A Midsummer Night's Dream

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Title page of the first quarto (1600)

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a romantic comedy by William Shakespeare, suggested by "The Knight's Tale" from Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, written around 1594 to 1596. It portrays the adventures of four young Athenian lovers and a group of amateur actors, their interactions with the Duke and Duchess of Athens, Theseus and Hippolyta, and with the fairies who inhabit a moonlit forest. The play is one of Shakespeare's most popular works for the stage and is widely performed across the world.

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Sources

It is not known exactly when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written or first performed, but, on the basis of topical references and an allusion to *Spenser's Epithalamion*, it is usually dated 1595 or 1596. Some have theorised that the play might have been written for an aristocratic wedding (numerous such weddings took place in 1596), while others suggest that it was written for the *Queen* to celebrate the feast day of St. John. No concrete evidence exists to support either theory. In any case, it would have been performed at *The Theatre* and, later, *The Globe* in *London*.

Some features of the plot and characters can be traced to elements of earlier mythologically based literature; for example, the story of *Pyramus and Thisbe* is told in *Ovid's Metamorphoses* and the transformation of Bottom into an *ass* is descended from *Apuleius' The Golden Ass*. Lysander was also an ancient Greek warlord while Theseus and Hippolyta were respectively the Duke of Athens and Queen of the Amazons. In addition, Shakespeare could have been working on *Romeo and Juliet* at about the same time that he wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and it is possible to see Pyramus and Thisbe as a comic reworking of the tragic play. A further, seldom noted source is *The Knight's Tale* in *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*.[1]

Date and text

The play was entered into the *Register* of the *Stationers Company* on 8 October 1600 by the bookseller Thomas Fisher, who published the *first quarto* edition later that year. A *second quarto* was printed in 1619 by William Jaggard, as part of his so-called *False Folio*. The play next appeared in print in the *First Folio* of 1623. The title page of *Q1*
states that the play was "sundry times publicly acted" prior to 1600. The first performance known with certainty occurred at Court on January 1, 1604.

**Synopsis**

The play features three interlocking plots, connected by a celebration of the wedding of Duke Theseus of Athens and the Amazonian queen Hippolyta, and set simultaneously in the woodland, and in the realm of Fairyland, under the light of the moon.[2]

In the opening scene, Hermia refuses to follow her father, Egeus's, instructions for her to marry his chosen man, Demetrius. In response, Egeus quotes before Theseus an ancient Athenian law whereby a daughter must marry the suitor chosen by her father, or else face death. Theseus does not want this young girl to die, and offers her another choice, lifelong chastity worshipping Diana as a nun. (The word 'nun' in this sense is an anachronism.)

Hermia and her lover Lysander decide to elope by escaping through the forest at night. Hermia informs her best friend Helena, but Helena has recently been rejected by Demetrius and decides to win back his favour by revealing the plan to him. Demetrius, followed doggedly by Helena, chases Hermia. Hermia and Lysander, believing themselves safely out of reach, sleep in the woods.

Meanwhile, Oberon, king of the fairies, and his queen, Titania, arrive in the forest outside Athens. Titania tells Oberon that she plans to stay there until after she has attended Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding. Oberon and Titania are estranged because Titania refuses to give her Indian changeling to Oberon for use as his "knight" or "henchman," since the child's mother was one of Titania's worshippers. Oberon seeks to punish Titania's disobedience and recruits the mischievous Puck (also called Hobgoblin and Robin Goodfellow) to help him apply a magical juice from a flower called "love-in-idleness" (a.k.a. pansy), which makes the victim fall in love with the first living thing seen upon awakening. He instructs Puck to retrieve the flower so that he can make Titania fall in love with some vile creature of the forest. Oberon applies the juice to Titania in order to distract her and force her to give up the page-boy.

