William Shakespeare's
A Midsummer Night's Dream
Directed by Ethan McSweeny

FIRST FOLIO:
TEACHER AND STUDENT RESOURCE GUIDE
Consistent with the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s central mission to be the leading force in producing and preserving the highest quality classic theatre, the Education Department challenges learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern perceptions. We hope that this First Folio: Teacher and Student Resource Guide will prove useful to you while preparing to attend A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

First Folio provides information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production. First Folio contains material about the playwrights, their world and their works. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance.

First Folio is designed as a resource both for teachers and students. All Folio activities meet the “Vocabulary Acquisition and Use” and “Knowledge of Language” requirements for the grades 8-12 Common Core English Language Arts Standards. We encourage you to photocopy these articles and activities and use them as supplemental material to the text.

Enjoy the show!

The First Folio Teacher and Student Resource Guide for the 2012-2013 Season was developed by the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department:

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Theseus, the Duke of Athens, and Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazons, are to be married. Egeus wants his daughter Hermia to marry Demetrius, but Hermia is in love with Lysander and wishes to marry him instead. The Duke, coming to Egeus’ aid, declares that Hermia must make her choice: marry Demetrius, or die. Hermia and Lysander, left alone, resolve to flee into the woods together the following night. Hermia’s childhood friend Helena is in love with Demetrius. Lysander and Hermia tell Helena of their escape plan, and Helena resolves to reveal their designs to Demetrius and follow them all to the woods. Meanwhile, a group of Athenian laborers decide to put on a play, in the hopes that they will be chosen to perform it for Theseus and his court as part of the wedding celebrations.

In the forest outside Athens, fairies are dealing with the fallout from the quarrel between Oberon, the fairy king, and Titania, the fairy queen. To exact revenge, Oberon sends his servant Puck to find a flower with the power to make people fall in love. Demetrius searches for Hermia in the forest, with Helena following at his heels. She begs him to love her, but he remains disgusted by her advances. Oberon overhears their conversation and directs Puck to charm Demetrius with the nectar of the flower when he falls asleep, making him fall in love with Helena.

Nearby, Lysander and Hermia lay to down rest. Puck assumes that Lysander is Demetrius and lays the charm on him by mistake. Lysander awakens, protesting his love to Helena, who thinks he is making fun of her. She flees, with Lysander in hot pursuit. Hermia awakens from a nightmare to find herself alone and goes to find Lysander.

When the Athenian craftsmen arrive in the forest and begin rehearsing their play, Puck lures Bottom the weaver deeper into the woods and puts a spell on him that gives Bottom a donkey head. Bottom’s terrified companions flee, and Bottom begins to sing loudly to show that he is not afraid. He wakens Titania, who is sleeping nearby. Under the flower’s magic, she falls in love with Bottom, and she and her fairies entertain him royally.

Elsewhere, Puck and Oberon soon realize that they have charmed Lysander instead of Demetrius. Oberon remedies the situation by dousing Demetrius too in the magic flower’s nectar. Helena then arrives, followed by the lovesick Lysander. Demetrius awakens, sees Helena, and swears his love to her. She is convinced that they have joined forces to humiliate her. Hermia arrives and all four begin fighting. When they finally lie down, exhausted, Puck lifts the charm from Lysander so that he will love Hermia again.

Oberon takes pity on Titania and releases her from the spell of the love flower. Titania awakens, confused, and gazes with horror on the sleeping Bottom. She and Oberon leave to bless and celebrate Theseus’s wedding day, and Puck removes the ass’s head from Bottom.

Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus and other members of the court find the four young lovers sleeping on the ground and awaken them. Demetrius is now happily in love with Helena, and Theseus deems the situation to have resolved itself and gives his permission for Lysander and Hermia, and for Demetrius and Helena, to marry. They all depart for Athens. Bottom awakens, wondering at the marvelous dream he has had. He returns to Athens and his companions.

Theseus gathers with his court to celebrate the nuptials. He selects “Pyramus and Thisbe,” to be presented by Bottom and the craftsmen. They perform to the great amusement of the court. After the play’s ending and a dance, Puck, Oberon and Titania bless the marriages that have concluded so happily.
**WHO’S WHO in A Midsummer Night’s Dream**

- **Duke Theseus**
  - The Duke of Athens and engaged to Hippolyta.

