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Family Plays

The Rude Mechanicals

Freely adapted from Shakespeare's

A Midsummer Night's Dream

by

Ed Graczyk

The Rude Mechanicals

Premiered by the Pickwick Players of Midland
Community Theatre in Midland, Texas.

Fantasy. By Ed Graczyk. Freely adapted from Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. Cast: 8m., 1w., 1 either gender. With scant allegiance to the work of Shakespeare, this play takes many liberties with the Bard's text. In doing so, it achieves a comedy style of its own. Peter Quince the carpenter is out of work, and in his idleness, persuades his friends, "the rude mechanicals," to compete for a prize the duke is offering for a play to be performed in honor of his wedding. The rude mechanicals snatch at the chance to recoup their failing fortunes. Manipulated by Puck, a playful sprite, Quince writes a play about Pyramus and Thisbe and recruits the rude mechanicals to perform in it. It proves to be a riot and wins the prize. One unit set with changing properties. Elizabethan costumes. Approximate running time: 55 minutes. Code: RA5.

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(THE RUDE MECHANICALS)

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THE RUDE MECHANICALS

THE CAST

ROBIN GOODFELLOW

PETER QUINCE (a carpenter) Prologue in the play

SNUG (a joiner) Lion in the play

NICK BOTTOM (a weaver) Pyramus in the play

FRANCIS FLUTE (a bellows maker) Thisby in the play

TOM SNOUT (a tinker) Wall in the play

ROBIN STARVELING (a tailor) Moonshine in the play

THESEUS (Duke of Athens)

HIPPOLYTA (betrothed to Theseus)

PROPMAN

The premiere performance of *The Rude Mechanicals* was given 28 February, 1970, by the Pickwick Players of the Midland Community Theatre, in Midland, Texas. Following is a copy of the programme:

THE PICKWICK PLAYERS
of MIDLAND COMMUNITY THEATRE

Present

THE RUDE MECHANICALS

By ED GRACZYK

Freely Adapted from Shakespeare's
"A Midsummer Night's Dream"

Directed and Designed by
ED GRACZYK

CAST

(in order of appearance)

ROBIN GOODFELLOW	Kristin Griffith
PROPMAN	Neil Gould
PETER QUINCE	Rick Ball
SNUG	Mike Coffield
ROBIN STARVELING	Bill Thomas
NICK BOTTOM	Jimmy Heck
DUKE	Ken Kubik
TOM SNOOT	David Flinn
FRANCIS FLUTE	Conrad Coffield
HIPPOLYTA	Cynthia Hickey, Becky Gideon

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager	Nancy Mathys
Assistant Stage Managers	Nathalie Harmon, Jim Hankinson
Lights	Gerry Pyle, Ann Thomas, Drew Gilland
Sound	Gerry Pyle, Ted Caryl
Props	Ruth Taylor
Costumes	Bonnie Cooper and Pickwick Girls
Set	Bill Thomas and Pickwick Boys

