



**2006  
Young People's  
Performance**

***A Midsummer Night's Dream  
The Ballet***



**Friday, March 17, 2006  
Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center  
University of Missouri - St. Louis**

*9:30 a.m. and 12:45 p.m.*

*Alexandra Ballet's* presentation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream - The Ballet* will provide an opportunity to introduce ballet to your students through a live performance that translates William Shakespeare's play into the language of movement and dance. The **Alexandra Ballet Educational Booklet** has been designed as a resource for teachers to provide specifics about the performance, as well as a broad spectrum of learning materials that might be used to enrich your class' experience of *A Midsummer Night's Dream - The Ballet*. Literature, creative writing, poetry, music, theater, history, and art education are integrated through the lessons and classroom activities.

**The Young People's Performance and learning materials apply to:**  
National Standards for Arts – Dance 3, 5, & 7; Music 8 & 9; Theater 6  
Missouri Standards - Fine Arts 1-5; Communication Arts 1-7; Social Studies 2 & 6  
Illinois Standards – Fine Arts 25-27; Language Arts 2; Social Science 18

## *A Midsummer Night's Dream-The Ballet*

### **Performances for the General Public**

**Saturday, March 18, 2006**  
**7:30 pm**

**Sunday, March 19, 2006**  
**2:00 pm**

**Blanche M. Touhill Performing Arts Center**  
**University of Missouri-St. Louis**  
**For tickets call 314-516-4949 or purchase on line at [www.touhill.org](http://www.touhill.org)**

**Alexandra Ballet is a member of:**

Chesterfield Arts    --    Missouri Citizens for the Arts    --    Dance St. Louis  
Regional Dance America, Mid-States Honor Company



## Introduction to the Play

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written by William Shakespeare around 1595 and published in 1600. Some scholars think it was written to be performed at a noble's wedding ceremony. It is a comedy about love that combines foolishness, , and fun. The setting of the play is supposed to be in Athens, with two pairs of Athenian lovers as characters. However, it actually takes place in a mythical forest, which is similar to the English Warwickshire Woodlands near Stratford, England where Shakespeare was born. It is an enchanted forest with butterflies and fairies, where mortals and immortals try to make sense of love.

The play combines three comical plots. In the play misunderstandings occur between two pairs of Athenian lovers; between Oberon and Titania, king and queen of the fairies; and a group of village craftsmen who are rehearsing a play to present at the wedding of their duke.

The characters from each of the three plots speak in their own manner. The two pairs of romantic lovers (Hermia & Lysander and Helena & Demetrius) speak with courtly poetry, using mythical allusions, metaphors, and rhymes. The king and queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania, speak in a beautiful poetic language. The band of villagers speaks in prose.

The play has five acts with Act One presenting the situation and characters to begin revealing the plot.

### Act I: Exposition

The audience discovers the problem with the lovers. Each lover is in love with the wrong person.

### Act II: Increasing action

The quarrel between Oberon and Titania is

more intense, and Lysander is given the love juice.

### Act III: Climax

Bottom is transformed into a donkey, and Titania is humiliated. The lovers are in disarray.

### Act IV: Declining action

Titania and Bottom wake up from their dreams, and Oberon and Titania become reconciled.

### Act V: Resolution

The three couples prepare for marriage, and the play within a play begins.

The full text of the play is on the web.

<http://www-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/midsummer/full.html>

## Main characters

**Puck** Oberon's jester, a mischievous fairy who delights in playing pranks on mortals.

**Oberon** King of the fairies is at odds with his wife, Titania. His actions begin the confused sequence of magic and comedy.

**Titania** Queen of the fairies is tricked into a potion-induced love for Nick Bottom.

**Lysander** Young man of Athens in love with Hermia against her father's wishes.

**Demetrius** Young man of Athens in love with Hermia, too, which sets the stage for conflict.

**Hermia** Young Athenian in love with Lysander and is a childhood friend of Helena.

**Helena** Young Athenian woman in love with Demetrius, although he is now taken with Hermia.

**Nick Bottom** A weaver who is in the craftsmen's play for the wedding. He is over-confident and silly as Puck transforms him into a donkey.

## William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Shakespeare, an English playwright and poet, is considered to be one of the world's greatest dramatists. Shakespeare had a remarkable talent for characterization and portrayal of human motivations and behaviors.

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 at Stratford-upon-Avon in England. As a boy William loved the countryside and flowers and enjoyed listening to country folklore.

