WOMEN, POWER AND SILENCE
IN SHAKESPEARE'S A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

A University Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of
California State University, Hayward

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in English

By
Dana M. Chohlis
June, 2000
Dana M. Chohlis  c  June 2000
WOMEN, POWER AND SILENCE

IN SHAKESPEARE'S A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

By

Dana M. Chohlis

Approved:  

Date:  

5/10/00  

5/16/02
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“How shall we find the concord of this discord”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“That will ask some tears in the true performing of it”</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I know not by what power I am made bold”</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The most lamentable comedy”</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

William Shakespeare creates a shimmering web, a dramatic fairyland in his play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The play has the general atmosphere of a dream with its confusions of time, space and object. In this play a dreaming other world is shaped; a joyous event in a wondrous realm, in a timeless manner. Real dreams have a surrealistic, magical quality as does Shakespeare’s play. In the summer of 1999 I directed *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* at Cal State Hayward. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* on the surface is silly, unreal, surreal, lively, escapist and childlike. I wanted the audience to put aside their adult problems for an evening and regain their childhood suspension of disbelief. Oberon, King of the Fairies, opened the play by hypnotizing the audience so all could be part of the dream.

In Chapter One I wrote about the several criticisms of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Some critics praise the play as an ingenious combination of folklore and classic literature; other critics pan the play as a silly romp through the forest. I also wrote about the origins of the characters and the folktales and literature Shakespeare incorporated in the play. I read many criticisms to help me shape the vision I wanted for my production.

Chapter Two of this thesis, I wrote briefly about the origins of comedy and tragedy and how they helped shape Shakespeare’s writing. I also researched the absence of the director in the sixteenth century and the role of the prompter.
Chapter Three focuses on the expected behavior of women in the sixteenth century. Hippolyta has very few lines in the play, this is historically significant. The scenes with Hippolyta and Theseus frame the play and set the mood. Hermia’s outbursts and refusal to obey her father go against sixteenth century etiquette and rules. All the women in the play push the borders of appropriate behavior. I found this to be an exciting aspect in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and wanted to see how I could exploit this in my production, but first I needed to look at the text in historical context.

In the last chapter I wrote about the directing choices I made for my production. Even though Hermia, Helena and Hippolyta get married in Act V and Titania gives up the changeling in Act IV, I wanted to try to make the women as strong and powerful throughout the play as I could while staying true to the text.
1. "How shall we find the concord of this discord?" (II.i.128)

In this first chapter I will look at criticism of William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Criticism ranges from Harold Bloom's praise: “It is his first undoubted masterwork, without flaw, and one of his dozen or so plays of overwhelming originality and power” (Bloom 148), to Samuel Pepys over quoted criticism “...it is the most insipid, ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life” (Foakes 24). Some have argued that the play challenges the orthodox Renaissance view of the superiority of reason, and others have seen in it an affirmation of the value of reason over the precarious world of imagination. R.A. Foakes found in it “a splendid balance between the two” (Foakes 96). While many productions in the last three decades have emphasized the play’s unsettling dimensions, influential critical analyses of the play have stressed the movement of the play toward social harmony. Brooks and Foakes found in the final fairy blessing of Theseus’ house a comfortable aesthetic closure that confirms the social order of the rational court. “So these triumphs of the poet’s imagination at the close confirm the stability of the ordered society for which Theseus and his ‘cool reason’ stand, reminding us that the continuance of society depends upon marriage” (Foakes 67).

Most historians agree the play was written in the winter of 1595-96 coming between *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merchant of Venice*. In *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* similarities are found between Shakespeare’s plays that he wrote before and after *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In *Love Labour’s Lost* (1594-95),
Shakespeare’s characters engage in games of repartee, exchanging balanced speeches, and capping one another’s riddles. The primary emphasis is on words in this episode of his writing as is evident in Richard II (1595) in which the great speeches of Gaunt and Richard carry the emotional weight of the play. Romeo and Juliet (1595-96) also contains rhyming passages, stichomythia and great verse cadenzas. This play is memorable for the passion of the lovers in speeches “that have caused this to become perhaps the best-known of all love stories” (Foakes 1). Similarities can be found between the plays; the thirteen-year-old Juliet summons night with the image of Phaeton whipping the horses of the sun:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,

Towards Phoebus’ lodging; such a waggoner

As Phaeton would whip you the west,

And bring in cloudy night immediately.

(III.i.i.1-4)

Oberon and Titania, are also given great powers, they alter the universe as they fight. Puck can fly around the world in 40 minutes and he, too, can call in the night and more:

Now it is the time of night

That the graves, all gaping wide,

Every one lets forth his sprite,

In the church-way paths to glide:

And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate’s team,

From the presence of the sun,

Following darkness like a dream.

(V.1.388-95)

Similarities can also be seen between the love story of *Romeo and Juliet* and the use of the folktale of *Pyrimus and Thisby* in *Midsummer*. Comparing the similarities in the works of a five year span, one can see the maturation of Shakespeare’s work. Some critics do not believe that *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was just another play written by Shakespeare in the course of his career but that the play was written for a specific purpose. For many years it was believed Shakespeare wrote the play as entertainment for a wedding feast. Giving credence to this assumption is the performance *Pyrimus and Thisby* during the Act V at the wedding feast of Hippolyta and Theseus. However, this notion is largely discounted today. But whether it is true Shakespeare wrote the play for a wedding or not, it is one of the most popular plays to read and to produce. What follows is a summary of literary criticisms of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Frank Sidgwick in 1908 writes that the *Midsummer* “is more of a masque than a drama -- an entertainment rather than a play” (Sidgwick 2). He defines the characters as “puppets” with Bottom being the only character that has any depth or interest. He describes the main plot as “sentimental” and the secondary plot as “sheer buffoonery” and finds the story of Titania and Oberon’s argument to be undignified at best. He credits Puck as the character that holds the whole play
together but by only a thin thread. He states that Shakespeare derived his play from his readings of Chaucer, North’s Plutarch and Golding’s Ovid and he comes to the conclusion that Shakespeare took the fairy lore from the popular beliefs of the day and not from any literary source. Sidgwick compares the source of Shakespeare characters and plot with other literary works as well. Theseus and Hippolyta are from Plutarch’s *Life of Theseus*; Sidgwick claims Shakespeare “appears to have made direct use” of this work (Sidgwick 9). Theseus is also taken from Chaucer’s *The Knight’s Tale*. Egeus, Philostrate and the four lovers also derive, according to Sidgwick from Chaucer and Plutarch. The rude mechanicals were original characters drawn from the Warwickshire rustics and Shakespeare’s own observations, although Bottom’s transformation into an ass may have been suggested from a passage in Reginald Scot’s *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584). Scot mentions the supposed power of witches to change men into animals most notably a story of an English sailor who was transformed by a witch into an ass. The story of Pyramus and Thisbe can be taken from Golding’s translation in 1575 of the story in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Chaucer’s *Legend of Thisbe of Babylon*. Sidgwick finds evidence that the fairies, especially Oberon were taken from the English translation of the French Auberon in the romance of *Huon of Bordeaux* and Titania from Scot’s *Discovery of Witchcraft*. Puck or Robin Goodfellow is taken from the well known legend passed down through generations of a mischievous fairy who plays tricks on housewives. Sidgwick uses his critique to investigate the sources of Shakespeare’s play. He states though that
each part of the play is ‘coloured by the poet’s genius’ (Sidgwick 3). Although he writes of the play that ‘probability is thrown to the winds and anachronism is rampant’ he does recognize that “the threads that bind together the three tales are ingeniously fastened” (Sidgwick 2).

*The New Cambridge Shakespeare* edited by R.A. Foakes brings up the old idea that the play was written for a specific event, probably the wedding of nobleman. He brings in to evidence two possible occasions: The nuptials of Elizabeth Vere and the Earl of Derby on January 26, 1595 and the wedding of Elizabeth Carey and Tomas Berkeley on February 19, 1596. He states that there is no evidence to connect the play with either ceremony and that the formal entertainment at aristocratic weddings usually took the form of a masque and not a full five act play. He does point out that Elizabeth Carey’s grandfather and her father, Sir George Carey were patrons of Shakespeare’s company which might suggest a link to this wedding. He also suggests that Shakespeare made a few references to the Queen Elizabeth in *Midsummer* and it is known that the Queen was in attendance at the Elizabeth Vere’s wedding as she was the bride’s godmother. He also suggests that due to the need for several fairies in the play, it was assumed that a private patron could provide several boys to the company temporarily to fulfill this need. *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* continues with references to Shakespeare’s sources of the play. Along with the sources mentioned in Sidgwick’s criticism, Foakes also finds references to John Lyly’s *Gallathea* (1585), where Lyly has a number of self-contained groups, one against
another and each presented in turn. Also, a possible reference for Shakespeare might have been *Midas* (1589) in which Midas’s head is metamorphosed into an ass’s head. Oberon is attributed to Robert Green’s play *The Scottish History of James IV* (1590) and Puck to *Grim the Collier of Croydon* (1600). Foakes concludes that “the texture of the plays derives a large part of its richness and complexity from the many imaginative strands Shakespeare drew from legend, folklore, literature and drama, and wove inextricably together to our lasting delight” (12). Both Sidgwick and Foakes note the works from which Shakespeare probably wrote his play, both bowing to his genius and masterful weaving together of the many sources.

