

**Excerpt from Splendid Productions'
'Midsummer Mechanicals'**
By Kerry Frampton & Ben Hales



Bill *(to audience)* Thank you everyone for coming today. The Duke and Duchess would like to welcome you to their new playhouse: a place where everyone is welcome.

Please feel free to move about the space if you need to. You can go out and come back in again if you wish. There are no doors, just curtains, and you can leave at any time.

(To Quince) Peter Quince, the Duke and Duchess will be arriving in three quarters of the hour. That's your three- quarters of the hour call.

Quince Thank you Bill!

Quince leads applause and takes centre stage.

Quince Welcome one and all! I'm delighted that so many of our friends and family could be here today. Thank you for arriving so promptly.

And what a marvellous convenient place for our performance, the premiere of our brand new play: 'The Adventures of The Weaver and The Fairy Qu...'

Bottom *(interrupting)* Do you want me to do some acting now Peter? I could...

Bottom prepares to act.

Quince Not yet Bottom, patience!

Patience *(popping out)* What?

Quince *(to Patience)* Not you, Patience Snout... *(To audience, amused at the misunderstanding)* She's just helping out.

As I was saying, our new play 'The Adventure of The Weaver and The Fairy Queen' will start once the Duke and Duchess have arrived. And what an honour to be the first company to perform at the Duke's new playhouse...

Patience *(interrupting, examining the audience)* With all that money you'd think he would have invested in more comfortable seating. Look at them all squished in up there. You all right Bernard? You got enough leg room?

Quince *(trying to ignore her)* This truly is a stage fit for the gods. A stage...

Patience *(sympathising with Bernard)* He hasn't got enough leg room.
Cheapskates.

Quince A stage constructed...

Bottom has been experimenting with sight-lines. There are places on stage where not everyone in the upper galleries can see.

Bottom *(interrupting, to one side of the gallery)* Can you lot see me if I'm acting here?

The audience respond: they can't see. Bottom turns to the other side.

Bottom Oh, but you lot can!

Quince *(trying to ignore him)* A stage constructed of the highest quality green oak...

Patience *(interrupting again)* And where are the Duke and Duchess going to sit?

Quince *(patiently, pointing)* Just up there with all the courtiers and dignitaries...

Patience Bet **they** get enough leg room.

Bottom *(to the other side of the gallery)* Can you lot see me if I'm acting here?

The audience respond: they can't see either. Bottom turns to the other side.

Bottom Oh, but you lot can!

Quince It is an honour to be here...

Patience *(noticing audience standing)* Look at them up there, those people don't even have seats!

Bottom turns to the audience sitting in the pit.

Bottom *(to the pit)* And you lot can just see everything?

The audience in the pit respond: they can see everything.

Patience Lucky you.

Bottom It hardly seems fair...

Quince *(pressing on)* It is an honour...

Bottom has identified the best sight-lines in the middle of the stage.

Bottom Peter! We can only perform in this very narrow corridor here...

Quince Yes, we'll look at that in a minute. I'm actually just trying to welcome everyone here...

Bottom Let's sing them the song!

Quince Which song?

Bottom **The** song!

Quince No, Bottom, we've got much more important things to...

Bottom *(interrupting, to audience)* You want a song, don't you?

The audience respond. Bottom retrieves Quince's accordion from backstage and gives it to him to play.

Bottom *(to Quince)* Here's your squeezezy... *(To the audience)* You'll have heard us singing it all around the village. Join in if you want to, it's my favourite!

*Bottom grabs his double bass and counts in the **Song of Togetherness**. Quince joins in reluctantly.*

Bottom & Quince *(singing)* Raise your voices
Lift your hearts
And join our happy band
On we go together
On we go together

Friends to left and friends to the right
We're marching hand in hand
On we go together
On we go together

Bottom *(interrupting)* I've got an idea!

He conducts one side of the audience:

Bottom Everyone this side say 'Hi!'

That part of the audience respond: Hi!

Bottom Everyone this side say 'Ho!'

That part of the audience respond: Ho!

Bottom Hi!

That part of the audience respond: Hi!

Bottom Ho!

That part of the audience respond: Ho!

Bottom & Quince *(singing)* And on we go together
On we go together
On we go... together!

Quince sings 'together' too long, and Bottom too short. They try again.

Bottom & Quince *(singing)* ... together.

This time Quince goes short and Bottom goes long. After a beat:

Bottom Close enough! It sounds good in here. I can't wait to do the play!

Patience *(to audience)* Bet you can't wait to watch this play, can you?

Patience reads the title from the cast list on the wall.

Patience 'The Adventure of the Weaver and the Fairy Queen.'

Bottom That's right, Patience Snout. Our brand new play which we shall deliver on this stage of historic impotence.

Patience *(correcting Bottom)* 'Importance'.

Bottom That's what I said.

Quince Yes, a specially commissioned piece, written by Mr Nicholas Bottom here...

Bottom ... with some additional material from Mr Peter Quince over there, my brother of the quill.

Patience *(under her breath)* 'Brother of the quill'?

Quince Before we start rehearsing, you should know that I tinkered with your last draft Nick.

Bottom You did?

Quince Five prologues was too many.

Bottom But Peter, you can't have too many prologues! The beginning of the play is the best bit... The building anticipation of the crowd...

Bottom gets the audience to join in, encouraging them to make the sound of 'building anticipation'.

Bottom The audience wondering 'has the play has started yet?'...
Then: silence...

Bottom gestures for the audience to be silent. He encourages Quince to make a dramatic entrance.

Bottom ... as an actor walks onto the stage... impressive... There's a small gasp...

The audience respond.

Bottom Someone stifles a cough...

The audience respond. Bottom guides Quince to the centre of the stage.

Bottom And the actor...

Quince gives Bottom a look. He doesn't consider himself an actor.

Bottom ... who isn't normally an actor... takes a deep breath, and begins The Prologue...

Quince attempts to speak, and panics.

Quince I've forgotten the prologue! I've forgotten the prologue!

Quince runs off.

Bottom ... which he hasn't learned...! An actor is unprepared... I love theatre! Literally anything could happen! It's my favourite thing. Apart from weaving. I love weaving, me...

Bottom is briefly overwhelmed by his love for weaving. Quince reappears with a handful of small cards.

Patience *(to Quince)* What you got there?

Quince *(showing her the cards)* It's the prologue written out on little parchments, it's a perfectly crafted solution. Everything's in hand!

Quince accidentally drops all the cards and has to frantically pick them up.

Patience Are you sure you lot are ready?

Bottom Ready?

Patience To perform a brand new untested play?

Bottom Untested? Me and the boys have had **four** rehearsals. That's two more than last year.

Patience *(ironically)* What could possibly go wrong?

Quince I sent the updated script to the whole troupe last week, so even Francis will be well prepared... He should be here by now...

Patience *(calling out)* Francis Flute? *(To audience)* Has anyone seen Francis? *(Prompting)* You know, Jenny Flute's boy... pale lad... bit shy... easy to miss...

Quince Not to worry, Francis is very reliable. Right then... *(Looking about)* We have our audience, instruments back there, script, cast list... *(Checking cast list)* Now, is all our company here? Myself: Peter Quince, here! Nick Bottom?

Bottom *(raising his hand)* Here!

Quince Francis Flute?

Bottom Not here. Late.

Quince Snug the Joiner, on his way...

Bottom *(confidentially, to audience)* Terrible actor, shouldn't be anywhere near the play, he's rubbish.