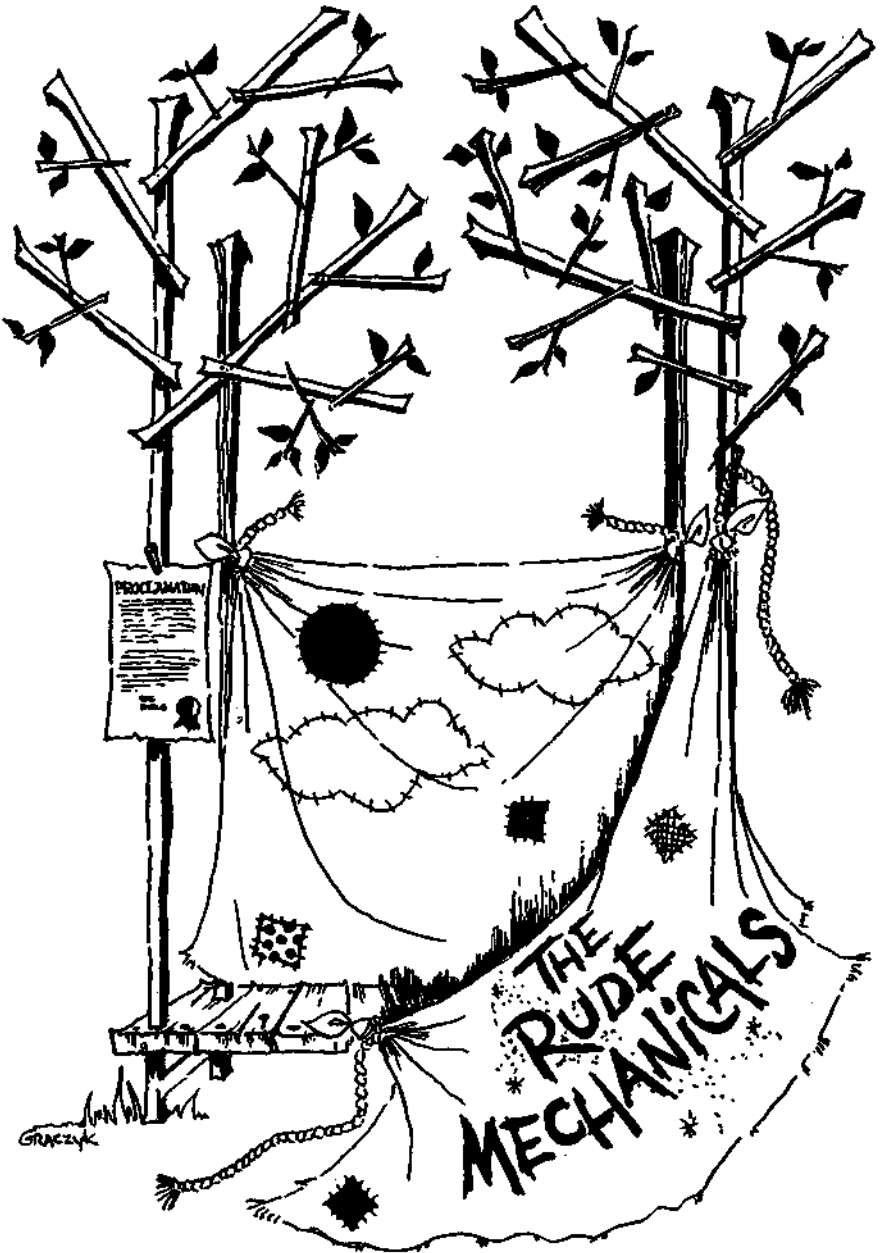
THE MUSIC

Producers are encouraged to use their own ingenuity in the selection and use of music for this play.

“The Mechanicals’ Theme” which runs throughout should be a light and happy short musical piece, played very crudely, as if on toy instruments and tin pans. This piece introduces the Mechanicals whenever they appear and acts as the main theme of the play.

Other musical selections and sound effects should be descriptive of the action onstage as indicated in the script.

SCENE SKETCH



Setting for *The Rude Mechanicals*
Designed by Ed Graczyk

THE SETTING: There is a platform center stage elevated one foot off the stage floor, crudely constructed of random spaced boards. At each corner is a tall post, the tops of which resemble tree branched and foliage. Stretched between the front posts, covering the platform is a drape with "THE RUDE MECHANICALS" crudely lettered on it. This is basically our set. Whatever other properties or locale changes we need will be supplied by the prop man. Dressed completely in black, he will hold twigs and become a tree, he will don hats or robes and become extra characters as we need them. He should never leave the stage but merely fade into the darkness until he's needed.

There is no main curtain, only blue and green splotches of light hitting the tops of the trees and a special golden light on the drape. As the house lights fade, the "Mechanicals Theme" begins, the golden light brightens, and a shower of large colored paper squares erupts from behind the drape. Robin Goodfellow pops up. As he speaks, the music fades out.

ROBIN. Like a shower of rain on a Midsummer day, in a flash it will come, and in a flash it will go. So is the way I'll appear in this play, one minute I'll be here and (he pops down) in another I won't.

(His head appears from under the drape. He lies on the platform with the drape behind him, elbows on the floor he holds up his head).

I'm glad you could come, I've been waiting for you all to get here. I mean, I didn't want to start and have you miss anything. For those of you who don't know me . . . I'm Robin Goodfellow . . . a sprite.

(He now sits on the edge of the platform).

