

A Midsummer Night's Dream
Written by William Shakespeare
Directed by Kristin Skye Hoffmann

Review by Gila Babich
Showbusiness Weekly

I stepped into the theater and was swallowed wholly by the world of the play, and was shaken only by violent fits of laughter.

Most notable in this small, well-cast production were Melissa Johnson as a whiny but charming Helena, and Bennett Harrell, who pulled off the role of Bottom in an exceptionally natural and hilarious manner. But Jake Paque stole the show in the role of Puck. His was a particularly hyperactive and flighty Puck who couldn't resist flirting with anything that moves, including unsuspecting audience members. Paque's high-energy performance charged the unfolding of events, and seamlessly tied together the different elements of the show. Even the actors with smaller roles owned their parts. Look out for the lion, played by Joshua David Bishop, whose upstart roars will make you convolute.

The production's modern take proves once and for all that Shakespeare's words are compelling even when his characters are rapping. With hip hop dancing fairies, timely screen projections and cell phones as props, this production pulls Shakespeare's timeless themes into real life, but does it without losing the surrealism of *A Midsummer Night*. The light design accentuates the magical quality of a play in which most characters think they are merely dreaming.

Minor stumbling over text on opening night could stand to be polished, and the play does lose some of its initial momentum as it nears the end, before picking up again for the finale. Overall, the combination of one of Shakespeare's funniest works, a fresh cast and Kristin Skye Hoffman's direction makes this *A Midsummer Night* well worth a trip to Queens.