Having seen Demetrius act cruelly toward Helena, Oberon orders Puck to spread some of the elixir on the eyelids of the young Athenian man. Instead, Puck accidentally puts the juice on the eyes of Lysander, who then falls in love with Helena. Oberon sees Demetrius still following Hermia and is enraged. When Demetrius decides to go to sleep, Oberon sends Puck to get Helena while he charms Demetrius' eyes. Due to Puck's errors, both lovers now fight over Helena instead of Hermia. Helena, however, is convinced that her two suitors are mocking her, as neither loved her originally. The four pursue and quarrel with each other most of the night, until they become so enraged that they seek a place to duel each other to the death to settle the quarrel. Oberon orders Puck to keep the lovers from catching up with one another in the forest and to re-charm Lysander for Hermia, to prevent them all from killing each other.
Meanwhile, a band of lower-class labourers ("rude mechanicals", as they are famously described by Puck) have arranged to perform a crude play about Pyramus and Thisbe for Theseus' wedding, and venture into the forest, near Titania's bower, for their rehearsal. Nick Bottom, a stage-struck weaver, is spotted by Puck, who transforms his head into that of an ass (donkey). Titania is awakened by Bottom's singing and immediately falls in love with him. She treats him like a nobleman and lavishes him with attention. While in this state of devotion, she encounters Oberon and casually gives him the Indian boy. Having achieved his goals, Oberon releases Titania and orders Puck to remove the ass's head from Bottom. The magical enchantment is removed from Lysander but is allowed to remain on Demetrius, so that he may reciprocate Helena's love.

The fairies then disappear, and Theseus and Hippolyta arrive on the scene, during an early morning hunt. They wake the lovers and, since Demetrius doesn't love Hermia anymore, Theseus over-rules Egeus's demands and arranges a group wedding. The lovers decide that the night's events must have been a dream. After they all exit, Bottom awakes, and he too decides that he must have experienced a dream "past the wit of man." In Athens, Theseus, Hippolyta and the lovers watch the mechanicals perform "Pyramus and Thisbe." It is ridiculous and badly performed but gives everyone pleasure regardless, and afterward everyone retires to bed. Finally, as night falls, Oberon and Titania bless the house, its occupants, and the future children of the newlyweds, and Puck delivers a soliloquy to the audience.

Characters

- The men and women in the play of high social class:
  - Lysander, beloved of Hermia
  - Hermia, beloved of Lysander, engaged to Demetrius
  - Helena, in love with Demetrius
  - Demetrius, in love with Hermia but then falls in love with Helena later on.
    Engaged to Hermia
  - Egeus, father of Hermia, wants to force Hermia to wed Demetrius
  - Theseus, Duke of Athens, good friend of Egeus
  - Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons and betrothed of Theseus

- The lower-class citizens in the play:
  - Philostrate, Master of the Revels for Theseus
  - The acting troupe (otherwise known as The Mechanicals):
    - Peter Quince, carpenter, who leads the troupe
    - Nick Bottom, weaver; he plays Pyramus in the troupe's production of "Pyramus and Thisbe," and gets a donkey head put on him by Puck so that Titania will magically fall in love with a monster.
    - Francis Flute, the bellows-mender who plays Thisbe.
    - Robin Starveling, the tailor who plays Moonshine.
    - Tom Snout, the tinker who plays the wall.
    - Snug, the joiner who plays the lion.

- The supernatural characters:
  - Puck, a.k.a. Hobgoblin or Robin Goodfellow; a faun, servant to Oberon
Analysis and criticism

Themes

Love

Writer David Bevington finds in the play what he refers to as the dark side of love. He writes that the fairies make light of love by mistaking the lovers and by applying a love potion to Titania’s eyes, forcing her to fall in love with Bottom as an ass. There are many dark sides of love that occur in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Hippolyta is “woo’d” by a sword instead of being given “love-tokens” in the same way Lysander has won Hermia’s love (1.1.17-30). What is even more disturbing is the possible outcome that could have taken place at the forest. Shakespeare borrows the myth of Pyramus and Thisbe from Ovid’s Metamorphoses, transforming it into a play that is performed at the end and using ideas of the myth for the entire play. Like Pyramus and Thisbe, Hermia and Lysander escape to the forest to avoid the tyranny of Hermia’s father. In the forest, both couples are met by problems and assume that a partner is dead at some point. Hermia and Lysander are both met by Puck, who provides some comedic relief in the play by confusing the four lovers in the forest. Despite the darkness and difficulty that obstructs the love in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, it is still a comedy as Benedetto Croce indicates. He writes, “love is sincere, yet deceives and is deceived; it imagines itself to be firm and constant, and turns out to be fragile and fleeting.” This passage, like the play juxtaposes one idea next to another. The play is a comedy, yet it harbors serious ideas. At the end of the play, Hermia and Lysander, happily married, watch the play about the unfortunate lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe, and are able to enjoy and laugh about the play, not realizing the similarities between them. Although their story is very similar to that of Pyramus and Thisbe, it does not end in tragic death. Hermia and Lysander are both oblivious to the dark side of their love. They are not aware of the possible outcome that could have taken place at the forest.

