

Performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the Homeless (and Others) in Paris

Isabelle Schwartz-Gastine, University of Caen, France

Abstract

The production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* given in March 2010 by the company Théâtre du Bout du Monde in Paris had an unusual cast composed of amateurs, helped by professionals. The two directors, Miguel Borrás and Philippe Guérin, have conducted workshops for amateurs in various locations: a bank, a primary school, a center for homeless people, an assisted living home for the elderly, and a ward for people struggling with mental illness at the local hospital. The members of these heterogeneous groups were given roles in the production despite their difficulties. Instead of trying to minimize or hide the disabilities of these amateurs, the directors integrated them into their dramaturgy, turning challenges into assets. The amateurs were paired with the professional members of the company, so that the mechanicals, the four Athenian lovers, and even Theseus, could rely on experienced actors if they failed to remember the details of their parts. Thanks to the inventiveness of the directors, this production managed to explore new perspectives of this play that resulted from the (dis)abilities of these amateurs, creating a strong impression of ensemble work.

Introduction

In March 2010, three performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a French version entitled *Le Songe d'une nuit de mai*¹ were given in the auditorium of a center devoted to Amateur Practices,² right in the middle of the fashionable district of Saint-Germain des Prés in Paris. Since the end of the nineteenth century, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has been the most frequently performed play of the Shakespearean canon in France. First considered as a romantic comedy and loosely adapted, often with a female Puck, in heavy elaborate sets (Théâtre de l'Odéon, 1886) or performed in continuity against painted backcloths (Camille de Sainte-Croix, the Founder of the Compagnie Française du Théâtre Shakespeare, 1912), the interpretations soon focused on the "rude mechanicals" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.2.9).³ The play became a favorite with travelling companies and open-air festivals, exploring the *vis comica* of the plot (Jean Dasté, 1957;

the Footsbarn Theatre, 1993, 2008; Paul Golub, 1995; Nele Praxilou, 2002). Even the Comédie-Française in Paris has performed the play in repertoire several times (influenced by Jan Kott's interpretation, Jacques Fabbri, 1965; conceived as an Argentinian tango, Jorge Lavelli, 1986; Muriel Mayette-Holtz, 2014). This season it is also in the repertoire of another subsidized theater separate from the Comédie-Française, in the south of France: the Théâtre National de Toulouse (Laurent Pelly). Amateur companies tend not to choose canonical plays; however, *Dream* is one of the exceptions (along with Molière's comedies), possibly because they think that their amateur acting can pass for the amateur skills of the mechanicals. Another reason, of course, is that the plot is very familiar to audiences.⁴ This particular staging, which had been performed before, attracted my attention because it was performed as part of a conference on Amateur Creation and presented very unusual characteristics.⁵ After a period of rehearsal (from January to May 2010), it premiered from 6-9 May 2010 in the Theatre of the Mairie, the Townhall of Nanterre, a suburb northwest of Paris, and again on 25 May at the Festival of Theatre and Companies in the same town. This staging took its inspiration from themes explored in the previous decade through a series of amateur workshops.

After introducing the directors and their workshops, I shall examine how some of them and their characters functioned and argue that far from being just another amateur staging or a charitable initiative, this production is a different exploration of the Shakespearean text, a valuable contribution to the already rich understanding of the play. We shall see that the production does these modern amateurs proud.

Workshops and the Play

This was a project of Théâtre du Bout du Monde, a company of professional actors based in Nanterre, that held several workshops there and in the adjacent tenth district of Paris. Le Théâtre du Bout du Monde (The Theatre of the Far End of the World) was founded in 1990 by Colombian-born Miguel Borrás, who trained at the National School of Acting of Paris (Le Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique); Philippe Guérin, a former student of the Charles Dullin School of Acting, who joined Ariane Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil for a time, and has since created several theater companies; and André Bonnet, who was not involved in this production.⁶ The Company had already staged twenty-six productions mixing street arts, drama, and music.

