

IN THE SHADOW OF PETER BROOK: DESIGNING AND REDESIGNING *A
MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM* AT THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY,
1970-2000

By

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Abstract

The Royal Shakespeare Company's 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Peter Brook and designed by Sally Jacobs, is the most influential production of Shakespeare in the twentieth century. Indeed its design licenced audiences, critics, academics, and practitioners to visualize the setting of the play as something more than a staid palace in Athens and a sylvan forest of actual shrubbery. Incorporating a wide range of archival material including the previously unknown full-length recording of that production, I trace how the scenography for the 1970 production has shaped institutional trends of designing *Dream* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, both visually and conceptually. In the six main stage RSC productions that followed, those directors and designers all responded to the famous white-box design to varying degrees, highlighting trends within the institution. In 1989, an artistic movement in stage design began, as practitioners at the RSC, instead of avoiding the innovative box set, boldly appropriated the design and production concepts from the 1970 production. This history of designing *Dream* at the RSC and the critics and academics who write on this topic, have not only shaped the modern impression of Brook and Jacobs's production, they have noticeably transformed it.

To my wife, Victoria.

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Table of Contents

List of Illustrations / Figures	i
List of Abbreviations	vii
Introduction: In the Shadow of Peter Brook	1
0.1. The Myth and Legend of the Japanese Broadcast	2
0.2.0. A Scenographic Lens	8
0.2.1. A Problem of Theatre History: Anecdotal and Archival	13
0.2.1. A Stance of the Researcher	16
0.2.3. Research Design	20
0.3. Early Twentieth Century Productions and The RSC's First <i>Dream</i>	27
0.4.0. A Review of Related Literature, Resources, and Artefacts	38
0.4.1. A Review of Related Literature: The Critical and Academic Afterlife	41
0.4.2. A Review of Related Literature: Complementary Materials	53
 Chapter One: A New Design for <i>Dream</i> at the RSC	 55
1.1. “What is really needed is a great white box”: The Beginning of Brook and Jacobs	60
1.2. A Contemporary Viewpoint: A personal account of the 1972 video recording of the Brook/Jacobs <i>Dream</i>	69
1.3. “A small luminous place”: The Abstract and Intimate White Box of Brook and Jacobs	74
1.4. “All such things grow out of specific needs”: Adapting the Design of Brook/Jacobs	87
1.5. “The blank sign is [...] a vision without meaning, a metaphor with one of its two elements absent”: The Colour Design of Brook/Jacobs	94

Table of Contents (Cont.)

1.6. “ <i>To do so we must prove that there will be no trickery, nothing hidden</i> ”: The Design of Stage Magic in Brook/Jacobs.	111
1.7. “ <i>Every artist is, consciously or unconsciously, eclectic</i> ”: The Evolution of Brook and Jacobs’s Philosophy	120
1.8. The Shadow of a White Box	130
Chapter Two: The Scenographic Responses to the Brook/Jacobs <i>Dream</i> at the RSC	133
2.1. “ <i>Sometimes it seems as if directorial choices have been made primarily to be different at all costs</i> ”: The Barton/Napier <i>Dream</i> (1977)	139
2.2. “ <i>Back to a world of footlights, frock coats, crinolines, and gentle ballads</i> ”: The Daniels/Bjornson <i>Dream</i> (1981)	164
2.3. “ <i>This could have been a little close to the Brook production</i> ”: The Alexander/Dudley <i>Dream</i> (1986)	188
2.4. Living Up to the Memory of Brook/Jacobs	209
Chapter Three: The Atavistic Legacy of the Brook/Jacobs <i>Dream</i> at the RSC	213
3.1. “ <i>Sue Blane’s set promises to evoke the celebrated Peter Brook Dream</i> ”: The Caird/Blane <i>Dream</i> (1989)	218
3.2. “ <i>A sly homage to Peter Brook’s famous adventure-playground production</i> ”: The Noble/Ward <i>Dream</i> (1994)	234
3.3. “ <i>The simplicity of Brook’s design is echoed in his set</i> ”: The Boyd/Piper <i>Dream</i> (1999)	247
3.4. Visual Atavism and the Design for Brook/Jacobs	263
Chapter Four - Conclusion: Designing <i>Dream</i> at the RSC in the next millennium	266
4.1. Remembering the Brook/Jacobs <i>Dream</i>	268
4.2. The Influence of Brook/Jacobs both Inside and Outside the RSC	274

Table of Contents (Cont.)

4.3. “<i>A Play for the Nation</i>”: The Whyman/Piper <i>Dream</i> (2016)	279
4.4. Epilogue	285
Appendix A	287
Appendix B (CD-Rom Attached at Back Cover)	300
Bibliography	301

List of Illustrations / Figures

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Royal Shakespeare Company, <i>Promotional poster for A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , 1970, Pictured: Model for set designed by Sally Jacobs; ©RSC.	1
2	Victoria and Albert Museum, <i>Beerbohm-Tree, Set Design for Dream</i> ; 1900; Photograph; vam.ac.uk, Online. ©VAM	28
3	Thomas Holte, <i>Hall/De Nobili, Set Design for Dream</i> ; 1959; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT	30
4	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Farrah, The Tempest</i> ; 1963; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	63
5	Franz Kline, <i>Painting Number 2</i> ; 1954; Oil on Canvas; The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society, New York.	63
6	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Demetrius and Helena</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	73
7	Joe Cocks, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Helena discovers Lysander on the ground</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	76
8	Walter Scott, Bradford; <i>Brook/Jacobs, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Auditorium and Stage, Stratford-upon-Avon</i> ; 1970; Postcard; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	77
9	Joe Cocks, <i>Brook/Jacobs, The Lovers are awoken</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	80
10	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Actors in the gallery</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	81
11	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Oberon, Puck, and the sleeping lovers</i> ; 1971; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	86

List of Illustrations/ Figures (cont.)

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Page</u>
12	Sam Francis. "Untitled Watercolor, 1965"; Gouache and Watercolor on Paper; <i>Masterworks Fine Art</i> , Web, https://www.masterworksfineart.com/artist/sam-francis/francis-watercolor-untitled-1965-2/ . 12 Feb 2016.	99
13	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Four lovers are awoken with Egeus and the fairies</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	100
14	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Everyone in white at the end of the play</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	103
15	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Oberon and Puck put Titania to sleep</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	104
16	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, The mechanicals in Pyramus and Thisbe</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	106
17	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Titania seduces Bottom with the four fairies</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	107
18	Thomas Holte, <i>Brook/Jacobs, The Athenian court meet to decide on a play</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	110
19	Reg Wilson, <i>Brook/Jacobs, Bottom as an Ass</i> ; 1970; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©RSC.	115
20	Thomas Holte, <i>Barton/Napier, The Athenian Court</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	141
21	Joe Cocks, <i>Barton/Napier, Oberon and Titania with disguised fairies</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	142
22	Ernest Daniels, <i>Bridges-Adams/Wilkinson, The fairies dance around Bottom, Titania, and the tree</i> ; 1938; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©RSC.	146

List of Illustrations / Figures (cont.)

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Page</u>
23	Thomas Holte, <i>Barton/Napier, The mechanicals</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	147
24	Thomas Holte, <i>Barton/Napier, The lovers</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	147
25	Thomas Holte, <i>Barton/Napier, Titania and her Fairies</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	150
26	Joe Cocks, <i>Barton/Napier, Oberon casts a spell over Titania</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	154
27	Sotheby Park Bernet, <i>Inigo Jones, Water Deity or Spirit</i> ; 1973; Found in Orgel, Stephen, and Roy C. Strong. <i>Inigo Jones: The Theatre of the Stuart Court, including the Complete Designs for Productions at Court for the Most Part in the Collection of the Duke of Devonshire Together with Their Texts and Historical Documentation</i> , Vol. II, London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1973, 820.	108
28	Anthony Crickmay, <i>Barton/Napier, Titania enters</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©RSC.	157
29	David Farrell, <i>Brook/Jacobs, The celebration of Bottom and Titania</i> ; 1970; Photograph; ©RSC; Found in McKinney, Joslin and Philip Butterworth, <i>The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography</i> , Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009, Print, 139.	159
30	Thomas Holte, <i>Barton/Napier, Bottom with Titania</i> ; 1977; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	161
31	Thomas Holte, <i>Daniels/Bjornson, The Athenian court</i> ; 1981; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	167
32	John Haynes, <i>Daniels/Bjornson, The Mechanicals</i> ; 1981; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©RSC.	168

List of Illustrations / Figures (cont.)

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Page</u>
33	Joe Cocks, <i>Daniels/Bjornson, The fairy forest as backstage</i> ; 1981; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	169
34	Joe Cocks, <i>Daniels/Bjornson, The lovers in the forest</i> ; 1981; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	170
35	Thomas Holte, <i>Daniels/Bjornson, Titania surrounded by fairies as puppets</i> ; 1981; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	173
36	Benjamin Pollock, <i>Neptune Wooden Toy Theatre Model</i> ; 1880, Paper mounted on wood; Benjamin Pollock's Toy Shop, Covent Garden.	174
37	Joe Cocks, <i>Daniels/Bjornson, Theseus and Hippolyta</i> ; 1981; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	184
38	Keystone-France. <i>Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Andrew</i> ; 9 June 1963; Photograph; Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images.	184
39	Thomas Holte, <i>Daniels/Bjornson, Oberon and Titania</i> ; 1981; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	185
40	Reg Wilson, <i>Alexander/Dudley, Egeus complains to Theseus about Hermia</i> ; 1987; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©RSC.	189
41	Reg Wilson, <i>Alexander/Dudley, The lovers lost in the forest</i> ; 1986; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©RSC.	190
42	Joe Cocks, <i>Alexander/Dudley, The forest</i> ; 1986; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	192
43	Edmund Dulac, <i>Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves</i> ; 1908; Colour plate from <i>Shakespeare's Comedy of The Tempest</i> (Hodder and Stoughton, London).	200
44	Joe Cocks, <i>Alexander/Dudley, Titania with fairies (on left), Oberon and Puck (on right)</i> ; 1986; Photographs; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	202

List of Illustrations / Figures (cont.)

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Page</u>
45	Joe Cocks, <i>Alexander/Dudley, The child fairies</i> ; 1986; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	203
46	Reg Wilson, <i>Alexander/Dudley, Athenians watch as mechanicals perform Pyramus and Thisbe</i> ; 1986; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©RSC.	204
47	Joe Cocks, <i>Caird/Blane, Egeus comes with complaint to Theseus</i> ; 1989; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	219
48	Joe Cocks, <i>Caird/Blane, Oberon, Titania and the forest of junk</i> ; 1989; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	223
49	Joe Cocks, <i>Caird/Blane Titania's bower surrounded by fairies</i> ; 1989; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	225
50	Rowland Emmet, <i>The Featherstone Kite Openwork Basket-Weave Mark Two Gentlemen's Flying Machine</i> ; 1977; Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.	226
51	William Heath Robinson, <i>Carrying out the correspondence course for mountain climbing in the home</i> ; 1928; Ink and Watercolour on Paper; (found in Cook, Sir Peter. <i>Architecture Workbook: Design through Motive</i> . Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley, 2016. Print. 32)	228
52	Joe Cocks, <i>Caird/Blane, Titania and Bottom with assorted fairies</i> ; 1989; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	230
53	Donald Cooper, <i>Noble/Ward, The Athenian court</i> ; 1994; Photograph; "Designing Shakespeare" (http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections) – AHDS Website hosted by Royal Holloway and Christie Carson; Web; 12 Feb 2016	235
54	Malcolm Davies, <i>Noble/Ward, Bottom with the fairies</i> ; 1994; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	238
55	Malcolm Davies, <i>Noble/Ward, Set design, Act One, Scene Two</i> ; 1994; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	241

List of Illustrations / Figures (cont.)

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Detail</u>	<u>Page</u>
56	René Magritte, <i>Hegel's Holiday</i> ; 1958; Oil on canvas; Private collection.	243
57	René Magritte, <i>The Pleasure Principle: Portrait of Edward James</i> ; 1937; Oil on canvas; West Dean House, Sussex, UK.	243
58	Malcolm Davies. <i>Noble/Ward, Four lovers in bed-sheet cocoons</i> ; 1994; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	245
59	René Magritte, <i>The Lovers II</i> ; 1928; Oil on Canvas; National Portrait Gallery, Australia.	245
60	Malcolm Davies, <i>Boyd/Piper, The white oval</i> ; 1999; Photograph; Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, Stratford-upon-Avon; ©SBT.	248
61	Donald Cooper, <i>Boyd/Piper, Theseus, Hermia, and Hippolyta (seated) with court</i> ; 1999; "Designing Shakespeare" (http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections) – AHDS Website hosted by Royal Holloway and Christie Carson; Web; 12 Feb 2016	253
62	Donald Cooper, <i>Boyd/Piper, Philostrate and member of the court</i> ; 1999; Tom Piper Design; Web; http://www.tompiperdesign.co.uk/gallery/a-midsummers-night-dream-1999/ . 12 Feb 2016.	254
63	Florin Chirea, <i>Hall/Pavelka, Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus with the lovers</i> ; 2004; "Critical Stages/Scenes Critiques"; Web; http://www.critical-stages.org/11/shakespeare-for-all/ . 14 March 2016.	275
64	Tom Piper, <i>Whyman/Piper, Model of the set design</i> ; 2016; "Tom Piper Design"; Web; www.tompiperdesign.co.uk/dream-16/ . 16 May 2017	280
65	Topher McGrillis, <i>Whyman/Piper, Pyramus, Thisbe, and Wall, The Belvoir Players, Belfast</i> ; 2016; "Royal Shakespeare Company-Dream 16"; www.dream16.org.uk . 17 July 2017.	281
66	Topher McGrillis, <i>Whyman/Piper, The Mechanicals, Lovelace Theatre Group, Nottingham</i> ; 2016; "Royal Shakespeare Company-Dream 16"; www.dream16.org.uk . 17 July 2107.	283
67	Topher McGrillis, <i>Whyman/Piper, Bottom/Lisa Nightingale, The Canterbury Players</i> ; 2016; "Royal Shakespeare Company-Dream 16"; www.dream16.org.uk . 17 July 2017.	284

List of Abbreviations

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Detail</u>
<i>Dream</i>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> by William Shakespeare
RSC	Royal Shakespeare Company
RST	Royal Shakespeare Theatre
SMT	Shakespeare Memorial Theatre
SBT	Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
SCLA	Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive
DSM	Deputy Stage Manager
(Act, Scene, Line)	All references to Act, Scene, and Line are taken from: <i>William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> . Ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2008. Print.

<u>Abbreviation (Production)</u>	<u>Detail</u>
Hall/de Nobili	1963 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Peter Hall and designed by Lila de Nobili
Brook/Jacobs	1970 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Peter Brook and designed by Sally Jacobs
Barton/Napier	1977 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by John Barton and designed by John Napier
Daniels/Bjornson	1981 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Ron Daniels and designed by Maria Bjornson
Alexander/Dudley	1986 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Bill Alexander and designed by Bill Dudley
Caird/Blane	1989 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by John Caird and designed by Sue Blane
Noble/Ward	1994 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Adrian Noble and designed by Anthony Ward

List of Abbreviations (cont.)

<u>Abbreviation (Production)</u>	<u>Detail</u>
Boyd/Piper	1999 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Michael Boyd and designed by Tom Piper
Whyman/Piper	2016 Royal Shakespeare Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Erica Whyman and designed by Tom Piper
Hall/ Pavelka	2003 Propeller Theatre Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Edward Hall and designed by Michael Pavelka
Donnellan/Ormerod	1986 Cheek by Jowl Company production of <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> , directed by Declan Donnellan and designed by Nick Ormerod.

Introduction: In the Shadow of Peter Brook



Figure 1. *Promotional poster for A Midsummer Night's Dream, 1970, RSC.*

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Dream*), directed by Peter Brook and designed by Sally Jacobs, opened at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (RST) in Stratford-upon-Avon on 27 August 1970 and then went on to tour the UK, the United States, all over Europe, Asia, and ultimately ended its production run in Sydney, Australia, in August of 1973.¹ It was a critical and financial success worldwide. It remains to this day one of the most successful productions in the RSC's history, and it is one of the most recognizable stage designs of Shakespeare in the twentieth century. The production was set in a small, bright white box (see figure 1).

¹ See Appendix A, p.288-92 for the abridged tour details with dates, as written by Roger Howells, General Stage Manager of the RSC in 1970.

0.1. The Myth and Legend of the Japanese Broadcast

For years, the only video recording of the 1970 RSC production of *Dream* amounted to a few clips that had been filmed for a BBC television documentary in the week leading up to the production's opening. Several filmmakers producing documentaries on the RSC, Brook, or just memorable performances of *Dream* have since reused the BBC footage. Several of these clips have also been made publicly available to view on the website *YouTube.com*. Most recently, these clips were featured in the 2016 exhibition, "Shakespeare in Ten Acts" at the British Library, in which the curators prominently showcased the 1970 *Dream* as a pivotal moment in modern Shakespearean performance. Without a full video copy of the performance, however, it was difficult for academics to form any new ideas about the production. In the digital age where every production at the RSC is audio-visually recorded and catalogued by the Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive (SCLA) and its sponsor the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT) in Stratford-upon-Avon, the absence of a full video recording to clarify what actually happened during this production of *Dream* has frustrated many new researchers who might investigate or question previous academic or critical assertions. Given the production's overwhelming success, it has also been no surprise that as new and old researchers revived the subject new questions about the production arose. Myth and legend surrounding the 1970 *Dream* began to develop and, without any concrete documentation, they became more and more difficult to refute.

In 2013, Brook wrote an essay entitled "A Cook and A Concept: Dreaming the Dream" for his book *Quality of Mercy*. This was the first time he had written his side of a story that can now only be described as part of theatre legend. This was Brook's

attempt to answer the question as to why there was no full video copy of this acclaimed production available for the public to view. In summary, his story was this: when the tour for his and Jacobs's *Dream* was invited to Japan in 1973, there was not enough money in the RSC coffers to extend the tour to Asia. Even though this production had already broken critical and financial success records at the RSC, the world tour was proving too expensive to cover overhead costs. In order to pay for this extension, however, a Japanese corporation proposed a live tele-recording of the performance to offset expenses. Brook's reticence to have the production filmed was well known by this point as he had had several offers to make a film from this already successful production and turned them all down. The corporate Japanese sponsor compromised and said that after the performance had aired, their recording of *Dream* would be destroyed in the presence of the British Consul so that there would be no lasting record. Brook agreed and the production went forward as planned. The RSC tour went to Japan, and, according to production records found at the SCLA ("Dream Tour-Time Book") on 18 May 1973 in Tokyo, Japan, the Japanese public television corporation, NHK, filmed it. In Brook's own words:

A few weeks later, I received a bulky parcel from Japan. It contained a set of large discs. "This," wrote one of the producers, "is a copy of the recording. We feel that you should have it."

I found a player and discovered to my amazement that it looked very good. I sent a cable to Japan, telling them not to destroy the master. At once a telegram returned. "This morning, in the presence of the British Consul, as you requested, the recording and the negative have been burned." (*The Quality of Mercy* 81-2)

In Brook's version of events, it was at this moment that he resolved to, "stay with [his] own convictions. The life of a play begins and ends in the moment of

performance” (ibid). The legend, known by many theatrical and academic followers of this famed production, began with the knowledge that the only known video copy of this production was in Brook’s possession. According to that legend, a copy of the video would not be made available to the public until after Brook had died and his possessions had been passed into the care of his estate. As his final word on the subject, Brook’s article was reprinted in *The Guardian* on 15 April 2013, and his story has been used by academics several times since as evidence that there has been no full publicly available video copy of the 1970 RSC *Dream*.

Not only were new critics and academics frustrated, but even those who were there in 1970, many who still write about the production in hindsight, also took to refreshing their own accounts, which they had originally written many years ago. In 2016, written as an academic complement to the “Shakespeare in Ten Acts” British Library installation, Peter Holland based his essay, “The Revolution of the Times,” on his own memory of seeing the production. This was a revitalized account from a different essay on the same topic he had written in 2006 for *Sourcebooks Shakespeare* entitled, “As Performed.” In his 2016 essay, Holland wrote of the legend surrounding the video of the production, “there is little record of Brook’s *Dream* on film (unless a copy of the supposedly destroyed Japanese film of it surfaces one day)” (164). It is clear from this mention of the Japanese recording that Holland, and by proxy the British Library, takes Brook’s “A Cook and A Concept” as an endorsement of the legend; that there are and have been no existing publicly available video copies of the 1970 *Dream*. Holland expresses that it is almost better that the production live in perpetuity through personal memories and production photographs, and that there are no complete filmed copies of the entire performance: “If we must always regret that only tiny fragments of his *Dream* were filmed, it also seems right that this most

theatrical of productions was never transferred to the wrong medium” (179). Neither in 2016 nor in 2006, when Holland first published his story of seeing the 1970 *Dream*, was this news revelatory to modern researchers and practitioners who had wished to see the celebrated production.

A full video copy had been out of reach or impossible to view for many years before even Brook wrote his essay. Academics and critics who have since reported on or referenced this production are either reliant on their own memory and notes from having seen the production or on past accounts from audience members and other critics who were actually there. Holland and others hold this production in reverence, likened to a religious experience: “However much those who never saw it are aware of it, talk of it, perceive its influences, they cannot have the memory of an emotion that, for me at least, the production created then and which remains with me” (Holland, “Revolution of the Times” 164). The experience of it has made for an exclusive club of scholars who have since made the production their own. Brook himself said, “if the event has a future, this can only lie in the memories of those who were present and who retained a trace in their hearts” (*The Quality of Mercy* 82). This type of reporting, however, made an unassailable icon out of a production that, without video evidence, could not be proven or even questioned. It is true that since Brook’s resolution of 1973, there has been no public viewing of the full video performance as it was filmed in Japan. However, the story told by Brook, the legend of the video, and any other pieces of information, anecdotal or otherwise, upon which Holland bases his conclusions, are incomplete narratives.

The legend continues even today. Roger Howells, who worked in the RSC Archive at the SCLA up until his death in 2018, was the General Stage Manager of the RSC in 1970. In a personal interview on 14 August 2014, and in his own personal

notes (see Appendix A), Howells confirmed his familiarity with a public embargo on the Japanese recording of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* until after Brook's death. The legend of the embargo was of special concern to Howells, as in 2011 he was put into the unique position of challenging it.

In a story told by Howells, he described seeing and meeting with Sally Jacobs at an RSC "talk-back" event in 2011 (Howells, 14 August; see also Appendix A). According to Howells, the RSC archive received a few years prior to this event, via post and two intermediaries, an old and well-used videotape copy of Brook and Jacobs's *Dream* that had been in the memorabilia of Hal Rogers who had been the company manager for the world tour. After reviewing the tape, Howells remembered the video as one having been recorded on the last night of production at the Aldwych Theatre in 1972. Once received by the archive, in order to save the original, the old videotape was transferred onto Digital Versatile Disc (DVD) by David Howells, Roger's son, who was at the time of the video's arrival at the SBT, curator for the RSC Collection. Given the embargo over the Japanese recording, however, both Roger and David also understandably believed this restriction could be applied to any other recording as well and thus decided not to advertise publicly that the RSC archive held a copy. During the course of their conversation at the 2011 event, Jacobs asked if (Roger) Howells had had any contact with (Hal) Rogers, the company manager, because she was hoping to track down this copy of the production and she knew he was the last person to have had it. Apparently, the recording had been made so that Rogers and his stage management team would have a video copy to show understudies and new tour members, and it was Jacobs who had requested the video to be made. These new cast members would have needed to know the staging of the show for the American and world tours that followed the run at the Aldwych. Jacobs,

however, had thought that the recording was lost. It made sense then that Brook, in his 2013 article, was not aware of the survival of any video copy if Jacobs was the one who had commissioned it and had not told Brook of its resurfacing. Jacobs then asked whether Howells was willing to make a copy for her personal library.

It was right at that moment, in conversation with Jacobs, that Howells changed the legend of the embargo forever. Working up the courage, he decided to ask her for a favour in exchange for making a copy of the video. He ventured to ask Jacobs if he would be allowed to show the 1972 video copy to a few colleagues and fellow researchers at the SCLA, as it would have been a shame to have it and not be able to share it. According to Howells, Jacobs laughed and said, “Of course” (Howells, 14 August), and even further she “vehemently denied that any embargo existed” (Appendix A 293). Jacobs shattered Howells’s assumption about the embargo. She clarified that it was only the recording made by the Japanese in 1973 that had any restrictions placed on it, simply because the only known copy happened to be in Brook’s possession. Howells was free to show this copy of *Dream* to any researchers who asked for it at the SCLA. The DVD has been available for researchers to view since the day after their conversation, which occurred on 4 September 2011. It may have taken several years, but the myth and legend of the Japanese broadcast that has overshadowed the truth of the existence of a video of the RSC *Dream* by Brook and Jacobs is now dispelled.

0.2.0. A Scenographic Lens

David Addenbrooke, in *The Royal Shakespeare Company: The Peter Hall Years*, cited that, “outstanding RSC productions were often referred to by naming the

director, in some cases the leading actor, and then the play” (94). The fame of the actor-managers such as Henry Irving, Frank Benson, and Herbert Beerbohm-Tree, among others at the end of the nineteenth century, was refocused in the early to mid-twentieth century with the rise of the director and the centrality that companies such as the RSC and its first Artistic Director, Peter Hall, placed upon their role. In the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a custom those modern researchers, critics, and academics adopted as a result of this director-centric recognition of productions. In this particular case, this custom is manifest when they use the epithet, “Brook’s *Dream*,” or Brook’s “white box” to identify the 1970 production (Kennedy; Maher; Loney; Miller; Barnes; Billington; Wardle; Evans). Since Brook has not directed another production of *Dream*, neither before nor since the 1970 RSC production, it makes sense that mentioning only his name would be the easiest way to identify this particular production of the play. This academic practice, substantiated by Addenbrooke, has not changed significantly throughout recent criticism of productions at the RSC.

Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen assert the centrality of the role of the theatre director to the interpretation of Shakespeare’s plays as recently as their 2008 edition of *Dream*, published by the RSC:

Modern theatre is dominated by the figure of the director. He, or sometimes she [...] must hold together the whole play, whereas the actor must concentrate on his or her part. The director’s viewpoint is therefore especially valuable. Shakespeare’s plasticity is wonderfully revealed when we hear directors of highly successful productions answering the same questions in very different ways. (94)

According to Bate and Rasmussen, who make an example of Brook and the 1970 *Dream*, the director is a driving force behind any and all choices made in a production,

whether that choice is regarding the casting, the actors' movement and speech, or the costume, set, sound, and light design; it is the director's autonomy that keeps the production together. This particular attitude towards directors is echoed by Robert Smallwood in his essay "Directors' Shakespeare," where he also expounds the value of a director's interpretation to the academic afterlife of Shakespeare's plays: "The production, then, is not only going to present Shakespeare's play; it is also going to offer something of an interpretative essay upon it, showing its awareness of other critical essays, academic and theatrical" (177). Concerning these particular statements by Smallwood, Bate and Rasmussen, there are three points of interest that I would like to briefly address. The first of these is that according to these academics, the director is and should be solely responsible for the interpretation of each play as it is moved into production.

Though it is theoretically possible that a director has made all of the decisions within a production, the designer for each production of *Dream* at the RSC, as this thesis shows, is part of the team that has been symbiotically responsible for the decisions made in regard to how each production looked and felt to the audience. Jacobs's major contribution in 1970, the white box design, was and has been a notable method of identification for this production. These designers and their directors deserve, if not equal then at least, shared credit for their collaborative work. This is Sally Beauman's contention in her assessment of the production in *Royal Shakespeare Company: A History in Ten Decades* (1982, 305-7), and it has become mine as well. Following a format found in the online digital database, "Designing Shakespeare," hosted by Royal Holloway, University of London and curated by Christie Carson, this thesis lists both the director and designer to identify each specific production that is

reviewed here. For example, the 1970 production of *Dream* is identified as “Brook/Jacobs” whenever possible in this thesis.

The second point to be derived from Bate, Rasmussen and Smallwood, is that, in their assessment of a director’s contribution to the production, any modern interpretation or production of Shakespeare can never be understood as an isolated incident. In this case, a director’s as well as the designer’s response to historical interpretations, or the conscious reformation of ideas that have already been staged by other practitioners, is paramount to understanding all contemporary explanations or interpretations of a Shakespearean play. As this thesis shows, histories of the RSC and accounts of this famed production focus mainly on Brook and Jacobs’s translation of modern theatrical theory and their pivotal contribution to the production history of *Dream*. These narratives credit the 1970 production with being the prototype to adopt and significantly realise innovative theatrical practices and concepts associated with the play. As outstanding a production as it may have been, however, the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* must be examined as a piece of the fluid history of the RSC and of British theatre, and not considered an exception to it. Rather, an understanding of cultural and institutional influence, or an examination of the artistic scaffolding at the RSC before and during this seminal production is necessary to any study that addresses theatre practices and concepts that were widespread after the 1970 *Dream* had closed.

Lastly, there have been many studies on the significance of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* to the history of the RSC and to British theatre in general, using director Brook as a centrepiece for those examinations (Smallwood, Addenbrooke, Bate and Rasmussen included). Despite these studies, the 1970 *Dream* was not crafted within a director-centric production process. In Carson’s *Shakespeare and the Modern Stage*, the argument is made by Carson and Robert Lepage that:

[A] Director's Theatre fundamentally contradicts Brook's own radical impulses: 'If you look at when Peter Brook did *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he reappropriated the text but he didn't set it anywhere in particular. He just said 'Play with it, make it yours', and they made it theirs.' (Lepage, qtd. in Carson 326)

In 1970, all of the actors and the design for the production were as much a part of creating the world of the play as Brook's direction had been. According to Beauman, Brook's experience with and his ultimate intention in creating this *Dream* was the result of, "a long creative journey, stemming partly from his interest in Artaud and Grotowski" (305). Also according to Beauman, the 1970 *Dream* was not a conceptual production at all, and setting it in a bright, white box was Brook's attempt to shed the voice and influence of the authoritarian director in Shakespeare, "with greater emphasis on exploration and collaboration" (ibid 306). It is Beauman's contention that Brook's *Dream* was not focused on him or his practices at all, and at its essence it was a challenge to all of the critics that still maintain, "that if ever a production bore the unmistakable stamp of its director it was this *Dream*" (ibid). The RSC had practically invented the Director's Theatre under Peter Hall in the 1960s, with Brook as complicit in this trend as were his contemporaries, and here Brook, "generally regarded as the greatest director of his era, was rejecting that dominance" (ibid 307). Indeed this thesis spends much of its capital on the premise that it was this cooperation and leadership of a company that made the production such a rousing success. Brook's reputation, however, as a theatrical auteur, the director and designer for many of his other RSC productions, carried over into the public, critical, and academic impression of this production's process. As important as it is to examine the 1970 *Dream* as a piece of RSC history, so too it is important that this production is understood here as an important piece of Brook's career, and not an exception to it.

Herein some of Brook's other productions are examined, at least briefly, in order to understand how the 1970 *Dream* fit into his career at the RSC and with Jacobs.

In this thesis, I expand on and even contend with the studies that focus on Brook as the centrepiece to this production, but beyond what Beauman, Carson, and Lepage contend as the true collaboration of all the practitioners involved, the main focus of this study shifts the heart of the academic and critical discussions on the 1970 *Dream* from director to stage designer. To that end, I incorporate research and examinations unique to the focused area of scholarship on stage design:

Scenography is defined as the manipulation and orchestration of the performance environment. The means by which this is pursued are typically through architectonic structures, light, projected images, sound, costume and performance objects or props. These elements are considered in relation to performing bodies, the text, the space in which the performance takes place, and the placement of the audience. (McKinney & Butterworth 4)

Scenography is an area of scholarship within the discipline of performance studies and as a field of research, includes discourse on topics such as engineering, acoustics, the architecture of a theatre, the history of fashion, and philosophy of stage design. As such, scenography is the discussion of the physical as well as cultural context within which a specific production is performed as well as its position within the history of the play, the company, the theatre space in which it was performed, and the practitioners who participated. Most significantly, however, a focus on scenography for practitioners and students of theatre history, which is precisely how this study is crafted, must include an analysis of the raw technological data that is used in building the stage, light, and costume design. These are the intricacies of the production with which the designer and the technicians who built it did concern themselves, so they are of primary importance here. Academics and researchers may derive meaning

from the original text of Shakespeare's plays, so too a practitioner that is behind the scenes of a Shakespearean production finds meaning in the original circumstances of historic productions. It is even more significant if that design was implemented within a familiar space to the modern-day practitioner, like the RST. For instance, a complete ground plan drawn of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* includes the dimensions and detail of the set design that was implemented onstage at the RST in 1970 (See Appendix B).² That illustration, however, also includes some of the details for the architecture of the auditorium, the backstage platforms and ladders that surrounded the set design in 1970, and an overhead viewpoint to map the exact locations of set pieces, and stage properties with the movement of the actors also given consideration. As a study of scenography, this thesis necessitates the intertwining of qualitative, sometimes anecdotal narratives with the quantitative data found in the archives to expand on and argue the more scholarly and sometimes unnoticed merits of this production from the point of view of a designer.

0.2.1. A Problem of Theatre History: Anecdotal and Archival

There currently exists, in modern theatre history, a problem within its historiography: theatre lore or myth surrounding a production's history (as the above narrative on the Japanese recording illustrates) along with the presentation of existing archival material (photographs, ground plans, critical accounts, etc.) often do not fit cleanly with one another within the many subsequent creations of narratives by theatre historians to have broached a particular topic. According to Thomas

² Appendix B is a "to-scale" copy of the original ground plan held at the SCLA. (SCLA Call number: RSC/SM/2/1970/6). Additional dimensions provided by Glenn Loney (*Peter Brook's Production...*), Roger Howells (Personal Interviews/ Notes), and David Graybill.

