

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by William Shakespeare

Tom Mills – Sound Designer and Composer

Talk a little bit about your vision for this production?

As the production is set in a 1960s Hollywood film studio, the music lends itself to being created in that epic, cinematic style. Using *Cleopatra* as inspiration I am aiming to produce a sound at the beginning of the play that is reminiscent of those sound staged film scores. This style will then become dissolved and refracted with the pop culture of the time as we enter the dream through the imagination of Puck. The music that I compose will marry up with existing, well known pieces and songs from the 60s to create a definite sound for the show. I will be making soundscapes to accompany and underscore the action along with mashing up the sounds of film clatter, distortion and white noise to create new effects. The most important aspect is that it sounds fun and magical.

How have you chosen to respond to the songs in the play?

We are using Shakespeare's words for the fairies song – 'Philomel, with Melody...' – and setting them to a bebop vibe: think *Mr Sandman* by the Chordettes. This will be on the radio whilst the fairies join in to sing Titania to sleep. Bottom's song will be replaced with *Up On The Roof* by Kenny Lynch.

What are the challenges of composing music for a Shakespeare play?

In my limited experience I find Shakespeare plays quite easy to accompany with music, especially the sung and rhyming aspects of them. There is such a definite rhythm to the words. Usually the challenge is to try not to flood the piece with too much music. Depending on the style of production, less is often more. I tend to saturate the play with music and then take bits away as we go through the production week.

Who are your influences as a composer?

I'm a big fan of Sufjan Stevens. He crosses over in many genres of music and always makes a sound with interest and depth. Jon Brion is a film composer who I enjoy and listen too a lot for inspiration. The big ones: Danny Elfman, Randy Newman always write classic scores. Damon Albarn is a great source for combining ideas. Peter, Bjorn and John and Sigur Ros are favourites of mine too.

What three works of art (books, paintings, films – anything!) would you take to a desert island?

Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind, *Donnie Darko* and *Shanteram*.