The company serves as a link between artists who have come to Paris from other countries. The company is therefore composed of many varied nationalities, artists who have trained in different circumstances and with different methods. The founding principle of the company is that

it should be fully integrated in the district where it is based and open to the ideas of its members, most of whom are local residents of this suburb of Paris. Borrás is strongly against any tendency to withdraw within closed communities. All can benefit from the exchange: the actors within the company, the actors within their new surroundings, and local people with each other, enabling all to acquire a keener knowledge of themselves.⁷ There are a few wage-earning posts in the company, but other members are brought in when needed for particular projects. These include professional actors who share Borrás's political and artistic outlook. Influenced by Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed,⁸ the company wants to reach people who otherwise feel excluded from society for personal, medical, or social reasons. Their aim is to prove that while these people might feel like social outsiders, they have the capacity to join together in a theatrical event. As stated in the presentation text of *Dream*, "Another thing dear to us is to mix people of varied origins and backgrounds around a theatrical play."⁹ Since 2002, one of Guérin's workshops has had an arrangement with the National Theatre of Nanterre (Le Théâtre des Amandiers),¹⁰ and with the town of Nanterre to work on extracts of one of the plays, which is performed in repertoire during the winter season. In 2009-2010, the stage manager and director of the Théâtre des Amandiers, Yannis Kokkos, staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the main auditorium with professional actors.¹¹

For the 2009-2010 season, the company chose to work on the theme of transformation: the transformation of a person through play-acting; the transformation of a person through love and desire; and the transformation of reality through theatrical illusion. This general theme was inspired by the work that Philippe Guérin had been doing on extracts of Shakespeare's comedy in some of his workshops.¹² Borrás and Guérin's final aim was to stage a play involving the participants from all their workshops in a single production.

Borrás and Guérin chose to use Pascal Collin's adaptation of *Midsummer Night's Dream* titled *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*, changing the title to *Le Songe d'une nuit de mai* because the month of May is referred to so often in Shakespeare's play. They felt that it was a clear version written in every day contemporary French, devoid of the numerous mythological allusions of the original, and thus it suited their purposes, those of their actors, and their potential spectators.¹³ The directors chose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because, as has been alluded to and will be detailed below, some of the participants had already worked on extracts and were familiar with some ideas in the play, and so would be better prepared to perform the longer version.

Four different workshops participated in the production. Except for one workshop in the north of Paris, the other three were based in the suburb of Nanterre and were largely supported and

subsidized by the local authorities. Philippe Guérin's "CASH" Workshop has been conducted bi-weekly at the local hospital in Nanterre since 1995. The workshop meets in a wing called the Center d'Accueil et de Soins Hospitaliers: Shelter and Hospital Care Center, or "CASH." The center helps people (not necessarily patients) with health or other problems on both a short and long-term basis. This center is a shelter for those who have no income or face difficulties living independently. Some participants have spent time in prison, struggle with drug, alcohol, and other addictions, or have been thrown out of their homes by parents, partners, or property owners. Others have been diagnosed with medical pathologies, including serious health problems resulting from old age, stroke, or psychiatric trauma. These pathologies limit the ability of those helped by the center to cope on their own. CASH also welcomes residents from the local retirement home. Some of these people may be transferred to the hospital if they need more care over time.

Guérin wants to get the best from his amateur actors without pushing them too far, so he must be aware of their physical, psychological, and mental situations, taking into account the possibility that some may be absent or tardy or have difficulty expressing themselves, relating to others, and learning their parts. However, his enthusiasm is without limits, and so is his flexibility to adjust to the moods and needs of workshop participants. Guérin's aim is to create a quality production with a group composed of heterogeneous long-term members, resulting from a common effort as the group coheres. The goals of this workshop are to strengthen the self-image and self-confidence of the participants, enable them to relate to the others through group activity, and help them realize that they have great potential.

The workshop concludes with Guérin's amateurs performing their extracts on the stage of Nanterre's prestigious professional theater. In exchange, they are invited to attend some rehearsal sessions of the play by the professional actors and attend one of their performances. For these amateurs, it is a marvelous experience to be able to see famous actors and directors in professional surroundings, to speak to them as equals, and to attend a performance with the general public. Attending this performance allows participants to forget the negative image that society usually sends back at them. Five of the six mechanicals, as well as Theseus and Titania, were members of this workshop.

