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**AUDITION PIECES**

**A Midsummer Night’s Dream**

by William Shakespeare

 **Director:** Francesca Ellis: francesca.a.ellis@gmail.com | 07971 162280

Please prepare audition pieces as follows:

**Sunday 6th April**

**Theseus/Oberon** – audition pieces 1 and 2

**Hippolyta/Titania** – audition pieces 2 and 3

**Egeus** – audition piece 1

**Bottom** – audition pieces 3 and 4

**Quince** – audition pieces 4 and 5

**Flute** – audition pieces 4 and 7

**Snug/Snout/Starveling** – audition pieces 4 and 6

 **Monday 7th April**

**Puck** -audition piece 8

**Philostrate** - audition piece 9

**Hermia** – audition pieces 10 and 11

**Lysander** – audition pieces 10 and 12

**Helena** – audition pieces 11 and 13

**Demetrius** – audition pieces 12 and 13

**Fairies Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed**- audition piece 14

**Important things to note**

* If you have put down four or more characters on your form, please select a maximum of three characters to read in the auditions, and we will extrapolate from there. (Theseus/Oberon and Hippolyta/Titania count as one.)
* Characters in brackets indicate that a scene will not be counted as an audition for that character, but is a read-in – not everyone, therefore, will read those scenes.
* Some scenes have been edited from the script for the purpose of the audition.
* The play, and several of the audition pieces, include sudden, intense passions. In line with best practice we rehearse physical contact with an intimacy coordinator - please do not therefore improvise physical contact in auditions! Find a way to show the character’s intention and intensity without touching.
1. **Theseus and Egeus** (with Hermia)

Theseus, Duke of Athens looking forward to his wedding, is interrupted by Egeus. Egeus shockingly invokes an ancient law to retain control over his daughter’s choice of husband.

**EGEUS**

Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke!

**THESEUS**

Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

**EGEUS**

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander. And, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child.
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness. And, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens:
As she is mine, I may dispose of her,
Which shall be either to this gentleman,
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

**THESEUS**

What say you, Hermia? Be advised fair maid,
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

**HERMIA**

So is Lysander.

**THESEUS**
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

**HERMIA**

I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

**THESEUS**

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

**HERMIA**

I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

**EGEUS**

Either to die the death or to abjure
For ever the society of men.

**THESEUS**
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires:
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun,
To live a barren sister all your life.
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

**HERMIA**

So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord.

1. **Oberon and Titania** (with Puck)

He wants something; she won’t give it to him. A classic domestic argument, except the status of each is huge, their power supernatural and the relationship is centuries old. They know exactly how to push each other’s buttons - ancient grudges are evoked, old mistakes dug up. Choices to be made on where each hits home, and whether either comes close to being persuaded.

After Titania leaves, Oberon turns to Puck to put a magical revenge plot into motion.

**OBERON**

Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

**TITANIA**

What, jealous Oberon! Fairies, skip hence:
I have forsworn his bed and company.

**OBERON**

Tarry, rash wanton: am not I thy lord?

**TITANIA**

Then I must be thy lady: but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest Steppe of India,
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

**OBERON**

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?

**TITANIA**

These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fogs, which falling in the land
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents.
The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

**OBERON**

Do you amend it then; it lies in you:
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

**TITANIA**

Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child of me.

**OBERON**

How long within this wood intend you stay?

**TITANIA**

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

**OBERON**

Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

**TITANIA**

Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

*Exit TITANIA*

**OBERON**

Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music.

**PUCK**

I remember.

**OBERON**

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd. A certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts.
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
Will make a man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb, and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

1. **Titania and Bottom**

Bottom, in ass’s head, has scared off his fellow actors. His singing wakes Titania who, under the spell of the magic flower, falls instantly, heavily and hilariously in love.

**BOTTOM**

I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir
from this place, do what they can. I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

*Sings (the below, or sing anything you fancy)*
The ousel cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill--

**TITANIA**

*[Awaking]* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

**BOTTOM**

*[Sings]*
The finch, the sparrow and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo grey,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay--

**TITANIA**

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again.
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note,
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape,
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

**BOTTOM**

Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days; the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends.

**TITANIA**

Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

**BOTTOM**

Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

**TITANIA**

Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate:
The summer still doth tend upon my state,
And I do love thee.

1. **Mechanicals**

The rehearsal in the woods. Quince tries to keep control, but Bottom is in his theatrical element and has many ideas of his own. The reactions of the other four are up for interpretation – but suffice to say they are not restricted to their one or two lines!

**BOTTOM**

Are we all met?

**QUINCE**

Pat, pat, and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our
stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke.

**BOTTOM**

Peter Quince,--

**QUINCE**

What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

**BOTTOM**

There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must
draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?

**SNUG**

By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

**STARVELING**

I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

**BOTTOM**

Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I, Pyramus, am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear.

**QUINCE**

Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

**BOTTOM**

No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

**SNOUT**

Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

**STARVELING**

I fear it, I promise you.

**FLUTE**

Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

**BOTTOM**

Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,--'Ladies,'--or 'Fair-ladies--I would wish You,'--or 'I would request you,'--or 'I would entreat you,--not to fear, not to tremble. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no I am no such thing' and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner.

**QUINCE**

Well, it shall be so.

1. **Quince**

The prologue to the mechanicals’ play – Quince steps out to address a most prestigious audience, including the Duke, Hippolyta and the Athenian Court.

Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
This beauteous lady Thisbe is certain.
This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present
Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;
And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
To whisper, at the which let no man wonder.
This man, with lantern, dog, and bush of thorn,
Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,
The trusty Thisbe, coming first by night,
Did scare away, or rather did affright;
And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain:
Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
At large discourse, while here they do remain.

1. **Snout, Snug, Starveling** – choose ONE of the following

Both characters’ moment in the spotlight in the mechanicals’ play.

**Lion**

You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner am:
A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam;
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

OR

**Wall**

In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so:
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

1. **Flute (as Thisbe)**

The closing speech of the mechanicals’ play. Thisbe discovers the body of Pyramus. It is at once ridiculous and somehow very moving.

Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone:
Lovers, make moan:
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters Three,
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue: *[Stabs herself]*

And, farewell, friends;
Thus Thisbe ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu.

1. **Puck** (with Oberon)

Puck has transformed Bottom, and Titania has fallen in love with an ass’s head. Giddy with their own cleverness, Puck rushes to Oberon and savours each moment of the story.

**OBERON**

How now, mad spirit!
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

**PUCK**

My mistress with a monster is in love!
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of actors would rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's nole I fixed on his head:
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly!
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass!

1. **Philostrate** (with Theseus)

Theseus’s ‘Master (or Mistress) of Mirth’ has seen the mechanicals’ play. They don’t expect for a moment that Theseus will want to see it to.

**PHILOSTRATE**

A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play,
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious. For in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is,
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

**THESEUS**

What are they that do play it?

**PHILOSTRATE**

Why, pensioners that dwell in Athens here

Who now have toil'd their wearied memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

**THESEUS**

And we will hear it.

**PHILOSTRATE**

No, my noble lord,
It is not for you: I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world---

**THESEUS**

I will hear that play.

1. **Hermia and Lysander**

Under threat of the Athenian law, Hermia vents her misery and fury. Lysander’s lyrical reasonings achieve some calm, but the tone truly changes once he hits on the plan of eloping.

**LYSANDER**

How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

**HERMIA**

Belike for want of rain, which I could well
Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

**LYSANDER**

Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.
But, either it was different in blood,--

**HERMIA**

O cross! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

**LYSANDER**

Or else misguided in respect of years,--

**HERMIA**

O spite! too old to be engaged to young.

**LYSANDER**

Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,--

**HERMIA**

O hell! to choose love by another's eyes.

**LYSANDER**

Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.

**HERMIA**

If then true lovers have been ever cross'd,
It stands as an edict in destiny,

As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs:
So let us teach our trial patience.

**LYSANDER**

A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager,
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues.
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night,
And in the wood, a league without the town,
There will I stay for thee.

**HERMIA**

My good Lysander!
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,
By all the vows that ever men have broke,
In number more than ever women spoke,
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

1. **Helena and Hermia** (with Lysander)

Both Lysander and Demetrius, under the influence of the magic flower, have transferred their love from Hermia to Helena. The women now turn on each other, and nothing cuts deeper than the betrayal of girlhood friendship.

**HELENA**

Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows --O, is it all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?
We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
Have with our needles created both one flower,
Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
Both warbling of one song, both in one key.
And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?

**HERMIA**

I am amazed at your passionate words.
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

**HELENA**

Ay, do, persever, counterfeit sad looks.
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault;
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

**LYSANDER**

Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life my soul, fair Helena!

**HERMIA**

O me! what news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:
Why, then you left me--O, the gods forbid!--
In earnest, shall I say?

**LYSANDER**

Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

**HERMIA**

O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?

**HELENA**
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

**HERMIA**

Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem;
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

1. **Lysander / Demetrius** (with Helena)

Pure over-the-top comedy as he wakes and, under the spell of the magic flower, falls instantly and ridiculously in love with the first living creatures he sees – Helena. (This is Lysander’s moment but Demetrius’s is similar.)

**HELENA**

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground!
Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.
Lysander if you live, good sir, awake.

**LYSANDER**

*[Awaking]* And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.
Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

**HELENA**

Do not say so, Lysander, say not so
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content.

**LYSANDER**

Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason,
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

1. **Helena and Demetrius**

Determined Helena refuses to accept Demetrius’s rejection and pursues him to the woods. His empty threats are bulldozed by her overwhelming insistence on adoring him.

**DEMETRIUS**

I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me.
Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;
And here am I, and wode within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

**HELENA**

You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

**DEMETRIUS**

Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

**HELENA**

And even for that do I love you the more.

**DEMETRIUS**

Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit;
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

**HELENA**

And I am sick when I look not on you.

**DEMETRIUS**

You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city and commit yourself
At night into the hands of one that loves you not.

**HELENA**
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
For you in my respect are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone,
When all the world is here to look on me?

**DEMETRIUS**

I will not stay thy questions; let me go:
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

*Exit DEMETRIUS*

**HELENA**

Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
You do me mischief! Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex.
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be wooed and were not made to woo.

**14. Fairy** (with Puck)

The audience’s first introduction to the strange and magical world of the fairies.

**PUCK**

How now, spirit! whither wander you?

**FAIRY**

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire.
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere,
And I serve the fairy queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be:
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours:
I must go seek some dewdrops here
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:
Our queen and all our elves come here anon.

**PUCK**

The king doth keep his revels here to-night:
Take heed the queen come not within his sight.

**FAIRY**

Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villager?
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm,
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck,
You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
Are not you he?