As an adult, he left Stratford and went to London to further develop as an actor, poet, and writer. He had an acting company that performed at many open-air theaters and later bought the Black Friars Theater for indoor plays. As he grew older he returned to Stratford to live out his remaining years and died on April 23, 1616 at the age of fifty-two.

This source has a biography, list of works, English historical factors, and other information.

[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761562101\\_1/Shakespeare.html#S1](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761562101_1/Shakespeare.html#S1)



MSN Encarta Premium

## Life in England

During the time Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Queen Elizabeth I ruled England, which is why it is named the Elizabethan period. This time was also the English Renaissance (14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries), when great works of poetry and drama were written.

Only the elite enjoyed literature, while most people of this time period could not read. Therefore, stories and legends were passed along by word-of-mouth, and plays acted in the town square for all to enjoy.

Students can use research skills to learn more about the Elizabethan period and Renaissance in history, including the artists and authors from that time. For more information on the Elizabethan period refer to the educational brochure for *The Sleeping Beauty 2004* on the *alexandra ballet* web site.

<http://alexandraballet.com/perfm/performances.html>.

## Elizabethan English

In Elizabethan English, adjectives could be used as adverbs and nouns. Most of the words in Shakespeare's plays exist today, but some of their meanings have changed. The word "silly" used to mean "holy," and the word "quick" meant "alive."

Some words in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are no longer used in the English language. One can still tell the meanings of these words by using the context of the sentence.

<u>No longer used</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
quads	showy toys
belike	perhaps
misgraffed	badly matched
orbs	fairy rings
reremice	bats
pard	leopard
dole	source of sorrow

## *Synopsis*

### *A Midsummer Night's Dream - The Ballet*

Different from the play, the ballet is divided into two acts. The plot and climax are in the first act. The second act is the decline in action and resolution.

#### **Act I**

The night in question is Midsummer's Eve, a time of great rejoicing and mischief among the fairies of the forest. Oberon, their King, and Titania, their Queen, quarrel over who gets to keep a little Indian Boy. To resolve the quarrel, humble his proud Queen, and gain the boy for himself, Oberon enlists the aid of Puck. This clever and mischievous fairy delights in playing tricks on mortals, and he is the faithful servant of Oberon.

Led by Peter Quince, a carpenter, there is a meeting in the forest of a group of tradesmen. They are preparing a play. The star of the group, Nick Bottom, a weaver, struts and boasts of his ability to play any and all parts.

Hermia and Lysander, meeting this same night in the forest, make plans to be married, only Hermia's wealthy father wants her to marry Demetrius. Demetrius, in love with Helena, is swayed by Hermia's dowry.

Hermia and Lysander, very much in love, are followed through the forest by Demetrius and Helena. Blind to his feeling of unrest, Helena continues to vie for Demetrius' attentions.

Oberon sends Puck on a journey for a magic flower. He will anoint Titania with the nectar of this flower, and she will fall in love with the first creature she sees upon waking.

He also has the idea to have Demetrius nointed so he will not be swayed by Helena,

and remain true to Hermia. Mistaking Lysander for Demetrius, Puck places the nectar on the eyes of the sleeping Lysander, causing him to fall in love with Helena and forsake Hermia.

Into this confusion comes Bottom and his amateur acting troupe. Puck turns Bottom's head into the head of a donkey, frightening off all his friends and leaving the weaver alone. Titania, the queen of the fairies, awakens from her sleep. Her eyes, like those of Lysander, have been anointed with the magic nectar, and she falls in love with the first creature she sees. Her new love is, of course, Bottom--with his donkey's head.

#### **Act II**

After playing various pranks on Titania, Bottom, and the two pairs of lovers, Oberon relents and has Puck set things right again. Lysander and Hermia are reunited, and Demetrius, with the aid of the magic nectar, rediscovers his love for Helena.

Titania and Bottom lie sleeping side by side while Oberon watches in hiding. Oberon, sorry for Titania, regrets his vengeance and decides to use his magical flower to regain her favor. He squeezes the nectar of the magic flower into her eyes. As she awakes she sees Oberon and declares her love for him.

Puck releases Bottom from his enchantment. He is awestruck and confused but returns to his friends to continue rehearsal for the play.

The fairies participate in the celebration of the double wedding, Hermia to Lysander and Helena to Demetrius. The whole forest is enchanted by Titania and Oberon who bless the couples and their court, sending everyone into a future of happiness on this magical Midsummer Night.