Guérin also runs the EMMAÛS Workshop, based in the tenth district of Paris. It is part of the EMMAÛS Association, the well-known network set up by Abbé Pierre for the homeless.¹⁴ This workshop rehearsed the scenes featuring the four Athenian youths. It focused on the trials that Hermia and Helena face, first in Athens and then in the woods at night, and on the utter confusion that prevails for all four lovers. In the woods where the fairies rule, the four young Athenian

lovers find that values are changed without any apparent reason. The former vows of fidelity and friendship are twisted, and they cannot control anything in an environment that is ruthlessly against them.

The Performers

Guérin saw a parallel between the situation of Shakespeare's lovers in *A Midsummer Night Dream* and the situation of his workshop members, who live in a world that they find utterly hostile, the woods of the modern world, and within a completely hermetic situation they cannot always comprehend nor escape. However, the play is a comedy with all problems solved at the dénouement. Guérin wanted to show his workshop that life could turn out much better than they expected. He stressed the idea that transformation of the self is always possible, thanks to the work the members do through the play, which is a totally different kind of activity from their life on the street dealing with basic material needs. This workshop is a relief from an existence where members are excluded from many public places, a life that drags on endlessly without structure or purpose. People living on the margins of society want love and have sexual needs, just like everyone else. Should they try to have love in their lives or give up? According to Guérin, this play can give hope to participants who would like to find love someday because the misunderstandings between the lovers are over at the play's close, the horrors of wandering in a hostile wood end, and the four young Athenians find peace and happiness.

Guérin put the question of love and seduction in very blunt terms, because these are crucial problems for members of this workshop. How can people who have been homeless for some time, people whose appearance has suffered as a result, express feelings of attraction for someone with similar problems or for someone in mainstream society? Why should they be excluded from love, or rejected by their initial lovers as Helena is at the opening of the play and Hermia is in the tangled woods? Guérin wanted to show that his participants can be, like the four young Athenians, transformed by love and find the energy to achieve the things they want. Because there were more than four amateurs willing to perform these parts, each of the roles was shared to allow for the participation of all workshop members in the production. This device required other dramaturgical choices, which will be analyzed below.

Five little girls were cast as the fairies. They came from the theater workshop at the final year of the local primary school, L'école Paquerette (The Daisy School), which was directed by Stéphanie Correia, a professional actress and member of the Théâtre du Bout du Monde, who took the part of Hippolyta. Knowing that Shakespeare's fairies are male characters, according to old English folklore, Borrás first planned to present the girls as a set of undistinguishable, unsexed,

small creatures wearing similar dungarees, but he gave up this idea when he found that they were far too girlish to be convincingly unisexual. He instead chose to emphasize the girlish side of the fairies, presenting them in the image of fairies from Walt Disney cartoons. They wore huge, bright-yellow bows in their long hair that matched their ballet tulle skirts and shoes. To complete the visual cliché, they held magic wands in their hands as an ironic reminder of nineteenth-century fairies. More prosaically, the wands prevented the girls from fidgeting about or moving their arms without dramatic purpose. They hopped lightly up and down the stage in a charming group, provoking indulgent laughter from the audience.¹⁵

The set was created by children belonging to two distinct organizations, under the leadership of the visual artists Virginie Berland and Françoise Lemoine: the workshop of the local primary school (Ecole La Fontaine) and a local association called *Zy'va*, composed mostly of immigrant children.¹⁶ All of the children were asked to create a tree, taking inspiration from their own background. So there were African and South American trees side-by-side with traditional European pine-trees, all made up in transparent plastic material that shone according to the variation of the lighting. Together, the trees formed a strange place, full of frightening shadows which, in subdued lighting, was transformed into an exotic dreamland. Hanging from the rigging loft, the trees were lowered to the stage-floor during the woodland scenes. The professional actors themselves came from different countries with different backgrounds and had been trained in varied acting techniques. Spectators, however, could not have guessed this unexpected diversity, the result being so unified. There was more diversity in the colour of the actor's skins, from deep black to pale white, including two little girls of Chinese origin. The cast seemed to mirror humanity.

