

Queensland
Ballet

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR LI CUNXIN

Liam Scarlett's

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Proudly Supported by Suncorp

Teachers'
Resource Kit

A co-production with the
Royal New Zealand Ballet

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Welcome to our Teachers' Resource Kit for Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

William Shakespeare once wrote that *we know what we are but know not what we may be*.

As dancers, this desire to discover what we are capable of is often on our minds as we take the first steps onto a stage.

What will we express? How will our audience respond?

I can tell you from personal experience that this sense of anticipation is the most wonderful of feelings.

Queensland Ballet's Education Program has been developed with the intention of helping all young Queenslanders to realise what they 'may be'.

When I recently heard that almost 30% of Queenslanders now live outside South-East Queensland I thought what a lot of potential that is, just waiting to be fulfilled!

That is why, in 2016, our Company is more committed than ever to connecting regional students and educators with dance.

Our passionate education team continues to develop world-class programs that reach far beyond the city limits and into our smaller towns and communities.

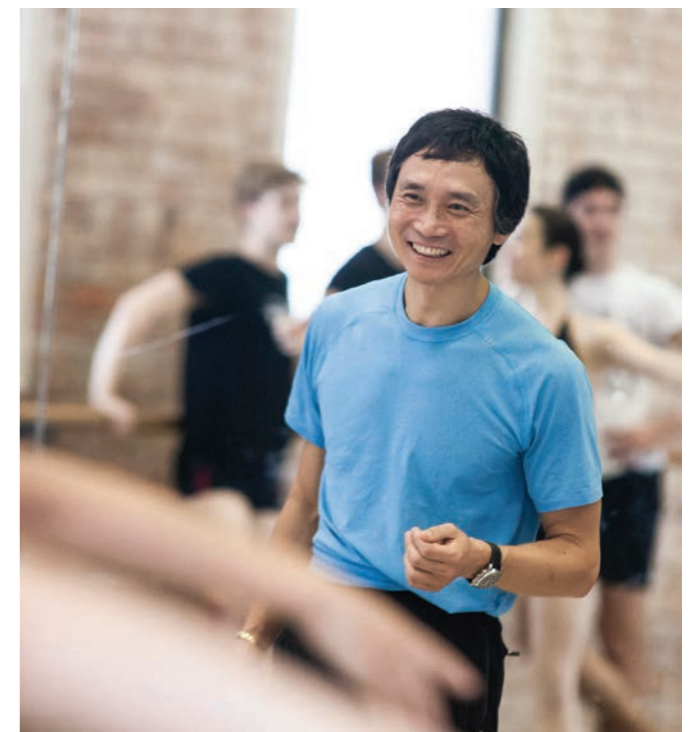
These programs are underpinned by artistic excellence and supported by resources such as this Teachers' Resource Kit, which offers unique insights into Shakespeare's beloved work, with many inspired suggestions for ways to support your classroom's activities.

I hope that wherever you are in Queensland you are as excited as I am to share in the magic of Liam Scarlett's whimsical interpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is a truly unforgettable production from one of the best choreographers in ballet today.

Li Cunxin
Artistic Director, Queensland Ballet



Titania



Cover image: Clare Morehen
Creative Direction: Designfront Photography: Simon Lekias
Styling: Mark Vassallo Make-up: Nicole Thompson, Senior Artist M.A.C.
Hair: Richard Kavanagh

ABOUT QUEENSLAND BALLET'S EDUCATION PROGRAM

Queensland Ballet is a vibrant and creative company that enriches lives through dance. With a culture of creativity and collaboration, complemented by an active program of engagement with our communities, the Company has become the central hub for dance in the State.

Our Education program offers students and teaching staff from state, Catholic and independent schools inspiring, accessible and life-long dance experiences regardless of age and ability. We do this through an exciting program of:

- performances and Q&As
- in-school workshops
- exclusive behind-the-scenes Thomas Dixon Centre experiences
- teaching resources and professional development experiences
- work experience and internship placements
- partnerships and artist-in-residence collaborations
- dance classes and more.

Developed by a team of highly experienced program managers, teaching artists, community engagement specialists and registered educators, all opportunities are underpinned by artistic excellence, authenticity, accessibility and creativity.

Above all, the focus of our work is to complement and enhance the teaching and learning currently taking place in schools.

Using this Kit

This resource kit provides a platform for exploring the historical, social and artistic aspects of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It can supplement a school group's visit to the theatre, support an in-school workshop, or serve as a broader starting point for investigating ballet as an artform.

Using behind-the-scenes insights and personal reflections from the creatives behind Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as contributions from specialist teachers, this kit can inspire Dance, Drama and English teachers across Queensland to create meaningful learning experiences for students.

