So far be distant; and good night, sweet friend.

*They both fall asleep.*

**Puck** This is he my master said  
Despised the Athenian maid;  
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,  
On the dank and dirty ground.

*He smears Lysander's eyes with the juice of the flower.*

Churl, upon thy eyes I throw  
All the power this charm doth owe.

**Phyllis** Cecil! You've put the juice on the wrong person's eyes.

**Cecil** Sorry. I am a bit confused.

**Phyllis** You were supposed to put it on Demetrius' eyes so he will love Helena.  
Lysander already loves Hermia.

**Cecil** Then it can't do any harm when he wakes up, can it?

**Phyllis** You have spoiled everything.

**Cecil** I have not! And don't forget you've got some of the juice of the magic  
flower on your eyelids too...

*Cecil stomps off in a sulk.*

*Demetrius enters, pursued by Helena.*

**Demetrius** I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus!

*Demetrius exits.*

**Helena** O wilt thou darkling leave me? Do not so.

*She sees the sleeping Lysander.*

But who is here? Lysander, on the ground?  
Dead, or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.  
Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake!

**Joan** No, Nancy, don't wake him!

*But it is too late...*

**Lysander** Not Hermia, but Helena I love:  
Who will not change a raven for a dove?

*He tries to embrace **Helena**.*

**Helena** Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do!  
Fare you well!

***Helena** runs off.*

**Lysander** Hermia, sleep thou there,  
And never mayst thou come Lysander near.  
And, all my powers, address your love and might  
To honour Helen, and to be her knight!

***Lysander** runs after her.*

***Hermia** wakes.*

**Hermia** Lysander! Lysander! lord!  
Alack, where are you?

***Hermia** exits.*

**Robert** So, when does Demetrius die?

**Phyllis** Demetrius doesn't die.

**Robert** You promised me a splendid death scene.

**Phyllis** Yes, but Demetrius doesn't die. There is another part to the story –  
there's a group of amateur actors rehearsing a play for Theseus and  
Hippolyta's wedding. It is called 'The Most Lamentable Comedy, and  
Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe.'

**Eric** It has got killing in it!

**Phyllis** It has. And a lion, Cecil.

**Robert** Can we do that part now?

**Phyllis** Yes.

**Quince** Is all our company here?

*The boys assemble as the **Mechanicals**.*

Answer me as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver?

**Robert** Bottom?

**Phyllis** That is his name.

**Quince** You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

**Bottom** What is Pyramus? A lover, or a tyrant?

**Quince** A lover that kills himself, most gallant, for love. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender?

**Flute** Here.

**Quince** Flute, you must take Thisbe on you.

**Flute** What is Thisbe? A wandering knight?

**Quince** It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

**Peter** I said that I wasn't going to be a girl.

**Phyllis** It's the olden days...

**Flute** Nay, faith, let me not play a woman: I have a beard coming.

**Bottom** Let me play Thisbe too. I'll speak in a monstrous little voice: 'Thisne, Thisne!' – 'Ah, Pyramus, my lover dear!'

**Quince** No, no, you must play Pyramus; and Flute, you Thisbe. Snug the joiner, you the lion's part.

**Snug** Have you the lion's part written?

**Quince** It is nothing but roaring.

**Bottom** Let me play the lion too.

**Quince** You can play no part but Pyramus. Here are your parts.

*Quince hands out scripts.*

*Snug exits to rehearse his roaring.*

There is two hard things: that is, to bring the moonlight into the chamber; for Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

**Bottom** Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open; and the moon may shine in.

**Quince** Ay. Then there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through a chink in the wall.

**Snout** You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

**Bottom** Some man or other must present Wall; and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him to signify Wall.

**Quince** If it may be, then all is well. Come sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin...

**Cecil** But first you have to go to be the sleeping Titania again, with the magic juice of the flower on your eyelids.

*She does so. Her rest will be disturbed by the necessity of giving Quince's lines.*

*Puck enters.*