- **Hippolyta**
  - Queen of the Amazons and engaged to Theseus.

- **Egeus**
  - Hermia’s father. He wants her to marry Demetrius and gives her a harsh ultimatum if she disobeys him.

- **Helena**
  - In love with Demetrius and best friends with Hermia. Demetrius is in love with Hermia instead of her.

- **Demetrius**
  - In love with Hermia and is chosen by her father, Egeus, to marry her.

- **Lysander**
  - In love with Hermia but is not allowed to marry her because of her father. He convinces her to run away with him.

- **Hermia**
  - In love with Lysander even though her father has promised that she will marry Demetrius.

- **Titania**
  - Queen of the fairies and refuses to give Oberon the changeling boy.

- **Oberon**
  - King of the fairies. He is in a fight with Titania over a changeling boy.

- **Mechanics**
  - An acting troupe in the forest who are working on a performance for the marriage ceremony of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta. They include: Nick Bottom, Peter Quince, Francis Flute, Robin Starveling, Tom Sout and Snug.

- **Puck**
  - Mischievous jester to Oberon. He is given orders by Oberon but messes them up which causes a lot of confusion among the lovers.

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**KEY**
- family
- love
- Interest
- friend
- servant
- Lord or Nobleman
During the Elizabethan period, "English" was a relatively young language (only about 160 years old) combining Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon. There was no dictionary or standardized literacy education. People in Shakespeare’s London spoke much more than they read, causing the rules of grammar and spelling to be quite fluid. Writers created new words daily and poets expressed themselves in a new form of writing known as blank verse, first appearing in 1557 in Certain Bokes of Virgiles Aenis by the Earl of Surrey:

They whistled all, with fixed face attent
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak, O Queene, it is thy will,
I should renew a woe can not be told:
(Book II, 1-4)

That the verse was “blank” simply meant that the poetry did not rhyme, allowing rhyme-less poets such as Virgil and Ovid to be translated and Elizabethan playwrights to emulate the natural rhythms of English speech within iambic pentameter.

A typical line of verse from this time contains five units of meter or feet. Each foot contains two syllables. When the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed (dee DUM), it is an iamb (iambic meaning push, persistency or determination). The prefix penta means five, as in the five-sided shape—a pentagon. Iambic pentameter is therefore one line of poetry consisting of five forward-moving feet.

It was this new tradition of blank verse in iambic pentameter that Shakespeare inherited as he embarked on his career as playwright and creator of the greatest poetry in the history of the English language. Similar to the human heartbeat, a horse gallop or the beat of a piece of music, iambic pentameter drives and supports Shakespeare’s verse, moving the language along in a forward flow that emulates the natural speech and rhythms of life. Here is a standard line of verse in iambic pentameter from A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
(act 3, scene 2)

If we were to say the rhythm and not the words, it would sound like this:

de DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM

When we scan a piece of text (marking it with a “◡” for the unstressed and “/” for stressed), we simply tap out the rhythm of the line, based on dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM, to see if the line is structured in iambic pentameter:

◡ / ◉ / ◉ / ◉ / ◉ / ◉

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
(act 1, scene 1)

Prose in Shakespeare’s work is not in iambic pentameter and relies more heavily on other literary devices for its speed and rhythm. These devices include: antithesis (setting opposite words against each other), lists (series of actions or descriptive words that build to a climax) and puns (the use or misuse of a word to mean another word). Shakespeare used prose to express conversation between the lower classes, like the Mechanicals in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, or familiar or intimate scenes, as with Henry and Katherine at the end of Henry V. He also utilized prose to express madness or vulgarity, as in the nunnery scene of Hamlet. The exact meaning of a shift from verse to prose is not constant, but it always signals a change in the situation, characters or tone of a scene. Only Much Ado About Nothing and The Merry Wives of Windsor rely almost entirely on prose.

In the following passage from A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Bottom speaks in prose.

