Part of the magic of Shakespeare is in its almost complete lack of stage directions. As a result, directors have the ability to interpret the language of the plays with almost no constraint; some of the plays we saw during the trip gave evidence to this fact—i.e. the Woodstock-inspired festival scene in Winter's Tale. This leeway gives a director almost unlimited creative freedom in the construction of his performance.

This freedom has its drawbacks. The plays have little description for a novice director to use as a crutch. The entire play must be seen in his mind, or else the play will become a series of actors standing still saying their perspective lines, unable to make sense of them. The duty of the director is to bring the text to life—to create, from words, living, breathing characters and problems.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is an example of the many possibilities for interpretation of Shakespeare's work. The play has been performed in time periods from Ancient Greece, to the turn of the 20th century, to the Second World War. Bottom the Weaver has been portrayed as a self-glorifying, egotistical lout, a complete idiot, and a horny goofball. However, the facets of A Midsummer Night's Dream that have encouraged the most creative genius and most diversified interpretations are the fairies and their fey world.

The reason for this creative variation is because the fairies and humans represent two completely separate worlds. As our guide at the walkshop around the old Globe pointed out, Shakespeare loved to create a two contrasting worlds in his plays, which often symbolized the City and the bankside area. In these worlds, one was always serious, urban, and civilized while the other was usually fanciful, idyllic, and wild. The key to maintaining two realms in this manner is the distinct contrast between them; therefore, it is imperative that the fairy dwellers are made to appear very different than the humans in the play. Over the years the play has been in

production, the fairies, Oberon, Titania, and Puck have been portrayed in countless ways. There are some very common themes, but each director of A Midsummer Night's Dream adds his or her own imagination to the construction of the play.

Directors of different plays employ their own techniques to differentiate the fairies from humans. In the three plays studied, I have examined the fey characters, pointed out the techniques the directors have used to make the fairies supernatural, and how they compare with the normal humans around them.

Doran describes a "puck" as an ugly, merry, mischievous hobgoblin (Swisher, 115). In each version of the play performed, the character is portrayed as a combination of these traits. Puck is the character that inevitably steals the show; his portrayal is always energetic, mimicking and running circles around the other characters.

The 1999 film has Puck, played by Stanley Tucci, first appearing in the midst of the fairies revelry, taking a sip of a drink and chewing on some grapes. His figure is that of a lean satyr with three horns, two at the front of his head and one in the center of the back. Unlike the other portrayals of puck, this one seems much older, with a bald pate and silvery-gray hair. He does not join in the revelry, but only watches it amusedly; this reaction gives him a much more mature appearance.

Puck's playfulness is proven as he stumbles upon Hermia and Lysander asleep. He appears riding a giant turtle, and hops off of it when he spies them. After noticing Lysander, he then wheels, stick in hand, to defend himself from the man's bicycle. He pokes at it, tests it, and jumps away, frightened of the technology. He then becomes fascinated by it, and takes the bike, riding off honking its horn.

Puck's magical powers are also on display when he keeps Lysander and Demetrius from fighting. In order to fool the mortals, Puck rides Lysander's bike around, pumping fog behind him and speaking with the mortal's voices to lead them. It is then all sucked back into the satchel on the back of his bike.

With his last lines, Puck also proves that he is the ringmaster of the show. He has manipulates lovers, appeases Oberon, helps enchant Titania, and gives the mechanicals great strife. He has reached every plot. Puck also is amazed by the technology that seems so natural to the average human. Most importantly, he has affected the other characters—changed their emotional states to his liking. Mere mortals do not have that power over the fairies; they are only pawns in the fairy creatures' games.

The war between the fairy king and queen is the mechanics for the entire play's action. They are both creatures of great power that have a magical effect over all the humans in the land by their emotional manipulation of nature.

When Titania's train first appears, she is borne by figures wearing white shrouds that cover their whole bodies, with lights flickering atop their heads. In the background, a mysterious female moaning sets an eerie mood. Thunder peals, rocks fall, and winds blow, sending the revelers grabbing for their lovers and heading for cover. The next view is of storm and thunder, bubbling mud and whipping wind. Lightening cracks and lights a fire as the queen's curtained sedan chair is set down in front of an unimpressed Oberon, who sits on a stone throne.