Postlewait in *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography*, modern theatrical events of the past century sometimes suffer from as many muddled academic historical interpretations as those events that are hundreds of years old. It is not the lack of evidentiary material that is the cause of these modern mishandlings, but rather it is a problem of methodologies historians use to translate the archive of each production:

[W]e find ways to muddle the fundamental task of compiling reliable, accurate information. Compounding our mishandling of the documentary record, we sometimes adopt contextual and causal explanations that are inadequate, even inappropriate [...] Consequently, in some cases our historical representations of modern events may be as flawed as those we put forward for pre-modern events. (61)

Postlewait faults the type of historical inquiry that is undertaken as the reason for misinterpretation. It is therefore important that any methodology used to interpret the design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* at the very least acknowledges the issues that are brought about by a modern translation of archival production records.

A study of theatre history centred on an internationally renowned company such as the RSC, and arguably one of its most famous productions, inevitably involves the use of the company's archive at the SCLA, but the original materials contained within that library include only artefacts, critical accounts, and few, if any, interpretative academic analyses of that production. The many anecdotal and in-depth inquiries, found in the outlying academic provinces such as the biographies and reflections of those who participated in or witnessed the performance, may not be based in fact but have been equally important to interpretations of Brook/Jacobs. In Jacky Bratton's *New Readings in Theatre History*, she contends that the anecdotal history of a production is, as she puts it,

[C]hiefly important as the control of social resources through the making of myth and legend [...] It [the anecdote] purports to reveal the truths of the society, but not necessarily directly: its inner truth, its truth to some ineffable ‘essence’, rather than to proven facts, is what matters most—hence its mythmaking dimension. (103)

The critical and academic debates over what was signified where during the Brook/Jacobs production and what actually happened onstage are mostly answered through the anecdotal lore. The problem in theatre historiography applies here when the lore is so often repeated that, even though incontrovertible fact has surfaced to question these stories, the myth and legend surrounding the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* remains as part of the production’s history. Anecdotes are the narrative that piece together all of the archival material to make sense of a production and the journey of the practitioners who undertook it. Instead of authenticity, a trait that makes the archival material of any production valuable, the inherent truth of the anecdotal lore relies on how many times it has been repeated and by whom. Those narratives, however often they are echoed, are not always correct.

Writing an anecdote of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, having been seen by hundreds of thousands of people in its three-year production run, is a secular pastime amongst Shakespearean academics. There are an abundance of personal accounts and stories of seeing the 1970 *Dream*, yet only a few combine those accounts with an analysis of the stage design to this production. My own personal account of seeing this production (several times on video at the SCLA) not only concentrates on the stage design, but as the most recent academic to add his account to the litany of reviews on this production, I have the advantage over many historians in that I was able to watch the same performance over and over again and do later in this thesis

give an account of the lasting record of Brook/Jacobs so that future academics may prove (or question) what I have documented.

0.2.2. A Stance of the Researcher

I am a theatrical designer and have been for over twenty years and I have chosen to focus my academic lens on the scenography of the Brook/Jacobs production. My experience as a practitioner has taught me that theatrical productions are at first holistic enterprises that excel at imposing many collaborative interpretations of the text onto the performance of the play. A designer's interpretation of the play, as it materializes, is exhibited in a different fashion than a director's vision or star actor's interpretation of character as the designer's job is to, quite literally, imagine and build the world around all other collaborators and their ideas. Beyond my experience in theatrical practice, however, the research I have undertaken into modern Shakespearean production says that at the last, when critics and academics have had their say on what it all meant, each production is mostly understood as a manifestation of the director's point of view on the play. As indicated above, a director's interpretation will reveal an understanding of his or her predecessors' metaphorical offerings, both academic and theatrical, at the altar of Shakespearean performance. That academic understanding of a director's input to a production, however, is best understood when all viewpoints, historical and collaborative, are amalgamated into one cohesive idea, concept, or practice. The reason I mention this is that in academic accounts that focus on the director, there are details to the production process that are inevitably glossed over in favour of this unifying theory to Shakespearean production.

Within the archives of Shakespearean performance, specifically the collection at the RSC archive, there exist several interpretations of the 1970 *Dream* that are not as easily understood as only Brook's translation of the play. This collection of documents, photographs, drawings, texts, and assembly of original pieces of the design from the Brook/Jacobs production are held at the SCLA and some, in the past, have been notably on display at art installations for the RSC, the British Library, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The hundreds of photographs taken during the Brook/Jacobs production run or the shorthand used in the original promptbook, written by the Deputy Stage Manager, Laurence Burns are a testament to these varied points of view. These resources from the 1970 *Dream* have been used and reused in countless histories, but there exist other materials that are not so straightforward but tell an equally powerful story of this famed production. This study notably engages with many of these records as this is also often my interpretation of any play I design, and especially *Dream*, which I have designed sets, costumes, lights, sound, and props for six separate times in my life, for six different theatre companies. My reading of the play each time is made with technical drawings, lists of lighting hook-ups, and notated scripts where specific design cues fall in performance.

Bridget Escolme declares the necessity of using the entire archive when examining a live performance in, *Being Good: Actors' Testimonies as Archive and the Cultural Construction of Success in Performance*: "Where full archives exist, use all their elements in dialog [...] to acknowledge that different kinds of archival forms produce different meanings is an important part of the analysis of something as fleeting and contingent as live performance" (90). The artefacts that are held in perpetuity by libraries and archives reflect the many voices of those who created them. The numerous historical objects leftover from the design and rehearsal process, kept

at the SCLA and other archives, substantiate many such viewpoints expressed during the 1970 *Dream*.

As a designer, I can say that there are aspects to any production archive that only another designer is necessarily aware of, such as the dimensions of the set design or the list of stage properties used for a production tour. Due to the nature of these records, these are details that are often extraneous to other research projects, yet as someone educated in these fields, I am not only able but also compelled to effectively interpret and use them as primary sources to this thesis. Also, due to the highly technical nature of the work during production, there is a likelihood that the stage designer fabricates more archival material (paperwork, drawings, ground plans, etc.) than any other occupational artist working on the production. The archive on the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* held by the SCLA is generous, with several boxes of material devoted to only production records including ground plans for many of the theatres to which the production toured around the world, seven separate promptbooks, many copies of original costume drawings, and countless photographs. Using those resources, my examination of the 1970 *Dream* shows an understanding of, a focus on, and inevitably a translation of the practices of Jacobs and the technicians that are otherwise missing from other accounts of the same production.

Before I get too far into the exposition of this thesis, however, a few terms that are used with some frequency here must be defined, specifically the differences between the artistic concepts of naturalism and abstraction, as well as realistic and surrealistic, specifically how they are translated into stage designs. A naturalist stage design, as it was accomplished on British stages at the beginning of the twentieth century, is a style that depicts the details for the world of the play as exactly as they occur in nature. An abstract stage design, like Brook/Jacobs, is quite the opposite, as

it has exactly none of the particulars of the outside world present in its visual design. A naturalist forest is designed with real-looking trees and actual leaves and a turn of the twentieth century naturalist street scene is accomplished using real cobblestones, gas street lamps, evening gowns, tuxedos, and crinolines. Abstract designs are intentionally ambiguous in shape, size, colour, and purpose. The elements of that design signify nothing in particular; yet therefore can represent anything or nothing in the world of the play.

Realism and surrealism, on the other hand, may reflect how the stage design is incorporated into the narrative arc of the play, but they are not concepts that are used directly by a stage designer. Realism and surrealism are devices of the director and actor as they imbue their surroundings with a life that is not completely understood by simply looking at it. A black rehearsal cube onstage is made real or surreal when the actor acknowledges its presence and gives it a purpose, and it is only then that the audience understands that this cube serves a certain purpose. A lamppost used as an inanimate perch or the light source at the side of a road could be seen as a part of a realistic setting, whereas that same lamppost being situated in the middle of a cornfield and anthropomorphised by the actors into a living, breathing character of the play with feelings, emotions, and lines are ways a stage design could shift from the realistic into something surrealistic. An abstract rehearsal cube and a naturalist street scene may be either realistic or surrealistic in their onstage portrayal, depending on the direction the actors are given during a specific production.

0.2.3. Research Design

For more than four decades after the RSC's Brook/Jacobs *Dream* production had its last performance, many of its central themes stayed fixed in a cultural

memory—the white box, a circus motif, and the abstract nature of the production—but other ideas and details may have been forgotten or even reconfigured within the critical and academic recollections over time. The artistic importance of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* to the history of design at the RSC is not in question. The six teams of subsequent directors and designers of *Dream* at the RSC worked in the prodigious shadow of this renowned production. They have acknowledged its influence in interviews and have since shown that influence through their varying reactions against the 1970 design. Over the years, in accounts of subsequent productions, academics such as Jay Halio, Michael Greenwald, Bate & Rasmussen, and theatre critics such as Michael Billington, Irving Wardle, and J.C. Trewin have used the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* as a cultural reference point. They have compared it to more modern productions of *Dream* at the RSC, and incorporated twentieth century theatrical philosophers such as Brecht, Kott, and Artaud, yet in doing so they have had to rely on incomplete visual evidence—short video clips and production photos. Even when a video of the Brook/Jacobs production became available for public viewing in 2011, many were not aware of its existence or accessibility. Critics and academics have, over time, stopped interrogating the memory of Brook/Jacobs while at the same time used it as a baseline of comparison.

The approach of this thesis is to begin by presenting a case study of the design for the 1970 RSC production of *Dream* using a cooperative mixed-method structure of presenting both qualitative studies and quantitative data as research having to do with the scenography of that production. The case study of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* in the first chapter is followed by an ethnographical, or rather, design-focused and culturally centred inquiry of the six RSC productions of the same play in the same space that occurred during the subsequent three decades. The purpose of this study is

to accurately detail the processes of production from before, during, and especially after the Brook/Jacobs production and, in light of new research and access to the 1972 video, a fresh perspective on the 1970 *Dream* from the point of view of a theatrical design practitioner.

There is a case to be made that studying only subsequent productions of *Dream* at the RSC unnecessarily limits the scope of the conclusions that are drawn here. This thesis, after all, is a study centred on the afterlife of the design for “the most influential single production of any Shakespeare play in the second half of the twentieth century” (Bate and Rasmussen 104), or what is “generally recognized to be the definitive production [of *Dream*] of the twentieth century” (Bourus 9). There have been many productions of Shakespeare since that have existed outside these parameters (that is, either being a production of *Dream* or staged at the RSC), which could be relevant to this discussion and were most certainly influenced by the design of Brook/Jacobs. There have been examinations of the cultural influence of the design for Brook/Jacobs on British theatre as a whole, as well as studies that focus only on examining the cultural and artistic influence on subsequent productions of the same play in the same space. There are a few compelling reasons, however, why an examination of the designs for only these six productions makes for a more interesting study to practitioners than a broader focus on the Brook/Jacobs influence on British theatre as a whole.

First, given its long life, the RSC’s history of staging varied adaptations of Shakespeare has already been the focal point for several academic histories (Addenbrooke; Adler; Beaman; Greenwald; Steinberg). It is this cultural history and artistic testimony, shifted to the viewpoint of a designer that helps to focus and inform this examination. The RSC has been exceptional in its artistic mandate in the UK for

the past fifty-seven years as a theatre devoted to the production of plays written by Shakespeare. Until the opening of the Shakespeare's Globe theatre in London in 1997, the RSC was the only major theatre and company in the UK to embrace that ideal. Adapting these academic histories of the RSC to focus on the genealogy of the stage design for one play uses those familiar settings and ideas to back up the unconventional methodology in this thesis.

Second, a mixed-methods case study followed by an ethnographic examination of the design history of the RSC crafts the narrative of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* as a pivotal design yet something more tangible and affecting to the company that created it than the mythic piece that has been written about endlessly since 1970. According to Christie Carson in *Shakespeare and the Modern Stage*:

[T]he radical tradition of the theatre would aim to reinvent, destroy or contest earlier work as much as it would lovingly reconstruct former models. This sequential narrative suggests a history that is tied to other significant cultural factors beyond the pure desire to experiment theatrically. (312)

It is easier to perceive an artistic and cultural narrative, particularly one that Carson refers to, when focusing a study only on one space, the RST, as in the span of each decade the same play was reimagined two or three times there by completely different teams of theatre artists. Several academics have produced such focused histories of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* at the RSC already (Halio; Maher; Bate and Rasmussen), and it is these works that act as fundamental scaffolding to the study of the design for this production.

Ultimately, this thesis will trace the lines, within the cultural boundaries of theatrical design at the RSC, of artistic influence and reactions against the design for the Brook/Jacobs production in order to question, scrutinise, and possibly correct the cultural history and institutional memory surrounding subsequent productions of

Dream at the RSC. With that goal in mind, the six other productions of *Dream* that appeared on the RST stage between 1970 and the year 2000, all of which arguably were designed and staged as some kind of reaction to the Brooks/Jacobs production, are pivotal to this inquiry. The first three to follow, the 1977 John Barton/John Napier production, the 1981 Ron Daniels/Maria Bjornson production, and the 1986 Bill Alexander/Bill Dudley production were the first generation to follow and are explored in Chapter 2, with a specific focus on whether or not they were artistic rebellions against the Brook/Jacobs design. The second generation to follow and next three, the 1989 John Caird/Sue Blane production, the 1994 Adrian Noble/Anthony Ward production, and the 1999 Michael Boyd/Tom Piper production are examined closely, with a particular focus on them having used the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* as a constructive model for their designs.

The rationales for gathering the subsequent RSC productions into groups of three are rather clean-cut and binary, either for or against the artistic quality and basic design of Brook/Jacobs, yet it so happened that a fairly significant event in RSC history occurred immediately following the Alexander/Dudley *Dream* so as to cleanly mark a generational beat at the RSC. Artistic Director Trevor Nunn resigned from the RSC, leaving Terry Hands as the sole leader of the company. Many academic and critical accounts use a similar organization and this thesis follows the same historical trends while, at the same time, unpacking each of these critical and academic histories as part of a more nuanced debate in examining the scenography to the 1970 *Dream*. As such, tracing the many ideas and practices through the history of designing *Dream* at the RSC is not as compact or shrewd an exploration as the above narrative surrounding the myth and legend of the Japanese broadcast.

Third, following Carson's model of a sequential and cultural narrative, this thesis focuses on the scenography of many productions staged in the same theatre to allow for a comparative examination of exactly how each of the productions to follow Brook/Jacobs were compelled to use the space, especially in relation to their predecessor. The study of an entire stage design for a production must include how the time period and culture of the theatre in which it was staged influenced the reception of the production, and the ways in which the architecture influenced how the design was first developed. Sight lines, safety restrictions, budget concerns, and the adoption of seasonal stage layouts have all played a part in the design and reception of these productions, and are pertinent to a discussion of how each creative team addressed and incorporated each artistic boundary into their production.

Lastly, nowhere else was the influence of Brook/Jacobs felt more immediately than at the RSC. The academic concentration on this one theatre is necessary as there is a danger of concluding modern artistic choices in design, especially concerning productions of a company as large and influential as the RSC, to be the result of, or having been influenced by a predecessor simply because of their temporal placement to one another. The Latin phrase, "post hoc ergo propter hoc," ("after, therefore because of") is an expression that has been used to point out this type of logical fallacy. It is a tempting logic in this case because Brook/Jacobs was staged before so many experimental practices and themes were introduced to British theatrical productions of *Dream*. This fact alone has implied causality to many academics and critics when, in fact, so many other mitigating factors, artistic, theoretical, or cultural should be considered. There are mentions of productions of *Dream* outside the RSC in this thesis, which are used more as illustrative of the world where the practitioners live, work, and from which they derive artistic inspiration. The references to external

productions in this thesis even increase as the chapters progress as a reflection of the ever-expanding influence Brook/Jacobs had upon its successors over the years. In keeping the primary analysis focused on the subsequent productions of the same company and the same stage on which the 1970 *Dream* premiered, however, it is not only temporal but also the institutional and, decidedly scenographic, spatial arrangement that is studied. As stated previously, in order to effectively explore the stage designs of the subsequent productions, this thesis also needs to be an investigation into the culture that surrounded and defined the RSC at the time; one that helped to mould, and was consequently shaped by Brook and Jacobs's revelatory approach to one of Shakespeare's best known plays.

Culture is a term much debated and an endlessly redefined concept in the study of social sciences, especially to those academics who undertake qualitative research projects, such as those based on subjective studies of human interaction rather than on the quantitative analysis of statistical data. As this study is a delicate combination of both those methodologies, culture must be clearly identified here. According to Johnny Saldaña in *The Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*, "literally hundreds of definitions for the concept [of culture] exist" (5), all of which are dependent on the fluid relationship between a society and the individuals within that society. For the purposes of this thesis, the culture of theatre in question will be centred on the RSC as fair representative of the society in which individual practitioners, such as Brook and Jacobs, once lived and worked. Diana Elizabeth Kendall, in *Sociology in Our Times*, viewed the relationship between society and culture as synergetic and it is the definition on which this thesis will rely:

Culture is the knowledge, language, values, customs, and material objects that are passed from person to person and from one generation to the next in a

human group or society... Society and culture are interdependent; neither could exist without the other. (42)

The culture of the RSC definitely helped shape the Brook/Jacobs production, and in turn the 1970 *Dream* also shaped the culture of the RSC. It will be a focus of this thesis to determine how that symbiotic cultural and societal influence was made manifest within the institution of the RSC.

It is necessary to define what I mean by institution in order to understand the culture that lived and worked within the confines of the RSC, for it is not simply indicative of the physical location in Stratford or London. The concept of the institution at the RSC, in the syntax of this thesis, is one that is represented by the theatre spaces it has created and reshaped over the years,³ the theatrical practices and philosophies that the company has espoused, the productions that have resonated far beyond the walls of the RSC, and the practitioners that the company is known for bringing up through its ranks of actors, directors, and designers. As an expression frequently used in this thesis, an institutional practice or viewpoint is one that has been repeated so often in its productions and by its practitioners that it has become one of many standard bearers for the RSC. Understanding the ideas and practices that make up the institution of the RSC, is to understand the culture that these productions were created within.

The interest in this focused inquiry lies in the field of performance studies, and most specifically as a detailed account of the scenography for productions of *Dream* originally designed and built for the RST, a space with a rich history of innovative Shakespearean performance and bold stage design. Before such a detailed analysis

³ The newest renovation for the RST was finished in 2010, when it was transformed from a proscenium arch stage to a space with audience sitting on three sides of the massive thrust stage.

can occur, however, a little historical context to the Brook/Jacobs production must be provided. As this thesis will be an examination of possible historical trends in designing *Dream* at the RSC that followed Brook/Jacobs, it is relevant to this discussion to explore what exactly happened before that time, in a fashion consistent with the rest of this study. To that end, here is a brief account of early twentieth century productions that in turn had a major influence on the only RSC production of *Dream* to appear on the RST stage in the decade before 1970.

0.3. Early Twentieth Century Productions and the RSC's First *Dream*

The epitome, from the modern critical point of view, of extravagant Victorian pictorialism was Herbert Beerbohm Tree's 1900 production of *Dream* at Tree's own Her Majesty's Theatre in London: it featured... forest scenes decorated with real trees filled with mechanical chirping birds. Infamously in a 1911 revival of the production, Tree added real rabbits to his forest scene, coaxed onto and around the stage with trails of bran. (Lopez, "Dream: The Performance History", 65)

The Victorian penchant for staging huge Shakespearean spectacles, produced by the likes of actor-managers Henry Irving and Herbert Beerbohm-Tree, had become a lodestone praxis for many early twentieth century practitioners wishing to rethink or re-imagine what Shakespearean theatre could be (see figure 2). Tree's naturalist spectacle design was complete with falling leaves, real-looking trees, and live rabbits that chased food pellets across the stage.



Figure 2. Beerbohm-Tree. *Set design for Dream*. 1900. Her Majesty's Theatre, London. VAM.

The responses to this tradition of Victorian pictorial design in Shakespearean performance occurred in the early to mid-twentieth century and was a movement led by theatre practitioners like William Poel, E. Gordon Craig, and Harley Granville Barker, as they began to rethink the vast naturalist stage designs that had been produced in the latter half of the 1800s. Jonathan Post called Poel's revival of Elizabethan staging, "an ostensibly uncompromising reaction against overwrought Victorian scenography and acting style whose goal was to achieve a more transparent mediation between modern and early modern theatrical experience" (345). An inspiration to several of the RSC's most prominent directors, most notably Peter Hall and John Barton, Poel staged his Shakespearean productions on bare stages, simple and unchanged throughout so that onstage transitions from scene to scene did not break up the poetry of the play: "Poel's striking contribution... lay not within his adoption of Elizabethan dress, but rather in a more authentically Elizabethan regard

for the play... in the permanent stage set which revealed the musical structure of the play” (Styan 48). Looking specifically at the stage designs of British Shakespearean productions in hindsight, there are artistic and populist trends that are discerned by many academics. Christopher Innes in *Edward Gordon Craig: A Vision of Theatre* wrote: “One characteristic of modern drama seems to be that new forms supersede each theatrical reform as soon as that reform becomes established enough to react against” (213). Innes specifically related this premise of superposition to Craig and his contemporaries, but his assertion can be applied comprehensively to other movements in Shakespearean theatrical design.

 Poel’s notions of acting space, [E. Gordon] Craig’s simplicity in curtains and in architectural shapes, [Max] Reinhardt’s lighting, [Emil] Orlik’s geometric restraint, and [Leon] Bakst’s extravagant coloration... Most of these forces can be called modernist, and all of them reacted against the inflated propensities of nineteenth-century pictorialism... Metaphoric scenography was the key not just to visual reform but to a complete rethinking of the nature of Shakespearean production. (Kennedy 77)

This thesis is a discussion on the ebb and flow of period fashion in Shakespearean costume design and the spectacle set designs of the Victorians in contrast to the metaphoric stage designs that manifested later in the twentieth century. The design of the RSC’s first production was indeed a conceptual response to the many productions of *Dream* that had preceded it in British Theatre, and fit cleanly into that discussion.

 In 1963, newly appointed Artistic Director of the RSC, Peter Hall, and his designer, Lila de Nobili, revived a production of *Dream* in the RST they had originally produced in 1959 at what was then, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre (see figure 3). Several critics described the design of this production as, “an Elizabethan country house” (Worsley; Thompson; Trewin).



Figure 3. Hall/de Nobili. *Set design for Dream*. 1959. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SCLA.

The 1959/63 design for *Dream* was, in fact, a sturdy wooden staircase complete with a wooden balustrade balcony that flanked a large centre-stage double doorway. Hall and de Nobili designed and built the foyer of an old English mansion as Theseus's palace in *Dream*, which, according to Don Chapman of *The Oxford Mail*, also looked somewhat like the stage and tiring house of an Elizabethan theatre ("A plea for promising young actors"). The detail of the extravagant set that occupied the entire stage at Stratford was fastidious, though not on the level of Tree's spectacle in 1900, it was impressive in its sturdiness and bulk. Though there were aspects of the design that placed the time period of this production in Shakespeare's era, Hall and de Nobili used modern lighting fixtures and contemporary building materials and stage effects. It is important to note that the production was not an attempt at a naturalist forest with real trees onstage and rabbits traversing the stage as Tree had designed in 1900, or an attempt at authenticity as it did not adhere to any original practices of the Elizabethan era as became popular at Shakespeare's Globe in London in the mid-1990s (see

Carson, “The Original Practices Project”). This *Dream* celebrated the artistic movement in stage design initiated by Poel and some of his contemporaries at the beginning of the twentieth century, and brought to the forefront of modern thinking on Shakespearean production by one of Hall’s mentors at Cambridge, F.R. Leavis.

The design of the 1959/63 *Dream* was not an exact duplicate of Poel’s methods. The costumes of the mortals and fairies in the Hall/de Nobili production were a perfect example of that dichotomy as representative and not derivative of Shakespeare’s theatre; they were Elizabethan-like in design. Many of the ladies of the company wore a farthingale, corset, and collar ruff, whereas doublets, puffed-up breeches, leggings, and a collar ruff were worn by many of the gentlemen. As there were no cross-gender or double casting elements in this production, it was easy to tell each group of individual characters apart onstage, gentlemen and ladies, the mortals from the fairies, the gentry from the peasants. The fairy and mortal royals wore large, stately costumes, while the lovers and Puck were modestly yet also finely dressed, and the mechanicals wore elements of plain labourers’ clothing. All of the mortals wore costumes in white and black with highlights of sober and muted colours, while the fairies were clad in shimmering gold and silver with highlights of bright green and a shiny blue. In essence, each character could be classified as noble or peasant, mortal or immortal simply by looking at the cut of his or her outfit and its colour.

The Hall/de Nobili production of *Dream* was also interesting in that its design was significantly different from all the Stratford productions that had come before. Before Hall and de Nobili, and even before the theatre had been given the title of Royal Shakespeare in 1962, *Dream* had been produced in Stratford-upon-Avon regularly every four or five years. Cecil Wilson of *The Daily Mail* called the Hall/de Nobili production, “a refreshing revolution: for all who favour the lush conventional

Dream a sacrilege” (“Laughton plays down”). Before 1959, productions of *Dream* were often staged as spectacular, expansive, and natural spaces that looked much like picturesque forest hinterlands. Indeed Poel’s work deeply influenced the practitioners at Stratford,⁴ but it was W. Bridges-Adams, the artistic director at Stratford after the fire of 1926, who developed a way of working with Shakespeare, “which was essentially a compromise between the bareness of Poel’s staging and the scenic excess of [Frank] Benson’s” (Beauman 77). In 1932, Norman Wilkinson designed for Bridges-Adams’s production of *Dream*, a giant, real looking tree that sat centre stage for the entire second, third, and fourth acts of the play. This design, or some derivation of it, was used over and over again for productions up until the early 1950s. T.C. Worsley of *The Financial Times* wrote that Hall’s intent was to “rescue the play from over-production which too often weighs it down” (“Memorial Theatre Stratford”). The design of the 1959/63 *Dream* signified Hall and de Nobili shifting away from that design, but not the practices that led to its creation. The design for the Hall/ de Nobili *Dream* was also a large central piece that did not require lengthy scene changes during the performance of it.

David Addenbrooke in *The Royal Shakespeare Company: The Peter Hall Years*, rightly observed that the Hall/de Nobili production was, “interesting in that it remained part of the RSC repertoire over a period of nearly ten years” (114). Towards the end of his tenure as director of the RSC, Hall turned this production into a film in 1968. The film was designed as a slightly different and yet similarly erudite impression of *Dream* to the stage design. These attempts in Elizabethan-like costume and reflecting an early twentieth-century academic reality for the play, or rather an interpretation of *Dream* conceived and celebrated by academics as well as

⁴ See Beauman, pp.59-90, for an examination of early twentieth century designs of Shakespeare at the Memorial Theatre of Stratford.

practitioners, signified Hall's roots at University and his fondness for the work of Poel. Hall's penchant for academic Shakespeare while directing at the Stratford theatre stemmed from his years at Cambridge, reading literature under Leavis and George Rylands.

Hall says in an interview with Roger Manvell, "the greatest influence on me, on my generation, was Leavis, who believed above everything in a critical examination of the text, the search for meaning and metaphor" (121). Hall, John Barton, and Hall's directorial successor at the RSC, Trevor Nunn, having all read under Leavis, were deeply affected by this novel approach to the work of Shakespeare. "Hall saw himself as scholar/director, bringing to the theatre the possibility of a new academic status, through the employment of the methodology of close textual scrutiny" (McCullough 114). It was Rylands, however, who schooled Hall in an historical model of how to apply his academic study of Shakespeare to his work in the theatre. Rylands and the Cambridge chapter of the Marlowe Society taught the received pronunciation (RP) of Shakespeare's text that had begun in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the work of William Poel (Rokison 29-30). In *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players*, Hall spoke of the influence that Leavis, Rylands, and Poel had on his work, writing that they, "although an unlikely trio, have in fact been the most significant if largely unrecognised influence on twentieth-century British theatre" (195). The design of the Hall/ de Nobili *Dream* had definite roots in the historicism of Poel's scholarly forays into producing Shakespeare on stages that were reminiscent of the Elizabethan tradition.

Hall also states in an interview with John Thompson of *The Daily Express*, that he had an idea for his *Dream* long before he began to stage this production:

[A] production that takes the play back to its beginnings – staged, perhaps, for a wedding in an Elizabethan country house. For me, 'Elizabethan' means

splendours and conceits, not Merrie England tea shoppes and bare stages of well-scrubbed wood. (“The Dream—a taste of 1960 Stratford”)

The “beginnings,” to which Hall refers, stem from an academic theory that debates whether or not Shakespeare might have written the play for a late sixteenth-century aristocratic wedding. This debate is one that has continued into the twenty-first century. Jay Halio posits in *Shakespeare in Performance: A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1995), “the ‘hymeneal’ aspect of the play suggests that the *Dream* was written expressly for a noble wedding” (9). Bate and Rasmussen argue that, “theories suggesting that [*Dream*] was written to celebrate an aristocratic wedding have fallen into disfavour” (95). The logic behind both sides of the conversation stems from a close examination of Shakespeare’s text, and a certain logic applied to Halio, Bate and Rasmussen’s contentions is that these types of scholarly disputes are cyclical in their popularity. Hall and de Nobili’s production was a definitive commentary on that debate; judging purely from my hindsight point of view, these two practitioners came down squarely on the side of Shakespeare having written the play for a noble wedding. Without strictly adhering to the practices of Poel, the Hall/de Nobili interpretation of *Dream* showed its academic roots to any theatregoers who were familiar with a particular debate about the origins of the play. Given the locale of the theatre in which the production was first conceived and its academically minded director, it is also a virtual certainty that academics, researchers, and professors of Shakespeare were in attendance at many of the performances.

John Barton was quoted in *The Guardian* in 2002 saying that, “working with de Nobili, Hall became the most romantic director in England” (Jays). This production’s design was a beautiful union of an academic understanding of the play with a taste of romanticist woods full of child-like fairies. It brought forth Hall’s

“splendours and conceits” as the production moved from the setting of Athens to the fairy forest at the second act of the play. At the top of Act Two, it was then that leaves, vines, and small branches entered from the double-doors and tiring house by way of gossamer-clad fairies who quickly wrapped and covered the railings and balustrade in a bright green décor indicative of a forest. They spread rushes and hay over the floor as they went. This kind of simple Poel-inspired transition from the palace of Theseus to woodlands was an idea to which modern day audiences have since become accustomed. Peter Holland in *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s*, states plainly that, “Intervals... constitute one of the theatre’s sharpest means of defining interpretation” (3). The scene change was not overly time consuming or grandiose, and the pace of the play moved along quickly as a result. More than with the Elizabethan-styled costumes and the stolid English estate setting, this transition made clear to audience members, familiar with the notion, that the Hall/de Nobili production, though somewhat romantic, was a Poel-inspired historical interpretation of the design for *Dream*. Following the Leavis example in their design of *Dream*, Hall and de Nobili reflected the metaphors used in Shakespeare’s text, “upon which performance might be built” (McCullough 114). They did not design a fairy forest, but rather used only vines and leaves to metaphorically, or rather metonymically⁵ stand for the entire woodland having engulfed the city of Athens. Following the Rylands example, Hall and de Nobili reflected the scholarly work of Poel who, in Hall’s own words, had, “brought Shakespeare back to a bare stage where the audience’s imagination was invited to produce images more vivid than the work of any scene painter” (*Shakespeare’s Advice to the Players* 193). Hall and de Nobili

⁵ “Like the literary devices of metonymy and synecdoche, a metonymic design is based upon the contiguity of the presence on stage to the absence it represents” (Kennedy 13).

created a setting that metaphorically reflected but did not recreate Elizabethan theatrical practices.

As detailed as it was, the Hall/de Nobili design was not a literal translation of the settings depicted in the play, as there were no trees within, nor moon to light the forest as Quince describes the, “palace wood a mile without the town” (1.2.94), in which the mechanicals are to rehearse. The look and feel of Elizabethan country home architecture onstage at the RST was a clear allusion to certain elements and themes of the play, as well as a nod to the theory that *Dream* was an epithalamium, or a play written as a gift for the express purpose of being performed at a wedding, thought to be for the Earl of Southampton and his nuptials to Elizabeth Vernon in 1598 (Williams 4). Despite being a conceptually historic design for *Dream*, this production was still a realist ideal that manifested as an accurate interpretation of an actual place and time, the home of an English aristocrat on the eve of his wedding, and was not abstract in anyway.

In hindsight, it is also possible Hall and de Nobili found the model for their design in the musings of a Shakespeare critic from the time of Poel. In 1918, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch in *Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship* described how he would have designed *Dream*, and it was remarkably similar to what was presented onstage in Hall and de Nobili's production forty years later:

The set scene should represent a large Elizabethan hall, panelled, having a lofty oak-timbered roof and an enormous staircase, occupying in breadth two-thirds of the stage, should be fronted with folding or sliding doors which, being opened, should reveal the wood, recessed, moonlit. (76)

Almost to the detail Hall and De Nobili recreated this setting onstage in the late 1950s. Given Hall's academic approach to his work, it would make sense that a critic's

opinion such as Couch's description of *Dream* was a catalyst for the design of his production with de Nobili. This idea was first speculated by J.W. Lambert in 1959 for his review of the Hall/de Nobili production: "It is in this vision of the play to which Peter Hall, consciously or not, has given local habitation" ("A Midsummer Night's Dream"). Beyond that, however, there can be only theories that Quiller-Couch's statement had any effect on the design for Hall and de Nobili's *Dream* as there is no testimonial or written proof of influence in this case.

