

**PYRAMUS AND THISBE: THE BURLESQUE  
SCENES FROM SHAKESPEARE'S  
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.  
ARRANGED IN TWO ACTS. WITH FULL  
STAGE DIRECTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

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Pyramus and Thisbe: The Burlesque Scenes from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.  
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**FRANK RAYMOND HARRIS**

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*Shakespeare, Williams*

# **Pyramus and Thisbe**

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**Arranged in Two Acts**

**With Full Stage Directions and Suggestions.**

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**Eldridge Entertainment House**

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## PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

### *Synopsis.*

The hard-handed Athenian mechanicals plan to present a play before Theseus, Duke of Athens, and his betrothed, Hippolyta, in honor of their approaching nuptials.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS.

#### *Spectators at the Play.*

Theseus, Duke of Athens.

Demetrius, a Courtier.

Lysander, a Courtier.

Philostrate, Master of Revels.

Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

#### *Characters in the Play.*

Quince, a Carpenter, who gives the Prologue.

Snug, a Joiner, cast as the Lion.

Bottom, a Weaver, cast as Pyramus.

Flute, a Bellows Mender, cast as Thisbe.

Snout, a Tinker, cast as the Wall.

Starveling, a Tailor, cast as Moonshine.

## PYRAMUS AND THISBE.

### ACT I.

A Grove near Athens.

Bottom and his fellow-workmen meet to rehearse the play.

### ACT II.

The Palace Grounds.

The play is presented before the Duke.

Time of Presentation—One Hour.

## INTRODUCTION.

Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* occupies a position absolutely unique in dramatic literature. It is altogether original and embodies one of the most beautiful conceptions that ever visited the mind of a poet. It is, as its name implies, a phantasmagory; a mask of shadows, full of marvels, surprises, splendor and grotesqueness. It is an intricate tangle of love stories, supported on the one side by the exquisite fancies of fairy life, on the other side by the broadest farce of the clowns and their unconscious burlesque of *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Shakespeare has created out of "airy nothing" the delicate gossamer of a fairy world and peopled it with the phantoms of his marvelous imagination. He has accomplished this feat, not by external effects, but by the wonderful imagery of his verse; he appeals to the mind's eye rather than to the eye of sense; and he depends upon the co-operation of the spectator for the success of his fairy scenes.

In direct contrast to the poet's own method, he sets forth that of Bottom and the rude Athenian mechanicals, who propose to celebrate the Duke's nuptials with an interlude. They are determined to leave nothing to be supplied by the imagination. Wall must be plastered; Moonshine must carry lantern and bush of thorns; every detail must be carried out with absolute literalness. The result is a burlesque, worthy of Shakespeare's genius. It is a keen but kindly satire upon the expedients of the Elizabethan stage and its humor is none the less enjoyable because the authors of it are so entirely unconscious of their own absurdity.

In separating the burlesque scenes from the fairy scenes, an effort has been made to do as little violence to the text of Shakespeare as possible. The first act, "The Rehearsal," is made up of several short scenes. The connective passages have necessarily been altered and a few passages added to preserve the sense of the original. With the exception of the transposition of two short speeches in the second act, no further changes have been made.

In its present form, *Pyramus and Thisbe* does not possess the fragmentary character that isolated scenes from dramas so often possess. Its story may be understood and appreciated by an audience, unversed in Shakespearean lore, without a previous knowledge of the connection in which the scenes were originally used. It is well within the scope of amateurs and is peculiarly suited to Commencement exercises where a play of literary merit, not too long in the presentation, is desired.

#### SUGGESTIONS.

*Pyramus and Thisbe* is a burlesque, pure and simple, and it should be played in the spirit of burlesque. The Athenian mechanicals may do the most ridiculous things but they must do them in deadly earnest. Bottom and his fellows take themselves in all seriousness, however the spectators may regard them. There is ample opportunity throughout the play for by-play but it should be free and spontaneous and not forced. The suggestions for stage business are intended to be suggestive and not exhaustive. The clever actor will discover many opportunities to round out his part. In the second act, where Bottom and Flute impersonate *Pyramus and Thisbe*, the declamatory passages should be given in mock-heroic style, with many gestures.

Bottom is an overweening egotist; the others are his humble admirers. Much of the success of the production depends upon the acting of Bottom and great care should be exercised in casting the part. If a boy of slight build is cast as the Lion, it will add to the effectiveness of the part. The weaker the roars he emits, the more effective they will be.

