

*A Midsummer's Night Dream* is (without a doubt) one of Shakespeare's most famous plays, having been performed countless times and translated into just as many languages- and this, coupled with last year's stunning performance, gave the *Playing Shakespeare* cast a lot to live up to.

In a quick summary, the play centers around four young Athenians who find themselves within a love-square. Unknown to them, Oberon, the king of the fairies, has had an argument with his counterpart (the queen) and has his mischievous servant Puck flying round the forest with a powerful love potion. As well as these two groups of colliding characters, we have the mechanicals, who are trying to rehearse a play that is to celebrate the marriage of the Duke of Athens and his bride- and, naturally, these comic characters also become involved in the mayhem.

The first (obvious) thing to comment on is the fantastic acting performed- each actor/actress played their part superbly, bringing their character (or multiple in most cases) to life and each making Shakespeare (that can be a little dull) very amusing.

Not only the actors did the play justice- as ever, the costumes and set design were a powerful mixture of modern and old, creating a memorable and unexpected effect. The set was surprisingly simple, though the space on and around the stage was used perfectly and interactively. Props, too, were used at the right moments- and the modern assets (such as the iphone) definitely gave the young audience some humour! The costume designs were mind-blowing- the themes for characters were well thought out and planned, each giving an inside glance to the characters' personality... almost as if the actors were wearing their characters.

The direction was excellent, too- all aspects of the play, stage and audience were taken into account, and the attention to detail (in terms of placing of props) was genius. The globe, with its noisy surroundings, limited lighting and odd charm, has many more things to consider than a normal conventional theatre- though perhaps that's what makes it so interesting.

On another note, some think that the play was a bit *too* long; and I can see why this is. Once all problems have been resolved you *think* the play is finished- and then have to suppress a groan (or not, in some cases) when you release that's not the case. However, I would not say this is only directed at this adaption of the play- I think it's simply attached to the title. The fact we were standing may have also played a factor.

I would recommend this play to everyone, though of course it's limited to those who have tickets- and if that's you, I'm sure you'll love this fast-paced and quick production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.