

'60s sights, sounds alter dimensions of 'Dream'

Director says decade, play perfect fit

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior staff writer

When he wrote "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Shakespeare never used the word "groovy."

But that's how the director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln production describes the show.

This weekend, the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance opens its production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." For the show, the cast and crew have taken the Bard's most performed comedy and transplanted it to 1968.

"I questioned if there was a time in history that reflects the same quality and fantasy of the play," said Robin McKee, the play's director.

McKee found her answer in the 1960s. That era, McKee said, celebrated the same ideals as "A Midsummer Night's Dream": love as a form of rebellion, working-class

agitation and youth in leadership.

"It has that kind of frolicsomeness that Shakespeare was going for," McKee said.

In the play, two young lovers — Hermia and Lysander — run away to elope against Hermia's father's wishes. The two flee to the forest, where they find a world of fairies, magic and mischief. With the help of love potions and quarrelsome fairies, love triangle after love triangle is constructed and torn apart.

To bring the play into the 1960s, McKee transformed the palace at the beginning of the play into a university, such as University of California-Berkeley circa 1968.

"This scene represents the leftist Marxist thinkers of the time and all the intellectual debates that were going on," McKee said.

The world of the fairies became a commune of flower children.

"Flower power embraced the same principles of the fairy world,"

Theatre Preview The Facts

What: "A Midsummer Night's Dream"
Where: Howell Theatre, Temple Building, 12th and R Streets
When: 8p.m. Friday through Saturday and March 24-27
Cost: \$6 for students, \$9 for UNL faculty/staff/senior citizens, \$10 for general admission
The Skinny: The Bard's most popular comedy gets dressed up in love beads and dances to The Doors

McKee said. "There's a sense of playfulness and magic there."

To bring the commune to life, set designer Cathryn Dashiell designed a geodesic dome and suspension bridge. The colors recall the rich, vivid jewel tones that were popular at the time.

McKee ties all of this together with music by musicians such as the Doors, the Beatles and Janis Joplin.

"Music says that one thing you can't describe," said Ryan Johnston,

“Flower power embraced the same principles of the fairy world. There's a sense of playfulness and magic there.”

ROBIN MCKEE
"Midsummer Night's Dream" director

who plays Puck in the production. "It gives the show a feeling of authenticity."

McKee said the show's contemporary feel would appeal to audiences without compromising Shakespeare's intent. To ensure the play retains its honesty, the production keeps Shakespeare's original text, changing only time and place. This way, McKee said, audiences will realize Shakespeare was not an elitist writer.

"He wrote some of the dirtiest, most bawdy, silly stuff also," she said.

This play in particular capitalizes on Shakespeare's riotous sense of humor, Johnston said.

Shakespeare wrote "A Midsummer Night's Dream" after "Romeo and Juliet." McKee believes Shakespeare needed a comic release after the tragedy of the star-crossed lovers.

"It shows how silly one can be when one says, 'I'll kill myself if I can't have you,'" McKee said. "It's a direct contrast to 'Romeo and Juliet.'"

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