

After the Dream by Richard Macaulay

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First performed 9th February 2002 by Taunton Thespians

Won the UK National Festival of Community Theatre
Geoffrey Whitworth Trophy for Best Original Script 2002

After

the

Dream

a play in one act

by Richard Macaulay

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Drama Association of Wales/Cymdeithas Ddrama Cymru
Unit 2, The Maltings
East Tyndall Street
Cardiff CF24 5EA
WALES
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)29 2045 2200
Email: info@dramawales.org.uk
www.dramawales.org.uk

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CHARACTERS

PUCK
WILL SLOWLY
THOMAS CROOKSHANK
ANN PAGE
MEG TANSY
NICK BOTTOM
FRANCIS FLUTE
TITANIA
OBERON
Cobweb, Mustardseed, and Peaseblossom

Morning, afternoon, night and dawn in a glade in a wood near Athens. Midsummer, ten years after the Dream.

The single set is envisaged as a shadowy depth of hung leafy netting with sackcloth tree trunks, behind a shallow acting area, and from which the spirits of the wood may emerge.

SCENE ONE

LIGHTS UP. BRIGHT MIDSUMMER MORNING

A THREAD OF MUSIC. PUCK APPEARS, LOOKS AWAY OFFSTAGE, SMILES AND BECKONS, GATHERING THEM IN. ALL THIS OF HIS MAKING. WAITS, WATCHES, THEN STEPS AWAY BETWEEN THE TREES AS THE FIRST OF THE PLAYERS ARRIVES. MUSIC ENDS.

WILL SLOWLY, A SMALL NIMBLE GOOD-HEARTED MAN. AND THOMAS CROOKSHANK, TALLER, WITH A LEAN SARDONIC LOOK ABOUT HIM. BOTH OF THEM NOW EXHAUSTED WITH RUNNING, WEIGHED DOWN WITH CLOTH BUNDLES AND STAGE PROPS; SWORDS, SPEARS, SHIELDS AND BRIGHT BANNERS. WHICH THEY DROP ANYWHERE. THEN COLLAPSE, SEPARATELY.

WILL: (BETWEEN GASPS) Oh! Oh me! Oh disaster! Misery! Oh me!

THOMAS: Don't talk. Breathe.

WILL: Can't help it. Open my mouth, words come out.

THOMAS: Don't breathe then.

WILL: I'll die!

THOMAS: We'd all be better off...

WILL: How far was it this time? Five miles? Ten?

THOMAS: One. Maybe a bit more.

WILL: One? Never!

THOMAS: As if it mattered...

WILL: I'm out of condition.

THOMAS: You're out of everything. Brains, talent, money, hope... Look at yourself! No... Don't.

WILL: I'll grant you the money. Are we safe now?

THOMAS: I doubt it... Ah... One more.

(ANN PAGE ENTERS. YOUNG, PRETTY, ALSO BURDENED. SHE SITS ON ONE OF HER BUNDLES, GETTING HER BREATH BACK)

WILL: Ann... Ann, I'm sorry! I'd have waited, except I'm a coward.

ANN: It doesn't matter

THOMAS: Where's Meg?

ANN: Coming.

WILL: You mean they didn't catch her? I thought surrender was what she was best at.

ANN: Will...

WILL: No, all right. I'm sorry. At least she's the only one of us making any money. No profits in playacting.

ANN: Not after today.

WILL: Disaster!

THOMAS: Speaking of which... On cue for once. Meg Tansy. Travelling light I see as always.

(MEG TANSY ENTERS. A DARKER MORE AUTUMNAL BEAUTY. ORNATE JEWEL BOX UNDER ONE ARM)

MEG: My loves! So here you all are! All safe and sound? Splendid! Dearest Will, is this my bundle? We wouldn't want to go sitting on anything of yours now, would we?

WILL: It's all right, Meg. My fleas don't talk to your fleas any more. Can't afford the prices.

MEG: Dear heart...

ANN: No, wait a minute... Where's Nick?

MEG: I thought he was with you.

THOMAS: Not with us.

MEG: Where then?

ANN: Last time I saw him he was still on stage, shouting them down to finish his soliloquy.

THOMAS: They've caught him. Must have.

MEG: Oh, no! Thomas, no.

THOMAS: Must have.

ANN: It's not fair! All that for the price of a few miserable meals and a night's lodging.

WILL: Well, not exactly that. There was those few flagons of ale besides. And the chickens in hot sauce. And the game pies. And you and the innkeeper's wife, Thomas. That was asking for trouble! No wonder he set the watch on us. We'd enough debts and crimes between us, let alone the playacting, to be worth a beating any day of the week, hanging matter if the world turned spiteful.

ANN: But the play was going so well! Why didn't they let us finish it?

MEG: Athenians, my dear. Waste of time. The Greeks know nothing about theatre.

THOMAS: Florence was better.

MEG: Ah, Florence! And Padua... And Naples...

THOMAS: Navarre. The courts of the King of Spain.

WILL: Constantinople. I liked Constantinople.

MEG: Whatever for?

WILL: I don't know. Never could think of a reason.

ANN: Venice...

About the playwright

Richard Macaulay (1929-2005) enjoyed a life-long passion for, and knowledge of, both history and drama, which is evident in his plays. Based in Somerset, he took great pleasure in sharing this enthusiasm with many talented friends in various theatre companies and in numerous productions. He was delighted by the national recognition his award winning plays received.

After the Dream

The play is a mini sequel to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Nick Bottom, still partly in thrall to his experiences in the wood, has become a travelling play actor, leading a ragbag company gathered up over the years on the road. Now, ten years later, he returns to Athens. His career has been neither a financial nor a dramatic success, and, after yet another disaster, he and his players find themselves sheltering in the same woodland glade of the Pyramus rehearsals ten years earlier. The apparent accident of their coming is in fact Puck's doing, at Oberon's behest, obeying Titania's wishes. And the action of the play concerns Titania's making amends for the turmoil she has caused to Bottom's life, now perhaps at its ending. The individual members of his company are also guided by her to their own destinations in life. But not before she has witnessed Bottom's performance of his rewrite of the death scene from 'Albert the Dane'. The aim of the piece is a mixture of comedy and pathos, and an echo of the enchantment of Bottom's first meeting with the spirits of the wood.

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teresa@dramawales.org.uk leon@dramawales.org.uk