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# EIU's 'Midsummer Night': The Bard Would Approve

Wednesday  
27 April  
1977

**Editor's note:** "A Midsummer Night's Dream" will be performed at 8 p.m. Monday, in addition to scheduled performances this weekend.

By **WALTER LAZENBY**

Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" graced the Eastern stage last weekend as the Theatre Department's contribution to Celebration 77 and will appear again three times this weekend, Friday night's performance being dedicated to retiring Vice-President Moody and Mrs. Moody.

This romantic comedy can never — well, hardly ever — fail to please, with its variety of mood and incident. Guffaws always seem appropriate for the antics of its rustic characters rehearsing and presenting a

## A Review

play-within-the-play, which gave Shakespeare a chance to satirize amateur actors' productions.

Smiles and chuckles inevitably arise in response to the bard's playful suggestion that the mystery of lovers' unpredictable falling in and out of love can be explained as the operation of a magic potion. In the story of two pairs of lovers thus bedeviled he took opportunity good-humoredly to compare them with lunatics.

Laughter can even find its place in the spirit world above these mortals — Lord, what

fools they be! — where Oberon, King of the Fairies, plots with Puck to make Titania, his queen, ridiculously fall in love with something hideous, because they have quarreled.

In fact, the course of true love never does run smooth in the play, except perhaps in the "frame" story, which shows dignified Duke Theseus celebrating his marriage to the Amazon queen, Hippolyta.

In Eastern's show, the spectacle of costume and set dominates.

Many of Nancy Paule's costumes are happy ideas — for example, the rustics' homespun-looking brightly varicolored patchwork outfits and the "unisex" designs for the lesser fairy characters. The latter lend themselves to numerous striking tableaux, in which Director Gerald Sullivan has related actors spatially through use of the long trains worn by Oberon and Titania. Oberon's red and Titania's pink — clashing as they do — are thematically functional.

Such a successfully unified impression seems questionable only when the agreed-on design does not seem "right" for a given actor's physique.

I could not get accustomed to the buskins (tall boots traditionally used in tragedy) which added to Oberon's and Titania's stature, largely

because they seemed to me to inhibit the freedom of movement (that's something spirits ought to have plenty of!) and to detract from their overall beauty.

C.P. Blanchette's ingenious method for suggesting the desired atmosphere and for changing scenes drew applause on opening night.

The music and songs were, for me, only minimally effective. The long opening sequence in which one of Shakespeare's least fortunate lines ("Swift as the moon's sphere") was endlessly repeated seemed gratuitous and boring. Occasional later passages detracted from the very dialogue they were evidently intended to enhance, either through failure of the sung lyrics to capture a sense of beauty or through being too loud or stopping too suddenly.

The cast exhibited a general evenness of ability and gave intelligent readings of the lines, clearly enunciated. Randy Arney's interpretation of Nick Bottom, the weaver, seemed perhaps the most consistently successful performance.

Certain scenes, however, could have been more effective with more pointing and building (especially the moment where Helena falsely thinks that she is the victim of a conspiracy of the other three lovers).