



Talented?

Would you like to develop your acting and performing skills?

Acorn Youth are looking for 13 to 18 year olds who wish to take their talents a stage further

Auditions will be held in the Arts Centre, King Street on Monday 25th June @ 7pm
For further info phone the Arts Centre on 01224 635208 or email acorntheatrecompany@yahoo.co.uk



A Midsummer Night's Dream

By William Shakespeare





Wishing you a very successful run of the show. Be proud, you've all worked very hard and deserve to enjoy it now. So, go out there and give it your all.

Best Wishes,

Jordan

Jordan McCurrach graduated from RSAMD in 2006. He has recently appeared in 'James and the Giant Peach' at the Citizen's in Glasgow, and with National Theatre of Scotland in 'Macbeth'.

Acorns of Old

Good luck to all at acorn youth. Hope you have a blast doing one of Shakespeare's greatest plays.

Love

Tunji Kasim

Adetunji Kasim will graduate from RSAMD in June 2007. He is currently rehearsing for 'Big White Fog' at the Almeida Theatre in London.



THE COMPANY

Acorn Theatre Company presented its first production in May 2003. It was a one act play called "One Good Beating" by Linda MacLean and it was performed in front of a small audience in the drama studio of an Aberdeen secondary school.

This humble beginning was well received and encouraged us to stage our first full length production in September of the same year. Phyllis Nagy's adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's 'The Talented Mr Ripley' was a challenging and invigorating step forward for a company that had been in existence for such a short time. It proved to be a rewarding and educational experience for all involved.

In 2004, Acorn entered two different categories in the Scottish Community Drama Association Festival of One Act Plays. In the youth section we presented 'Laundry Girls' by Bill Owen, and in the main festival our entry was Edward Albee's 'The Zoo Story'. Both plays won on their respective nights; the former going through to the divisional youth final and the later winning the award for Outstanding Achievement.

Our September 2004 production was a play that contrasted quite strikingly with much of what we had done before. 'Biloxi Blues' by Neil Simon was a genuinely funny World War II comedy that once again met with a favourable response from our audience. Immediately following our successful run of Biloxi Blues the company diversified by instigating a regular youth theatre group on a Monday night. In many ways this was going back to our roots, as originally the company had grown out of a successful school based theatre group.

Acorn Youth is intended to introduce young people to theatrical performance and allow them to develop their talent as individuals within an atmosphere of shared responsibility. A healthy company ethos and sense of identity are key to our aims.

The new venture's first production was Liz Lochhead's 'Cuba'. This story of two schoolgirls living through the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 was presented along with 'Letterbox' by Anne-Marie Di Mambro and a revival of 'One Good Beating'.

In February 2006, Acorn was back in SCDA competition again. 'Spirit' was an original piece written by Jennifer Morrison, one of our longest serving youth members. We were all delighted when the piece won through, collecting the prize for Best Youth production and The Outstanding Achievement award on the way.

In March 2006, we presented 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland', focusing on both the fantastically colourful and darkly disquieting aspects of the heroine's subterranean adventures.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is the first time that Acorn has ventured into the realm of Mr Shakespeare.

A Midsummer Night's Dream


William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover and, in his son's youth, a man of some repute and influence in local social and political circles. John's position is likely to have been instrumental in securing young William a place at King's New School, where he received the sum total of his formal education. Like his contemporary Ben Jonson, Shakespeare did not attend university.

Biographical details of Shakespeare's life between 1585 and 1592 are practically non-existent. In effect, he disappears for seven years before resurfacing as a young playwright in London. The circumstances that led to this state of affairs have been cause for much conjecture; what isn't debatable is that William Shakespeare had embarked upon a career which ultimately placed him at the very pinnacle of English literature and drama.


A Midsummer Night's Dream was probably written and performed around 1595/96. Chronologically, this places it in a group of plays that includes Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet and The Merchant of Venice. These plays are the product of Shakespeare's maturation as a writer. Indeed, A Midsummer Night's Dream is sometimes regarded as Shakespeare's first mature masterpiece, and it remains one of the most widely performed of his plays.

