

# Asses and arses all mixed up with some love juice in a sylvan setting

By [John Cooper](#)

30 Jan 2013

A Midsummer Night's Dream is one of Shakespeare's best-known and loved comedies. Given current events is it fair to call a play set in Athens (actually mainly in a nearby forest) a "riot"? It takes a while to get going perhaps, but soon enough there is riotous behaviour indeed in the woods.



So to the characters: Marcel Meyer plays the two roles of Theseus, Duke of Athens and Oberon, the Fairy King. Kim Cloete doubles up as Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons who is betrothed to Theseus, as well as Titania the Fairy Queen. Their roles are well acted, allowing the stern and moral world of reason to be contrasted with the more dissolute fairy world - as it appears Shakespeare intended.

## Confusions and misidentifications

As is usual for a Shakespeare comedy, there are confusions and misidentifications. Four lovers (played by Zondwa Njokweni, James Macgregor, Nicholas Campbell and Hannah Borthwick) argue, get passionate, get duped by Puck (Oberon's mischievous elf servant) with "fairy juice" and fall in and out of love. Helena (who at first loses out in the love department) is played by Hannah Borthwick, initially in game-watching shorts and with a heavy meise accent, who gets quite a few good laughs in one of the play's over-the-top roles. I was slightly puzzled as to why the four lovers consecutively and incrementally stripped down to their undies, but all four had buff-enough bodies to admire, so no great problem. Perhaps the director (Fred Abrahamse) wanted to emphasise the sexual nature of the play.



Puck (athletically played by Sven Ruygrok) cheerfully puts a donkey's head onto Nick Bottom (arse and ass!). This allows Terence Bridgett, as Bottom, to seize the play with buffoonery and a certain amount of horniness when Titania awakes to fall in love with him. I will not spoil the enjoyment by going into details.

"There are fairies at the bottom of my garden." Sometimes played in Dream by real live ballerinas, but in this production Titania's fairy servants: Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed become disembodied, being replaced with nifty green laser

lights that flit around the set with ethereal squeaky voices.

## A play within a play



A "play within a play" is a dramatic device that Shakespeare favoured. He used it in Hamlet and The Taming of the Shrew (Maynardville's excellent Shakespearean production in 2011) is itself a play within a play. In the Dream six "rude mechanicals" first rehearse and then later stage the play Pyramus and Thisbe to the assembled wedding party. The mechanicals are presumably competent enough artisans (carpenter, tailor, bellows-mender and the like), but not intended to be much good as actors. For me Wiseman Sitole in the role of Tom Snout the tinker (who acts as Wall) and the joiner Snug as Lion (Malefane Mosuhli) were the most enjoyable with their

facial expressions precisely capturing the drollery of their little play. When Bottom's Pyramus entreates: "Thou Wall, O Wall, O sweet and lovely Wall, Show me thy chink" through which to talk to Thisbe (aka Francis Flute played by Mdu Kweyama), I was expecting an outstretched arm with the hole made by thumb and first finger, but Wall offers the audience what is more of a cleft, contributing to the bawdy humour that set the Maynardville audience a-guffawing. The use of simple

puppets to represent Pyramus, Thisbe and Lion by the six mechanicals was a good touch and well presented.

Other than the lasers (designed by Ian Powell), the set is pretty stark and there are not that many props in use, so it is either keep standing up or lie down and fall asleep most of the time. Oberon and Puck's make-up and costumes (the latter designed by Marcel Meyer) were great, as was Wall's caftan. As always seems the case at Maynardville, the acting was professional and I detected no faltering dialogue as the play progressed, with no prompt to be heard from the second row.

Oh yes, what would Shakespeare Maynardville be without a little drizzle after the Interval? No probs for we veterans as we had our blankies ready.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream is at Cape Town's [Maynardville Open-Air Theatre](#) until 9 March. Tickets are available from [Computicket](#) or by calling +27 (0)21 421 7695.*

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>