The fairy king and queen, despite their angry tempers at their entrance, are bedecked in glitter and sparkles. Titania is bejeweled in gold and wears a flowing baby-blue dress, while Oberon is dark and tanned, dressed more like the fairies—greens and browns—except for a golden spiked crown.

Oberon is a laid-back, quiet king in this version. He speaks softly to Puck and his queen, and slouches in his throne. His hair is trimmed short and disheveled. His soliloquies are mere whispers as he languidly lounges on a rock. Even as his wife cuddles with the mortal man, Oberon just looks on placidly.

Titania contrasts with Oberon's casual style by appearing regal and proud, letting her fairies tend to her perfect, long, golden hair, and commanding them to "Sing me now asleep" (2.2.7) while she fans herself with a feather. She is a fiery woman, whose voice thunders as she tells Oberon she would not give him the changeling for all his fairy kingdom (2 .1.144), and whose magic powers include vines that strike out of nowhere to entangle Bottom's ankles. She leans over Bottom and demands he stay with her, but her sexuality is only implied. It is soft and loving, not vulgar or lewd.

Compared to the other women of the play, Titania is much more empowered—more modern. Helena is constantly being ridiculed and pushed away, Hermia is victim of her father's wishes; even when she tries to escape, she is only able to follow Lysander and his directions (or lack thereof) through the woods. Even Hippolyta, future duchess of the Athens, was wooed by Theseus' sword, and he "won [her] love doing [her] injuries" (1.1.17). Titania, on the other hand, sticks to her guns and doesn't let Oberon rule her. Although she does have to face the consequences of her actions—Oberon's wrath—but in the end she still gets her way. No other female character achieves her goals without a male's help. There is something in her nature that makes her stand out from the other creatures.

The fairies first appear as small, Tinkerbell-like flashes of light that dance around the more normal humans. As the scene cuts to the dark forest, two horned satyrs suddenly appear, naked from the waists up, who disappear into a smoky, music-filled cave alive with the liveliness

of the fairies. The film immediately cuts to a horned piper playing in the extreme foreground, with two dancing female drummers tapping Bodhrans behind him and another horned man tapping a pair of long wooden spoons. The music is reminiscent of Celtic reels. The scene quickly pans three groups of dallying fey, a male sitting behind a female in the near foreground, her clothes on the verge of falling off, two winged nymphs are behind them, adoring a red and round satyr and moving quickly to a second couple, again with the man behind the woman, him passionately stroking her breast. The foreground is then taken up by a fat satyr and an angel-winged dwarf playing a chess-like game, which is interrupted by a lithe female who bounds right over their board. The camera follows in pursuit past a woman stirring a pot, until it lands on a bearded male with large horns carrying a tray of meat and past him to another man, dancing and cooking meat in front of a fire with a skewer in one hand and a broad-bladed sword in the other. The film then cuts back to the piper, a crash of cymbals, and then the tapping spoons before landing on Puck.

By this flowing montage of scenes, the director skillfully depicts the fairy folk at their sport: dancing, dallying, games, and food. The nature of the fairies is relaxed and happy, and they are unfettered by work or bills. This image is starkly different than the humans depicted before this scene. At the beginning of the film, scenes are showed of the manor prior to the wedding festivities, and the house is filled with bustling servants working hard in preparation for the feast. The humans seem to be all work and no play. Even the wedding feast is glossed over by the director and only the play-within-a-play is shown; even this is not a complete relaxation, for the mechanicals are working for the Duke's favor, and failure to earn it may cost them their lives.

Puck also first addresses a middle-aged, weary, grumpy fairy, who pushes away groping hands, and whose lines,

Over hill, over dale,

Thorough bush, thorough briar,

Over park, over pale,

Thorough flood, thorough fire;

I do wander everywhere,

(Act 2 Scene 1 lines 2-6)

Are delivered in a bored, tired, nasal tone. She is a fairy uncommon in other versions, for almost all the fairies are youthful and exuberant. She is, like Puck, more mature than the other fairies, refusing the passing pleasures of dalliance. This is an interesting characterization, because it makes the fairy more "human." By doing this, the director shows that even fairy life is not perfect and that—like humans—fairies can be old.

