

TheatreStorm

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Review: 'Midsummer of Love' (an adaptation of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream') from We Players (***)

by Charles Kruger (<https://theatrestorm.com/reviewers/charles-kruger/>)



(<https://theatrestorm.files.wordpress.com/2017/07/midsummer.jpg>)

(l to r) Britt Lauer, Ava Roy, Nick Dickson, Nathaniel Justinano, Amy Nowak and John Steele in "Midsummer of Love." Photo Credit: Lauren Matley.

(<https://theatrestorm.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/sfbatcc->

We Players describes their production of "Midsummer of Love" as "an erotic comedy of consent, cruelty and control."

Let's get the cruelty part out of the way right now. The performance we attended

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This reviewer is a voting member of the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC)

at Kennedy Grove Regional Recreation Center in El Sobrante was preceded by a 30 minute hike on a dusty narrow trail, so narrow we had to form a single file, fearing a slip on the ever-moving gravel. Not only did this take place in the midst of a heat wave that had the temperature hovering around 100^o, but we had a bona fide encounter with a very loud, frightened, and frightening rattlesnake (thanks to quick if somewhat panicked action taken by Bottom, nobody was bitten and the rattler slithered safely away). Well, many points for a unique experience!

Once we arrived at the hilltop visa, we truly felt that we had transgressed into another world, and there is no question that John Steele, as a gender-bending Titania, Queen of the Faeries, confirmed that sensation. Steele's performance of multiple characters—Titania, Puck, and Theseus—nearly steals the show. But there is no shortage of fun here, in particular, Nick Medina's jovial Bottom and Nick Dickson's deliciously goofy turns as both Demetirus and the "mechanical" master Flute, who is compelled to perform as the maiden Thisby in the famous play within a play. Ava Roy is very funny as Peter Quince, the director of the mechanicals, and the put upon and confused Helena, whose love life seems to fall into a blender.

Shakespeare's enchanting tale of confused lovers, manipulative faeries, hapless amateur actors, and happy endings never fails to please, and We Players does a fine job with the language and the laughter.

Is it funny? Yes. Is it cruel? Yes. Is it erotic? Very. (Warning: children and unprepared parents may be taken aback by Bottom's transformation into a Donkey for which he grows more than a pair of ears.)

Audiences willing to gamely brave the elements and relax into fantasy will enjoy this romp in faerie land, in the hands of a sexy and capable company of actors, having fun in the sun.

"Midsummer of Love" plays for two more performances (July 22nd and 23rd) at Kennedy Grove Regional Recreation Center in El Sobrante, before returning for a final weekend (July 27-30) on Strawberry Hill in Golden Gate Park. For further information, click [here \(http://www.weplayers.org/midsummer-2017\)](http://www.weplayers.org/midsummer-2017).

Rating: *** (For an explanation of Theatrestorm's rating scale, click [here \(https://theatrestorm.com/2012/03/01/reviews-with-ratings-an-ambivalent-acquiescence/\)](https://theatrestorm.com/2012/03/01/reviews-with-ratings-an-ambivalent-acquiescence/).)

"Midsummer of Love", an adaptation of William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by Ava Roy. Original score: Charlie Gurke. Costumes: Brooke Jennings. Props: Ting Na Wang. John Steele, Jr.: Makeup Design. Production Sponsor: Rasmussen Winery.

Cast:

Bottom/Lysander: Nick Medina. Snug/Hermia: Amy Nowak. Flute/Demetrius: Nick Dickson. Quince/Helena: Ava Roy. Puck/Titania: John Steele. Puck/Oberon: Britt Lauer.