

**A101: An arts foundation course**  
**A101/06: Interpreting a dream**

**Executive Producer: Nancy Thomas**  
**Producer: Paul Kafno**

**Contributor(s) in clip:**  
**Arnold Kettle**

**Clip transcript: A101 A Midsummer Night's Dream 1**

**Arnold Kettle:**

Now whatever the Elizabethans made of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' they didn't treat it as a tutonic fairytale. Yet it's this tradition that lurks behind the small grotesque figures in Fuseli's picture of Titania and Bottom finished in 1789, the sort of picture that influenced the visual effects 19<sup>th</sup> century producers of 'The Dream' had up their sleeves. And that still influences the Walt Disney Corporation to this day. And then there's Mendelssohn's music splendid music, which perhaps more than anything has shaped producers' and our responses to 'The Dream', even though we may not always be conscious of it.

[Music: 'You spotted snakes' (Opus 61 No 3) F. Mendelssohn (Decca SPA 451) Side 1 Band 3 of the world of the Great Classics – A Midsummer Night's Dream Incidental Music London Symphony Orchestra conductor: Peter Maag, soloist: Jennifer Vyvyan with chorus]

**Arnold Kettle:**

Now the thing that above all I want you to notice about these images and that music is that they belong to a period which is neither Shakespeare's nor ours. And perhaps the key image is that of fairies as ballet dancers. As we can see again in these Richard Dadd paintings of 1841. There seems to have been at least two traditions behind this. One is a rather austere classical one. And the other tradition linked with dancing is erotic with Titania treated as a Venus who manages like so many mythological goddesses to be sacred and profane at the same time. We're lucky that we have preserved for us in an unlikely but available form, the essential 19<sup>th</sup> century way of producing 'The Dream'. Max Reinhardt's film wasn't made until 1935, and of course it gets effects no stage production could ever achieve. But forget about Mickey Rooney and the other Hollywood stars, but don't forget Mendelssohn or the fact that the dancing was in the charge of Bronislava Nijinska, sister of the great Russian dancer. And don't forget that Reinhardt himself was a great experimental producer, who earlier had played an exciting part in making Germany a great centre of the drama. It was because of Hitler that he happened to be producing 'The Dream' in the Hollywood Bowl, and Warner Bros. persuaded him to have a go at filming it.

**Extract: A Midsummer Night's Dream, directed by Max Reinhardt, 1935**

**Puck:**

How now, here comes Oberon!

**Oberon:**

I'll met by moonlight, proud Titania!

**Titania:**

What, jealous Oberon? Fairy, skip hence. I have forsworn his bed and company.

**Oberon:**

Tarry, rash wanton! Do you amend it then? It lies in you. Why should Titania cross her Oberon? I do but beg a little changeling boy to be my henchman.

**Titania:**

Set your heart at rest.  
The fairy land buys not the child of me.  
His mother was a votaress of my order  
And for her sake do I rear up her boy;  
And for her sake I will not part with him.

**Oberon:**

How long within this wood intend you stay?

**Titania:**

Perchance till after Theseus' wedding day.  
If you will patiently dance in our round  
And see our moonlight revels, go with us.  
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

**Oberon:**

Give me that boy and I will go with thee.

**Titania:**

Not for thy fairy kingdom! Fairies, away.