This document also outlines activities linked to strands of the Australian Curriculum (AC) and the Dimensions of the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).



LINKS TO CURRICULUM

Dance has the profound power to enrich and transform lives, connecting with people of all ages and backgrounds. It plays a major role in the development and expression of cultures and communities, both here and around the world.

Performances often combine other artistic disciplines – drama, music, visual arts and media arts – to create a multi-sensory aesthetic experience for all audiences.

Queensland Ballet acknowledges the important relationship dance has with other arts subjects, as well as the capacity for dance to assist students to develop multi-literacy – particularly kinaesthetic, symbolic, verbal and visual languages. For this reason, this document references the following syllabi:

- AC: The Arts Learning Area, Dance Subject
- AC: The Arts Learning Area, Drama Subject
- AC: English Learning Area
- QCAA: Dance Senior Syllabus 2010
- QCAA : Drama Senior Syllabus 2013
- QCAA: English Senior Syllabus 2010.

The Australian Curriculum (AC)

The Australian Curriculum (AC) is a syllabus that provides the base for learning, growth and active participation in the Australian community. For more information visit www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA)

QCAA's Senior Syllabi provide support and a framework for Year 11 and 12 teachers to develop a senior curriculum/program that includes assessment techniques and reporting processes. For more information visit www.qcaa.qld.edu.au

Curriculum Reference Matrix

The matrix on the following pages have been developed to assist teachers to integrate Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into their classrooms, providing stimulus across year levels and subjects / learning areas, while also recognising the breadth of cognitive, social and kinaesthetic development of students and the diversity of our communities.



THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

(Years 7 – 10) Learning Area – Strands



Arts Learning Area – Dance

Making in Dance involves improvising, choreographing, comparing and contrasting, refining, interpreting, practising, rehearsing and performing.

Responding in Dance involves students appreciating their own and others' dance works by viewing, describing, reflecting, analysing, appreciating and evaluating.



Arts Learning Area – Drama

Making in Drama involves improvising, devising, playing, acting, directing, comparing and contrasting, refining, interpreting, scripting, practising, rehearsing, presenting and performing.

Students use movement and voice along with language ideas to explore roles, characters, relationships and situations.

They learn to shape and structure drama including use of contrast, juxtaposition, dramatic symbol, cause and effect, and linear and episodic plot forms.

Responding in Drama involves students being audience members and listening to, enjoying, reflecting on, analysing, appreciating and evaluating their own and others' drama works.



English Learning Area

In the **Language** strand, students develop their knowledge of the English language and how it works including:

- Language variation and change (effect of historical, social and cultural changes on languages and dialects).
- Language for interaction (language for social interactions and evaluative language).
- Text structure and organisation (purpose audience and structures of different types of texts, text cohesion, punctuation, and concepts of print and screen).
- Expressing and developing ideas (sentences and clause level grammar, word level grammar, visual language, vocabulary, and spelling).
- Phonics and word knowledge (phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabet and phonic knowledge, and spelling).

In the **Literature** strand, students engage in the study of literary texts of personal, cultural, social, artistic and aesthetic value and will develop their knowledge of:

- Literature and context (how texts reflect the context of culture and situation in which they are created).

- Responding to literature (personal responses to the ideas, characters and viewpoints in texts, and expressing preferences and evaluating texts).
- Examining literature (features of literary texts and language devices in literary texts).
- Creating literature (creating literary texts and experimentation and adaptation).

In the **Literacy** strand, students develop the ability to interpret and create texts with appropriateness, accuracy, confidence, fluency and efficacy for learning in and out of school, and for participating in Australian life more generally. Students will develop their skills and knowledge of:

- Texts in context (texts and the contexts in which they are used).
- Interacting with others, (listening and speaking interactions) and oral presentations).
- Interpreting, analysing and evaluating (purpose and audience, reading processes, comprehension strategies, analysing and evaluating texts).
- Creating texts (creating texts, editing, handwriting and use of software).



Dance

Choreography — students use dance components and skills to explore and create dance works in differing contexts to convey their intent. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Demonstrate knowledge, understanding, selection and manipulation of dance components and skills, in response to stimuli, to convey choreographic intent in dance works.
- Structure dance works that demonstrate the integration and synthesis of dance components and skills to convey choreographic intent.

Performance — students develop and demonstrate dance components and skills to interpret and communicate a choreographic intent in dance works from differing contexts. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding by integrating dance components and technical skills when performing dance works.
- Interpret choreographic intent through the synthesis of dance components and expressive skills when performing dance works.

Appreciation — students develop their knowledge and understanding of dance components and skills to respond to dance texts from differing contexts. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of dance components and skills in context through the use of dance terminology, referencing and language conventions.
- Analyse and interpret the interrelationships between dance components and skills in context.
- Synthesise, evaluate and justify decisions and conclusions in context.



