



A  
Midsummer  
Night's  
Dream

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Ann Arbor Civic Theatre  
Opening night November 15, 2007  
Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre

# A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

*The Night Harun al Rashid Met Himself Upon The Water*  
written by Mary Zimmerman

Adapted and Directed by  
Jeff Meyers

Assistant Director Shelly Smith	Producer Brandon Cave	House Manager Tanya Dabney
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*The Night Harun al Rashid Met Himself Upon The Water* is used with permission  
by Mary Zimmerman and is part of her play *The Arabian Nights*.

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## From the Director

The first question I was asked after proposing that Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* be set in ancient Baghdad was, "Why?" I'll get to that answer in a moment. The second was, "What about all the stuff in the forest, do they even have woods in the Middle East?"

In many ways the second question answers the first. Sort of. Maybe not why I chose Shakespeare, but rather the inspiration behind this project. With the world as it is now, with the strife and violence that plagues the Middle East (and our own country's participation) it's easy to forget what Baghdad once was and view it only as the tragedy it is today. But once upon time, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates (Dijla and Furat, in Arabic) was the cradle of civilization. It was the land of Scheherazade and *The Arabian Nights* and before that, *Gilgamesh*. There were cedar forests, riverbanks dense with trees and land that was renown for its fertile soil.

It is the dream of the Baghdad-that-was that inspires this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Set nearly a thousand years ago, our production sincerely hopes to evoke the vibrancy of a region once regarded as the cultural center of the world. In the time of Harun al Rashid, art, science, religion and literature prospered.

Reworking the characters and text, I have incorporated Babylonian legend along with the region's personalities, beliefs and culture to reflect the *Midsummer's* new setting. It is, admittedly, the work of an amateur but one I hope you'll find compelling. Even with the great Khalifah, Harun al Rashid to Enkidu and Shamhat (the bestial companion of *Gilgamesh* and his bride), Shakespeare's fantasy (and much of his story) remains intact but its sensibilities have been transformed.

To be honest, I chose *Midsummer* because it is, first a foremost, a tale of imagination, not history. In the realm of dreams anything can happen and so evocation seemed to be more important than translation. The Bard's use of Greek culture is, at best, a thin veneer for his fanciful examination of passionate expression and the madness of love. It is those themes that drew me to the project. Venturing into the wild his lovers, repressed by rigid rules of social conduct, experience their first taste of freedom... romantic and sexual. Whether it's the moral codes of Victorian society, the "sharp" laws of religious doctrine or the enforced behavior of a good "decent" folk, Shakespeare's tale of liberation --its virtues and pitfalls-- is poignantly universal.

It is a recognition of what makes us common that fuels tonight's performance. With each passing year our world gets smaller and our country becomes more diverse. Southeast Michigan, in particular, is home to some of the largest Middle-Eastern-American communities in the nation. I see a unique opportunity to reach out to these communities. Taking a cue from Shakespeare's use (some might say, misuse) of history and fantasy, this marriage of Anglo text to Middle Eastern culture is, I hope, a metaphor for how two communities can come together to create something unique and beautiful.

Jeff Meyers, Director

# A Thumbnail Primer on Some of What You Will See and Hear

First, please, forget whatever you know of the traditional versions of *Midsummer* and surrender yourself to the heat, culture and passion of ancient Baghdad. Fairies become djinn, Puck (named for the Irish Pukka) is now Div and Titania is no longer the proud Greek immortal Shakespeare envisioned but rather Shamhat, disciple of Ashtar, goddess of passion and beauty. She tames Enkidu by making love to him not by waging war. Similarly, the mechanicals, originally dubbed with nonsensical names like Snout and Bottom, are saddled with monikers like Kebab, Samoon (a round of bread), Burut (moustache), Taboon (clay oven), Dishdasha (a robe) and Masoor (a type of lentil).

Second, *Midsummer's* play-within-a-play, *Pyramus and Thisbe* has been replaced *The Night Harun al Rashid Met Himself Upon The Water* as adapted by Mary Zimmerman. It is one of the many wonderful tales you can find in *A Thousand Nights And One Night* as translated by JC Mardrus and Powys Mathers and I am thrilled Ms. Zimmerman has allowed me to use her words. Though it changes the tone of the play's final act, I hope you will find its twisted tale of love and betrayal a good fit.