The scrolls used by the players may be made of brown cloth with a stick at each end, so that they may be rolled up.

#### CHARACTERS.

There are speaking parts for ten male characters and one female character. As many spectators, male and female, may be added as desired. Two of the male parts, *Lysander* and *Philostrate*, may be assumed by girls. In



this event, it would be well to change the name of Lysander to Helena on the program. The entire cast may be made up of girls, if desired.

#### STAGE SETTING.

If the play is given in a well-equipped theatre, the problems of stage management are readily solved. The scene is unimportant. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, most of the rehearsal scenes take place in Quince's house and the play itself is presented in an apartment of the palace. It is more effective to place both scenes out-of-doors. Even in the well-equipped theatre, it adds greatly to the beauty of the presentation, to bank the stage with boughs and potted plants.

A very pretty and inexpensive stage setting may be made by the use of wide-meshed chicken wire for background and wings, interwoven with boughs and twigs. The same setting will be suitable for both acts.

No set-pieces are required in the first act. In the second, one seat only is required. This should be covered with a fur robe or painted to represent a marble bench. Theseus and Hippolyta are seated on this bench at the extreme right. The spectators group themselves behind them. In case a large number of spectators is desired, some may be stationed upon the extreme left.

Only three entrances are required; one at the center (C); one at the right (R); and a third at the left (L). Both the right and left entrances should be at the rear of the stage.

#### COSTUMES.

The costumes are Greek, and in case they cannot be readily rented from theatrical costumers, they may be made with little difficulty. Cheese cloth may be used but a better material is sateen. For the female characters, make a long robe, with short sleeves and low neck, very much like a Mother Hubbard. Over this, the himation is draped. This consists of a piece of cloth, 12 feet long and 6 feet wide and may be draped around the shoulders and body to suit the wearer's fancy. Both the himation and the undergarment should be

trimmed with a broad border of some Greek design. The border may be made of silver or gilt paper, sewed upon the garment, or better still, a stencil may be cut from card-board and the design painted upon the garment in gold, silver or other colors. This design may consist of the Greek border shown in so many pictures of Greek costumes, of leaves and flowers, or even of one or two narrow stripes.

For the male characters, make short tunics, reaching above the knees and fastened with belts at the waist. Over this the himation may be draped or it may be dispensed with entirely. The above costumes are appropriate for the spectators, who may be as few or as numerous as desired. In getting up the costumes, aim at variety, grace and beautiful colors. The following suggestions may be of assistance: green with a border of gold; light blue and silver; deep blue and white; orange and black or gold; white and blue; red and gold or black; black and silver or white; brown and gold; gray and silver. A very pleasing effect may be obtained by using different colors for the undergarment and the drapery. For example, a himation of green trimmed with gold, may be draped over a tunic of orange trimmed with black.

The male characters should wear a band of gold, about an inch in thickness, about the head. This may be made from gilt paper, pasted on cloth. A Psyche knot, with fluffy hair, held in place by a fillet, wound two or three times around the hair, is an appropriate head dress for the female characters. A broad band of gold may be worn both by the male and female characters around the arm, between the elbow and the shoulder. If sandals cannot be procured, low slippers form a satisfactory substitute. The male characters should wear pink or white hose and bind the ankles and feet with strips of cloth, in harmony with the costumes.

The costumes of some of the prominent characters require special attention.

Theseus should wear a short tunic of white, richly embroidered with gold, with a long cape of deep red.

He should wear a helmet or crown upon his head. Another appropriate costume would be a long robe of red richly embroidered, with heavily-jeweled turban.

Hippolyta should wear a long flowing robe that sweeps the ground. The more richly it is stenciled and embroidered, the better. She also wears a crown.

Bottom and his fellow-workmen should be clad in short tunics of some dark material, with belts. There should be no drapery. Several changes of costume are necessary in the second act. Bottom should wear a gaudy tunic with a cape. He wears a helmet and carries a sword. Flute, who represents a woman, should be so attired. His himation should be worn so that it may readily be dropped. Snug, who represents the Lion, should wear some material around his shoulders that would suggest the lion's skin. The lion's head may be fashioned out of heavy paper, appropriately painted.

Snout, who presents the Wall, may cover himself with lime and dirt and carry a stone in his hand, or he may have a wall painted on card-board and suspended from his shoulders, in the manner in which the sandwich-men carry their advertisements.

Starveling carries a lantern, suspended on a pole, a bundle of thorn twigs, and leads a dog. The lantern is easily made of card-board, open on all four sides and painted black.