English

Understanding and Responding to Contexts — students examine how texts are structured and organised for particular purposes and then apply this knowledge to produce different types of texts for particular purposes. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Use genre patterns and conventions to achieve particular purposes.
- Select, sequence and organise subject matter to support opinions and perspectives.
- Establish roles of the writer/speaker/signer and relationships with audiences.

Understanding and Controlling Textual Features — students understand and control textual features, in a variety of contexts. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Use grammar and language structures for particular purposes.
- Use cohesive devices to develop ideas and connect parts of texts.
- Use vocabulary for particular purposes.
- Use vocode-appropriate features to achieve particular purposes.

Creating and Evaluating Meaning — students create and evaluate texts to demonstrate how and why meaning is made. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Use and evaluate ideas, attitudes and values that underpin texts and influence audiences.
- Create and evaluate perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in texts.
- Use aesthetic features to achieve purposes and evaluate their effect in texts.



Drama

Forming — students create, shape and manage drama through the application, manipulation and structuring of the dramatic languages. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Manage elements of drama to create dramatic action.
- Use conventions of forms and styles, and skills of drama to shape dramatic action.
- Synthesise dramatic languages, purposes and contexts to create dramatic action and meaning.

Presenting — students manipulate the dramatic languages to realise dramatic action and communicate dramatic meaning to an audience. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Interpret purposes, contexts and texts to communicate dramatic meaning through performance.
- Manipulate elements of drama through conventions of forms and styles to realise style in performance.
- Demonstrate skills of drama to communicate dramatic action and meaning for audiences.

Responding — students demonstrate their skills in interpretation, analysis and evaluation of dramatic action and meaning to communicate a position. By the conclusion of the course, students should:

- Analyse use of dramatic languages to facilitate dramatic action and meaning.
- Evaluate, with supporting evidence, the effectiveness of the dramatic action in communicating meaning to audiences.
- Synthesise positions about dramatic action and meaning through language conventions and drama terminology.

QUEENSLAND CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY

(Years 11 – 12) Subject Dimensions – General Objectives

WHY A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM IN MY CLASSROOM?

Christopher Sheriff

Teacher, Brisbane Bayside State College

After graduating from The Australian Ballet School in 1997, Chris joined Sydney Dance Company (SDC). Under the direction of Graeme Murphy, he performed in all productions from 1998 to 2004. During his time with SDC, Chris became a much polished and travelled performer who embarked on many international tours. Chris later completed a Bachelor of Creative Industries (Dance)/Graduate Diploma of Education at Queensland University of Technology. Chris now works as a teacher for the Queensland Government's Department of Education and Training

Queensland Ballet's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers an authentic real world experience for students to experience the beauty and splendour of a truly world class ballet company. Bringing the classic Shakespearian text to a 21st Century audience, with universal themes of unrequited love and betrayal, the performance offers a poignant focus for study within the context of the QCAA Senior Dance syllabus.

What better way to engage students in a theoretical response task than an engaging practical experience at the theatre? The performance lends itself to opportunities for teachers to create rich tasks for senior dance students within the dance analysis and/or choreographic dimensions of the QCAA syllabus. This Teachers' Resource Kit offers useful insights into the creation of the work to support this. Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also provides a great opportunity for junior secondary arts students or students from other Key Learning Areas to see, experience and understand the beauty of classical ballet and appreciate the enormous capacities of ballet to communicate ideas and stories.

Annette Box

Teacher, Somerville House

After graduating from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in 2002, Annette has taught Drama and Dance in various Brisbane schools. She has held the position of Head of Drama at Somerville House for the last seven years and in 2015 completed a three-year term as President of Drama Queensland. Annette has professionally engaged with Queensland Theatre Company, La Boite, Brisbane Powerhouse, Out of the Box Festival, Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, QUT, Griffith University and QPAC. She has also represented drama education nationally and internationally.

The beauty of Shakespeare's work is that the themes and narratives are usually timeless and universal and can be applied to a multitude of contexts and settings. However, in exploring these texts in Drama, the unfamiliarity of the language, the lengthy soliloquies and the poetic qualities of the text often intimidates students. The best way to bring them back to the play is through the narrative and the characters painted throughout the story, and this is best done through movement.

The physical interpretation of the language breathes life into the words for young audiences and performers. In the case of Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lyrical fluidity dancers possess is ideal for recreating the ethereal world of the lovers and the fairies, along with the mischief of the players. Students studying Shakespeare would reap the rewards of experiencing Queensland Ballet's portrayal of his work as they witness the power of gesture, expression, symbolism, execution of action and body language onstage in a completely text free version of one of Shakespeare's classics – undoubtedly influencing their text interpretation and performance skills.



