



Extracts from reviews published in *Cahiers Élisabéthains*

Compiled by Jodie BLIN
(Université Montpellier 3)

CE 30 (1986), p. 89-90 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Cheek by Jowl, Donmar Warehouse, 5 June 1986. (By Jill Pearce)

"Miss Flute was anti-violence and threw away Bottom's sword, which meant he had to mime killing himself, a graphic comic rendering of the act which had the audience in stitches."

CE 36 (1989), p. 109-11 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by John Caird at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 19 August 1989. (By Peter J. Smith)

"'Pyramus and Thisbe' was slapstick as usual – Dhobi Oparei's Moonshine creeping quietly about during Pyramus' death speech only to slip in Thisbe's gown and crash headlong into one of the columns supporting the marquee."

CE 40 (1991), p. 110-12 *Le Songe d'une Nuit d'été*, ballet de John Neumeier d'après Shakespeare, musiques de Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdi et Györgyi Ligeti, chorégraphie et mise en scène de John Neumeier, décors et costumes de Jürgen Rose, créé à l'Opéra de Paris le 5 mai 1982, repris du 30 mai au 12 juin 1991. (Par Guy Boquet)

« Entrés sur la danse des clowns, les artisans vont jouer une irrésistible parodie de danse classique sur des airs de *La Traviata* : Bottom-Pyrame (Fabrice Bourgeois), cabotine en cuirasse sur gilet de flanelle sous un casque à panache défraîchi, Flûte-Thisbé (Thierry Mongne) en perruque filasse à longues nattes singe les ballerines en ratant toutes ses pointes, le tailleur et le chaudronnier soutiennent le mur aux moellons apparents dont l'autre face est peinte d'un guéridon et d'une chaise d'où Thisbé fait semblant de coudre avec un coup de caisse chaque fois qu'il tire le fil, le menuisier en collant rose a une crinière de lion, un pagne, des bracelets et des chevillières en paillons dorés, le charpentier est couvert d'une toile grise parsemée d'étoiles et porte au bout d'une perche un ballon solaire rayonnant avant de le changer pour un ballon lunaire esquissant un visage, mais quand vient l'heure tragique le mur se fait aussi ciel gris semé d'étoiles. »

CE 46 (1994), p. 97-100 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, by Benjamin Britten, opera in three acts, libretto by Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears after William Shakespeare (Aix-en-Provence Festival Production 1991 and 1992, directed by Robert Carsen, design Michael Levine, lighting David Cunningham, choreography Matthew Bourne and Catherine

White), Ensemble Orchestral de Paris conducted by Stewart Bedford, Opéra Berlioz, Le Corum, Montpellier 13 April 1994. (By Angela Maguin)

"Pyramus dies accompanied by other-worldly chords developing into grotesque braying. An agile flute playing with a muted trumpet accompanies Thisbe's last moments."

CE 47 (1995), p.121-22 *Le songe d'une nuit d'été*, adaptation, mise en scène et scénographie Denis Llorca ; costumes Mine Barral-Vergez, musique Hervé Llorca et Antonio Vivaldi, lumière Eric Fassa. Centre Culturel Jean Houdremont à la Courneuve, 30 Janvier 1995. (By Guy Boquet)

« La pantomime abonde en effets comiques, de l'air ingénue du mur qui doit se faire souffler ce qu'il doit faire aux commentaires rassurants du lion sur son identité, avant le double suicide des amants laissant Thisbé allongée sur le corps de Pyrame sous l'épée de bois fatale qui dresse sa poignée et sa garde comme une croix de bois de cimetière militaire. »

CE 56 (1999), p.88-89 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Michael Boyd for the RSC, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 23 April 1999. (By Peter J. Smith)

"‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ worked well thanks largely to a high tragic performance from Orlando Wells’s Flute, who played Thisbe. The comic juxtaposition between Flute’s practiced am-dram and Bottom’s theatrical self-importance ruptured the insert play into a series of laughable moments (Daniel Ryan played Nick Bottom) overseen by Peter Kelly’s Quince who stood looking on, chain smoking.”

CE 57 (2000), p.105-107 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Richard Monette, designed by Teresa Przybylski, Festival Theatre, Stratford, Ontario, 14 June 1999. (By William T. Liston)

"The Performance of Pyramus and Thisbe was, as always, marked by ineptitude. It should not be taken as negative criticism if I say that it lacked originality; rather, the fun was rich, and the jokes were made cleanly and economically, not marred by overdoing and repetition. Moonshine’s dog broke in half, as did Pyramus’ sword, the broken half still dangling as Bottom handed it to Thisbe."

CE 59 (2001), p.123-125 *Le songe d'une Nuit d'été*, compagnie du Soleil Bleu, mise en scène Laurent Laffargue, texte français Jean-Michel Déprats, Théâtre Jean Vilar à Suresnes les 10 et 28 novembre 2000. (Guy Boquet)

« La parodie est farcie de lazzi : Thisbé perd sa perruque en fuyant, Pyrame se frappe au cœur une dizaine de fois avant de tomber, mais la mort de Thisbé crée un instant tragique, vite interrompu par le départ des artisans et des nobles et les appels de Puck à l’indulgence du public conquis. »

CE 62 (2002), p.107-108 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Mike Alfreds, The Globe, London, 6 June 2002. (Peter J. Smith)

"Carried away by the excitement of appearing on stage, Jem Wall’s hitherto quietly spoken and timid Wizard of Oz Lion went berserk and rugby-tackled the fleeing Thisbe – his mane falling off."

