

ST MICHAEL'S PLAYERS PRESENT

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

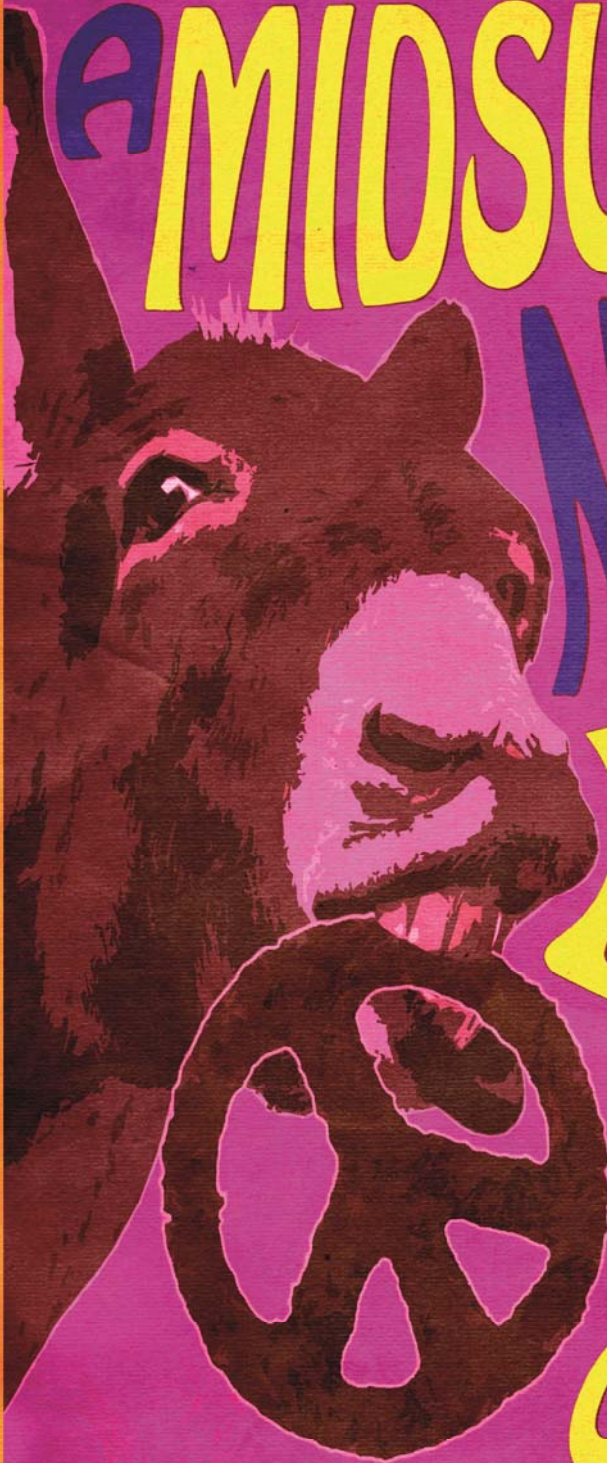
A MIDSUMMER

NIGHT'S

DREAM

1-4 JULY

OPEN AIR



Programme



65th Anniversary Summer Spectacular
"A Midsummer Night's Dream" by William Shakespeare

WELCOME

St Michael's Players

Good evening and a very warm welcome from all of us at St Michael's Players. For those of you who don't know us we are a Chiswick-based theatre group with an enthusiastic (unpaid!) membership ranging in age from 16 to 86. Our philosophy is simple: we aim to put on the very best productions we possibly can; but try to have some fun along the way despite all the stresses and strains of juggling rehearsals with work and family commitments.

St Michael's Players was founded in 1949 with its first production – Painted Sparrows by Guy Paxton and Edward Hoile. Since then we have had an unbroken run of performances every year; more recently managing to mount 3 or 4 productions annually. For some reason, however, none of our previous 152 outings have included any Shakespeare. So in our 65th year it felt high time we give the old fella a try - and to really stretch ourselves we thought we would take him outside. We hope you enjoy the result.