The play is the story of the events that surround the wedding of Theseus, Duke of Athens and Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazons; the former has recently defeated the latter in combat. Amidst the preparations for the wedding, the Duke is visited by a loyal subject called Egeus who wishes to evoke Athenian law in dictating who his daughter should marry. The rebellious Hermia has her heart set on Lysander, whilst her father demands that Demetrius should be her husband. To complicate matters, Demetrius is doted upon by Helena. The play really gets underway when Hermia and Lysander elope into the woods together, followed by Demetrius and Helena.


The very same woods are in turmoil because Oberon and Titania, the respective King and Queen of the Fairies, have fallen out over the possession of a little Indian boy that both want as a page. Oberon schemes to humiliate Titania by means of the magic properties of a flower that will cause her to fall in love with the first thing that she sees. At the same time he charges the mischievous Puck with applying the same flower's juice to the eyes of Demetrius, thus instigating a night of total confusion for the four Athenian lovers.




Rebecca Wilkie – Rebecca has grown in confidence in the course of rehearsals and has stepped into the breach of a speaking part when another Acorn had to drop out. As Mustardseed, Rebecca has shown a natural elegance and poise in her movement that would make any ephemeral being proud. Rebecca has an excellent presence on stage and we look forward to working with her in many more productions.



Rachel Walker – Rachel the ex-fish has transformed herself into Titania, Queen of the Fairies. She brings a haughty dignity to the role and has been working on her Carry On facial expressions for the scenes in which she is magically enamoured of an ass. Rachel has also shown her versatility by designing and making her own costume and those of her Fairy band. The results are striking and add considerably to the overall look of the production.



Rachel Walker – Rachel the ex-frog was the obvious choice to play Puck; who else would we turn to when looking for an energetically mental sprite with a mischievous glint in his eyes? Strangely, Rachel had some trouble translating her own pucknacity to her portrayal of the character. However, she has worked hard to do what comes naturally and has become the Puck that we always knew she could. She goes, she goes, look how she goes!



Milli Dow – Milli seems as light as a feather when she is flits onto the stage at the head of the fairies in Act 2. This is an important entrance and she has achieved it with grace and conviction. Not all her entrances are quite so timely: having not appeared for a rehearsal, Milli informed us when phoned that she was still in her "PJs and curlers"! Forgetfulness aside, Milli has proved to be a committed and enthusiastic Acorn.

The final plot strand involves the earnest attempts of a group of Athenian tradesmen to stage a play at the celebrations of the Duke's wedding. Under the direction of Peter Quince, and with the irrepressible Nick Bottom as leading man, they embark on a production of The Tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. This leads them to the woods to find a rehearsal space, and subsequently into the heart of the Fairy conflict.

A Midsummer Night's Dream has a varied and colourful production history. It was regarded as rather strange by Restoration audiences, and when the diarist Samuel Pepys saw it in 1662 he described it as "the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw". The possibility of fantastical spectacle inherent in the play's fairy characters encouraged 18th century producers to present the story as a musical adaptation, cutting substantial sections of the text. In some cases, Quince and his band of mechanicals were excised completely. The full play was revived in the 19th century, almost 200 years since it had last been performed unadulterated. However, many of these productions tended even more towards spectacle, with increasingly large numbers of fairies populating increasingly grandiose and fantastical sets. A Broadway production of 1888 boasted an on-stage pleasure barge and a scrolling diorama of scenery.

More recent productions have explored darker elements of the play and delved deeper into the troubled relationships that form the basis of the play's conflict and comedy. Fairies have been presented as closer to animals than humans and the lovers have been depicted as unsympathetically stropky teenagers. Directors have sought to present the contrast between Athens and the world of the wood. Athens is rational and behaviour is governed by the strict rules of the court. The events that take place in the wood demonstrate the confusions, jealousies and transformed behaviour of seemingly rational individuals that can result from the power of love.