James L. Calderwood in his 1971 book, *Shakespearean Metadrama* writes of the four lovers being threatened by Egeus and Puck but sheltered by “the overruling figures of Theseus and Oberon, whose authority restores all” (Calderwood 121). He goes onto state that the “cosmic resolution at the end can be total”; the worlds of the nobles, workmen, and fairies are united in festivity, dissension and alienation fade away in half-remembered dreams (Calderwood 121). Calderwood calls *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* an elegant play in verse, “the symmetrical disposition of its worlds” and calls its graceful in it movement through time. (Calderwood 122) He does have trouble though believing in fairies and the perfect ending. But with a willing suspension of disbelief he finds intelligence and variety in the elaborate plot and thematic development. He finds *Midsummer* to have more significance then Shakespeare’s earlier comedies. Calderwood’s
regards the play as a “lingering memory.” He sees the plays as “something of cunning folksiness” and “the assimilation of art to reality of imagination to reason” (Calderwood 123). Puck offers the audience the opportunity to see the plays as nothing more than dream and Calderwood feels to be a shadowy “memory that perhaps works most when least we know it” (Calderwood 148).

Harley Granville-Barker on the other hand wishes the play were just a dream and states it is a bad one at that. He condemns Midsummer as a bad play from the opening speech which he calls “very bad dramatic verse” to the lack of substance of the characters. He finds the mechanicals to be shallow clowns and the fairies to be ridiculous. He states that the fairies are impossible to stage and that a play impossible to stage is a failure. He states “in this play I can visualize neither a beginning nor an end to realism of either scenery or action” (Granville-Barker 35). He finds Shakespeare writing to be reckless especially in Titania’s speech of 35 lines about the weather and Helena’s stayed speech of thirty-seven lines. Granville-Barker agrees wholeheartedly with Pepys “insipid” comment and goes further to say the play is nothing more than prolonged plagiarism and no audience should be forced to endure this kind of pain for two and half hours.

Luckily, though, there are critics who praise the play such as T. Walter Herbert who writes “it is a tolerantly genial plays with explicitly urges us to be light-hearted” (Thaler 29). He states that it takes a “knowledgeable and intellectually alert member” of the audience to recognize the multiple allusions with joy and to leave the theatre after enjoying “gentle laughter” (Thaler 29). Herbert
recognizes Shakespeare's literary nods to other works and calls his play “comic artistry” (Thaler 30). Herbert finds many facets of Ovid's *Odyssey* and the *Ilaid* within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He found it fascinating how Shakespeare ingeniously interwove many Greek names from famous romantic tales into the names of the four lovers. At the beginning of the play Helena wonders how Demetrius could possibly prefer Hermia. Helen of Troy was associated with a young girl named Hermione. The similarities between Hermia and Hermione and Helena and Helen intrigued Herbert. He compared Lysander and Demetrius to Paris and Menelaus, because their names were similar also. In Homer the man known as Paris was regularly called Alexandros. The name Alexander was popularly known as Alisandre in the 1590's and pronounced Alisander. He goes onto compare the thick fog Puck used to protect the lovers to Aphrodite in the *Iliad* when she covered the combatants with a protective cloud to keep anybody from getting hurt. Herbert found all these similarities and the way Shakespeare molded them together in his play along with folklore and contemporary characters to be absolutely ingenious as well as entertaining.

Gary Jay Williams in his book *Our Moonlight Revels* (1997), finds the cultural issues and forces operating in the play more interesting than the traditional criticism of the play as the Renaissance debate between reason and imagination. He finds many references to eyes in the play. Hermia wishes her father "look'd but with my eyes" (I.i.56), Theseus replies that she must choose by her father's eye, Puck annoints the male lovers eyes with the powerful love juice and so on.
Williams points this out to show that Shakespeare made his audience aware that they also were not in firm command of their ideas of reality. He also points out Shakespeare’s fascinating subject of “unruly women who have challenged male perogatives” (Williams 21). He argues that Queen Elizabeth’s relation to her subjects is at the heart of this plot. He states the conclusion of the play depends upon the success of the process by which “misanthropic warriors, possessive mothers, unruly wives, and willful daughters are brought under the control of lords and husbands” (Williams 23). He points out Theseus’s subduing Hippolyta with his sword, and Titania being brought to heal by Oberon and the lover’s being wed at the conclusion of the play are all parallel to Elizabeth’s sometimes threatening relation to the men of her court.

R.W. Dent praises Shakespeare’s work for it interwoven actions of the four lovers, the fairies and the mechanicals and his treatment of love in the play. A Midsummer Night’s Dream has been admired for its unity, but Dent looks at the use of imagination in the play. Dent writes that that the play is about love and “that love so influenced the imagination as to have it misreport what it saw” (McManaway 116). He explains that the eventually pairing of the four lovers is not due to reason but the constancy of Helena and Hermia. Frequently, according to Dent, “men fluctuate before finally settling down to a constant attachment such as the heroines exhibit for the start” (McManaway 116). The origin of love never lies in reason and imagination runs rampant throughout the play. The
unexplainable pairing of the lovers is left to the imagination as it is in true life matters of love.

Harold Bloom says of *Midsummer* “Nothing before *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is it equal, and in some respects nothing by him afterward surpasses it. It is his first undoubted master work, without flaw, and one of his dozen or so plays of overwhelming originality and power” (Bloom 148). Bloom goes onto call the play a “humane and wise drama” and he contends that most productions are “brutal disasters” (Bloom 148). He states that too many productions try to make the play about sexual violence and bestiality. He states that Shakespeare is “bawdy, but not prurient” and that Bottom is “amiably innocent” (Bloom 149). He claims Shakespeare was denied the gift of inventing plot but very ingeniously intertwines an “elaborate and outrageous plot” from ancient legend and myth. In his book *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Bloom explains the historical background of each character, finding Bottom to be his favorite character and he describes him as Shakespeare’s one true clown rather than a fool or jester. He describes Bottom as innocent, shrewd and kind, and that one cannot help but to love him. Bloom’s criticism resonates with true adore for Shakespeare comedy. He finds the same innocence and ingenuity in the play that attracted me to the work.

Most critics agree on the historical time frame of the play and the literary works and legends its characters are based upon. There is disagreement whether the play was written for a specific event, and wide variances as to the genius of the
play. I agree wholeheartedly with critics who praise *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a beautiful weave of legendary literature, innocent love and outrageous fun. In Chapter Three I will write about past productions and interpretations, leading up to Chapter Four, my production and modest interpretation.
2.
That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. (I.ii.27)

This chapter will cover briefly the origins of comedy and tragedy, the use of a prompter instead of a director during the 16th century and the introduction of iambic pentameter. Shakespeare’s plays are timeless and have been performed in many styles from Kabuki to Noh, using many acting styles including Stanislavky’s method acting technique. His plays have been set in all imaginable settings and time periods from Venice Beach, California to the wild west of yesteryear. The one thing that is agreed upon by directors today is not to force a style of acting upon an actor, unless using a very stylized form of theatre. Actors need to come through the rehearsal process into performance by methods that best suit each individual.

In a modern production, the world of the play is a matter for the director. The director must imagine world where the acting style, the visual impact of costume and set, the sound, the music and the relationship between the action and the audience are consistent with each other. The director’s vision must be conveyed to the cast early in the rehearsal process, with the actors being given the chance to explore and discover the acting style required for the imaged production. The actor must connect with the world of the play not only intellectually but also emotionally, with his or her feelings and instinct.

The ancient Greeks had social and religious uses for drama. Comic actors lampooned the tendency of self-important humas to keep secret their animal needs. The festival was a spiritual antidote to hubris, which is pride against the
gods. It was also an affirmation that, whatever the foibles and idiocies of society, humans still had to perform animal functions and particularly, produce the next generation. Thus we have the comic tradition of sexual desire thwarted by social convention. Sexual attraction finally achieves its end, often by chance or through unbelievable coincidence, when the right couple pairs up; or in the case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when a certain band of fairies conspire to make things right.

Plautus (c.254-184 BC), the Roman clown turned comic dramatist, used comic types as the Cunning Slave, the Bragging Soldier and the Miser. He created complicated plots in which these simple types could function, and they satirized life in the city. The ancient Italian *commedia dell'arte* also used comic types, and employed knockabout physical routines with stock characters. These characters usually had a fixed idea - for food, sex or money - and behaved in an entirely predictable way if these needs were triggered by their situation. This made the characters predictable to the audience, though not the themselves, and so the audience laughed at them from a position of superiority.

