



# SANTA CRUZ SHAKESPEARE EDUCATION PROGRAM

## Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

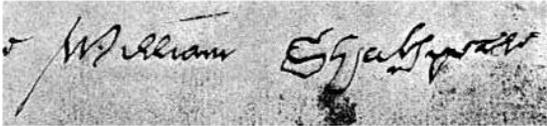
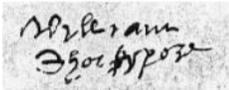
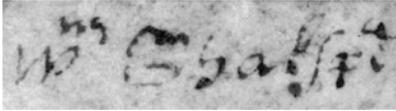
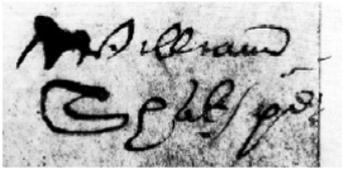
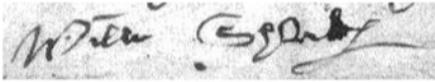
Below you will find a few fun facts about Shakespeare, a 20 second monologue to recite while washing your hands, introduction resources and a lesson plan for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and a streaming option for watching the play.

We encourage you to share these resources with your colleagues, and if you would like to share your work or any of your students' work on this platform, we would love to engage with you! Send questions or comments to [education@santacruzshakespeare.org](mailto:education@santacruzshakespeare.org).

## About The Playwright

[Shakespeare's Globe](#) provides us with a multitude of information about Shakespeare and his plays.

Did you know? "We have six surviving versions of Shakespeare's signature. They are all different. He wrote: Willm Shakp; Wm Shakspe; Willm Shaksper; William Shaksper; Willm Shaksper; William Shakespere; and William Shakespeare. The last version, taken from his will in 1616 is the version we use today." Excerpt from [Fact Sheet: Shakespeare](#), an introduction to Shakespeare provided by Shakespeare's Globe.



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## 20 Seconds Of Shakespeare To Recite While Washing Your Hands

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:  
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,  
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;  
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,  
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:  
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,  
And make her full of hateful fantasies.

Oberon

ACT II SCENE I

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare



Larry Paulson (Puck) and Cody Nickell (Oberon) in SCS's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Photo by rr jones.

## Intro To *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

We recommend The Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for your students to read. You can also listen to a free audio recording of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at [shakespeare.folger.edu](https://shakespeare.folger.edu), featuring SCS alumni Cody Nickell (pictured above) as Oberon! If you'd like to watch the play performed, see the streaming option listed below in the section *Stream A Midsummer Night's Dream At Home*.

### Before the Play Begins...

As Duke Theseus prepares for his marriage to Hippolyta, he is called upon to resolve a domestic conflict: Hermia wishes to marry Lysander while her father Egeus insists that she marry Demetrius. Meanwhile Quince has decided to organize some fellow citizens of Athens in preparing a theatrical entertainment for the wedding celebrations.

