

Arts & Entertainment

'Midsummer Night' entirely enjoyable

By TOM HELMA

A little something for everybody? The MSU Department of Theatre's production of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which opened last Friday, is a great example of something old made new.

I caught up with Frank Rutledge, interim chairman of the department, as we were both vacating the Pasant Theatre at the end of the show and had to ask him who did the set design. "It's the new guy from Wisconsin, Kirk Domer," he said.

New guy? This is a whole new take on Shakespeare, with electricity from the beginning scene in which Oberon, played exquisitely by Graham Irwin, explodes the play into being. What follows and carries through in the blocking of the action scenes requires the entire cast to have the stamina of the MSU cross-country team. Credit director Marcus Olson for that, but an equally important but unacknowledged presence on the stage is Domer's stair platform, which provides a 45-degree angle running track for Puck and various other entities to hurl themselves into the action of the play with breathtaking speed and multiple variations of stair-climbing technique.

Review

'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

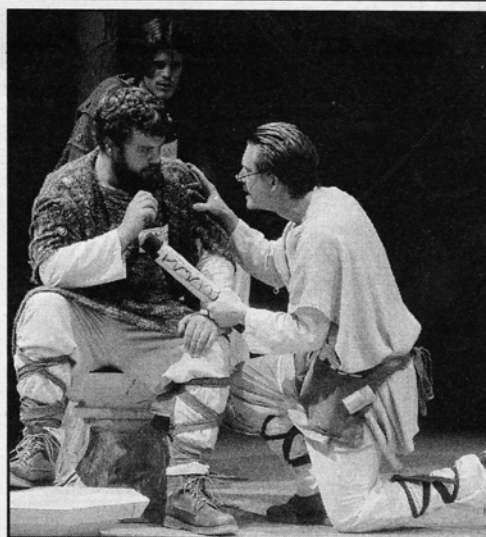
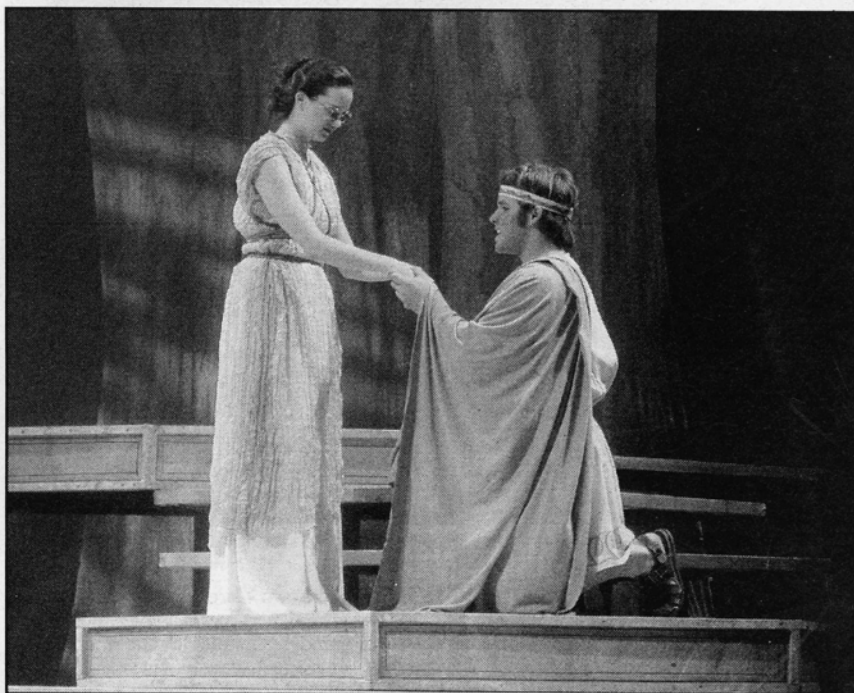
Play presented by MSU Department of Theatre continues at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 14, and 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 15, through Sunday, Nov. 17, in The Wharton Center's Pasant Theatre, on MSU's campus.

Tickets are \$5 at the door. For more info, call 355-6690 or 432-2000.

Up and down they go, throwing out lines clearly, but with reckless and articulate abandon that energizes the action and keeps the audience hopping, too.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" has always been a good example of "plays-within-a-play," and when a director is able to audition and cast an array of 25 characters — with each of them coming onstage in fresh and innovative ways — the effect is to keep the audience awake and laughing throughout the play. No small feat.

Perhaps the most outrageous and entirely laughable sequence within the play is when Peter Quince, played extremely well by Andrew Towler, assembles his motley cast of craft persons to perform for the royals themselves. Jason Wagner as Bottom brings an egomaniacal narcissism to this role that is both charming and witty. The critic can perhaps be faulted for not quite recalling whether the character of "the



At left, Jason Wagner ("Nick Bottom") and Andrew Towler ("Peter Quince") rehearse a scene with David Cain ("Snug", background) for MSU Theatre's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The show continues Thursday through Sunday.

Above, Rachel Roberts ("Helena") and Kelly Curtis ("Lysander") star in the show.

See Shakespeare, Page 12

Shakespeare

from page 9

Wall" was Flute, Snout, Snug or Starveling. Despite that lapse on my part — this guy clearly stole the scene, if not the show.

Equally as lively (manic would be an equally permissible label), with stage movements and grimaces alone producing many laughs, was Puck, portrayed by Patrick Hickey. He was Snap, Crackle and Pop and early Pee Wee Herman all rolled up into one.

On the only slightly more serious side of the play — the action between the lovers in the play — with Kelly Curtis and Rachel Roberts as Lysander and Helena, Sarah Habel and Nathaniel Nose as Hermia and Demetrius — was also very dynamic.

There wasn't a weak performance in the

entire show.

A note needs to be added here to the fine choreography and stage work of choreographer Annie Stulberg, and the execution of magic movement on the part of Mustardseed, Cobweb, Peasebottom and Moth and their unnamed but equally appealing array of Oberon's fairies. Dance was an integral part of this play, and along with lighting and costumes, provided a lively backdrop for the always effective and unsettling dizzy pace of the action itself.

It is not easy to imagine a midsummer night's dream in a mid-Michigan November. Still, the weather cooperated on opening night with one last warm hint of a season about to pass.

This was an entirely enjoyable comic performance, hectic in the best sense of the word.