"It is crucial in comedy that the audience is kept on the edge of what is safe" (Perry 114). Shakespeare does this in many instances in *Midsummer*. The audience is never quite sure if the battle between Oberon and Titania will become explosive, we are not sure if Puck can straightened out his errors or if, as an audience, we are viewing reality or a dream.
Although *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not considered a tragedy, it is still important to look at the genre for reference and to understand how Shakespeare’s writing style developed. The word tragedy comes from the Greek *tragos* (goat) and *ode* (song) and thus means “goat song” or more apt for our purposes perhaps an ass’s song. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC), observed that unity of form in playwriting contributed to the force of tragedy. Aristotle suggested that the characters in tragedy should be “elevated” types (kings, queens, and demigods), and that they should be essentially good with one weakness of character - the tragic flaw.

Seventeenth-century French “new” or neoclassical playwright used Aristotle’s observations as though they were strict rules. The neoclassical tragedies of Racine (1639-1699) make strict use of single location and plot, a 24-hour time-span, no on-stage action, classical mythological characters for heroes and employ Alexandrine couplets as spoken verse.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), and other English Elizabethan playwrights, ignored classical tragic form. They used many locations, an arbitrary time-span, and they mixed comic scenes with tragic plot. Dialogue was mixed with music, songs, dances, stand-up comedy, battle scenes and processions. Newly discovered iambic pentameter was used for elevated thought, while couplets and prose serve for low-life scenes.

Very little is known about Shakespeare, who is the greatest playwright of all time. He was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564, the son of a glover.
Shakespeare wrote plays during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century for a London-based company of actors whom he knew personally. Companies played in the middle of the afternoon, in a noisy atmosphere and in broad daylight to all sections of the London community, most of whom were illiterate. Women did not act, only men and boys. The actors would not get a script in case they sold it to another company. There were no copyright laws, so scripts were locked away to be used only by the prompter. Instead, the actors would get a “side” or cue script with only their own words on it and their cue line. There would be very little rehearsal time and no director, only the prompter who would sit on the stage during the performance and prompt in full voice. After preparation and line learning, the actors came together to rehearse entrances and exits. The actors would listen to hear their cues, and the action would develop spontaneously as the players responded. There was no scenery and no attempt to convince the audience that they were actually in the woods or a palace (Brown).

The play offered to Theseus and Hippolyta at their wedding feast by the ‘hempen homespuns’ in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* could be considered at farcical version of something that might have occurred in the professional theatre. From the start Quince the Carpenter is in charge as Book-holder or prompter. He arrives at the first rehearsal in his own home carrying the “the scroll of every man’s name which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and duchess on his wedding-day at night” (I.ii.3-6). He is then requested by Bottom the weaver to “say what the play treats on, then read the names of the
actors, and so grow to a point” (I.ii.8-9). Quince announces the play which is approved by Bottom as “a very good piece and merry” (I.ii.14).

This could be a rough outline of normal procedure in the professional theatre. There was a meeting at which the actors were told the subject and the story of the play and allotted their roles. If Quince were to appear as Thisbe’s father, he would have to abandon his role of Book-holding and prompting. He is prompter at the rehearsals and he must also be regarded as speaking the prologue, though the text does not state this. There was no other player left to deliver the explanatory introduction.

The Pyramus play is there for farcical purposes and cannot be taken as reliable evidence of what went on at a professionals rehearsal. But it does suggest that the Book-holder was a man of authority. It is Quince who has to tackle the problems of production. A Book-holder might do more than serve as warden of the company’s scripts; he had to make a list of the properties required and hold the book as prompter during performances.

The language Shakespeare wrote was never meant to be appreciated as literature or poetry. Every full stop, comma, break in line, eccentric spelling and capital letter in the text was a choice made not in the service of literature, but in the service of the actor. The pattern of words on the page told the actor not only what to say, but also what to do. In the First Folio, the version considered to be the one Shakespeare actually wrote, the apparently eccentric us of capital letters and phonetic spellings are actually telling the actor how the words sound.
Whatever version an actor uses, the general rule with Shakespeare is to obey the text. If characters say they are furious, in love or lying, then they are. There is no subtext. Stage directions are also contained in the text, and the emotional pitch of the scene is implied by the use of poetry or prose (Money).

The verse form used by Shakespeare was predominantly blank verse. It was Christopher Marlowe who established this pattern in *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587) because blank verse resembles the normal patterns of English speech more than any other poetic form except unrhymed free verse.

Once a script was finished, the author’s copy would be made and sent first to the Actors’ Company for their approval. Then it had to go to the censor. No matters of state or religion could be shown on the stage unless approved by the censor; the playwright could be imprisoned or loose his license to perform. The Master of the Queen’s Revels had to read and approve every word before official approval was issued for a new play. When a new play had been licensed, the next task was to distribute its parts. Shakespeare knew who he was writing for, the same actors performed most of his plays; normally Richard Burbage would take the lead.

The actors were not given copies of the play, but only of the words of their own parts with the brief cues from preceding speeches. These parts were taken home to be studied and learned. Joint rehearsals were few, except for the boy/actors with their respective masters. Each character was separately prepared because the mornings allotted to the rehearsals of each play had to be used for
arranging movement on and around the stage and for sorting out costume-changes and the provision of properties, as well the physical problems of fighting, banquet scenes, dancing and other group activities that were commonly required by the texts.

"A trumpeter announced when everything was ready for a performance by three calls from a special position high above the tiring house. People still outside hurried in to find last-minute places and, for a moment, the auditorium was hushed" (Brown 35). In Chapter Four I will discuss my production of A Midsummer Night's Dream and my directing choices.
3.

"I know not by what power I am made bold" (1.1.59).

The subject of this chapter is the characters who are silenced through the course of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I will look at theories and criticisms as well as historical significance for this silence. First, I will discuss Hippolyta, the conquered Queen of the Amazons. She speaks but a few lines in Act I, then remains on stage not speaking while Theseus conducts business. Hippolyta does not speak again until Act IV where she is seen trying to make Theseus jealous and again in Act V where she has seemingly conquered him. Secondly, I will look at Hermia and Helena who are quite vocal throughout Acts I - IV which goes directly against the prescriptions for proper behavior of 16th century ladies. Hermia and Helena, fall victim of silence, after they are wed in Act V, they do not speak again. Lastly, I will look at Egeus who is very demanding in Act I and the beginning of Act IV but he, too, is silenced after Theseus announces that Hermia has been granted her wish to marry the man her father had forbade her to marry.

Hippolyta's silence reaches beyond the first scene. In fact the long fingers of silence reach out and affect the entire play. Theseus and Hippolyta's relationship shapes the other relationships, Oberon and Titania, Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius and Helena. The beginning and ending scenes with Theseus and Hippolyta frame the play, provide the structure and set the tone for the play.

Hippolyta speaks five lines at the very beginning of Act I. She repeats Theseus' announcement that there are only four days left until their wedding. Hippolyta does not speak again until the end of the play, where she is openly
giving Theseus her opinion. Hippolyta’s silence reaches beyond the first scene; though her silence is as masterful and powerful as any of Shakespeare’s written words. As the play opens Theseus tells Hippolyta of the approach of their wedding day. “Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour/ Draws on apace: Four happy days bring in/Another moon...”(I.i.1-3). Theseus is anxious for the days to pass by quickly; Hippolyta is not and repeats Theseus’s words back to him. She replies with the only words she speaks during the opening scene.

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night,
Four night will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities

(I.i.7-11)

Hippolyta’s statement can be interpreted two ways. In the 1932 movie by Max Reinhardt, Hippolyta appears melancholy and anxious for the days to hurry by so she can be joined in matrimony with Theseus. This, however, seems a peculiar choice, Hippolyta is the captured Queen of the Amazons after all. Not only has she been conquered and kidnapped, she has had her power taken away from her. She is no longer the leading monarch of her people, she is in a strange land forced to become the wife of a stranger. A strong-willed defiant Hippolyta would be a more acceptable directorial choice, in my opinion. Hippolyta was the ruler of a legendary race of female warriors and would not easily be subdued and therefore, happy or please to be forced into marriage by the man who captured her.
The words Hippolyta does speak are important to look at. Theseus wishes the nights until their wedding to go by quickly. Hippolyta repeats his word “quickly.” She says it twice. “Four days will quickly steep themselves...Four nights will quickly dream away” (1.i.12-13). Hippolyta’s use of the word “quickly” can be interpreted differently than Theseus use of the word. He can hardly contain his joy at the upcoming wedding night and wishes time to pass in a hurry. Hippolyta knows that four days will go by too soon and she is not ready to be conquered once again by Theseus. These words introduce the possibility of a conflict between Theseus and Hippolyta.

In this same scene Theseus decrees that Hermia must wed Demetrius, her father’s choice for husband or die.

