

Puckishness: "A Midsummer Night's Dream," at Lincoln Park through July 11

Written by Thom White
Tuesday, 06 July 2010 06:00

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I arrived at Genesisius Guild's Friday-night performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

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repeat scroll 0% 0%; -moz-background-clip: border; -moz-background-origin: padding; -moz-background-inline-policy: continuous;"> minutes prior to the start of the show. What would otherwise be adequate arrival time for most of the Guild's performances proved a problem for this one - I could not find a seat. Other than a few spots on the not-comfortable-enough-for-more-than-two-hours bleachers, the seats were filled. With patrons already staking out spots on the surrounding lawn, I was forced to return to my car, grab a lawn chair, and jockey for a position to best view the night's performance. <p style="margin-bottom: 0in;">While frustrating for me, this was no doubt good for Genesius Guild, as the performance was well-attended - perhaps even beyond expectations. (I was told that Saturday night's performance broke a record for attendance.) And I'm certain it helped that William Shakespeare's fantasy is one of his most popular plays.</p> <p style="margin-bottom: 0in;">A Midsummer Night's Dreamis a tale of crisscrossed lovers. Hermia (Lisa Pilgrim) loves Lysander (Andy Curtiss), but is ordered by her father, Egeus (Michael Miller), to marry Demetrius (Paul Workman); Helena (Annie Tunnick), meanwhile, loves Demetrius, who does not love her in return. Shakespeare's romantic quartet ends up in the realm of Fairyland, where they get mixed up in a plot by Oberon (Adam Overberg), the king of the fairies, to embarrass his Queen Titania (Faith Rebekah). Oberon plans to use a magical flower to cause Titania to fall in love with the first thing she sees upon waking, but after seeing Demetrius treat Helena cruelly, he also orders his fairy servant, Puck (Stephanie Moeller), to use the flower to bewitch the man into loving this romantically beleaguered young lady. Inevitably, the best laid plans of mice and, um, fairies, go awry, leading to a who-loves-whom mix-up that must be corrected.</p> <p style="margin-bottom: 0in;">The production marks the first Genesius Guild play in which I can recall being bothered by the staging. Director Patti Flaherty positions much of the proceedings downstage right, which I may not have noticed had it not been the only part of the stage that was almost entirely obstructed from my view. As it was, I was left listening to, rather than watching, much of the performance - and that, too, proved a problem, as not all of the actors were able to (or simply

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didn't) sufficiently project their voices. I found myself admiring the woodland details of stage designer Earl Strupp's set pieces when I couldn't admire the sights or sounds of anything else on stage.

What I did see and hear, however, was quite enjoyable. While some of the actors had a tendency to simply recite their lines, several actors stood out with more expressive performances. While Tim Miller stumbled through some of his lines and jumped a few of his cues, his Peter Quince emerged a jovial, companionable character. Pilgrim commands attention the moment she steps on stage, with a strong pout aiding her feisty turn as Hermia. Tunnicliff, however, out-pouts her with an almost whiny approach to Helena. (While it left me thinking it would require a spell to love this young woman, it also made for an intriguing take on the character's romantic arc, in that it's not so obvious why Demetrius should love her.) Workman, who was fairly one-note for much of his performance, blossomed with almost silly undertones while under the flower's power, enamored with Helena and fighting with Lysander for her affection.

It's Bob Hanske, however, who earned the title of Crowd-Pleaser for his portrayal of Bottom. Above and beyond any other actor on stage, Hanske managed to project both in volume and in personality, mostly with his delightful shades of pretentiousness. Even with a horse head over his own, Hanske could be clearly heard, and he seemed to be enjoying his role so much that it was hard not to enjoy it along with him. While the crowd chuckled throughout the production, it roared after many of Hanske's

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lines.

Genesisius Guild's

A Midsummer Night's Dream

makes for a pleasant way to spend a... well, a midsummer night. Might I suggest, though, arriving early to guarantee yourself a good seat, one offering a full view of the performance. One in the front row would be especially nice, as it would give you a better chance of hearing most of the actors.

For more information, visit [Genesius.org](http://www.Genesius.org).

Thom White covers entertainment news for WQAD Quad Cities News 8.