This brief analysis of the influence and production of the 1959/63 *Dream* is designed to give the Brook/Jacobs production and its successors some necessary cultural and historical context. A director steeped in scholarship and his stage designer, inaugurated the chronicle of designing *Dream* at the RSC. This was an approach to producing Shakespeare that was adopted by their contemporaries as well as the institution itself. Indeed, the thesis for this study is predicated on that statement; that Brook, Jacobs, and many of their artistic successors at the RSC based their stage designs of the play on scholarly interpretations of the text. Many such critical opinions and academic observations spark similar lines of inquiry in my discussion of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* and the subsequent productions of the same play at the RSC. Now that the 1972 video has been made available, I am also in the position to put forth my own critical account of what occurred onstage for the Brook/Jacobs production, which is a critical part of my first chapter.

One more thing needs to be stated here regarding the Hall/de Nobili production in relation to Brook/Jacobs and its white box design: the 1963 production was almost completely overshadowed by its successor in the years that followed 1970. This was effectively achieved by a multitude of academic and critical material, which showered the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* with praise of innovation and summarily ignored

the innovations of its predecessors. In order to understand the breadth of that related literature, all of those sources will be reviewed here if only to provide some critical context to the discussion of Brook/Jacobs and, later, to effectively bolster any argument that can be made using those sources.

0.4.0. A Review of Related Literature, Resources, and Artefacts

As a testament to its importance to many theatre practitioners inside and outside the RSC, the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* has become a pinnacle of quality and artistic creativity for Shakespearean performance in England. As Halio summarises:

The [Brook/Jacobs] production exerted a tremendous influence on many subsequent representations all over the world... Like Mount Everest, it was there and could not be ignored. Some might attempt to scale it and get part way up, others would seek ways of getting around it somehow. (72)

Brook/Jacobs was an iconic production of *Dream*, and it has been impossible to ignore its memory.

Early on, in critical reviews and academic analysis, the design of this production was captured in photographs that were, in turn, coupled with the critical and academic accounts of those writers lucky enough to see it at the time. Many periodicals include articles on Brook/Jacobs from its initial run in Stratford-upon-Avon and the subsequent world tour. These descriptive daily reviews from newspaper and magazine critics like Irving Wardle, Clive Barnes, John Barber, Bernard Levin and others give the photographs of the 1970 production dynamic context. Those same critics, some of whom write about the productions of *Dream* at the RSC that succeeded Brook/Jacobs, however, were also the first to posit theories of unseen relationships between Brook/Jacobs and its successors. Michael Coveney for the *Financial Times* writes about the Alexander/Dudley production in 1986: “Thus the

Brook-instigated RSC doubling of Oberon/Theseus and Titania/Hippolyta is resoundingly challenged” (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream/Stratford”). Given the time each critic was allowed to review and sometimes compare a successor’s design to the 1970 *Dream*, often only one or two days from seeing the production but usually the same night, it also made sense that each critical review fit into one of a few different types of views on the production.

One type of critical review is a simple qualitative comparison between the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* and its successors. The significance of these pieces is how these critics judge the quality of the later productions not just by what was presented onstage, but also by what was not. The critic for the *Solihull News* calls the 1977 Barton/Napier production, “a more traditional work than that of Peter Brook’s unusual ‘Dream’ of seven years ago. The critics will compare and as a result will find the revival flat and not so imaginative” (“Weird Fairies Roam”). This type of comparison so soon after Brook/Jacobs was fairly common. These opinions use a comparative lens and are varied, yet these kinds of reviews, however entertaining, are useful to this thesis mostly for details about what occurred onstage or to help interpret the tone of the production at hand, such as calling Barton/Napier a “more formal” production.

Another type of review to mention the Brook/Jacobs production continued to set that production as the bar to which every subsequent production of *Dream* at the RSC should be measured. Some of these reviews emphasize a contention that existed between Brook/Jacobs and its successors. Bernard Levin of *The Sunday Times* wrote: “the magic which Peter Brook wrought with [*Dream*] set a standard by which productions of the play will be judged for decades to come. The lot has fallen on John Barton” (“Lullabies of Broadway”). This is prescient commentary by Levin, just days

after the Barton/Napier production had opened in 1977, that the theatrical practices of Brook/Jacobs would incite all of their successors into a reactionary artistic stance. Other reviewers characterised the successive productions of *Dream* as having responded directly to the Brook/Jacobs production by stating outright that they had challenged their predecessor. Irving Wardle of *The Times* wrote that, “sooner or later somebody had to step into Peter Brook’s magic circle... The challenger is John Barton, Brook’s scholarly opposite number in the temperamental spectrum of the RSC directorate” (“Enchantment mixed with disenchantment”). This idea suggests that an adversarial relationship already existed between Brook and Jacobs and the subsequent directors and designers of *Dream* at the RSC. What is also useful about these reviews is that each provides clues as to what thematically, to them, was the most notable part of the 1970 *Dream*; both Levin and Wardle use the word “magic” to describe Brook/Jacobs. Both Levin and Wardle are also prophetic given that their contentions are repeated for years afterwards. The comparison model did not go away after the reviews of the first few productions of *Dream* following 1970 and they were not always contentious. In 1999, Michael Billington writes:

The legend lives on: Peter Brook's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* casts a shadow even on a generation that probably never saw it. Like Adrian Noble's 1994 production, Michael Boyd's brilliant new version at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre is consciously post-Brook. (“Leap of the Imagination”)

These types of reviews are excellent in pointing out when and where modern practitioners have replicated or reimagined one of the practices or themes commonly associated with Brook/Jacobs.

Academics such as Bate and Rasmussen, Halio, Mary Z. Maher, and others, writing much later, did eventually pick up the cultural gauntlet, opinions and all, that these critics had metaphorically dropped. They often begin by making similar direct

comparisons between the design of Brook/Jacobs and its successors, yet in a more candid and brazen manner than the critics had, at the time, dared. The academics and researchers who address the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* have the added benefit of hindsight, which allows for a more in-depth examination of the production. Given that the 1972 video was not available to them at the time, it is understandable that as more and more academics added critical opinions to the topic, the collective memory of the actual 1970 production began to morph into theory, conjecture and myth rather than remaining focused on fact.

0.4.1. A Review of Related Literature, Resources, and Artefacts: The Critical and Academic Afterlife

In more ways than one, the performance research community has established and augmented the legends that have surrounded the 1970 Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, and the myth of a Japanese videocassette in Brook's expansive library as the only surviving recorded copy is simply one of them. A profusion of writing from Brook has helped to give his own history and context to the decisions he made before and during the production process for *Dream*, and many academics and critics who have written on the Brook/Jacobs production have, at some time or other, referenced him heavily. In his later books, *The Shifting Point* (1988) and *The Quality of Mercy* (2013), Brook gave detailed impressions of his production and working methods with Jacobs from 1970 and before, as well as his work with many of his actors in *Dream*. In his personal interviews, he never shies away from his experience on the 1970 production; in particular he spoke at length on the topic with Ronald Bryden for *The Observer* (1970), Peter Ansorge for *Plays and Players* (1970), and Margaret Croyden, in her

book, *Conversations with Peter Brook, 1970-2000* (2003). His most recent interview was given to Peter Holland at the British Library in June 2016.

Jacobs has, in the past, been more guarded than Brook about her experience of that production, having never written a narrative of the process herself, yet she has given several interviews on the topic of her design. Her most recent personal dialogue on this *Dream* was with Christie Carson on 10 May 2002. Clips from that session, along with interviews given by other RSC designers on a myriad of topics, have become a prominent feature of Carson's online database and research project, "Designing Shakespeare". The database, which focuses on productions of Shakespeare that went on in the UK between the 1960s and the year 2000, also hosts hundreds of photographs and taped interviews with designers, some of which are featured in this examination.

Perhaps most importantly to one argument that surrounds the 1970 *Dream*, Brook also wrote the preface to Jan Kott's seminal work, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1962) and forever linked, in the minds of critics, academics, and practitioners, his production of *Dream* with Kott's essay, *Titania and the Ass's Head*. J.C. Trewin, in his *Birmingham Post* review, gives insight as to the difference between what the audience and critics were anticipating and what actually occurred onstage:

Many people had expected him to direct the *Dream* as a variation on the complicated theories of Professor Jan Kott. Pundits ought to have known better. Brook, back at Stratford after seven years—never does anything he is expected to do. Here he has sought, as it were, to conjour [sic] this play from the air. ("A Midsummer Night's Dream...")

Benedict Nightingale agreed when writing for *The New Statesman*, once in 1970 and again in 1971, notably decrying that Brook's *lack* of Kottian woe and misery in his

production was a fault: “The effect of all the manic decoration, let alone the actors’ attempts to radiate an ‘overwhelming sense of enjoyment’ is to deprive the *Dream* of its undoubted suffering, lust, horror and terror” (“Tripping Gaily”). Despite these compelling reviews, many critics contend with this assessment, as it is theorized that Kott and others (i.e. the work and writing of Artaud, Brecht, and Grotowski) influenced Brook so heavily, that their ideas about theatre, practice, and the play, *Dream*, have become a gateway into interpreting the 1970 production as well as the work of Brook’s successors at the RSC. Looking at Brook’s work in hindsight, the work of Kott was evident in Brook’s 1971 film of *King Lear* (*Lear*), modelled after his 1962 RSC production. Though Brook has denied Kott’s influence on his production (Eyre 22), this is a theatre piece that took place in the same year as the writing of Kott’s essay, “King Lear or Endgame” (*Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*) and even many personal communications between Kott and Brook on the topic of *Lear*.⁶ Though the precise time line of these interactions, Kott’s treatise, Brook’s production and the subsequent film are not debated here, it is not difficult to understand why critics and scholars make the academic connection between Kott and Brook. In turn, pundits make inexorable the artistic connection between Kott and the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*.

Most significant for the argument of these many theorists who address the connection between the 1970 *Dream* and *Titania and the Ass’s Head*, is Kott’s statement, “The *Dream* is the most erotic of Shakespeare’s plays” (175). This sexual energy is theorised by Kott and was plainly realised in moments onstage in Brook/Jacobs. It was the first time at the RSC that interactions between many of the

⁶ Kott, in the 2nd Edition of *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, documents and describes these personal interactions as “conversations” with Brook (“Appendix: Shakespearean Notebook,” 296).

characters were given a sexual energy that had been absent from many previous Stratford productions of *Dream*. Kott adds on to his assessment of the play, “the *Dream* was also a most truthful, brutal and violent play” (ibid 178). Commentators on the 1970 production take both of these Kottian concepts as an onstage truth that Brook and Jacobs did adopt in 1970. John Simon’s 1971 review for *New York Magazine* supports this viewpoint when he writes: “[Brook] sees *Dream* as Shakespeare’s most erotic play, and one in which the eroticism is expressed in almost unparalleled brutality” (“Bardicide”, 48). There are some varying opinions of critics and academics, yet the majority is in contrast to Trewin and Nightingale’s negation of Kott in the design of Brook/Jacobs, as the collective and critical memory of Brook/Jacobs has shifted to support a narrative that the 1970 *Dream* is the definitive realisation of Kott’s interpretations.

The academic connections between the two, Kott and the 1970 *Dream*, had by 1981 become part of the narrative for subsequent productions of *Dream* at the RSC. In the programme for the Daniels/Bjornson production of *Dream*, Philip Brockbank, the then director of the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, connects Kott to the 1970 *Dream* through imagery that Kott mentions in his description of Goya’s paintings of *The Caprichos*: “[Brook’s] production would have left Jan Kott free to catch his own glimpses of the ‘dark sphere of beastiality’ that [...] he describes in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*.”⁷ Brockbank connects Brook to Kott through Goya’s work. As is made clear in this thesis, academics more than critics employ an intricate line of reasoning but the message is much the same: Kott’s treatise on *Dream* had an indelible impact on the Brook/Jacobs production.

⁷ Kott connects *Dream* to Goya’s paintings in “Titania and the Ass’s Head” (181);

What is interesting here is that these strong impressions connecting Kott to Brook/Jacobs are also a part of academic narratives for the entire RSC (Addenbrooke; Adler; Beauman), historical accounts for many different productions of *Dream* (Williams; Maher; Bate & Rasmussen; Halio; Griffiths; Holland (2008)), and examinations of Shakespearean scenography (Kennedy; Worthen; Gillette; DiBenedetto). The reason all of this is worth mentioning here, is that the debate of Kottian influence over Brook and Jacobs permeates past analyses of this production's scenography even though the design of this *Dream*, and its white box, lies in stark contrast to every visual analogy and every descriptive interpretation of the play that Kott's writes in "Titania and the Ass's Head."

Kott paints his dark picture of *Dream*, based on a reading of the play, when he begins with Puck as the devilish two-faced faerie, "that of the Robin Goodfellow, and of the devil Hobgoblin" (172). Kott reads the First Fairy's line as the basis of his character assessment ("Those that Hobgoblin call you, and sweet Puck" 2.1.40). Kott continues with, "Puck is not a clown [...] It is he who, like Harlequin, pulls all the characters on strings [...] When at last will the theatre show us a Puck who is a faun, a devil, and Harlequin, all combined" (Kott 174)? *Dream* is not a comedy filled with simple or one-dimensional characters, and to Kott's liking, neither should the theatre portray them as such. Love, as it is so brazenly fallen into and out of by three of the lovers and one fairy Queen, is equated with the late-night drunken trysts of opportunity: "All that is left in the *Dream* of these amorous passions is the suddenness of desire" (174-5). There is nothing more telling, however, of Kott's interpretation of *Dream* than how he believes an audience should perceive a performance of it:

The scenes between Titania and Bottom transformed into an ass are often played for laughs in the theatre. But I think that if one can see the

humour in this scene, it is the English kind of humour, ‘humeur noir’, cruel and scatological, as it often is in Swift. (183)

Kott sees the fairies as terrifyingly ancient beings that laugh at their mistress’s misfortune (182), and Bottom as a monster that is seduced by a “very tall, flat and fair girl” (183), as Titania. The aforementioned glimpses of Goya that Kott sees in *Dream* are the stuff of focused vulgarity: “Goya, or animal eroticism. Everything here is hairy, everything part of the same night. Everything has to do with squeezing, handling, sucking, sticking” (187). At the last, it is Kott who relishes the idea that despite all the depravity and sexual inhibition disguised as love during the first four acts of *Dream*, it is the play within the play of Act 5 that shows a socially acceptable, Royal Court approved, violent and tragic end to Pyramus and Thisbe: “The world is cruel for true lovers” (190). It is simultaneously a great and terrible sight to imagine on any British stage that is the performance of a true Kott-ian *Dream*. The Brook/Jacobs design, though it did adopt certain themes from his rendering, did not faithfully adhere to Kott’s imagery. This thesis engages heavily with the dichotomy of Kott’s imagery versus Brook and Jacobs’s design for *Dream* principally because the two have been adamantly linked together for so long.

Not only is this thesis an account of the 1970 production, but an account of the academic afterlife of Brook/Jacobs and that afterlife’s effect on subsequent productions. Of these academic narratives, three have been used as models for this thesis regarding the design of Brook/Jacobs and its influence on its successors specifically because of their examination of the consecutive productions at the RSC. The first of these academic narratives acts as a catalyst for the interpretation of the other two, as, among other things, it points

out and debunks the relationship between Kott and the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*.

In the 1998 book, *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, edited by Dorothea Kehler, Mary Z. Maher contributes an essay entitled "A Midsummer Night's Dream: *Nightmare or Gentle Snooze?*" that challenges many long-held viewpoints on how the Brook/Jacobs production was critically and academically perceived.

Although many writers discuss how Brook's production drew inspiration from the gloomy prurience of Jan Kott's vision and emphasized the sex in the play in a non-traditional way, that description is misleading and inaccurate. In fact, the performance was permeated with lightness, physicality, laughter, comedic insights, even sight gags. (431)

Maher's assessment of the afterlife for the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* is, in my opinion, accurate and well founded. Maher seals her judgment of the many academics who write on this topic by stating, "to say that Brook's play dealt with the dark side of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is to miss the point of the production entirely" (ibid 432). Maher not only questions the relationship between Brook and Kott in the 1970 *Dream*, she denies it outright.

The heart of Maher's essay is to explore the "afterlife,"⁸ of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*. Though Maher's essay is shrewd and captivating, it is not long enough to explore the idea to its fullest. This thesis, however, expands on Maher's provocative ideas regarding the afterlife and influence of Brook/Jacobs on future RSC productions, and it brings her line of questioning into a sharper focus; the expanse of productions she posits as influenced heavily by Brook/Jacobs include productions not only from the RSC, but the United States, and many others all over Europe as well. This thesis concentrates on productions inside the UK, and reflects her interrogation of well-

⁸ "Afterlife" is a term she attributes to Jonathan Miller's book, *Subsequent Performances*.

established ideas about interpretations of, or academic attributions to Brook/Jacobs that might not bear up under modern scrutiny.

The second academic source, Jay Halio's *Shakespeare in Performance: A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1995), was one of the first academic books to explore the 1970 production as a visual and conceptual influence on successive productions of *Dream* at the RSC. Now with Maher's interrogation of other academics' work in mind, Halio's book not only provides a model for the examination of source material, but is also an excellent place from which to begin to frame and build the chapters that follow the case study of Brook/Jacobs in Chapter One. Inside Halio's chapter, entitled "Reactions to Brook: the *Dreams* of Barton, Daniels, and Alexander", he enlists the three subsequent productions of *Dream* at the RSC as commentary on Brook/Jacobs. The second chapter of this thesis focuses on the same three immediate successors to Brook/Jacobs, calling them Barton/Napier, Daniels/Bjornson, and Alexander/Dudley. The third chapter adapts this model of investigation and examines the next three productions to appear on the RSC main stage: Caird/Blane, Noble/Ward, and Boyd/Piper. The theoretical arguments posited here are focused as a through line to the productions in each chapter, and progressively build off one another, from the case study in Chapter One, to what will be examined as a symbolic deviation from the design of Brook/Jacobs in Chapter Two, to the pastiche designs of the productions that followed in Chapter Three.

Halio writes on how the Barton/Napier production (1977), "went the way of reaction, rather more or less" (72). Whilst Halio uses the term 'reaction' in general reference to the three immediate successors, this thesis takes a more nuanced approach, as the distinction between an artistic reaction against and a positive influence by Brook/Jacobs is not applied to an entire production, but rather to specific

elements of scenography that appear in subsequent productions. While this thesis brings deeper focus to Halio's argument by emphasising the importance of the many different practices adopted from Brook/Jacobs upon the stage designs of later productions, the arguments made here also address some of the historical and textual justifications for each of those production concepts that were adopted in 1970.

Most importantly, Halio emphasises the impact Brook/Jacobs had upon its successors by bringing to light what the successive practitioners themselves had to say about the 1970 *Dream*. Five core individuals at the RSC, besides Howells, have been interviewed from the year 2013 to 2017 as research and background for this thesis: RSC directors Trevor Nunn who was interviewed by Abigail Rokison-Woodall (12 September 2014), as well as personal interviews with Bill Alexander (15 February 2016), and John Caird (30 January 2017). There were also personal interviews with designers Tom Piper (23 May 2013 and 2 July 2013) and Sue Blane (25 February 2017). This thesis will revisit the conclusions of Halio and other academics in light of all the new material that has been more recently produced, including these interviews. Halio's work will serve as a jumping off point to explore practical decisions made about each of these successive designs that can be seen as direct responses to, either influenced by or reactions against, the design of the Brook/Jacobs production. It also serves as a model of questioning how some of the successors felt the 1970 *Dream* manifested itself within their own production designs of *Dream*.

The third academic source, Bate and Rasmussen's 2008 RSC edition of *Dream*, also posits theories on the concepts behind the development of Brook/Jacobs and its influence on several of the RSC successors. Bate and Rasmussen write that, "No director could avoid the influence of this staging of the *Dream*" (104-5). Their analysis represents a broader study of RSC productions of *Dream* than Halio's, and

more focused than Maher they extend their enquiry beyond the three successors to include other more modern productions yet do not extend their inquiry beyond the scope of the RSC itself. Bate and Rasmussen see the influence of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, as they put it above, not as a passive trend that slowly infused each of its successors, but as an active force that could not be avoided. The trend of responding to Brook/Jacobs did not end with the three productions outlined by Halio, the 1977, 1981, and 1986 RSC productions of *Dream* respectively, but rather, according to them, continued into the new millenium. In Chapter Three of this thesis, the artistic influence of the 1970 *Dream* is explored not as a passive force, but as an unstoppable ripple effect that inevitably suffused the next generation of directors and designers at the RSC.

Important to this thesis is the Bate and Rasmussen position that, “after Jan Kott’s essay ‘Titania and the Ass’s Head’ ... productions of the *Dream* picked up on the strand of dark sexuality evident in the text” (103). Bate and Rasmussen indicate that as a result of the Brook/Jacobs production having championed this interpretation of the play, “many productions since have emphasised the nightmarish elements evident in the text” (ibid. 109). It is here in taking all three sources together (Maher, Halio, and Bate/Rasmussen) that Maher’s line of questioning can begin to distil and cross-examine the other two well-established academic impressions of Brook/Jacobs. Maher specifically refutes the idea that Brook/Jacobs was at all dark or nightmarish. Rather than point out all the logical fallacies that have since occurred because of this impression, it falls to this thesis to explore exactly where that interpretation of the play may have originated, specifically from productions at the RSC. Maher’s investigative attitude towards other academic conclusions will be a cornerstone of this examination.

Bate and Rasmussen's study is therefore pertinent for two reasons. First, their use of Kott's philosophy as an influence on many of the RSC designs that followed Brook/Jacobs is an excellent model for positing, in a different fashion than Halio, that Brecht, Artaud, and Grotowski's theatrical practices and theories also manifested in later productions as reactions to the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*. Secondly, with the benefit of new research and a now indelible video record of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, this thesis questions many of the conclusions made by these and other academics. The revision of Bate and Rasmussen will act as a prototype for the interrogation of other academic points of view.

Although these three sources provide interesting commentary and relevant source material regarding productions of *Dream* at the RSC, I contend that none of them delve deeply enough into how and why the 1970 production affected the subsequent performances so profoundly. They do not address the institutional pressure of the RSC and the cultural trends within British theatre at that time that were essential to the development of the stage design to the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* and many of its successors. Going further into the philosophical enquiries begun by these sources and others, this thesis builds upon some of the ideas surrounding the design of Brook/Jacobs and its influence. Most importantly, it is my contention that the visual and conceptual similarities and stark differences between Brook/Jacobs and its successors at the RSC, to which Maher, Halio and Bate/Rasmussen call attention, establish a fluid kinship between all of the RSC productions. These scenographic relationships are paramount to this investigation, and these three studies have set the standard for this type of exploration into the performance history of *Dream* at the RSC. Another important distinction to make then, between these three academic explorations and this thesis, is that these arguments are brought up to date and built

upon to focus on an in-depth analysis of the design of Brook/Jacobs and those of its successors.

Lastly, two prominent scholars have also written entire books on the Brook/Jacobs production of *Dream*. Both are fundamental to a general academic understanding of the 1970 production, its influence over its successors and are the two sources used in nearly every critical exposé of this production. The first of these books, compiled and edited by Glenn Loney, is *The Authorized Acting Edition of Peter Brook's Production of William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream for the Royal Shakespeare Company* (1974). This book is an assembly of original interviews conducted or edited by Loney of over a dozen practitioners, including Brook, most of the stage designers, a few actors, the tour manager, and the stage manager giving after-the-fact impressions and memories of what occurred during the whole production process. Perhaps the most useful section of the book to this investigation is a section entitled, “World Tour Shipping Checklists”, which includes a small schematic of the world tour towers and beam assembly (114), and an itemized list of *Dream* scenery including all of the costumes and stage properties (115-27). This book also includes a copy of the original deputy stage manager’s (DSM’s) touring promptbook that recorded stage movement, music and lighting cues, as well as line edits for the production.

The second essential monograph to this thesis is David Selbourne’s *The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream: An Eye-witness Account of Peter Brook's Production from First Rehearsal to First Night* (1982). This one of a kind book was written as a journal and gives a detailed personal account of the entire production and rehearsal process. Each chapter is a journal entry broken up by the days and weeks leading up to the opening night performance, and it gives a first-hand report on what

was said inside the rehearsal room and in production meetings. Though Selbourne does not describe much of the stage design for the production, this is a useful account of how the actors first encounter and begin to adapt their characters to the set and costume designs brought into the rehearsal room.

Processing both of these sources together, a structural narrative of what occurred before, during, and after the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* can be assembled for the purposes of crafting a more complete portrait and, in this instance, a case study of the design for the 1970 production. In light of the source material that has been found and created for this thesis, those critical and academic proofs, concepts, and suppositions built upon impressions, can and will be re-examined with fresh eyes and a modern-day perspective.

0.4.2. A Review of Related Literature, Resources, and Artefacts:

Complementary Materials

The first of the complementary materials is my own personal account of seeing the 1972 video of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*. Though this account cannot capture the undoubtedly electric atmosphere of seeing the production in person over fifty years ago, it is, however, a first critical look made from multiple viewings of a production that has been out-of-reach for modern researchers. This original account is in the second section of the first chapter of this thesis.

Along with other critical and academic accounts, and original source material that has been amassed and developed as research for this thesis, there is herein, redrawn from a ground plan of the original 1970 design held at the SCLA, a full-size

blueprint of the design as it was installed into the RST (see Appendix B).⁹ At the SCLA, there are also a few other plans of the set design installations at several other theatres on the subsequent world tour that were used as reference guides for the re-creation of this ground plan. Though none of the original plans contain exact measurements, coupled with other schematics and dimensions from other sources, and a reverse engineering of the scale and accuracy of the schematic at the SCLA, this copy of and descriptive illustration of the set design as it was realised in 1970 is a part of this thesis.

There is also a vast collection of photographs from the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* and its successors held in the RSC archive that can help visually translate the academic and critical accounts used in this thesis. There are also seven of the original promptbooks, including the original book edited by stage manager Laurence Burns, with all of the adapted stage directions, line changes, and design cues, held at the RSC archive.¹⁰ Lastly, there is a roving collection of original props, costumes, and design drawings from Brook/Jacobs, some of which were most recently seen at the British Library exhibition in 2016, which has helped to bring perspective to this exploration and research project. With permission from the SBT and the RSC, pictures of these materials or first-hand accounts of these artefacts are a prominent feature as and when it is necessary to supplement the narrative of this thesis.

⁹ SCLA Call number: RSC/SM/2/1970/6

¹⁰ SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/1/1970/MND3

Chapter One: A New Design for *Dream* at the RSC

Once in a while, once in a very rare while, a theatrical production arrives that is going to be talked about as long as there is a theater, a production that, for good or ill, is going to exert a major influence on the contemporary stage. Such a production is Peter Brook's staging of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which the Royal Shakespeare Company introduced here tonight. (Clive Barnes, "Historic Staging of 'Dream'")

The Brook/Jacobs *Dream* ran from 1970 to 1973, selling out almost every performance at the RST, and even overselling many evenings on its trip around the world. "In its first brief tour to the United States," which lasted only from January to April in 1971, "more than 200,000 people saw it, and it earned the RSC more than £1,000,000 at a time when such income was sorely needed" (Helfer and Loney 152). Enormous financial gains and outstanding attendance records were only two of the barometers used to measure this production's success. According to then Artistic Director of the RSC, Trevor Nunn, "it's the only production... until [*Nicholas*] Nickleby,¹¹ where there was a standing ovation at the interval" (Nunn). Though many critics of this production make grand statements in their reviews, none are quite so bold or prophetic as Clive Barnes, writing for *The New York Times* ("Historic Staging of *Dream*"). Both acclaim for the production and praise for the director were equally widespread. Barnes states, "the star of this dream is Peter Brook himself, with his ideas, his theories and above all his practices" (ibid). The case study in this chapter not only focuses on what happened onstage during the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, but also, as advocated by Barnes, this is an examination of Brook and Jacobs's ideas, theories and practices that shaped this production, in particular its design. This chapter

¹¹ 'The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby' was an eight-and-a-half hour RSC production staged in 1980.

explores how this iconic *Dream* was developed from concept to performance and ultimately set the stage for this thesis to show how this production transformed British theatrical history and ultimately, the theatrical praxis of the RSC.

Over the years, since the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* ended in August of 1973, many critics and academics have developed and explored an array of theories and interpretations of this production, and explore its origins and its significance to the performance history of the play. Nineteenth and twentieth-century theatre practitioners and theorists inspired Brook and Jacobs's production, though that realisation does not detract from the initial impulse and the confidence that it took to process and then coalesce all of those influences and inspirations into a cohesive, innovative production that spoke to and inspired audiences around the world. Brook and Jacobs developed and staged these ideas with their blank slate, their white box, to great effect on British and world theatre, and what they staged was completely subject to the opinions of those who had seen the performance, and those who then wrote the analysis of the production. Brook and Jacobs created a blank slate that many academics and critics interpret as commentary on Shakespeare, on culture, or, as designated representatives of Brecht's theatre, on the idea of theatre itself. Jack Kroll of *Newsweek* writes: "Brook catches it all in that bright white space, which we see is his way of making a tabula rasa out of our cluttered and encumbered minds, cleansing our imaginations to receive Shakespeare's sweet thunder" ("A Dream of Love"). Though other productions of *Dream* also went on to use the tabula rasa approach, as Kroll put it, they helped to transform some of the Brook/Jacobs practices from innovative experiments to institutional convention through the years. Even though the subsequent RSC practitioners used or recreated the abstract designs that Brook and

Jacobs pioneered, the 1970 production is remembered by practitioners, academics, and critics alike, as the original white-box *Dream*.

The designing of a blank slate, however, could never come to be without certain flourishes in its design born out of necessity in rehearsals or on tour. The blank slate in 1970 was shaded by audience expectation and that design was changed through trial-and-error, and then translated through the imaginative lens of culturally literate audience members at the RSC. Wendy Monk likened the set design for Brook/Jacobs to what audiences in the playhouses of Shakespeare's day must have done to imagine the settings of the plays.

Like their forebears in the first production of 'Dream,' they have no atmospheric help, no changes of light, no shadows, no scenic effects, they wear their own hair, their faces are as God made them; even Bottom cannot hide behind the twitching ears and rolling eyes of the traditional ass's head; for all that, their words come to meet us, unhampered, moving, beautiful.
("Peter Brook's Dream")

Monk was not the only reviewer to embrace the notion that a minimalistic approach was a nod to the Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses where *Dream* was originally produced. Peter Roberts, in his review of Brook/Jacobs for *Plays and Players*, commented that "all this takes place at Stratford in a bare and consistently brightly lit set which has the three levels of the Elizabethan playhouse without being in any sense a reproduction of them" ("A Midsummer Night's Dream", 43). The three levels of the playhouse, audience, stage, and upper stage or balcony were all present and acknowledged in the 1970 production. Maher relayed a story told by David Meyer (who played Moth in 1970) in an interview he gave to her in 1995 about the ending of the performance each night. Meyer said that "Puck's lines, 'If we shadows have offended' became the recognition that we were all human beings and the wall

between player and audience, watcher and performer, speaker and listener, was beginning to melt” (qtd. in Maher 435). Meyer spoke of the incredible energy that closed the production every night and how no one in the audience was unaffected by it. Dispelling the mysticism of the theatre and asking the audience to participate in such a profound moment of the play was a new concept for the RSC. If Brook and Jacobs had sought to recreate an actual Elizabethan playhouse, similar to the construction of the modern Globe Theatre in London that opened in 1997, as Monk and Roberts had posited, it would not have had the same effect on an audience. Rather, that playhouse would have brought about the cultural expectations in an audience of something much older and archetypal, which was the exact type of pictorial atmosphere that Brook had told Jacobs he wanted to avoid.

Unlike Monk and others, Dennis Kennedy thought that the design of Brook/Jacobs expressly avoided any relationship with theatres or spaces with which the audience might have been familiar: “The secret of the white box was its emptiness, its power to call forth the imagination, not its ability to invoke a specific set of cultural responses” (*Looking at Shakespeare* 187). The audience could project their own ideas of what the empty space was because the white colour—or blank canvas—needed to be filled in. At the very least, Monk and Roberts are evidence that an audience could have seen an Elizabethan playhouse where only a white wall existed.

According to Jacobs, after the initial phone call with Brook, the two met at a hotel in New York in January 1970 to discuss and play with ideas that both of them had come up with (Selbourne 47). In a true meeting of the UK and the United States coming together, it can be supposed that the first meeting of the production team is where the initial design concepts for the show first emerged, as the story told by Jacobs goes. Jacobs had a concept of the colour design in her head around the time

that she first spoke to Brook on the phone (Jacobs, *Designing Dream*). Prior to meeting, Brook claims to have seen a Robbins ballet, and eventually took Jacobs to see the Chinese circus in Paris (“A Cook and a Concept”). According to Trevor Nunn, Brook also had seen the previous RSC season’s white box design of Shakespeare (Rokison Interview). It stands to reason then that the initial design meeting with Brook and Jacobs was a meeting of minds already in sync. These two collaborators had similar ideas about the design of this production and were on the same conceptual page of minimalist design from their history of working together. This production was a reflection of Brook and Jacobs’s maturity in their collaborative process, their visual style, their appropriation of institutional RSC practices around that time, an inherent need to celebrate the philosophy of Kott and Artaud, along with the practices of Brecht and Grotowski, and a trust in their audience to use their imaginations.

