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## A MIDSUMMER SATURDAY NIGHT'S FEVER DREAM

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WOW!

"If we offend, it is with our good will, that you should think, we come not to offend, but with good will."

The prologue is straight out of Shakespeare, but after that, you know you're in Troubies Land as the strains of "Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' alive, stayin' alive. Ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin' alive" fill the Falcon Theatre ... and the Troubadour Theater Company's latest crowd-pleaser A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever Dream is off and running.



As its title suggests, A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever Dream follows the tried-and-true Troubies format of taking a classic Shakespeare plot, adding to it songs made famous in a certain John Travolta movie classic, and spicing the mix with the wild-and-crazy humor that has made Matt Walker and his Troubies L.A. legends (and inspired their very own Scenie category).



Saturday Night Fever's "Stayin' Alive" proves the perfect tune to introduce Shakespeare's cast of characters to a 1977 Bee Gees-style disco beat. There's Theseus, Duke of Athens (Morgan Rusler) and his glamazon queen Hippolyta (Suzanne Jolie Narbonne); sweet young thing Hermia (Katherine Malak), steadfastly refusing the demands of her "barely alive" father Egeus (Mike Sulprizio) to marry blond hottie Demetrius (Joseph Leo Bwarie), her heart full of true love for boy-next-door cutie Lysander (Tyler King); bespectacled girl nerd Helena (Beth Kennedy), yearning with unrequited love for Demetrius; and the band of strolling thespians known here as The 99%—Peter Quince (Matt Walker), Nick Bottom (Rick Batalla), Flute (Rob Nagle), Snout (Sulprezio), and Starveling (Lisa Valenzuela)—to put on a show-within-a-show.



As in the Shakespeare original, the mismatched lovers head off into a forest ruled over by Faerie King Oberon (Matt Merchant) and Queen Titania (Monica Schneider). There, more or less per Oberon's orders, the mischievous Puck (Walker) applies a magical flower juice to the eyes of several of the forest visitors, causing each to fall instantly in love with the very first person he or she sees upon awakening. Thus both Lysander and Demetrius find themselves smitten with Helena (to a pouting Hermia's dismay), and Titania falls head over heels for Bottom, whom Puck's magic has turned into a donkey-eared ass.

Since this is *A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever's Dream*, all of the above unfolds in classic Troubies fashion, with plenty of quips, double entendres, and ad-libs (or lines scripted to sound like ad-libs). Egeus gives Hermia "twenty-four hours to die ... or Stayin' Alive." A Latino Starveling carries a bag of oranges inside his coveralls because, "I moonlight at offramps." Quince gives the members of his band of mostly female faeries nicknames like Hairy Faerie, Scary Faerie, and Very Very Very Faerie. Hottie Demetrius inspires, "When I look at you I see the boy band One Direction all wrapped up in one." Oberon's "Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull" gets paraphrased as "Be it on lion or tiger or bear," the better to inspire the Wizard-Of-Ozian response, "Oh my!" Bottom's transformation from human to donkey hybrid prompts him to riff off the '70s TV show *Hee Haw*. And in one obviously ad-libbed line, the Troubies head honcho cracked the Opening Night joke that "Steven Stanley's gonna get a cramp for writing so much." (Yes, indeed, I do take notes at a Troubies show or suffer the consequences of a specifics-free review.)



With musical director Eric Heinly and his onstage band (Dana Decker, Kevin McCourt, and Linda Taylor) providing tiptop backup, *A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever Dream* features a potpourri of Saturday Night Fever classics: "Boogie Shoes," "Night Fever," "Jive Talkin'," "If I Can't Have You," "How Deep Is Your Love," "More Than A Woman," and "Disco Inferno."

If Act One ties up virtually every one of Shakespeare's original plot threads (leaving one to wonder what could possibly be left), there is ample reason to return post-intermission, since virtually all of Act Two revolves around Quince and his Rude Mechanicals' Tale Of Pyramus And Thisbe, with a buxom 6'4" "Thisbe" (Nagle's Flute in busty, pigtailed drag) towering over Batalla-as-Bottom's considerably more petite Pyramus—and plenty of physical comedy thrown in for good measure.



Not surprisingly, the entire cast of *Troubies* (Batalla, Liz Beebe, Bwarie, dance captain Joseph Keane, Kennedy, King, Malak, Merchant, Nagle, scene-stealing pug Roosevelt "Roo" Nagle-Allyn, Narbonne, Rusler, Schneider, Sulprizio, Valenzuela, and Walker) are once again at the top of their comedy triple-threat game and a shoo-in for one of this coming September's two sure-thing "Best Ensemble Performance—*Troubies*" Scenies, as is Walker for his guaranteed "Best Direction Of A *Troubies* Show" Scenie for A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever Dream and last year's holiday-themed Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindoor.



Cheers and applause go out to choreographer Molly Alvarez, who has turned this cast of movers and dancers into bona fide disco-era dance whizzes. Lighting designer Jeremy Pivnick and scenic designer Jeff McLaughlin add color and pizzazz to the proceedings, while Sharon McGunigle once again proves herself a design dazzler with her supremely imaginative collection of costumes. Prop designer Corey Womack and sound designer Robert Arturo Ramirez deserve snaps as well, with live effects provided by Valenzuela on the slide whistle.

Shelley Stevens is stage manager and Mike Jespersen technical director.

Past *Troubies* Shakespeare take-offs have included *Two Gentlemen Of Chicago*, *Fleetwood Macbeth*, *As U2 Like It*, and *Much Adoobie Brothers About Nothing*, and with Bwarie now back from five years starring as *Jersey Boys'* Frankie Valli, *Measure Four Seasons Measure* ought to be on Walker & Company's must-do list. In the meantime, *A Midsummer Saturday Night's Fever Dream* is guaranteed to keep audiences laughing throughout its guaranteed-to-be-sold-out run.

Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Drive, Burbank. Through July 7. Fridays at 8:00, Saturdays at 4:00 and 8:00, and Sundays at 4:00 and 7:00. Reservations: 818 955-8101

[www.falcontheatre.com](http://www.falcontheatre.com)

—Steven Stanley

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Photos: Chelsea Sutton

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