

## **A Midsummer Night's Dream Theatre Education Project<sup>1</sup>**

### **Background**

You and your group members run the theatre education program at the Stratford Festival. Your job is to go out to elementary schools and talk to senior elementary students about Shakespeare's plays at Stratford. Your goal is to create enough interest in the plays that students will become lifelong theatre-goers.

### **Your Task**

You will prepare a presentation for a group of grade 8 students that will excite them about studying Shakespeare and seeing a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Your presentation should give them enough information to understand a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: a little bit about Shakespeare's times, the plot of the play, which scene you are presenting, and why.

### **The Products**

#### **1. Oral Presentation**

You will give a brief talk of no more than two minutes in which you give the students important background information they will need to understand the scene you are presenting. You must have a visual aid to assist you in this presentation. You will lose marks if you simply read your presentation.

#### **2. Scene Performance (Choose One)**

##### *a. Original Scene Performance*

Your group will stage a performance of a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in its original form, although you may edit it (see Performance Preparation). You must select one of the following scenes to prepare a rehearsed performance:

- 3.1.76-193: Titania falls for Bottom, 6 players
- 3.2.178-358: The lovers quarrel, 4 players
- 3.2.358-482: Oberon instructs Puck to undo the spell on the lovers, 6 players
- 4.1.1-102: Titania waits on Bottom; Oberon and Puck undo the spell, 5 players
- 5.1.130-236: The mechanicals present "Pyramus and Thisbe" (Part 1), 6 players
- 5.1.237-353: The mechanicals present "Pyramus and Thisbe" (Part 2), 8 players

You may use the script but your performance should show evidence of rehearsal and planning. You must perform with expression in your voice and movement. Props and/or costumes are optional. Your performance should last no more than five minutes. Remember to introduce the players, the roles they are playing, the scene you are performing, the point in the play in which the scene occurs and why you chose that scene.

OR

##### *b. Paraphrased Scene Audio Recording*

Your group will script your chosen scene into a different 'genre' and will record a dramatic reading of this. (Genres could include science fiction, Western, skater, rap, etc.) The rewritten script must stay faithful to the tone and meaning of the original scene. Your performance should take no more than 5 minutes. You will play the reading performance for your audience following your introductory presentation.

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<sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Wendy Jackson for the idea for this assignment.  
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## Oral Presentation Preparation

### Select information

- Decide what information to use for your presentation. You will want to select pieces of information that are educational and interesting. Some ideas to get you started are:
  - *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play about ...
  - It is set in ....
  - The plots of the play are ...
  - The key characters are ...
  - The main conflicts are ...
  - Shakespeare wrote this to ...
  - Some of the interesting techniques Shakespeare uses are ...
  - The scene we will perform is important because ...
  - You should see this play because ...

### Outline

- Organize your information in a way that will make sense for Gr. 8 students hearing about the play for the first time.
- Create an outline of the presentation.

### Draft and Revise

- Write a first draft of the presentation.
- Read the draft aloud as a group and make comments for improving it.
- Revise your draft based on your group's comments.

### Polish

- Decide who will deliver what parts of the presentation.
- Create an appealing visual aid that helps your audience understand the main points of your presentation.
- Presenters do not have to memorize their parts, but they do need to be familiar enough with the main points that they can speak with only occasional glances at their notes. If it helps to memorize it, then do so.

### Present

- Speak – don't read – loudly and slowly.
- Make eye contact with your audience.
- Smile.
- Point at your visual aid when it helps to clarify what you are saying.

### Follow-up

- Hand in:
  - Your presentation outline
  - Your presentation draft
  - Your visual aid

## Original Performance Preparation<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Edit

- a) Make copies of the scene for everyone in the group.
- b) Read the scene aloud going around the group. As you read, circle any words and phrases you don't understand.
- c) Get definitions for those words from notes, dictionary, or Shakespeare Glossary.
- d) Read again, deciding together what each speech means.
- e) Read again, deciding on the objective of each character.
- f) Decide how your passage fits into the context of the act and the whole play.
- g) Read again to edit out lines that could be omitted without damaging the meaning. Remember that performance time should not exceed 5 minutes.
- h) Read again to check your editing.

### 2. Cast

- a) When everyone has a comfortable understanding of the scene, cast parts.
- b) If you don't have enough people in your group, you may have members 'double' (play two parts – use a prop or sign to indicate each character) or, if the extra characters have only one or two lines, you may draft people from other acting companies.
- c) Appoint a director to oversee the whole production.

### 3. Block

- a) Read through the scene, locating character entrances and exits.
- b) Decide on appropriate placement and movements for the characters and write them into your script.
- c) Move through the blocking several times. Talking about what to do is not the same!