Professional actors were also asked to take part. All had a long standing connection with the company and understood the differences between this company and traditional professional theaters. They provided coherence to the production by helping the amateur participants sustain their parts. They were asked to learn all the parts in their scenes because their partners might know their words one day and forget them the next. Miguel Borrás told them to "serve your partners, help them to be as good as possible, and thus, their success will eventually be yours too, and you will also be successful thanks to them and what you have been able to bring them." Among the professionals, the actor playing Peter Quince, Emmanuel Peironnet, got his start in one of the workshops run by Philippe Guérin. He joined when he was homeless, worked with Guérin for a long time, then eventually became a professional actor.¹⁷

Here are some of the pairings of professional and amateur actors. Professionals Stéphanie Correia (Hippolyta), Isis Perrone (Hermia), Raymond Dikoumé (Demetrius), and Oumria Mouffok

(Helena) were paired with amateurs from the CASH or EMMAÛS workshops. The professional playing Oberon (Gora Diakhaté) had a particular status as the "king of shadows" because he mostly plays alone or with Puck, who certainly did not need any special care (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 3.2.348). Although technically an amateur, the senior playing the part of Puck, Catherine Bloch, then seventy-five, is extremely experienced. During her working career, Bloch was a leading member of the theater workshop that Miguel Borrás runs in the bank where she worked. She originally trained as a professional actress, winning First Prize at the National School of Acting and had some parts with the Charles Dullin Company. Bloch gave up professional acting to earn a dependable income for her family. Since retiring, she has been acting steadily in amateur productions, especially with this company.

The Roles

Instead of choosing actors to fit to a concept, Miguel Borrás and Philippe Guérin adjusted the staging to their participants. They took into account the abilities and impediments of their amateurs, both seeing their potential capacities for a role and finding solutions matched to a disabled actor's needs. This problem solving made sense of the play and created further meanings on aspects of the play. Rémi Clignet from the CASH workshop was cast as Theseus because of his tall stature and dignified attitude. A former academic, he had lost some memory as the result of a stroke and wears an audio-aid in his left ear.¹⁸ He has partly recovered his capacity to speak, but still has a throaty voice and walks with a hesitating jerk. Miguel Borrás explained that Clignet worked on the text, in connection with the gestures, during rehearsals — which helped him to remember his speeches when he was asked to repeat the movements he had memorized with the cast.

Clignet's part is all the more important because Theseus opens the play and sets the tone for the action, although he appears only in acts 1 and 5. His slow progression across the stage at the opening of the performance could be interpreted as the dignified gait of the victorious warrior against the Amazons, the proud ruler of Athens who progresses "with pomp" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1.19) to impress his people. Clignet's very cautious delivery increased his sense of authority, as if he were addressing the whole court in a very solemn manner, aware of the importance of every word in a context of his political leadership. He held a long stick topped with a metal sphere, which could be seen as the official emblem of sovereignty, but in fact the main purpose of this prop was to help him keep his balance.

For the opening scene of the play, Hippolyta (Stéphanie Correia, a professional actress) held Clignet's left arm on the audience side to support him physically as he entered. This gave the impression of a subdued wife-to-be, a valid portrayal of the character, though in conflict with

many feminist interpretations. The looks she cast at Theseus (she was always on the lookout in case something went wrong) could well be understood as a show of total surrender, admiration, and mutual love. This couple looked even more attuned to each other as, at the beginning of the first performance, Hippolyta finished off the end of a line that Clignet had forgotten as if the line were her own. I am sure this detail passed unnoticed by the members of the audience, but to me it expresses the intimate personal attention between these characters, proving their closeness to each other. It also proved the actress's ability to maintain the dignity of her partner, to give him support and confidence in his rendering of the part. The following evening, Theseus delivered his speech without help.

The situation of the four lovers in the Athenian wood can be confusing to spectators, so movement had to be as clear as possible. Because several amateurs were sharing the same role and because the scene is so complex, Philippe Guérin precisely choreographed the movements of his actors to help them remember the sequence. Splitting the parts had been a careful negotiation among his EMMAÛS workshop members because some did not want to give up lines to those they considered unable to perform the part. Guérin could not impose his views in an authoritarian manner, which would have put the amateurs off altogether. He found a strategy that did not hurt their dignity.