...either prepare to die
for disobedience to your father’s will
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would,
Or on Diana’s altar to protest
for aye austerity and single life.

(I.i.86-90)

This announcement links Hermia and Hippolyta in the same movement of time. Both are being propelled too quickly towards a wedding where they will be joined to a man that they do not love. Because Hippolyta’s silence is not commented on by any of the characters, its interpretation can be left to the director. Peter Hall’s 1959 production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon had Hippolyta’s silence confirm the harmony between her and Theseus. She sat
side-by-side with Theseus on the stage. At Theseus’s exit he put out his hand and an unresisting Hippolyta took his hand and made her exit along side him.

This is in contrast to John Hirsch’s production in Ontario’s Stratford Shakespeare Festival in 1968. The opening scene in this production showed the conflict between Theseus and Hippolyta. Theseus was an old man in military dress, Hippolyta was a desirable middle aged woman who entered wearing all black, carrying a red rose. As Hippolyta spoke of how quickly the nights would pass she moved away from Theseus downstage to the perimeter of the stage. When Theseus spoke he moved to Hippolyta and tried to kiss her. She avoided this gesture with obvious distaste. Hirsch’s production intensified the distance between Hippolyta and Theseus when Theseus gave his edict to Hermia. The three actors, Theseus, Hippolyta and Hermia, stood apart from each other in a triangular configuration showing an alignment between Hippolyta and Hermia and resistance between the two of them to male domination. When Theseus puts out his hand and says “Come, my Hippolyta” (I.i.150) she crosses to Hermia, hands her the rose and exits without Theseus. The rose is given later to Helena, Hermia’s long time friend, the only woman in the play no one wishes to marry. The rose becomes a symbol of sisterhood among the three women. They are bound by the passing of the rose to each other. In my production, I chose to borrow this symbolic gesture and used a white rose. I chose a white rose because white has many meanings that were symbolic for these three women. White represents purity and innocence, free from evil intent. Helena and Hermia are
innocent in their quest to marry the men they love. The women passed this rose to each other in a gesture to show a bond of sisterhood, to help empower each other. At the beginning of Act V, the three women walk on stage each holding a rose and greet each other in a circle, hugging and congratulating each other. They are showing the bond between them will remain intact.

In Celia Brannerman's 1980 production for the new Shakespeare Company at the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park, London, Egeus, Hermia's father, enters carrying a book with the laws of Athens. He hands the book to Theseus who checks the law and pronounces Hermia's sentence. Theseus then hands the book to Hippolyta. She reads it, snaps the book shut loudly and slaps the book into Theseus hands and exits, thus conveying a bond of sympathy between Hippolyta and Hermia.

Hippolyta must assert her power over Theseus if this is to be a marriage she can tolerate. If Hippolyta is resistant to Theseus in Act I, when she returns in Act IV being coquettish and flirtatious, she has set a new tone. She has developed a relationship, off stage, with Theseus where she is beginning to accept her fate but finding a way to put herself in power as Theseus' right hand "man". This is seen best in Act V when Theseus is consulting Hippolyta about the choice of performances to be seen at the wedding feast. Theseus consults Hippolyta and discards the entertainment she does not like. This new or regained power of Hippolyta's is especially evident when she tells Theseus she does not like
Philostrate's manner and attitude. "I love not to see wretchedness
overcharged/And duty in his service perishing" (V.i.85-6).

At the end of Brannerman's, Hippolyta takes Theseus in one hand and
Egeus into the other to exit together harmoniously, thus showing that Hippolyta
and Theseus have worked through Hippolyta's opposition to marriage during their
absence from the stage. Most telling of the new union between Hippolyta and
Theseus is in the beginning of Act V, Hippolyta addresses Theseus as "my
Theseus" as does Titania when she awakens in the woods. "My Oberon, what
visions have I seen" (IV.i.75). The women have taken possession of the men.

Hippolyta's silence is not an incidental part of the play. The first scene
when Hippolyta is silenced and the last scene when she refers to Theseus as "my
Theseus" frame the play and set the mood. In this interpretation Hippolyta, a
woman, speaks her mind to Theseus and gains her power back by Act V is a
commanding statement in this male-dominate society of Renaissance Europe.
Women were considered physically and intellectually inferior to men, they were
thought to owe men their obedience. Hippolyta and the other women attempt to
break this mold when they speak their mind and demand their rights. This puts the
female characters in conflict with the male characters. All is righted and the mood
transformed when Hippolyta exits willingly in Act V with Theseus.

Another character that fights against male oppression is Titania. Titania,
Queen of the fairies is fighting with her husband, Oberon, King of the fairies over a
small changeling boy; both want to raise the child as their own. Oberon, as ruler of
hi kingdom is trying to establish the proper obedience from his wife. “While Oberon and Titania are accustomed to mutual sexual betrayal, their actual rift has nothing to do with passion but concerns the protocol of just who has charge of a changeling human child, a little boy currently under Titania’s care” (Bloom 153). It is as if Oberon is trying to make Titania live the rules for 16th century mortal females. Oberon feels his male superiority is being usurped by Titania’s refusal to give over the boy to him. Titania lashes out at Oberon with a long monologue stating the conditions of the earth since they have started their war over this boy. Oberon is intent on taking the boy from her and will do anything to get it. Oberon uses his magic to trick Titania into him. Titania fights gallantly but in the end looses to Oberon. She hands over the boy and leaves the stage with him in Act IV. In my production I didn’t want it to be to easy for Oberon. I wanted Titania to fight as long as possible. When Oberon anoints Titania’s eyes with the magic juice that will make her fall in love with Bottom, she shows she is not asleep or under his spell. She plays along with Oberon’s joke to try to get the better of him. She does have to give him the boy in the end but she grabs Oberon by the ear and leads him off stage at the end of Act IV when she asks him:

Come, my lord; and in our flight

Tell me how it came this night

That I sleeping here was found

With these mortals on the ground.

IV.i.105-8
I tried to show that the battle between husband and wife would never be completely over because Titania would never behave like a typical 16th century women should or that she would never be silenced.

What are we to make of Egeus' silence in Act IV, Scene I? The young lovers are found in the forest, after he has made demands to Theseus that his daughter be put to death if she does not obey him. “Fathers and husbands were encouraged to silence their daughters and wives” (Jones 43). Demetrius states that his love for Hermia has melted away and he is once again in love with Helena. This leaves the door open for Hermia and Lysander to marry. Theseus thus sets aside the law he had earlier pronounced as being unable to be “extenuate[d]”.

Egeus, I will overbear your will,  
For in temple, by and by, with us,  
These couples shall eternally be knit.  

IV.i.178-180

What is Egeus response to this? “In both the Quarto and the Folio--the two texts of A Midsummer Night's Dream surviving from Shakespeare’s time that are considered independently authoritative--Egeus says nothing” (McGuire 103). It could be Egeus’ silent consent to the wedding. Evidence from Shakespeare’s era prevents the assumption that Egeus’s silence is definitive evidence that he withholds his consent to the wedding. The marriage ritual set down in the 1559 Book of Common Prayer specified that the bride’s father carried out his functions
in silence. What happens in Act IV is not a marriage ceremony, it cannot be taken as evidence by the 1559 *Book of Common Prayer* as certain proof that Egeus's silence establishes his consent. As a director the choice must be made, does Egeus accept this new development and welcome his son-in-law or does he storm off stage rejecting Theseus decision and thereby jeopardizing his good standing in the community.

Various productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* demonstrate the range of alternative meanings and effects that can emerge from Egeus's silence. In Richard Cottrell's production for the Bristol Old Vic Company, Egeus embraces Hermia and places her hand in Lysander's thus giving Hermia to the man he had earlier denounced. It is suggestive of traditional wedding ceremonies when the father is asked "Who gives this bride?" and the father takes the bride's hand and puts it into the groom's hand.

In Elijah Moshinsky's 1981 production Hermia moves to Egeus to embrace him and he kisses her hand. At the beginning of the play Theseus warned Hermia "fit your fancies to your father's will" (I.i.118). By kissing Hermia's hand Egeus is fitting his will to the duke's authority and also to his daughter's fancy.

In Brannerman's production Egeus does not move to embrace Hermia. He accepts Hippolyta's hand as a gesture of comfort and exits without repairing the conflict with his daughter nor accepting Lysander as his son-in-law. Egeus chooses to remain a member of Athenian society by accepting the pairing of his daughter with Lysander but does not reconcile with her. In Peter Brook's
production Egeus exits without speaking when Theseus announces the couple would wed. Upon his exit Egeus chooses to exile himself from society and from his family. In my production, Egeus shakes hands with Lysander and kisses Hermia on the forehead. He then takes Hermia’s hand and places it in Lysander, showing he has accepted the Duke’s pronouncement and he will willingly accept Lysander as part of his family.