### 4. Characterize

- a) Read through your lines silently and aloud many times until you're sure you understand every word, phrase, and sentence.
- b) Identify your objective in the passage. (Use your notes from part 1, editing, to do this.)
- c) Decide what words, phrases, or ideas need to be stressed and indicate that on your script.
- d) Decide where pauses are appropriate and indicate them on your script.
- e) Identify your movements.
- f) Read your part aloud many times. You do not have to fully memorize the part, but you should feel completely comfortable with it when you perform it in front of the class.

### 5. Furniture, Props, Costumes

- a) Decide if you need furniture. Remember that classroom desks can be trees, walls, etc.
- b) Decide if you need props, and if so, what they are and who will bring them.
- c) Decide on costumes. These will not be elaborate, but you may wish to use something like a hat, scarf, or jacket to help you change your appearance a little.

### 6. Performance Worksheet

Fill out and copy the performance worksheet so that all members of your company know their responsibilities. Hand one copy in to your teacher.

### 7. Rehearse

Rehearse your scene several times. Remember, the more you practice, the more relaxed you will be in front of the class.

- a) Get on your feet and go through the scene acting out the parts.
- b) Use your notes on blocking to help you decide where to come in, where to stand, which direction to turn while speaking, where to exit, etc.
- c) Listen to your director. She may have suggestions about changes in blocking, movement, inflection, pauses, characterization, etc.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from O'Brien, Peggy, et. al, Ed. *Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth*. Toronto: Folger Teaching Shakespeare Institute, 1993.

## **Paraphrased Scene Reading Performance Preparation**

### **1. Paraphrase**

- a) Make copies of the scene for everyone in the group.
- b) Read the scene aloud going around the group. As you read, circle any words and phrases you don't understand.
- c) Get definitions for those words from notes, dictionary, or Shakespeare Glossary.
- d) Read again, deciding together what each speech means.
- e) Read again, deciding on the objective of each character.
- f) Decide how your passage fits into the context of the act and the whole play.
- g) Choose a genre for your paraphrase.
- h) Rewrite each line into your chosen genre.
- i) Read your paraphrase aloud to make sure that you have captured the meaning, and that your reading is no longer than 5 minutes. Make any necessary changes to your script.
- j) Submit a copy of your script to the teacher for comments.
- k) Create a final version of your script and distribute copies to your group members.

### **2. Cast**

- a) When everyone has a comfortable understanding of the scene, cast parts.
- b) If you don't have enough people in your group, you may have members 'double' (play two parts – use a an obvious change in voice to signal this).
- c) Appoint a director to oversee the whole production.

### **3. Characterize**

- a) Read through your lines silently and aloud many times until you're sure you understand every word, phrase, and sentence.
- b) Identify your objective in the passage. (Use your notes from part 1, editing, to do this.)
- c) Decide what words, phrases, or ideas need to be stressed and indicate that on your script.
- d) Decide where pauses are appropriate and indicate them on your script.
- e) Read your part aloud many times. You do not have to fully memorize the part, but you should feel completely comfortable with it when you record it.

### **4. Sound Effects and Music**

- a) Read through the scene, noticing the setting. Imagine background noise or music that would help listeners imagine the setting, and think about how you might produce and record that. Discuss whether the noise should be loud or soft, ongoing throughout the scene or fading out once speaking starts.
- b) Read through the scene, noticing character entrances and exits. Decide how you might signal these with appropriate sounds (opening / closing doors; footsteps; horses hooves; etc.) or music. Discuss how you will produce and record these.
- c) Read through the scene again, noticing any other movements or actions that might suggest noise. Plan for ways of producing these sound effects.
- d) Read through the scene with the planned sound effects and music clips several times.
- e) Note any extra props that you might need to produce the sound effects.
- f) Submit your final script, with sound / music notes, to your teacher

### **4. Performance Worksheet**

Fill out and copy the performance worksheet so that all members of your company know their responsibilities. Hand one copy in to your teacher.

### **5. Rehearse**

Rehearse your scene several times. Remember, the more you practice, the more effective your recording will be.

### **6. Record**

Use Audacity to record your paraphrased scene. Play the digital recording for the class after your oral presentation.

**Acting Company Performance Worksheet<sup>3</sup>**  
**(Copy and give to company members and the teacher)**

**ACTING COMPANY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SCENE TO BE PERFORMED:** \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>CHARACTER</b>	<b>PLAYED / READ BY</b>	<b>COSTUME / SOUND EFFECTS</b>
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____

**PROPS:**

**WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING WHAT?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ will bring her/himself and \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ will bring her/himself and \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ will bring her/himself and \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ will bring her/himself and \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ will bring her/himself and \_\_\_\_\_
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**NOTES AND REMINDERS:**

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