Some man or other must present Wall. And let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him to signify wall, or let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.
(act 3, scene 1)

As his writing skill level increased, Shakespeare gradually employed alliteration (the repetition of a vowel or consonant in two or more words in a phrase), assonance (resembling vowel sounds in a line) and onomatopoeia (words with sounds imitating their meaning) to create deeply poetic, vibrant images on stage for the characters and his audience.
I Can Do That: Modernizing a Piece of Classical Text

There are many texts and performance groups that update Shakespeare's language to resonate with a modern audience. See if you can modernize the language in this excerpt from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* without changing the main ideas that the characters are discussing. Examine the excerpt line by line and update each line of text on its own. Feel free to look up any words or phrases that you are not familiar with. This activity gives you the opportunity to closely examine a classical text and recognize how the ideas contained in it are timeless.

**Egeus**

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander. And my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitched the bosom of my child.
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou has given her rhymes
And interchanged love tokens with my child.
Thou has by moonlight at her window sung
With feigning voice verses of feignin love
And stol’n the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gauds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats—messengers
Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth.
With cunning hast though filched my daughter’s heart,
Turned her obedience (which is due to me)
To stubborn harshness. And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your Grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens:
As she is mine, I may dispose of her,
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

*(act 1, scene 1)*
“The hardest question in all of Shakespeare is ‘What do fairies wear?’” claims director Ethan McSweeny.

“Shakespeare’s fairies have more in common with the ‘little people’ of Ireland, with Celtic tradition, than they do the ones who flit around on gossamer wings,” he notes. “There are specific rituals that must be completed. It’s their duty to make sure the seasons change, for example. But the rest of the time they’re playing tricks on each other and, of course, on humans.”

Fairies are just one element in a play that McSweeny compares to a three-ring circus. “You’ve got the world of the fairies, then you have the world of the lovers, along with their community in Athens, then you have the Mechanicals, who are, themselves, attempting to put on a play.”

The trick, according to McSweeny, is to give all three equal weight. “Very often a production manages to capture one or two of those worlds. Seldom does it capture all three. Depending on the director’s skills, or realm of interest, one of those worlds won’t completely come to life. Our goal—and I can’t guarantee that we’re going to succeed—is to make sure that all three worlds, all three rings of the circus, will function equally well.”

It’s a tall order for a play that has some very famous incarnations. Most memorable—and still spoken of in theatrical circles—is the Peter Brook production that premiered with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1970, then toured the world. Performed in a stark, white space, it featured trapeze perches for Titania and Oberon, along with spinning plates and other circus paraphernalia.

“There are two things that STC Artistic Director Michael Kahn always says about A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” McSweeny notes. “First, that he’ll never direct it himself, after seeing Brook’s production. Second, that, after all the ink that’s been spilled in trying to decipher that production, the setting—that empty, white space—was actually meant to represent a rehearsal hall.”

The idea of a rehearsal hall stuck with McSweeny. “It makes such perfect sense. It’s a place where things are created, where you play with people, take on different personas. And there’s no doubt that this play is infused with theatricality.”

McSweeny’s vision evolved from that early image of an empty room to arrive at a fully formed, highly theatrical setting. Scenes in Athens, the most realistic of the play’s three worlds, will take place in front of the stage curtain. Those curtains will part to reveal the world of the Mechanicals, set in the confines of a dilapidated theatre. The massive rear doors that stand at the back of the stage will then open to reveal the forest, and the more abstract fairy world.

“Fairies will, literally, be coming out of the woodwork,” McSweeny said.

To answer that central question of what those fairies wear, Titania and Oberon’s company will outfit themselves in a wild array of styles and periods, as though pulled from costumes abandoned during the theatre’s centuries-long history.

“Anyone who has stood in an empty theatre at night knows what a magical place it is,” McSweeny says. “Theatres are like oak wine casks, or like the wood of a violin that holds all the notes that have ever been played on it. In a theatre, something always remains of what has occurred.”