The directors emphasized Puck's role as the "wanderer of the night" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.1.43). It was one of Puck's pranks to change the actors playing the lovers, an echo of the mistake of having poured the magic juice over the eyes of the wrong Athenian. Puck moved close to the couples with a grin and a sneer, the lights were dimmed, and after having clapped her hands, Catherine Bloch led the amateur actors to seats in the first row of the auditorium, brought the other two on stage, and placed them on the same spot and in the same position, wrapping around the neck of the new pair of actors the scarves that identified the mark of each character. The trick was played and repeated several times, making it a component of the character of Puck, who thinks that the humans are fools and plays pranks on them for her amusement. The part of Lysander was given to three different amateur actors. Philippe Guérin had them all learn the whole part so that a player could be replaced more easily if someone did not come to perform, which is always a possibility. For stability, there was only one Helena, Oumria Moukkok, one of the professionals. She worked independently with each of her three Lysanders before she rehearsed with the three together.

Fatima was another member of the CASH workshop who had attended erratically, but she insisted on taking part in this production. She was cast as Hermia. Isis Perrone, a professional, shared the role and could take over if "Hermia bis" ("The Second Hermia," as they had nicknamed Fatima) failed to appear. The spectators did not know about this last-minute arrangement, nor were

they confused by it. When Fatima played her part, a new dimension was explored in this scene because Fatima and her Lysander were much older than is normally expected for these parts. This highlighted the fact that love and passion can strike mature people with the same intensity, urgency, and youthful naivety.

Five of the actors from the CASH workshop who had great personal difficulties were cast as the rude mechanicals. Philippe Guérin was extremely patient, though firm, when someone wanted to leave the premises to smoke a cigarette or go to the toilet just before they were due to play. The directors did not want the mechanicals to seem clumsy (a mistake often made by amateur actors), but used their disabilities to give a foundation to their parts and cohesion to the group. This is why the mechanicals played their parts in everyday clothes (oversized checked shirts and trousers or dungarees), and were asked to perform naturally, avoiding excessive caricature. For instance, Marie-Thérèse Boulogne,¹⁹ playing Snout, is missing her front teeth from years in the street. She is very difficult to understand. Boulogne worked hard on her elocution, but she played a very convincing Wall, a character who also has trouble being understood. Snout soon abandoned Wall's words for a pantomime.

Gérard Lacaille, playing Robin Starveling, was given Peter Quince's prologue to read as the interlude begins. Lacaille has a continuous tremor in his hands. He was not asked to stand behind the others or perform with his hands in his pockets, as some directors might suggest. He was placed right in front of the other actors at the beginning of the Epilogue, holding a piece of paper on which his role was supposed to be written. So, in the complete silence of this crucial moment, there was only the noise of the ruffling of paper in Lacaille's hands. That was understood as the fear and nervousness of a character who dared to present a performance at Court. The directors turned his impediment into an advantage that suited the message of this production.

Geoffrey cannot read or write, but he enjoyed being on stage, so the "slow of study" lion was the perfect part for him (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.2.56). There was even an extension of his part during the Epilogue. Here, Peter Quince played a lion tamer who cracked his long whip at the lion, which kept dancing in a circle with a supposedly fearful grunt as an ironic allusion to the mechanicals' earlier fear of frightening the ladies. The lion was non-threatening, and Geoffrey seemed delighted when performing. Philippe Guérin recalled the night when Geoffrey had not arrived by ten minutes before the performance. The other amateur-mechanicals were very upset, and Philippe Guérin was devising a solution when Geoffrey turned up. He was so pleased to have found his way in the suburban train, metro, and streets on his own that during the performance he transmitted tremendous energy to the rest of the mechanicals.