Using all available source materials on this production, new interviews and, most notably, the video of the production filmed in 1972, this chapter presents a more comprehensive portrait of the production and its design than has been rendered critically or academically thus far. This study of the Brook/Jacobs design is illustrated in detail through four of the key component concepts, which carried through the entire production process from the first meeting between director and designers to the closing night of the world tour. These concepts encompass 1) the design of an intimate and abstract space; 2) the fluidity and adaptability of every element of the stage design; 3) the symbolic use of colour in both costume and set design; and 4) the onstage magic that was designed to capture the audience’s imagination. Knowing how, speculating why, and showing what Brook and Jacobs did to create the design for their *Dream* helps to illustrate this as a truly pivotal event at the RSC and goes far in tracing its influence through the design history of the company, the designs of notable

productions in British Shakespeare, and what was an inadvertent buttressing of design archetypes such as minimalism and a universal lighting scheme that became popular again at the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

1.1. “*What is really needed is a great white box*”: The Beginning of Brook and Jacobs

The origins of the design for the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* have only ever been speculations made by critics and academics, and even here it is only educated guesswork. The origins of this production have been a source of great fascination to researchers, as Brook and Jacobs have commented often about how the production came to pass. Neither have ever been very specific, however, about where the ideas came from. According to Jacobs, “It was a marvellous sort of you know coming together of an idea and a result. It happened really quickly in a hotel room. As most good ideas do” (*Designing Dream 2*). While there is no reason to doubt Jacobs's assessment, the critics and academics have since interrogated that magic moment between Brook and Jacobs.

In *Looking at Shakespeare*, Kennedy suggests that Brook and Jacobs received their initial inspiration for their design of *Dream* from Harley Granville-Barker in his book *The Exemplary Theatre* which reads: “These modern theatres with their electric lights, switchboards and revolving stages are all well enough but what is really needed is a great white box” (Barker 204-6; qtd. in Kennedy 184). Though many other researchers have repeated this observation by Kennedy it only remains a

theory,¹² as neither Brook nor Jacobs have ever directly addressed Barker's prescient commentary when they have spoken on what inspired them to create their design of *Dream*.

The history that they shared prior to *Dream* informed their process and provided the grist to the academic mill that has wondered at this project. In his career, Brook designed sets and costumes for many of his own productions at the RSC and elsewhere. It was not until his 1963-64 productions for the RSC's *Theatre of Cruelty* season at the LAMDA Theatre Club in London that he and Jacobs began to work together (Helfer and Loney 193). During that season, Jacobs designed every show for Brook and Charles Marowitz, an American practitioner and the other director of the season, and Jacobs described the experience of working with them:

Just about every idea we wanted to try out, we did! That was my first encounter with Peter Brook. It was very hard. I wasn't used to working that way—where you work through an idea to see if it's actually going to work or not. Even, up to a point, building something to see if it can be used. (qtd. in Helfer and Loney 193)

Given that the entire project was based on the theories of Antonin Artaud, hence the name *Theatre of Cruelty*, an improvisatory and organic theatre work ethic makes sense.¹³ After the 1963-64 season, Jacobs's working relationship continued with Brook's workshop production of Jean Genet's *The Screens, Marat/Sade* for the RSC in late 1964, and again with *US*, a devised piece centring on the morality of the Vietnam War, for the RSC in 1966. The seminal history of Brook and Jacobs working together in the 1960s is testament to the foundations of experimental theatre in the

¹² Williams 152; "Shakespeare: Drama's DNA"; "Peter Brook and Associates"; BBC4 Radio, *The Reunion*

¹³ See also Artaud's "The Theatre of Cruelty: First Manifesto" in *The Theatre and its Double*, p.63-71.

UK and prologue to their work on *Dream*. It was also Brook's work in the theatre, prior to and around the time of Jacobs that was pivotal to the emerging style of design these two practitioners were eventually credited with spearheading at the RSC.

In *The Shifting Point*, Brook writes of his meeting with Edward Gordon Craig in 1956 (23-5), and he is open about Craig's modern and symbolist designs and the influence he had on Brook's first production of *The Tempest* in 1957. When Brook staged *The Tempest* again in 1968, the stage design had grown into what Margaret Croyden describes as, "a huge gymnasium; no stage, but enormously high ceilings, from which Brook had hung a circus-like white canvas tent" ("Peter Brook's *Tempest*" 125). As a stage designer or stage director matures, like any artist, a signature style can emerge, and Brook's style of static onstage visuals throughout each of his productions at the RSC were not only abstract, but began to resemble the abstract expressionist artwork of the late 1950s. In 1962, Irving Wardle, writing for *Plays and Players*, describes Brook's sparse props, non-figurative style, and use of white light as effective in producing an emotionally vacant setting for his RSC production of *King Lear* ("Complex Simplicity"). The design for *King Lear* was a signature for Brook in the 1960s and the visual design of the 1963 RSC production of *The Tempest* by Abd'el Kader Farrah, a production directed by Brook, consisted of a wall of flats, noticeably with bold black strokes akin to artist Franz Kline's work of the 1940s and 50s (see figures 4 and 5 for comparison). The production of *Dream* he and Jacobs realized on the RSC stage less than a decade later showed maturity in Brook's conceptual thinking on designing Shakespeare. Brook retained a nonrepresentational background yet did not include the abstract expressionist artwork he had in previous designs.



Figure 4. Brook/Farrah. *The Tempest*. 1963. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.



Figure 5. Franz Kline. *Painting Number 2*. 1954. Oil on Canvas. The Franz Kline Estate / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

The production design of *Dream* retained Brook's artistic style of an abstract setting throughout Jacobs's work in 1970 and yet also appeared as an evolved piece of art from his earlier pieces. Brook did not have another designer work with him in the interim between *US* in 1966 and *Dream* in 1970.

In the 2013 book, *The Quality of Mercy*, Brook describes the process of inspiration and making *Dream*. He writes of attending the Peking circus in their first visit to Europe in the years leading up to his production, and the acrobatics reminding him of fairies: "In the lightness and speed of anonymous bodies performing astonishing acrobatics without exhibitionism, it was pure spirit that appeared" (77; see also Brook, "A Cook and a Concept"). Brook also writes of attending a Jerome Robbins piece in New York that was equally inspiring: "A small group of dancers around a piano brought into fresh and magical life the same Chopin nocturnes that had always been inseparable from the trappings of tutus, painted trees and moonlight. In timeless clothes, they just danced" (77).

Though this is Brook's memory of the production process, forty years passed between the time of the production and his recollection of events in *The Quality of Mercy*. As it happened, Robbins staged "The Concert," a comic ballet using Fredric Chopin's music and a solo pianist centre stage, at the New York City Ballet in December 1971 (Barnes, "Dance: A Rare 'Concert'"). The ballet was staged a year after *Dream* opened yet it seems to be a part of Brook's inspiration in hindsight. In fact, the direct visual influences on *Dream* that Brook and Jacobs have admitted to incorporating, such as works by notable visual artists, a performance by a Chinese circus, a ballet choreographed by Robbins, and a few of their own productions of Shakespeare in the decade prior to 1970 that were preliminary experiments into abstract expressionism, were clearly not Brook and Jacobs's only inspiration.

In the 1969-70 RSC season, the first for which Trevor Nunn was the Artistic Director, Nunn decided that the company would adopt a thematic approach to its selection of that season's plays for the first time since 1960, focusing on the late plays of Shakespeare. As audacious as that choice was to attempt both *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* in the same season, the design of the 1969 RSC stage represented an equally bold decision: "Both Trevor Nunn and Terry Hands in particular were concerned to scale down Stratford productions, to try and move towards what they felt was a much-needed new simplicity of staging" (Beauman 301). Christopher Morley, who was Nunn's designer and regular collaborator, "created a new permanent set that... was a conscious stripping away of everything extraneous, creating a stage that was like a great empty box, white for *Winter's Tale*, blue for *Pericles*" (ibid). Though a simplicity in design may have stemmed from the RSC's financial woes directly after the exit of its founder, Peter Hall, Ronald Bryden for *The Observer*, uses the phrase, "white box-set" in a more than flattering review describing Morley's design for *A Winter's Tale* ("Time, That Conspirator"). It is fact that the 1969-70 season was a financial and critical success even before Brook/Jacobs came along in late summer of 1970. According to Nunn, in a 2014 interview given to Abigail Rokison-Woodall:

Peter [Brook] came to see... the *Winter's Tale* and he was absolutely overjoyed and he said, 'I'm completely sure a whole new thing has started here! And we mustn't go back on it.' So I think Peter was very conscious that he was doing a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a theatre where we had just celebrated white box [set design]. (Nunn)

Considering the design for the 1969 season and reviews of the productions at that time, this statement from Nunn indicated that the revelatory design for the Brook/

Jacobs *Dream* was at the very least suggested by productions that had already been staged at the RSC a year prior to *Dream*.

The white-box design was not, however, the only idea shared and borrowed from production to production during Nunn's first two seasons. After the opening night of the Terry Hands/ Timothy O'Brien production of *Pericles* on 8 April 1969, Laura Gillan of *The Express and Star* commented on the casting practices of the RSC: "Doubling parts in a play is an old and honourable custom. Shakespeare did it, mainly for economic reasons... I didn't expect to find the Royal Shakespeare Company at the game" ("Double, double means toil not trouble"). Though it may have been an old custom, until the 1968-69 season, the RSC was not in the regular practice of doubling actors' roles and many critics commented on the practice (Gillan; Chapman; B.A. Young; Evans, 1969). In the Hands/O'Brien production of *Pericles*, eight actors each played two separate roles a piece. In the Nunn/ Morley production of *The Winter's Tale*, which opened 15 May 1969, Judi Dench doubled the roles of Queen Hermione and her daughter, Perdita.

In 1970, the roles of Theseus with Oberon, Hippolyta with Titania, Philostrate with Puck, and Egeus with Quince were doubled. According to Bernard Levin from *The Times*, the doubling in Brook/Jacobs seemed, "so unarguably right that I marvel it has never been done before" ("A Midsummer Delight"). In an essay on doubling in Shakespearean production, Stephen Booth writes the doubling in the Brook/Jacobs production "was so spectacularly workable and so spectacularly successful as to have since become a theatrical fad among less grand companies" (107). In the subsequent years, double casting became an institutional practice within RSC productions of *Dream*, having been used, in some derivation of the Brook/Jacobs division, six out of the seven times it was staged at the RSC from 1970 to 2000.

Peter Holland points out in his Oxford edition of *Dream*, that the idea of doubling roles in this play was not new; the practice had been around since the sixteenth century. In a quarto copy of *The Merry Conceited Humors of Bottom the Weaver*, a 1661 adaptation of *Dream*, the first written suggestion for doubling occurs in the list of characters. Oberon is listed as “King of the Fairies, who likewise may present the Duke,” and the mechanicals are all listed with the addendum, “who likewise may present three fairies” (British Library). But according to Holland, in those interpretations, the “evidence only suggests that the economy of size of company necessitates doubling. It does not indicate the interpretative meaning which an audience might attach to the double” (97). Since 1970, however, critics and academics have viewed the adoption of this practice as one way to establish a relationship between the mortal court and the immortal fairy worlds not evident in productions without doubling. As doubling in *Dream* was previously associated with economic practicality of a theatre company, I think Holland is right that the innovation with which Brook and Jacobs should be credited is the modern thematic justification for such a practice:

Brook’s interest in the double was seen as a celebration of theatrical virtuosity, the actors’ delight in the quick change as ‘apparent triumph at the transparent theatricality of their physically minimal metamorphosis’. But it was also seen as arguing that the scenes in the forest were ‘the subconscious experience of the daytime characters’. (Ibid 97)

Having the same actor portray Theseus and Oberon implies that an audience could view these characters as two halves of the same person and the same can be said of the other fairy characters doubled with mortals: Hippolyta/Titania and Puck/Philostrate.

This idea, however, does not translate in the same manner with the

Brook/Jacobs doubling of Egeus with Quince, as both characters are mortal.

According to Halio, “why Egeus and Quince were paired is less clear, unless Brook wanted to stress the sort of officiousness appearing in two diverse walks of life” (56). In looking at the text, Halio’s assessment of the pairing of these characters makes sense. Both Egeus and Quince are the petty tyrants of *Dream*; one is from the gentry of the court and the other a lowly worker of Athens. Egeus wishes to control his daughter and whom she decides to marry; Quince hopes to control his play and the performing of it. These two characters share traits, as Halio implies, as both are meddlesome and self-important individuals in the play. Continuing that train of thought, both Egeus and Quince are also the characters that bring about the inciting incidents of to the story of *Dream*. Egeus, in Act 1, proclaims to the court of Theseus, “Full of vexation come I with complaint / Against my child, my daughter Hermia” (1.1.23-4). Egeus’s complaint is the impetus for Hermia and Lysander to leave Athens and Hippolyta’s disagreement with Theseus, and thus begins the play. It could also be argued that another inciting incident to occur in the play, outside of the Athenian court, is Quince producing, “The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of *Pyramus and Thisbe*” (1.2.11-2), thus beginning the adventures of Bottom and the mechanicals as they rehearse and, inevitably, Puck’s prank of changing Bottom into the ass with which his Queen will fall in love. These two characters were doubled to signify the importance each character has upon the storyline of the entire production or their position as instigators within their own social circles.

All of this history to the work of Brook and Jacobs is important when examining the design of their *Dream* in 1970, especially in establishing wherein lies the originality and innovative quality that many critics and academics have professed to seeing in this particular production and its design. It also makes clear that the 1970

production was indeed a vehicle for both Brook and Jacobs to explore their ideas on the nature of theatre, as all of their previous productions together had served that purpose as well. Before I delve into that description, however, I must give a brief account of seeing the Brook/Jacobs production on video at the SCLA for the first time in October of 2015, as it is a primary source that I will be referencing throughout the rest of this thesis.

1.2. A Contemporary Viewpoint: A personal account of the 1972 video recording of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*

The recording was taken on a black-and-white camera from a fixed position at the height of the dress circle of the Aldwych Theatre in 1972. The video footage is notably grainy and the sound recording is low quality as well. The fidelity of the audio and video recording, however, is enough to make out the recognizable shapes and voices of a young Ben Kingsley as Demetrius, Frances de la Tour as Helena, Alan Howard as Theseus and Oberon, Sara Kestelman as Titania and Hippolyta, and Patrick Stewart, who took over the role of Snout in 1971.

The quality of the video and sound is especially noticeable at the opening of the production when the lights onstage immediately flare up at the opening, and the actors yell and run onstage with the band making a noise so loud that, on the video, it is hard to discern people's voices from the drums and cymbals that are being hammered by the musicians. As the actors take a bow in their long white capes, the audience is still in an Artaudian shock-like trance from all the commotion. As they take off those capes to take position for the opening lines of the play, the actors look the part of the star acrobats about to perform the death-defying feats of a three-ring

circus. When the opening curtain call is finished, the deep baritone of Alan Howard speaks the first words of the play, “Now fair Hippolyta...” Both Theseus and Hippolyta spend their first scene together looking straight out into the audience for every line, and never once do either steal a glance of the other, even though their characters are to be married soon. From the outset of the performance, it is apparent these actors are from another time and place where Shakespeare is spoken with a reverence and musical lilt that is unfamiliar to the modern audience’s ear. The Brechtian approach to their characters, in front of the all-white background and speaking in a disconnected manner rather than an expressive method of acting the text, this exempts the audience from empathy with the actors and gives the opportunity to view the performance objectively. The actors use Shakespeare’s words to metaphorically paint this white box stage with the detail it is notably lacking.

During the course of this production, the white box becomes the Duke’s palace, a commoner’s workshop, and then a wood outside Athens. All of the characters describe the setting as it changes: “Through Athens I’m thought as fair as she,” speaks Helena in Act One, Scene One of *Dream* (1.1.230).¹⁴ In the same scene, Lysander describes stealing away to the home of his widowed aunt, “From Athens is her house remote seven leagues” (1.1.161). In the next scene, the first meeting of the mechanicals, Quince describes their next rehearsal spot, “in the palace wood a mile without the town by moonlight” (1.2.94-5). Later in the production, even though the Brook/Jacobs setting never shifts from being a brightly lit white box open to the audience, there is the only set design addition of a few coil-wire trees dropped on fishing rods from the gallery atop the wall. It is understood from that addition that the

¹⁴ Bate, Jonathan and Eric Rassmussen. *William Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Macmillan Publishing Group and The RSC Shakespeare. 2008.

lovers are chasing each other amongst the trees and the mechanicals are in the moonlit palace wood to rehearse their play.

At various moments during the performance, every actor, when not onstage at the middle of the white box, comes to sit at the top of the wall and laugh with the audience. They play along with the mechanicals, they laugh at the mischief of Puck and Oberon as though they were spectators to this play, and they watch as the four lovers run round and about the Athenian wood. They even celebrate riotously by throwing rice paper and Mylar confetti onstage when Bottom is told by the Queen of the Fairies to join her in her red feather bower that lowers to the stage from the rafters above the stage. The scenography created by Brook and Jacobs does not create a representational world of perfect metaphor, with a large leafy tree or a paper yellow moon to show us the way, but rather this production allows the audience to create a world with its imagination.

The fairies in the production fly above the mortals on trapezes, as Puck and Oberon do whenever they observe the lovers chasing about the stage. In a clever visual metaphor for her character's unattainable status, Titania is raised up and lowered down as she sits sleeping, diva-like in repose, on a giant ostrich feather that is hung right above centre stage. The four fairies of Titania's entourage, who are all too often only background for the royal fairy triumvirate, playfully act as stage managers to many of the scenes with the four mortal lovers. As Lysander and Hermia amorously wish to lie closer to one another, in Act Two, Scene Two ("Amen, Amen to that fair prayer say I..." (2.2.62)), each lover is cleverly distracted by one of the fairies whenever they came too near to one another. When both Lysander and Hermia lay down to sleep, the four fairies stand onstage and sing them to sleep.

Mostly, I was struck by how bright, enjoyable, and raucous the entire production seems as much of what has been written on the 1970 *Dream* does not describe that at all. At the end of Act 3, Scene 1, the stage erupts into a celebration of Bottom and Titania's expected love-making, and while the fairies carry Bottom around on their shoulders with one fairy noticeably extending his arm between Bottom's legs as an improvised erect phallus, the familiar recorded music of Mendellsohn's "Wedding March" is played loudly in an ironic poke at the relationships of any married couples in the production and, I assume, in the audience. I expected a completely different feeling and staging than what I saw, as descriptions of dark, sexual undertones to the production are the in majority of critical and academic assessments I have read. Though obviously staged in a white box, I was expecting a Kott-ian interpretation of the play, and as such, far more violent interactions onstage between the characters of the play than I saw in this performance from 1972.

One such occurrence, when de la Tour's Helena chases Kingsley's Demetrius onstage in Act Two, Scene One, she body-tackles and pins him to the ground ("You draw me..." 2.1.199); this was, however, not a dangerous and violent blow from an amateur actor-combatant onto another unsuspecting performer, but rather a well rehearsed albeit fierce and physical interaction between two professionals in prime physical condition (see figure 6). In the video performance, at the end of this scene between Demetrius and Helena, Kingsley tries climbing out of the centre of the white box and away from de la Tour by jumping to catch the top of the seven foot wall and scrambling up to the gallery, instead of using the mid-stage ladder that had been built into the design for that purpose ("I will not stay thy questions..." 2.1.239).



Figure 6. Brook/Jacobs. *Demetrius and Helena*. 1970. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

In this moment, I was struck by how, despite the plain and angular setting, the movements by the actors onstage in the video are fluid and defy the rigid lines of the scenography. Oddly enough, Kingsley's interaction with the set wall would not have been possible in exactly that way in the original design at the RST, as, according to photographs, the walls were then twice the size and far out of reach of an actor at stage level. There are many such interactions between characters and the space that are rough and tumble (as Helena is with Demetrius) or frenetic and funny (as it is with Demetrius and the white wall). Examining how the actors use the space and each other in static photographs from 1970 at the RST as well as in the video from 1972 at the Aldwych is an excellent barometer for how and why the impression of this production and its stage design changed over time. As one of the few scholars to see this production over forty years later, this account is proof against some suppositions and theories that have been put forward by academics and critics since the production closed. In order to gain a little perspective on the importance of the 1972 video, and

the scenography captured therein, the next part of this chapter is an accounting of the design for the Brook/Jacobs production both at the RST and how it changed over the course of its world tour.

1.3. “*A small luminous place*”: The Abstract and Intimate White Box of Brook and Jacobs

The most notable feature of the set design for this production of *Dream* was its bright austerity. It was called “the white box” (Halio; Kennedy; Williams), and it was devoid of any aesthetic element that evoked a wooded fairyland, a royal court, or a peasant workshop; it also withheld a sense of time period or place in its set design, though some the costumes, done in a tie-dye spatter for the lovers, along with a few of the actors’ hairstyles betrayed the look of a 1960s or 70s production. The lighting design was especially sterile. According to the “Lighting Cues” prompt sheet from the world tour found at the SCLA,¹⁵ there were a total of five lighting cues and two pre-sets during the entire performance;¹⁶ most of these cues amounted to the lights being turned all the way up or, in turn, blacked out completely. There were no spotlights for the star performers, or a blue-coloured lighting state to indicate the moon was shining onstage, and there were no subtle fades showing one area of the stage while keeping another onstage area dark. The bright, white lights that covered the entire stage were either all-the-way on or off for the whole performance.

¹⁵ SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/2/1970/6

¹⁶ A ‘pre-set’ lighting cue is the level at which theatre lights are set when the curtain rises on a particular scene.

According to the ground plan for the 1970 *Dream* (see Appendix B),¹⁷ the acting area for this production spanned almost the entire width of the RST stage at the lip closest to the audience, with a few feet on either side for actors to enter and exit through what Roger Howells referred to as “the assemblies” (Howells 2017). The box design itself, however, was shallow in depth compared to the expanse of the RST. Also, from the overhead viewpoint of the ground plan, the geometric shape of the three-sided box-set design was actually a trapezoid, with its long edge downstage towards the audience and its shorter side upstage and away from the audience.

Using forced perspective, which, in essence, helped Brook and Jacobs create a more intimate space onstage at the RST, the white box gave the impression of being deeper and larger than it actually was as it opened up towards the audience.¹⁸ In fact, the forced perspective layout of the white box appeared to someone sitting in the auditorium as if the set took up almost the entire depth of the RST without making the actors look or sound as tiny at the back wall as they might have been had they actually been the full length of the stage away. The white box set design was placed all the way at the front of the stage so the actors, when they walked away from the audience to the back wall of the set, were physically only twenty-three feet from the edge of the stage. Everyone onstage was both physically closer and appeared larger to the audience as a result of the size and shape of the white box. In a walleyed camera view of the stage, the shape of the box is obvious (see figure 7).

¹⁷ SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/2/1970/6

¹⁸ Linear perspective in painting, very similar to a set designer’s forced perspective, is defined as, “a simple visual phenomenon: as parallel lines recede, they appear to converge and to meet on an imaginary line called the horizon, or eye level” (Lauer and Pentak 208). A forced perspective, used in three-dimensional space, occurs when those parallel lines are given a different horizon point than what is truly eye level.



Figure 7. Brook/Jacobs. *Helena discovers Hermia and Lysander on the ground*. 1970. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

According to the British Performing Arts Yearbook 1994, which keeps accurate records of all the RSC stage spaces at their various points of renovation; in 1970, the RST stage measured 59 feet (18 m) from the lip of the forestage/apron to the back wall of the stage. The forestage/apron in front of the proscenium arch measured approximately 30 feet (9 m) at its widest (386). According to the dimensions extrapolated from the ground plan at the SCLA (see Appendix B), the back wall of the set design was 19'6" (5.95m) wide and there was a distance of 23'6" (7.16m) from the back wall to the lip of the apron, including the black running carpet that ran the entire width at the front. The measurements taken from the inventory of the set pieces brought on the world tour do not stray far from what was implemented at the RST. According to that list, the stage cloth, a piece of fabric or carpet that padded and protected the actors' feet while onstage, was 19'6" wide (5.95m) at the back white wall of the set and 22' long (6.7m) from the back wall towards the audience (Loney 124). The black running carpet, 3 feet (~1m) in width, was also included in the

inventory of the world tour. In a rarely seen photograph of this design, in situ at the RST, the white box design is almost all the way to the front edge of the RST and the black running cloth can be seen between the lip of the stage and the acting area (see figure 8).

Through the assembly of the information in the British Performing Arts Yearbook, the production photographs, the world tour property list, and the ground plan drawings, the most useful fact that may be gleaned is that the back wall of the white box was set back 23.5 feet (7.16m) from the audience. What is clear from these dimensions, and from the original ground plan, is that this design was intentionally built as undersized in comparison to the RST stage, yet, because the design was to be placed as close to the audience as possible, the white box was built as large as it could have possibly been inside the confines of the proscenium archway. It was also built with a considerable amount of empty, unused stage space behind the back white wall.



Figure 8. *Brook/Jacobs, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Auditorium and Stage, Stratford-upon-Avon. 1970. Postcard by Walter Scott, Bradford. SBT.*

It is evident that the relative size of this design to the RST stage was important because Brook and Jacobs could have achieved a similar level of intimacy with less effort by staging this production in a black box or a small studio space. Indeed, they had already done so in their previous partnerships, as the RSC *Theatre of Cruelty* season was staged at the LAMDA Theatre Club, a notably smaller and more compact space than the RST. For their *Dream*, however, rather than use a small space to create intimacy, Brook and Jacobs made a calculated decision to contrast the space made for the actors with the actual expanse of the RST.

The first of the concepts adopted by Brook and Jacobs and addressed in this chapter is the diminutive size and shape of the original set design for the 1970 *Dream*. The most practical and compelling reason for the small size of the acting space relative to the huge RST proscenium stage is that it was built to create a sense of intimacy not employed regularly in that space. If an audience member had been to see any one of the other productions in the 1969 or 1970 seasons in Stratford-upon-Avon, the proportion of this white box, not only to the size of the stage but to those other designs as well, would have seemed unusually small by comparison if it had floated in the middle of the stage and not all the way at the front.¹⁹ The set designs for *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* in the 1969 season used the entire stage in this way, situated behind the proscenium arch. In an interview with Margaret Croyden for her book *Conversations with Peter Brook*, Brook briefly described his decision: "We didn't want that great, stark, spare, empty desert. We wanted a small place. And we wanted a small luminous place. So we made a box" (Croyden 6-7). This mention by Brook was the only time he tried to explain his rationale for the relative size of the white box

¹⁹ According to the book *Design Basics*, by David A. Lauer and Stephen Pentak, the term "proportion" is the relative size of an object a person perceives "against other elements or against a mental norm or standard" (292).

design for *Dream* to the RST. In this instance, according to Brook, it was not the shape or colour of the white box itself that was the distinguishing characteristic of the set design for *Dream*. Comparing the expanse of the RST stage to a sizeable desert suggests that this decision to make the white box small was intentional to focus the attention of the audience during a production designed to be intimate or physically close.

Jacobs gives a more comprehensive rationale for the design, in her interview with Loney, when she illustrates the objective consequences of creating a small space for actors onstage at the RST.

The white space gave us a sense of distance, but at the same time it was very intimate. Actors could speak very quietly, if they wanted to. Acoustically, it worked very well, especially on the large Stratford stage, where voices can get lost... Mainly, it was to create an intimate acting area. (qtd. in Loney 47)

The acoustics of a theatre are an important factor in any performance. In citing this as a part of their decision to make the box-set smaller and closer, it was then clear why intimacy was paramount to the production design, at least from an auditory standpoint.²⁰ Since 1932, when the RST was built, there had been many problems with the poor acoustics of the old theatre and audiences felt too far away or removed from the action onstage. Instead, in 1970, Brook and Jacobs designed the intimate white box space so that the actors could speak more softly onstage and still be heard by the audience and their fellow actors.

²⁰ "An unpublished study by the company of the facilities at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre says: 'In the balcony, for example, where almost one third of the audience sits, poor acoustics and sightlines make the experience of seeing and hearing Shakespeare remote and unsatisfactory'" (Lister, 8 July 1997).



Figure 9. Brook/Jacobs. *The Lovers are awoken*. 1970. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

Combining the logic of Brook and Jacobs then, this decision not only amplified the proportions of the actor but also the volume of the actor's voice. Given how close the set was situated to the audience, and how, according to the ground plan, the box was built so close to the proscenium arch, the set design never looked small. In fact, it was built so far back and close to the proscenium that a triangular floating walkway had to be constructed at the top of the walls so that actors could move around the proscenium and not fall off the wall (see figure 9, above).²¹ Though the horizontal space the white box occupied onstage was small, by comparison to the size of the actual RST stage, the real scope of this intimate production design was defined by how the vertical space above the main acting area was used.

In the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, the largest elements of the set that occupied the expanse of the stage were the brilliant-white walls that contained the space.

According to Peter Holland in his introduction to the 1994 Oxford edition of *Dream*,

²¹ See Appendix B, area labeled "Floating Walkway." See also figures 7 and 8 for pictures of the triangular floating walkway at the top of the wall.

at the outset of the production's run at the RST the tops of these walls were "more than 3.5 metres (12 feet) above the stage floor" (178). In the above postcard of the set in situ at the RST, the walls are approximately half the height of the proscenium arch. The proscenium arch is approximately 31 feet above the stage (9.1m), according to the British Performing Arts Yearbook (386). With room between the height of the set and the proscenium arch itself, the audience saw a negative or dark space that framed the white box set within the proscenium arch. In other words, the white box, surrounded by the negative space and the proscenium arch, looked to be a frame-within-a-frame picture that brought a progressive focus to the aesthetic of this design for *Dream*, while at the same time these frames made the box set feel even smaller.

In production photographs, inset within these two frames surrounding the set, there is also a third yet irregular border made up entirely of the off-stage actors that stood or sat in the gallery at the top of the white walls (see figure 10).



Figure 10. Brook/Jacobs. *Actors in the gallery*. 1970. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

According to Jacobs, the original design plan “was to... give us a place where the rest of the actors who were not in the scene could surround the action and continue to watch it” (qtd. in Loney 47). This approach was new in this theatre but there was an artistic precedent for this method of design. The intimacy to the set design was not only intended to amplify the actors’ voices. This frame within a frame visual technique was used quite often in paintings and photography to direct the viewer’s eyes to the action in the centre of the frame. Prior to 1970, however, it was not a common practise used in stage designs for the RSC. In *Design Basics*, authors David Lauer and Stephen Pentak explain how artists create focus in a picture or painting by providing “figures [to] direct our attention [...] as we follow their gaze to the focal point” (56). In the design of Brook/Jacobs, an iron railing and catwalk, which Jacobs called the “gallery”, ran along the top of the back walls so that actors not in the scene could view the scripted action from above (Loney 49). Those actors would observe from the gallery to applaud, laugh, or even distract the other actors onstage during the performance. In the 1972 video, the gallery was occupied by as many as ten off-stage actors at a time, and at different points in the performance, they would line the top of the walls to observe, interact, and bring emphasis to specific moments of the production.

The progressive focus that these three frames—proscenium arch, negative space, and gallery—brought to the stage, made the action on stage more immediate in the eye of a spectator, thereby dramatically decreasing the perceived distance from actor to audience. In painting and photography, “this emphasized element initially can attract attention and encourage the viewer to look closer” (Lauer and Pentak 56). In this particular scenic design it worked much the same way. This effect, cited by Kennedy, made the design look like a small bright space which was on display within

a much larger, darker theatre: “A space for the demonstration of overt performance” (183). Brook and Jacobs had done this to emphasise the elements of dramatization that are normally masked from the audience’s view. They allowed the audience to see beyond the borders of the main acting space, and even into the rafters, to witness all of the mechanisms of the stage that are normally hidden.

Audience to actor intimacy was paramount to this production design, and this can be proven through a modern extrapolation of only some of the compromises to this stage design that occurred throughout the production process. One of the principal functions of a theatre designer is to adapt a stage design to the practical nature of a theatre space, if a director and designer decide on a specific idea for that production, it is the designer that makes the concept tenable to the theatre. If not for the conceptual importance of the audience’s perception of intimacy to the 1970 *Dream*, the exact design for the white box would have looked much different from how it was actually implemented onstage at the RST.

According to Roger Howells, who was at the time Company Stage Manager for the RSC, “Peter didn’t want the break-up of the set, or [for it] to be a series of panels. He wanted it to be a complete wall” (Howells, 14 August 2014). According to Howells, in one of the original plans for the 1970 *Dream*, the walls of the white box were mostly unbroken, with only two doors at upstage left and upstage right positions. These doors were similar to the layout of a Jacobean playhouse but both were dual hinged and could swing in either direction, similar to what one might see in a professional restaurant kitchen. Complications developed, however, when it came to implementing that unbroken white wall design into the RST while simultaneously keeping the white box close to the audience. It was the concept of intimacy that won

out over the unbroken white wall, as there were other factors that made both impossible at the same time.

Throughout the twentieth century and up to today in the UK, a standard practice of all major proscenium arch theatres is to lower a fire safety curtain to stage level before the start of a performance or during the interval, in full view of the audience. According to Jacobs, her set design needed to be altered as a result of this fire safety regulation:

At Stratford, the iron curtain has to be seen by the audience to close off the stage from the auditorium—fire regulations. The set walls projected out on the apron beyond the proscenium arch, so they had to be broken at that point for the curtain to come down. (qtd. in Loney 49)

To give the iron curtain its full range of motion, Jacobs had to remove two small vertical sections in the middle of the stage left and stage right walls of the white box from the original plan. Pursuant to that safety practice regulation, each night the safety curtain was lowered to the stage just before the interval. This event was even documented in the 1972 video at the Aldwych.