Jeff Meyers, Director

Read the wonderful True Love Story of an Ann Arbor couple!

## "Heidi and Bill" by Wilfred Kaplan

In 1936 Wilfred Kaplan had a traveling fellowship from Harvard University to pursue his career in mathematics. He enrolled at the Institute of Technology in Zurich and, on the first day of classes, found a seat next to the only girl in the class, Swiss-born Ida Roettinger (later nicknamed "Heidi"). A few weeks later he invited her to the grand student ball, which lasted from 9 p. m. till 5 a. m. During those eight hours they fell deeply in love, a love which was to last for over 68 years. It took almost two years for them to overcome the obstacles to getting married, for Heidi's parents were strongly opposed. The story is told almost wholly in letters between the two lovers (translated from German by Wilfred). In reading it, one is inevitably drawn into the life of the historic times, when Hitler was threatening the world.



Also Available:

## "The 1960 Casals Master Classes in Berkeley"

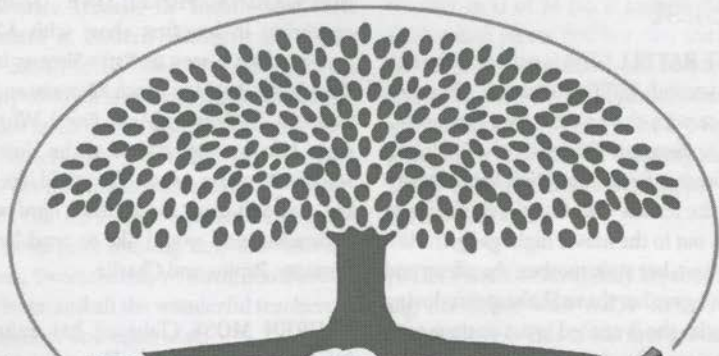
by Ida Roettinger Ph.D. Edited by her husband  
Wilfred Kaplan



In April 1960, Pablo Casals conducted master classes in cello at the University of California in Berkeley. Ida Roettinger Kaplan, nicknamed "Heidi," traveled from Ann Arbor, along with her cello teacher, Harry Dunscombe, to attend the classes as auditor. Harry was one of the students in the master class. Heidi wrote letters to her family, describing all her experiences. The present pamphlet reproduces those letters in edited form. They convey the spirit of the remarkable occasion and supplement the comments made in the appendix to Heidi's book *Head, Hand, and Heart* [published under her maiden name Ida Roettinger in 1970, distributed by Shar Music Co. in Ann Arbor]. The 1960 Casals Master Classes in Berkeley is an Episode in the Lives of "Heidi and Bill".

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# The Cast

**BRITTANY BATELL** (Div) is ecstatic to be acting in her second A2CT production. Her first performance with the organization was as Miranda in *The Tempest*. Currently she is also an assistant director for Dexter High School's production of the female *Odd Couple*. She'd like to give a shout out to the movie night gang, the talented DHS cast, her stoic mother/chauffeur, and her dad, who gave her those Shakespeare-loving genes and who she is excited to act onstage with for the first time. Thanks, everybody!

**MARK BATELL** (Abu Yusuf, Dishdasha, Old Boatman) Mark's dream was to act alongside the real talent in the family: his daughter, Brittany (Div). He wishes to express his appreciation to A2CT for putting theatre opportunities within the reach of anyone and everyone. He also wants to extend a special thank you to Matt Steward for his friendly encouragement which gave him the courage to try out and fulfill his dream. "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt." (Measure for Measure)

**KARISHMA SINGH CHOWDHRY** (Wazir Yahya) is making her stage debut in A2CT's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This is her first trip to the United States and so as they say she is fresh off the boat. She has acted in a couple of plays during her school and college days and of course she is the drama queen at home. Karishma would like to thank the wonderful and very talented cast and crew for making this a fabulous first experience. She would especially like to thank her husband for going along and supporting all her new ideas.