This production has been many months in the planning and is the result of the hard work and dedication of many individuals. They are too numerous to mention but they know who they are and I thank each and every one of them. I would, however, like to acknowledge the tremendous support and co-operation we have had from St Paul's Church and for the funding we received from Whitman and Co Estate Agents and from the London Borough of Hounslow Chiswick Area Forum. I would also like to thank the musicians from both of our wonderful bands for agreeing to play for us and making this a real summer festival.

Finally, if you enjoy this production we hope to see you again. If you fancy getting more actively involved, on or off stage, then please get in touch as we are always on the lookout for new members. Either way – it's www.stmichaelsplayers.org

Alastair Dewar – Chairman, St Michael's Players

St Paul's Church

Dear Friends,

A very warm welcome to St Paul's Church.

Over the years the vicarage and gardens has been the venue for many concerts and celebrations, but this is the first time we have had a play performed in the gardens. We are delighted that St Michael's Players chose to come here for their 65th anniversary production and to offer 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', a favourite for many of us.

With best wishes for this production and the future.

Fr Michael Riley



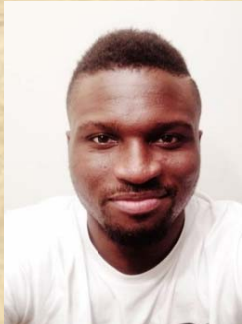
The Play

A Midsummer Night's Dream was written in 1595-6, one of Shakespeare's early "festive comedies" and remains one of his most popular plays. Shakespeare was in his early 30s when it was written, yet already the most successful and best-known playwright in the country. He was also one of a syndicate that owned the Globe Theatre in Southwark, which was to open in 1599 and he regularly appeared in productions on its stage. Indeed, it is thought that he often took the role of Theseus - the noble Duke of Athens in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

Despite the many thematic references to "dreams" and the fantastic setting of the Athenian forest, the play also contains a fair amount of commentary on Shakespeare's contemporary England. The title refers to an old English custom: on "Midsummer Eve", or the night of the summer solstice, English men and women would spend the night around bonfires, telling tales of fairies and witchcraft. The play also makes reference to "the rite of May," or "maying" - an English tradition whereby, on the first night of May, young men and women would engage in singing, dancing (and possibly more besides) in the woods outside their towns. At the time the play was written, these traditions had come under attack by the English Puritans, who considered them "pagan" practices that allowed too much opportunity for mischief. By giving the play a happy ending after all its midsummer madness, Shakespeare may have been defending such traditions against their critics, suggesting that they are actually benign, even desirable.

Although the play was a popular hit with contemporary theatre-goers, the London diarist, Samuel Pepys, who went to see A Midsummer Night's Dream in 1662, hated it. He describes it as 'the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life'; the only things he enjoyed in it were 'some good dancing and some handsome women'. For most audiences, however, the theme of lovers and their entanglements, the fairy scenes in the enchanted wood and the lovingly handled bungling tradesmen as comic relief, make this the most magical and lyrical of Shakespeare's plays, explaining why it is still performed all over the world today.

The Actors



JAMES MBANEFO (*Theseus/Oberon*)

James joined St Michael’s Players last year in our production of *Mammals* by Amelia Bullmore and also appeared in the 2014 panto. Prior to this he had not acted since 2002 but he is now studying for an acting diploma at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. James says that he is loving St Michael’s Players!



GEORGINA PARREN (*Hippolyta/Titania*)

Georgina has been performing with St Michael’s Players for the past two years, and is also studying for an acting diploma at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Her most notable performance with St Michael’s Players was Principal boy in the Christmas pantomime, ‘Puss in Boots’ where a lot of thigh slapping happened. By day, she works as a freelancer at various television stations.