If you stop and think for just a minute . . . I mean really think . . . you'll remember who I am. I'm the one, last quarter past Monday, who painted the trees all yellow and green. And remember the Friday, just two weeks thereafter, when up in the sky, right after that shower . . . a rainbow appeared . . . I did that. I mean, I had a little help, but, I did that. I love magic . . . Watch!

(He waves his hands as the lights become bright).

Sunshine!

(He waves them again and they fade to blue).

Moonlight!

(He laughs and squeals and runs about).

I love it! . . . I love it! . . . I love it! . . .

(He repeats the magic several times with the lights).

Sunshine . . . Moonlight . . . Sunshine . . . Moonlight.

(Propman taps him on the shoulder and whispers in his ear).

Are they very angry?

(Propman nods Yes. Embarrassed he walks downstage).

The actors are anxious to start the play . . . But before we begin I'd like you to meet my assistant . . . He helps me with my magic . . .

(The propman steps forward and stands beside the drape).

Better watch close now, because when the play starts he'll change himself into all sorts of things . . . trees, clouds, raindrops . . .

(The propman steps forward, Robin sees him and stops).

Sorry, didn't mean to give away any secrets . . . Where was I . . . oh . . . Yes, yes, the play!

("Mechanical Theme" comes up).

Come back with me now. Step into the past to a day in mid-summer, the one year before last. Let's begin in the sunlight . . .

(He waves his hands and . . . sunlight).

In a land far away . . . a small town known as Athens on the eve of the Duke's wedding day.

(The propman takes down drape, and hangs it on its reverse side, across the back poles. Robin hangs a proclamation on the pole as Quince and Snug enter, wearing work aprons. Propman, with a hat comes from behind the drape and crosses the stage).

QUINCE *(To propman)*. Build you a table? . . .

SNUG. Add a wing to your stable? . . .

(Propman shakes head no and exits behind sheet. Quince sits on platform).

QUINCE. It's no use, Snug . . . we're ruined, nobody needs our services.

SNUG. Don't give up so easily, Peter Quince . . .

(Propman returns in a different hat).

Carve you a door? . . .

QUINCE *(Rising)*. Sand down your warped floor? . . .

(Propman exits).

There's no work to be found . . . I'm afraid Quince Carpentry Shop is now out of business . . . I'm sorry, Snug, you're the best joiner in Athens, surely you won't have trouble finding another job.

SNUG. But what about you, Peter Quince? . . . What will you do?

QUINCE. I'll have to move on to another town . . . Set up shop wherever there's need for a carpenter.

SNUG. You can't leave us, Peter Quince . . . Surely business will pick up soon.

QUINCE. I've spent every cent I have keeping the shop open this long . . . I'm penniless.

SNUG. The fellas will help . . . They'll lend you some money. Tomorrow I'm sure business will pick up.

QUINCE. I can't do that, Snug . . . I can't be certain.

SNUG. But this is an emergency, Peter Quince . . . Why, we've all been friends for so long . . . The old group wouldn't be the same without you . . . I'm sure they'd do anything . . . Why, what are friends for?

QUINCE (*Rising*). I'll miss all of you . . . and I appreciate all you're trying to do, but . . .

(*He notices proclamation*).

What's this?

SNUG. What's what, Peter Quince?

QUINCE. It's a proclamation.

(*He takes it down and reads it*).

SNUG. What does it say, Peter Quince?

QUINCE. "Players needed . . . Sixpence apiece . . ."

(*He mumbles to himself, reading*).

The Duke wants a play to be performed at his wedding night feast.

SNUG. What's that have to do with carpentry, Peter Quince?

QUINCE. With carpentry . . . nothing . . . with keeping the shop open . . . everything! Listen as I read on . . . "The play and players that best favors the Duke will receive a just reward."

SNUG. You've been out in the sunlight too long, Peter Quince . . . You're not making any sense.

QUINCE. Of course I am . . . We could become rich!

SNUG. We?

QUINCE. You said the fellows would do anything didn't you. Well I'm going to write a play for the Duke's wedding feast . . . and you and the fellows will be the players.

SNUG. Why, I don't know, Peter Quince . . . We've never been in a play before.

QUINCE. It's simple . . . nothing to it . . . I mean, how difficult could it be?