## The Ballet

Many ballets have been set to Shakespeare's plays. In 1969, John Cranko used Scarlatti's music to stage a full-length ballet of *The Taming of the Shrew* for the Stuttgart Ballet in Germany. This knock-about comedy involves the courtship of an unlikely couple.

Using Shakespeare's tragedy of *Othello* for his inspiration, choreographer José Limon created *The Moor's Pavane*. It does not attempt to tell the play's story, but provides the essential feelings of love, jealousy, and betrayal. This stately dance for two couples is set to the music of Henry Purcell and was first performed in 1949.

In similar fashion, British dancer/choreographer Robert Helpmann used Tchaikovsky's fantasy overture to *Hamlet* for a ballet that is an interpretation of the events and emotions of this great tragedy. Helpmann danced the role of the "melancholy Dane" (Hamlet) with partner Margot Fonteyn as Ophelia in 1949.

George Balanchine, at New York City Ballet, first choreographed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1962. Sir Frederic Ashton set a one-act production for the Royal Ballet in 1964 to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. More recently, Bruce Wells staged a production for Boston Ballet, and Peter Anastos created a new version for Garden State Ballet.

*alexandra ballet* first performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream - The Ballet* in 1999, staged and choreographed by William Starrett. The 2006 presentation

of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is set to the music of Felix Mendelssohn's Incidental Music, Opus 21, and Opus 61. Marek Cholewa, Professor of Dance at Butler University in Indianapolis, staged and choreographed the new piece for this season. For more information on Cholewa, refer to his biography included in the educational brochure for *The Sleeping Beauty 2004* on the *alexandra ballet* web site. <http://alexandraballet.com/perfm/performances.html>.

PBS's Great Performances includes a ballet of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* titled "*The Dream*." Although the story is the same in both "*The Dream*" and the *alexandra ballet* presentation, the choreography, staging, and costumes are different between the two versions. This is similar to the differences between productions of a play when they have different producers, directors, actors, costumes, and stage accommodations.

A ballet interpretation of "Othello," another of Shakespeare's classic tales, is available through this PBS web site. <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/shows/dream/>

This is one of the ballet web sites, which explains how the play was adapted to a ballet by one choreographer. Also, it contains a list of previous versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream-The Ballet* with dates, music, and choreographers. <http://www.balletmet.org/Notes/Midsummer.html>

Ask your students to research ballet as an art and discipline. Tell the story of a well-known ballet dancer. This PBS educational resource provides a lesson plan for grades 5-8 to learn about the discipline and craft of the male ballet dancer. [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/education/plan\\_btbw\\_overview.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/education/plan_btbw_overview.html)

**Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)**

Mendelssohn was a German composer from a wealthy family. He was a child prodigy who produced his first piece in 1820 at age eleven. He was inspired by reading Shakespeare's poetry when he composed Opus 21, Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

These sites on Felix Mendelssohn, have a biography and list of his repertoire.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/education/mendelssohn.html>,

<http://www.felixmendelssohn.com/Default.htm>, and

<http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/mendelssohn.html>

The music from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is available through the public library.

Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Felix, 1809-1847. Selections Greatest hits [sound recording] / Mendelssohn. Imprint New York : Decca ; Universal Classics Group, pc2005. Contents: Selections from A midsummer night's dream, Op. 21. (COM DISC CM 537 G6)



*Felix Mendelssohn*

**Books in the Public Library**

Shakespeare and Company / by Sylvia Beach. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959.

Call Number: B BEACH.

William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night / edited by Philip Page and Marilyn Pettit; Illustrated By Philip Page. QJ 822.33 7-9

William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet / edited by Philip Page and Marilyn Pettit; illustrated by Philip Page. Imprint Hauppauge, N.Y. : Barron's Educational Series, 2005. QJ 822.33 7-9

William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream / edited By Philip Page And Marilyn Pettit; Illustrated By Philip Page. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Education Series, 2005. QJ 822.33 7-9

Tales From Shakespeare / retold By Tina Packer; Illustrated By Gail De Marcken [Et Al.]. Packer, Tina. New York: Scholastic Press, c2004. QJ 822.33 4-6

William Shakespeare's Twelfth night / retold by Bruce Coville; illustrated by Tim Raglin. Coville, Bruce. New York: Dial Books, 2003. QJ 822.33 1-2

To sleep, perchance to dream: a child's book of rhymes / William Shakespeare; illustrated by James Mayhew. Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616. New York: Chicken House/Scholastic, 2001. QJ 822.33 1-2

Shakespeare's storybook: folk tales that inspired the bard / retold by Patrick Ryan; illustrated by James Mayhew. New York: Barefoot Books, 2001. QJ 822.33 3-4

## Lesson Plans and Resources on the Internet

Numerous educational resources on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Shakespeare are available through the internet, English texts, book publishers, and the library. This is a list of a few Internet resources that we found helpful.