**TOM FOLEY** (Harun Al-Rashid) is very happy to be performing with A2CT again. His last appearance with A2CT was last spring in *The Tempest*. Since then he has appeared at The Performance Network in *Amadeus* and with the Michigan Shakespeare Festival in *Henry V* and *MacBeth*. Tom is a drama student at EMU. He would like to thank his family for all their love and support.

**MIA-CARINA MOLLICONE** (Shamhat) is appearing in her first show with A2CT. She was previously seen as Patty Simcox in *Grease*, Blanche in *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and Margot Frank in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. When not on stage Mia is a sophomore at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She would like to thank the cast and crew for all their hard work and dedication, and would like to send her love to Mommy, Papito, and Charlie.

**LAUREN MOSS** (Taboon) has enjoyed acting throughout her life. Her most recent role includes Bianca in *Desdemona: A play about a handkerchief*. She would like to thank Jeff for this opportunity and everyone in the cast for making it so much fun. A special thanks to her family for putting up with her late night rehearsals and early morning crankiness.

**AHMED MUSLIMANI** (Kebab, Aziz) is thrilled to be making his debut with A2CT as part of this unique and exciting production. As the company manager of the Blackbird Theatre in Ann Arbor, Ahmed has appeared in numerous productions including *In the Heart of America*, *The Glob*, *Lydie Breeze Pt. 1*, *The World Over*, *The Rainbow*, *Take Me Out* (at Performance Network), and *Hamlet*. As a director, he has staged *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf*, *Dirt*, and the upcoming *Santaland Diaries* by David Sedaris at the Blackbird. He is currently enrolled in the Actor/Director Lab at the Purple Rose Theatre. Ahmed would like to thank Jeff for this fantastic opportunity and the cast and crew for making this more fun than he could've imagined.

**LAUREL NEFF** (Masoor), a graduate of Eastern Michigan University, began pursuing her interest in theatre participating in summer plays at the Marquis Theatre in Northville. She is currently studying voice, and is an Improv and Writing student at The Second City in Novi. She can be seen improvising in the Level D show in December, as well as singing one or two Broadway Melodies in Ann Arbor (Location TBA). Laurel will continue her education



as a graduate student in Theatre Arts/Arts Management at Eastern Michigan University (Winter 2008), in addition to working at the University of Michigan. Her favorite roles include Kate from *Sylvia*, and Vagina Girl from *Vagina Monologues*. She would like to thank everyone for making this an amazingly fun experience (You All Rock!), and her Family and Friends (who have exciting new dimensions), God, Mom, Sweetcheeks, Wheeza, The Bubba's, The Bubbetts, and all the wonderful teachers in her life, theatre and otherwise.

**KATINA NICHOLS** (Abassa, Girl in the Garden) is absolutely thrilled to be involved in an A2CT show! Some of her past theatre credits include: Ursula Merkle in *Bye Bye Birdie*, Sylvia in *Two Gentleman of Verona*, Sandy in *Grease*, Mrs. Potts in *Beauty and the Beast*, and Miranda in *The Tempest*. Katina is a Hydrogeology major at Eastern Michigan University, but is looking to

transfer to U of M (so if anyone out there has the hookup, please find her after the show). Katina would like to thank Jeff Meyers for being so patient, the wonderful cast of *Midsummer* for being so wonderful, Ms. Anne K-Magee for just being alive, and last but certainly not least, her family for constantly reassuring her that she is, in fact, talented.

**JOHN PRAKAPAS** (Ja'far) is proud to be making his debut with A2CT in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This is his first production after a four year hiatus from the stage, and his enthusiasm is matched only by his great enthusiasm. Past credits include Ubazz in *Avenue X* at The Performance Network and Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* at EMU. He would like to dedicate his head for clear thinking, his heart for greater loyalty, his hands for longer service, and his health for better living for his club, his community, his country, and his world.

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**RUSSELL RABB** (Enkidu) is a successful stand-up comedian and will be starring in his own comedy show called "Comic-Kazee" Wednesday November 21, 8 pm at the Ann Arbor Comedy Showcase located at 314 E. Liberty. Russell is so excited to be a part of this fantastic production full of so many talented actors; he will indeed never forget this experience. Enjoy the show!