JAYSON BAIRD (*Lysander*)

Since graduating with a Drama degree from the London College of Music, Jayson has appeared in several short films and is becoming more of an ever-present on the Fringe circuit. This is his second foray into Shakespeare, having recently played Iago in *Othello* to positive reviews; “[Baird] is brilliant as a chillingly charming and unhinged Iago; his impressive command of the Shakespearean tongue makes his character all the more loathsome and mesmeric”



OLIVIA GILMAN (*Hermia*)

Olivia played The Prince in St Michael’s Players’ *Snow White* many moons ago and has since performed at venues including The Rivoli Ballroom for The National Trust, The Burton Taylor Studio and The Theatre Royal Haymarket. Voiceover work includes various alongside The Oxford Revue, and for director Dirk Maggs (*Hitchhiker’s Guide To The Galaxy*). In 2014 she spoke on a panel alongside Sir Trevor Nunn about theatre from the 17th Century to today. As a writer/director/producer she runs collective Direct-H. She will be studying at Cambridge from October 2015.

**LAUREN POWELL** (*Helena*)

Lauren joined St Michael's Players at the beginning of this year, having fallen in love with them at their annual dinner! By day, she works in marketing at Sloane Square's Cadogan Hall. By night she is mostly either with St Michael's Players or at the Soho Theatre, for which she is part of its 2014-15 writing group. She will, hopefully, have written her first play in a couple of months' time.

**TOM REBUFFA** (*Demetrius*)

A student of Bournemouth University's scriptwriting programme, Tom utilises those slick creative juices whilst freelancing in tech and film extra work. He has been part of Barnes Community Players for the past two years. This is his first role with St Michael's Players.

**MAGDALENA JABLONSKA** (*Puck*)

This is Magdalena's first production with St Michael's Players and, when she's not soaking up the limelight onstage, she spends her time studying, swimming and dancing.

**EMMA BECKETT** (*Snug*)

Emma's love for performing began with her involvement in school productions and she went on to study Drama at University of Exeter. She joined St Michael's Players in 2014, playing Betty in the Christmas Panto *Puss in Boots*. By day she is a tutor for young people with special needs.

**ALASTAIR DEWAR** (*Bottom*)

Alastair's theatrical career began with pantos at his son's school. He graduated to St Michael's Players in 2008 in the role of Alec Harvey in Noel Coward's *Still Life*. Since then he has performed another 15 times in roles ranging from a mobile phone, via a poetry quoting detective, to a tongue-tied professor of linguistics. In 'real life' Alastair is an HR Director for the IT Company CGI.



MERVYN JUPE (*Flute*)

Mervyn has been a member of St Michael's Players for 20 years. He has appeared in all 16 pantomimes along with a variety of other productions including *Pack of Lies* by Hugh Whitmore, *Real Inspector Hound* by Tom Stoppard and *Lend Me A Tenor* by Ken Ludwig. He has also directed a number of plays including Mike Leigh’s *Abigail’s Party*, and Alan Ayckbourn’s *Confusions*. He is enjoying his retirement with some occasional voluntary work for the Canal and River Trust and Kew Gardens.



ELIZABETH OLLIER (*Snout*)

Elizabeth has been a member of St Michael’s Players for the last 8 years; her first appearance was as Laura in Noel Coward’s *Still Life* and has since appeared in many productions. Roles have variously included: tearful housewives, stropky secretaries, deluded divorcees, widows, girlfriends, Postman Pat, and even a French poodle! However the biggest challenge has to have been appearing as Annie in *Calendar Girls* - wearing nothing but a pair of teacups! During the day, Elizabeth is a professional voice artist.



STEVE SHOTTON (*Starveling*)

Steve joined St Michael’s Players this year with some small roles in *Visiting Hour* by Richard Harris. His previous theatrical experience is limited to short performances at the company Christmas parties! In real life he is an accountant for a large US company.



BRYONY WILMAN (*Peter Quince*)

Bryony joined St Michael’s Players in 2006, initially to act but has branched out into stage management and directing. After many years as a civil servant, she is now very happily retired.



SUE DARRIEULAT (*Fairy Cobweb*)

Joined St Michael’s Players in 1991 to play opposite Peter Woods for the first (but not the last) time in *Mixed Doubles*. Her favourite role was Hester Collyer in *The Deep Blue Sea* but she also has very fond memories of playing Liz in *Present Laughter*, Valentine in *Love Affair* and Marie in *Calendar Girls*. By day Sue is a charity finance manager.