As with Hippolyta’s silence in Act I, Egeus’ silence in Act IV is left for interpretation. Even the stage directions in the Folio Society Version: 1957 are ambiguous. They state precisely that Egeus is to enter, "Enter Theseus, Egeus, Hippolyta and all his traine". The stage exit is less precise “Exit Duke and Lords”. This could allow Egeus to exit with Theseus, remaining a loyal subject or exit alone, to withdraw from society. Theseus states, “Away, with us, to Athens, three and three,/Welle holde a feast, in great soleminte./Come Hippolyta. (IV.i.). Theseus could be talking to Egeus to come with them to Athens and remain a part of society. If Egeus refuses and exits separately it could be interpreted as disobeying an order by the duke forcing an exile from Athens.

In Act V, during the wedding celebration the Folio’s stage directions state that Egeus enters with Theseus, Hippolyta and Lords but the Quarto states only that Theseus, Hippolyta and Philostrate enter. If the Folio version is used Egeus enters and stands by silently. He could stand in agreement or disagreement according to what his choice was in Act IV. In the Quarto the stage directions state that Egeus enters. The text differs from the Folio version when it gives some
of Philostrate’s lines to Egeus. He does not speak to Hermia or Lysander nor they to him.

With Egeus’ silence three choices can be made. He can accept Theseus new ruling happily and thereby accept Lysander as his son-in-law or he can accept Theseus ruling because he is a devoted Athenian Lord but not accept Lysander as his son-in-law. In these two cases Egeus remains a citizen of Athens in good standing. If he does not accept Theseus’ ruling, he is forced to leave Athens and his daughter.

The standard tactic to choose a course of action for Egeus would be to “scrutinize the words of the play for evidence of Shakespeare himself intended.. Because each gives Egeus nothing to say, there are no words of his to scrutinize” (McGuire 105). The Folio gives lines to Egeus, therefore he must be at the wedding festivities. The Quarto keeps Egeus silent during the entire act.

Words are not the only means at a director’s disposal. Doubling Egeus with another character is a tactic available to show why Egeus is not on stage. In some productions the actor playing Egeus also plays either Quince or Philostrate. Seeing the actor on stage during the wedding scene as another character would give either a simple explanation as to why Egeus is not at the wedding, simply because the actor cannot be two places or once. Or it gives the audience reason to ponder why the choice was made not to have Egeus on stage enjoying the festivities with his daughter and new son-in-law.
Egeus is not the only character silent in Act V. Hermia and Helena; newly wedded brides also do not say any thing during the festivities. This is in direct contrast to Act I when both women had a lot to say regarding their situations. Hermia first asks Theseus's pardon, because she is "made bold" by "I know not what power" (I.i. 59-61). The silence of Hermia and Helena accentuates the fact that Hippolyta, who remained silent during Hermia's trial in Act I, is the only bride who speaks during the festivities. Hippolyta has captured the power she has struggled to gain, while Hermia and Helena loose their power when they marry.

Daughters and wives in Elizabethan times were to be silent and obedient to their fathers and husbands (Jones 112).

Hermia's line "Me thinks me see things with a parted eye/When everything seems double" (IV.i.88-89), reminds us of Hermia and Helena's almost dual personalities. The two friends have much to say to each other throughout the play, as well as to Lysander and Demetrius. Hermia in Act I is openly defiant to both her father and Theseus. Both women fall silent in Act V after being wed. Women were expected to acquiesce to their husbands therefore no comments from the two women would have been expected. Hermia had outspokenly refused to be obedient and to accept Theseus ruling on the Athenia law that sentenced her. This is very unusual and defiant behavior for a woman. Women were considered property of their fathers until they were given to a man in marriage and then it was simply an exchange of merchandise and they were the property of their husbands. "Women were consistently the objects of scrutiny and the targets of complex
prescriptions of proper behavior” (Jones 39). The practical conduct books were written by men for men on the expected etiquette of wives and daughters. These courtesy manuals, marriage manuals and conduct books were written to tame the “hysterical and irrational outburst” of women. (Jones 40). Women were told the “requirements for their morals and manners...[and were] enjoined to silence” (Jones 40).

The three women, Helena, Hermia and Hippolyta, are bound by the Athenian law, to marriage and silence. In my production Hippolyta stands apart from the gathering when Theseus proclaims death upon Hermia. She then passes a white rose to Hermia before she exits. My intent was to show Hippolyta and Hermia sealing a kinship with each other. Hermia passes this rose onto Helena when they speak of their love for each other. My purpose with the one rose was to show the “single blessedness” that Theseus later dismisses. Hermia’s response to his words is a defiant vow to undertake “such maiden pilgrimage”:

So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,

Ere I will yield my virgin patent up

Unto his lordship whose unwished yoke

My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

(Ii 79-82)

The diverse meanings and effects that Hippolyta’s silence yields have an impact that reaches beyond the opening scene. Her silence can be the primary factor in defining the nature of her relationship with Theseus, and that relationship
in turn can shape the alignments among the various characters. The conflict between the Duke of Athens and the Queen of the Amazons sets the initial tone of disorder that surfaces in the quarrel between father and daughter, the power struggle between Bottom and Quince and the battle between the King and Queen of the Fairies that disrupts everything even the cycle of the seasons.

16th century women were to be obedient and silent. They were first to be obedient to their fathers and then to their husbands when they married (Jones). Shakespeare has four very strong women in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Hippolyta, Titania, Hermia and Helena all speak their minds and demand to be heard. This was quite unusual for women of this time, unfortunately Hermia and Helena become dutiful wives by the end of the play. They are silenced and do not speak any more lines. Hippolyta though is the one female who strove to regain her rightful power as a queen and formed a happy balance with her new husband.
"The most lamentable comedy..." (I.ii.11).

One of my life's dreams has been to direct a Shakespeare production. During the summer of 1999, I was lucky enough to fulfill this dream. I approached the Theatre Department at Cal State Hayward about directing a play for their summer program. The summer program is called the Highlands Theatre and it accepts college as well as high school students to audition for their three productions. I was accepted as a graduate student doing research for my thesis and asked to direct a production that had a large cast, as to attract as many students as possible. My first choice was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This production is often done and had been done twice at Hayward in the last ten years but was a good choice because there is no starring roles, it is an ensemble cast and accessible to high school students.

I held auditions for the play on two consecutive weekends in April with the other director's that summer; Ed Wright was to direct *The Little Mermaid* and Don Cate *The Threepenny Opera*. The first weekend was very disheartening because only a half a dozen high school students auditioned. I was feeling rather frightened that I would have to cancel the whole thing; but the following weekend close to two dozen high school, college and university students came to the auditions.

I knew during the auditions that I would need two young women to play Helena and Hermia. Helena should be tall and Hermia should be shorter and have
dark hair. I felt Oberon should be a big man with a sexual quality about him. The last day of auditions Karen Moore and Jeanette Penley came into together to audition. They were theatre students at the university. They didn’t care what part they got, they just wanted to be another Shakespeare production, having been in Macbeth during the winter quarter. Karen and Jeanette had such youthful exuberance about them I started to see them in the roles of Helena and Hermia. It was there ability to be very physical with each other, hugging, laughing with foreheads touching and holding hands that clinched the roles for these two actors. They already had the closeness and bond that Helena and Hermia needed to present to be believable.

Only one person auditioned for the part of Oberon that was even considered. Jeff Beck was a tall, broad shouldered man that was a bit older than most of the students. He definitely exuded a sensuality and presence that I knew I needed for Oberon. Jeff also gave an hysterical audition for the part of Bottom, which is the part I think he really wanted. But I had no other person that could equal him as Oberon.

The rest of the cast fell into place quite easily. I had a beautiful, powerful seductress to play Titania. An older gentleman to be Egeus. A larger than life Theseus. And two very handsome and fun young guys to play Demetrius and Lysander. I was set and looking forward to the summer with relish. I knew I was going to have the summer of my life. I would spend my days listening to the words of William Shakespeare and see them come to life before my eyes.
I had run into an old friend in February who had quit her teaching job to work solely on her art. She had taken up metal sculpture. She agreed to build a metal tree for the set. I told her I wanted one large tree that had an evil aura. My friend, Carol Hathaway, built a rusted metal tree about ten feet tall with four mangled branches. We draped the tree with green tobacco cloth handing from the cat walk, this gave the haunting impression of moss hanging from the branches.

The rest of the set was simple acting blocks.

I had gone to the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco when I got stuck trying focus on costumes. There I saw Henri Matisse’s *Femme au Chapeau*. This piece is a portrait of his wife dressed in very vivid colors from her hat to her dress. But when she sat for the painting she had been wearing only a black dress. This intrigued me. I wanted the basic colors for the costumes to be black with vivid accent pieces. Regina Cate, the professor of costume at Cal State Hayward designed beautiful costumes with a hint of ancient Greece.

The lights were designed by Bobby Ramirez. To give the overall feeling of something not quite innocent he used an avant garde technique. The show was in a black box theatre and Bobby lit only the stage with no light spilling into the audience. This gave a very unreal and sometimes uncomfortable feel to the show.