Loss of individual identity

Maurice Hunt, Chair of the English Department at Baylor University, writes of the blurring of the identities of fantasy and reality in the play that make possible “that pleasing, narcotic dreaminess associated with the fairies of the play.” By emphasizing this theme even in the setting of the play, Shakespeare prepares the reader’s mind to accept the fantastic reality of the fairy world and its magical happenings. This also seems
to be the axis around which the plot conflicts in the play occur. Hunt suggests that it is the breaking down of individual identities leads to the central conflict in the story[8]. It is the brawl between Oberon and Titania, based on a lack of recognition for the other in the relationship, that drives the rest of the drama in the story and makes it dangerous for any of the other lovers to come together due to the disturbance of Nature caused by a fairy dispute [9]. Similarly, this failure to identify and make distinction is what leads Puck to mistake one set of lovers for another in the forest and place the juice of the flower on Lysander’s eyes instead of Demetrius’. Victor Kiernan, a Marxist scholar and historian, writes that it is for the greater sake of love that this loss of identity takes place and that individual characters are made to suffer accordingly: “It was the more extravagant cult of love that struck sensible people as irrational, and likely to have dubious effects on its acolytes” [10]. He believes that identities in the play are not so much lost as they are blended together to create a type of haze through which distinction becomes nearly impossible. It is driven by a desire for new and more practical ties between characters as a means of coping with the strange world within the forest, even in relationships as diverse and seemingly unrealistic as the brief love between Titania and Bottom the Ass: “It was the tidal force of this social need that lent energy to relationships” [11]. David Marshall, an aesthetics scholar and English Professor at the University of California - Santa Barbara, takes this theme to an even further conclusion, pointing out that the loss of identity is especially played out in the description of the mechanicals their assumption of other identities. In describing the occupations of the acting troupe, he writes “Two construct or put together, two mend and repair, one weaves and one sews. All join together what is apart or mend what has been rent, broken, or sundered” [12]. In Marshall’s opinion, this loss of individual identity not only blurs specificities, it creates new identities found in community, which Marshall points out may lead to some understanding of Shakespeare’s opinions on love and marriage. Further, the mechanicals understand this theme as they take on their individual parts for a corporate performance of Pyramus and Thisbe. Marshall remarks that “To be an actor is to double and divide oneself, to discover oneself in two parts: both oneself and not oneself, both the part and not the part” [13]. He claims that the mechanicals understand this and that each character, particularly among the lovers, has a sense of laying down individual identity for the greater benefit of the group or pairing [14]. It seems that a desire to lose one’s individuality and find identity in the love of another is what quietly moves the events of A Midsummer Night’s Dream. It is the primary sense of motivation and is even reflected in the scenery and mood of the story.

Feminist

Male dominance is one thematic element found in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Shakespeare's comedies often include a section in which females enjoy more power and freedom than they actually possess [citation needed]. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Helena and Hermia escape into the woods for a night where they do not fall under the laws of Theseus or Egeus. Upon their arrival in Athens, the couples are married. Marriage is seen as the ultimate social achievement for women while men can go on to do many other great things and gain societal recognition [19]. In his article, "The Imperial Votaress," Louis Montrose draws attention to male and female gender roles and norms present in the
comedy in connection with Elizabethan culture. In reference to the triple wedding, he says, "The festive conclusion in A Midsummer Night's Dream depends upon the success of a process by which the feminine pride and power manifested in Amazon warriors, possessive mothers, unruly wives, and willful daughters are brought under the control of lords and husbands" [29]. He says that the consummation of marriage is how power over a woman changes hands from father to husband. A connection between flowers and sexuality is drawn. The juice employed by Oberon can be seen as symbolizing menstrual blood as well as the sexual blood shed by virgins. While blood as a result of menstruation is representative of a woman's power, blood as a result of a first sexual encounter represents man's power over women [21].