CE 63 (2003), p.126-129 *Le songe d'une nuit d'été*, traduction en japonais de Yushi Odashima, mise en scène de Yukio Ninagawa, Maison de la culture du Japon, Paris, 12 octobre 2002. (Guy Boquet)

« Snug se précipite sur Thisbé qui s'enfuit en perdant son kimono, que Snug fait tournoyer avant de le laisser à terre. Pyrame le prend, tente de l'endosser, l'allonge sur le sol, se déchausse, ouvre sa veste et place son épée sous le bras droit après avoir changé de côté.

La lune salue et emporte son petit chien. Thisbé se promène, voit enfin Pyrame, lui caresse les jambes en remontant et se heurte à l'épée pour comprendre enfin qu'il est mort. De côté, Quince la dirige souvent du geste, pour l'amener à se mettre sous le bras de l'épée de Pyrame. »

CE 63 (2003), p.131-133 *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*, translated by Jean-Michel Déprats, directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski, Théâtre National de Nice, 8th March 2003. (Margaret Llasera)

"The play-within-the-play was tragic rather than comic, the deaths of Pyramus and Thisbe (Stéphane Gasc) emphasizing the pain of true, thwarted love."

CE 64 (2003), p.94-95 *Le songe d'une Nuit d'été*, adaptation française et mise en scène de Pierre Sourdive, au Théâtre du Chevaleret, Paris, le 22 mars 2003. (Guy Boquet)

« Après les scènes du mur et du croissant de lune, Snug ôte un instant son masque, le remet, suit de près Thisbé et lui arrache son écharpe ; elle s'enfuit ; Pyrame voit l'écharpe, croit Thisbé morte, se poignarde vite à l'épée, dit plusieurs fois qu'il meurt avant de s'allonger sur le sol ; Thisbé revenue le voit, prend son épée et tombe morte sur lui, mais Pyrame se relève devant certaines réflexions des nouveaux mariés athéniens sur les marches. »

CE 67 (2005), p.78-79 *Un songe, une nuit d'été...*, d'après Shakespeare, adaptation et traduction de Benoîte et Pauline Bureau, mise en scène de Pauline Bureau, au Théâtre du Ranelagh, Paris, le 5 janvier 2005. (Guy Boquet)

« Après la scène du mur, où Flute/Thisbé porte une longue robe claire, il ôte sa robe pour n'être plus qu'en slip quand il a fui le lion : après avoir parlé à l'homme à la lanterne, Bottom/Pyrame voit cette robe et après de grands gestes tire un poignard dont il finit par se frapper : Flûte/Thisbé revient, d'abord derrière le rideau, puis prend le poignard et s'en frappe, à demi caché par le rideau. »

CE 67 (2005), p.80-81 *Le songe d'une nuit d'été*, traduction de Jean-Michel Déprats, mise en scène de Sophie Lorotte, au théâtre Mouffetard, Paris, le 6 janvier 2005. (Guy Boquet)

« Frédéric Souterelle arrive en Bottom/Pyrame en costume et chapeaux extravagants et il prendra un débouchoir en caoutchouc en guise de poignard pour frapper sa poitrine dénudée. Stéphane Brel-Thisbé porte une énorme perruque et un costume encore plus extravagant, avec deux entonnoirs en métal en guise de seins, et laisse tomber une écharpe. À son tour, elle prendra le débouchoir pour s'effondrer près de lui, mais tous deux se relèvent quand Thésée donne son avis avant le retour de tous sur la scène pour un salut en musique dansé sur la chorégraphie de Louise Ekland et le dernier rappel de Puck au public. »

CE 68 (2005), p.79-81 *Le songe d'une nuit d'été*, traduction, adaptation et mise en scène de Fabrice Eberhard, au Théâtre Les Enfants Terribles, Paris, 9 juin 2005. (Guy Boquet)

« Bottom-Pyrame porte une petite veste rouge et pointe un poignard sur sa poitrine avant de le faire glisser sous son bras, gesticule, vient près de Thésée et s'effondre avant que Thisbé, le voyant mort, prenne le fourreau du poignard pour faire semblant de s'en poignarder. »

CE Special Issue (2007), p. 38-39 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Tim Supple for Dash Arts/ British Council, The Swan, 12 June 2006. (By Elinor Parsons)

"Flute (Joyraj Bhattacharya) wore a full-length dress and he gave a sincere performance as Thisbe, rather than a comic one as Flute-playing-Thisbe. The tragedy of *Pyramus and Thisbe* was emotionally engaging. Bhattacharya's native language removed the crass

rhymes and Thisbe's lament sounded musically genuine. The theatre audience's emotional connection with Thisbe was also made possible by the stage audience's still and focused attention. [...] The couples' attentive body language (facing the same way as most of the Swan audience) ensured that more attention was given to the mechanicals' play than to the observers' responses."