Titania is attended in her bower by a host of female fairies, youths dressed in flowing dresses, which are reminiscent of old, worn Greek fashions. Two fairies appear drawing water. They wear masks and collars such that they have faces on the front of their heads as well as the back. Stares out at the camera with Medusa-like hair of snakes, while yet another swings from a leafed vine swing. And old woman and young child, who appear simple, even midget-like, appear carrying a wheelbarrow full of things stolen from Theseus' manor. A gramophone's bell, records, and silver objects are handed out like toys to the fairies, including a group of nudes lounging in a pool of water. When it is time to lull their queen to sleep, a fairy with bells attached to her arms waves them like wings and another plays soft pipes and goblin-like creatures crank her bed up in a pulley-run contraption that raises her into the trees. Meanwhile,

the nudes in the water swim about, fascinated by their new toys. As the fairies are commanded away by a sentinel fairy, they slowly change back into the Tinkerbelle-like flutters of golden light. In this scene, the director has chosen to portray the fairies as innocent beauties—laughing and playing with no serious troubles. They contrast with the first group of fairies because their attitudes are very child-like: there is nothing sexual in their nature. The humans who come to visit them obviously relish this innocence, and desire it for themselves. But as the humans leave, as they must, the director points out the eventually all humans must say goodbye to their innocence.

The fairies are captivated by modern technology, and Oberon distracts Titania's guardian by handing her a silver hand mirror, with which she is immediately spell-bound by her own reflection. It is interesting that the fairies are so curious over technology: they use vinyl records as plates, wear a gramophone bell as a hat, and jump away from a bicycle horn in terror. This fascination proves that something is lost in the fairies' freedom—they do not have the time, patience, or ability to create technology, nor can they create anything that is permanent, lasting.

The fairies are frightening to Bottom at first, as the ones that appear are the green-skinned goblins. Peasblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed are young, sparkling female fairies who attend on Bottom, but look at their queen dubiously when told to do so. They are of varying appearance, Cobweb of dark hair and pale skin, and Mustardseed also with dark hair and a latin accent; all four are of fabulous beauty, and their catering to Bottom is very sexually-charged. To him, the fairies represent the mystery of physical pleasures only imagined.

As morning comes, and Titania is still lavishing over her ass, the fairies look on disapprovingly. The final scene of the fairies is of them hammering at bicycles and washing

clothes in a river, as morning breaks. They then all fade away into the shimmering lights, and disappear.

This film made very stark contrast between the working people of Mont Athene and the fairies. The workers dressed all in drab browns and grays—Bottom stands out in a white suit. Humans were constantly working, always worrying, caught up in their lives. Bottom's wife searching the streets for her husband; the myriad of performers appearing for the Duke, and the lovers themselves, worrying over who-loves-whom—this is the characterization of human being, and how they are in life. The fairy realm is by far more desirable, but—as the film shows—is impossible: the fairs all fade away with the light of the morning sun.

In the first film version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, Mickey Rooney portrays Robin Goodfellow as a wicked, malicious goblin that takes great please in the miseries of the humans. A child-like, half-clothed, screaming nuisance, the first film Puck portrays a negative view of the character.

Titania and Oberon contrast even more in the original film version of the play. Oberon and all his fairies are dressed head to toe in solid black. Oberon himself is a tall, thin man with large black horns protruding from his head. His demeanor is fearsome and, although his wishes for the humans are benevolent, there is always a hint of malice in his looks. Titania is a glittering, golden-haired beauty, who shimmers in any light.

The fairies of the original film version appear very different based on whom they serve. The fairies of Oberon are a frightening group of black-winged specters. No individual fairy is seen; instead, they move as a tide of black demons, chasing the fairies of Titania. The Queen's fairies are a sparkling host of white-gowned women. They do not present individual attitudes, but instead do a sparkling dance in the forest, portraying lives of song and beauty. The only

fairies that do have names and personalities are the four that are introduced to Bottom. They are all male children, probably about six years old. As an adult would to a serious child, he very seriously shakes their hands and says, with seeming sincerity, "I shall desire you of more acquaintance" (III.1.160, 166, and 172). As opposed to the sexual nature of this scene in the first film, these lines and characterizations impress the innocence of the fairies, and makes Bottom seem the elder—and worldlier. In fact, this scene impresses upon the viewer that a sheltered innocence is silly, impractical, and undesirable in adults.