This small set design, however, could have been shifted upstage, away from the audience and out of the path of the safety curtain, yet if this had happened, that sense of intimacy would diminish and everything from the actors to the box set itself would have appeared even smaller to the audience. According to James Sargent, the Production Coordinator for the RSC in 1970, “the most important ingredient of the production [was] that [the set design] be set downstage as near as possible to the audience” (qtd. in Loney 79). Rather than situating the entire set behind the proscenium arch and beyond the line of the fire safety curtain, thus precluding the

necessity of missing sections from the wall in the white box, the intimacy of the setting took precedence.

Using forced perspective in their set design was not only a way of increasing intimacy, and improving the acoustics of the space, but also acted as an accommodation to the changing sightlines of each theatre to which the production toured. The trapezoidal layout allowed audience members sitting at the sides of the auditorium to see clearly into the white box set. In the case of Brook/Jacobs, designing the box to these sight lines accommodated the action at the centre of the stage, and eventually, also allowed the audience to see the actors standing in the gallery more clearly. An alteration to the design, however, occurred when during the course of the world tour, the height of the walls for the white box was changed drastically, due to the extreme sight lines of one particular theatre.

The height of the walls was changed at the Aldwych Theatre in London in 1971 (Loney 87; see also Appendix A). Though the width and height of the proscenium at the Aldwych is comparable to that of the RST, circa 1970, the seating capacity of the theatre spanned over three steep levels, which meant that the audience was physically much higher in the auditorium than they were at the RST. This created a sharper angled sight line from which the audience could view the stage, the set, and all of the actors. Even though the set design had been placed at the front of the stage, the walls of the white box needed to be cut horizontally nearly in half to accommodate the audience's view of the entire space at the Aldwych (Loney 89; see figure 11).



Figure 11. Brook/Jacobs. *Oberon, Puck, and the sleeping lovers*. 1971.
Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT

During the subsequent world tour of *Dream*, the walls were kept at the Aldwych height of 8 feet, 6 inches (2.59m),²² and never returned to the height originally made for the RST (Loney 89). Having used the sight lines of the Aldwych as a guide, the diminutive size of the set, relative to the proscenium arch stage surrounding it, was preserved. The change in the height of the walls is evidence that the problems of the intimate set design could not always be foreseen, and sometimes it fell to the other pieces of the design to help adapt the setting to each specific theatre on the tour.

On the world tour, the lighting design was often used to facilitate solutions to problems with the intimacy of the set inside spaces that were much larger than the Aldwych Theatre, or even the RST.

In the cavernous Brooklyn Academy of Music theatre, where the production moved after Broadway, audience-actor rapport initially was difficult to establish. The stage seemed to float in a pool of white light, while the audience had vanished in outer darkness. [The lighting designer] solved this

²² According to dimensions listed in the touring stage inventory listed in Loney, page 115.

problem... by the simple expedient of leaving the house lights on. This worked wonders in bringing the stage and auditorium together. It also made the large auditorium seem more intimate, more alive. (Loney 75-6)

Through a simple alteration of lighting in the space, the audience's expectation of darkness in the theatre while the performance went on was sacrificed in order to keep the actor-audience intimacy. As it happened, however, it was the intimacy between actor and audience that was never compromised, and all design decisions that happened after 1970 were in service to that ideal. When the lighting design was altered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), making the stage light universal to actor and audience it brought about the intimacy that had been missing, much as natural light surely does with an outdoor space like Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London.

1.4. "*All such things grow out of specific needs*": Adapting the Design of Brook/Jacobs

Another feature of the Brook/Jacobs set design that was implemented out of necessity, or as an organic solution to the small and closed-in acting space was a certain adaptability to the stage design. This seemingly simple white box design ran into many problems during rehearsal and its world tour, yet through its adaptability remained faithful to the text, the ideas driving the production, and its initial design concepts. Besides having to change the design for sightlines, the sheer volume of stage traffic from the actors on stage and in the gallery proved problematic at points given the limited amount of space onstage. Without compromising the look of the design, Jacobs created additional exits to and from the stage to help manage the flow.

Along with the two upstage doors used as entrances and exits from the space, Jacobs also wanted to provide access to the gallery from the stage level so at each end of the box's side walls, downstage left and downstage right, respectively, two ladders were placed allowing the actors to move between the two levels in full view of the audience. As it happened, the two missing sections of white wall created for the safety curtain were large enough for, and began to be used as, alternative exits and entrances, making a total of six exit and entrance areas from the stage level space. Jacobs commented on how she and the actors began to amend the design during rehearsals:

I thought: Why have only those two downstage SR [stage right] and SL [stage left] ladders to the gallery? So I added two more at the curtain gaps... All such things grow out of specific needs, but, in rehearsals, the performers always experiment and find new uses for them. (qtd. in Loney 49)

These mid-stage openings were given inset ladders that would swing out of the way as the iron curtain was lowered, and used as simple stage level exits. The look of the walls had been altered due to the necessity of the safety curtain; now that actors were using those slits in the walls for entrances and exits, the energy and usefulness of the space changed as well.

As rehearsals progressed, the possibilities for how to use the space continued to evolve. At one point, the idea emerged that Puck would walk on stilts while he teased Lysander and Demetrius in Act 3, Scene 2 ("Here, villain, drawn and ready..." 3.2.415). This became possible when Jacobs widened the mid-stage openings, where the iron curtain lowered to the stage, to allow Puck to walk on and off the stage with those stilts, thus also making it easier for all of the other actors to squeeze through what had previously been only a small opening (Loney 49). Though the white box remained small, there were enough exits and entrances to and from each acting space (stage level and gallery) to accommodate movement on and off stage.

Still, Jacobs also had to figure out how to accommodate the movement of those already on stage. For instance, in particularly athletic scenes where the stage activity became unsafe when too many people were crammed into the small area. One example of this was at the beginning of Act 3, Scene 2 when the four lovers chase each other while Puck and Oberon watch (“O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?” 3.2.43). In contemplating this scene with the lovers, Jacobs realized they were not using the vertical space above the stage, and out of that realisation came the idea of having the fairies hang above the stage on two trapezes (Loney 48). This idea of creating another physical dimension to the acting space may have grown out of her necessity for practicality, but it ended up being used as a symbolic divide between the mortal and fairy worlds in this production of *Dream*.

Jacobs placed two trapezes above stage level, from which Oberon and Puck held most of their private conversations. The design team created dynamic curtain tracks above the stage that allowed the stagehands to lower the fairies from above, physically slide the trapezes from one side of the stage to the other, or even swing them from side to side as if Puck and Oberon were on a children’s play set. This added a dimension that allowed more characters to be present in a scene without taking up space on the ground, and yet also made the air above the stage dynamic. Raising Oberon and Puck above the action set a thematic precedent for the placement of Titania’s bower, a giant, red ostrich feather that hovered in mid-air above the action centre stage. At the beginning of the show, the bower was suspended in profile at the centre of the back wall. The feather would then flatten and lower to stage level when it was needed for a scene as the bower; it was constructed so as to safely carry a sleeping Titania or Bottom up and away from the stage.

The last elements of this aerial design consisted of four suspended cradles hung on lateral tracks immediately in front of the back wall, similar to the trapezes.²³ These cradles, made up of white cloth suspended by wires, were called “love seats” in the DSM’s promptbook from the world tour (Loney 30a), as well as in the original prompt copy of the script written by stage manager Laurence Burns (95). In photographs, the cradles looked more like swings. Each love seat could move vertically with the rigging yet was not stable enough for the actors to move laterally as when Puck and Oberon made their trapezes swing from side to side. According to Burns, these love seats were first used during performance when the four fairies of Titania’s entourage were lifted into the air as they began to sing Titania to sleep in Act 2, Scene 2, “You spotted snakes with double tongue...” (2.2.9). This moment provided a sense of the fairies’ and Titania’s otherworldly nature as they floated in mid-air. The design of the space above the stage not only expanded the options for physical action, entrances, and exits, but it also represented a de facto physical divide between the mortal and fairy world throughout most of the production.

Immortal characters were not the only ones to fly, however, as several mortal characters were lifted into the air during the production, yet only while they were asleep. In the stage direction written into both prompt copies of Burns and Loney, Bottom was lifted in the air when he fell asleep in Titania’s bower (4.1.28). In the production, when Titania was awakened a few lines later by Oberon and shown that her imagined lover was indeed a beast (4.1.58-63), Bottom remained asleep in the

²³ On the original ground plan at the SCLA, Roger Howells drew in pen where approximately these four swings were to hang (each is labelled “Swing” on the ground plan copy). Howells’ drawing was not to scale, however, so these swings are the only elements of the design where the original plan and the copy in Appendix B look dissimilar, as the four swings drawn there are to scale with the rest of the drawing. Howells did, however, also draw in measurements for the distances between the “love seats” and the walls of the white box. Accompanied by my examination of production photographs and the 1972 video, what appears on the ground plan copy in Appendix B is my best approximation of where the swings were hung above the stage in 1970.

bower and was raised above the stage level after Puck had removed the costume pieces that dressed Bottom as an ass (Loney 63b). Bottom stayed in the bower above stage level until he next spoke, more than one hundred lines later, “When my cue comes, call me...” (Loney 67b; Burns 99).

This is where the production design shows its adaptive nature most clearly. In the original production at the RST, according to the Burns promptbook, the four lovers were each given one of the cradles at the back wall by Puck, who helped to usher them into their places to fall asleep in Act 3, Scene 2. The lovers, in this iteration of the production, crossed over into the immortal world, as Bottom had done, when each was raised up above the stage level (Burns 95-6). Many published photographs show the four lovers hanging in mid-air and thus have also corroborated this stage direction.

In the text, Bottom is the only mortal in the play to interact directly with the fairies, through his intimate relations with Titania, her entourage, and his transformation, courtesy of Puck, into an ass (3.1 and 4.1). In the original staging of this production, however, both Bottom and all four lovers cross over into the immortal realm, and there is an argument to be made for the lovers to fall asleep in the fairy realm above the stage. In Act 2, Scene 2, for instance, Puck and Oberon begin their interference with the four lovers (“Churl, upon thy eyes I throw...” 2.2.45), perhaps in a more nuanced way than when Puck transforms Bottom from human to beast and back again. On one hand, Puck and Oberon directly affect the love dynamic, changing affections and causing chaos; on the other hand, the lovers remain completely unaware of the presence and influence of the fairy king and his associate.

During the world tour, this use of the aerial design changed. The DSM's promptbook from the world tour, held at the SCLA,²⁴ gave another version of the actors' blocking. In this later iteration, in Act 3, Scene 2, Puck led the lovers to fall asleep in the upstage corners of the white box, not the love seats (Loney 58a-60b). This alternative stage action was corroborated by the 1972 video. The change in staging was again prompted by a practical need of the space to alter the physical location of the lovers while they slept and the metaphorical line that had been effectively drawn between mortal and fairy world in the Brook/Jacobs production was reinvented during the production run from 1970 to 1973. In the later iteration, Bottom was the only character to breach the mortal-immortal divide. In light of his tryst with Titania, and his subsequent interaction with Titania's retinue (4.1.1-44), his elevation above the stage when he became a temporary tenant of the immortal world made sense. Perhaps because the lovers remained unaware of the fairies throughout the production, the decision to keep these four mortals grounded while they slept actually strengthened the premise that only fairies should fly in *Dream*.

In some ways the 1970 *Dream* was a production that remained unfinished; yet instead of altering the design and staging each night through improvisation, like the 1964 Brook/Jacobs *Theatre of Cruelty*, the 1970 *Dream* evolved over time through changes to props and costume pieces and to the actual design that was adapted to fit different theatre spaces. During the course of the rehearsal, the production at the RST, and the world tour that followed, stage properties changed the most. Sometimes these changes came about because the props were no longer deemed necessary, but more frequently the actors simply stopped using them effectively. Barbara Penney, the DSM for the world tour, comments on these changes to the staging in Loney:

²⁴ SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/1/1972/MND1; This is the same text that Loney used for his production script.

A lot of props from the original production have gone out. The stilts for Puck, for instance. When we were in the second stage of Paris rehearsals for the world tour, Peter Brook cut a lot of props. He and the actors decided they just weren't necessary to the action of the drama... From the original production, in the first scene with the mechanicals, there were lots of boughs and boxes and ladders and trunks. All of those went. (qtd. in Loney 95)

Even as late in the production run as the 1972 video, at the beginning of Act 1, Scene 2 ("Is all our company here?" 1.2.1), the mechanicals each brought on the props that Penney refers to here. A prop that had once held a sense of wonder to the actor and audience may ultimately become a crutch, once the actor became accustomed to it. In *The Stage Life of Props*, Andrew Sofer explains that a stage property's lifespan depends on two different criteria: "The prop's impact is mediated both by the gestures of the individual actor who handles the object, and by the horizon of interpretation available to historically situated spectators at a given time" (61). In Brook/Jacobs, props that held some semblance of magic or wonder in the skilful hands of the actors at the beginning of the run, no longer entranced actors or audiences after a year or two of the production. When commenting on this, Loney equates this issue to the reputation of the production, and the press it received in its initial run: "Because the production is now so famous that audiences come expecting magic really to happen for them" (37). With that expectation, came familiarity, and as Jacobs had said, that would have killed the magic (qtd. in Loney 47). The Brook/Jacobs *Dream* was adaptable throughout its design.

1.5. “The blank sign is [...] a vision without meaning, a metaphor with one of its two elements absent”: The Colour Design of Brook/Jacobs

Along with its adaptability and the perception of intimacy in the design for this production, a concept of the design for Brook/ Jacobs that set it apart from other productions of *Dream* was the sparse colour used in the set, costume, and lights. Colour within a production design can acquire or generate meaning through its relationship to other colours present (Gillette 130). Most often, designers will collaborate to develop a colour palette for each production, or a specific set of one or two-dozen colours that work together so that all the designers (set, lighting, costume, and property) can draw upon them to create an agreed-upon stage aesthetic. In Brook/Jacobs, given the stark white backdrop, the use of any colour within the production was significant to its design because so few different colours appeared onstage at all.

Brook had this to say about the colour design: “The place had to be somewhere that told no story – it had to be white – in which people could be on wires, could be on the ground, could be in the air, could leap, swing, hang, fly, jump, and run” (Croyden 6). Not only had Brook and Jacobs made the stage of the RST a smaller, more intimate space, they had also removed any overtones of what critics could call formal, theatrical, authentic, or traditional presentation. In creating a space that was truly empty of any cultural expectation, or indicative of any realistic or naturalistic space, Brook believed that the performers might infuse the blank, white space with possibility that only an audience could imagine. Brook spends much of his book *The Empty Space* talking about this phenomenon. In an interview given to the

Drama Desk²⁵ on 25 January 1971, Brook gave a succinct answer to why the set design was painted white:

“The only reason we have white walls is because we’re in a theatre building [...] What is most important is that all we wanted was to make nothingness around the work. So the white walls are not there to state something, but to eliminate something. On a nothingness, moment by moment, something can be conjured up—and then made to disappear” (qtd. in Loney 25).

Brook and Jacobs created an undefined, abstract yet unblemished and bright setting for their production. Jacobs agreed with Brook when she was asked about the design: “My basic idea was to find something absolutely timeless, so that all that tradition of Elizabethan costume and pantomime fairies would vanish” (ibid 50). The white box was there to eliminate any pre-conceived ideas that an audience would have had of *Dream*, Shakespeare, or the theatre itself upon entering that space.

Brook and Jacobs, each in their own way, had wanted to create a design that told no story, however, so that they might more easily address themes and elements of the play, including the idea that colour is indicative of the different types of transformation that so many characters underwent during the course of their production. The use of colour was methodical and that the Brook/Jacobs production used colour at all was visually significant for four simple reasons. First, and most notably, the use of colour in the costumes was symbolic of change as some of the actors were double-cast in roles: Theseus with Oberon, Hippolyta with Titania, and Philostrate with Puck. In all of these cases, one half of the double-cast characters, the mortals, were outfitted in a monotone white or black costume that was large enough to cover-up the costume for the immortal alter ego, which had been given details of colour. Second, it helped to draw the audience’s eye to a particular place or character

²⁵ “The Drama Desk is a Sardi’s-based society of New York drama editors, critics, and journalists” (Loney 23).

on the stage. Though the box set was brilliant white and white was a part of almost every character's costume, each and every character's outfit was given enough colour, tint, or shade so, as not to fade into the background. Third, the pattern or texture of colour in the costumes helped to group specific characters together. The colour of the lovers' costumes was similar to one another, but different from the textures of the mechanicals or the fairies or the mortal and immortal nobility. Fourth, the colour used in the costume helped to distinguish one character from the next because white was used so often in all of the characters' clothing and in the background of the stage.

Using colour as symbolic of change stems from the text as there are several references to specific colours and a Shakespearean attribution of emotion that is given to each in *Dream*. Oberon's mention to Puck in Act 2, Scene 1 of where the misfired bolt of Cupid once, "[...] fell upon a little western flower, / Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound" (2.1.169-70), suggests that love is at its foundations a transformative experience, one signified by colour. In Act 3, Scene 2, Oberon uses colour in his speech yet again as a symbolic herald of change, this time as a timekeeper and a signal that daylight is approaching:

[...] Even till the eastern gate, all fiery red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams. (3.2.404-6)

At the end of the play, colour once again is indicative of change as Thisbe (Flute) finds her love, Pyramus (Bottom), dead and devoid of all colour: "These lily lips, / This cherry nose, / These yellow cowslip cheeks, / Are gone, are gone" (5.1.329-32). All of these suggestions of colour, or lack thereof, as symbolic of transformation in the text are pertinent to this discussion yet Bottom's quandary of character in Act 1, Scene 2, and how he might best portray Pyramus in costume, seems especially

meaningful here. Bottom ends the scene in a discussion on costume design, specifically about which colour beard would suit his character best: “I will discharge it in either your straw-colour / beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-/grain beard, or your French-crown-coloured beard, / your perfect yellow” (1.2.86-9). In his monologue, colour equates character. As Bottom is the only individual in the play to be physically transfigured, this monologue on different colours symbolizing character and transformation is especially captivating from a design perspective.

Beyond being a harbinger of change in character through costume, the colour in the stage design was used sparingly, so that each occurrence of non-white hue, tint, or dye onstage had special thematic significance. Dennis Kennedy, in *Looking at Shakespeare*, calls this type of abstraction, “scenographic encodings that demand [an audience’s] effort to understand,” or rather a blank sign to be interpreted (14). In the completely white space, audience members would have, like the critics and scholars who would eventually write about it, taken some creative leaps to understand the reasoning behind the bold and dramatic colours used in the costumes of Brook/Jacobs. John Barber of *The Daily Telegraph* calls the costume colours, “as vivid as a conjuror’s silks” (“First Impressions”) while many other reviewers were reminded of the garish costumes worn by circus performers (Dawson; Say; Lewis). According to Kennedy, a definition of these types of non-specific scenographic signals is that blank signs are metaphoric representations which find meaning through their relationship to setting, character, or pieces of action that occur onstage. They, essentially, are signs that are given value through context with other parts of the design, the actors, or the action within the theatrical space. Kennedy states:

The blank sign is... a vision without meaning, a metaphor with one of its two elements absent. But if an image on stage looks like a sign, the habit of visual decoding is so strong that most viewers, especially of Shakespeare, will

attempt to read a message from it, even if the message is that there is no message. (14)

The audience will seek out meaning in the design of a production wherever or however they might find it. In the case of Brook/Jacobs, the blank sign of this production was a literal representation of a blank wall and mostly white costume, which were then given meaning through, among other things, pockets and splashes of colour interspersed into other parts of the design.

In order to understand why colour was used in each character's costume at all, perhaps it is best to begin with why Jacobs introduced colour to a completely white background in the first place. In a 2002 interview with Christie Carson, Jacobs puts forth only one design concept as her own in a story about how, in 1970, the abstract impressionist paintings of Sam Francis had inspired her to create her colour design of *Dream* (Jacobs, *Designing Dream 2*). Jacobs called Francis's paintings, "just big empty white canvases with beautiful, multi-coloured, primary strips down the sides or one along the bottom. And [Francis] said... 'The white space is for you to enter'" (ibid). She then described an, 'a-ha' moment or a "click that went off" in her head when she first spoke to Brook about designing this production, as if the ideas of Brook and Francis had suddenly coalesced in her imagination (ibid). Jacobs described to Carson that she had voiced her concerns to Brook about recreating the nineteenth-century pictorial productions of *Dream*, with trees and gossamer fairies. According to Jacobs's story, Brook responded: "No. I don't want to do it that way. I want to strip it of everything that's traditionally associated with this play. I do not want to pictorialise it" (Jacobs, "Designing *Dream*"). Brook's concept for the production clearly fused with Francis's paintings in Jacobs's mind and her translation of that synthesis was how the design began to be realised.



Figure 12. Sam Francis. *Untitled Watercolor, 1965*. 1965. Gouache and Watercolor on Paper. Masterworks Fine Art.

The works of Francis were popular in the late 1960s, and the ones that had inspired this escape from the nineteenth-century pictorial concepts of *Dream* were called the “edge” paintings. They depicted an expanse of white canvas at the centre of each painting with vibrant colour painted around the edges (see figure 12, above). Meiling Cheng, in her book *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art*, describes these paintings by Francis: “The main area is filled with one particular color, yet it also looks like a colorless background that wants to be painted. The painting seems both pregnant and unfinished; it signals the promise or inertia of a frozen moment” (3). In this, Jacobs’s design closely resembled Francis’s largely colourless paintings, with *Dream*’s white box acting as the centre of a design that was to undergo change during a performance. This large white centrepiece acted as a blank canvas for the audience’s imagination that, in turn, was filled in each and every night of the production with the colours of fairies, mechanicals, and lovers. Rosemary Say, writing for *The Financial Times*, describes Brook, for his *Dream*, as “more

determined than ever to compel us to take a creative part in his production. This time we are to be bullied into getting our imaginations to work” (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”), almost as if Brook and Jacobs were asking the audience to watch as the actors painted the stage with the colour from each of their costumes, while the scarlet ostrich feather lowered to stage level, represented Francis’s brush strokes used on a canvas.

Chronologically in the production, the first characters to introduce real colour to the costume design of the Brook/Jacobs production were Egeus and the four mortal lovers—Demetrius, Lysander, Hermia, and Helena. In Act 1, Scene 1 of the production, Egeus first appeared centre stage in a long deep blue robe with a plain white blouse and trousers visible underneath (see figure 13). Both of the gentlemen lovers wore simple trousers with a tie-dyed blouse and the ladies both wore ankle-length tie-dyed dresses with long sleeves and a modest neckline.



Figure 13. Brook/Jacobs. *Four lovers awaken with Egeus and the Fairies*. 1970. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

One critic of the production likened all of the mortals' outfits to "white maxi-dresses and bell bottoms" in a succinct abbreviation of the costume concept to the status of modern dress ("Stratford 'Dream' Gets a New Look"). Looking at production photographs and the 1972 video, the actors' hairstyles and tie-dyed clothing were evidence enough that this production was performed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although each lover wore a distinguishing colour and pattern, the tie-dye designs and their significance to the fashion of that era also signified the lovers as representative of youth and a bohemian hippy culture that had marched the streets of Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco only three years prior to Brook/Jacobs, during the Summer of Love in 1967.

It was also clear, according to the Brook/Jacobs costume colour choice, that the character of Egeus should be seen as significant to the driving force of this play as he first spoke, "Full of vexation come I with complaint / Against my child, my daughter Hermia..." (1.1.22-3). His difficulty with accepting Lysander as a partner to Hermia, and his insistence on Demetrius as the only welcome suitor for his daughter's inevitable betrothal is the inciting incident for much of the rest of the play. That Egeus was given the colour blue in this production suggested a relationship with his favourite suitor, Demetrius. In production photographs, Demetrius wore a blouse of a deeply saturated blue tie-dye, by far the most colourful of the lovers, that was not so strangely the same colour blue as Egeus's robe. In the first scene of the play, Egeus explains that Demetrius is his chosen suitor for Hermia: "True, he hath my love; / And what is mine my love shall render him" (1.1.97-8). Given the textual allegiance between the two characters, this colourful relationship seemed appropriate.

According to Jacobs, the use of colour in the costumes for Demetrius, Lysander, Hermia, and Helena was simply to "[help] differentiate among the lovers"

and was meant to be as uncomplicated as possible (Loney 50). Though it is an explanation that makes sense of the design choices in costume, I believe that Jacobs meant for the colours to identify the lovers in more ways than a simple visual differentiation. There are studies in the psychology of design that support a “colour equates emotion” interpretation of the Brook/Jacobs costumes:

Because of the learned association of color with objects, we continue to relate colors to physical sensations. Hence, red and orange (fire) and yellow (sunlight) become identified as warm colors. Similarly, blue and sea-green colors (sky, water) evoke coolness. (Lauer and Pentak 270)

The 1972 video, in combination with the colour production photographs, shows that the colours evident in each lover’s costume mirrored the emotion and action of each character. In Act 1 of the 1972 video, Philip Locke, as Egeus, coldly excoriated Terence Taplin, as Lysander, matching the icy blue of his costume.

The other lovers’ costumes also can be translated as colour equating the emotional quality of each character. Lysander’s blouse was evenly, if sparsely, tie-dyed in warm oranges and yellows. Hermia, with the least colour of all the lovers, was given just a few droplets of a sea-green tie-dye on an otherwise white outfit, while Helena’s dress was heavily spattered with the similar oranges and yellows, colours akin to Lysander’s blouse. Although the pattern of each of these tie-dyes appeared random, perhaps a similar hue and level of colouring for Helena and Lysander’s clothes indicated the emotional fervour of their character, while the blue and green may have indicated that Hermia and Demetrius were emotionally cold. Jacobs designed these costume colours as a method of distinguishing each lover from one another. It was then up to the actors to embody the costumes and the colours they were given as a piece of their emotional identity onstage.

At the beginning of the production, Lysander, in his warm colours, exuded love and a sexual attraction towards Hermia, “One turf shall serve as pillow for us both” (2.2.41), which, in the 1972 video and the stage directions recorded in the DSM promptbook was accompanied by an aggressive kiss (Loney 31a). Hermia, dressed in sea-green tie-dye, replied coldly: “Nay good Lysander, for my sake, my dear/ Lie further off yet, do not lie so near” (2.2.43-4) as she pushed him away (1972 video; Loney 31a). Demetrius, in turn and in his blue tie-dye blouse, greeted Helena with cold words, such as “I love thee not, therefore pursue me not” (2.1.192) while Helena, in her yellow and orange tie-dye, greeted him with passion: “You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant...” (2.1.199). The contrasting colour combination given to the lovers’ costumes, and this proclamation of Helena’s, as being involuntarily attracted to an unfriendly Demetrius, is representative of a running theme of enigmatic relationships that permeates the entire play. Colour is even a herald for change in the costumes of the lovers. In Act 5 of the production, all four of the lovers, having resolved their differences, changed into costumes of pure white with no colour at all (see figure 14).



Figure 14. Brook/Jacobs. *Everyone in white at the end of the production*. 1970. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

The absence of colour in the design was so pervasive that all the characters in the 1970 *Dream*, except for three, had white incorporated into pieces of their costume. With no white evident anywhere, the fairy royals, Oberon and Titania, and Oberon's companion, Puck, wore the most vibrant colour costumes in the design of Brook/Jacobs (see figure 15). Given the surroundings of trapezes and tumbling actors, several reviews of the production rightly saw the use of colour as a depiction of the saturated colours found in the costumes of modern circus performers (Say; "Stratford 'Dream' Gets a New Look"). The introduction of colour onto that stage was a signifier of importance, as a reflection of emotional quality, or of impending transformation to the production or its design, or identity, as such the fairy triumvirate costumes are then an important piece to this discussion as they were the only characters completely saturated in colour. In the photograph below, both fairy royals wore shimmering shapeless gowns that extended from their shoulders to the floor, blue for Oberon and forest green for Titania.



Figure 15. Brook/Jacobs. *Oberon and Puck put Titania to sleep*. 1970.
Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

Puck wore a bright blue skullcap and a baggy, bright-yellow outfit, reminiscent of the style of a Pierrot clown in a puffy costume that hugged his wrists and ankles.²⁶ In the set design, the only true, as in unbroken colour to appear was the giant scarlet red ostrich feather that was Titania's bower. With all of the primary colours represented,²⁷ the fairy triumvirate looked to be the origin or wellspring of colour within this production. The colour combination of the blue of Oberon, green of Titania, yellow of Puck, and red of the Queen's bower provided texture to the lovers' tie-dyed costumes, painting them as Puck and Oberon dashed the lovers with the juice from the "love-in-idleness" flower on several occasions throughout the production.

The importance of colour in the Brook/Jacobs costumes was also apparent with the appearance of the mechanicals in Act 5. For the entire production this group of mortals—Bottom, Quince, Flute, Snug, Snout, and Starveling—were seen as "present-day workmen" wearing simplified, utilitarian, and yet realistic, outfits in white, neutral grey or deep brown (Loney 50). At the end of the production, during Act 5 and the 'play within the play,' each of the mechanicals had been given costume pieces with colour. The mechanicals wore patchwork clothes reminiscent of the 'Sunday-best' jacket and ties commonly attributed to a lower-middle-class person or even provincial workers. The vibrant colour each mechanical was assigned in their scene of *Pyramus and Thisbe* was, in line with a colour equates emotional design, much like the colours that had been given to each of the lovers and to Egeus. For example, Thisbe's mantle, worn by Flute, was a bright passionate red, and Pyramus's sash, worn by Bottom, was a cold electric blue (see figure 16).

²⁶ "Pierrot – A tall thin melancholy clown who appears in whiteface wearing a loose white costume with very long sleeves and a row of big buttons down the front. A traditional figure in French pantomime, he developed from the character of PEDROLINO in the Italian *Commedia dell'arte*" (*Dictionary of the Theatre* 389)

²⁷ Red, blue, and yellow are the primary colours for paint/pigment; red, blue, and green are the primary colours for light.



Figure 16. Brook/Jacobs. *The mechanicals in Pyramus and Thisbe*. 1970.
Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

In the 1972 video, the portrayal of Thisbe was sincere and sad whereas Bottom's portrayal of Pyramus was stiff and taciturn.

As important as the presence of colour in the design, are the characters' costumes to which Brook and Jacobs gave no colour. Styan calls the four fairies of Titania's retinue, "less than characters in their baggy grey judo pyjamas" (*The Shakespeare Revolution* 225), implying that these characters were not as significant as the rest of the cast. The four grey outfits belonged to the fairies Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed who were dressed in very simple tunics and modern non-tapered trousers (see figure 17). These four characters seemed to be in a class and colour of character unto themselves. The fairies wore light grey costumes that had a satin sheen to them, yet neither were they pure white like any of the mortal characters nor were there bold colours like their king and queen.



Figure 17. Brook/Jacobs. *Titania seduces Bottom with the four fairies*. 1970.
Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

John Kane (who played Puck and Philostrate) gave an account of these four individuals and their role within this production: “The four Fairies—we called them Audio-Visuals, because they made sounds and moved things around—they could be banks, chairs, anything. And sometimes they moved actors around the stage like chess pieces” (Loney 28). These four fairies interacted and interfered with the lovers, the fairy triumvirate, and the mortal court of Athens. In the 1972 video, though the four characters rarely spoke, they were constantly a part of the scenes, moving bits of scenery and properties around, acting as the faceless members of the mortal court, or simply watching from the gallery. The colour they wore, a deliberately neutral shade, allowed them to blend with other mortal and fairy characters alike without seeming misplaced.

The costumes and sets were not the only pieces of the colour design during this production. The lighting design was instrumental in that respect as the lights made the stage look a brilliant white, seemingly without shadow, and kept the colours

of the costumes and set as bright as possible. As it happened, only five lighting cues had been planned out for Brook/Jacobs.²⁸ The main lighting scheme was a completely white bright lighting (“All set lights to FULL”) for the stage, which carried throughout most of the production. Turning all the lights on and making the stage bright may have sounded simple, but in reality, it was not. Lloyd Burlingame, the lighting designer for the world tour, described the lighting design of *Dream* as “bright general illumination” and stated, “there are no artful variations of colour or intensity to emphasize a special stage area or to give unique emotional overtones to a performer’s work” (Loney 74). Though there was no lighting designer listed in the original programme, the person responsible for this lighting state was, according to Howells, a man named John Bradley (14 August 2014). At the request of Brook, the white lights were brought to full intensity in order to eliminate any shadows within the acting space, as shadows would change the shade of the walls and costumes when the actors moved around (Loney 74). White walls and costumes can sometimes appear grey, not white, in such shadow. The colour of the fairies’ and lovers’ costumes would have also shifted as they moved from light to dark on stage. This is significant for two reasons. First, making shadows disappear from a stage where there is constant movement is a difficult yet possible task for a designer. Second, the design effectively rendered this production out of joint with the real world. This idea fit with Brook and Jacobs’s concept for a white space that told no story, as nowhere in reality do shadows cease to exist. Bradley and, on the world tour, Burlingame achieved this no shadow effect by completely blanketing the stage with white light, which was a far more difficult task than it sounds.