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Viewing Queensland Ballet's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and reading Shakespeare's play provides an opportunity for students to analyse and compare how texts across various mediums can be structured and organised. Students can also compare the role of the writer and the choreographer, evaluating their relationship with audiences.

Monique McMullen

Teacher, The Gap State High School

Monique has been teaching across the Performing Arts, with a focus on Music and Drama and a playful interest in Film, Television and New Media, as well as English, for 24 years. As the previous Head of Department at Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School and Kedron State High School, she is currently the Panel Chair for Music in Brisbane Central District and a Vice President for Drama Queensland. She is also a musical theatre tragic who moonlights as a pit musician whenever given the opportunity.

Shakespeare is arguably history's greatest storyteller. His works transcend time and describe the human condition with such clarity and understanding – what it is to celebrate, love, laugh, hate, mourn, scheme and survive in this world. The universality of Shakespeare's themes allow his stories, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to be accessed across our modern curriculum.

As musicians, students could consider how Mendelssohn's music evokes character, mood, emotion, time and place.

As dancers, students could analyse the choreographic and floor patterns for clues related to the characters, their situations and emotions.

As actors, directors and devisers of drama, students could consider the dancer's movements and the set, costume, lighting and sound design to ascertain how each contributes to the successful portrayal of characters and themes.

As lovers of literature, students could revel in the characters and plot, looking for evidence of symbol throughout the performance and exploring how it enhances Shakespeare's thematic intent. They could consider the absence of spoken language and how the choreographic and performance elements work to bring the story to life. Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers multiple opportunities, regardless of subject, of how meaning-making can be created and conveyed through visual mediums.



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Researching and defining key Shakespeare phrases and comparing the text structure between these and contemporary Australian phrases provides an opportunity for students to develop an understanding of language variation and the effect that historical, social and cultural changes can have on languages and dialects.



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Viewing Queensland Ballet's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can offer opportunities to analyse how and why meaning is made. Students can evaluate how effectively ideas, attitudes and values are represented through symbols and how meaning is created through visual representations. Particular attention can be placed on grammar and language structures, cohesive devices, vocabulary and mode-appropriate features.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Context

Since the original play was written in the 1590s, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been consistently performed across the world, becoming a source of inspiration for many artistic endeavours, from instrumental music and song to opera, painting, film and ballet.

Several ballet choreographers have used Shakespeare's play, offering a different perspective and treatment, including George Balanchine's 1962 full-length work, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Frederick Ashton's 1964 one-act ballet, *The Dream*.

DANCE

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Exploring works, including comparing and contrasting, can be a great way for students to understand the concepts of adaptation, choreographic style and the ways in which social context impact artistic endeavour. Expose students to a variety of works and enable sufficient time to research historical, social, and cultural activities and implications of a period and/or location. This will allow students to better understand how an artist can use his/her work to comment on life and living.

DRAMA

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Adapting Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into a play for a contemporary audience is a fantastic way for students to create dramatic action using the elements of drama. Students can analyse and compare the differences between the play, the ballet and their own versions to develop a stronger understanding of how conventions, form and style can impact dramatic action and meaning.

Co-produced by Queensland Ballet and The Royal New Zealand Ballet, Liam Scarlett has choreographed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* anew in 2015. Like Balanchine's ballet, Liam Scarlett's production consists of two acts (full-length) and the music has been augmented (extended) with additional music by Mendelssohn, orchestrated by Queensland Ballet's Music Director and Principal Conductor, Nigel Gaynor. Somewhat different to Balanchine's interpretation, Scarlett has chosen to explore the narrative across the two acts - only resolving the love dispute in Act 2. Similarly to Ashton's ballet, Scarlett's ballet takes place entirely within the magical forest.

Queensland Ballet Creative Team

Choreographer **Liam Scarlett**
 Composer **Felix Mendelssohn**
 Conductor, Arrangement and Additional Orchestration
Nigel Gaynor
 Costume and Set Designer **Tracy Grant Lord**
 Lighting Designer **Kendall Smith**



Peaseblossom

Characters

Oberon
King of the Fairies

Titania
Queen of the Fairies

Puck
apprentice to Oberon

Bottom
a young rustic

Helena
in love with Demetrius

Demetrius
in love with Hermia

Hermia
in love with Lysander

Lysander
in love with Hermia

Cobweb
a fairy

Mustardseed
a fairy

Peaseblossom
a fairy

Moth
a fairy

Fairies, Rustics,
Changeling Boy

Synopsis

Act I

In a forest clearing, under a moonlit night sky, Titania and Oberon quarrel over a Changeling Boy found sleeping in the woods. Titania eventually takes possession of the infant. In his rage, Oberon summons his apprentice Puck, and sends him to search for a magical flower. When sprinkled into the eyelids of a person sleeping, this magic flower causes the sleeper to fall in love with the first creature he or she sees upon awakening. Oberon plans to use this on Titania in revenge.

