

Max Tankersley

Drama Scholar

3/15/2023

Outcome Report: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Mainstage Production

***"Take pains, be perfect, adieu!"*: Director's Note**

A Midsummer Night's Dream is, at its core, a play about rejecting an old world that does not meet the needs of the current generation. The play begins with a young woman being forced to flee Athens to escape the draconian marriage laws of her father's generation that demand she marry a man she does not love. The play follows her generation's journey in parallel with the magical inhabitants of the neighboring forest and a band of blue-collar workers who just want to make some art.

I started developing a concept for my favorite play nearly two years ago when I was first introduced to parallels between the aesthetics of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, Funkadelic's *Maggot Brain*, and Childish Gambino's *Awaken, My Love!* These contemporary artistic pieces with central messages of liberation from oppressive capitalist environments mirror my own reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *Parable's* protagonists are forced to leave the world of their parents after climate change and corporate greed destroy their homes in the year 2024, which I think is a natural modern parallel to the rebellion of *Midsummer's* Athenian lovers.

The artistic staff and I have set this production in a near-future, post-apocalyptic Athens where the lovers flee for the potential of the supernatural forest. Throughout this creative process, I have been most invested in the play's themes of young people escaping the status quo for the promise of an environment that is less heteronormative, misogynistic, and oppressive. We've created a production framed by the musical aesthetics of Funkadelic and Childish

Gambino's work, putting previous and current musical generations in conversation with each other alongside *Midsummer's* cast of characters seeking to escape their parents' world.

My hope is that by the end of this production we will all feel called to look at the flaws of our world a little more critically, and begin to change our rules to allow us to love one another better, as I feel this text calls us to do.

"This green plot shall be our stage": Scenic Design

Directing my first mainstage production was an extremely rewarding experience in patience and flexibility. When I began this project, I knew securing a performance space would be the most challenging production element necessary to get the show on its feet. That proved true, and the challenges my production faced in securing a space made me look very critically at the resources I had available to me in the form of my fourth-year award grant, and maintain the flexibility I established for myself to allocate this funding in the places it would best support putting on great performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

It is a very common struggle for student theatre productions to find a space that will house their work, even with grant funding. I began this project with the hope to find a space that would be willing to accept grant funds for rent, but between both on and off-grounds options, my faculty mentor, Dave Dalton, and I couldn't find the professional space we sought for *Midsummer*. This was a very disappointing outcome for both myself and my artistic staff, but we moved quickly to see how I could best utilize the funds I had to make the most of our non-theatre space in the Student Activities Building.

We invested heavily in our technical elements, as I got the chance to work closely with both lighting and set designers to craft detailed theatrical elements that not only made the space feel magical and otherworldly but also emphasized the deeper textually themes that I was

exploring on with my actors at the same time. Technical Director Charlie Mooz and I created a set that felt both detailed and flexible, using fabric and leaf screens to transition quickly between the forest and Athens. The quick-change ability of this set design made it presentable in the round while also emphasizing the importance of how these two different environments informed distinctly different behavior from the characters onstage.

Our lighting designer, Sam Kiser, was attached to the moonlight imagery in the text. He and I collaborated to create a lighting design that was practical in showing the difference between night and day, city and forest, as well as emphasizing the oncoming darkness the human characters felt. We were able to invest deeply in costuming and props as well, using those elements to emphasize the “post-apocalypse” concept of a crumbling empire in Athens through distressed, ripped, and faded clothing for the human characters that stood in stark contrast to the bright, polished look of the “queered” forest creatures.

“*Music, such as charmeth sleep!*”: Sound Design

Alongside the visual technical elements of set and lighting, I continued to invest in a soundscape that would reflect the emphasis I wanted to place on the play’s theme of old and new generations in conflict with one another. I worked extensively with our choreographer, Chris Lin, to devise an opening movement sequence that began the story of *Midsummer* and established the funk soundscape as a driving force of the play’s development. We also created transitions between the forest and Athens environments underscored with musical pieces that made direct reference to one another across eras (i.e. Funkadelic’s *Can You Get to That* and Childish Gambino’s *Have Some Love*). Movement and dance ended up being a much bigger part of the creative process of creating this show than I expected and the creative relationship I formed with

Chris through this process was very rewarding as I learned new techniques in movement and devising.

***“Love's stories written in love's richest book”*: Supplementary Resources**

Gaining increased flexibility in my budget also allowed me to invest in more personal education materials to continue learning about the history behind *Midsummer* and other directors' processes. I renewed my subscriptions to National Theatre and Digital Theatre Online which I used to watch professional productions under my Third Year Award, taking particular inspiration from the National Theatre's *Midsummer* which incorporated many of the queer themes I wanted to see in my own work. I invested in texts as well, including multiple scholarly annotated copies of the play, Arden's *Queer Shakespeare*, and monologue-specific scholarship in *Speak the Speech!*

***“Adieu, adieu, adieu”*: Conclusion and Takeaways**

Midsummer was the most challenging directing experience of my career, during one of the most difficult semesters for the UVA community. I am tremendously grateful to The Miller Arts Scholars foundation for the grant resources that supported this production, to Dave Dalton for his guidance and mentorship, and to every student actor, designer, and autistic staff member who supported my work. I got to take lessons from many other directing gigs, classes, and theatre experiences and pour them into a production of my favorite play. This challenging experience introduced me to a multitude of new directing challenges and also affirmed that my mindset in the rehearsal room of prioritizing my ensemble's well-being above all else translates into extremely rewarding work.

Final Budget

| Expense | Cost | Description |
|---------------------------|----------|---|
| Lighting Equipment Rental | \$660.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 24 x Source 4 Fixtures ● Lighting accessories |
| Costume Pieces | \$600.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dress for every actor, including double castings |
| Props | \$300.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● See attached elements sheet |
| Set Pieces | \$350.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Set dressing ● Platform design ● Forest elements |
| Directing Texts | \$350.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Penguin <i>Midsummer</i> ● <i>Speak the Speech!</i> ● Arden <i>Queer Shakespeare</i> ● Norton Shakspeare |
| Streaming Services | \$300.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Theatre ● Digital Theatre Online |
| Working supplies | \$200.00 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Binder ● Printed script ● Dividers ● Highlighters, pencils, tabs |

Lighting Order (Credit: Light Designer Sam Kiser)

Date Taken Out: 11/28/22 Return Date: 12/3/22 5 days

| Qty | Item | 1st Week | + Week | Total | Replacement cost per item |
|-----|--------------------------------|----------|--------|-------|---------------------------|
| 14 | Source 4-50 575 w/Safety cable | \$25 | | \$350 | \$325 |
| 8 | Source 4-36 575 w/Safety cable | \$25 | | \$200 | \$325 |
| 2 | Source 4-70 575 w/Safety cable | \$25 | | \$50 | \$350 |
| 1 | smarfade 24/96 | \$45.00 | | \$45 | \$1,000 |
| | pattern + holder TBD | | | n/a | |
| 5 | 15' 5-pin DMX cable | \$3.00 | | \$15 | \$25 |
| 1 | 100' 5-pin DMX cable | \$5 | | \$5 | \$50 |
| 2 | S4 7.5" Colorframe | | | n/a | \$10 |
| 22 | S4 6.25" Colorframe | | | n/a | \$10 |
| 24 | MEd-FPin adaptor | | | n/a | \$25 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Refundable Deposit: n/a Total Rental Fee: \$660.00

Show Photos (Credit Photographer Emma Demartino)



Elements List (Credit SM Charlie Mooz)

| ELEMENTS SHEET: Shakespeare on the Lawn's A Midsummer Night's Dream, Fall 2022 | | | | | | | | Key: | | Projected Cost | Actual Cost |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------------|--|----------------|-------------|
| | | | | | | | | To-Do | | | |
| | | | | | | | | Do-Fer | | | |
| | | | | | | | | Final | | | |
| | | | | | | | | Consumable/Check-in | | 0 | 0 |
| Page(s) | A/S/L | Element | Quantity | Character(s) | Actor | Business | Department | Status | Notes | | |
| 1 | 1/1/1; 5/1/1 | Theseus' palace | N/A | N/A | N/A | | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 1/10; | 4/1/99; 5/1/1 | engagement signifiers | 2 | Hippolyta, These | Nada, Kelly | wom | Costume | | | | |
| 1/21; | 4/1/1; 5/1/29 | love tokens | 2 | Hermia, Lysande | Christine, Katie | wom | Costume | | | | |
| 9 | 1/2/1; 4/2/1 | Quince's house | N/A | N/A | N/A | | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 9; 29 | 1/2/16; 3/1/72 | Pyramus script | 1 | Quince | Emma | handed to Bottom; read b | Prop | | given to Bottom during 1.2 | | |
| 10; 29 | 1/2/36; 3/1/72 | Thisby script | 1 | Quince | Emma | handed to Flute; read by | Prop | | given to Flute during 1.2 | | |
| 11 | 1/2/51 | Thisby's mother script | 1 | Quince | Emma | handed to Starveling | Prop | | given to Starveling during 1.2 | | |
| 11 | 1/2/54 | Pyramus' father script | 1 | Quince | Emma | handed to Snout | Prop | | given to Snout during 1.2 | | |
| 11 | 1/2/56 | Thisby's father script | 1 | Quince | Emma | | Prop | | | | |
| 12 | 1/1/1; 3/2/1; 4/1/1 | wood near Athens | N/A | N/A | N/A | | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 0; 22; 23; 37 | ; 2/2/69; 3/2/102 | purple flowers | | Puck; Oberon; P | Becca; Kelly; Be | handed to Oberon; "squeez | Prop | | given to Oberon during 2.1, some of it is given back to Puck during 2. | | |
| 3/2/40; | 3/2/121; 4/1/1; 5/1/29 | Athenian weeds | 2 | Demetrius, Lysar | Zachary, Katie | wom | Costume | | interpret this how you will; described at 2.2.71 | | |
| 26 | 3/1/3 | "green plot" | N/A | N/A | N/A | used as rehearsal space | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 27 | 3/1/15 | prologue | 1 | Quince | Emma | written by Quince | Prop | | | | |
| 27 | 3/1/15 | writing utensil | 1 | Quince | Emma | writes prologue | Prop | | see above prop | | |
| 28 | 3/1/46 | calendar | 1 | Quince | Emma | read | Prop | | | | |
| 28 | 3/1/50 | "chamber window" | 1 | N/A | N/A | opened for the performan | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 28; 67 | 3/1/52; 5/1/139 | bush of thorns | 1 | "Moonshine" | Eleanor | | Prop | | only described in 3.1, not ONS | | |
| 28; 68 | 3/1/53; 5/1/139 | lantern | 1 | "Moonshine" | Eleanor | | Prop | | only described in 3.1, not ONS | | |
| 28; 65 | 3/1/59; 5/1/137; | wall | 1 | "Wall" | Lilla | wom | Costume | | interpret this how you will, only described in 3.1, not ONS | | |
| 28; 65 | 3/1/60; 5/1/137 | "loam, plaster, or some ro | 1 | "Wall" | Lilla | | Prop | | interpret this how you will, only described in 3.1, not ONS | | |
| 31; 50 | 3/1/92; 4/1/1 | ass' head | 1 | Bottom | Sivan | wom | Costume | | | | |
| 33 | 3/1/183 | "bower" | N/A | N/A | N/A | where Bottom is brought f | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 46; 50; | ; 3/2/452; 4/1/68 | herb | | Oberon; Puck; O | Kelly; Becca; Kel | handed to Puck; "squeeze | Prop | | given to Puck during 3.2 | | |
| | 3/2/406 | bush | 1 | N/A | N/A | hidden behind | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 50 | 4/1/1 | "flowery bed" | 1 | N/A | N/A | sat on by Bottom | Scenery | | interpret this how you will | | |
| 50 | 4/1/3 | musk roses | | Titania | Nada | placed in Bottom's hair | Prop | | placed in Bottom's hair during 4.1 | | |
| 51 | 4/1/30 | dry oats | | Bottom | Sivan | | Prop | | | | |
| 61 | 5/1/46 | playbill | 1 | Hippolyta | Nada | handed to Theseus, read | Prop | | given to Theseus during 5.1 | | |
| 67 | 5/1/139 | dog | 1 | "Moonshine" | Eleanor | | Prop | | | | |
| 67 | 5/1/143 | lion | 1 | "Lion" (Snug) | Lily | wom | Costume | | | | |
| 69 | 5/1/146 | "mantle" | 1 | "Thisby" (Flute) | Halsey | wom, flies off head as shr | Prop | | "Lion" (Snug) picks up after it falls on ground during 5.1 | | |
| 69 | 5/1/146 | bloody mantle | 1 | "Lion" (Snug), "P | Halsey, Lily, Siva | bit by Lion | Prop | | "Lion" (Snug) switches with clean mantle, shakes it in her mouth, drop | | |
| 70 | 5/1/150 | blade | 1 | "Pyramus" (Botto | Sivan | "Pyramus" (Bottom) kills P | Prop | | "Thisby" (Flute) picks up after "Pyramus" (Bottom) is dead during 5.1 | | |