When I start to design a show in my head the first thing that comes to me is music. I have to ‘hear’ a show before I am able to see it. Three songs came to me that set the mood and the tone for the show. The play begin with Cass Eliot singing “Dream a Little Dream”. This is a very sweet and light song about love
and birds singing. This quickly changes to Marilyn Manson’s version of “Sweet Dreams” a very hard edged cover of an Eurthmyics tune. After intermission, before the beginning of Act IV, I played Fleetwood Mac’s “Silver Springs”. This is a song of an obsessive love, a love that haunts the couple. Stevie Nicks has a haunting, rough quality that lends itself to the overall feeling of the play. This song became the theme song for the play. Every time someone heard it, at a store, on the radio, or in their car they thought of the play.

“Time cast a spell on you, so you won’t forget me.

I know I could have loved you, but you would not let me.

I’ll follow you down, the sound of my voice will haunt you,

You’ll never get away from the sound of the woman who loves.

The play begins with Oberon, King of the Fairies, hypnotizing the audience so all can experience the same dream together. Oberon comes out in the dark with a large green cape on. Under his cape are his fairies. As the lights go up the fairies run out to the audience swinging crystals, as if to put them under their spell.

Oberon: You’re getting sleepy, sleepy, sleepy,

Sleep -- perchance to dream.

The fairies and Oberon run off stage. Cass Elliot’s song begins and a leaf design appears on the floor. One of Titania’s fairies appears rocking a swaddled bundle and dancing as if cooing and comforting a baby.

“Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you,

Sweet dreams that leave your worries far behind you,
But in your dreams whatever they be,

Dream a little dream of me."

The fairy dances and leaps across the stage and ends up by the tree where she sits down with her bundle. Two other fairies come out and dance and play. They are joined by two more fairies and all the fairies get up and dance together. At this point the Cass Elliot song fades out and the Marilyn Manson song begins.

"Sweet dreams are made of these,

Who am I to disagree,

I’ve followed the world and the seven seas,

Everybody’s looking for something.

Some of them want to use you,

Some of them want to be used by you,

Some of them want to abuse you,

Some of them want to be abused."

When this music begins Puck and Oberon’s fairies sneak onto the stage. Puck puts a sleeping spell on Titania’s fairies and they fall asleep. Puck steals the swaddled bundle and wakes the fairies and a battle ensues. Ultimately, Titania’s fairies retrieve the bundle and Puck puts another spell on them, they freeze and form a circle. Puck goes inside the circle and the fairies start unrolling the bundle of silk
and wrapping it around the circle. When the entire circle is covered they slowly lower the silk. At this point Sandy Jardin who plays Puck sneaks off stage. The fairies notice Puck is gone and drop the bundle and the lights go out.

I wanted the play to begin with a preliminary set up of what Oberon and Titania are fighting about. I wanted the swaddled bundle to look like a baby that Oberon’s fairies were trying to steal from Titania’s fairies. It turned out that the bundle was just silk and the fairies had fooled Puck. I also wanted a feeling of magic and competition between the two sets of fairies.

When the play begins with Act I, Theseus and Hippolyta enter the stage. Theseus is holding a single white rose which he tries to give to Hippolyta while stealing a kiss. As he bends to kiss her Hippolyta holds up the rose so Theseus pricks his lips on the thorns. I wanted to demonstrate right away that Hippolyta was not happy with her capture and not going along with the marriage willingly. Theseus declares with frustration that “four happy days bring in another moon” as if he cannot wait for the days to hurry by so he can marry (I.i.2). Hippolyta mimics these words also with frustration “Four days will quickly steep themselves in night” (I.i.8). But it is not because the days are going by too slowly, it is because they will be gone to quickly and she will be forced to marry Theseus.

When Egeus enters pulling Hermia by the hand, Hippolyta moves over to stage right away from the gathering and stands on the first riser (a platform for rows of chairs) near the audience. She is looking down at the proceedings holding the rose Theseus gave her. You can tell by her body language and facial
expressions that she does not approve of Egeus nor of Theseus's decree of Hermia's fate. Egeus hands Theseus the book of Athenian law and Theseus walks over to Hippolyta to show her he has no choice because the alternatives for Hermia are in writing. Hippolyta takes the book and reads it, she walks over to Egeus and slams the book shut - shoving it at him. She stands near Hermia and hands her the rose. Theseus tells Egeus and Demetrius to follow him off stage for some business, he looks to Hippolyta to follow him. She gives him an angry look and turns to Hermia for one last look of comfort and understanding and follows Theseus off stage. When Hermia shares her secret with Helena and comforts her over her love for Demetrius she hands Helena the rose and exits with Lysander. I wanted to show the bond between women. Women who were strangers and women who were intimate friends, women who were all in a situation dominated and ruled by men. I intended for the play go on from here with the idea that the women held the power of their destiny; that they could get what they wanted in a male world. Hermia and Helena wanted to marry the men they loved, and this they achieve. Hippolyta ultimately wanted her freedom and to return to the Amazon but this would not be possible. She has to marry Theseus but she can marry him on her terms. I chose to show Theseus as amenable to an equal partnership in marriage.

When Lysander and Hermia are left alone on the stage they commiserate together the fate that has befallen them. They act like two young lovers who are so in love they will take the chance that Hermia will be put to death and Lysander
exiled from Athens if they marry. They are two, young, sweet lovers and this part of the story is not evil. When Helena enters the two lovers share their secret with her. She is happy that her friend is in love but knows the danger she faces. She also knows that Hermia is betrothed to Demetrius and she feels it is in her best interest to do as the law demands. Helena herself is in love with Demetrius but decides to put aside her own love for him so that he can save Hermia from death.

When Helena enters she is sad and asked by her good friend Hermia why. Hermia hands the rose that was given her by Hippolyta in act of kinship to Helena. “Take comfort: he no more shall see my face” (I.i.202). Hermia tells Helena of her decision to run through the forest to Lysander’s aunt so they can get married without Egeus permission. The triangle of the rose is complete. It has been passed from Hippolyta as a sign of sisterhood and alliance to Hermia who now passes it to Helena with the same purpose. In Act V all three women come on stage after the wedding each holding a single white rose as symbolic of each obtaining the end they had manipulated.

The rude mechanicals are also innocent members of Athens that befall the evilness of the forest. They are all dressed in different colored plaid pajama bottoms and peasant shirts. Each distinguishes himself with either a hat or vest. There are six mechanicals which are all male characters but I cast three men and three women, they played the characters as men using their own voices without garnishing fake deep voices. I did make sure that Flute was cast as a man so that when he played Thisbe in the play before the King and Queen it would be more
comical with a man dressed as a young girl. In the process of rehearsal Flute became Bottom’s lackey and applauded all of his directions and acting choices. At the same time Snout became Quince’s right hand man and took his side against Bottom. The artisans are innocent and unaffected by the forest, all except Bottom who finds himself translated by a “dream” he had while in the forest.

In Act II Titania and Oberon meet for the first time on stage. This is proceeded by Puck and one of Titania’s fairies who set up for the audience the war that has been raging between the two. Puck enters the stage with a long black piece of silk over his shoulders like a royal cape. He pantomimes Oberon as a tyrant and himself as an obedient elf who is mistreated by his master. He drapes the silk over a pyramid of acting blocks, then he looks towards the sky and slowly waves his hand at the heavens. The lights change and with a magical sound the stage blackens and is lit only by tiny points of star light. After this affect is registered on the audience a blue light comes up to give the affect of night.

When the fairy arrives she asks Puck “Are you not he/That frights the maidens of the villagery” (II.i.34-35)? She describes the tricks Pucks plays upon the people of the towns he visits and Puck readily agrees that he is that “shrewd and knavish sprite called Robin Goodfellow” (II.i.33-34). Puck proceeds to act out for the fairy some of the mischievous things he does to people, such as pretending to be different animals, making beer flat and transforming himself into a three foot stool that collapses when sat upon. Oberon’s laughter is heard off stage
and both fairies scatter, so as not to be seen together as they are from separate warring camps.

Titania enters with her loyal troupe of fairies and Oberon with his. When they see each other Titania directs her fairies to “Skip hence: I have forsworn his bed and company” (II.i.61). As the fairies try to leave, Oberon gives his fairies a signal and they advance on Titania’s fairies, driving them back and holding them on stage. Titania accuses Oberon of being jealous that she is in the woods to see Theseus’s wedding and she accuses him of coming to Athens to see Hippolyta.

Why art thou here,

Come from the furthest steep of India?

But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,

Your buskin’d mistress and your warrior love,

to Theseus must be wedded, and you come
to give their bed joy and prosperity.

(II.i.68-73)

Titania says this last line with sarcasm as she knows Oberon does not come to see Hippolyta happily wedded. And Oberon shoots back at her:

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,

Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?

Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night

From Perigenia, whom he ravished?

And make him with fair AEgle break his faith,

With Ariadne, and Antiopa?