There are points in the play, however, when there is an absence of patriarchal control. In his book, Power on Display, Leonard Tennenhouse says the problem in A Midsummer Night's Dream is the problem of "authority gone archaic" [22]. The Athenian law requiring a daughter to die if she does not do her father's will is outdated. Tennenhouse contrasts the patriarchal rule of Theseus in Athens with that of Oberon in the carnivalistic Faerie world. The disorder in the land of the faeries completely opposes the world of Athens. He states that during times of carnival and festival, male power is broken down. For example, what happens to the four lovers in the woods as well as Bottom's dream represents chaos that contrasts with Theseus' political order. However, Theseus does not punish the lovers for their disobedience. According to Tennenhouse, by forgiving of the lovers, he has made a distinction between the law of the patriarch (Egeus) and that of the monarch (Theseus), creating two different voices of authority. This distinction can be compared to the time of Elizabeth I in which monarchs were seen as having two bodies: the body natural and the body mystical. Elizabeth's succession itself represented both the voice of a patriarch as well as the voice of a monarch: (1) her father's will which stated that the crown should pass to her and (2) the fact that she was the daughter of a king [23].

The challenge to patriarchal rule in A Midsummer Night's Dream mirrors exactly what was occurring in the age of Elizabeth I.

Religious

Patricia Parker, professor of English at Stanford University and the editor of the New Arden edition of this play has argued that it contains a religious allegory. It has been well established for two centuries that Puck and Robin Goodfellow are both names for the devil from English folklore. Parker argues that the character of 'Wall' acted by Snout represents the partition that exists between Earth and Heaven and that comes down on the day of Apocalypse. Pyramus and Thisbe are a late Renaissance allegory for Jesus and the Church, and that the source of the names Peter (petros, Greek for a stone), and Quince (quoin, a term for a wedge shaped cornerstone) suggests his identity as St Peter. (P. Parker 'Murals and Morals; A Midsummer Night's Dream' in (ed) Glenn W. Most, Aoremata; Kritische Studien zur Philologiegeschichte, 1998 pgs 190-218). The play-within-the play therefore appears to be a religious satire. The allegorical dimension was extended to the other characters and demonstrated in performance by the Dark Lady Players in a New York production in March 2007 (Ted Merwin 'The Dark Lady as a Bright Literary Light' The Jewish Week, 23 March 2007 pgs 56-7).
Performance history

17th and 18th centuries

During the years of the Puritan Interregnum when the theatres were closed (1642-60), the comic subplot of Bottom and his compatriots was performed as a "droll." Drolls were comical playlets, often adapted from the subplots of Shakespearean and other plays, that could be attached to the acts of acrobats and jugglers and other allowed performances, thus circumventing the ban against drama.

When the theatres re-opened in 1660, A Midsummer Night's Dream was acted in adapted form, like many other Shakespearean plays. Samuel Pepys saw it on Sept. 29, 1662, and thought it "the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw...."[24]

After the Jacobean/Caroline era, A Midsummer Night's Dream was never performed in its entirety until the 1840s. Instead, it was heavily adapted in forms like Henry Purcell's musical masque/play The Fairy Queen (1692), which was not revived after its initial performance at the Dorset Garden Theatre. Richard Leveridge turned the Pyramus and Thisbe scenes into an Italian opera burlesque, acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1716. John Frederick Lampe elaborated upon Leveridge's version in 1745. Charles Johnson had used the Pyramus and Thisbe material in the finale of Love in a Forest, his 1723 adaptation of As You Like It. In 1755, David Garrick did the opposite of what had been done a century earlier: he extracted Bottom and his companions and acted the rest, in an adaptation called The Fairies. Frederic Reynolds produced an operatic version in 1816.[25]

The Victorian stage

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In 1840, Madame Vestris at Covent Garden returned the play to the stage with a relatively full text, but padded it out greatly with musical sequences and balletic dances. Vestris took the role of Oberon, and for the next seventy years, Oberon and Puck would always be played by women. After the success of Vestris' production, nineteenth century theatre continued to treat the Dream as an opportunity for huge spectacle, often with a cast numbering nearly one hundred. Huge, detailed sets were created for the palace and the forest, and the fairies tended to be envisaged as gossamer-winged ballerinas. The much-loved overture by Felix Mendelssohn was always used throughout this period, with the text often being cut to provide greater space for music and dance. Augustin Daly's production opened in 1895 in London and ran for 21 performances. The special effects were constructed by the famous Martinka Magic Company, which was later owned by Houdini. Herbert Beerbohm Tree staged a 1911 production with live rabbits.

Twentieth Century
In the early twentieth century, a reaction against this huge spectacle emerged. Innovative director Harley Granville-Barker introduced in 1914 the modern way of staging the *Dream*: he removed the huge casts and Mendelssohn, using instead Elizabethan folk music. He replaced the huge sets with a simple system of patterned curtains. He used a completely original vision of the fairies, seeing them as golden robotic insectoid creatures based on Cambodian idols. This increased simplicity and emphasis on directorial imagination has dominated subsequent *Dreams* on the stage.

