

# PRE-SHOW IN-THE-KNOW

## TITLE

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare.  
Directed by Kip Williams.

## CURRICULUM LINKS

HSC Drama Individual Project text list  
Contemporary Interpretation of Shakespeare  
Shakespearean Comedy  
Play within a play

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

The action begins in Athens, where the city's leader, Theseus, is to marry Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Great celebrations are planned.

Meanwhile, Egeus brings his daughter Hermia to an audience with Theseus. Egeus wants Hermia to marry Demetrius, but Hermia has refused because she is in love with Lysander. Theseus orders Hermia to obey her father's decision on who she should marry. If she does not, she will either enter a convent or be put to death.

To avoid such a fate, Hermia and Lysander decide to meet in the forest and elope. They confide in their friend Helena. However, because Helena is in love with Demetrius, she tells him of their plan in the hope of winning his affection. That night, all four lovers set out for the forest.

Meanwhile, a group of tradesmen – the Mechanicals – are planning to put on an amateur play in celebration of Theseus' wedding. They rehearse the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe in the same forest.

Elsewhere, Oberon and Titania, the fairy king and queen, are in the midst of a tempestuous argument. Oberon has his servant Puck find a magic plant, the juice of which, when squeezed onto the eyes of someone asleep, causes them to fall in love with the first creature they see when they wake. Oberon uses the juice on Titania.

Puck, who has overheard the Mechanicals rehearsing, transforms Nick Bottom's head into that of a donkey. The other men are terrified and flee the forest. When Titania awakes, the first creature she sees is the monstrous Bottom.

As the lovers chase each other through the forest, Oberon has Puck cast the same spell on Demetrius, in order that he will fall in love with Helena. However, Puck confuses the two young Athenian men and it is Lysander who falls in love with Helena. Puck eventually casts the spell on Demetrius as well.

Eventually, Oberon lifts all the spells and puts the lovers to sleep. Titania and he reconcile. The lovers awake from what they presume was all a dream. Demetrius remains under the spell. Bottom wakes up and recounts his strange encounter.

The wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta becomes a triple celebration of three weddings. The Mechanicals perform Pyramus and Thisbe.

## CAST AND CHARACTERS

Paula Arundell - Hippolyta/Titania  
Matthew Backer - Puck  
Rob Collins - Lysander  
Honey DeBelle - Helena  
Emma Harvie - Robin Starveling/Cobweb  
Jay James-Moody - Francis Flute/Peaseblossom  
Brandon McClelland - Demetrius  
Josh McConville - Nick Bottom  
Robert Menzies - Theseus/Oberon  
Susan Prior - Peter Quince  
Rose Riley - Hermia  
Rahel Romahn - Snug/Moth  
Bruce Spence - Egeus/Tom Snout/Mustard Seed

## STYLE

Distinctively Visual  
Play within a play  
Contemporary Interpretation of Shakespeare

## RUNNING TIME

2 hours and 30 minutes, including interval

## THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

How mood and atmosphere are created  
Hippolyta's hands, when she is introduced  
How Bottom plays the donkey  
The use of music and song

## CONTENT WARNING

This production contains material that may be difficult for some students. Please see the 'what to expect' document or call Lisa Mumford on 9250 1768.