²⁸ “Lighting Cues” Sheet included in Production Files: SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/2/1970/6

In a static unmoving picture, like a painting or a photograph, to create shapes in the space that do not have any shadows is a rudimentary skill. Once objects or people are placed exactly where they are supposed to be, the lighting designer can look for where the shadows fall naturally and hang, focus, and use more lights to fill in that darkness. Eventually, all shadows will become imperceptible to the human eye if sufficient, and bright enough, light is used. In an organic moving space, as any stage show typically is, removing shadow becomes incredibly difficult as in order to eliminate these shadows when they emerge, individual lights have to be focused at the stage and adjusted as the production progresses to manage the inevitable effect of an object or character moving. According to Burlingame, rather than trying to handle each shadow individually, the design was engineered to swathe the stage with light from all angles and from as many possible points, to achieve a universal shadow-vanquishing effect. “[Burlingame] recalls that Brook, half jokingly, would say, ‘There’s not enough light yet!’ even when the stage seemed bathed in brilliance” (Loney 75). Unfortunately, as a by-product of using a blanket lighting set-up, the light in the audience’s eyes, either reflecting off the white surfaces or simply aimed in their direction, was blinding until their eyes adjusted. At the Billy Rose Theatre in New York City, when the Brook/Jacobs production toured there, 250 lighting instruments were used, “a lot for a straight play” (ibid), and three new lighting positions were built to accommodate the production, all so that no shadow would change the colour of the white set and costumes. It would have been far easier to use fewer lighting instruments, but this ‘no-shadows’ concept was paramount to the creation of Brook and Jacobs’s true neutral space: “Making the long night in the wood, in this greatest of all comedies of the night, something we imagined rather than something we saw conjured up by the effects of stage lighting” (Holland, “The Revolution of the Times”

178). The lighting design was as important to the colour design as all of the other design elements had been, especially in getting out of the way of the audience or the actor's imaginative journey onstage.

Lastly, in the early iterations of the production, in Stratford upon Avon and on the world tour, there was another lighting state that occurred at the beginning of Act 5 when the mortal court of Athens entered prior to the play within the play. The entire stage went dark, and all of the actors entered carrying trays of candles that eventually became the footlights for the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe* (see figure 18). In contrast to the overly lit stage, a lighting change at that moment provided a markedly different ambience, almost a transition between worlds. The white stage had first represented Athens, and then the fairy forest of *Dream* for a majority of the production; this shift in lighting was the only signal to the audience that the setting had changed, and that time had passed. Along with the contrasting lighting design, the mortal court of Athens also donned different costumes.



Figure 18. Brook/Jacobs. *The Athenian court meet to decide on a play*. 1970. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

All of the actors, save for the mechanicals, wore black floor-length capes with high ruffled collars, almost birdlike in texture, over the all white costumes. These black capes mirrored the all-white capes the actors had worn in the first scene of the production. Although this lighting cue, and the candles themselves were eventually done away with due to fire code (Loney 41), the costumes were kept for the mortal court in Act 5. What is interesting, however, is that like so much of this design that was eventually cut or changed, the allegorical nature of the production and the fluid quality to the design remained intact.

1.6. “*To do so we must prove that there will be no trickery, nothing hidden*”: The Design of Stage Magic in Brook/Jacobs.

Designers have often translated the stage magic of *Dream* in terms of creating literal spectacle, and audiences at the time had come to expect certain displays. During the first and second previews of the Brook/ Jacobs production of *Dream* in 1970 at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (RST), John Kane (Puck) overheard and recorded a series of remarks made in the bar and foyer of the RSC. ““They should give us a reduction on the price of tickets... the set must have cost nine pence.’...‘Midsummer Night’s Dream! There are more fairies at the bottom of my garden”” (qtd. in Loney 63). In fact, this highly technical endeavour was a reflection of the director and designer’s desire to show the audience that the actors, and indeed the theatre, had nothing to hide. It seems, however, that in trying not to fool anyone and to show the audience everything, it may have been misinterpreted as unprofessional or even cheap. Along with the creation of an intimate space, and the

seemingly simple distinctions made between colour and no-colour, or light and shadow, another concept was at work in this production: *magic*.

The creation of onstage magic through imagination was an idea that had been introduced before any actor had stepped on stage and was carried through the design process until the end of the production. According to Brook, the idea of magic in this production of *Dream* is not the stuff of spells, witchcraft, or even, fairies. In *The Empty Space*, Brook writes:

Once, the theatre could begin as magic: magic at the sacred festival, or magic as the footlights came up. Today, it is the other way around... We cannot assume that the audience will assemble devoutly and attentively. It is up to us to capture its attention and compel its belief. To do so we must prove that there will be no trickery, nothing hidden. We must open our empty hands and show that really there is nothing up our sleeves. Only then can we begin. (119)

It is this age-old adage, spoken often by the sleight of hand stage illusionists of the early twentieth century that makes the idea of magic conceivable within a “nothing up our sleeves” stage production.²⁹ This creation of onstage magic is the fourth and final design concept of the Brook/Jacobs production that is discussed here. Specifically, this exploration focuses on the elements of the production design that were either adapted for the purposes of revealing the mechanisms of the stage effects or created to indicate the presence of onstage magic.

There are several moments in the text where the magic of fairies plays a part in the play, as in Quince’s line, “Bless thee Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art translated” (3.1.115), or Puck’s “I’ll put a girdle round the earth / In forty minutes” (2.1.178-9). Since the early nineteenth century, critics have expressed their dissatisfaction with

²⁹ In 1938, Douglas Beaufort published a book on stage magicians called, *Nothing Up My Sleeve*, in reference to magicians proving they held no cards or props there, and that what they were doing could be considered ‘real’ magic.

how magic has been depicted in productions of *Dream*. In 1818, William Hazlitt writes his impressions of seeing a production of *Dream* in his book, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*:

The spectacle was grand; but the spirit evaporated, the genius was fled... That which was merely an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought, immediately becomes an unmanageable reality... The imagination cannot sufficiently qualify the actual impressions of the senses... Thus Bottom's head in the play is fantastical illusion, produced by magic spells: on the stage, it is an ass's head, and nothing more. (108-9)

In a grand spectacle of design, the magic of *Dream* on stage has consisted of hiding the mechanisms by which fantastical effects are achieved, covering them up with a background of foliage or physical representations of lordly manors, palaces, or workshops for the Grecian mortals. Brook and Jacobs provided no such interpretations of naturalist settings, relying instead on the audience's ability to imagine an entire forest of trees out of three abstract fishing poles suspended from the gallery that hung metal coils onto the stage.

They also did not attempt to create special effects that required an audience's suspension of disbelief. Brook and Jacobs hid nothing because they knew a theatre is ill-equipped to imagine what the audience could do better for themselves. Brook states:

A fairy is the capacity to transcend natural laws and enter into the dance of particles of energy moving with incredible speed. What theatre imagery could enable human bodies to suggest bodilessness? Certainly not gossamer schoolgirls. (*The Shifting Point* 96)

Selbourne describes more of Brook's advice on the magic described in the text of *Dream*, specifically how the actors should handle Puck and his 'girdle round the

earth’: “‘Literally illustrating the action is out.’ If Puck ‘says he is going’, then ‘it is sufficient that he says it, and stands still.’ And ‘when he says he is back, he is back’” (45). In fact, in the 1972 production video, when Puck said, “I’ll put a girdle round about the earth/ In forty minutes” (2.1.178-9), he did not stand still or leave the stage in a hurry, but rather fell asleep in his trapeze and woke up to Oberon saying, “Welcome wanderer” (2.1.252), as if he’d just returned from a long voyage. The magic of the production was imagined and no stage device of Brook or Jacobs usurped what the audience invented in their own minds. The production managed to succeed in creating the magic of *Dream* without bringing the audience into a predetermined world, and by keeping the spectators at an emotional distance so that they could imagine the world for themselves.

Though the design was made up of many blank signifiers, Brook and Jacobs provided clues for the audience to understand character or setting and never used overt or heavy-handed signals. Several costume pieces were indicative of that magic. The first of these was the choice by Jacobs to forego the traditional ass’s head worn by Bottom after Puck transforms him in Act 3, Scene 1. Jacobs’s original idea was to have “a very elaborate pair of ears which were going to pop out of Bottom’s head when he scratched it” (qtd. in Loney 51). However, this idea changed when Jacobs attended rehearsal and found that, “David Waller [Bottom] was doing the most marvellous things with his face. With his body. He was an ass. You didn’t want to cover up his face” (ibid). Her ass’s costume for Waller was a black rubber clown nose and a cap with ears tacked onto it (see figure 19). Given their size and shape, Kenneth Hurran of *The Mail* later compared the Brook/Jacobs interpretation of Bottom’s ears to that of famed cartoon Mickey Mouse (“Exit mouse”).



Figure 19. Brook/Jacobs. *Bottom as an Ass*. 1970. Photograph by Reg Wilson. RSC.

As the other mechanicals were fleeing the scene (3.1.102-12), the four fairies strapped clogs with three-inch wooden soles to Bottom's feet as a blacksmith might have done when shoeing a horse, making Bottom's outfit even more ungainly yet giving him more height. The nose, the ears, and the clogs were the only costume pieces used to transform Waller's Bottom into an ass, leaving the rest of the transformation to his skill as an actor. This rather pedestrian transformation of Bottom was not what

Shakespeare hints at in the text. When Oberon speaks, “Robin, take off his head” in Act 4, Scene 1, it is the only reference in the play to a necessary costume change. Shakespeare’s line indicates how the effect of changing Bottom into an ass and back to a human was done in the late sixteenth century, and also how it has been designed by many productions since: using a full headdress. In the Brook/Jacobs production, Bottom had only to remove a small clown nose, a hat with ears on it, and a pair of over-sized clogs to become human again. Rather than an act of beheading, as the line “take off his head” implies, only through watching the video did I ascertain that it was Puck who plucked off Bottom’s fake nose, slipped off his hat, and removed his shoes when he was instructed to take off Bottom’s head. During any performance of *Dream*, an audience is asked to suspend their disbelief for this transformation but when the change involves one actor literally removing the full headdress of another, the magic is often lost, as Hazlitt stipulates. In the Brook/Jacobs production, that magic was achieved through what might have been seen as an act of undressing, or a metaphor for what most people may do at the end of a long day of work—remove their hat and shoes. Brook’s concept for the mechanicals’ costumes was to have them represent each occupation and nature of the characters (Selbourne 45). In this, the magic associated with Bottom’s transition from human to ass and back to human echoed a worker’s emotional and physical transformation from their homes to a factory or office and back again.

Some of the other signifiers that Brook and Jacobs used in their costume design relied on the cultural literacy of the audience members,³⁰ in particular, those associations the audience might have related to the magic of a circus performer. The

³⁰ A phrase coined by E.D. Hirsch Jr., in his book *Cultural Literacy*, he called it, “the network of information that all competent readers possess” (2). It is the background information that allows readers, or in this case audience members, to understand certain significances.

audience sat back and watched a performance of the 1970 *Dream* as they might have done when watching the death-defying acts under the big top. This concept is well understood by critics and academics as nearly every one of them that writes on Brook/Jacobs mentions the circus. Brook and Jacobs modelled the shapeless gowns of the Oberon and Titania after Chinese acrobats, hoping to elicit the natural magic of the stage or spirit with which those acrobats were associated. Brook remarked on this phenomenon in *The Shifting Point*, “Sitting with Sally Jacobs the designer, seeing Chinese acrobats, we found the key: a human being who, by pure skill, demonstrates joyfully that he can transcend his natural constraints, become a reflection of pure energy. This said ‘fairy’ to us” (97). Without real magic, the circus performer, in incredible feats of physical prowess, manages to achieve the unbelievable. Unlike Oberon and Titania, Puck was not modelled after the Chinese circus, but rather a different archetype altogether, the Pierrot clown. The image of Puck was as the Pierrot, the sad white-face clown of French pantomime, based on Pedrolino of the Italian *Commedia dell’arte* theatrical style popular in the seventeenth century. Donald Richie, for *The Drama Review*, aptly assesses the 1970 production as, “A real dream circus which never existed on sawdust, all circuses rolled into one” (330). Though each archetype did not fit exactly with any of the other circus characters, the association of the Pierrot and of the Chinese acrobat are close to popular associations of a modern-day circus clown. This mixing of cultural iconography, using both Eastern and Western archetypes within the same design was a clever elimination of ethnic or social associations made with either the Chinese acrobat or the Pierrot without excising the premise of their characters: the circus performer. As both of these archetypes were used within the design, then neither of the cultures from which they originate was preferred to the other, yet both were understood.

Like the circus performance, Brook and Jacobs did not present or design illusion on stage. They presented a group of skilled artisans who instead evoked a sense of wonder in the audience. In one of the many favourable reviews of the Brook/Jacobs production, Neville Miller of *The South Wales Argus* explains how the magic of the play and the magic on stage are reconciled: “So our world which no longer believes in magic is prevented from musing irrelevantly on how the effects are made, and the confession provides grist to the argument about what is real and what is illusory” (“A Dream of Our Times”). This familiar type of performance magic was another way of creating intimacy between audience and performer. Brook and Jacobs made it clear that these actors flew with the help of trapezes, like a circus performer might—they did not disguise the wires but rather flaunted them. This nothing-up-our-sleeves concept dictated that the design would produce the kind of stage magic that does not rely on visual special effects and that the production was free to embrace elements of a circus or a magic show based completely on the skill of the performer. Not so surprisingly, this is exactly the type of production that a modern-day theatregoer expects from the productions put on at Shakespeare’s Globe in London.

Following along the lines of circus magic, but moving beyond the costume into other elements of design, one example of the magical stage property or “prop” design within this production occurred in Act 2, Scene 1 of *Dream*, when Oberon speaks: “The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid/ Will make or man or woman madly dote/ Upon the next live creature that it sees” (2.1.155-7). The ‘Love-in-Idleness’ flower, as one of the magical elements within the play, is all too often realised as an actual flower on stage. This production used instead, in the form of a direct visual metaphor, a spinning plate, like those used in the circus, which was passed between

Oberon and Puck on Perspex rods. Jacobs describes in *Loney* the process in which a circus act became the metaphorical flower:

There's no such thing as the Magic Flower. We've already seen it too many times on stage. It's not magic: we know it's only a prop [...] It had to be the right thing, to delight and still suggest what it was supposed to be. We remembered the spinning plates from the Chinese Circus—the whirling plate on a stick works very well for the flower. (47-8)

Several other props were meant as metaphors as well, though not textual in origin. In celebration of the unity between Titania and Bottom (3.1), tennis balls wrapped in silver and gold mylar, a mirror-like paper similar to baking foil, were thrown across the stage as if they were lightning bolts or party streamers.³¹ In the same scene, the actors threw full size paper plates as if they were confetti. Using a spinning plate instead of a flower, shiny spheres to represent lightning bolts, and paper plates to symbolize parade confetti fused the performance with a childlike sense of wonder, or magic. Early in the production's tour, sparklers were lit for the actors to dance about with, as if they were children on the 5th of November in England, or on the 4th of July in America: "The magic that is distilled among the coiled wire trees... and Titania's rich red ostrich feather hammock is real, with all a child's wayward simplicity and ingenuity of imagination" ("Puck with a Clown Suit"). The adults in the audience were brought back to a time when a child imagines circus acts as supernatural, or that sparklers are fairies dancing at their fingertips. In the end, the sense of wonder and imagination required for audience members to engage with this production was deliberate and effortless.

³¹ In the production's world tour shipping manifest printed in *Loney*, these were given the name, "fireballs" (119).

The design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* was, of course, not only created from these four concepts: the design of an intimate and abstract space, the fluidity of the stage design, the symbolic use of colour, and the onstage magic. There was an entire history and relationship between Brook and Jacobs that had matured by the time Trevor Nunn, the artistic director of the RSC in 1970, first proposed producing *Dream* to Brook. Their past work together was not the only influence, however, as the surrounding culture at the RSC and several works by fine artists had also inspired Brook and Jacobs and helped to shape the design of their *Dream*.

1.7. “Every artist is, consciously or unconsciously, eclectic”: The Evolution of Brook and Jacobs’s Philosophy

The significance and genius of Brook and Jacobs’s approach to stage design lay in their ability to absorb the prevailing artistic motifs, themes, and theories of their time and hone them into one production as well as continually modify them throughout the process, without ever losing sight of the artistic vision. I believe that Brook’s co-director from the *Theatre of Cruelty* season, Marowitz, understated the genius of Brook and his ability to soak up and reshape the ideas of other practitioners and the European theorists whose ideals he embraced: “Every artist is, consciously or unconsciously, eclectic. They alchemize ideas and inferences from other people’s work into their own” (“Brook: From Marat Sade”). The alchemy of staging Brook and Jacobs’s *Dream* manifested as a collaborative effort in both of their abilities to skilfully shape and reshape different, even contradictory, ideas into one coherent and innovative new product that spoke to a particular audience at a particular time. Not every artist, as Marowitz implies, was as well-suited to the alchemy evident in the

collaboration of Brook and Jacobs on the design of the 1970 *Dream*, and it was that design in particular that became the signature of the RSC and its productions of that play for decades to come.

The maturity of Brook's practices not only manifested themselves in his stage designs as he gained more experience as a director and designer, but also in the critical theories of theatre he integrated into his work by the late 1960s. Not every philosophy that Brook and Jacobs entertained, however, is explored in this chapter. For instance, Vsevolod Meyerhold's theatrical study of symbolic gesture and biomechanics of circus performers definitely influenced the athleticism of the 1970 production and the costume design of the fairy triumvirate, as Meyerhold is quoted in the 1970 programme.³² Interestingly, Brook writes of Meyerhold as a challenger to the legacy of Stanislavsky's realistic portrayal of character (*The Empty Space* 30), which is exactly the same position that Barnes attributes to Brook and his relationship to the theatre after *Dream*: "It is as though he is challenging the world, by saying that there is no such thing as Shakespearean style" ("Historic Staging of 'Dream'"). Despite Brook's passing glances at the theatrical ideas of Meyerhold, however, this chapter does not focus on him or his theoretical influence over this production of *Dream* as neither Brook nor Jacobs ever focused heavily on his theories in their writing or interviews regarding this project. Brook instead looked to other theorists and practitioners for inspiration far more deeply: Artaud, Grotowski, Kott, and especially Brecht. This section explores each of these theorists and practitioners to examine how they were instrumental in Brook's production design of *Dream*.

³² "There is a fourth *creator* in addition to the author, the director and the actor—namely the spectator... from the friction between the actor's creativity and the spectator's imagination, a clear flame is kindled. *Meyerhold (1902)*" (1970 *Dream* RSC Programme).

According to Arnold Aronson, a critic for the *New York Times* in 2005, the goal for the 1963-64 *Theatre of Cruelty* season at the RSC, “was to reinvigorate theater through a theatrical vocabulary not tied to language” (“‘Peter Brook’: The Empty Stage”). Brook’s approach was to develop a dialect, or more specifically a physical and tonal vernacular, that allowed a level of communication between performers more immediate than the text itself. “Slowly we worked towards different wordless languages: we took an event, a fragment of experience and made exercises that turned them into forms that could be shared” (*The Empty Space* 61). The RSC’s *Theatre of Cruelty* season, however, was not a specific series of scripted plays; rather it was a workshop that explored Artaud’s ideas. The Brook/Jacobs *Dream* was an amalgamation of what Artaud intended not only for the actors, but for the design as well. In his book, *Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty*, Albert Bermel examined the surrealist approach to design and how Artaud had wished to integrate those kinds of approaches into a performance: “The kind of theatre Artaud envisaged would use the classics but only after subjecting them to a radical overhaul. Lighting, sound equipment and other technical means would no longer subserve the text; they would partially replace it” (6). Indeed, Brook and Jacobs were not beholden to any textual descriptions of a fairy forest, or of an Athenian court, or even the slightest hint of designing what the night sky looks like when Theseus, at the opening of the play, proclaims, “O, methinks how slow / This old moon wanes” (1.1.3-4). There was no moon onstage in 1970.

Artaud’s work was characteristic of Brook’s Holy Theatre, or a “theatre working... by magic; a theatre in which the play, the event itself, stands in place of the text” (*The Empty Space* 55). The 1970 *Dream* was a culmination of Brook and Jacobs’s work that reflected a similar philosophy of theatre-making. J.L. Styan, in *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*, wrote of what Artaud’s programme meant to

a new theatre style: “The stage will engulf the audience, not with words, but with physical and concrete sounds and images, music and dance, testing the nerves of the spectators by their conjunction and mixture” (109). The organized chaos onstage during the 1970 *Dream*, as the actors ran all over and above the stage, swinging from trapezes, and throwing confetti to the stage in celebration of Bottom and his forthcoming union with Titania, was a reflection of Brook and Jacobs’s evolved interpretation of Artaud’s ideas.

Brook and Jacobs’s fascination with Artaud’s practice and theory was only one path in a complex network of ideas they incorporated into the design of *Dream* in 1970. In *The Empty Space*, it is clear that Brook admired directors who had also adapted Artaud’s ideas into their theatre practices. According to Brook, Jerzy Grotowski and his theatre, “is as close as anyone has got to Artaud’s ideal” (*The Empty Space* 72), also dubbing Grotowski’s theatre an important part of his own principles. Brook published his reflections on Grotowski’s work four years after his own RSC experiment with the *Theatre of Cruelty*, and Brook’s words suggest a sense of regret, or possibly reverence, that he had not, in 1963, pushed Artaud’s ideas as far as Grotowski had done:

Most experimental products cannot do what they want because outside conditions are too heavily loaded against them. They have scratch casts, rehearsal time eaten into by the need to earn their living, inadequate sets, costumes, lights, etc. Poverty is their complaint and their excuse. Grotowski makes poverty an ideal; his actors have given up everything except their own bodies; they have the human instrument and limitless time—no wonder they feel the richest theatre in the world. (ibid)

Grotowski was not a theorist for Brook, like Artaud had been, but a rather a practitioner who espoused that an actor's as well as a director's approach to theatre must be to remove his own prejudice or preconceptions from the act of theatre.

Brook writes that the Holy Theatre of Artaud and Grotowski could be called, "the Theatre of the Invisible-Made-Visible: the notion that the stage is a place where the invisible can appear has a deep hold on our thoughts" (*The Empty Space* 49). It is important to distinguish the difference between Brook's notion of the Holy Theatre and a religious or church service. Theoretically speaking, audiences should have similar metaphysical experiences in church as they do in a theatre. Brook implies that the religious experience in a theatre is the invisible, and that experience allows theatre to represent all things in life that are metaphorical, rhythmic, behavioural, or fleeting. Brook wished for a place where these conceptual ideas could be made more tangible: "A holy theatre not only presents the invisible but also offers conditions that make its perception possible" (*The Empty Space* 67). Brook wants for an audience member in a theatre that may be as receptive to a seemingly religious experience as a member of a congregation might be while sitting in a church pew, and the *Dream* was his and Jacobs's successful attempt at producing the conditions necessary for them to accept that role.

Kennedy explains that, "Brook and Jacobs transferred the magic of a supernatural place and of supernatural beings directly to the bodies of the actors... the production relied not on the scenic tricks of the theatre but on the athletic tricks of the performer" (184). The actors onstage in 1970 brought to life the invisible that Brook thinks is necessary and they were intrinsic to the design as it was implemented within the costumes, the set, and even the lighting of that production. Not in what each of these elements accomplished, but in what each element of the design notably

sacrificed. The minimalist white box design meant that the production relied heavily on the performers and text to provide mood and setting. In the first lines spoken by Hippolyta in the first scene, she stipulates the span of time that will pass over the course of the entire production.

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities. (1.1.8-12)

Brook and Jacobs provided no lighting changes to signify night or a symbolic moon rising and setting to mark the passage of time over those four days and nights that Hippolyta mentions. In the text, the mechanicals discuss designing their performance in Act 3, Scene 1, when they address the possibility of bringing moonlight to their performance at the Duke's palace (3.1.45-55). Quince concludes then, "Ay, or else one must come in with a bush of / thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure, / or to present, the person of Moonshine" (3.1.56-8). Starveling (Moonshine) became a physical representation of a lighting design that the audience of Theseus's court was to imagine in Act 5 of the production. These design choices made by Jacobs were not beholden to the text, but I believe that Brook and Jacobs were not immune to taking some of the hints it provided. In Act 3, Scene 2, Oberon's words provide a hint of time passing during the play: "Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night, / The starry welkin cover thou anon" (3.2.368-9). This utterance describes an atmosphere that Shakespeare wanted to evoke onstage during this scene. In the 1970 production, the audience could only picture the night time setting from Oberon's description, "With drooping fog as black as Acheron" (3.2.368), as the stage remained brightly lit throughout all of the scenes in the fairy forest.

Another conceptual influence on Brook and Jacobs was Jan Kott's theatrical doctrine on *Dream*, "Titania and the Ass's Head" from *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. Kott was popular to many practitioners in the 1960s and 70s, especially at the RSC. The other two individuals that made up the RSC directorate at the time, Peter Hall and John Barton, were heavily influenced by Kott: "[Hall's] 1963-64 *War of the Roses* with John Barton was said to be the illustration of Kott's Grand Mechanism. His RSC Hamlet in 1965 was similarly 'strongly influenced'" (Lieblein; see also Beauman 281-82).³³ According to many critics and academics writing on the Brook/Jacobs production, Kott's essay was fundamental to the themes that Brook and Jacobs embraced during the design and execution of the 1970 *Dream*, specifically those addressing the sexuality and eroticism of *Dream*. According to Halio:

Jan Kott, whose essays in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* were seminal in Brook's thinking about *King Lear* and now the *Dream*. Kott had stressed what most criticism and performance had tended to miss or to ignore: the play's undercurrents of sensuality and brutality. (Halio 57)

The staging of the 1970 *Dream* reflected an intense, exciting and vigorous kind of passion amongst the four lovers, a joyful sexuality between Bottom and Titania, and a kind of amusing eroticism that flowed throughout the production. The 1970 *Dream* was sexualized, but I would argue that the production's sensuality was neither as punishing nor the characters quite so wicked as Halio and others have since posited, nor was the design of Brook/Jacobs at all what Kott imagines.

In "Titania and the Ass's Head," Kott writes of the concept of love in *Dream*: "In no other tragedy or comedy of [Shakespeare], except *Troilus and Cressida*, is the

³³ Kott's "grand mechanism" was his translation of Shakespeare's histories as violent, cruel, and inevitable (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 38-41).

eroticism expressed so brutally” (175). In this statement, rather than using the word “brutally” as a descriptor that condones violence and danger to the sexually charged interactions of characters within *Dream*, I believe that Kott translated *Dream* as a frank and unfiltered look at young love and lust. Along the lines of Mary Z. Maher’s assessment of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, what is important to note here is that a Kottian darkness with which academics associate Brook/Jacobs (Bate and Rasmussen 109-13; Styan 231; Williams 215), that nightmarish element, was not a part of the design for the 1970 production at all. The sexualised exchanges between all the couples of the production, fairy and mortal alike, were never gross, indecent, or overtly treacherous, nor were they hidden or discreet. Maher points this out, most notably in Brook’s portrayal of the fairy queen as she seduced Bottom in Act 3: “Brook’s treatment of Titania’s obsession differs substantially in tone from Kott’s: Brook treated the incident with relish and humor [...] whereas Kott saw violence and victimization [...] Kott was an inspiration not a straitjacket” (Maher 432). Brook and Jacobs used Kott as a springboard for their ideas and instead of using “Titania and the Ass’s Head” as a manifesto towards Shakespeare, they treated Kott’s essay as a parable of interpreting *Dream*, from which to draw certain ideas and leave others behind.

Though the level of Kott’s impact on Brook and Jacobs’s artistic practice is debatable, and it was Artaud and Grotowski’s theories and practices that inspired the experimental elements and very nature of the 1963-64 RSC season, it was Bertolt Brecht’s theatre that was the most direct conceptual influence over the 1970 *Dream*. Just as Artaud and Grotowski are a piece of Brook’s Holy Theatre in *The Empty Space*, Brook addresses the theories and practices of Brecht as representative of the Rough Theatre. In fact, Brook’s sentiments in that book practically ensure that Brecht

was a part of his process in 1970: “Brecht is the key figure of our time, and all theatre work today at some point starts or returns to his statements and achievement” (86). Brook wrote about the final production of the RSC’s *Theatre of Cruelty* season, “the *Marat/Sade* could not have existed before Brecht” (90). Brecht’s influence over Brook’s work was obvious and evident well before 1970.

At the outset of the performance in the 1972 recording, Theseus and Hippolyta spoke their lines about love and marriage coldly and calmly, addressing the audience and not each other. Theseus spoke of wooing and wedding Hippolyta (1.1.19-23) yet there was no emotional tenor to any of this speech. Referring to the “epic” Brechtian style of theatre, Brook explains it this way: “The key thing about epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the spectators’ emotions than to their reason. The spectator is not supposed to share in the experiences of the characters but to question them, dispute them” (*The Empty Space* 39).³⁴ So completely were Brook’s impressions of Brechtian ideals that not only did they manifest in the performances of the actors, but they are the cornerstone of his and Jacobs’s design for *Dream*. Peter Ansorge, writing for *Plays and Players* in October 1970, spoke with Brook about his impression of the play, and it was Brook who connected the play’s concept of colour, of magic, and of adaptability to Brecht. He is quoted by Ansorge saying:

We have dropped all pretence of making magic by bluff, through stage tricks. The first step must be moving from darkness to daylight. We have to start in the open - in fact we begin in a white set and white light [...] We present all the elements with which we are going to work in the open [...] Out of this academic and very Brechtian discussion comes the formulation that the actor should say to the audience, 'I am a man as other men are'. That is the necessary beginning for a play about the spirit world - the actors must present themselves as men who are like all other men. It's from the hidden inner life of

³⁴ See Brecht and Willett’s *Brecht on Theatre* (151) for more on the alienation effect and epic theatre.

the performer that the magic, the unfolding possibilities of the play, must emerge. (18-9)

Brook's theatre of no trickery and nothing hidden intentionally stayed away from a real or naturalist space, one that an audience might relate to or empathise with; instead, Brook and Jacobs shaped an abstract space with non-specific costume and colour to keep the audience at bay as distant yet self-aware onlookers to a play, rather than emotionally engaged participants to the drama that was unfolding onstage.

The choices in 1970 to have the entire company come on at the outset of the production and to throw white capes off as the performance began was a nod to Brecht. The offstage actors who perched themselves in the gallery to watch and interact with the scene below, laughing and keeping their attention as spectators, helped to keep the audience from identifying too much with the action onstage. At the interval, in a moment of actor become stagehand, Puck and the four lesser fairies remained onstage to sweep up confetti and to assist in the necessary lowering of the safety curtain. At the end of the 1970 production, after Puck speaks the lines, "Give me your hands if we be friends / And Robin shall restore amends" (5.1.434-5), the actors jumped off the stage to shake hands with as many audience members as they could. Though the 1972 video was a static visual of centre stage, the actors can be seen at the end hopping off the stage to join the audience. The Brook/Jacobs production was not an Aristotelian attempt to have the audience suspend their disbelief, rather, it was shaped to alienate the audience enough so that they may objectively judge the performances in 1970 as what they were, a performance.

1.8. The Shadow of a White Box

Brook had many influences to reconcile for *Dream* to work, and he had to reach a practical compromise between the theories and practices of Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski, and Kott, which he did and had already done through his collaborations with Jacobs. Brook describes his ideal designer in *The Empty Space*:

The best designer evolves step by step with the director, going back, changing, scrapping, as a conception of the whole gradually takes form [...] What is necessary, however, is an incomplete design; a design that has clarity without rigidity; one that could be called 'open' as against 'shut.' This is the essence of theatrical thinking: a true theatre designer will think of his designs as being all the time in motion [...] the designer thinks in terms of the fourth dimension, the passage of time—not the stage picture, but the stage moving picture. (124-5)

In 1970, Brook and Jacobs used the ideas of Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht, and Kott as threads of what became their style of abstract stage design. Which eventually would become a signature visual design to inspire many productions at the RSC and beyond.

Also according to Brook, no single conceptual idea dominated *Dream* over other theories, ideas, or practices. In *Quality of Mercy* (2013), he summarizes why that was so:

A concept is the result and comes at the end. Every form is possible if it is discovered by probing deeper and deeper into the story, into the words and into the human beings we call characters. If the concept is imposed in advance by a dominating mind, it closes all the doors. (84-5)

This statement suggests that there were many influences on his and Jacobs's *Dream* at the outset, from conceptual to theoretical to visual, and none of them were used as declarations of style or form from which to base all decisions about the production.

The Eastern European theatre practitioners and theorists (Artaud, Grotowski, Brecht, and Kott) all influenced the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* in their own ways, but, according to Brook, they did not do so overtly or in a constricting manner. It is important to note that since the production ended, the narrative of Brook and Jacobs and their *Dream*, one that has been thus far intrinsic to this thesis, has not been solely of their own making.

For instance, there are several academic and critical theories that make the connections between Kott and Brook a fixed idea, and one that bears mentioning every time someone writes on the 1970 *Dream*. In *Talking Theatre: Interviews with Theatre People*, Richard Eyre asks Brook directly about his relationship with Kott, and despite much of the literature on the topic, Brook outright denies using Kott's treatise on *Lear* for his production in 1963 (22). At the same time, Brook states that it was the institution of Shakespearean theatre that was the problem: "I think that what was quite clear was that *Lear* had suffered like all the other plays from tradition, and where tradition in some cases is a good thing, in the case of Shakespeare, tradition is not a good thing" (ibid). A similar sentiment towards the scenic traditions in Shakespearean performance is endorsed in Kott's "King Lear or Endgame" (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary*). This is a parallel that does not establish causality yet suggests a shared philosophy between Brook and Kott. Though he implies as much in Eyre, Brook does not comment directly on whether he and Jacobs thought much of Kott's essay on *Dream* in this interview. It is my opinion that the design of the 1970 production is evidence enough to suggest that they did not follow Kott's theories on *Dream* anymore than Brook explicitly followed Kott's theories on *Lear*. They were influential ideas from which to begin the process, not finite plans that dictated where the process should end. More than anything, however, it is clear that

Brook and Jacobs were responding to other productions, practices, theories, and ideas in their design of *Dream* in 1970. It is not that responding or reacting against one's predecessors is at all a new idea, but it is important to note how and to what Brook and Jacobs were responding when they built the white box. It was never only one other thing, one other idea, or one other production; it was a conglomeration of many, or collaboration, of these things that made this production work simply and perfectly.