Max Reinhardt staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream* thirteen times between 1905 and 1934, introducing a revolving set. After he fled Germany he devised a more spectacular outdoor version at the Hollywood Bowl, in September 1934. The shell was removed and replaced by a "forest" planted in tons of dirt hauled in especially for the event, and a trestle was constructed from the hills to the stage. The wedding procession inserted between Acts IV and V crossed a trestle with torches down the hillside. The cast included John Davis Lodge, William Farnum, Sterling Holloway, Butterfly McQueen, Olivia de Havilland, and Mickey Rooney, with Erich Wolfgang Korngold's orchestrations of Mendelssohn. (The young Austrian composer would go on to make a Hollywood career.) On the strength of this production, Warner Brothers signed Reinhardt to direct a filmed version, Hollywood's first Shakespeare event since Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Mary Pickford's *Taming of the Shrew* (1929). Rooney (Puck) and De Havilland (Hermia) were the only hold-overs from the cast.

Another landmark production was that of Peter Brook in 1970. Brook staged the play in a blank white box, in which masculine fairies engaged in circus tricks such as trapeze artistry. Brook also introduced the subsequently popular idea of doubling Theseus/Oberon and Hippolyta/Titania, as if to suggest that the world of the fairies is a mirror version of the world of the mortals.

Since Brook's production, directors have felt free to use their imaginations freely to decide for themselves what the play's story means, and to represent that visually on stage. In particular, there has been an increased amount of sexuality on stage, as many directors see the 'palace' as a symbol of restraint and repression, while the 'wood' can be a symbol of wild, unrestrained sexuality, which is both liberating and terrifying. A number of noted British actors played various roles in Brook's acclaimed production, including Patrick Stewart, Ben Kingsley, as well as noted stage actors John Kane (Puck) and Jennie Stoller (Helena).

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* has enjoyed myriad productions in New York, including several by the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Delacorte Theatre in Central Park, and a notable production by the Theatre for a New Audience, produced by Joseph Papp at the Public Theatre. In 1978, the Riverside Shakespeare Company produced a popular tour
Adaptations and cultural references

Literary

Botho Strauß's play Der Park (1983) is based on characters and motifs from A Midsummer Night's Dream. St. John's Eve written in 1853 by Henrik Ibsen relies heavily on the Shakespearean play. The Thyme of the Season, written in 2006 by Duncan Pflaster is a sequel to Shakespeare's play, set on Halloween.

For his series The Sandman, Neil Gaiman included a fantastical retelling of the play's origins in the graphic novel Dream Country. It won several awards, and is distinguished by being the only comic that has ever won a World Fantasy Award. In 2006–2007, comic-strip artist Brooke McEldowney, creator of 9 Chickweed Lane and the webcomic Pibgorn, adapted the story into a 20th century setting in Pibgorn, using characters from both his comic series in the "cast." A Midwinter Morning's Tale is comic of the Corto Maltese series by Hugo Pratt. Oberon, Puck, Morgan Le Fey and Merlin appear in the comic as a representation of the Gaelic and Celtic fantasy beings. They choose Corto Maltese as their knight to fight for their sake against a possible German invasion in the context of World War I.

Jean Betts of New Zealand also adapted the play to make a comedic feminist spoof, "Revenge of the Amazons"(1996). The gender-roles are reversed (play actors are feminist "thesbians"/ Oberon falls in love with a "bunny girl"). It is set in the 1970s with many social references and satire.

Magic Street (2005) by Orson Scott Card revisits the work as a continuation of the play under the premise that the story by Shakespeare was actually derived from true interactions with fairy folk. A Midsummer Night's Gene (1997) by Andrew Harman is a sci-fi parody of Shakespeare's play. Faerie Tale, the 1988 fantasy novel by Raymond E. Feist, contains many references to the mythical characters represented in Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Lords and Ladies, written by Terry Pratchett, adapts the general use of fantasy characters (elves), the setting of a field, rustic thespians, and a royal wedding to his Discworld cast of characters.

"The Sisters Grimm (novel series)", written by Micheal Buckly, features Puck, A.K.A: the Trickster King, as one of the main characters. In the fourth book of the series, "Once Upon a Crime", Titania, Oberon, and other Faerie Folk are introduced.

