TEXT AND PERFORMANCE

General Editor: Michael Scott

The series is designed to introduce sixth-form and undergraduate students to the themes, continuing vitality and performance of major dramatic works. The attention given to production aspects is an element of special importance, responding to the invigoration given to literary study by the work of leading contemporary critics.

The prime aim is to present each play as a vital experience in the mind of the reader – achieved by analysis of the text in relation to its themes and theatricality. Emphasis is accordingly placed on the relevance of the work to the modern reader and the world of today. At the same time, traditional views are presented and appraised, forming the basis from which a creative response to the text can develop.

In each volume, Part One: *Text* discusses certain key themes or problems, the reader being encouraged to gain a stronger perception both of the inherent character of the work and also of variations in interpreting it. Part Two: *Performance* examines the ways in which these themes or problems have been handled in modern productions, and the approaches and techniques employed to enhance the play's accessibility to modern audiences.

A Synopsis of the play is given and an outline of its major sources, and a concluding Reading List offers guidance to the student's independent study of the work.

PUBLISHED

A Midsummer Night's Dream
Antony and Cleopatra
Hamlet
Henry the Fourth, Part I and II

Roger Warren
Michael Scott
Peter Davison
T. F. Wharton

IN PREPARATION

Doctor Faustus
King Lear
Macbeth
Measure for Measure
Othello
The Tempest
The Winter's Tale
Twelfth Night
Volpone

William Tydeman
Gāmini Salgādo
Gordon Williams
Graham Nicholls
Martin L. Wine
David Hirst
R. P. Draper
Lois Potter
Arnold Hinchliffe

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Text and Performance

ROGER WARREN

M

© Roger Warren 1983

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission.

First published 1983 by

THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD

Companies and representatives

throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-33998-5

ISBN 978-1-349-06469-4 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-06469-4

Typeset by

WESSEX TYPESETTERS LTD,

Frome, Somerset

The paperback edition of this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent, in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	6
<i>General Editor's Preface</i>	7
<i>Plot Synopsis and Sources</i>	8

PART ONE: TEXT

1	Introduction	9
2	The Fairies	13
3	The Court	24
4	The Lovers	31
5	The Mechanicals, and the Fusion of the Four Worlds	36

PART TWO: PERFORMANCE

6	Introduction	44
7	Peter Hall: Royal Shakespeare Company, 1959–69; Glyndebourne, 1981	47
8	Peter Brook: Royal Shakespeare Company, 1970–73	55
9	Robin Phillips: Stratford, Ontario, 1976–77	62
10	Elijah Moshinsky: BBC Television, 1981	67
	<i>Reading List</i>	74
	<i>Index of Names</i>	76

Illustrations will be found in Part Two.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Quotations from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from the New Penguin Shakespeare edition (1967), edited by Stanley Wells.

Other quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Complete Works* (1951), edited by Peter Alexander.

All quotations, except those from Chaucer, are given in modern spelling.

Source-details for the illustrations are given with the relevant captions to the plates.

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

For many years a mutual suspicion existed between the theatre director and the literary critic of drama. Although in the first half of the century there were important exceptions, such was the rule. A radical change of attitude, however, has taken place over the last thirty years. Critics and directors now increasingly recognise the significance of each other's work and acknowledge their growing awareness of interdependence. Both interpret the same text, but do so according to their different situations and functions. Without the director, the designer and the actor, a play's existence is only partial. They revitalise the text with action, enabling the drama to live fully at each performance. The academic critic investigates the script to elucidate its textual problems, understand its conventions and discover how it operates. He may also propose his view of the work, expounding what he considers to be its significance.

Dramatic texts belong therefore to theatre and to literature. The aim of the 'Text and Performance' series is to achieve a fuller recognition of how both enhance our enjoyment of the play. Each volume follows the same basic pattern. Part One provides a critical introduction to the play under discussion, using the techniques and criteria of the literary critic in examining the manner in which the work operates through language, imagery and action. Part Two takes the enquiry further into the play's theatricality by focusing on selected productions of recent times so as to illustrate points of contrast and comparison in the interpretation of different directors and actors, and to demonstrate how the drama has worked on the modern stage. In this way the series seeks to provide a lively and informative introduction to major plays in their text and performance.

MICHAEL SCOTT

PLOT SYNOPSIS AND SOURCES

Theseus, Duke of Athens, is about to marry his former enemy Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Bottom and other local workmen plan to perform a play for the royal wedding day. On that day, too, Hermia must reply to her father Egeus's demand that she should marry Demetrius, whom he favours, rather than Lysander, whom she loves. Hermia and Lysander decide to meet in the nearby wood, and flee from Athens. They are followed to the wood by Demetrius, and by Helena, whom he had loved before he met Hermia.

In the wood, Oberon, King of the fairies, is quarrelling with his Queen, Titania, because she will not give him a little changeling boy to be his page. In revenge, Oberon anoints her eyes with the juice of a magic flower which has the power to make her fall in love with the next creature that she sees. The workmen come to the wood to rehearse their play. Oberon's servant Puck puts an ass's head upon Bottom, and Titania falls in love with him in this form.

Oberon instructs Puck to use the magic flower to restore Demetrius's love for Helena. Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius, with the result that both men now pursue Helena, rather than Hermia. Much confusion and a prolonged quarrel follow. Eventually, Oberon intervenes and restores the four lovers to their original partners.

Under the spell of her infatuation with Bottom, Titania agrees to give Oberon the changeling boy. Oberon frees her from the spell, and they are reconciled. Theseus over-rides Egeus's objections, and the three couples are married. At their wedding celebrations, Bottom and his friends perform their play. Finally, the fairies come from the wood to bless the palace and the three marriages.

SOURCES

There is no major source for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but Shakespeare probably drew on Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* and North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* for Theseus, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for the story of Pyramus and Thisbe, Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* for Bottom's transformation and the old romance *Huon of Bordeaux* and folklore for the fairies.