PIHU DUBE (*Fairy Moth*)

Pihu joined St Michael’s Players in 2014 as a ‘Biker Bunny’ in last year’s panto, Puss In Boots. She is the Director of Vintage Fairy Events For Fun and a professional HR Advisor by day.



MADELEINE HAZARD (*Fairy Mustardseed*)

Since joining St Michael’s Players having not been on stage since college days, Maddy has rediscovered the joy of treading the boards, especially with such a great troupe! Her highlight was the brilliant *Calendar Girls* and being told she would need considerably bigger buns! She would encourage anyone out there to take up this fabulous hobby.



CHRISTINE LEE (*Fairy Peaseblossom*)

Christine started her "acting" in the Strand on the Green Panto – being involved on stage for several years, and producing for a couple of years. She graduated to St. Michael’s Players in 1993, joining in the Panto on stage and helping on other productions. In real life Christine is a teacher and served on the committee for quite a number of years. *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is the first production Christine has performed which not a panto – but she is still a fairy. Once a fairy, always a fairy. That’s fair enough!



KAY PORTER (*Philostrate*)

Kay Porter's first appearance onstage was 59 years ago as the Mad Hatter in a school play. Since then she has played a variety of roles, her favourites being Olwen in JB Priestley's *Dangerous Corner*, and Mary in *How the Other Half Loves* (Ayckbourn). She has been a member of St Michael's Players since 1988, and was last seen as the Royal Page in *Puss In Boots*.



PETER WOODS (*Egeus*)

Peter started his amateur stage career in 1942, singing to the troops in Revue and Variety Shows, and a month ago directed *The Importance of Being Earnest* for TW4. In the intervening 73 years he has been very lucky with roles but admits to a still soft nostalgic spot for the Cambridge Footlights.



The Musicians

July 01/02:

- Vocals / Guitar..... **GALIA ARAD**
- Guitar / Vocals..... **ANDY MURRAY**
- Bass Guitar / Vocals **EAMONN DOYLE**
- Drums..... **MARTIN SCOTT**



Galia Arad is a new singer-songwriter from Indiana via New York, Dublin and Glastonbury, whose latest album is called 'This Is Lost'. Martin Scott is a former member of Cambridge psychedelic legends The Soft Boys, and first played with Andy Murray in The Stiff All-Stars. Dubliner Eamonn Doyle was a member of Vertigo recording artists Zerra One, playing alongside Genesis, Corrs and Clannad guitarist Anthony Drennan

Gerry O’Sullivan, Andy Godfrey and Simon Smith are Lost Boutique, who grew from the ashes of power pop band Mood 6, who toured and recorded many fine albums in the 1990s. Andy Murray joined them on guitar after meeting singer Gerry in Cuba.



July 03/04:

- Vocals **GERRY O'SULLIVAN**
- Guitar / Vocals..... **ANDY MURRAY**
- Bass Guitar / Vocals **ANDY GODFREY**
- Drums..... **SIMON SMITH**

The Director



PAUL SMITH

Paul Smith has appeared in numerous productions, including *Calendar Girls*, *Sisterly Feelings*, *Straight And Narrow*, *Separate Tables* and, recently, as Bottom in Theatre West Four's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He has directed productions of *Anne Boleyn*, *The Browning Version* and *The Hollow Crown*. He has two kids who love his productions and a wife, who does not. This is the first time Paul has directed with St Michael's Players.

Undertaking Shakespeare is always a daunting endeavour. So when St. Michaels Players' chairman, Alastair Dewar, asked me to direct *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I knew I would have to think carefully about it before accepting. But then he said "It's our 65th anniversary production, so we want to make it special. And we've never done Shakespeare before. Oh, and it's outdoors". At least I knew the 'daunting' aspect was catered for.

The first task in dealing with such a well-known and popular play is to decide how you want to play it: the setting, the period, the style. Having just been involved in a fairly traditional version of the play, I wanted to try something a bit different, a bit more playful and fun, something more in keeping with the ethos of the group.