When director Michael Francis began to put together his portrayal of A Midsummer Night's Dream, he was not attempting to create a prototypical or scholarly performance of the play. He wanted extremes. Francis' version of the play needed to be different; it needed to generate talk; it needed to sell tickets. By hiring super-star Dawn French, increasing the threshold of slapstick in the play, and adding an air of homo-eroticism, Francis did just that—even if he neglected the classic depictions of the play.

In such a performance, it is impossible to neglect the fanciful nature of the fey creatures. When every line and action must be used to get laughs, the nature of the fairy characters are an invaluable way of achieving that. Although many of the classic methods of portraying the fairies will work for humor, the sillier and less human they seem, the more valuable they are in this type of performance.

Puck, played by Lee Ingleby, is a youthful, energetic character whose personality is somewhere in the middle between Mickey Rooney and Stanley Tucci. His character used the standard puckish behavior, running around, climbing trees, and imitating Oberon. Even his look was prototypical, in a worn red vest, satyr-like leggings and twin horns. He was the most magical of all the fey creatures; he could freeze people with a swing of his hips, and would incite

fear or joy in a human character by mimicking the same emotion near them. He used this to frighten the humans and chase them around the stage. Puck also had the most creative entrances—from inside a suitcase and slowly lowered down a chimney.

The Albery's version of Oberon took much from this first movie version. He again is dark and sinister-looking, with long hair and goatee. He is dressed in a leather vest from the waist up and leggings supposedly meant to make him look satyr-like. Benedict Nightengale of The Times describes him as "a saturnine fairy king, in … a feathery skirt that makes him look rather too much like a cross between Errol Flynn and a chicken" (Nightengale). His interaction with Puck is reminiscent of the 1998 version of the play performed in Stratford, Canada for the annual Shakespeare festival: while speaking, puck rides atop Oberon, implying father-son friendliness. The Oberon flexed his super-human muscles against Puck—an invisible, magic noose seemed to choke him when Oberon got angry.

Titania's character was not as focused on being a foil to Oberon as she has been in other versions of the play. Her character seems much more mild as well—more a victim of Oberon's magic than a powerful, strong-willed queen. The only thing that truly sets her apart from her human counterpart in Hippolyta is her fanciful dress and a magic spell that creates an invisible fishing line when Bottom tries to run away.

The four fairies, Cobweb, Mustardseed, Peaseblossom, and Moth—described as "urchin" and "tomboy" by Nightingale—have a very formulaic costume and a classic attitude. Each character had a fanciful element, be it a set of wings or leaf necklace, and a piece of ragged clothing, be it torn skirt, ruddy shorts, or tattered jacket. These fairies are energetic, doing flips and leaping about. They also have interesting entrances like Puck, coming in from behind

scenery and trees. Their numbers seemed to be multiplied by mirrors set in the wings of the stage.

This performance must have been greatly influenced by the 1999 film production. The fairies act much the same as Titania's fairies in the film version; they are completely fascinated by modern technology. In order to get past Titania's sentry, he gives her a small hand mirror and she walks away kissing it.

The most important facet of the fairy characters, however—and the main feature that separates them from the ordinary humans—is their youth. They are young and svelte ("robust" as de Jongh calls them), with thin bodies and youthful energy, contrast greatly with the older, nerdier-looking mechanicals. The lovers are young, but not truly youthful. Even Lysander has a receding hairline.

In each version of A Midsummer Night's Dream, the fairy folk represent the joyful side of human life: the characters love, laugh, dance, and play; their mischief is serious, but they never cause permanent damage. This joy and happiness is always fleeting, and is gone with the light of day. In contrast to the fairies, the humans strive constantly to set up something permanent—marriage. What is learned in the play is that the two must coexist together: the impermanent joy holds sway over constancy, and through that joy, constancy is found.

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