Meanwhile, four explorers have entered the forest in search of the exotic specimens to be found there, and a complicated love triangle ensues. Helena pines for Demetrius, who is in turn infatuated with Hermia, who is happily coupled with Lysander. Upon seeing this, Oberon orders Puck to resolve this situation by using the magic flower to make Demetrius return Helena's affections. However, Puck confuses the two men and administers the potion to the wrong one, causing even more trouble.

Titania awakens under the flower's spell to fall in love with the rustic Bottom, whom Puck has transformed into a donkey. Oberon spies on the couple, taking great pleasure in Titania's humiliation, to which she is entirely oblivious.

DANCE

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

The complex love relationships between the four human characters – Demetrius, Hermia, Helena and Lysander – are a rich source of stimulus for choreographic activities. Students can physically explore the unrequited love of the four characters, using various dance components and structuring devices to test and convey their intent.

Act II

Upon realising Puck's mistake with Demetrius and Lysander, Oberon is furious and sets about punishing Puck and resolving the mess, so that Lysander returns to loving Hermia and Demetrius finds love with Helena.

Bottom is restored to human form and as the night draws to a close, Titania and Oberon resolve their differences and gently return the sleeping Changeling Boy to where they found him, and to his own midsummer night's dreams.

ENGLISH

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Reading the play and observing the performance offers students a chance to compare the similarities and differences in the subject matter and treatment between the two, and whether these are significant. Students can investigate and analyse the way the narrative has been retold and adapted to develop an understanding of how people, cultures, places and concepts can be represented in different texts and contexts.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

History of Theatre

Theatre is an art form or discipline that uses live performers to communicate an experience, either real or imagined, to an audience through a combination of gestures, speech, song, music and dance (Carlson, 1993).

Throughout history there have been a variety of dramatic forms and styles, informed by dramatic traditions from different cultural and social inheritances, which influence the way in which the dramatic action is structured, organised and shaped and how the dramatic action is expressed or performed.

The table provides a brief overview of dramatic forms and styles that have existed from 500 BC up until Elizabethan Theatre, the form and style of Shakespeare's plays.

DATE	FORMS AND STYLES	DESCRIPTION
Circa 500 BC	Greek Theatre	Greek Theatre is the root of the Western theatre tradition, where it existed as part of a broader culture. Greek Theatre became institutionalised in competitions in a festival called Dionysia, which honoured the god Dionysus. During this period, three dramatic genres emerged labelled tragedy, comedy and satyr (Banham, 1995; Brockett & Hildy, 2003). In these performances, a group of boys/men known as a chorus would be positioned in the background, acting as narrators and providing insight into the action on stage presented by individual actors positioned in the foreground (Carroll, n.d.).
240 BC	Roman Theatre	Romans first experienced theatre in the 4th Century BC (Beacham, 1996) though wasn't until 270-240BC, when the Roman Republic expanded into several Greek Territories, that Roman Theatre emerged (Beacham, 1996). Roman Theatre spread across Europe, becoming more varied and sophisticated including festival performances of street theatre, comedies and tragedies (Brockett & Hildy, 2003).
Circa 400 AD	Medieval Drama	From 400AD-900AD, Western Europe was enduring a period of disorder causing most organised theatrical activities to disappear (Brockett & Hildy, 2003). Any theatre that existed during this period was performed by travelling groups of actors. The church held different views of the mythological gods and saw theatre as evil. Later, the church began using the art form as a way to re-enact biblical stories during mass, which became known as morality plays in the 1400s (Carroll, n.d.). At the conclusion of the Middle Ages, professional actors began to appear in Europe (Brockett & Hildy, 2003).
1560 AD	Commedia Dell'arte	Originating in Italy in the 1560s, Commedia Dell'arte is an actor-centred form that requires little scenery and very few props. These plays originate from scenarios called lazzi - loose frameworks that actors could use to improvise, assuming stock character roles and creating a comic plot that would arrive at a humorous climax (Brockett & Hildy, 2003; Rudlin, 1994).
1562 AD - 1642 AD	Elizabethan Theatre	During the Elizabethan period, public theatres (such as the Globe) were built, prompting the establishment of professional companies and actors who regularly performed plays. In these plays, actors wore lavish costumes consistent with upper-class dress of the period as opposed to clothing that reflected the station of their characters, and minimal stage scenery was used. Shakespeare is recognised as one of the leading playwrights of this period. In 1642, the Puritan Parliament closed the theatres so that they could focus on appeasing a potential civil war (National Endowment for the Arts, n.d.).



