

A Midsummer Night's Dream: Introduction

This LibGuide was created to accompany the Visions & Voices event: A Midsummer Night's Dream .

On Thursday, April 10, USC students will have a chance to attend Bristol Old Vic with Handspring Puppet Company's performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream.

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Introduction

This LibGuide was created to accompany the Visions & Voices event: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* . On Thursday, April 10, USC students will have a chance to attend Bristol Old Vic with Handspring Puppet Company's performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the [Broad Stage of the Santa Monica College Performing Arts Center](#).

About this performance: "Having last worked together on the internationally acclaimed *War Horse*, Bristol Old Vic's artistic director, [Tom Morris](#), and South Africa's [Handspring Puppet Company](#) reunite to begin a new journey. Shakespeare's inexhaustible *A Midsummer Night's Dream* unfurls in the wooded ambience of [The Broad Stage](#), interweaving the lives of lovers, actors, friends, foes and fairies..." [Read more about the event at the Visions & Voices website](#).

About the play: "The most persistently popular of all Shakespeare's comedies, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is much more than a piece of gentle fairy-fun. Its concern with illusion and reality has been amply demonstrated by many critics as has its profound exploration of the whole art of theatre." For more see, [The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English](#), Cambridge UP, 2000.

Subject Guide

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William Shakespeare
Folger Shakespeare Library

Unknown artist after the Chandos portrait. Shakespeare signboard. Oil on panel, late 1600s to early 1700s. Shelfmark

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A Midsummer Night's Dream: Plot Synopsis

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Sources

A Midsummer Night's Dream

The Oxford Companion to English Literature (7 ed.) Online. Oxford UP, 2009. Ed. Dinah Birch

A comedy by ***Shakespeare**, written probably c.1594–5; printed in quarto in 1600 and 1619; reprinted with changes apparently deriving from performance in the first **folio**. It is often thought to be associated with a courtly marriage but none has been successfully identified. There is no single source, but Shakespeare drew, among other authors, on **Chaucer**, **Arthur *Golding's** translation of **Ovid**, and **Apuleius' Golden Ass**.

Hermia refuses her father Egeus' command to marry Demetrius, because she loves Lysander, while Demetrius has formerly professed love for her friend Helena, and Helena loves Demetrius. Under the law of Athens, Theseus, the duke, gives Hermia four days in which to obey her father; else she must suffer death or enter a nunnery. Hermia and Lysander agree to leave Athens secretly in order to be married where the Athenian law cannot pursue them, and to meet in a wood a mile outside the city. Hermia tells Helena of the project, and the latter tells Demetrius. Demetrius pursues Hermia to the wood, and Helena Demetrius, so that all four are there that night. This wood is the favourite haunt of the fairies.

Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies, have quarrelled, because Titania refuses to give up to him a changeling Indian boy for a page. Oberon tells Robin Goodfellow (Puck), a mischievous sprite, to fetch him a certain magic flower, of which he will press the juice on Titania's eyes while she sleeps, so that she will fall in love with what she first sees when she wakes. Overhearing Demetrius in the wood reproaching Helena for following him, and wishing to reconcile them, Oberon orders Robin to place some of the love-juice on Demetrius' eyes, but so that Helena shall be near him when he does it. Robin, mistaking Lysander for Demetrius, applies the charm to him, and as Helena is the first person Lysander sees he at once woos her, enraging her because she thinks she is being mocked. Oberon, discovering Robin's mistake, now places some of the juice on Demetrius' eyes; he on waking also first sees Helena, so that both Lysander and Demetrius are now wooing her. The women quarrel, and the men go off to fight for Helena.

Meanwhile Oberon has placed the love-juice on Titania's eyelids. She wakes to find Bottom the weaver close by, wearing an ass's head (Bottom and a company of Athenian tradesmen are in the wood to rehearse a play for the duke's wedding, and Robin has put an ass's head on Bottom). Titania at once falls in love with him, and toys with his 'amiable cheeks' and 'fair large ears'. Oberon, finding them together, reproaches Titania for bestowing her love on an ass, and again demands the changeling boy, whom she in her confusion surrenders; whereupon Oberon releases her from the charm. Robin at Oberon's orders throws a thick fog about the human lovers, and brings them all together, unknown to one another, and they fall asleep. He applies a remedy to Lysander's eyes, so that when he awakes he returns to his former love. Theseus and Egeus appear on the scene, the runaways are forgiven, and the couples married. The play ends with the 'tragedy' of 'Pyramus and Thisbe', comically acted by Bottom and his fellow tradesmen, to grace these weddings and that of Theseus and Hippolyta.

The Oxford Companion to English Literature (7 ed.) Online. Oxford UP, 2009. Ed. Dinah Birch

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MLA International Bibliography

"Index to scholarly publications in literature, language, linguistics, and folklore from over 4000 journals published worldwide."

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Shakespeare in LION (Literature Online)

- Texts By William Shakespeare - view primary works
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 ISBN: 9781408152010
 Publication Date: 2011



The Cambridge Shakespeare Guide by Emma Smith
 Call Number: PR2987 .S75 2012
 ISBN: 9780521195232
 Publication Date: 2012-03-22



Phenomenal Shakespeare by Bruce R. Smith
 Call Number: Doheny Library PR2976.S49 2010
 ISBN: 9780631235484
 Publication Date: 2010-01-26

Bruce R. Smith is Dean's Professor of English and Professor of Theatre at the University of Southern California. He has published widely on

Shakespeare with recent works including *The Key of Green: Passion and Perception in Renaissance Culture* (2009), *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (2000), and *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (1999). A former president of the Shakespeare Association of America, Smith has been a keynote speaker at meetings of Shakespeare and Renaissance organizations in Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, Portugal, and the UK. He has also been featured in programs aired on BBC Radio 3, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Public Radio International, and TV 4 London.



Shakespeare's Comedies by Leggatt, Alexander
 Call Number: Doheny Library PR2981.C36 2002
 ISBN: 0521770440



Shakespeare's Comedies by Kiernana, Ryan
 Call Number: Doheny Library PR2981.R93 2009
 ISBN: 0333599322

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Beyond a Common Joy: An Introduction to Shakespearean Comedy by Olson, Paul A.

Call Number: PR2981.O67 2008

ISBN: 0803215746



Shakespeare and Comedy by Maslen, R.W.

Call Number: Doheny Library PR2994.M37 2005

ISBN: 1904271448

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Journals (Selected)

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Shakespeare Quarterly (SQ)

"SQ publishes articles in the vanguard of Shakespeare studies. SQ, produced by Folger Shakespeare Library in association with George Washington University, features notes that bring to light new information on Shakespeare and his age, issue and exchange sections for the latest ideas and controversies, theater reviews of significant Shakespeare productions."

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Krapp's Last Tape

In 1971, Alan Schneider directed this historic video taped performance of Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, starring Jack MacGowran. The play dramatized an old man's struggle to repossess his youth by searching through reels of audiotape. This performance was originally intended for television but never shown and subsequently put away and forgotten for nearly twenty years. The original film has been restored by Pennebaker Hegedus Films and remains a memorial to the late Jack MacGowran, Alan Schneider and William Ritman.

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