Thus the idea of the Woodstock theme was born. It has many immediate benefits: it's a great period for wardrobe and it gives us an excuse to have a band, food and music. But above all, it gave us a new way of looking at the magic that makes up the body of the play — with all the smoking and experimenting of the period, perhaps Puck is right: "we all do but slumber here". Doubling up Theseus and Hippolyta as Oberon and Titania, having the mechanicals as roadies and casting the fairies as more mature, drugged out hippies gives us a new way of thinking about this oft-heard play.

Once we'd agreed on this *mise en scène*, the fantastic team behind the production got to work. Helen Doyle's tireless problem-solving, Marc "Don't worry, I've already done that" Pearce and his fantastic set (and van!) design and construction and Alastair Dewar's calm obstacle-removing, to say nothing of the great and exhausting marketing effort by the committee made this a lot less stressful than it should have been.

But one of the most exciting aspects for me has been putting together this extraordinary cast. Seeing stalwarts take on Shakespeare for the first time, introducing great new talent to St. Michaels Players or, as in the case of Magdalena Jablonska, introducing great new talent to the stage has been a joy.

We hope you enjoy watching it as much as we enjoyed putting it together. From all of us, thank you for taking the time to join us for this *Midsummer Night's Dream*!

Paul Smith



65th Anniversary Summer Spectacular
"A Midsummer Night's Dream" by William Shakespeare

The Crew

Production Design..... **MARC PEARCE**
Musical Manager..... **ANDY MURRAY**
Wardrobe..... **JAN HUCKLE**
Stage Manager..... **HELEN DOYLE**
Production Crew..... **ADRIAN ELLIS, FLEUR DE HENRIE**
MARIOS PAPADAKIS, JO HARRY
RICHARD AND THOMAS WADE
LOUISA BARRETT
Business Manager..... **CHRIS HULATT**
Front of House..... **MEMBERS AND FRIENDS**

Special thanks

Agnieszka Solska at White Light
Martin Hanness

First time with St Michael's Players, a very warm welcome to:
MAGDALENA JABLONSKA, TOM REBUFFA, JAYSON BAIRD

And a warm welcome back to:
PETER WOODS, OLIVIA GILMAN

And congratulations to:
PAUL SMITH
First time directing with St Michael's Players

The Venue

St Paul's Church has been here for 143 years, and was built thanks to the patronage of William Cavendish the 7th Duke of Devonshire. It was designed by the English architect Henry Currey (1820-1900) in and built in 1872.

In 1883 the Duke leased a piece of land to Chiswick residents who wished to form a sports club. Cricket, football, lawn tennis and bowls were played at the Club, all by women as well as men. Chiswick Park Lawn Tennis Club was for many years the scene of the annual Middlesex Open Tennis Championships, making the venue second only to Wimbledon



The vicarage has also had an interesting history and seen a few famous faces pass through its doors. Perhaps the most bohemian is the poet Dylan Thomas, whose works include the poem Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night, and the play Under Milkwood. He lived at St Paul’s Vicarage during the 1940’s with his wife Caitlin Macnamara

Nowadays the vicarage is frequently used by film and TV companies as a location for film and dramas. It was used by the BBC to film some of the interior shots for Best Possible Taste; a docu-drama about the life of Kenny Everett.

The vicarage was also used for the 2011 Cold War espionage film, **Tinker, Tailor Soldier Spy**, based on the 1974 **John Le Carre** novel of the same name starring **Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, John Hurt** and **Benedict Cumberbatch**.

More recently, in 2014 the vicarage and church garden were used extensively in the Stephen Hawking bio-pic, **The Theory of Everything**, starring **Eddie Redmayne** and **Felicity Jones**.





We've loved seeing you here and look forward to
the pleasure of your company again

Treasure Island (Malcolm Morgan)

14-17 October

Ali Baba and the 40 Thieves (Ben Crocker)

9-14 December

Special Thanks

WHITMAN & CO.