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Reading the play and observing the performance offers students a chance to compare the similarities and differences in the subject matter and treatment between the two, and whether these are significant. Students can investigate and analyse the way the narrative has been retold and adapted to develop an understanding of how people, cultures, places and concepts can be represented in different texts and contexts.

William Shakespeare and the Play

- Born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, Shakespeare is arguably the greatest playwright and dramatist throughout history, creating 38 plays which are still performed consistently across the world (Bio, n.d.).
- Many of Shakespeare's plays reflect the social, cultural and historical climate of the time - the Elizabethan Age. During this time in England, there were wartime triumphs, economic successes, and the constant threat of illness and death from the bubonic plague (known as the Black Death) which killed two of his older siblings (Bio, n.d.).



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Analysing the purpose and researching the historical and cultural context of Shakespeare's play can inform a student's own performance of a scene from the play. Students can manipulate the elements of drama to achieve the characteristics of the Elizabethan style and use voice and movement to communicate dramatic action and meaning to audiences.

- A Midsummer Night's Dream* is arguably Shakespeare's most famous comedy. Though the first recorded performance of the play occurred in London on New Year's Day, 1605 at the court of King James I, it was most likely written and first performed during the 1590s (Hunter, 1870).
- The play was popular in Shakespeare's lifetime and during the early part of the Jacobean period, however it fell out of favour during the 17th Century. It wasn't until 1842 when it was performed again, using Mendelssohn's music and ballet sequences (Blom, 1955).
- His first play about marriage, the work dramatises gender tensions that arise from complicated familial and romantic relationships (Shmoop, 2016).



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Student can identify, analyse and debate the representation of stereotypes such as traditional gender roles and romance in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Students can answer questions such as: are these representations present in contemporary society or relevant to contemporary audiences? Through listening and speaking, students are offered the opportunity to develop an understanding of how people, cultures, places and concepts can be represented in text.

Felix Mendelssohn and the Music

- Born in 1809 in Hamburg, Germany, Jacob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, is a 19th Century Romantic composer who composed over two hundred compositions (Todd, 2003). His music features colourful nuances and catchy melodies that inspire imagery and narratives.
- Mendelssohn enjoyed reading Shakespeare's plays (translated into German) and in particular *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By the age of 17, he had composed an Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Opus 21, which was debuted in 1827. This original short piece consisted of a series of colourful motifs that were associated with many of the characters from the play though was not associated with any performance of the play. The light, scurrying motifs are linked to the fairy kingdom, while hunting calls and more courtly melodies portray the rustics and the world of the Athenians (Classic FM, n.d.).
- In 1842, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV commissioned Mendelssohn to compose incidental music for three plays including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Drawing on the motifs of his previously completed Opus 21, Mendelssohn composed 12 pieces and a finale to be performed as part of a play by Ludwig Tieck. Some of these included songs (in German) using Shakespeare's texts (Blom, 1955).

Q AND A WITH NIGEL GAYNOR

Music Director and Principal Conductor

What are the key characteristics of music for ballet?

A vast variety of music genres and styles have been used for ballet. Music composed for narrative ballets usually consists of 1 – 4 minute sections, which each convey a particular mood or sequence of moods. These sections are designated specifically for pas de deux, solos or corps de ballet components. Often narrative ballet music assigns musical motifs (tunes/themes) for each of the main characters. In this way, music assists to portray characters' identities and their intentions. Ideally, the music for each character should be in strong contrast from each other, to help convey the story in the most colourful and dramatic way possible.

In a ballet performance, does the orchestra conductor lead or follow the dancers?

It's an inter-relationship that ebbs and flows depending on the circumstances, and what the intention is at a particular time. Generally, the Company Dancers will follow my lead so that they remain in time with each other and the music. However, I can alter the tempo, where possible, to assist the Principals and Soloists with the execution of their art. To be fully prepared, these elements are explored with dancers and artistic staff during the rehearsal period.

Describe the collaborative process when working with Liam Scarlett.

Liam and I first discussed his concept and vision for the production and how we would augment Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Opus 61 to produce a full-length ballet score. It became a process of creation and reflection. Part of the process meant I orchestrated Mendelssohn's *Songs Without Words* piano compositions as well as adding some transitions. Also, once Liam commenced choreographing, further music was inserted to complete the score.

Describe your process of orchestrating the piano pieces and composing the transitions.