In formulating a concept for our production, we started by considering what would be an appropriate setting in time for a play about love and what happens when it is given free reign. With this in mind, we decided that our wood should be reminiscent of the 1960s. The costume of the fairies is intended to suggest a hybrid of 60s influences – mid decade Mary Quant and later Summer of Love flower power and Victoriana. Athens and its inhabitants are more suggestive of the 1950s. Hermia and Demetrius are a little more "beat" and Lysander and Helena a little more "square", but all four are transported from the relative austerity of the city to the revolutionary and colourful world of the wood.



Adrienne Salmon – Every year there are performers in our productions who have to suffer for their art. Really suffer. Adrienne is one such this year. She has had to crawl around on all fours; grapple with Craig and Mark; be bullied by Danielle and Karen; and in rehearsals she had to balance precariously on an angled table that was posing as a ramp. We think that Adrienne is a very talented girl that is the ideal Hermia. We hope this makes up in some small way for the loss of her dignity.



David West – One of the highlights of the rehearsal process this year was seeing the look of joy on David's face when presented with a choice of wigs to wear whilst playing Flute playing Thisbe. He has really taken to the cross dressing element of the role and has made the trip from Banff and back every Monday night just to make sure that he can fulfil it. That's real dedication! David has impressed us all with his focus and commitment. And his love of frocks.



Craig Taylor – Craig is the matinee idol of Acorn Youth. More by accident than design, he has been cast as the love interest in most of our productions: from classroom hunk Mr Shaw in Cuba to the King of Hearts in Alice. This year he is the lovely Lysander, apple of Hermia's eye. The journey from Mr Shaw to Shakespeare is a significant one; one that Craig has completed in carefully measured steps and with total commitment.



Olivia Bruce – Olivia is new to the company and she has brought with her a great deal of talent and a creative spark. She is a vital cog in the wheel of Team Oberon and a thoughtful and intuitive performer. Olivia has been incredibly consistent in her application and we hope that this year is just the beginning of her contribution to Acorn Youth productions.



Fiona Murray – Fiona has had to endure the double ignominy of being asked to play Bottom and then being informed that this involved playing an ass. She has taken this on the chin and delivered an excellent Bottom that is the epitome of the self-aggrandising amateur thespian; all flowery gesticulation and posturing. One of the heads that Fiona performs in tonight is her own. See if you can guess which one.



Karen Young – Karen is a new member of Acorn Youth, and she has impressed us from the very beginning with her commitment to the company and her energy in approaching her role. Karen was one of the first to know her lines and has been a model of consistency all the way through the rehearsal process. Despite being nobody's "spaniel", she makes an excellent Helena. She moves from victim to aggressor with alarming ease!



Danielle Harper – Danielle is new to the Acorn ranks. She has thrown herself into the production with enormous enthusiasm and commitment. She is surprisingly good at playing a grumpy old man; a talent that one presumes she didn't know that she had. It might not be a transferable skill, but it is one that has served us well. As long as she gets her gauds and trinkets the right way round, she'll deliver an excellent Egeus.



Vicki Rennie – One can only imagine that Vicki was upset by the lack of penguins in this year's choice of production. And they say that Shakespeare is a genius! However, in her role as Starveling she does get to dress in a manner not dissimilar to her "penguin" costume last year. Every cloud does have a silver lining. Vicki has been a key part of a very strong Mechanicals team and has shown her usual dedication to the play.

Putting on a production of a Shakespeare play allows for a lot of freedom. Choice of setting in time and place is virtually unlimited; after all, the Bard's use of Athens is nominal to say the least. Almost all of our Mechanicals are played by girls – a reversal of the constraints placed on Elizabethan companies, when all of the female roles had to be played by young men. What can't be underestimated is the need to give the language due care and attention. It has to be delivered with clarity if its beauty and subtlety are to be conveyed. Moreover, clear delivery of the lines is the only thing that is going to allow the audience to follow the intricacies of the plot. It is not just a matter of learning the lines; our actors have had to learn the lines, establishing that they understand them, and then make sure that the pace, tone and rhythm of the delivery convey the language to the audience in a meaningful way.