<http://sfstl.com/wn.pla.mid.html>

This web page for Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis provides a summary of the play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and links to educational programs that this organization provides.

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/midsummer.html>

The Web English Teacher page for William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* explains and links to many lesson plans and other teaching ideas.

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/shakespr.shtml>

Teachers First provides lesson plans and activities on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and other works by Shakespeare that are designed for high school levels.

<http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00000723.shtml>

Emints has lessons on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for grades 7 through 12.

<http://www.shakespearemag.com/reviews/midsummeractivities.asp>

The Shakespeare Magazine presents lessons for high school students that build on the movie version of the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by writer/director Michael Hoffman.

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/works/work135.html>

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) presents a video of the play performed by The Royal Shakespeare Company.

<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/elementary/lessonplan.html>

The PBS educational resource gives a writing lesson for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades using rhythms and inventive images such as Shakespeare's from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It builds on the poetry taken from the play.

*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,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;  
And there the snake throws her enameled skin,  
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.*

The NCTE and IRA educational standards that apply to the lesson are given, as well as, many useful web links.

## Ballet - Lesson Plans and Resources on the Internet

*alexandra ballet's* educational brochures from *The Sleeping Beauty 2004* (pages 6, 7, & 17) and *Musical, Magical, Moving 2005* (page 13) offer additional lesson plans, activities, and resources related to ballet. <http://alexandraballet.com/perfm/performances.html>.

A study guide by Ronald K. Brown offers dance integrated with curriculum on "Journey, Change, and African-American Studies." <http://www.dancestlouis.org/onlineguides.html>



### Videos and DVDs in the Public Library

- The complete works of William Shakespeare (abridged) [videorecording] / by The Reduced Shakespeare Company; Acorn Media, a Canada UK Co. production in association with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; producer, Paul Kafno; writers, Adam Long, Daniel Singer, Jess Winfield; director, Paul Kafno. Silver Spring, MD: Acorn Media, 2001.
- A Midsummer Night's Dream / [Videorecording] / Warner Bros.; Produced and Directed by Max Reinhardt. Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, c2001. Film production 1935. VID.CAS
- In Search of Shakespeare [videorecording] / Maya International Vision; written and presented by Michael Wood with The Royal Shakespeare Company; producer, Rebecca Dobbs; directors, Gregory Doran and David Wallace. Burbank, CA. PBS Home Video, 2003. DVD 822.33 I35
- Shakespeare's Greatest Hits. Volume I [sound recording] / retold by Bruce Coville. Imprint New York : Full Cast Audio, p2003. Contents: Midsummer Night's Dream -- Macbeth -- Romeo & Juliet -- Twelfth Night. COM.DISC J 822.33  
Summary: "There is no finer way to welcome young people-- or adults!-- to the pleasures of Shakespeare than with these four masterful retellings of some of the Bard's most beloved plays. Ranging from the pure magic of A Midsummer Night's Dream to the heartbreak of young love in Romeo and Juliet, featuring the spine-tingling tragedy of Macbeth (complete with ghost and witches) and culminating in the laugh-out-loud hijinks of Twelfth Night, this collection features clear, straightforward storytelling combined with the richness of some of Shakespeare's most beloved poetry-- all brought to life by over two dozen brilliantly talented actors."--Container



*alexandra ballet, A Midsummer Night's Dream-The Ballet, 1999*

## Classroom Activities

### Character Development

Make up or select a few character sketches and read them to the class. The students can discuss which character sketches help them to see or understand the character. Each member of the class can choose one of Shakespeare's characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and write a paragraph describing the character's traits. The character sketches can be read in class. Then the students can discuss whether the characters seemed real or unreal. This can be combined with drawings of the characters or a search of pictures from books and the Internet.

### Plot Development

Discuss the three plots in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Then read a selection from the play or from a short story with a plot that evolves from the reaction of a character to a situation. Discuss the qualities of the plot and how it adds to the story. Then the students can use the character they wrote about before in a simple plot developing from one of these situations:

- While walking backward in the park, the character bumps into a crocodile. What happens next?
- The character is from a city and is spending his/her first summer on a farm. What happens to the character?
- A person explains why something he promised is not ready to give to the character. What happens next?