CE 72 (2007), p.53-56 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Christopher Luscombe, Open Air Theatre, London, 8 June 2007. (Poonperm Paitayawat)

"Other brilliantly improvised comical moments were when Talbot's Bottom waved at the roaring airplane in the sky as he impersonated Pyramus and exclaimed 'Now am I fled / My soul is in the sky' (V.1.294-95) or when the already dead Bottom/Pyramus rolled over to the other side of the stage to fetch a sword for Flute/ Thisbe to commit suicide. This caused enthusiastic laughter in the audience."

CE 72 (2007), p.78-80 *Le Songe d'une Nuit d'été*, directed by Jean-Claude Fall for La Haute Ecole de théâtre de suisse romande La Manufacture (Lausanne), Festival « Le Printemps des comédiens », Théâtre d'O, Studio Gabriel Monent, Montpellier, 10 June 2007. (Nathalie Crouau and Gaëlle Ginestet)

"When Pyramus lay dying, Moonshine raised the lamp above her head, attempting suicide by hanging herself with the wire."

CE 74 (2008), p. 69-70 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Jonathan Munby, The Globe, London 21 May 2008. (By Michael P. Jones)

"The return to the action allowed Bottom the stage for his solipsistic dying speech (V.285-300). He roved the whole stage and mutilated himself limb by limb only to end up lying centre-stage with a sword protruding upright from between his legs. This provided a particular resonance to Thisbe's (Peter Bankolé) 'Asleep my love?' (V.1.318)."

CE 75 (2009), p.74-75 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gregory Doran for the RSC, The Courtyard Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 13 November 2008. (By Kath Bradley)

"In addition it was occasionally difficult to spot the join between the over-acting of Joe Dixon's Nick Bottom and his Pyramus, who was an unconscionable time dying."

CE 77 (2010), p. 74-75 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by John Dillon, Georgia Shakespeare Festival, Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia, 30 July 2009. (By Charles Whitworth)

"Chris Kayser's Monty Pythonesque hacking himself to bits in Pyramus' suicide was just one of the many over-the-top moments. No one was complaining. His snorting and sighing when enlaced in Titania's arms was sufficient to convey Bottom's asinine ecstasy; any more ostentatious vulgarity was not required."

CE 78 (2010), p. 95-96 *Le Songe d'une Nuit d'été [A Midsummer Night's Dream]*, directed by students of the performing Arts Department of Université Paul-Valéry with Alain Chambon, Gérard Liéber, Philippe Goudard, Laurent Berger and Joëlle Chambon, théâtre de la Vignette, Montpellier, France, 3 June 2010. (By Janice Valls-Russell)

"Some memory of this gender-crossing experience (as well as an echo of Peter Brook's staging of the play in 1970) seemed to resurface when, playing Pyramus, she thrust her arm with clenched fist up between Wall's legs – to the perplexity of Flute/Thisbe (Fanny Honoré), who evidently did not know the codes and was so taken in by the acting that she subsequently sobbed as she anticipated both Bottom/Pyramus' and her own suicides."

CE 80 (2011), p. 74-75 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Nancy Meckler for the Royal Shakespeare Company, The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 15 August 2011. (By Eoin Price)

"Bottom, too, drew attention to his nether regions when, in the elaborate death of Pyramus, he stabbed himself in the penis; but the pièce de resistance of penis jokes occurred when Flute/Thisbe, in death, fell head first into the crotch of Bottom/Pyramus."

CE 80 (2011), p. 90-91 *En Attendant Le Songe [Waiting for the Dream]* after *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, translated by Marie-Paule Ramo, directed by Irina Brook, Le Petit Théâtre de Paris, Paris, 21 May 2011. (By Gaëlle Ginestet)

"Of course, a character with a scrubbing brush on his helmet and killing himself with a plunger cannot but trigger roars of laughter in the audience, especially when he so ardently wants to be the star of the show that he plays his suicide five times. The result was that the poor Thisbe had to make her entrance five times as well and looked very bothered."

CE 81 (2012), p. 48 *Midzomernachtdroom*, directed by Theu Boemans for Het Nationale Toneel, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, 10 January 2012. (By Coen Heijes)

"In the play-in-a-play, first Hippolyta was visibly moved as Bottom spoke the line 'She lived, and laughed, and was so passionate'; emotionally overcome, she rose from her seat and – when Bottom died – grasped his hand."

CE82 (2012), p. 52 *En Midsommernatts Drom*, directed by Peer Perez Oian, for the Bergen Festival, Studio Theatre, The National Theatre, Bergen, Norway, 5 June 2012. (By Stuart Sillars)

"... the Pyramus and Thisbe interlude. The parody is direct here, introduced by the actor-director as being a postmodern historical deconstruction of ideological excess. It's parody, and is funny as such – and yet, when two characters start waving flags, one European, one far eastern, we can't help feeling the immediacy of the story. After 1989, 'the wall is down that parted their fathers' can never be the same again."