This has been a great challenge for the company, but one that we have been keen to take on. We hope that our first venture into Shakespearian territory will meet with your approval.

We'd like to extend our thanks to:

Tish Howard

Gordon Highlander's Museum

Derek Ryan

Andrew Sykes

Mrs M Davidson

Lara-Jo Taylor

Frank Faulds

Rhona Mitchell

Talisman Energy Investing in our Communities Programme

Paula, Verna and the Art Centre staff for their continued support and patience

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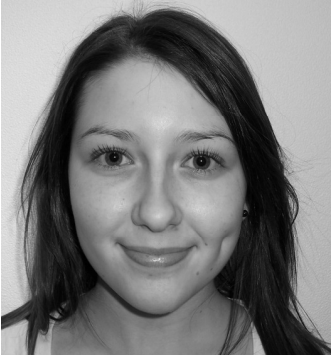
Leah Henderson – Leah is new to Acorn this year. She has taken to being a fairy and has become an important part of Team Titania. As we have more fairy attendants than Shakespeare intended, Leah had to endure initial rehearsals as a nameless sprite. We hope that this hasn't caused any lasting identity crisis and that she is satisfied now that she is Flame.



Felicity Cawley – It takes subtlety and commitment to play a wall. In fact, Felicity might have considered herself the victim of some rough casting. Despite this, she has continued undaunted and delivered another mature and intuitive performance. Felicity has been with us since the beginning and her dedication makes her a key element in the architecture of Acorn Youth, whether playing a wall or not.



Jack Christie – Jack played a gardener last year, so his elevation to a duke has been quite rapid. Then he had a flat cap and some fake flowers to attend to; now he gets a uniform, some attendants and a wedding. He also gets a lot more lines to learn and has had to work on a suitably stern delivery to keep his various wayward subjects in some kind of order.



Eilidh Connachar – Last year, Eilidh was our wise and scholarly owl; this year she has been a woodland inhabitant of a more supernatural sort. As one of Oberon's fairies, Eilidh has found herself testing her skills as a dancer as well as an actress. All this and the constant need to fire back witty ripostes to a directorial team who like to refer to her as Alan.



Emma-Lee Davidson – Emma-Lee has had the challenging task of creating the role of attendant to the feisty Philostrate. She has done this with ease. This is no surprise given that Emma-Lee directed her own production, 'Cagebirds', earlier this year and took the production to the SCDA festival. Perhaps she'll direct for Acorn one day.



Rowan Holligan – Rowan joined the company after the casting for this production had been finalised, so there was no opportunity for him to play Hermia or Helena. Despite this setback, he threw himself into the rehearsal process, knuckling down to life as the tallest member of Team Oberon. Still, he gets to wear a gaudy shirt, so what's not to like? Rowan has really impressed with his commitment and dedication.



Brad Morrison – We are beginning to suspect that Brad uses acting as an excuse to experiment with hair dye. In recent weeks, he has appeared almost unnaturally keen to follow the green of the Mock Turtle in 2006's Alice with a striking red for Oberon this year. The King of the Fairies is a pivotal role in the play and Brad has worked tirelessly, often independently, to make sure that his Oberon has the necessary gravitas and presence to command the stage.



Adam Emery – Adam arrived at the same time as Rowan, in a kind of two for the price of one deal. Just like Rowan, he missed out on the initial casting and found himself a late recruit to Team Oberon. He has shown real commitment to his fairy duties and has developed his weird otherworldly walk unselfconsciously and with aplomb. He also gets to wear a gaudy shirt. We look forward to working with Adam in future Acorn Youth productions.