SNUG. Well, I don't know . . . Have you ever written a play before, Peter Quince?

QUINCE. Never!

SNUG. It's an awful risky plot, Peter Quince . . . I mean . . . before the Duke and his new bride, and the whole kingdom . . . They might throw tomatoes and . . . there is the very good possibility the Duke won't like your play . . . and then where would we be . . .

QUINCE. Nonsense . . . we'll be great.

SNUG. We'd be the laughing stock of the whole town, and everyone's business would go slack.

QUINCE. I'll take full responsibility . . . for you see, I'll be the director, too. I might give up the carpentry business altogether and go on to the stage.

SNUG. You'd better build one first, Peter Quince. There's not one in all of Athens.

QUINCE. There's much work to be done! . . . The wedding's tomorrow . . . so time is of the utmost importance. Snug, you go round up the fellows, and tell them of the plan.

SNUG. What if they won't do it, Peter Quince?

QUINCE. Explain it to them . . . It's the only thing to be done to save the shop. And if that doesn't work . . . tell them there's sixpence apiece in it for the winners . . . Now hurry!

SNUG. Right away, Peter Quince.

(He exits).

QUINCE *(To himself)*. A play . . . a play . . . what can be the subject . . .

(Robin appears above the curtain, Quince cannot see nor hear him).

ROBIN. Since it is a wedding . . . what better a subject than the story of two lovers.

QUINCE *(An idea)*. I have it! . . . oh, the Duke will love it . . . a love play!

(Excited).

that's it . . . It's perfect . . . I'll rush back to the shop and write it now.

(He exits mumbling).

It's perfect . . . the Duke will love it . . . etc.

ROBIN. Well, that's how it started . . . Right here in the sunlight . . . of a midsummer day. As the carpenter labors on writing his play, onto the Palace, to see what the Duke has to say.

(Music up as the propman sets a stool and retires. Robin Starveling enters, tape measure about his neck, sleeves rolled up, etc.).

STARVELING (*Very nervously he paces*). Where is Nick Bottom, the weaver . . . I just know he won't have the fabric ready in time.

DUKE (*Off stage*). Robin Starveling the tailor . . . are you out there . . . have the fabrics arrived for my wedding suit?

STARVELING. I'm here, good Duke . . . the weaver is expected soon . . . very soon . . .

(Bottom enters, laden high with bolts of fabric. He can't see where he's going so as Starveling backs away nervously from the Duke's voice, Bottom walks into him sending bolts of fabric into the air, unrolling all over the stage).

BOTTOM (*Picking the fabric off from Starveling*). Is that you, Robin Starveling?

STARVELING. Well, it isn't the queen of the fairies.

(He gets up).

It's about time you got here, the Duke has been waiting . . . patiently . . . though why, I'll never know.

BOTTOM. I was detained briefly by Snug, the joiner . . . He and Peter Quince have called a meeting.

STARVELING. A meeting . . . Whatever for?

DUKE (*Entering*). I can't wait much . . . oh, good, you're here . . . let us proceed with the fitting.

BOTTOM (*Whispering to Starveling*). We'll discuss the meeting later.

DUKE. Discuss what meeting?

BOTTOM (*Bows quickly*). Oh, nothing, your Dukeness.

(Gathering up fabric).

I do hope you like the fabrics . . . they are a labor of love . . . quite befitting your wedding suit.

STARVELING (*Measuring the Duke's arm length, etc.*). When is the bride to arrive, your highness?

DUKE. Sometime later, on this very mid-summer day.

BOTTOM. We all can't wait to see her . . .

DUKE. She is truly very beautiful . . . she will make this dreary castle sparkle, and come alive. Our town has been without a Duchess long enough.

BOTTOM (*Not to disagree*). Oh, how true . . . how very true . . . oh noble Duke.

STARVELING (*Getting embarrassed*). Why don't you go on to the meeting, Bottom . . . I'll follow you there presently.

DUKE. What is this secret meeting?

BOTTOM. Oh, nothing, your Dukeness . . . I mean it's something . . . I mean . . . but, well, it's a secret.

DUKE (*Humorously*). Maybe you're planning to overthrow the Duke?

BOTTOM. Us? . . . We? . . .

(Falls to his knees).

