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Review: A touch of fairy dust makes Rain or Shine Theatre's A Midsummer Night's Dream sparkle

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By Gloucestershire Echo Gloucestershire Live | Tue 05 Jul 2016

The moon shone brightly on this very different, energetic and splendid production of William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream by the Rain or Shine Theatre Company.

Tom Jordan has used more than a **touch of fairy dust in his excellent direction** of this famous Shakespearean comedy. And what an entertaining comedy it was.

A Ringmaster, alias Nick Bottom (played by Rob Leetham) greeted us as we entered the auditorium. He is one of a group of Athenian craftsmen, The Mechanicals, who are to perform a play about the story of Pyramus and Thisbe as the entertainment at the wedding of Theseus, the Duke of Athens, and his bride Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons.

On stage the Shakespeare Family Circus are practising their skills of plate spinning, ribbon twirling and stilt walking. The wind whistles causing fairy bells and chimes to jangle and we follow a pair of lovers, Hermia and Lysander and Helena and Demetrius into the magical world of Oberon the Fairy King, Titania the Fairy Queen and Puck, Oberon's naughty and mischievous fairy who delights in playing pranks on mortals.

All the company nimbly play multiple roles and switch effortlessly between them.

Anthony Young as Theseus is certainly and convincingly at his bride's command, as Oberon he is very much in charge of his Queen (Jayne Lloyd), even if initially at odds with her because she refuses to surrender a young Indian prince whom he wants for his page. There is also some lovely a cappella four-part harmony by the Fairies. Mustard Seed (Matt Ferriman and Lysander) must be the butchiest South London Fairy one has ever seen and had the audience in stitches at his entrance and chuckling throughout the scene.

As Lysander, victim of misapplied magic and waking up in love with Helena, Matt Ferriman was superb as was his counter-part John Cooper-Evans, as Demetrius who was initially in love with Hermia. Emmeline Braefield (Hermia) and Pippa Meekings (Helena) were faultless chasing after and being rejected by their partners, cat fighting, weeping or as exasperated young Athenian girls.

Rob Keeves was incredibly funny as The Mechanicals "Wall". However, Rob Leetham as Bottom, stole the show from his twitching ass' ears, when bewitched by Puck, to ... sorry spoilers!

If you ever thought Shakespeare was not for you then I urge you to catch this production, if not at Cheltenham's Everyman Theatre this week, then at one of the company's many performances running until the end of August.

Judith Wordsworth