What Jacobs and the team of production practitioners that assisted her at the RSC and on tour show, from an examination of the technical material they generated in the years after 1970, is that the design of *Dream* is never, and should never be, finished by the production team. It is a production design that is best given room as it is augmented by an audience's imagination. All of the elements to this production, from the performances of the actors down to the decision to keep the setting as intimate as possible, were in service to this ideal: the connection this production makes with the spectator is in the here and now. If there is no room for the audience's imagination then no lasting connection can be made.

Therefore, it falls to the rest of this thesis to identify the elements that made up that design for the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* that have since gone far in establishing a few cultural and critical trends within the realm of producing and reviewing stage designs at the RSC. In order to do so, however, for the rest of this thesis, the similarities between the design of the 1970 production and the productions of Brook and Jacobs's contemporaries as well as their successors must be addressed and examined in order to establish that those trends were distilled by, reflected within, or were, in fact, created for the design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*.

Chapter Two: The Scenographic Responses to the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* at the RSC

If we may judge from three RSC productions that followed Brook's – those of John Barton (1977), Ron Daniels (1981), and Bill Alexander (1986) – their directors and designers were among those who, if they did not turn their backs on Brook's achievement, tried somehow to get around it or to find other ways of presenting the play without going to such extremes as Brook felt compelled to do... Either way, Brook's work was recognized, implicitly or otherwise. (Halio 72)

The influence of the 1970 Brook/Jacobs production over the three successive productions of *Dream* at the RSC was undeniable. Like Halio, several critics and academics agree that the three RSC productions of *Dream* to immediately follow Brook/Jacobs—the 1977 production directed by John Barton and designed by John Napier, the 1981 production directed by Ron Daniels and designed by Maria Bjornson, and the 1986 production directed by Bill Alexander and designed by Bill Dudley—aimed to do something completely artistically different onstage than Brook/Jacobs. Critics and academics consider the subsequent teams of directors and designers as having created productions of *Dream* that represented strong reactions against the visual design of the 1970 production, likely in an effort to distinguish themselves from Brook/Jacobs. It took seven years to convince another director to attempt producing *Dream*, and in that time, there was, “a rash of derivative Shakespeare-in-a-circus productions that immediately commenced in Europe and America and were still continuing, amazingly in the late Seventies” (Beauman 307). In response to the Barton/Napier production at the RSC, however, Anthony Everitt of *The Birmingham Post* writes that this kind of parallel analysis was, “[u]nfair maybe, but for some time yet any *Dream* at this theatre will have to stand comparison with Peter Brook's

famous version” (“Midsummer Night’s Dream”). It was difficult for critics to leave Brook/Jacobs behind as theatre companies pushed the envelope of what Alan Sinfield, in “Royal Shakespeare: Theatre and the Making of Ideology” calls, “the permissible (which is perceived as the consistent or the credible), judging whether or not particular productions fall within the scope of Shakespeare as currently recognised” (200). Brook/Jacobs was, and still is in many ways, the exception that proves the rule of the permissible or acceptable not only exists, but also thrives within popular criticism of Shakespearean performance. Though critics and academics review these three subsequent versions of *Dream* in a variety of ways, many of them attempt to show how the modern visual designs deviated from what Brook/Jacobs had done; each team having designed their production as separate from the abstract white box as possible, as a traditional forest, or a Victorian theatre, or a storybook fairy-tale. There were varying degrees of artistic responses to the design of and the process leading up to Brook/Jacobs, including those suggested by scholars such as Halio, as all three of these RSC productions seemed to at least tacitly acknowledge Brook/Jacobs. The critics and their comparisons not only kept the white-box design of *Dream* relevant for years after the 1970 production had closed, it also made for an unassailable icon that modern productions of *Dream* could not live up to.

Though the reviews and assessments of these three RSC successors focused a great deal on the visual differences, the responses to Brook/Jacobs in 1977, 1981, and 1986 were more nuanced than only simple visual reactions against their predecessor. Given how extensively it is theorised that Brook and Jacobs drew from theatrical philosophy and popular practises of their day when they realised their 1970 design, it also follows that the next three productions of *Dream* at the RSC were similarly influenced by at least some of those same ideas and methods. Looking at the history

of the RSC in hindsight, however, it is easy to see that the company itself was becoming a lodestone for criticism of the liberal theatrical establishment. Even former director, Hall, noted how the company at Stratford had become, “a perfect metaphor of how the radical dreams of yesterday become the institutions of today, to be fought and despised” (Hall and Goodwin 48; see also Sinfield 196). The radical *Dream* of Brook/Jacobs quickly became the institutional standard (or standard-bearer) for the RSC and was the impetus for those subsequent productions to take another route to exploring the play.

In the 1960s and 70s, the artistic movement in Shakespearean production, particularly in Stratford and the RSC, manifested as a coalescence of the academic and theatrical interpretations of the text. The design and execution of the Brook/Jacobs production is a testament to that premise. Sinfield remarks on this combination of scholarship and performance: “The RSC has, from the start, fostered this potent combination of relevance and the real Shakespeare by announcing its respect for the scholarship which seems to authenticate the process” (199). The RSC’s academic interpretations of the text, specifically after Brook/Jacobs ended its world tour, were licenced by a pervading sense of the theatrical and of Shakespearean performance history.

The scholarship that is a part of understanding each of these three subsequent productions is primarily historical in nature. Beyond the knowledge that these practitioners were trying to create something different from their famed predecessor, there is the history of *Dream*, the history of theatre, and the history of fairies that is also pertinent to this discussion. Though that is a broad spectrum of antiquated practices and ideas that must be sorted through, there are a few I stress here as talking points later on.

First, it is important to acknowledge that the human perception of fairies has changed throughout history. Perhaps not too strangely, this kind of study is more easily accessible when examining either fine artists' renderings of pixies, sprites and goblins, or past productions of Shakespeare's *Dream*. All three of these RSC productions approached the concept and performance of fairies in *Dream* differently, and each of those impressions in turn influenced the design for the rest of the production.

Second, there is a history of performing *Dream* in Britain and Eastern Europe that was not ignored in the 1970s and 80s. In fact these practitioners, in their attempts to skirt around Brook/Jacobs, celebrated practices that had long been out of use in productions of *Dream*. For instance, the music of Mendelssohn, popular in the mid to late nineteenth century became synonymous with productions of *Dream* in England. Mendelssohn wrote his *Overture* in 1827 and continued with his incidental music, including the *Wedding March*, which premiered in the Potsdam court production of *Dream*, directed by Ludwig Tieck in 1843. It was the quintessential music for productions of *Dream* by the turn of the twentieth century (see Kimber 202; Lopez 65). In order to accurately set the production's time period at the late nineteenth century, the Daniels/Bjornson production integrated this music into their sound design.

Lastly, a sense of history in theatre and popular theatrical concepts is necessary to the examination of these three productions at the RSC. One such concept that is often a driving force to the design of *Dream* is that of metaplay or metatheatre. This concept has long been a part of critical and academic analyses of *Dream* since it was given name by Lionel Abel in his 1963 book, *Tragedy and Metatheatre*. Abel called the metaplay, "the necessary form for dramatizing characters who, having full self-consciousness, cannot but participate in their own dramatization" (153). Indeed,

Abel uses *Dream* as an example of metaplay (140) as Bottom breaks character and gives exposition to Theseus and the court after cursing the wall in the first part of *Pyramus and Thisbe*:

Theseus: The wall, methinks, being sensible, should
curse again.

Pyramus [Bottom]: No, in truth, sir, he should not.

‘Deceiving me’ is Thisbe’s cue; she is to enter and I
Am to spy her through the wall. You shall see... (5.1.185-8)

Taking the theoretical idea one step further, James L. Calderwood, in *Shakespearean Metadrama*, implies that all productions of *Dream* are programmed to make a metatheatrical statement by merely presenting the play itself: “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* explores the nature of dramatic illusion as the point of convergence for play and audience and does so with an almost Pirandello-like engrossment in the epistemology of theater” (10). Metatheatre is inherently part of *Dream*, and a production’s design choices can help to augment that concept in the eyes of an audience. Keeping this in mind, history was an important factor in designing the productions of *Dream* to follow Brook/Jacobs at the RSC.

What is also important to this examination of the three productions that followed Brook/Jacobs at the RSC is that, unlike their predecessor, the expanse of research available on these productions is decidedly lacking. There are neither publically available video copies of either Barton/Napier or Daniels/Bjornson, nor is there a promptbook copy of the Barton/Napier production available for researchers to examine. Though the examination of the Alexander/Dudley production has both of these archival sources to draw from, the lack of academic artefacts makes these two other productions distinctive in this thesis. It is difficult to discern exactly how these practitioners interpreted several of the characters, especially the designs of the

costumes for the lovers and mechanicals of each production (save Bottom and his ass's head), beyond an examination of the limited number of photographs that exist and the few critical reviews that each performance garnered. The bulk of the argument in this chapter thus focuses on the design of the fairies and their environs.

This chapter argues that an understanding of these three main-stage RSC productions of *Dream* requires a more in-depth exploration of the company, the text, and the academic rationalizations behind the subsequent RSC stage designs. These are not only examined as visual reactions against the design of Brook/Jacobs, but also as successors to the conceptual tenets that matured and flourished within the 1970 production. Based on available production videos, photographs, and critical accounts this chapter details a complete picture of the stage designs for each of the three successors of *Dream* at the RSC. It explores how the critics and later the academics discuss these three stage designs relative to Brook/Jacobs and to the history of the play, popular theatrical theory, and the historical record of theatre in Britain. That critical and academic framework for each production is augmented with my own investigation of photographs, videos, and examination of the text to provide greater context to my conclusions. This investigation fills in an ever-widening gap of academic exploration, as I explore parallels between the philosophies and practices used in the designs of the successors' productions and those used by Brook and Jacobs. This gap has expanded as the individual visual and conceptual journeys taken by those successive directors and designers are slowly co-opted by theatre historians into the amalgamated memory of the RSC and abridged recollections of Brook/Jacobs, its most notable production of *Dream*.

2.1. “Sometimes it seems as if directorial choices have been made primarily to be different at all costs”: The Barton/Napier *Dream* (1977)

Unlike many of the other productions of *Dream* produced at the RSC, neither a video nor a prompt book is available for the production directed by John Barton and designed by John Napier, which opened at the RST on 3 May 1977. So it falls to the word of critics and a few academics, and, by comparison to other RSC productions, only a marginal number of production photographs to help shape a visual and conceptual model for this production of *Dream*. As such, the detail of this production design will be limited to what has already been written, and only what conclusions can be drawn having looked at static photographs rather than a video recording of the performance. Written by more than one critic, however, was the sentiment that the Brook/Jacobs production loomed large over Barton and Napier. According to *The Sunday Mercury*, the 1977 *Dream* represents a clear reaction against the 1970 production:

The awareness of Peter Brook’s revolutionary 1970 production obviously hangs over directors John Barton and [choreographer] Gillian Lynne as it does over the audience. Sometimes it seems as if directorial choices have been made primarily to be different at all costs. (“RSC ‘Dream’ is down to earth”)

Barton and Napier’s reaction against the pivotal 1970 production is framed here as a desire to design *Dream* differently than their predecessor. Although there were many glaring visual differences that appeared to directly contrast the Brook/Jacobs production, the reality seems to have been a bit more complex. Michael Greenwald explains in his biography of Barton, *Directions by Indirections*, that “Barton specifically chose not to resort to fanciful gimmicks because he was labouring in the long shadow cast by Brook’s inventive *Dream* of 1970” (182). As Greenwald and the

assertions of several other critics may prove, it is not a question of whether or not Barton and Napier were responding to Brook/Jacobs, but rather more a question of how they did so. On closer examination, Barton and Napier seemed to reinterpret concepts used in the 1970 in more subtle ways, creating a new version of *Dream* that was hard for critics and academics to pin down or define beyond pointing out the dissimilarities between the two.

Perhaps the most obvious deviation in 1977 from the design for the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* was that the production appeared, on the surface, to return Shakespeare's play to what critics call a traditional design. Irving Wardle of *The Times* notes the change in setting from 1970:

Enchantment is enchantment once again. Leaves drift down through moonlight, carpeting John Napier's forest of crystalline trees, inhabited by a horde of bark-skinned, frond-waving, earth sprites that freeze into stumps and exotic foliage when mortals approach. ("Enchantment mixed with disenchantment")

After it opened at the RSC in Stratford-upon-Avon on 3 May 1977, by comparison, the Barton/Napier *Dream* is seen as, "traditional Shakespeare [...] from the first corny shower of autumn leaves to the last lines of Puck's apologia" (*Evesham Journal*, "A Young Team"). A number of critics consider the Barton/Napier production traditional because, unlike the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, it appeared to be visually similar to a type of Victorian pictorialism that early twentieth century practitioners such as Poel, Craig, and Harley Granville Barker, had railed against.

The 1977 production set design, however, did not present a literal palace for Theseus in Act 1 and Act 5, nor did it present a real forest for the rest of the production, with giant naturalist trees and actual rabbits onstage (see figure 20).



Figure 20. Barton/Napier. *The Athenian Court*. 1977. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

Instead, it relied heavily on iconic and metonymic scenography in its depiction of Athens and a fairy forest, using a giant marble floor to represent the palace and pieces of foliage and saplings to represent the idea of large woodlands. Barton/Napier also employed lighting effects to elicit the feeling of a forest, without presenting an entire forest, as Robert Cushman of *The Observer* noted:

When we enter the theatre, mottled shadows, leaf-patterned, cover the back wall of the set. They fade to invisibility during the opening scene in the Athenian court, but once re-established they are a fixture. The final revels—the marriages and the performance of ‘Pyramus and Thisby’—take place in their shadow: almost it seems by their permission. (“In perfect harmony”)

Small tree trunks rose up through the floor, emerging from under the stage, when the mortal characters journeyed to the forest outside Athens. Greenwald described this moment in the production design: “A giant plant unfolded, as in a time-lapse nature film, and in the murky light spirits appeared” (182).



Figure 21. Barton/Napier. *Oberon and Titania with disguised fairies*. 1977.
Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

The shadowy and selective lighting, designed by John Watts, created an intimate feeling, mimicking what it might feel like to be surrounded by the foliage of an actual forest (see figure 21, above). Not all critics enjoyed this filmic realism, however, as Michael Billington's review for *The Guardian* concluded: "The problem is that in a play which is all about the power of the imagination, Barton's approach seems almost crushingly literal minded" ("A Midsummer Night's Dream," 1977). This design approached *Dream* with a representational naturalism disguised as surrealism in its transition from a place to the forest. Rather than looking surrealist, however, the design only comes across in photographs as a cursory attempt at naturalism. Actual leaves are scattered over the floor that once was Theseus's palace in an earlier scene (the details in the photograph above show the parquet floor beneath the detritus of the forest), yet without any hints as to why the fairy forest was lain over Athens, the exact reasoning behind the transition remains a mystery. The effect of a tree growing out of the stage is historically subtle by comparison to the spectacles of the late nineteenth

and early twentieth century with the bucolic set of Beerbohm Tree's *Dream* as representative of that ostentatious trend in stage design. The Barton/Napier set harked back to those Victorian spectacles, but was not a revival nor was it derivative of them. Most critics understandably saw the 1977 design as symbolic of stage designs that stand in contrast to the abstraction and simplicity of Brook/Jacobs.

They often made their comparisons between Barton/Napier and Brook/Jacobs in terms that spoke to their subtle preference for one or the other production. The critics were mostly on the side of Brook/Jacobs, policing the acceptable interpretations and boundaries of Shakespeare in performance (*Sunday Mercury*; Seaton; Barber; Everitt; O'Connor). Yet sometimes critics thought otherwise, as Gareth Lloyd Evans writes for the *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*, "John Barton's RSC production blessedly returns the play from the clever callisthenics in Brook's gymnasium to its rightful place as a poetic drama" ("Blessed Return"). Having examined these types of critical minefields, Sinfield concludes that these comparisons, on making interpretations of Shakespeare at the RSC somehow acceptable or unacceptable, are "finally unimportant—part of the conditions for the continuance of the game. But there is a persistent note of deep anxiety about productions which diverge too far from conventional understanding of [Shakespeare's] plays" (200). After Brook/Jacobs, that conventional understanding of *Dream* shifted and a return in 1977 to the romantic design of *Dream* was indeed a return to the conventional. In these critical comparisons, what also often appeared was descriptive shorthand that boiled down poignant visual designs to one or two prototypical characteristics.

John Elsom, in a review for *The Listener*, noted that the Brook/Jacobs production may have appeared more imaginative than that of the design for Barton/Napier on the surface: "Brook was trying to alter our ideas about magic and

fairy woods, by doing without the sylvan spells altogether [...] it would be easy to underrate the imagination behind the current production, which, by comparison, seems alarmingly trad” (“Family Dreams”). Critics set up the two productions as completely different interpretations of Shakespeare’s play because they were exactly that, but not for all the reasons that critics identified. Garry O’Connor of *The Financial Times* wrote, “One admires Mr. Barton’s attempt to replant the *Dream* into an authentic countryside setting, since Peter Brook carried it off seven years ago into the higher reaches of surreal wit and fancy” (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”). “Authentic” and “traditional” or “trad” are subjective designations to give the 1977 *Dream*, yet they are also used as comparative, often polarizing, terms to contrast this production to Brook/Jacobs, rather than as a genuine description of the 1977 design. The *Oxford Times* critic saw neither Brook/Jacobs nor Barton/Napier as an ideal production:

If not the most inspiring presentation of this play I remember, at least free from the worst excesses of RSC gimmickry—of the sort, for instance, so rapturously received by the majority of my colleagues in Peter Brook’s antiseptic 1970 production at Stratford. (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream,” 1977)

Overall, the Barton/Napier production did not inspire reviewers to rapturous applause or derisive mocking. Irving Wardle, writing for *The [London] Times*, for instance, set Barton and Napier as some kind of inevitable return to normality: “Sooner or later somebody had to step into Peter Brook’s magic circle and bring this play back to the Stratford stage” (“Enchantment mixed with disenchantment”). In this case, status quo designs of *Dream* are ones that designate a real Athenian residence and an actual forest. Despite the qualitative statements about both productions, however, what is important about these divisive reports is how they point the reader to Barton and

Napier's method of interpreting the play, which was also in sync with the institutional academic-supplements-theatrical trend that pervaded the RSC at the time (Sinfield). The Barton/Napier *Dream* is indeed best understood as an academic exploration into the history of Shakespearean performance.

The 1977 *Dream* had indeed revived some design concepts for the play that had been popular decades before Brook and Jacobs's white box. The label of "traditional" given to the 1977 production for some was in reference to those concepts presented by Barton and Napier, which had been prevalent in the stage designs of productions when the theatre at Stratford was still the SMT. Many productions of the day were attempts at naturalist forest designs for *Dream* since Frank Benson had first produced the play in 1888 in the small Victorian SMT, once situated where the modern-day RSC Swan stage now stands. In W. Bridges Adams's 1932 production, designed by Norman Wilkinson, this design of *Dream* was a two-dimensional stage flat painted to look like a giant tree that sat centre stage (see figure 22). This exact design of a centre-stage tree was used again and again in Stratford-upon-Avon until the 1950s. It is, however, important to designate these designs not as endeavours in symbolism, as the stage design was seen in 1977, but rather as earnest yet early attempts at staged naturalism.

Describing the 1977 production as "traditional Shakespeare" for other critics referred to specific design elements in the Barton/Napier *Dream* that predated the SMT, in particular the costumes that were replications of clothing from the Jacobean period.



Figure 22. Bridges-Adams/Wilkinson. *The fairies dance around Bottom, Titania, and the tree*. 1938. Photograph by Ernest Daniels. RSC.

The mortal royals, the lovers, and the mechanicals all wore costumes that were of that fashion. In the 1977 *Dream*, each male mortal character wore a variation of a doublet over a shirt, with either straight trousers or round puffy breeches over hose to cover his legs below the knee (see figure 23). The female mortals wore variations of a petticoat over a floor-length dress that puffed out at the hips in the style of a sixteenth or seventeenth century farthingale, a roll of cloth worn around the waist under the dress to give the impression of a slim waist and larger hips (see figure 24). Anthony Everitt of the *Birmingham Post*, commented: “John Barton offers something far more workaday, in key with his studious approach to Shakespeare; characteristically, it evokes in simplified form the realities of Elizabethan society” (“*Midsummer Night’s Dream*”). The costumes of the lovers and mechanicals were designed as the standard bearers of Barton and Napier’s period but not ostentatious design.



Figure 23. Barton/Napier. *The mechanicals*. 1977. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.



Figure 24. Barton/Napier. *The lovers*. 1977. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

The scholarly approach that Barton and Napier adopted, accompanied by a design full of romantic, as in turn-of-the-20th-century, spectacle and modern electric lighting, was decidedly one that Barton pioneered and writes about in *Playing Shakespeare* (1984):

We go for a mixture of modern elements and Renaissance, Elizabethan, or Jacobean elements... This “timeless” style is of course a healthy reaction against finicky historical exactness... It was the nineteenth century that invented the idea of meticulous historical accuracy... It is not what Shakespeare himself had in mind and it is useful to remember the Elizabethan way. (*Playing Shakespeare* 233)

Through incorporating fashion and technology from several different eras, including the modern day, Barton and Napier made their production historically eclectic in response to a strict adherence to historical production design.

They did not limit their design to only one time period, using an amalgamation of modern and period dress they essentially co-opted a theme, also used notably in the design of Brook/Jacobs, which was then adapted to the design of *Dream* in 1977. In this, Barton/Napier was following a model set forth by Brook/Jacobs. The combination of modern and period dress can never be timeless, as Barton claims, as the design in retrospect is identifiable by other cultural hints within the production, yet it can be made distinct and notable through its identifiable amalgamation of time periods. For the purposes of this thesis, viewing Barton/Napier as a retranslation or reinterpretation of ideas from the 1970 *Dream* is key to positing and understanding the ways in which Barton and Napier responded to the stage design in 1970.

In 1977, the costumes of the fairies and of Puck represented the most discernable example of how Barton and Napier reinterpreted the design of Brook/Jacobs. For their *Dream*, Barton and Napier designed a group of unique monstrous spirits that were the fairies, some with paunch bellies, others with wrinkled wizened faces, which were, as the reviewer for the *Sunday Mercury* wrote, “the sort

the Elizabethans would no doubt have understood instead of the idealised and asexual ones we have come to expect” (“RSC ‘Dream’ is down to earth”). The costumes were unlike any that had been seen at the RSC in recent memory.

The Barton/Napier fairies, each one with the lithe shape of a dancer’s body, were outfitted in sinister-looking make-up and costume, and each could blend into the background of the natural forest, an effect that added to the eerie atmosphere of the production. As the critic for the *Leamington Spa Courier* wrote, “In the murky light spirits rise as from the dead—appropriately, for Titania’s entourage includes some grotesque apparitions who appear to be first cousins to Caliban” (“Fairyland rules”). Interestingly, many more fairies, in addition to those given a name by Shakespeare (Moth, Mustardseed, Cobweb, and Peaseblossom), were added to Titania’s retinue in 1977. One photograph of the production shows Titania surrounded by as many as seven fairies (see figure 25), and eleven total cast members were listed in the 1977 programme as part of the fairy entourage.³⁵ Historically, when many actors had been used to depict lesser, unnamed fairies in productions of *Dream*, they all had worn similar, almost identical, costumes, such as those worn by the fairies dressed as ballerinas in Max Reinhardt’s 1935 film or as the golden children of Harley Granville-Barker’s 1914 production at the Savoy Theatre in London, designed by Norman Wilkinson. In the Barton/Napier production, however, no two fairies looked exactly the same.

³⁵ SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/2/1977/1



Figure 25. Barton/Napier. *Titania and her fairies*. 1977. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

John Barber of *The Daily Telegraph* describes the Barton/Napier fairies as bizarre and outlandish: “They swarm over their gaunt conifer forest like refugees from a surrealist bedlam. Blue-haired, shock-haired, or with no hair at all, waving long finger-nails like Struwelpeter, or galumphing grossly like Caliban” (“Magic missing as fairies go mad”). Looking closely at production photographs in 1977, one wore an old, ripped smock and dress of a woman with the immodest bust line of an Elizabethan bawd, with only a few teeth, dark sunken eyes, and the patchy grey hair and pattern baldness of an old man (see above, second from the left). Another looked the part of a childish Samurai warrior, with the somewhat identifiable plated armour of Samurai but grotesquely fashioned out of found objects, with hair sticking out at odd places and the plates made of bird feathers and lizard scales (see figure 36, second on the right). Overall, the effect and look of these gruesome creatures must have been quite frightening. Though this was a different interpretation of the fairies, behind this design there was an academic or rather, a research-informed purpose that was made obvious to the critics and the audience.

An excerpt in the 1977 production's programme drew special attention from critics, which was yet another reason for designating this production, "traditional." This excerpt, written by David Young, hints at what the concepts for the fairy costumes had been for Barton and Napier: "The creatures variously called puck [...] were dangerous and an Elizabethan audience could not contemplate him or his associates as representatives of the unknown without some apprehensions" (Barton/Napier Programme, May 1977).³⁶ Dressing the fairies as grotesques fit with an Elizabethan understanding of what fairies were, and made this an academic venture, or rather, a research informed production.

Several critics mention this Elizabethan concept for Barton and Napier's grotesque herd, and even a few reference D. Young's programme notes as the source. For instance, Everitt remarks on the Elizabethan-like dress of the fairies in his review: "Thus the fairies are (to cite a programme note) the historically correct 16th century 'mixture of wood spirits and household gods, pagan deities and local pixies'" ("Midsummer Night's Dream"). Investigating further, it seems that D. Young's note may have presented a slightly tempered interpretation of Elizabethan fairies. Farah Karim-Cooper, head of Higher Education & Research at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, wrote in 2013, that the medieval idea of fairies suggests, "that they were dangerously mischievous, demonic or evil. Convenient scapegoats, fairies had traditionally been linked with crime, sexual indiscretion and even violence" ("Fairies Refashioned"). Neither in D. Young's note, nor in the critical descriptions or photographs of Barton and Napier's design were any medieval, demonic or, overtly sexual versions of fairy presented. These fairies, however, definitely gave the impression of evil, mischievous, and possibly violent beings. Robert Cushman of *The Observer* called these creatures,

³⁶ SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/2/1977/1

“fairies who might have been taken from some sumptuously eclectic collection of children’s picture-books” (“In perfect harmony”). Barton and Napier had purposefully fallen short of the Elizabethan idea of malevolent-looking sprites and elves.

This lapse into Elizabethan imagery of the fairies represents another way in which Barton/Napier is seen as a reaction against the design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*. Halio states that Barton had had the same idea as Brook to “dissociate his fairies from sentimental conceptions of them” (73), while at the same time he also implies that Barton/Napier had clearly translated that disassociation in a far different manner than Brook/Jacobs. The obvious visual differences between the 1970 and 1977 designs of the lesser fairy characters suggests that both productions held the impressions of fey Victorian pixies in the same regard. This tenuous relationship to Brook/Jacobs, however, does not mean that Barton and Napier would have instinctively adopted an Elizabethan archetype into the design of their fairies.

Greenwald states that the 1970 production pushed the design of the 1977 *Dream* away from Brook-ian gimmicks, and that, “Bernard Levin thought [the fairies] may have been inspired by a fifteenth-century painting, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*” (183). Halio, however, claims that Brook/Jacobs positively influenced Barton and Napier to steer clear of romantic Victorian visions of gossamer-winged fairies, and that the fairy costumes were, “possibly suggested by the gnomes and elves in Max Reinhardt’s film,” in 1935 (73). Even though the D. Young note in the 1977 programme predisposed the critics, or at least those who had read it, to see Elizabethan fairies as part of this academic exploration into design, including Greenwald and Halio, all three sources posit contradictory reasons why Barton and Napier selected this route for their design in the first place.

I would like to put forth a far more persuasive reason for the monstrous fairy design than a forty-year-old film, a four hundred year old painting, or an Elizabethan point of view. If Barton and Napier were indeed working in response to Brook/Jacobs as well as reacting against the romantic idea of fairies, a more likely concept from which they had drawn inspiration was Brook's contemporary, Jan Kott, and his theory on what the fairies from *Dream* should look like:

In the theatre Titania's retinue is almost invariably represented as winged goblins, jumping and springing in the air, or as a little ballet of German dwarfs... I imagine Titania's court as consisting of old men and women, toothless and shaking, the mouths wet with saliva, who sniggeringly procure a monster for their mistress. (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, 182).

The Brook/Jacobs concept of *Dream* did not embrace this particular notion of Kott's, an assortment of grotesque fairies for Titania's cortege, yet the 1977 costume design seemed to fit this description nearly perfectly. Though critics and academics made countless assertions that Barton/Napier was a design made in response to Brook/Jacobs, this specific connection to Kott was never posited. In this way, both productions shared the critical influences of Kott yet Barton and Napier expressly adopted particular theories present in *Titania and the Ass's Head* that Brook and Jacobs had chosen to ignore—the fairies in Brook/Jacobs were never grotesques of the type that Kott would have employed, yet the design for the fairies of Barton/Napier were both Kott-ian and Elizabethan in nature.

Critics made many comparisons to Brook/Jacobs in 1977, and in so doing pointed to other elements of the Barton/Napier design that were also of Kott and the Elizabethan interpretation of these design elements. The *Sunday Mercury* described the Barton/Napier fairy king as, "a nearly naked, Satyr-like Oberon, whose constantly flaunted masculinity is delightfully refreshing after the bisexual fairy king of the last

Stratford production” (“RSC ‘Dream’ is down to earth”). In making this comparison to Brook/Jacobs, this critic rightly saw Napier’s costume design as a symbol of distinctly male sexuality. Sally Aire writing for *Plays and Players* agreed, saying: “Patrick Stewart’s superb Oberon is darker, crueller, more overtly sexual, a more successful interpretation... he is the most manly Oberon I have yet seen” (23). Oberon, played by Stewart, was clothed as a representation of wild sexualized manhood; bare-chested, wearing only a loincloth and a headband for the majority of the production, he also had long matted locks of black hair tangled with leaves that came down to his shoulders (see figure 26). Given how Barton and Napier fused Kott’s theories with Elizabethan illustrations of fairies, there is one piece of artwork acting as inspiration that is especially interesting to this discussion as it looks exactly like Oberon did in 1977; a costume labelled, “Water Deity or Spirit” in the festival costume designs of Inigo Jones (Orgel and Strong 820; see figure 27).



Figure 26. Barton/Napier. *Oberon casts a spell over Titania*. 1977. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.



Figure 27. Inigo Jones. *Water Deity or Spirit*. 1973. Photograph by Sotheby Park Bernet. Orgel and Strong (820).

Percy Simpson and C.F. Bell describe this character drawn by Jones in their book, *Designs by Inigo Jones for Masques and Plays at Court*, as having an, “unkempt beard and hair crowned with weeds or rushes. Nude excepting for drapery passing... across body. He holds a sapling in his left hand” (152). As if in confirmation of the fusion of Elizabethan fairies with Kott-ian inspiration there is an obvious visual correlation between this drawing, the design of Oberon in 1977 and the masculine description Kott gives Oberon in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*: “[A] splendid

cavalier [...] accompanied by a retinue of boys in rough leather jackets and fur caps with stags' antlers" (178). The design for Barton/Napier was visually closer to Kott's *Dream* than Brook and Jacobs had designed Oberon and the fairies of Titania's retinue. Barton and Napier definitely had a reaction against the design of Brook/Jacobs that manifested through Kott's ideas of the costume design for *Dream*.

In the 1977 *Dream*, however, both Oberon and Titania stood out to critics as anomalies compared to the rest of the cast. The *Warwick Advertiser* hinted at an impression of them as abnormalities in contrast to the already shocking appearance of the fairies in this production ("Stratford gives the 'unknowns' their chance"). Titania was dressed, by virtue of being Oberon's opposite, as a civilized Jane to her wild Tarzan. She wore a flowing white gown with golden armbands to act as garters, rather looking like curtain rings for the heavy fabric train that trailed behind her as she strode across the stage (see figure 28). In an article for the *Berrows Worcester Journal*, the critic suggested that the only justification for Titania wearing a formal dress was to present a polarized design for her from Oberon's costume:

By contrast, [Barton's] queen (Marjorie Bland) was formally dressed, but it can be only a matter of time before we have a topless Titania. There seems to be no good reason for believing that fairies, even important ones, wear ballgowns. ("Tarzan of the Fairies")

Aire compares the design for Titania to Glenda, the Good Witch of the North, from the 1939 film of *The Wizard of Oz* (MGM), saying, "mercifully she has abandoned her wand, although we fear it may be lurking, topped by a glittery star, somewhere just off the stage. The darkness is lacking in this interpretation of the role" (22).



Figure 28. Barton/Napier. *Titania enters*. 1977. Photograph by Anthony Crickmay. RSC.

Despite Aire's assertion, there is no evidence that Barton and Napier based Titania's design on the good witch from the *The Wizard of Oz*. What is important to this discussion, however, is that, like Oberon, Titania's costume choice by Barton and Napier was also steeped in scholarship.