To emulate Mendelssohn's orchestral sound I used only orchestral instruments that he had previously used. When arranging or composing the transitions between two sections, I had to consider the key (signature) relationships, as well as the motif material of each character. Strong harmonic relationships make the score sound more unified, as does appropriate repetition of each character's theme. When choosing which instrument/s carry the tune, you consider which tone or colour best suits the moment. A very general example would be to say that usually a flute has a 'happier disposition' than the clarinet, so for a section that should be brighter or more optimistic than the previous section, the flute is usually the best choice.

How has music been used in Liam Scarlett's production to communicate meaning, intent and create imagery?

Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* score is widely considered to be the greatest fairy music written in the 19th century. Conveniently for us, much of Mendelssohn's other orchestral music lends itself to portraying a fairy landscape, with delicate rapid string passages, shifting harmonies and restrained use of brass instruments.

For example, the *Hebrides Overture* is Oberon's theme. This music was originally intended to portray the oceanic power and mystery of the Scottish West coastline. The piece starts softly in a minor key and builds and surges in much the same way as a rugged seascape does. This creates an eerie, threatening atmosphere, which is ideal for this character, who is the king of the fairies.

Puck is described by Shakespeare as being able to run around the girth of the globe in 40 minutes which is why he is superbly personified by the 'quicksilver' *Scherzo* from Mendelssohn's *String Octet*. This rapid and intense music hurtles onwards, helping to create comic moments for a hasty Puck, who is very keen to serve his master, yet fails to fully consider the consequences of his actions!



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Listening to and discussing Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* music can be a great source of inspiration for choreographic activities and improvisations, focusing on the use of tempo, dynamics and instrument tone colour.

What is your favourite part of your role as Music Director and Principal Conductor for Queensland Ballet?

I love every aspect of the job – it is a very rewarding responsibility knowing you're helping dancers to do their best and to collaborate on new productions where I arrange and orchestrate music. It is a privilege to work with the whole Queensland Ballet team.

How would you describe the rehearsal process with the orchestra?

Intense! I have just two rehearsals of 2.5 hours each with the orchestra before we rehearse with the dancers. You can't always predict how this time is best spent, so it's a fascinating and creative day in its own right. We then have two rehearsals with the dancers performing on the stage (a technical and a dress rehearsal) and by the end of these we have to be ready for Opening Night.



Q AND A WITH THOMAS BOYD

Technical Director

How can ballet sets, props and costumes be used to convey meaning to an audience?

All of these elements each have their own purpose and need to relate back to and support the choreographer's vision, and also the music that they have chosen to work with. The set situates the narrative in an environment, grounding it. The props are details that enhance the narrative. There are deck props (for example, a sleigh, furniture or stair wagons) and hand props (such as a bouquet, fan, food or weapons). The costumes define the characters, indicating their personal histories and cultural heritage as well as their personalities. Tracey Grant Lord has embedded the narrative of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in her set design.



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Responding to Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides an opportunity for drama students to analyse how the performance facilitated meaning. Students can evaluate, with supporting evidence, how effectively this meaning was communicated to audiences.

How can lighting be used in a ballet to convey meaning to an audience?

The lighting design is the final layer of a ballet production that stitches the work together and supports the narrative. The lighting is able to gently direct and lead the audience through the environment to enhance the choreography and assist in communicating the narrative. The colour choices can also assist in establishing an appropriate atmosphere. Kendall Smith has designed a specific lighting palette for the different characters – for example purple and turquoise colours for Oberon and pale cool tints for Titania and her fairies – as well as different colours to reflect the characters' emotions.

How would you describe the collaborative process when working with the other artists?

It all begins with the choreographer's vision and the music they've decided to choreograph to. So in this sense, the arrangers, designers, artists, painters and builders are tasked to manifest that singular vision to help communicate the narrative or the meaning of the work.

How can sets reflect the music of a ballet?

I believe it's similar to how choreography can reflect particular music. If the music is melodic and soft and evokes a particular emotional quality, the choreography could respond through soft or lyrical movements. The same can be said for a set design where the selection of colours, the use of lines and even how the deck props are moved on and off the stage will reflect the music.

Describe the relationship between the artists involved in achieving a particular vision?

It is absolutely essential that all of the artists involved share (or at least support) the choreographer's vision. In turn, the choreographer must place enormous trust in the artists they have chosen to collaborate with, and allow ideas and expertise to create a catalytic experience for everyone involved. In my experience, the artists will often develop strong inter-relationships, developing the ballet together under the direction of the choreographer or stager.



Can the audience interpret a different meaning to the choreographer's intended meaning and is this valid?

Often a narrative ballet will be quite literal in the treatment of its subject matter. However I definitely think it is possible for audiences to construe their own meaning. Audiences bring their own history of experiences with them to the theatre and so may relate to different aspects of the ballet, engaging with it in their own way, which is completely valid.