You have it all wrong . . . I could never . . . I mean never would I . . .

DUKE. Enough, enough . . . I spoke in jest.

(He laughs).

BOTTOM (*Looks up*). Huh?

STARVELING. The Duke was pulling your leg . . . ass!

BOTTOM. Oh!

(He laughs embarrassingly, building into an enormous guffaw, he rises, moving beside the Duke).

That was surely a good one on me.

(He slaps the Duke on the back. Realizing what he's done he starts to back away, stepping on the fabric rolls, he falls backwards, scrambling to his feet, he exits hurriedly).

Well, maybe I had best wait for you at the meeting . . . I mean the gathering . . . good day.

(He's out).

DUKE. He's off so fast his feet are but barely touching the ground . . . are you nearly finished, good tailor Starveling?

STARVELING. One measurement more and . . . that's it, sire.

(Propman enters from behind the drape with a scroll, he hands it to the Duke, bows and exits).

DUKE (*Opening it*). A message from your future Duchess . . . notes of love, no doubt.

STARVELING. If you'd prefer I leave, I . . .

DUKE. No, no remain, I'll be but a moment.

(He sits and reads, Starveling casually trying to look over his shoulder, finally the Duke crumbles up the paper, throws it on the floor and stands).

Women! . . .

STARVELING. Beg pardon, sire?

DUKE. Nothing, nothing . . . maybe you had best return later in the day . . . wouldn't want you to miss your meeting.

STARVELING. Oh, no bother sire.

(He sits).

I'll wait . . . I mean it's probably an unimportant meeting anyhow . . . just a few friends . . . to talk of . . .

(The Duke has been pacing angrily).

DUKE *(Turns on Starveling, shouting)*. Go! and come back later.

(Starveling falls backwards off his stool, then scampers to his feet).

STARVELING. Oh, you want me to . . . go?

(Pause).

right away . . . why, you'll never even know I was ever here . . . I'll just creep silently away . . . quiet as a . . .

(He sneaks slowly away on tip toes).

DUKE. Faster!

(Starveling speeds up and off).

STARVELING. Yes sir!

(Duke paces angrily, then picks up scroll).

DUKE. Imagine! that woman refusing to marry me. Refuses! . . . to marry me!

(He sits angrily).

She's run off to hide away in the wood . . . a good place for her . . . amongst the other beasts.

(Rises).

I ask you . . . is that any way to treat a Duke? . . . of course not! Why, I paid her father a handsome price . . . two cows . . . three dozen geese and four of my prize mares. Is there not anyone who can understand the actions of a woman?

(He sits).

Perhaps I should have on my staff, an elf or sprite, to magically set things right.

(Robin pops up from behind the drape).

ROBIN. A better entrance cue, no one ever has needed.

(He comes around to the front of the platform).

You called for a sprite to set everything right?

(The Duke turns).

DUKE. Who on earth are you?

ROBIN. No one from earth . . . just a creature from space . . . and magic is written . . . all over my face.

DUKE *(Stands)*. You're an elf.

ROBIN. I prefer to be called sprite . . . it goes better with right . . . Robin Goodfellow's the name.

DUKE. Well, you popped in right at the nick of time . . . you need a job?

ROBIN. First tell me your problem . . . and if it tickles the fancy of this devilish sprite . . . I'll take it quite gladly and perform with delight.

DUKE. Well it seems my bride to be, Hippolyta . . . isn't in love with me.

ROBIN. Not in love? . . . then why do you marry?

DUKE. I love her. I loved her on first sight. While visiting her father's kingdom the Sunday before last, I spied her in the garden . . . how beautiful she was amongst the dogwood and peach blossoms, the sunlight shining on her golden hair . . . Right then and there I knew she must be my bride . . . so I bargained with her father and traded him, two cows, three dozen geese, and four of my prize mares . . . for her, my lovely Hippolyta.

ROBIN. A very romantic bargain.

DUKE. And what does she do? . . . She runs away into the forest and refuses to marry me . . . I ask you, is that any way to treat someone who loves her so?

ROBIN. The intent is polite . . . but the action's not right.

DUKE. What is it you mean?

ROBIN. Well, I don't imagine the lady likes being traded off like prize livestock. Have you told her of your love?

