

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has two main plot lines, both controlled largely by Oberon, the fairy king, and his mischievous and somewhat incompetent servant, Puck.

In one, Oberon intervenes in the lives of two pairs of human lovers, causing (through Puck's error) considerable chaos before they are happily (if artificially) paired up properly.

In the other, Oberon uses the same magic on his wife Titania, out of malice, to pay her back for refusing him an entirely self-ish request: he gives her a powerful aphrodisiac drug to make her fall hopelessly in love with, and give herself sexually to, the first person (or animal) she sees on waking up.

This turns out to be Bottom, the bumbling star of an amateur theatre company. Oberon's revenge, and Titania's humiliation, are sharpened by the fact that Puck, as a joke, has changed Bottom's head into that of a donkey, before she wakes up.

Shakespeare's play is (perhaps magically) remembered as a charming fairy tale. It is not. The male lovers veer between domineering possessiveness and vicious hatred of their female partners. The women, the two human lovers and the fairy queen, are all humiliated, and all debase themselves, for love.

Love is a fiction, the play seems to suggest, a drugged illusion, a dark fairytale. But perhaps the stronger fictions of poetry and myth can carry us through. Perhaps, if we understand stories, we can choose which ones we inhabit. Perhaps we can be free.

Our play replays the Shakespeare story, and seeks to resolve its bitter satire on romantic love through reference to poets, Indian myth, and the poetry of Shakespeare himself. The Indian myth is a tale of the childhood of Krishna; it is a myth of comprehension: of suddenly, joyfully, seeing the big picture.

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Krishna:

"Creatures rise and creatures vanish;  
I alone am real, Arjuna,  
looking out, amused, from deep  
Within the eyes of every creature.  
I am the goal, the root, the witness,  
Home and refuge, dearest friend,  
Creation and annihilation,  
Everlasting seed and treasure.  
I am the radiance of the sun, I  
Open or withhold the rainclouds,  
I am Immortality and  
Death, am being and non-being.  
All your thoughts, all your actions,  
All your fears and disappointments,  
Offer them to me, clear-hearted;  
Know them all as passing visions.  
Let your thoughts flow past you, calmly;  
Keep me near, at every moment;  
Trust me with your life, because I  
Am you, more than you yourself are."

From the *Bhagavad Gita*, translated by Stephen Mitchell

# actors, eat no onions!

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* turned inside out

A new play by Deirdre Burton, Tom Davis, and  
William Shakespeare

for

Somesuch Theatre Company  
www.somesuchtheatre.com

running time 2 hours (including 15 minute interval)

the actors are:

angie barnbrook ~ titania  
geoff barnbrook ~ oberon, bottom  
eleanor dodson ~ fairy, lysander, lion, quince  
christa harris ~ fairy, titania, moon, starveling  
ramesh krishnamurthy ~ ramesh krishnamurthy\*  
jerry morrison ~ fairy, hermia, wall, snout  
becky peake-sexton ~ fairy, helena, thisbe, flute  
maryam sanjoori ~ fairy, oberon, pyramus, snug  
laura schofield ~ fairy, demetrius, bottom  
alex whiteley ~ puck

directed by deirdre burton and tom davis  
music ~ deirdre burton  
graphics and web design ~ tom davis

\*'krishnamurthy' means 'manifestation of krishna'

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"The world, the human world, you see, is entirely composed of stories. It is woven from narrative, threads that cross, all colours, a tapestry, those entangled tales; just imagine it, my dear. All the stories there are, or could be, plausible, implausible, the dance of fictions, here, everywhere, the air you breathe, the life that you live. Dreams.

Dreams?

Everybody dreams, my dear. Everyone. We have to: we have a built-in need for improbable fictions. And that's why we like stories so much, need them so much."

From the play *Limitless Bliss*, by Deirdre Burton and Tom Davis