Norman Allen’s work has been commissioned and produced by the Shakespeare Theatre Company, the Kennedy Center, the Karlin Music Theatre in Prague and the Olney Theatre Center. As former playwright-in-residence at Signature Theatre he premiered Nijinsky’s Last Dance (Helen Hayes Award, Outstanding Play) and In the Garden (Charles MacArthur Award) with subsequent productions throughout the United States, Europe and South Africa.
Since the moment the ink dried on Shakespeare’s manuscript of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, other artists have set their own stamp on the work, redefining the play for their time and their world. Below are just a few of the notable adaptations of the Dream. You can view a more complete list of adaptations and versions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at Asides.ShakespeareTheatre.org.

**1692**
Composer Henry Purcell’s “Restoration spectacular,” *The Fairy-Queen*, adapts Shakespeare’s text into a semi-opera, a piece of theatre that combines a spoken play, masquelike episodes and music. Purcell pays homage to King William of Orange and his queen, Mary, with symbolism: orange trees for Dutch William and a Chinese-inspired scene tipping its cap to Mary’s collection of fine china.

**1826**
In 1826, Romantic composer Felix Mendelssohn, only 17 years old at the time, composes an overture inspired by the play, which is performed in concert in present-day Szczecin, Poland. Years later in 1847, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia commissions Mendelssohn to write incidental music for a German translation of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which features the now-famous Wedding March. In 1962, George Balanchine choreographs his *Midsummer* ballet to Mendelssohn’s music.

**1900**
The Victorian era’s rabid devotion to realism comes to a head with English director Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s production that features pluckable flowers from a grass carpet and live rabbits. When the actor playing Bottom squeezes one of the rabbits too tightly out of annoyance, the rabbit bites him. The scene changes in this production add 45 minutes to the playing time.

**1905**
Max Reinhardt stages *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* countless times during his career. The production in 1905 is highly realistic, employing three-dimensional trees and an innovative revolving stage. The revolve allows for an almost infinite amount of scenic views and possibilities.
Conductor, composer and pianist Benjamin Britten collaborates with Peter Pears to create an opera based on *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, which focuses primarily on the goings-on in the woods. Each group in the story—mechanicals, lovers, and fairies—have a specific musical treatment, and Britten stays close to Shakespeare’s original theme of love’s madness. In Thisbe’s final lament, Britten also makes fun of the opera form and parodies Italian composer Donizetti’s famously intense “mad scenes” that feature raving women.

Combining elements of Italian *commedia dell’arte*, circus and contemporary theatre practices, Brook strips away the sentimentality that had characterized *Midsummer* in the Victorian age. He is the first director to double Theseus and Hippolyta with Oberon and Titania, and he places the fairies on swings. The action takes place in a blank space, something like a rehearsal room, making the production very consciously theatrical.

1914
Actor-manager, director, playwright and theatre impresario Harley Granville-Barker breaks with the realism that had marked productions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to this point. Instead of three-dimensional trees for the forest, Granville-Barker uses drapes with trees painted on them. Critics pan it almost gleefully, one saying, “No human being…can be expected to be anything but worried and annoyed by pink silk curtains that are supposed to be the roofs of houses, or green silk curtains that are supposed to be forest trees.”
What’s too far to go for love?

At the beginning of the play, we are introduced to Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius and Helena—referred to as the four lovers. By the end of scene one, we know that the objective they all share is love, but they each have obstacles that stand in their way.

In Act 1, Scene 1 Lysander explains to Hermia “The course of true love never did run smooth.” He says this to Hermia in response to her father forbidding them to be married. Eventually Lysander comes up with a plan for them to run away from the court into the forest to be married. In addition to disobeying her father and Duke Theseus by not marrying Demetrius, Helena also risks her safety by traveling through the forest by herself.

In Act 2, Scene 1 Helena follows Demetrius into the forest even though he is chasing after Hermia. Demetrius repeatedly tells Helena that he does not love her. Helena responds to this rejection with the following:

And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel, and Demetrius,
The more you beat me I will fawn on you.
Use me but as your spaniel: spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave
Unworthy as I am to follow you.

These four lovers go to extreme measures to reach their objective. Lysander and Hermia risk death for disobeying the Duke, Demetrius and Helena risk their pride by chasing after people who are clearly not in love with them and Helena and Hermia risk their safety by traveling through the forest by themselves.