### Compare / Contrast

Compare and contrast Robert Frost's poem *A Passing Glimpse* to Shakespeare's passage given below.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II, Scene I

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 some time of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;  
And there the snake throws her enamel'd skin,  
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.

*A Passing Glimpse*

To Ridgely Torrence on last looking into his  
"Hesperides"

I often see flowers from a passing car  
That are gone before I can tell what they are.  
I want to get out of the train and go back  
To see what they were beside the track.  
I name all the flowers I am sure they weren't:  
Not fireweed loving where woods have burnt--  
Not bluebells gracing a tunnel mouth--  
Not lupine living on sand and drouth.  
Was something brushed across my mind  
That no one on earth will ever find?  
Heaven gives its glimpses only to those  
Not in position to look too close.

*Robert Frost*

## **Imagery**

The fairy world is associated with flowers and other nature imagery. Flowers and plants have usually been associated with magic. The fairies are constantly compared in size to the flowers. This gives us a visual image of the sizes of these tiny fairies.

Read the passage by Oberon that is given above (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act II, Scene I). Oberon's use of language is magical. This famous passage is really a list of flowers but it has a poetic magic. Look at the rhythmic and sensual qualities of Shakespeare's poetry. After reading the passage students can look through flower catalogs and make up a poem listing flowers and combining rhyme.

## **Types of Poems**

Ask your students to create one of these types of poems using nature as a theme.

### Haiku - Japanese form

Three lines with 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. Present a word picture related to nature.

Example:

Fluffy feathers white  
Falling softly on the ground.  
It is snowing hard.

### Tanka - Japanese form

It is the haiku with two lines added. The tanka consists of 31 syllables arranged in five lines based on a syllable count of 5-7-5-7-7. The first and third lines are 5 syllables long, and the second, fourth, and fifth lines have 7 syllables each. Rhyme and meter are not used.

Example:

Peace in the Garden  
Footprints in the snow,  
Side by side, the large and small  
Across the garden,  
Show me that my dog and cat  
Have forgotten their feuding.

### Cinquain

Cinquain is an unrhymed verse form like the haiku, an atmosphere poem. The form consists of five lines based on a syllable count of 2-4-6-8-2. Example:

Beggars  
Poppies  
Hold up their cups  
Like beggars, to the sun,  
Hoping that he will fill them full.

### Choose a Passage and Expand

- Have the students read this passage from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act V, Scene I. Ask them to describe the scene. Discuss the rhyme scheme.
- Some students might wish to draw illustrations or demonstrate with movement how a fairy might "hop as light as a bird."

Through the house give glimmering light,  
By the dead and drowsy fire:  
Every elf and fairy sprite,  
Hop as light as bird from Brier:  
And this ditty after me,  
Sing and dance trippingly:  
First, rehearse your song by rote,  
To each word a warbling note:  
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,  
Will we sing, and bless this place.

### Read the passage where Bottom awakens as a donkey.

- How would you feel if you woke up as a donkey?
- Explore movement - Would you move differently? How would you walk?
- Then ask someone to be a different animal.
- Who would like to pretend that you woke up like a .....
- Help them think about color and habitat. What color is the donkey and where would he live?
- Why is a donkey seen as comical? Have they seen a comical donkey in another story? (Example: The recent movie *Shrek*) What other animals might be seen as funny?
- These web sites have craft projects using donkeys.  
<http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/mpaperdonkey.htm>  
<http://www.dltk-kids.com/animals/mdonkey.html>

### Explore the role of magic and fairies

Who uses magic in the play? Example: Puck uses the magical love potion and changes Bottom. The fairies used magic.

Why is magic funny? Example: It makes the impossible happen which is a surprise. It can cause chaos such as the love-potion did when it was put on the eyes of the wrong person, Lysander.

- What other play, book, or movie has magic in it, and how did magic effect the story?
- Ask the students to find a book in the library that has fairies in the story.
- Compare and contrast what the fairies do in the different stories that they find.
- Each student can draw a picture of his/her favorite fairy, or after seeing the ballet in March they can draw a picture of the ballet's fairies.
- There are several craft projects related to fairies that can be taken from this web site.  
[http://familycrafts.about.com/od/tweens/index\\_a.htm](http://familycrafts.about.com/od/tweens/index_a.htm)

### Explore what the different characters say about the theme, love is difficult.

- Lysander - "The course of love never did run smooth."
- Helena - "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind,  
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind."