

## **REVIEW: A Midsummer Night's Dream performed by EODS**

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A WARM summer's evening in Holywell's Italian Gardens, and EODS's staging of Shakespeare's much-loved comedy, make an ideal combination.

This year, director Cathryn Parker, assisted by Gareth Brighton, has introduced some innovative touches of her own.

These include creating a theatre-in-the-round, which enables the large cast to benefit from many entrances and exits, and collaborating with Simon Bonsor who has composed original music to match the play's ever-changing moods, lyrical, romantic, and mystical.

Befitting its classical provenance, the action begins in the palace of Theseus, Duke of Athens (Philip Visick), who is planning to marry Hippolyta (Jane Tingley).

Two Athenian aristos, Lysander (James Collins) and Demetrius (David Fricker), have desires on two eligible ladies, Hermia (Roseanna Sargent) and Helena (Laura O'Mara).

All four young actors speak their lines faultlessly, and in the manner Shakespeare intended. To avoid parental wrath, the couples take to the woods, cleverly imagined in the Gardens with leaf-covered drapes and skilful lighting.

Here, under the magical spell of Oberon, King of the Fairies (David Morley), his gullible Queen, Titania (Becky Robinson), and the king's henchman, Puck (Kim Ramakrishnan), the lovers' feelings for each other are changed.

Puck, often played as an ethereal elf, is here an acrobatic, potion-sprinkling leprechaun-like figure, in marked contrast to the diaphanously-costumed fairies, sensitively choreographed by Tracy Watton.

Into this arboraceous fantasy, stumble a group of 'Rude Mechanicals', led by Bottom (David Nicholles) in a genuinely comic performance, under the command of Peter Quince (Tony Bannister).

These yokel artisans stage 'Pyramus and Thisbe', an 'entertainment' for the duke's wedding. In this, Flute (Oliver Beatson) as Thisbe, Snout 'The Wall' (Bob Lester), and Snug 'The Lion' (Douglas Dalziel), have the audience in stitches.

This is an outstanding production which pulls heart-strings and tickles funny-bones in equal measure. 'A Dream' to savour long into the summer night.