**SEAN SABO** (Samoon) began pursuing his interest in theatre by directing high school productions such as *Twelfth Night*, *The Crucible*, and *Aristophanes The Birds*. Favorite roles, besides this one, include Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Polixenes in *The Winters Tale*, and George Deever in *All My Sons*. Between roles on the stage, Sean plays English Teacher at Ann Arbor Pioneer High School five shows a day, five days a week. Sean would like to offer his heartfelt appreciation to his inspirations: Marianne, Connor, Chloe and the new boy. Also thanks to Jeff for the continuing education.

**JON STOCKDALE** (Kassim) This is Jon's Ann Arbor acting debut, as well as his first appearance on stage in 3 years, so please, be kind. Some of his favorite past roles include Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, and *Hamlet*. Many thanks to Jeff, Shelly, the cast, and

everyone at A2CT for all their talent and hard work!

**MARGARET TEALL** (Saffiah, Azizah) is thrilled to be making her A2CT debut in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A fourth grade teacher in Brighton, Margaret has recently appeared as Mary Kenny in *Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?* at Grosse Pointe Theatre and Luciana in *The Comedy of Errors* at Waterworks Theatre in Royal Oak.

**LISA TEETS** (Zubayda), a graduate of The University of Michigan, is making her stage debut in A2CT's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Her acting experience includes: waitressing at the Gandy Dancer (acting like she knew which wine went with each entrée), teaching high school math (acting like nothing bothers her), and mothering her new baby (acting like other people's kids are just as incredible as her beautiful little angel). Her husband is hoping this experience will teach her to "act nicer" at home. She would like to thank everyone involved for making this a wonderful first experience, especially her husband and baby (who is breastfeeding back stage right now!) that have had to do without her presence at bedtime.

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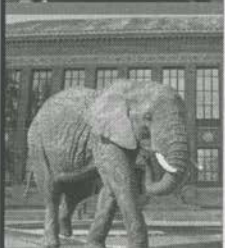
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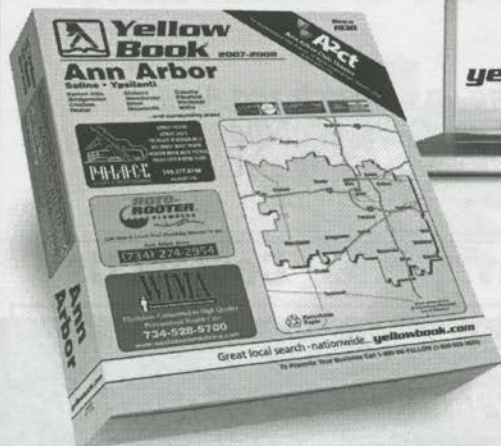
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# The Cast

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Shamhat.....	Mia Mollicone
Div.....	Brittany Batell
Harun al Rashid.....	Tom Foley
Zubayda.....	Lisa Teets
Ja'far.....	John Prakapas
Kassim.....	Jon Stockdale
Abassa.....	Katina Nichols
Saffiah.....	Margaret Teall
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# The Production Staff

**BRANDON CAVE** (Producer, Berut) is an award-winning actor from Ann Arbor, MI who has appeared in over 30 productions throughout southeastern Michigan including *On the Town* and *Hair* with A2CT and Perspectives with the Mosh Pit Theatre at Performance Network. In addition to his acting he has also directed and stage-managed for A2CT and Impact Dance of University of Michigan. In 2003 he co-authored and directed Super Heroes in Paradise a show designed for children in Whitmore Lake, MI.

**TIFF CRUTCHFIELD** (Lighting Designer) lights his first play at Lydia Mendelssohn after six previous A2CT musicals, most recently *The Music Man* and *Sweet Charity*. His lighting work has also been seen numerous times at Canton's Village Theater at Cherry Hill, including Destination Theatre's recent productions of *Annie* and *High School Musical*. At the end of June, he stepped down from the A2CT board of directors, where he served for four years, the last two as president. Though most at home behind the scenes, he can occasionally be found onstage, most recently in A2CT's *The Full Monty*.

**ANNE KOLACZKOWSKI-MAGEE** (Set Designer) Anne has worked off and on with Civic since 1986, but this is her first time designing for the mainstage. Thanks to Brad for his amazing work and comradeship.