(II.i.74-80)

Both have now let it be known that they know of each other's affairs. Titania asks Oberon why he is in the forest near Athens, he claims he is there to get the changeling boy from her. Titania tells him that they must stop fighting over the boy and altering the seasons in their battles as it has adversely affected the humans they are responsible for. Titania describes her love for the woman that has given birth to her young squire. As she describes being with her votaress during her pregnancy, her fairies break away from Oberon's fairies and surround her protectively. Lucy Serrano as Titania faces off against Jeff Beck as Oberon during this speech and she uses an accusatory voice. The two actors had decided that the reason Oberon wants the changeling boy is because it is his son due to an affair he had had with Titania's votaress, the fact that Oberon and Titania are not monogamous was established earlier in the scene. Some critiques believe Oberon wants the boy because he is a pedophile and others believe Titania wants the boy because she was involved in an affair with the votaress herself. Lucy and Jeff spent many hours outside of rehearsal discussing and rehearsing their characters. The
momentum and relationship that built from this time together precluded Oberon being perverted and Titania being anything but heterosexual. Jeff was playing Oberon as a spoiled brat that wanted everything his way; an overgrown child with supernatural powers. Lucy played Titania as a very powerful woman knowing the only way to get what she wanted from Oberon was through sex and compromise on her part. In the end Titania gives Oberon the child. This brings about a reconciliation which allows Titania to be involved in the rearing of the boy. My Titania does not go down without a fight though. I wanted women in this production to have the power. I could not stray from the written script but I could direct my actors to do things that had not been done before to achieve my goal. In Act III Oberon anoints Titania’s eyes with a powerful magic that will make her fall in love with the first thing she sees. This is joke Oberon plays on her in hopes that she is so overcome and grateful when he releases her from the spell that she hands over the changeling. I made the choice to have Titania more powerful than Oberon. When he anoints her eyes she does not fall under his spell, instead she rises from her bed to let the audience know that she is not under the spell but just letting Oberon believe she is. It is Titania who must compromise in order to bring an end to the war with her husband and peace back to the fairy kingdom.

Before the scene is over Titania tries to make up with Oberon and put an end to their quarreling. “If you will patiently dance in our round/and see our moonlight revels, go with us” (II.i.140-41). Oberon demands the boy once more and Titania denies him. Her fairies follow her off stage. Oberon yells after her
that she will suffer his wrath for her refusal. “Well, go thy way: thou shalt not
from this grove/Till I torment thee for this injury” (II.i.146-47).

This is when Oberon tells Puck of the flower he knows with the special
power. Puck is usually cast as a male, I cast a woman in the part. Sandi Jardin
had to make the choice whether to play Puck as a naughty boy, a female or an
androgynous character. Sandi kept telling me she was playing it as a female. I did
not see any evidence of this, Puck was coming across as a sexless character. At
one point she told me she decided she would try playing Puck as a boy. Through
out the production Sandi’s interpretation stayed completely androgynous. There
wasn’t even any ambivalence. Sandi is a small woman and was very elf like. She
wore a silver body suit with several layers of chiffon shirts. Her hair was divided
into three parts and braided so it stuck out from her head. She painted her face to
look somewhat dog like. Whether the audience made a gender choice consciously
or unconsciously, all fell under her power, she played a very convincing Puck. She
was able to combine a bit of wickedness, mischeviousness and playfulness. She
played a high energy character that did not always do as she was told but enjoyed
the fall out of her mistakes. During the fight scene in the forest between Hermia
and Helena, Puck brought a Jerry Springer type atmosphere to the stage. She
gathered Oberon’s fairies into a corner and cheered and jeered the physical
confrontation. Oberon’s fairies were at once afraid of him because of his power
and bad temper, but they like Puck, enjoyed his spells and interferences.
Eric Moore as Demetrius had a conflict. He was torn between playing his character as if he truly loved Helena but must stick obediently to Athenian law and marry Hermia as Egeus wishes. As the director I felt this would not work. I asked Eric to play Demetrius as the quintessential “bad boy” that most female audience members could recognize. The type of man that professes love and compassion to many women to gain favors from them without concern for their feelings. This fit with Demetrius threat to Helena when she was following him through the woods. “...if thou follow me, do not believe/But I shall do thee mischief in the wood” (II.ii.236-37). Eric had trouble playing the role this way because he was such a nice guy and could not conceive of treating another human in this matter. It was very hard for him to act in this matter. It worked to his advantage though when Puck finally puts the love spell on him and he dotes on Helena, his actions were quite clownish and over the top and which had an hilarious effect for the audience.

Titania’s fairies were quite popular with the audience. During the lullaby where they put Titania to sleep I had dance students choreograph a dance for them. All the fairies but one left the stage. “Hence, away! now all is well./One aloof stand sentinel” (II.ii.25-26). Oberon’s one male fairy was sent on stage to tempt this fairy away from Titania. When this was accomplished, Titania was left alone for Oberon to put the spell on her. Titania acted as if she were asleep until Oberon was gone. Now she sat up and watched the proceedings in the forest. She saw Puck put the magic on the wrong Athenian youth and she witnessed Puck
changing Bottom into an ass. When she awoke she played as if she were overcome with lust for him.

When the mechanicals entered the woods in Act II. They walked in very cautiously and a little frightened as if they could feel an evil presence in the forest. When Bottom is changed into a donkey the mechanicals run off in sheer confusion. As Titania awakens Puck and Oberon’s fairy hide and spy on the scene. Titania seize Bottom and kisses him which knocks him over; he is frightened and tries to escape. He is so overcome that he runs circles around the tree. Titania stands up on the acting blocks and captures him in her cape. They both crawl under the cape and make lewd noises as if they were enjoying a sexual encounter. Titania calls in her fairies to dote upon Bottom, she looks upon Bottom with distaste. “The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye;/And when she weeps, weeps every little flower” (III.ii.207-08). When Titania knows she is not being spied on by Puck, she can show her disgust for Bottom. He is becoming comfortable and a little bossy. Titania wants to see this game Oberon has set up to its conclusion.

As Titania leaves with her fairies and Bottom, Oberon enters and Puck and Oberon fairies act out what they have just witnessed with the mechanicals and Titania. Hermia and Demetrius enter and Oberon and the fairies sit on the outer edges of the stage to watch. Hermia accuses Demetrius of killing Lysander. She screams and yells but gets no answer from him. He tries to seduce her and she throws him to the ground. While he is down he grabs her legs and throws her down and gets on top of her. The play is taking on a more physical and
threatening tone. The spell of the forest is overcoming innocent characters who would not normally act cruelly nor be physical with each other.

When Adam Fresquez as Lysander and Eric (Demetrius) are under Oberon’s spell, I asked them to act completely love sick for Helena. They looked at her with puppy dog eyes and chased after her. They fought and pushed each other out of the way to get to her first. They are so eager to woo her they crawl across the floor on their knees. At one point they had Helena trapped between them and twisted her back and forth trying to steal a kiss. Helena steps back and the men end up kissing each other. Oberon is sitting on the pyramid of blocks witnessing the enter string of events and enjoying it. He does look occasionally at Puck giving him a slightly disapproving eyebrow raise.

Hermia reenters and Lysander tries to tell her how much he hates her now. Helena believes the whole thing is a deception that the three of them have devised to make a fool of her. She takes Hermia in arms and reminds her sarcastically of their love for each other as Hermia had done in Act I. Hermia acts perplexed by this change in Helena while the men look on following Helena’s every move. She tries to shove Demetrius and Lysander away trying to get them to stop the cruel joke she thinks they are playing on her. During the argument between Demetrius and Lysander, Oberon tries to get in on the fun and holds Lysander by the belt as he tries to strike Demetrius. Demetrius has become very violent and throws Hermia to the ground when she tries to follow him.
Hermia has had enough and turns on Helena. The women circle each other. Hermia grabs Helena by the hair and throws her to the ground. The women engage in a cat fight. Helena begs Demetrius to keep Hermia from harming her and Lysander holds her back as she punches and kicks towards Helena. The battle ends with Lysander trying to throw Hermia from the stage. Demetrius grabs a hold of Lysander’s shirt and they force each other off stage to continue the fight. Helena runs away and Hermia leaves in frustration. Oberon tries to convince Puck he is angry with him for his mistake but must admit he did enjoy the drama. He tells Puck to fix the mistakes and keep the foursome from harming each other.

A fog machine was used to create the foggy conditions called for in the script “with drooping fog as black as Acheron; and lead these testy rivals so astray” (III.ii.357-58). Puck reminds Oberon that they must hurry as the sun is coming up.

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,

For night’s swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,

and yonder shines Aurora’s harbinger;

At whose approach, ghost, wandering her and there,

Troop home churchyards: damned spirits all,

That in cross-ways and floods have burial,

Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,

The willfully themselves exile from light,

and must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

III.ii.378-87

Oberon agrees they are a different breed of fairy and must hurry before the sun comes up. All their fairy business must be done under the cloak of night, they must be done before it is light.