DUKE. Well not exactly . . . I mean I'm really quite shy . . . I've never spoken with her at all.

ROBIN. I think you hired the wrong sprite . . . Cupid would have been a better choice.

DUKE. Isn't there anything you can do? The wedding is tomorrow night and the entire town is madly preparing for it . . . Why I've even summoned a play to be written and performed.

ROBIN. Yes, so I've heard.

DUKE. And I love her . . . I did on first sight.

ROBIN. Well, the next step is to get her to love you back.

DUKE. She won't even see me, she's hidden herself away, deep in the forest.

ROBIN. I believe I have a plan that will reverse your love's affections, and the plan is pure delight, one that will return everything to right.

DUKE. I will do anything if my Hippolyta will return my love. When will your plan be put into action?

ROBIN. This very evening . . . on this very night.

(The propman removes the stool and remaining props).

Come, we must discuss the magic of this mid-summer night.

(“Mechanical Theme” as the Duke and Robin exit. Propman hangs a sign on the post, “Quince Carpenter Shoppe.” Quince enters, pen behind his ear, reading from a long scroll, the bottom of which drags behind him).

QUINCE. “If we offend, it is with our good will that you should think, we come not to offend, but to pay my lumber bill . . .

(Takes pen from behind his ear and scratches that out).

No . . . makes the intent sound too obvious.

(He sits on the edge of the platform and on a protruding nail, he stands abruptly. Mechanically he takes a hammer from his apron, pounds the nail down, and resumes his seat).

SNUG *(Entering)*. 'Tis all but done, Peter Quince . . . The players have all been told, and are headed right away, to the shop.

QUINCE. Very good . . . the script is nearly complete and a more befitting play, the Duke could never ask for . . . It will win the reward for sure.

SNUG. I do hope so Peter Quince, for surely business will pick up tomorrow.

QUINCE *(Standing and pacing)*. Quickly . . . I need a word that should rhyme with heartsick.

SNUG. Fiddlestick?

QUINCE. No . . . no . . . no . . .

SNUG. Arithmetic?

QUINCE. “The loving couple, they were so heartsick the pharmacist prescribed, a dose of . . . arithmetic?”

SNUG. Oh? . . . I see . . . it doesn't go, does it.

QUINCE. Not very well . . . “A dose of . . .”

SNUG. Arsenic?

QUINCE. Arsenic is a poison, don't you know?

SNUG (*Sincerely*). But would certainly cure the sickness of any heart.

QUINCE (*Disgusted*). Oh! . . . 'tis obvious you don't understand the poetic nature of writing a play.

SNOUT (*Entering*). Here I am, Peter Quince . . . but long I cannot stay . . . There are pots and pans and things that need some mending.

QUINCE. Good . . . good . . . Tom Snout, our meeting will be brief.

SNOUT. But where are the others . . .

(*To Snug*).

you call me here in such haste.

SNUG. They are on their way.

SNOUT. Good Peter Quince . . . has the play yet been finished?

QUINCE. In just a minute the final words will be printed.

SNOUT. Since first I'm here, I see it only fair the leading role should go to me.

QUINCE. All roles are written equal, there's plenty of words for all.

FLUTE (*Entering*). I am here, Peter Quince . . . Your idea of a play may be a good one, but as for me, a performer in it, I'm not really quite sure.

SNOUT (*To Quince*). If he doesn't want his part, write his words to mine. I will gladly do them both.

QUINCE. Nonsense. Five players there are called for, and since I must direct you on how to play the parts, your presence is most needed.

FLUTE. But in front of all those people . . . I'll surely faint from fright.

BOTTOM (*Entering*). I am here, Peter Quince . . . and lucky for you I am . . . I will speak your written words in a manner that will cause the Duke to reward you with top prize . . . for in all of Athens there is no better player of plays.

FLUTE. I have never seen you, Nick Bottom, appear before, in a play.

BOTTOM (*Embarrassed*). Well . . . 'twas many years before you arrived here, in our town.

FLUTE. But I was born and raised here in Athens.

BOTTOM (*Changing the subject*). You were? . . . oh, so you were . . . That vital statistic I never really knew . . . How come you to be born in Athens?

QUINCE. Silence . . . silence . . . The play is now complete! . . . Is all our company here?