As with all the professional actors in the company, Emmanuel Peironnet as Peter Quince worked very closely with the amateurs in his scenes, in order to keep them focused on their parts. This necessity again produced meaning. Quince was not superseded by an over-enthusiastic Bottom who, in the prologue, keeps making all the mistakes Quince had corrected during the rehearsal in the woods. This Quince was very much in control of the situation, quietly helping with the cues and movements of his cast, even giving a knowing glance to the audience as if requiring their indulgence for the mechanicals' ineptness. Quince gave their scenes a spin that made any difficulties on the part of the amateur actors seem part of the performance.

Nick Bottom was also an outsider. A former homeless man and addict, Pascal Rico joined the workshops at a desperate time in his life. As the years went by, his desire to act developed with his talent. He is now employed by the company to lead workshops and projects for children and teenagers and teaches French to immigrants, among other activities. Acting and teaching drama have become important parts of his life, and indeed Bottom's cue, "Man is but an ass if he go about t'expound this dream" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* 4.1.201-202), can well apply to him. During the conference, Rico explained how difficult it had been for him to memorize his lines when he first started: he had to write them repeatedly in copy-books. This painstaking preparation was not in any way obvious on stage. Rico's performance was utterly natural both when he was alone, with the other mechanicals, and with Titania. A big bulk of a man in his early fifties, he filled the space, moving and shouting as the character is meant to do.

Philippe Guérin cast himself as Philostrate, taking responsibility for the rehearsal of the mechanicals' play. In the wings, he was a very considerate director, supporting all his actors and making last-minute adjustments necessary for his amateurs to keep the performance in line with the general action and meaning of Shakespeare's play. Comparisons between professional and amateur theater companies are inappropriate because each belongs to dramatically different spheres, but this difference makes amateur practices worth studying.

This production was even more special because the twenty-five performers came from very varied backgrounds, yet gave a great feeling of unity on stage. Indeed it was a challenge to put together some amateurs on the grounds that they co-exist in the same district (a north suburb of Paris) whether because they lived there (like the little girls from the local primary school) or because they had ended up in the local hospital, the adjoining seniors' residence, or homeless center. The directors of this unusual *Dream* used the capacities of their amateur actors and helped them discover that physical or mental disabilities can be an advantage and meaningful. None of these amateurs was considered as inferior or patronized in any way. They were all persons with their

own idiosyncrasies, which contributed to the creation of the project. In so doing, they built the self-esteem of their amateurs and produced further insights into the meaning of the play.

Conclusion

The Théâtre du Bout du Monde company is aptly named because some of the professional actors come from the other side of the world, and also because some of the amateurs have come a long way to find a space where they can express themselves and regain their dignity as human beings and get a new grip on society. Indeed, when one had attended the conference and heard the directors explain the set-up and composition of the various groups, or heard some of the participants speak about their experiences, one could not but admire the results on stage, where magic and artistry prevailed. This is what can happen when the director believes in the ability of all the members of the cast to go beyond what they had thought were limitations: It was a dream come true.

Notes

1. The translation/adaptation by Pascal Collin (2008), entitled *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*, was composed for Yann-Joël Collin's staging of the play at l'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe the same year.
2. MPPA = Maison des Pratiques Artistiques Amateurs, Etablissement Culturel de la Ville de Paris, Danse, Musique, Théâtre, Auditorium Saint-Germain, 4 rue Félibien, 75006 Paris (<http://www.mppa.fr> [accessed 2 July 2013]).
3. All references to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* come from the Norton Shakespeare, edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al.
4. See Jean Jacquot, *Shakespeare en France: Mises en scène d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (1964); Estelle Rivier, *Shakespeare dans la maison de Molière* (2012); Isabelle Schwartz-Gastine, *A Midsummer Night's Dream — William Shakespeare* (2002); and Marie-Madeleine Mervant-Roux, ed., *Du Théâtre Amateur: Approche historique et anthropologique* (2004).
5. Conference on Amateur Projects, 4-5 March 2010, "Rencontre autour d'une création singulière"; 4 March discussion: "Projet Social, Création Artistique: Duel ou Duo?"; 5 March discussion: "Amateurs, Professionnels: Confusion ou Collaboration?" I had been asked to contribute on Shakespeare and *Dream* in a presentation titled "Un amateur devenu professionnel (Shakespeare) met en scène une troupe d'amateurs (les artisans athéniens)" or "An amateur turned professional (Shakespeare) stages a company of amateurs (the Athenian mechanicals)." See the website of the company, below.
6. Phone call to Tristan Schumaker, 9 January 2014.

