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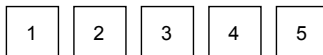
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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM REVIEW

Written by [Jon Adams \(/blog/Jon-Adams\)](#) | Wednesday, 11 February 2015 10:41

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Emily Burton

It is hard to believe this romantic comedy was written almost 420 years ago. If you're not familiar with the original, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is about two couples in love with the wrong partners and how they are finally brought together with the aid of a dodgy love potion and some poorly executed magic.

Dealing with the universal theme of love and its complications, the plot focuses on three parallel stories: the trials and experiences of two sets of lovers camping in a magical forest, the world of the Fairy King and Queen, and a sextet of amateur actors (The Mechanicals) rehearsing a badly-written play in preparation for the wedding of Theseus, the Duke of Athens to Hippolyta, the Amazonian Queen.



In a nutshell, Hermia is in love with Lysander. Lysander is in love with Hermia but her father wants her to marry Demetrius. Helena loves Demetrius, but Demetrius loves Hermia. When Lysander and Hermia are forbidden to marry they decide to elope and escape to the forest. Demetrius follows them, pursued by Helena, who still has the hots for him. A love quadrangle develops among the young lovers when the mischievous Puck decides to play Cupid.

As the four young lovers chase each other around the forest, the hapless thespians practise their play. It's immediately clear that our crew of amateur actors are pretty incompetent, which amuses the mischievous elf Puck, who has been watching the rehearsals from the sidelines.

Puck decides to play a joke on Bottom (one of the incompetent Mechanicals) by giving him donkey ears. (He's an ass!) And so it goes.



In this wildly original and contemporary adaptation, Schostakowski transports the drama's action from ancient Athens to a nostalgia-tinged and slightly kitsch vision of mid-70s Australian suburbia. Swapping the majesty of Athens for a grand Elizabethan hall (with an equally imposing staircase), the actors use La Boite's intimate space with confidence. Under Schostakowski's skilful hand, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' becomes the ultimate teenage parable driven by teenage desire, confused sexuality, the thrill (and angst) of pursuit, and the uncertain journey to adulthood.

In this bold, stripped-down production, Schostakowski challenges the cast with each of the performers taking on dual roles. Normally performed with a cast of 17-20 actors, Schostakowski's version relies on the versatility and capability of his 6 person team. While challenging the cast, this amalgam of roles may initially confuse some audience members, but any reservations are soon dispelled as the cast take charge of their respective characters.

THE FIRST SPELLS



There are good performances on display: Kathryn Marquet delivers a strong and believable Hermia/Snug, while Christine O'Leary's Hippolyta/Titania is magnificently commanding. In falling out of love with Brian Lipson's Theseus/Oberon, she simply swaps one overbearing ass for another! Kieren Law brings a new dimension to the character Bottom – which is so often underplayed. Emily Burton is a convincing Helena/Starveling, and the talented Pacharo Mzembe delivers an erstwhile Demetrius/Flute.

This polished production re-imagines the bard's magical and romantic comedy in a totally unique and original form with giggles galore! The cast is poised and confident and the production values consistent with La Boite's 90 year heritage.