How might the cultural and social contexts of audiences influence their expectations regarding sets and lighting?

There's definitely been a shift in what audiences expect, and I think this has been caused by both the technological advancements in our own industry and through influence of television and film. Stagecraft technology has evolved and become more versatile, making it easier to achieve these expectations. With regards to lighting, we now have digital lighting boards, LED lighting and moving lights. Lights have also become more environmentally friendly, increasing in life expectancy and decreasing in voltage required to power them.



REFLECTIONS FROM VITO BERNASCONI

Junior Soloist

Being a non-verbal art form, ballet relies heavily on visual cues and movement to convey meaning and the narrative. There are multiple artistic voices that work together to create these cues and movements including the choreographer, conductor, set designer, lighting designer, costume designer, and the Artistic Director. However, as a dancer, I believe it is us who, through the use of characterisation and movement, add the final layer of meaning.

It is the dancer's job to bring the characters to life, making them as believable as possible, to transport the audience from the theatre into the narrative itself – into the imagined world and era. To create meaning in dance, simple movements (such as walking, running and skipping) are combined with mime, gestures, facial expressions and certain postures. This involves both obvious forms of non-verbal communication (such as pointing) and subtle forms of dance-specific gestures (mime). When combined, both have a strong impact on the subtlety of the narrative and characters.



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Exposing students to ballet mime as a form of communication and experimenting with how this can be used to convey a script can be a useful way for students to explore human behaviour, emotions and empathy to convey roles and characters.

To assist in making my character as believable as possible, I read the story or play to develop an overall understanding of the key themes and events. I then re-read the story focusing on the character I might be cast to perform. There are a range of interpretations that any reader may ascertain, so I try to specifically identify age, gender, viewpoints, relationships and my character's interactions with other characters.



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Learning repertoire can be an effective opportunity for students to develop technical and expressive skills required when performing ballet. Students can explore physically how the repertoire conveys the characters' personalities, their objectives, and their relationships with other characters.

After constructing an outline of the character, we come together and work with the choreographer/stager to further develop the story and characters. The studio, where most of the "magic" happens, provides a safe space for dancers to ask the artistic staff questions about the character(s) and to experiment. While dancers are given artistic license to explore their character and to make them as real as possible, we must ensure our interpretation of a certain character is consistent with the choreographer's intent; characterisations often adapt overtime and in line with everyone's expectations.



For any artist, we want to bring something to each work that has not been done before, or at least adapt what has been previously done to make it our own.

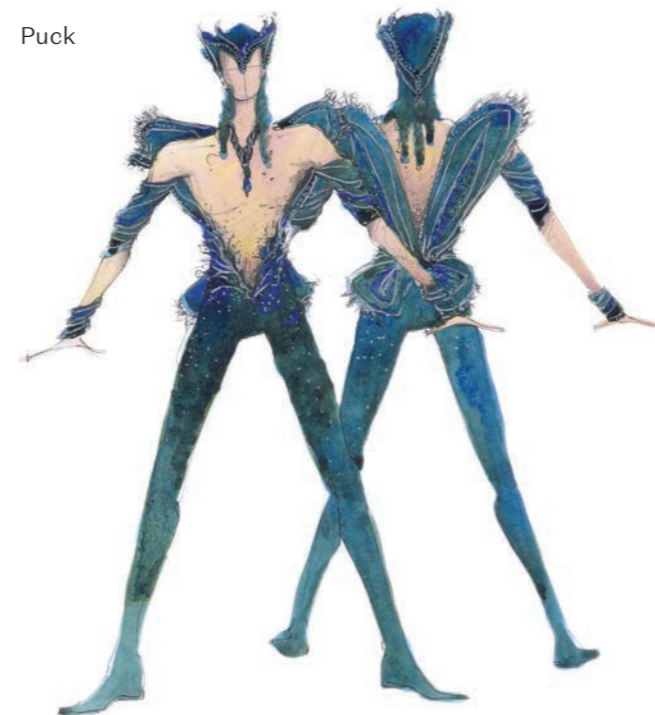
The stage is a place where a dance artist can share a part of themselves. Dance is a brave art form and it is one that many love and give their heart and soul to every day and night.



ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Responding to Liam Scarlett's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* provides an opportunity for students to analyse and interpret the inter-relationships between dance components and skills and evaluate how these are used to convey choreographic intent. Students may also develop their knowledge of ballet terminology, referencing and language conventions.

Puck



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Costume designs by Tracy Grant Lord

Production photography courtesy of Royal New Zealand Ballet, by Evan Li and Ellie Richards

Li Cunxin and Education images by Christian Tiger

Vito Bernasconi by David Kelly

Queensland Ballet

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