7. Théâtre du Bout du Monde, 3 rue des Aubépines, Nanterre, 92 000. Phone: 00 (0)1 47 84 23 38. Email: compagnie.tbm@gmail.com. Site: <http://compagnie-tbm.blogspot.com> [accessed 2 July 2013].
8. Site: <http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org> [accessed 2 July 2013].
9. Presentation of *Le Songe d'une nuit de mai*, read by Miguel Borrás, May 2010. The translation is mine.
10. Théâtre des Amandiers, 92000 Nanterre (Site: <http://www.nanterre-amandiers.com> [accessed 16 February 2012]).
11. Théâtre des Amandiers, *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été* Main Auditorium, 14 May to 16 June 2002. Staging, scenography, costumes: Yannis Kokkos; French text: Jean-Michel Déprats; lighting: Patrice Trottier; Choreographic movements: Richild Springer; Artistic collaboration: Anne Blancard; Assistant set: Muriel Trembleau; hairdressing, make up: Les Marandino; with: Gaël Chaillat, Guillaume Durieux, Alain Fromager, Laëtitia Lebacq, Antoine Mathieu, Jean-François Perrier, Dominique Pinon, Nicolas Pirson, Edith Scob, Bruno Sermonne, Richild Springer, Catherine Tartarin. (Site: <http://nanterre-amandiers.com> [accessed 16 February 2012]).
12. Philippe Guérin has had a long-standing connection with this comedy, as he took part in the production at the 1988 Valreas Theatre Festival, which used François-Victor Hugo's prose version of the play.
13. All the comments and quotes by Miguel Borrás and Philippe Guérin refer to my personal interview with them, dated 17 June 2011.
14. Association EMMAÛS: Site: <http://www.emmaus-france.org> [accessed 16 February 2012].
15. Contrary to the regulation concerning the professional stage, these children could take part in several performances running; they were in the care of a child-minder to keep them busy, quietly occupied in between their on-stage scenes.
16. *Zy'va* is a shortened slang form used by immigrant youth for *on y va*: "let's go."
17. During the 2008-2009 season, he took part in one of the productions of the Théâtre des Amandiers: *Les Fiancés de Loche*, by Georges Feydeau, staged by Jean-Louis Martinelli (see <http://www.nanterre-amandiers.com/2008-2009/les-fiances-de-loches> [accessed on 15 June 2013]). But his one-year status came to an end in June 2011, and he cannot claim much unemployment benefit as he has not had enough work days to meet with the requirements of the acting profession. In May 2012, along with other former members of the CASH workshop, he took part in a production entitled *Chantier Beckett*, which also was directed by Jean-Louis Martinelli, but was considered a mere amateur production (see <http://www.nanterre-amandiers.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/2018.pdf> [accessed 15 June 2013]).

18. In the DVD, he can be seen adjusting his audio-aid during the Epilogue.

19. She was one of the six actors involved in *Chantier Beckett*, see above, note 17.

Permissions

Figure 1. Hippolyta and Theseus in act 5, with the set featuring a tree behind them. Photograph, Tristan Schumaker.

Figure 2. Hippolyta and Theseus in act 1. Photograph, Tristan Schumaker.

Figure 3. Two Athenian Lovers in act 2: Helena and Lysander. Photograph, Tristan Schumaker.

Figure 4. Two Athenian Lovers in act 3. Photograph, Tristan Schumaker.

Figure 5. Three Mechanicals Rehearsing in the Woods: Flute, Snout, and Snug. Photograph, Tristan Schumaker.

Figure 6. The Mechanicals: Snug, Snout, The Prop Manager, Starveling (Gérard), Flute, and Peter Quince. Photograph, Tristan Schumaker.

Figure 7. The Mechanicals: Snug, Snout, Starveling, Flute, and Peter Quince. Photograph, Tristan Schumaker.

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