Mark Hewat – Mark has graduated from playing a lizard called Bill in Alice to playing a lizard called Demetrius in A Midsummer Night's Dream. This is in no way a reflection on Mark or his character. It is, however, a reflection of Mark's growing confidence on the stage. All that Bill was required to do was creep lizard-like, but Demetrius has to be a creep with Shakespearian dialogue and a whole lot of blocking to remember. Mark has met the challenge with enthusiasm and energy.



Leanne Kelman – Thankfully, Leanne has proved not to be slow of study; quite the reverse in fact. Her portrayal of Snug has subtlety and a quiet comedy that is sure to delight lovers of animals and tradesmen alike. Her history with the company goes back to the very beginnings, and she has matured into a reliable and focused performer who supports others admirably on and off the stage. She is Leanne Kelman: hear her roar!



Kirsty Leith – Kirsty is a time-served member of Acorn and one of the most experienced performers in our midst. Her performance as Hippolyta brings a sense of calm and regal elegance to the stage, demonstrating her versatility after last year's wild-eyed madness as the Hatter and allowing her to make full use of the quality and clarity of her voice. Kirsty always gives her all in performance and she has been an important performer in the development of Acorn Youth.



Megan McFarlane – As Philostrate, Megan's job has been to look menacing and officious on stage. She has bullied and harried with aplomb in her role as Theseus' enforcer. Megan joined Acorn Youth this year and quickly became an integral part of the company. She has worked hard to unite the group working as the 'Athenians' and as far as I can tell there has been no 'bullying or harrying'.



Lorna Stephen – Lorna is all about energy; everything that she does has an extra element of zing. This was demonstrated first in her audition and has been evident ever since. She has immersed herself in the ensemble nature of the company, and of being one of Titania's fairies in particular. A roomful of Lornas would negate the need for fossil fuels! It is probably advisable to stand well back.



Kate Copland – Kate's Quince is at the core of the play within a play; remaining on track with his artistic vision of "Pyramus and Thisbe" even as his leading man is temporarily made to look an ass. Likewise, Kate is at the heart of Acorn Youth; focusing on the good of the company and the progress of the play, as well as meeting the challenges of her own role with vigour and intelligence. Sadly, there was no requirement for her patented Cockney/Irish accent this year.



Kathryn Craigmyle – Kathryn has had to wake up this year, after sleeping through Alice as the Dormouse. This has involved an extensive training regime and learning not to look surprised when asked to move. Movement is a key element of her performance as Cobweb and she has worked hard to develop her fairy attributes and become a fully functioning member of Team Titania.



Kirsty Buchan – Kirsty is another new Acorn this year. She has fitted right in to the ensemble spirit of the company and the collective ethos that we try to foster. She is a part of Team Oberon, so she has had the task of adopting the persona of a moody and brooding fairy. Not an easy role to research, but one that she has taken on with enthusiasm and commitment. We look forward to working with Kirsty on many future productions.

CAST

Hippolyta Kirsty Leith
Theseus Jack Christie
Philostrate Megan McFarlane
Attendant Emma-Lee Davidson
Egeus Danielle Harper
Hermia Adrienne Salmon
Lysander Craig Taylor
Demetrius Mark Hewat
Helena Karen Young
Quince Kate Copland
Snug Leanne Kelman
Bottom Fiona Murray
Flute David West
Snout Felicity Cawley
Starveling Vicki Rennie
Puck Rachel Walker NP
Mustardseed Rebecca Wilkie
Oberon Brad Morrison
Oberon's Fairies Eildh Conacher
Olivia Bruce
Rowan Holligan
Adam Emery
Kirsty Buchan

Titania Rachel Walker Bod
Titania's Fairies Kathryn Craigmyle
Leah Henderson
Milli Dow
Rebecca Wilkie
Lorna Stephen

CREW

Directed by Doug Haggarty
Assisted by Irene Adam
Stewart Macpherson
Rebecca Conacher
Stage Manager Vicki Pirie
Lights Barry Sheriffs
Sound Bob Gillanders
Set Sets In Motion
Business Management Ian Adam
Kristin McCurrach