

THE DUBUQUE SHAKESPEARE PROJECT

at the Carnegie Stout Library, Dubuque, IA

Fall 2024

BECOMING THE BARD

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Synopsis: A royal wedding from Greek mythology. Two pairs of lovers with all sorts of love triangles. A troupe of amateur actors. A quarrel between the faerie queen and the faerie king. And the delightful faerie mischief-maker Puck with assorted woodland creatures from the English countryside. Shakespeare's second shortest play sets up all these plot strands and lets them collide into each other while creating a panoply of memorable characters.

Discussion Topics:

- Where *Romeo and Juliet* celebrates love, *Midsummer* looks at its mutability. All plot strands examine love from different angles and even sends up R&J in the Pyramus and Thisbe play-within-the-play. How does Shakespeare use multiple plot lines to explore the nature of love?
- Ovid's *Metamorphoses* provides the plot for one of the strands and also acts as a thematic element with several characters undergoing transformation. What components of a personality stay intact and what aspects undergo change? How does this set up a slippery environment where everything is in flux, including reality itself?
- Power inequities dominate the play: between parents and children, between genders, between classes, etc. How does Shakespeare manipulate action to let the audience constantly shift their sympathies and actively engage with the power dynamics?

Folger Text Link:

<https://www.folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/a-midsummer-nights-dream/>

Kanopy Film link: <https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/704863>

Other resources to consider:

<https://www.kanopy.com/en/dubuque/video/172554> Ballet version, 2007.

A Midsummer Night's Dream 1999 movie with Rupert Everett, Michele Pfeiffer, Stanley Tucci.

A Midsummer Night's Dream 2015 movie by Julie Taymor

Benjamin Britten's opera version available behind some paywalls.

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Carnegie-Stout Public Library 360 W 11th Street, Dubuque, IA