Did these four lovers go too far for love? Is there such a thing as going too far to be with someone you love? People still elope and run away to get married today. With technology, people are able to use online dating to help with their search for true love and people can Facebook-stalk their current crushes.

Choose one of the four lovers and write them a letter giving them advice about their quest for love. Do you think it was a good idea for Hermia to run away with Lysander? Should Helena have more self-worth? Should Demetrius get a clue and realize that Hermia loves Lysander and not him? Use quotes from the text to help prove your point about what you think love is worth.
Why Shakespeare?

We hope that you enjoyed our production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. You are fortunate to have a school that understands the benefits of seeing Shakespeare performed live. Unfortunately not all schools gave their teachers/students permission to attend this production because they did not recognize the positive outcomes that are associated with seeing Shakespeare performed on stage.

Based on the experience that you had seeing *Midsummer*, write a letter to your school administrators explaining why this field trip was beneficial and how experiencing the excitement of a live Shakespeare performance made classical literature come alive.

Why Midsummer?

Director Ethan McSweeney explained that he knows that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is often the first Shakespeare play that people read or see. He also mentioned that he knows many people have seen multiple productions of *Midsummer* throughout their lives; both on the stage and on film. So why is this play so popular? Why do you think that many school districts have entire grades read this particular play as an introduction to Shakespeare?

Imagine that you are a teacher at your school and you need to explain and defend your opinion to your administrators why the students must read Shakespeare and why *Midsummer* should be the first Shakespeare play students study.
Resource List

Shakespeare Dictionaries

Books on Shakespeare

Books on Teaching Shakespeare

Websites
- **Shakespeare Theatre Company**—http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/education
  - ON SHAKESPEARE: Articles and information about Shakespeare’s life and world
- **In Search of Shakespeare: Shakespeare in the Classroom**—http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/
  - The companion website to Michael Wood’s four-part PBS series *In Search of Shakespeare*, this site includes extensive research about Shakespeare’s life and works, as well as interactive features.
- **Folger Shakespeare Library**—http://www.folger.edu
  - Includes excellent resources for further reading about Shakespeare, as well as fun games and information designed specifically for students and teachers.

Standards of Learning

The activities and question sequences found in the Folio supports grade 8-12 Common Core standards in English Language Arts. Primary content areas addressed include but are not limited to:

- Understanding of Classical Literature
- Vocabulary and Content Development
- Stagecraft
- Argument and Persuasive Writing
- Inference
- Performance
- Questioning and Listening
- Research
- Analysis and Evaluation
The phrase “theatre etiquette” refers to the special rules of behavior that are called for when attending a theatre performance.

Above all, it is important to remember that the actors on stage can see and hear you at the same time you can see and hear them. Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing the general guidelines below:

**Before you go:**

- *Midsummer* plays take place before cell phones and other fun technology existed. Please help us create the environment by turning off your cell phone and other electronic devices (iPods, games, etc.). Not only will it be historically inaccurate, but it can be very distracting, not to mention embarrassing, when a cell phone goes off during a performance. The lights from cell phones and other electronic devices are also a big distraction, so please no text messaging.

- We’re sure that you would never stick your gum underneath your chair or spill food and drinks, but because this theatre is so new and beautiful, we ask that you spit out your gum before entering the theatre and leave all food and drinks in the lobby or the coat check.

- We don’t want you to miss out on any of the action of the play, so please visit the restroom before the performance begins.

**During the performance:**

- Please feel free to have honest reactions to what is happening on stage. You can laugh, applaud and enjoy the performance. However, please don’t talk during the performance; it is extremely distracting to other audience members and the actors. Save discussions for intermission and after the performance.

**Thoughts about the importance of being an audience member from Shakespeare Theatre Company Artistic Director Michael Kahn**

“When you go to the theatre, you are engaging with other living, breathing human beings, having an immediate human response. In the theatre you sense that all of this may never happen again in this particular way.

As a member of the audience, you are actually part of how that’s developing—you have a hand in it … You are part of a community where you are asked to be compassionate, perhaps to laugh with or grieve as well as to understand people, lives and cultures different from your own.”