But we are spirits of another sort.

I with the morning's love have oft made sport;

and, like a forester, the groves may tread,

Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,

Opening on Neptune, with fair blessed beams

Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.

But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:

We may effect this business yet ere day.

III.ii.388-95

Puck and Oberon confess they are fairies that consort with the dead that crawl out of their graves at night. They agree that there business is best down in the dark
and when the sun comes up they must be gone. Night and dark have always been associated with evil and monsters. Monsters throughout the ages must be back in their hide outs before the sun comes up and they are discovered.

The woods seems to have been a place that Athenian’s could wander through without fear before Titania and Oberon showed up. Lysander tells Hermia to meet him there at night. If it were a dangerous place he would not put the woman he loves in peril. The mechanicals agree to meet in the woods to rehearse where they will be unseen by the townspeople but not one of them protests because they are frightened. It is the presence of these otherworldly creatures that create the sinister feeling in the woods. To accomplish this for the end of Act III before the audience is sent out for intermission. The fog machine is turned on as well as an echo machine. Puck has a small microphone attached to her costume. When she leads the four lovers “round about the woods” her voice echoes and she carries a claw-like branch of a tree like a wand.

Up and down, up and down;

I will lead them up and down:

I am fear’d in field and town;

Goblin, lead them up and down.

III.ii.396-99
After intermission the fairies dance to Fleetwood Mac’s *Silver Springs*. This is song of a relationship that is over but still haunts the couple. The fairies dance and play games such as hide-and-seek and London Bridges, with Puck always in charge. Oberon’s fairies play in equanimity with Titania’s fairies. As Titania’s voice is heard the fairies scatter.

Titania and Bottom enter again. Bottom is now feeling quite comfortable with Titania and giving her fairies orders and commands. Titania is putting up with this because she is not ready to give up Oberon’s game. Titania sends the fairies away and curls up with Bottom to go to sleep. She says rather tiredly, “O! how I love thee; how I dote on thee!” (IV.i.50).

Oberon enters discussing with Puck that Titania has given the changeling boy to him. He also speaks tiredly as if he has had enough of the game. Puck removes the asses head from Bottom and Oberon removes the spell from Titania. She asks Oberon, “How came these things to pass” (IV.i.86)? Oberon speaks in an apologetic tone and claims that all is well now between he and Titania and that he will after all bless the wedding bed of Theseus and Hippolyta. Titania grabs his hand and in it finds the love-in-idleness flower that he used on her. She pulls him off stage demanding an answer from him. Although she knows what he had planned, she must retain the upper hand with him so that he will know that she was aware of his games and that he cannot play them with her any longer. In this way Titania becomes the dominator in the relationship.
As they depart, Hippolyta and Theseus enter with spears for hunting. Theseus brags of his superior hounds and Hippolyta mentions other men she has known who have better hunting dogs. This makes Theseus jealous. When they turn around they find the four lovers asleep on the ground. He awakes them and questions them how it came to be that enemies were found all sleeping together in the woods. Lysander tells him he does not know how it is he came to be sleeping in the woods. Egeus is still demanding that Theseus bring the law Athens down on his daughter she will not marry Demetrius.

The most touching point of the play came at this point when Demetrius claims his love for Helena. “Now do I wish it, love it, long for it, and will for evermore be true to it” (IV.i.181-82). Unfortunately for Eric his performance was so true, his girlfriend had an absolute fit. She thought that Eric and Karen (Helena) had something going on together because the scene was so lovely and real. Most of the cast would come out from back stage during rehearsals because they never tired of seeing this tender moment over and over. It is one of the most sincerely lovely speeches of the play.

Theseus declares that the two couples will join he and Hippolyta at their wedding. He is joyous and turns to Hippolyta for her approval. She is also showing that she has accepted the impending marriage to her capture and she is no longer angrily rebuffing his advances. Egeus goes over to his daughter and Lysander, he shakes Lysander’s hand and kisses his daughters forehead showing his acceptance of Theseus ruling and Hermia’s marriage to Lysander. By showing
his acceptance, Egeus may remain a part of the Athenia society and a part of his
daughter’s life.

Helena and Hermia hug, Lysander and Demetrius shake hands. They
wonder if perhaps they had dreamed what had happened. Helena and Demetrius
run off and Hermia and Lysander kiss and then run off to join the others. Now
that the sun has come up and Oberon and Titania have ended their battle, the
woods do not have the evil feeling of the night. The lights on the set change to
show the change in the mood. They are no longer blue for night but a warm wash
of yellow-orange for daylight as well as giving a feeling of a warm happy ending.

Bottom wakes up and wonders where all his friends have gone. He
announces that he has had a very rare vision, a very strange dream. He thought in
his dream that he had a tail and ears but he cannot be sure if it is real or a dream.
He decides that Quince must write him play about this experience. He claims that
“man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what me thought” (IV.i.219).

Bottom runs off to town to join up with his friends. At this time they are
waiting at Quince’s house fretfully waiting for Bottom. Bottom will not tell them
at this time where he has been and what he has seen. He tells them to get ready.
The marriage of Theseus has taken place and they must hurry if they are to
perform for the King and Queen.

At this point the large pyramid of acting blocks is removed from the stage
to give as much room as possible to the cast. Theseus enters with Hippolyta
carrying her white rose. As the two young couples enter, they are greeted with a royal kiss from Hippolyta. Theseus and Hippolyta seat themselves on two acting blocks, the four lovers and Egeus sit on pillows at their feet. Oberon and Titania enter and sit on Titania’s bed behind the group so they can enjoy the merriment.

Philostrate hands Theseus the hand bill of plays available for their entertainment. Theseus reads each and looks to Hippolyta for approval, she sneers and yawns at each selection until he reads “A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth” (V.i.55-6). This is the play that Hippolyta wants to see but Philostrate tries to talk Theseus out of this selection because he says it is very poorly acted. “There is not one word apt, one player fitted” (V.i.65). Philostrate cannot convince Theseus and Hippolyta against their decision. As he leaves to get the actors Hippolyta tells Theseus of her disapproval of Philostrate’s words and actions. “I love not to see wretchedness o’er charg’d/And duty in his service perishing” (V.i.84-85). She has now shown she, like Titania, has the upper hand in this marriage.

Quince enters to give the prologue. He has on his barret, looking like the official director of a great production; he gestures largely as he explains the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. While he is doing this the mechanicals act out the dumb show. Pyramus has on a wide satin sash holding a plastic sword. Flute has put on a large flowered dress, fake breasts and a wig. The Wall has on a sandwich board of stones, Moonlight is carrying a lantern and the Lion is dressed like the Cowardly Lion of The Wizard of Oz.
Bottom acts his piece with the most audacious over acting ever seen. Wall introduces himself to the court with lots of bowing and tipping of his hat. Every time Pyramus mentions the wall through which he and his love must whisper, the Wall takes a bow. This small gesture practically stole the show. When Pyramus stabs himself and dies, he takes a long, long time to die. While lying on the floor he spins himself in a circle to prolong attention to himself.

Quince is sitting on the stairs in the audience silently giving acting orders. When Bottom has his big dying scene she dies with him and spins around on the ground also. Admittedly this is the funniest thing I’ve ever seen and I had tears in my eyes each night. Many of the comic devices the mechanicals used came naturally to them during the rehearsal process. During each performance you can see the joy and love for the play the actors had.

This production was a joy for the actors as well as the audience. We had to turn people away each night because we were sold out. The production started late each night as we were trying to fit in more chairs so as many people as possible could see the performance.

The play ends with Titania and Oberon saying good night to the fairies. He announces that the battle between he and his wife is over. Oberon looks dotingly at Titania as he states they will bless the wedding bed of Hippolyta and Theseus, thus giving up their extra marital affairs. He also states that they will bless all the chambers of the house and leave the mortals in peace. The fairies run off together, Titania and Oberon kiss and he carries her off to there bed.
Puck ends the show apologizing if anyone was offended. He chooses to call the fairies “shadows”. He does not call them fairies, elves or sprites. He chooses a dark description. A shadow is a definite shape, something that is there, but you cannot capture a shadow or hold it still. A shadow is always a dark image, a black pattern on the ground or wall. A shadow can be a description of gloom, sadness and depression. Puck does not end the play with a light happy note about love. He tells the audience that if they were offended they can believe then that they were merely dreaming and the bad feelings will go away when they awake.

The feeling I wanted the audience to have was the feeling you often have when you awake from a troubling dream. You look back on the dream and wonder if it was real. You feel somewhat disturbed by it - but can’t put your finger on exactly way. It is a feeling that does not go away easily and stays with you for days.

This was a project that I enjoyed working on every day. Now in writing this thesis I still watch the video, read the script and look back on every day with pride and pleasure.
Bibliography


Morris, Peter Shakespeare on Film. Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1972.