The teen book, This Must Be Love (2004) by Tui Sutherland is based on the play. The characters have similar or identical names to the original. One sub-plot involves a school play of another Shakesperean play, Romeo and Juliet, and another sub-plot involves the
main characters going to see a play entitled "The Fairies Quarrel" in which a character acts like Puck amongst the main characters.

**Musical versions**

Felix Mendelssohn composed an overture inspired by the play in 1826, intended for concert performance. In 1843, because of the fame of the overture, he was commissioned to write incidental music for a German stage production of the play. He added the Overture to it, and both were used in most stage versions through the nineteenth century. Among Mendelssohn’s incidental pieces is his Wedding March, used most often today as a recessional in Western weddings. Between 1917 and 1939 Carl Orff also wrote incidental music for the play Ein Sommernachtstraum (performed in 1939). Since Mendelssohn was a Jew, his music had been banned by the Nazi regime, and the Nazi cultural officials put out a call for new music for the play: Orff was one of the musicians who responded.

The choreographer Marius Petipa (more famous for his collaborations with Tchaikovsky, Swan Lake and The Sleeping Beauty) made another ballet adaptation for the Imperial Ballet of St. Petersburg, Russia with additional music and adaptations to Mendelssohn’s score by Léon Minkus. The revival premiered July 14, 1876. English choreographer Frederick Ashton also created a 40-minute ballet version of the play, retitled to The Dream. George Balanchine was another to create a Midsummer Night’s Dream ballet based on the play, using Mendelssohn's music.

*Over Hill, Over Dale*, from Act 2, is the third of the Three Shakespeare Songs set to music by the British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. He wrote the pieces for a cappella SATB choir in 1951 by for the British Federation of Music Festivals, and they remain a popular part of British choral repertoire today.

Progressive Rock guitarist Steve Hackett, best known with his work with Genesis, made a classical adaptation pf the play in 1997.

The play was adapted into an opera, with music by Benjamin Britten and libretto by Britten and Peter Pears. The opera was first performed on June 1, 1960, at Aldeburgh. The Fairy-Queen by Henry Purcell consists of a set of masques meant to go between acts of the play, as well as some minimal rewriting of the play to be current to 17th century audiences.

**Film references**


Dead Poets Society: The tragic protagonist of the movie Dead Poets Society, Neil Perry (Robert Sean Leonard), was cast as Puck in a local production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. We only see a few frames of his performance, including the ending monologue
which could be interpreted as a literary device used by the writer (Tom Schulman) to emphasize his unsuccessful plea to his father.

Disney's animated series Gargoyles featured many characters from Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, including Oberon, Titania, and, most prominently, Puck. In this series, Puck actually takes the form of Owen, loyal assistant to the main villain Xanatos. Later, Puck becomes the tutor for Xanatos' quarter-fae son, Alex. He is wily, sprightly, and willing to have fun at the expense of others.

Get Over It: The 2001 film stars Kirsten Dunst (Kelly Woods/Helena), Ben Foster (Berke Landers/Lysander), Melissa Sagemiller (Allison McAllister/Hermia) and Shane West (Bentley 'Striker' Scrumfeld/Demetrius) in a "teen adaptation" of Shakespeare's play. The characters are set in high school, and in addition to some similarities in plot, there is a sub-plot involving the main characters acting in a musical production of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Film adaptations

See also Shakespeare on screen (A Midsummer Night's Dream)

The Shakespeare play has inspired several movies. The following are the best known.

- **1935** - directed by Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle, produced by Henry Blanke and adapted by Charles Kenyon and Mary C. McCall Jr.
  - The cast included James Cagney as Bottom, Mickey Rooney as Puck, Olivia de Havilland as Hermia, Joe E. Brown as Francis Flute, Dick Powell as Lysander and Victor Jory as Oberon. Many of the actors in this version had never performed Shakespeare, and never would do so again, notably Cagney and Brown and Mitchell, who were nevertheless highly acclaimed for their performances in the film. [22]
  - Much of Mendelssohn's music was used, but re-orchestrated by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. The ballet sequences featuring the fairies were choreographed by Bronislava Nijinska.
  - The film won two Academy Awards:
    - Best Cinematography - Hal Mohr
    - Best Film Editing - Ralph Dawson
  - It was nominated for:
    - Best Picture - Henry Blanke, producer
    - Best Assistant Director - Sherry Shourds
    - Notably, Hal Mohr was not nominated for his work on the movie; he won the Oscar thanks to a grass-roots write-in campaign. The next year the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences declared that it would not accept write-in votes for the awards.
The film was first released at 132 minutes, but was edited to 117 minutes for its general release run. The full 132 minute version was not seen again until it turned up on cable television in 1994. The film was then re-issued at its full length on VHS (its first video release was of the edited version). Later showings on Turner Classic Movies have restored the film's pre-credits Overture, and its Exit Music, neither of which had been heard since its 1935 road show presentations. A DVD version was released in 2007; it runs 143 minutes (ASIN: B000QGE8JC).

