

RSC



**A MIDSUMMER
NIGHT'S DREAM**

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Visual Story

A guide to help you to prepare for the performance of
A Midsummer Night's Dream
At the Barbican theatre, London

This hilarious production of Shakespeare's captivating comedy will transport you from deepest midwinter to the most magical of midsummer nights. As four young lovers are faced with the prospect of unhappy marriage or worse, they flee the court of Athens and stumble into an enchanted forest, where the real and fairy worlds collide.

Director Eleanor Rhode returns to the RSC with a joyous *Dream* that is magical, mischievous and full of wonder. This production includes creative audio description, which is performed live and in character by the cast, at every performance from press night. Audiences can access audio description and an additional soundscape through headsets.

Shakespeare used to share information with his audiences too.

Act 3 scene 1 - I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords



The performance is 2 hours 50 mins
(including a 20 mins interval)



Babes in arms welcome for relaxed performances

This Production Features

- Live music
- Loud sounds
- Flashing lights, strobe lights, projections and lasers
- Flame effects, haze and smoke
- Stage fighting
- Stage blood

If there are specific themes you are concerned about, you can call our Box Office team on 020 71011188, (Mon-Sun 10am - 5:30pm) or email info@barbican.org.uk



In places there are some very loud sounds. You may want to bring ear defenders.



Sometimes the lights on stage can be bright or very dark. But during our relaxed performances it won't be completely dark in the auditorium, even if it's dark on stage.



During our relaxed performances you'll be free to come and go.



Please don't film or take photos - we don't want to ruin the surprise for anyone else.

Introducing the characters



Some actors play more than one character. They might look different, change the way they move and talk or change their costume to show that they are a different character.

The Athenian Court



THESEUS
Duke of Athens



HIPPOLYTA
Queen of the Amazons,
betrothed to Theseus



EGEUS
Father to Hermia



PHILOSTRATE
An official in Theseus'
court

The Lovers



LYSANDER

In love with Hermia



HERMIA

In love with Lysander, but
ordered by her father to
marry Demetrius



DEMETRIUS

In love with Hermia,
though once a suitor to
Helena



HELENA

In love with Demetrius

The Mechanicals



RITA QUINCE

A carpenter and leader of an amateur dramatic group



BOTTOM

A weaver, who plays PYRAMUS in the amateur play



FLUTE

A bellows-mender, who plays THISBE in the amateur play



SNUG

A joiner, who plays a LION in the amateur play



SNOUT

A tinker, who plays a WALL in the amateur play



STARVELING

A tailor, who plays MOONSHINE in the amateur play

The Fairies



OBERON
King of the fairies



TITANIA
Queen of the fairies



ROBIN
Goodfellow, also known as
Puck, a sprite in the service
of Oberon



**PEASEBLOSSOM,
COBWEB, MOTH and
MUSTARDSEED**
Represented by colourful orbs

The Story

A story of order and disorder, reality and appearance and love and marriage. Theseus, Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, are to be married and great celebrations are planned.

The Athenian Court

Egeus brings his rebellious daughter Hermia in front of the Duke. Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius but Hermia refuses, because she's in love with Lysander. The Duke orders Hermia to obey her father or, according to Athenian law, she must face a death penalty or enter a convent.

Electric
buzzing
Flickering
projections



Into the forest



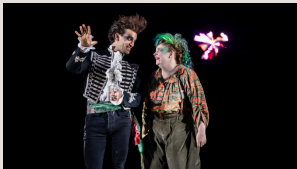
Hermia and Lysander decide to elope that night. They confide in their friend Helena. However, she's secretly in love with Demetrius so, hoping to win his affection, she tells him of Hermia's plan. That night, all four lovers set out into the forest.

Electric
buzzing



Meanwhile, a group of Athenian tradesmen (known as the Mechanicals), led by Peter Quince, are planning to perform a play in celebration of the Duke's wedding. They rehearse *The Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe* in the same forest.

Love at first sight



Haze
Bright flickering
lights

Elsewhere in the forest, the fairy King and Queen, Oberon and Titania, argue over Titania's refusal to give up her page-boy to Oberon. He sends his servant Puck to find a magic plant to cast a spell on Titania.



The juice of the plant, when squeezed onto the eyes of someone asleep, causes them to fall in love with the first creature they see when they wake up. Oberon uses the juice on Titania as she sleeps in her bower.

Puck overhears the tradesmen rehearsing and magically transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass. The other men are terrified and flee the forest.



When Titania wakes, the first creature she sees is Bottom and she falls rapturously in love with him.

Haze
Bright flickering
lights



There is a 20 minute interval.



Helena chases Demetrius in the forest and their fighting disturbs Oberon. He tells Puck to use the magic plant on Demetrius too, so that he will fall in love with Helena.



Stage
fighting

However, Puck muddles up the two Athenian men and uses it on Lysander instead, who promptly falls in love with Helena. Both women are confused, and Hermia furiously attacks her friend.

Stop reading now if you don't want to know how it ends...

The wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta becomes a triple celebration as the other human couples marry too.

Haze
Bright flickering
lights
Stage blood



Quince and Bottom's troupe amuses the couples with their amateur performance of the play.

As the couples retire, Oberon, Titania and the fairies perform a blessing, and Puck asks the audience to applaud if they enjoyed the performance.

The End

Creative Audio Description

A Midsummer Night's Dream at London's Barbican will be audio-described by the cast at every single performance from 3 December 2024 to 18 January 2025

What is Creative Audio Description?

Creative audio description is a step on from traditional audio description. A combination of first-person narration and additional soundscape is used to create a more accessible experience for visually impaired audience members.

A Midsummer Night's Dream will offer creative audio description through:

- Pre-show introduction notes, recorded in character by the cast.
- Touch tours, which will also be led by members of the cast.
- Headsets which will feed live audio description and additional soundscape.
- There will also be slight changes to the text made, so that it makes sense for blind story telling.

This will make for a more enjoyable and immersive theatre experience.

Our audio description Director Benjamin Wilson explains how creative audio description will be used in performances of A Midsummer Night's Dream in the video [here](#).

How can I book?

To book creative audio described performances and touch tours of A Midsummer Night's Dream at the Barbican, visit the [Barbican website](#). Headsets and touch tours can be reserved during the booking process as a free add on when proceeding through to check out.

Other Useful Resources

You might find some of our other resources helpful to prepare for the theatre visit and for the show.

- [A Midsummer Night's Dream Trailer](#)
- [Audio Notes](#): This tells you about the play and the theatre, it takes about 12 minutes to listen to.
- [Behind the scenes video](#): This tells you more about the process of creating and rehearsing the play.
- [Sonic Story](#): This highlights loud and quiet moments from throughout the performance, and moments where the sound changes suddenly.

You can see all of these on our Assisted Performances Page [HERE](#)

We hope you enjoy the performance