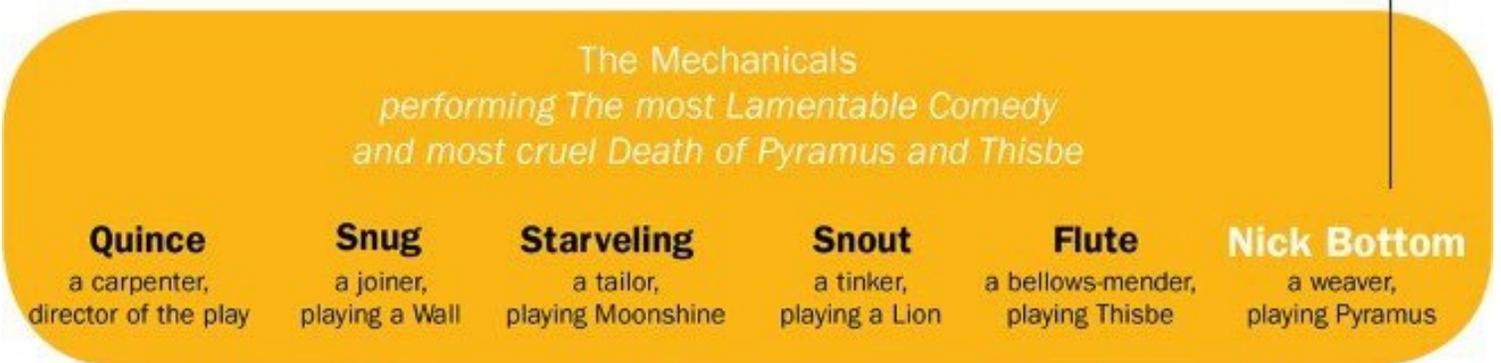
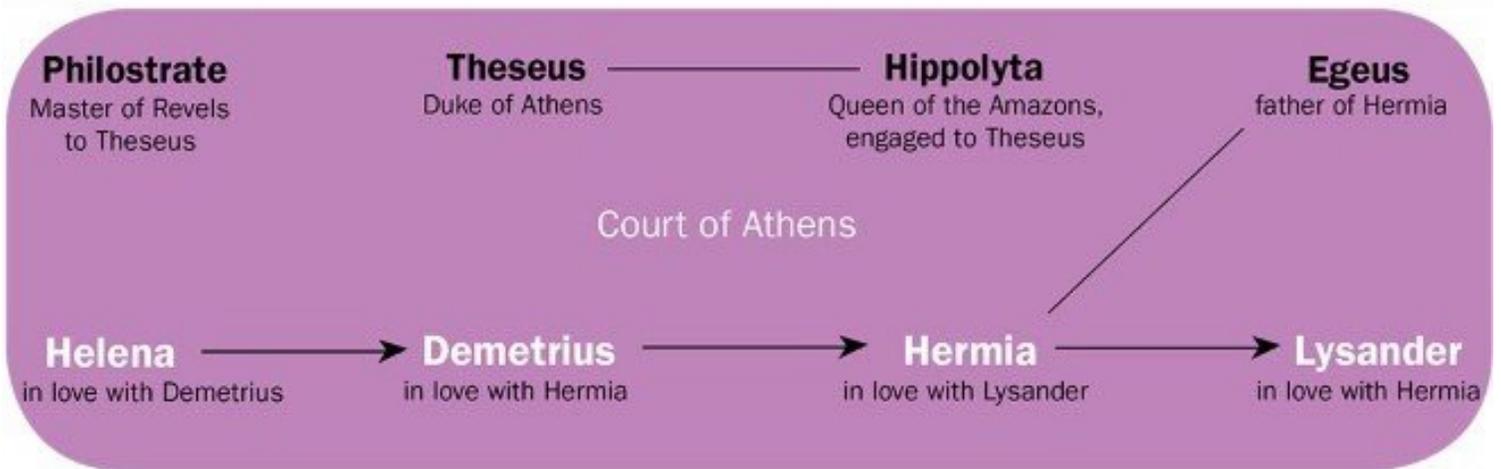
## DRAMATURG'S NOTES / MICHAEL WARREN

Shakespeare probably wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1595, during that period when, as a sharer in the recently-formed Lord Chamberlain's Men, he established himself as the major playwright of the London playhouses with plays like *Love's Labor's Lost* and *Romeo and Juliet*. He remained unchallenged in that position for at least two more years.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a highly original work; in form and in plot it has no obvious sources. Its action presents three distinct, even incongruous, social worlds. First, there is the world of the nobility of Athens, with Theseus and Hippolyta derived from the Greek historian Plutarch, while its romantic drama of frustrated youthful desire and parental resistance relates closely to Elizabethan life. Secondly, there is the world of the "mechanicals," craftsmen recognizable in any sixteenth-century English town or city. Lastly, the elaborately conceived fairy world of the forest at night brings together classical (Titania) and medieval (Oberon) fantastic beings with Puck, a hobgoblin out of English folk tradition.

This daring mixture of locales is matched by the extravagance and range of Shakespeare's language in creating these worlds. The play is notable for its dazzling display of a variety of verse forms that create dramatic clashes, aria-like speeches of great beauty, lyrical dialogue, and songs, especially in the fairy world. And notable also for their contrast: the distinctive prose of the craftsmen, with Bottom's misuse of words, and especially the conspicuously (and hilariously) inept verse of their play of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. That play, presented by actors who do not understand the role of the imagination in the theatre, draws attention to Shakespeare's brilliant achievement in this play: not just a funny comedy about young lovers and fairies, but a manifestation of and an apology for the power of poetry and the creative imagination.

# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM CHARACTER MAP





The Mechanicals in SCS's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Photo by Jana Marcus.

## 20-Minute Play: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Have your students work together during Distance Learning by using lessons provided by the Folger Method Express. With the help of Debbie Gascon, South Carolina HS teacher, and Greta Bragalla, Assistant Principal in Texas, Folger Shakespeare curated an *A Midsummer Night's Dream* resource packet. One activity that we found useful is called [20 Minute Play: A Midsummer Night's Dream](#). An excerpt from the lesson:

"Giving students the plot upfront frees them up to focus on the most important thing: the language! Twenty-minute plays also get students working collaboratively in high-energy, low-stakes groups to own bite-size language from the play. Right from the start, students develop a sense of ownership over the words and their ability to interpret them for themselves. This essential practice lays the foundation for what's ahead!"

Lesson Link: [20 Minute Play: A Midsummer Night's Dream](#)

## Stream *A Midsummer Night's Dream* At Home

Though it is always important to read Shakespeare's text, his plays were really meant to be performed on stage. Below you'll find a link to stream for free: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed at The Globe Theatre in London.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The Globe: [VIDEO LINK](#)

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## Special Thanks

Shakespeare's Globe

Folger Shakespeare Library

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NEH: Exploring the Human Endeavor

And all who support SCS's Educational Programming



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