- **1968** - directed by Peter Hall.
  - The cast included Paul Rogers as Bottom, Ian Holm as Puck, Diana Rigg as Helena, Helen Mirren as Hermia, Ian Richardson as Oberon, Judi Dench as Titania, and Sebastian Shaw as Quince.
  - This film stars the Royal Shakespeare Company, and is directed by Peter Hall. It is sometimes confused with Peter Brook's highly successful 1971 production, but the two are different, and Brook's production was never filmed. The fairies in Peter Hall's production wore green body paint.

- **1996** - directed by Adrian Noble.
  - The cast included Desmond Barrit as Bottom, Barry Lynch as Puck, Alex Jennings as Oberon/Theseus, and Lindsay Duncan as Titania/Hippolyta.
  - This film is based on Noble's hugely popular Royal Shakespeare Company production. Its art design is eccentric, featuring a forest of floating light bulbs and a giant umbrella for Titania's bower.

- **1999** - written and directed by Michael Hoffman.
  - The cast included Kevin Kline as Bottom, Rupert Everett as Oberon, Michelle Pfeiffer as Titania, Sophie Marceau as Hippolyta, Christian Bale as Demetrius, Dominic West as Lysander and Calista Flockhart as Helena.
  - This adaptation relocates the play's action to Tuscany in the late nineteenth century.

- **1999** - written and directed by James Kerwin.
  - The cast included Travis Schuldt as Demetrius. Sets the Dream story against a surreal backdrop of techno clubs and ancient symbols.

- **2002** - A Midsummer Night's Rave, directed by Gil Cates Jr.
  - This adaptation changed the setting to a modern rave. Puck is a drug peddler, the magic flower called "love-in-idleness" is replaced with magic ecstasy, and the King and Queen of Fairies are the host of the rave and the DJ.
  - Other differences include changing the character names such as 'Lysander' becoming 'Xander'.

- **2005** - ShakespeaRe-Told BBC TV drama, adapted by Peter Bowker.
  - The cast includes Johnny Vegas as Bottom, Dean Lennox Kelly as Puck, Bill Paterson as Theo {Egeus}, and Imelda Staunton as his wife. Lennie James plays Oberon and Sharon Small is Titania. Zoe Tapper and Michelle Bonnard play Hermia and Helena.
This is a modern adaptation, set in a contemporary holiday park playing host to the engagement party of Hermia and James (Demetrius). It has the three parallel plots, plus the fairies, mischief, hallucinations and comedy of the original play. The dialogue is modern with allusions to Shakespeare's original lines.

**Anime:** In 2005, *xxxHolic -A Midsummer's Night Dream* was released in theaters. It shared slight similarities with the play.

**Disney shorts:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was adaptated into a Disney short starring Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, and Daisy Duck as Lysander, Hermia, Demetrius, and Helena, respectively. In the end, the story is revealed to be a dream that Mickey has during a picnic. This short was featured in Disney's *Mickey Mouse Works* and *House of Mouse*

**References**

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15. ^ (Green 370)
16. ^ (Green 375)
17. ^ (Garner 129-130)
18. ^ (Slights 261)
19. ^ (Howard 414)
20. ^ (Montrose 65)
21. ^ (Montrose 61-69)
22. ^ (Tennenhouse 73)
23. ^ (Tennenhouse 74-76)
27. ^ Eckert, Charles W., ed. *Focus on Shakespearean Films*, p. 48 Watts, Richard W. "Films of a Moonstruck World"
Bibliography


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• A Midsummer Night's Dream HTML version of the play.
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• No Fear Shakespeare parallel edition: original language alongside a modern translation.
• Video of a Harvard-Radcliffe Summer Theatre Production of the entire play with incidental music by Mendelssohn
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• Los Angeles Philharmonic notes
• Notes, including production history