**JEFF MEYERS** (Director) is the former founder and artistic director of Theatre Vertigo in Portland, Oregon. He taught theater at Lewis and Clark College in Portland and Clark College in Vancouver, WA and was a theater critic in Seattle. In 2000 his collection of poetry, *Hereafter*, was a finalist for the Oregon Book Awards. Currently, he is the managing editor of metromode magazine and a film critic for Detroit's Metro Times. This is his second production with A2CT after directing *All My Sons* in 2005. He thanks his family for their support, patience and understanding during the show's rehearsal process, his wonderful cast for their talent and

hard work, the crew for their incredible efforts and his amazing assistant director, Shelly, who was a constant voice of sanity and calm.

**BRAD PETERS** (Set Builder) is elated to be working on his fourth A2CT production. Although he enjoys his administrative work at the U of M Hospital, spending time with A2CT, especially the scene shop, is what keeps a smile on his face. Past credits include production work on *Parallel Lives*, *Cactus Flower* and *The Music Man* with A2CT. He has also been seen onstage in *Pinocchio*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Fiddler on the Roof* with other organizations. He also must thank Cathy Cassar for all of her support.

**SHELLY SMITH** (Assistant Director) is so grateful to be part of this production. She'd like to thank Brandon Cave for the opportunity and Jeff Meyers for always pushing things to the next level. Shelly was recently seen with the Tonkawa tribe in A2CT's production of *Hair*. Currently she is regular singer in the Cowgirl Cabaret and hosts the Firefly Funnies comedy show the first Tuesday of the month. Thanks to the very talented and positive cast and crew for making this first Assistant Directing experience so great.

**NAN WIRTH** (Costume Designer) is happy to return to the A2CT to costume her fifth play. The costumes for *Midsummer* were interesting to design and make, and are representative of clothing similar to that illustrated in the Arabian Nights stories, rather than being historically accurate. Enkidu's costume and wig are based on ancient Iraqi depictions of the character. Nan also designed and made Kebab's mask and Enkidu's wig.

**MARY ZIMMERMAN** (Writer of Aziz and Azizah) is the recipient of a 1998 MacArthur Fellowship, the 2002 Tony Award for best direction and 10 Joseph Jefferson Awards, including ones for best production and best direction. She is the Manilow Resident Director of Goodman Theatre, a member of the Lookingglass Theatre



Company of Chicago, an artistic associate of Seattle Repertory Theatre, and a professor of performance studies at Northwestern University. Works which she has adapted and directed include *Silk* at the Goodman Theatre; *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* at the Goodman, Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) and Seattle Repertory; *The Odyssey* at the Goodman, Lookingglass, McCarter Theatre and Seattle Repertory; *Arabian Nights* at Lookingglass, MTC and BAM; *Journey To The West* at the Goodman, Huntington Theatre and Berkeley Repertory; *Metamorphoses* at Lookingglass, Seattle Repertory, Berkeley Repertory, Mark

Taper Forum and Second Stage; *Secret in the Wings* at Lookingglass, McCarter and Berkeley Repertory; and *Eleven Rooms of Proust* at Lookingglass and About Face. Ms. Zimmerman has also directed the highly acclaimed *Pericles* at The Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, D.C. in 2004; *Measure for Measure* and *Henry VIII* at New York Shakespeare Festival; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Huntington Theatre; *All's Well That Ends Well* and Seneca's *Trojan Women* at the Goodman. In 2002, she created a new opera with Philip Glass called *Galileo Galilei* which premiered at Goodman Theatre, and went on to the Barbicon in London and BAM.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following for providing us with incredible gifts...time, support, items and more. We can't express our appreciation strongly enough!

Emily Rogers

Bob Skon

Ed Hagopian

Arden Morris

Nate and Sam Meyers

Ring Of Steel

Mary Zimmerman

Thanks to Ray Alcodray and the Arab Theatrical Arts Guild (ATAG) for their feedback and suggestions in the development of this project.

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The Ann Arbor Civic Theatre (A2CT) is a nonprofit community theatre that provides the citizens of Ann Arbor and the surrounding region with opportunities to participate in all aspects of theatre: performance, production, and appreciation.

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