It is easy to interpret the costumes for the two fairy royals as showing conflict or an antagonistic relationship between only the two of them. A few critics actually described the symbolic contrast of Titania's light, sterile and flowing gown to Oberon's dark and dirty loincloth (Evans, 1977; Cushman, 1977). This idea is supported in the text, as the feud between the two fairy royals beginning in Act 2 is the impetus for much of the story that is the crux of the play. Oberon will not let his queen leave the forest without paying her back for the slight he suffers when Titania will not give him a little Indian boy to be his henchman: "Well, go thy way: thou shalt not from this grove / Till I torture thee for this injury" (2.1.148-9). In the 1977 production, this feud was clearly reflected in Oberon and Titania's costumes, a

contrast between a savage Oberon and a civilised Titania. All other characters onstage had a costume design that visually signified the social group, mortal or fairy, to which they belonged, and no other characters' costumes were designed with a polarity in mind. Yet for these two, Titania and Oberon, their costumes were both unique within the design and at the same time central to the ideas of this production. This is where Barton and Napier intersected with Kott's theories yet again. They designed Oberon's night to Titania's day.

Kott commented on this feud within *Dream* in terms of the binary states of nature, having written simply that, "night is the key to day" (189), and pointed out that these dual states of the world are interdependent. The schism of the sexes runs its course through the play, with Oberon and Titania's battle for supremacy ending in Act 4, Scene 1. Oberon dispels his magic, relenting his control over Titania and waking her from her dream: "And now I have the boy, I will undo / This hateful imperfection of her eyes" (4.1.62-3). In 1977, this conflict of interdependent forces within the fairy kingdom was emphasized not only in costume, but through the lighting design as well. Robert Cushman of *The Observer* called Barton/Napier's Titania the day to her Oberon's night, pointing to the lighting design as evidence: "When he threatens her the lights go down; when she defies him they go up again" ("In perfect harmony"). It was, quite literally, a battle between light and dark. The design of lighting in this production paralleled the conflict that was present in the costumes. Kott points out that the lovers of *Dream* are ashamed of their night-time pursuits and yet simultaneously, "that night liberated them from themselves" (Kott 189). A darkly-lit Oberon and his masculine sexuality represented what the modestly dressed lovers feared, while at the same time brightly-lit Titania's purity represented the stark consequences of the day after. The use of Kott's ideas in 1977, however, was

not limited to the relationships between Titania and Oberon and those of her fairies, but to Titania and her lover, Bottom, as well.

Through the many years of designing *Dream* at the RSC, the significance of only one element of costume has consistently received attention from critics and academics alike, as it is the only costume piece referred to in the text: Bottom's ass's head. According to Peter Holland in his 1994 Oxford edition of *Dream*, since 1970, raw sexuality has been attributed by many academics, including Kott, to this costume piece through a transformation of Bottom that reflects "the phallic associations of the ass, or those productions which turn the scene into a phallic celebration" (Holland 72). Holland was presumably referring to the depiction of Bottom in the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, played by David Waller in one of the most reproduced images of that production, caught in the midst of an obviously phallic celebration (see figure 29).



Figure 29. Brook/Jacobs. *The celebration of Bottom and Titania*. 1970. Photograph by David Farrell. RSC.

Having been hoisted onto the shoulders of the lesser fairies, one of the arms of the actors holding him up was extended between Waller's legs, a metaphorically erect phallus, just before he was carried offstage, presumably, to have sex with Titania during the interval. After the ass's head became a metaphorical representation of that sexuality, a number of actors at the RSC playing Bottom as an ass have since celebrated the overtly sexual nature of that element of costume. In Barton/Napier, that costume element, the ass's head and ears, carried over into the design of Bottom's lover, Titania.

In 1977, instead of Bottom's ears acting as his unique transformational feature, for the first time at the RSC, the fairy queen's costume also included a pair of donkey ears. In fact, throughout the production, Titania accessorised her white dress with a series of headdresses worn at different times. For her first entrance in Act 2, Scene 1 of the production, Titania wore a bejewelled turban with long quail feathers sticking out at the top ("What, jealous Oberon?" 2.1.62; see figure 28). She was also seen wearing a small circlet headdress, which likely represented a crown, and the donkey ears were used as an addition to another of Titania's headdresses made of flowers, and she wore it only in specific scenes. One of the colour production photographs shows, in Act 4, Scene 1, a transformed Bottom sitting with an also transformed Titania lying with her head in his lap (see figure 30). Bottom's face can be seen through a shaggy beard and wig with a pair of donkey ears on top, and clearly Titania's headdress was a flower garland with an enlarged pair of donkey ears growing out of her hair. Bottom's furry ears extended about one foot off the head of the actor Richard Griffith, with one ear bent to reflect the musculature of an actual ass's head. Titania's donkey ears were similar in construction, yet slightly smaller.



Figure 30. Barton/Napier. *Bottom with Titania*. 1977. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

Though Griffith's entire Bottom costume had been altered by his transformation from human to ass, Marjorie Bland's Titania had only donkey ears attached to a garland of flowers that she wore lightly on her head. Visually, there is an easy connection to make between the design of Titania's ears in Barton/Napier and the design of Bottom's ears in Brook/Jacobs. Each character wore the signature costume piece of the ass in *Dream* as a hat or crown and not a full mask, headdress, or transformative costume.

Kott calls the assembly of metaphors used by Shakespeare in *Dream*, a "bestiary" (*Shakespeare Our Contemporary* 181). Helena asking Demetrius to be, "used as you use your dog" (2.1.214), and Demetrius replying that he would instead leave Helena, "to the mercy of wild beasts" (2.1.232). Kott's point is taken as there are many references to the beasts of the wild in the text, and yet, Kott describes Titania as the slender white girl, who, "longs for animal love" (183). So, there are beasts that may kill and also, quite clearly, beasts of a sexual nature in *Dream*. Given that there is no recording of nor promptbook for the 1977 production, the only

conclusion that can be reached at this point is that Titania's ass's head was likely intended as a depiction of woman as the sexual instigator. Yet given the proclivity of Barton and Napier taking what was given to them by Kott, and translating his ideas to something new, this headdress was also a symbol that Titania was also a beast herself in this production.

Titania's sexuality also raises an issue of the staging to this production at the RSC, as up until this point, Bottom had been the only character in an RSC or SMT production to wear donkey ears. Given the association with sexual imagery historically associated with the ass in *Dream*, Titania's donkey headdress may have been interpreted as a sign that the fairy queen was an equal to Bottom in sexual prowess. Barton and Napier reframed the symbolism of the ass's head as well as the subsequent character transformation. In the play, the symbol of Titania's sexuality and power in *Dream* is her bower. It is her place of rest and private congress with Bottom. In 1977, the fairy queen was given a set of donkey ears, it seems, as an exchange for what Titania herself calls, "my bower" (3.2.196). Though there are several photographs of the romantic interactions in Barton/Napier between Titania and Bottom both in Act 3 and 4, yet in each, there is no evidence of a bower, or a specific set piece designated as a bed for the fairy queen. The ears achieved in 1977, what the red feather bower had done for Titania in 1970, that is to say: they gave her a sexual identity.

Strangely, no critics or academics at the time commented on this costume design choice or the lack of a bower, even though this transformation from a pure and chaste fairy queen in white to a sexually aggressive animal wearing donkey ears should have been important to the character development. This design choice also seems quite pivotal in that it redefined the relationship between Bottom and Titania as

sexual equals. In 1970, the large red ostrich feather was Titania's bower, looking very much like the fans used by the famed burlesque dancers of the *Folies Bergère* in the 1920s.³⁷ Titania was lowered to the stage on that red feather to confront her mortal lover, as a burlesque diva performer might have seduced an audience member. In 1977, there was no bed and the two actors lay down on the stage. The exchange of donkey ears for a bower may have brought Titania closer to Bottom and the carnal, mortal world but clearly not in such an obvious way that those who saw the production made the connection. In Brook/Jacobs, the carnality of the scene and Titania could not be missed, as Bottom was the one who was dramatically elevated (literally) above the stage and brought closer, if only for a short while, to the fairy realm.

In this case, the 1977 reaction against Brook/Jacobs was not a dismissal of the 1970 production's design or the concepts it espoused. Rather, the Barton/Napier production adopted tenets of Kott's *Dream* that Brook/Jacobs had ignored, and adapted them to practices and designs that were Elizabethan in nature, albeit through an academic lens. These Kott-ian and Elizabethan practices gave the 1977 *Dream* a twisted, even edgy, new meaning to elements in the design of the play. That neither promptbook, video of this production, nor a large collection of production photographs is available to researchers means that the symbolism outlined here primarily pertains to the design of the fairies of *Dream*. The analysis herein of the next two productions of *Dream* at the RSC continues the examination of the design for the fairies, the influence of the critics, the conceptual interpretation of the play, and the designer's choice of setting, yet with far more archival material available for each, I also explore the design of the mortals for each *Dream* as well.

³⁷ The *Folies Bergère* Music Hall and Cabaret is, as of this writing, still in operation in Paris, France. The height of its popularity was in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

2.2. “Back to a world of footlights, frock coats, crinolines, and gentle ballads”: The Daniels/Bjornson *Dream* (1981)

After Barton/Napier, Ron Daniels and Maria Bjornson were the next director/designer team to produce *Dream* at the RSC. This production was also seen, critically, as a reaction against Brook/Jacobs, but like Barton/Napier, the process, practices and concepts behind this successive design were far more nuanced than have since been depicted. Though there is no publicly available recording of this production, there are two original promptbooks held at the SCLA as well as critical reviews, academic commentaries, and a far more comprehensive set of photographs than Barton/Napier from which to draw information about this stage design. As I argue for the Barton/Napier production, the Daniels/Bjornson attempt to renovate *Dream* at the RSC involved more than simply creating a distinct visual experience—it meant reimagining many of the directorial and design concepts Brook/Jacobs first used and adopting a contemporary scenographic style for the play in order to facilitate that response. This section will involve an in-depth exploration of the 1981 production design—what choices were made, what they might mean, and how they may relate to the design of Brook/Jacobs.

The Daniels/Bjornson *Dream* opened on 15 July 1981, and it was clear from the outset that this was a production that relied heavily on an audience member’s sense of history, not only of the play or the RSC, but also of theatre itself. Michael Billington, for *The Guardian*, wrote: “It has taken the British theatre a long time to purge A Midsummer Night’s Dream of a sentimental Victorian overlay. But Ron Daniel’s weird, eccentric and dismaying production... takes us back to a world of

footlights, frock coats, crinolines and gentle ballads” (“Midsummer Night’s Dream,” 1981). Though this production design seemed to have no relation to Brook/Jacobs, the Victorian stage design in 1981 did not deter reviewers from comparing the new production to its 1970 predecessor.

The Daniels/Bjornson adaptation marked a significant departure in visual design of *Dream* at the RSC from the Brook/Jacobs creation, but rather than letting the latter interpretation supplant the former, most critics set both designs up in opposition to one another. According to John Barber, writing for *The Daily Telegraph*:

It is eleven years since Peter Brook’s production at Stratford of ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream,’ the one with actors on trapezes in a white box. Its influence is still being felt... Whether or not consciously, Mr Daniels does the complete opposite to all of this. (“Scenic dazzle in a Stratford revival”)

The legacy left by the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* made such an impact that simply producing *Dream* at the RSC meant that Daniels and Bjornson could not have avoided its authority. Many critics in 1981 use an artistic comparison to Brook/Jacobs to bolster their critiques (Wardle; Coveney; Cushman; Nightingale). None of the critics or academics even mention the Barton/Napier production in the reviews of its immediate successor. The closest any of them come to mentioning the 1977 *Dream* in 1981 was Francis King of *The Sunday Telegraph*, who acknowledges past productions by characterizing this new version of *Dream* as an attempt to restructure that which had appeared onstage at the RSC already: “It is natural that a director should adopt the attitude of a man who has just taken over a restaurant that has seen too many customers. How can he refurbish it?” (“A change of custom”) Williams, in *Our Moonlight Revels*, compares Daniels/Bjornson to 1970 when he noted, “the staging was far from Brook’s bright, erotic circus of a decade before” (243). Critical

and academic assertions are only a cross-section that show a pattern, not of practitioners modelling themselves after Brook/Jacobs, but of critics referencing that production so as to lend cultural weight to their product. In the same year as Daniels/Bjornson, Frank Rich, of *The New York Times*, in a review of a production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, writes that productions of *Dream*, have been, “a lightning rod for fresh ideas since Peter Brook's legendary white-on-white production of 1970.” The artistic shadow cast by the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* was made large by the number of critics who adopted it as a symbol of the unassailable, and at the RSC, the shade was unavoidable. As such, in 1981, the professional standard by which all stage designs for productions of *Dream* used by critics and academics was set not only at the RSC, but had extended beyond the borders of the UK.

The design of the 1981 production of *Dream* was a mostly accurate re-creation of a turn of the twentieth century Victorian stage design of the play (see figure 31). The Daniels/Bjornson production set the palace of Theseus, Quince's workshop, Titania's bower, and indeed the entire fairy forest within the context of a “splendid Victorian folly of cut-out pillars, receding clouds, red velvet curtains and potted palms” (Coveney, “A Midsummer Night's Dream”).

This set design was not a three-dimensional depiction of Athenian architecture or a naturalist forest with leaves and actual trees onstage, but rather celebrated the type of superficial realism made popular by the late nineteenth-century spectacles of Herbert Beerbohm-Tree and Henry Irving, and exactly the type of stage design that Poel, Craig, and Granville Barker had reacted against at the turn of the twentieth century.



Figure 31. Daniels/Bjornson. *The Athenian court*. 1981. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

At the opening of the production, Daniels/Bjornson built a grandiose Ducal palace that took up almost the entire stage and filled the proscenium archway with painted two-dimensional flats on which were inset, in the detail, painted-on sculptures of Corinthian pillars. To fill the empty space in the backdrop, painted two-dimensional trees flanked the red curtained doorway, and painted clouds floated above the action onstage. The costumes of this scene also reflected the time period as Hippolyta and the ladies of the mortal court were outfitted in dresses with crinolines and frock coats, while Theseus and the gentlemen of the court wore high-waist trousers, waistcoats, and cravats. Bjornson's design set the production within a specific time period, which was a clear departure from the abstract white box of Brook/Jacobs that left historical context to the imagination.



Figure 32. Daniels/Bjornson. *The Mechanicals*. 1981. Photograph by John Haynes. RSC.

In the second scene of the 1981 production and in the first appearance of the mechanicals, the two-dimensional flats with the painted trees and Greek columns of the first scene in Theseus's palace were flown up and off the stage, or were summarily rolled off-stage by the mechanicals who appeared onstage dressed as businessmen but acted as backstage technicians (see figure 32). According to the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, "[w]hen the characters exit, the lights go up and fantasy takes over. The 'mechanicals' are stage-hands, who put on a show of their own" ("Dream of a wedding"). From the second scene, it became clear that this was not a faithful revival of a Victorian *Dream* as it might have been performed at the turn of the twentieth century. Rather this was an imaginative re-creation of a Victorian theatre and all of its period set pieces were meant to metaphorically stand in as Theseus's palace, Quince's workshop, and the wood a mile outside Athens. The fairy forest of Daniels/Bjornson was not designed with leafy bushes or trees growing from the stage as in Barton/Napier.



Figure 33. Daniels/Bjornson. *The fairy forest as backstage*. 1981.
Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

Instead of Victorian pictorialism it was an attempt at showing the mechanisms behind those nineteenth-century spectacles, with the fairy forest of Daniels/Bjornson strewn with disused scenic flats, old and well-worn stage properties, cloth hampers, ropes and pulleys (see figure 33). The lovers chased each other about the forest in an obvious state of undress, as if they were backstage actors dodging set pieces, disused ladders, staircases to nowhere, and painted backdrops that were turned around to show the unadorned sides of stage flats.

The entire 1981 production seemed to hinge on the stage design accurately recreating a specific time and place, rather than attempting an historically ambiguous setting as Barton/Napier had done. The lovers seen at the outset of the production all in Edwardian costume, went from the meticulous to the methodical dismantling of

each piece of clothing, not in a striptease or violent fashion, but in a slow dishevelled of their appearance (see figure 34). Demetrius and Lysander each went from their courtly attire in a three-piece suit and frock coat to the outfit of a rumpled lover, or even a backstage actor between performances. While Hermia and Helena, both having worn formal dresses to court, stripped down to their bloomers and, for reasons other than comfort, roamed the backstage forest in hoop cages and old curtains. If the two-dimensional flats were not enough to symbolise the time period, the costumes for the mortals squarely placed this production at the turn of the twentieth century. Robert Cushman, for *The Observer*, wrote: “Mr. Brook’s production, ostentatiously demystifying, only substituted one form of artifice for another, while Ron Daniels’s new Stratford version... is actually playing very straight with us” (“Bubbling”).



Figure 34. Daniels/Bjornson. *The lovers in the forest*. 1981. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

For critics, the 1981 production had the same visual and conceptual relationship to Brook/Jacobs as Barton/Napier had in 1977, similar to the complex relationship Poel, Craig, and Barker held with their theatrical predecessors; contentious and dissimilar. The successors to the Brook/Jacobs legacy were not ignoring their predecessors or trying to reinvent Shakespearean production or even *Dream* as it had been produced at the RSC in the past, but rather they were responding to and adapting many different looks, ideas and practices that harkened back to not only Brook/Jacobs, but a time well before 1970 as well.

Once again, it helps this argument to understand that the pattern of dissimilarities in the stage designs between Daniels/Bjornson and Brook/Jacobs represented a purposeful revision on the part of a successor to stay away from what was designed in 1970. This stage design directly substituted the palace of Theseus with a Victorian stage, and the fairy forest with the backstage of an historical yet fictional theatre space. This visual metaphor as stage design, realised by Daniels and Bjornson, indeed used practices that were popularized by Brook/Jacobs, such as doubling the fairy royals with their mortal counterparts, to help bring their own interpretation of the play to the RSC stage. In doing so, however, Daniels and Bjornson also brought certain themes and concepts forward from Brook/Jacobs, and even Barton/Napier, that were not so easily translated by the audience and critics who saw the production.

Beginning with the fairy world of *Dream*, as these were the characters and environment that were most significant to the theoretical connection between Brook/Jacobs and Barton/Napier, the entire construction of the fairies and their world fit neatly with the idea of a crafted milieu of backstage at a turn-of-the-twentieth-

century theatre. Black-clad actors holding puppets acted out all of the lesser fairies in the 1981 production (Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed, and Peaseblossom; see figure 35). This element of the design sparked conversation among the critics, coming across as a decidedly Victorian, and also another rather sinister portrayal of the fairies.

The 1981 puppets resembled German-made Victorian china or bisque dolls, so named because in the mid-1800s the dolls had sometimes been made of bisque porcelain. Historically, these types of dolls first appeared in the 1840s and were popular through to the early twentieth century as fashion dolls for the daughters of affluent families from Western Europe and America. These dolls were known for their true-to-life, child-like features. In 1981, however, several critics saw these puppets as highlighting the more disturbing, nightmarish themes from the play. A critic from the *Solihull News* writes, “instead of the usual run of the mill fantasy creatures from a fairy world we were given grotesque hand-operated china doll puppets” (“Victorian midsummer magic”). Daniels and Bjornson created these stick-and-hand puppets, four of which represented the (scripted) lesser fairies of *Dream* (Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed, and Peaseblossom), and all of which were operated by several actors dressed in black, some of them operating one on each hand. The fairy dolls, though they retained some of the features of Victorian bisque dolls, were all misshapen and bizarre. Halio describes the fairies as “wooden puppets that closely resembled the kind of Victorian dolls beloved by the makers of horror films” (77).

Several of them had two legs and vaguely child-like bodies, yet were given patches of multi-coloured skin and scant hair on their heads, if at all. One doll seemed to be a disembodied head and appeared to float along, ghost-like, with the train of this doll’s nightgown sheathing the operator’s arm. All in all, this looked like another Kott-ian *Dream* come to the RSC stage.



Figure 35. Daniels/Bjornson. *Titania surrounded by fairies as puppets*. 1981. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

Visually, however, the time period setting and use of dolls as fairies marks one of the inspirations for this type of scenic and prop design as the toy theatres made popular by the two-dimensional paper designs of Benjamin Pollock, and the critics are the first to say as much (see figure 36). Jack Tinker, of *The Daily Mail*, rightly sees the design as a reflection of this long-since departed Victorian model of childhood role-playing: “Director Ron Daniels has filled the stage at Stratford with all the paraphernalia of an elaborate cut-out toy theatre by Pollacks [sic]” (“Gosh, a Victorian dream”).



Figure 36. Benjamin Pollock. *Neptune Wooden Toy Theatre Model*. 1880. Paper mounted on wood. Benjamin Pollock's Toy Shop, Covent Garden.

Pollock's cut-out theatres, sold at his toy shop in the late 1800s, featured well-known characters from story-books and scripts for children to act out entire plays based on their beloved folktales. The painted flats of the first scene were certainly reminiscent of those paper cut outs. Robert Hewison, writing for *The [Sunday] Times* also acknowledges the relevance of the toy design to the play, writing: "the designer, Maria Bjornson, has taken a heavy hint from the theatrical sub-text, and produces a visual style that is part-Pollock Toy Theatre, part-Victorian pantomime" ("Midsummer merry-making"). In bringing up the sub-text to the play, Hewison points to the concept of designing a toy-theatre within the design of another, period theatre, that was located inside yet another actual theatre as a nod to the device of the aforementioned play within the play in Act 5 of *Dream*. While Pollock may have intended his toy theatres as imaginative renderings for children to re-enact their favourite plays, Daniels and Bjornson reimaged a paper theatre on the RSC stage in 1981. The theme of a play within the play reflected quite literally into the design as a theatre within another theatre. This production was designed as the replication of a Victorian stage, and the setting was a self-aware imitation of that stage design.

Everything from fairies as bisque dolls and the Pollock toy theatre cut-out set design, to the crinolines and waistcoats the characters wore, to the music that was played were all nods to the practices of early twentieth century theatres. Yet in the recreation of Victorian romantic ideals and theatrical practices, however, several notable omissions and additions to the design made this only a Victorian pretence and not a recreation of the time period that had been laid over a conceptual translation of *Dream*. Gerald Jacobs from *The Jewish Chronicle*, astutely points out that Daniels/Bjornson had not recreated some of the more well-known Victorian settings for Shakespeare's play: "Ron Daniels' happy production of the *Dream* is Victorian in

appearance, but not in essence. No real rabbits, no leafy trees” (“Romance in the air”). In this, G. Jacobs is referring to two of the more prominent design elements from Tree’s production in 1900 (see Halio 31-2) and he then continues in his assessment of Daniels and Bjornson’s Victorian stage: “Cobweb, Mustardseed and the rest are evil-looking puppets manipulated by visible actors, two developments that no Victorian would understand” (“Romance in the air”). Puppetry in the time of Victoria was limited to Pollock’s toy theatres and the Punch-and-Judy shows which have peppered coastal cities and fairs of Britain ever since. According to the Victoria and Albert Museum website, having a puppet operator onstage visible to the audience was a modern convention that came with the advent of television in the late 1940s (“History of Puppetry in Britain”). G. Jacobs’s point is taken. The Daniels/Bjornson production was not quite reminiscent of what *Dream*-goers in Victorian times were used to seeing. It is clear, however, that the production concept was not simply to reproduce or be a straightforward reimagining of the past, or even realise a Victorian interpretation of the play, but the design was to accurately re-create a Victorian theatre, or rather, toy-theatre as the setting for a modern rendition of *Dream*.

In the Daniels/Bjornson production, the time period was monumental to the concept, as even in the 1981 production’s choice of music was there an element of pastiche to the design. Irving Wardle, writing for *The Times*, makes note of this in his review:

This is Victorian production; not only in its stiff-necked court etiquette and costume, but in its theatrical mechanics [...] Stephen Oliver’s music supports the action in the continuous manner of Irving’s Lyceum melodramas, sometimes pushing the text over into song. (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”)

The music choice in Daniels/Bjornson, noted by Wardle as a reflection of Victorian style, also points to a specific time period because it included the actual music that was popular in staged renditions of *Dream* in the late-Victorian era.

Creating an underscore to scene changes and the production itself, “Mendelssohn’s music drifted in from another room, and Stephen Oliver provided a romantic score that nodded to Mendelssohn’s with its passages of music beneath certain speeches in the play” (Williams 243). In 1981, the use of Mendelssohn-ian musical themes did not have the same significance for an audience that it would have had in the nineteenth or earlier in the twentieth century.

Between 1833 and 1957, few British productions of the play took place without Mendelssohn's music [...] By 1882, Henry Lunn, writing in *The Musical Times*, could claim that ‘the work of the poet seems now almost incomplete without the addition of the work of the musician. (Kimber 202)

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the music of Mendelssohn was used so frequently in productions of *Dream* that its absence was conspicuous. It even became a theatrical movement to present the music without a full theatrical performance, called “concert readings”, a practice that continued into the twentieth century (ibid 202-5). Even as background to the action of the Daniels/Bjornson production, Mendelssohn’s music, along with a traditional Victorian stage and the accompanying costume design, cleanly placed the time period of this production at the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By pairing these elements together and depending on their perspective, however, there was another reason that Daniels and Bjornson included this music.

At the time, the only occurrence of Mendelssohn’s music on the RSC stage since the 1950s was as a satirical accompaniment to the Brook/Jacobs celebration of Bottom and Titania’s tryst at the end of Act 3, Scene 1. In playing such recognizable

themes, in a serious, not satirical fashion, Daniels and Bjornson reclaimed Mendelssohn's music from the fairly recent cultural memory of pairing the music with the phallic celebration of Bottom and Titania in 1970. Those musical undercurrents of Daniels/Bjornson, balanced with the direct metaphor of Victorian theatre as the theatre within a theatre setting for a production of *Dream*, points to a modern concept of theatre that has since become a popular method of rendering productions of Shakespeare.

According to Halio, Daniels drew attention "to nineteenth-century theatrical concepts [...] His back-stage setting thus becomes a metaphor for theatrical illusion, and his production a form of metatheatre" (77). If anything, Daniels and Bjornson amplified the concept of metatheatre through their scenic transitions, in which the audience saw the actors who were playing the mechanicals physically moving the scenery. This was a theatrical performance about the nature of theatre, which is indeed the subject of Shakespeare's play. Richard Hornby in *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* defines the concept, "as drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself" (31). The Daniels/Bjornson *Dream* was designed as a staged interpretation of that idea, and referencing past practices and concepts, even ones as recent as those celebrated in 1970, would make sense in that reading of the play.

Describing metatheatre as a driving concept for the 1981 production is a gateway to unveiling a parallel philosophy that was at work for both the Brook/Jacobs production and Daniels/Bjornson. This understanding of the design for Daniels/Bjornson also supports the premise that the RSC continued its academically informed endeavours into Shakespearean performance into the 1980s. Lionel Abel coined the term 'metatheatre' in his book, *Tragedy and Metatheatre* (1963), and in

that book he also describes Brecht as being a key practitioner of the concept: “His characters are his puppets, to be sure, but he insists on the fact that they are puppets, does not try to pass them off as real people, and delights in exhibiting their mechanisms” (Abel 182). With the puppet operators in Daniels/Bjornson, all clad in black and in full view of the audience, the mechanisms of a Brechtian metatheatre and its characters were laid bare. The fairies were designed as anthropomorphized stage properties one might have found behind the scenes in a storage bin or property basket there. Irving Wardle writes in *The Times*, “pressing artifice to the limit, the fairies are represented by rod puppets with black-clad manipulators. The effect is extremely sophisticated thanks to Mr Daniels’s additional trick of evoking the Victorian stage and then denying any pretension to illusion” (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”). Not only did Daniels and Bjornson lay bare the mechanics of puppetry, but they also did not present the fairies as otherworldly, or rather as completely native inhabitants of their environment.

The puppeteers onstage, however, were not always seen as part of a mechanism of theatre, signalling a possible failure in execution that could not be seen without having been there. Hewison in the *Sunday Times* calls the puppeteers, “a distracting fourth social class in the play” (“Midsummer merry-making”), comparing them to millhands and day labourers. The critic for *The Banbury Guardian* writes that the puppets were distinctive but could not find a reason for them being designed that way, “The wooden dolls are so unimaginatively and unobtrusively dressed that they are hardly visible and the efforts of their black-clad operators are wasted” (“Puppet’s Potential Wasted”). The dark clothes and make-up of the puppeteers are typical of the wardrobe for backstage workers during a production and yet this definitely signals a problem with the costume and execution of skill on the part of the actors using the

puppets. The fairies were a part of the scenery, and they were inconspicuous because they belonged there, yet these connections were strangely not obvious to many critics. Billington indicates that the blanket artificiality was confusing as a design concept for this production of *Dream* and similarly cites the use of puppets as fairies inset within a Victorian theatre-world in his review for *The Guardian*:

Bjornson's designs totally sabotage Transfiguring Nature by being resolutely artificial [...] fairies turn out to be twee glove-puppets manipulated by black-garbed actors [...] I just do not understand what Mr Daniels and Miss Bjornson are trying to do. ("Midsummer Night's Dream," 1981)

The Victorian theatre setting was meant as a proxy for the palace of Theseus, yet to critics, who are always policing the public reactions to Shakespeare, the metaphoric scenography in Daniels/Bjornson was a flawed interpretation of the settings in the play.

Writing much later, Halio interprets another theoretical connection between Brecht and the 1981 *Dream*: "Possibly Daniels meant not only to emphasise the fantasy world of dreams, where consistency and coherence are never immediately apparent, but again... to call attention to the play *as* play, in order to induce a Brechtian alienation effect" (77-8). The production design was a theatre inside a theatre. It was metatheatre inside an epic theatre production design. Halio's assessment of metatheatre is astute yet the idea can be expanded to include other elements of Brecht's epic theatre in the 1981 *Dream*. Daniels and Bjornson specifically created an environment that the audience understood to be *of* the past and not *in* the past. According to Brecht, the epic theatre is a form that "was principally designed to *historicize* the incidents portrayed" (*Brecht on Theatre* 156). This premise, according to Brecht, is one that needs emotional and temporal distance from the event an audience is to witness (*ibid*). The metaphoric design of Daniels/Bjornson is

testament to the practices and theory of Brecht, and indeed of Abel and his research into metatheatre, that this production is better translated with the time necessary to understand the complete significance of all scenographic elements.

It is also important to note that the critics believed the idea of puppets in this production, and the use of a Victorian theatre was an inadequate analogy for the setting of *Dream*, or at least in this production of it. In no other production of *Dream* at the RSC, however, was the design of the fairies mostly dependent on an actors' skill in using a stage property. According to critics, the puppets were not effective because either the operators clad all in black were too distracting or the dolls were not visible enough. Having never seen the production, as there is no video at the SCLA or elsewhere, I and other academics writing after the fact may only comment on what we imagine the production, through existing production photographs and the prompt copies of the text, could have meant to an audience. Having personally seen productions of Shakespeare and other playwrights, where puppets as characters are spell-binding in the hands of a master puppeteer, this leads me to believe that it must have been the fault of the operators in this production that these fairies as puppets were seen as failures, not the design.

Daniels/Bjornson was a visual polarity from Brook/Jacobs yet not a conceptual one. Where Brook/Jacobs had purposefully remained abstract, Daniels and Bjornson created a rich, detailed stage design. Yet both of these stage designs were based on comparable interpretations of the same theories that had been pioneered by Brecht and, indeed, Brook. In *The Empty Space*, Brook writes his exposition of these theories and, depending on the point of view, is describing his and Jacobs's own production of *Dream* as well as a concept that featured heavily in Daniels/Bjornson:

What we see most often is a character inside a picture frame surrounded by a three-walled interior set. This is naturally an illusion, but Brecht suggests we

watch it in a state of anaesthetized uncritical belief. If, however, an actor stands on a bare stage beside a placard reminding us that this is a theatre, then in basic Brecht we do not fall into illusion, we watch as adults—and judge.

(88)

The Daniels/Bjornson production design did not need to provide a placard reminding the audience of the setting as a theatre space. Brecht's alienation of the audience from characters in an epic adaptation of a play happens for the express purpose of commenting on current events through an historical model or rather a historicized version of theatrical production. In the case of Brook/Jacobs, the commentary focused on the medium of theatre, specifically challenging what were, at the time, the popular ideas for designing Shakespeare on the modern stage. In the case of Daniels/Bjornson, through an historicized model of theatre, the production of a play was similarly used as a setting for the modern translation of a Shakespearean production. Rather than commenting on the practices and theories of modern theatre, Daniels and Bjornson were examining the practices and ideas of one specific time period in British theatre. Though this was not lost on critics and academics when they appraise the 1981 production as a whole, there were certain practices, adopted from Brook/Jacobs that stood out and overshadowed the rest of the design.

Critics cite the use of a practice that had been popularised by Brook/Jacobs as being key to their confusion: the double casting of Theseus with Oberon and Hippolyta with Titania. In 1981, it was only the fairy king and queen who were doubled with their human counterparts. Although Brook/Jacobs and Daniels/Bjornson incorporated the doubling in different ways, it was obvious to critics that the 1981 practice was not only a nod to Brook/Jacobs, but commentary on a modern day event as well. Coveney of *The Financial Times* comments: "This wheeze, of course, dates back to Peter Brook's 1970 production [but] Ron Daniels... is not just in the imitation

game” (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”). In 1970, the doubling meant Theseus and Hippolyta were seen as being allowed to act out their inhibitions, their feud, and their sexual frustration through their dream personas. In 1981, Oberon and Titania were, quite literally, the backstage personas of Theseus and Hippolyta, a royal couple dressed as though they were members of the British Monarchy (see figure 37 and 38 for comparison). In these photographs, Hippolyta and Theseus are in similar formal military dress to Queen Elizabeth II as she attends a Trooping the Colour ceremony in 1963, with her son Prince Andrew. Rather than justify the metaphor with the text for the compatibility of the two royal couples of *Dream*, as had been done by critics in 1970, the doubling was instead also translated by the press as alluding to the then upcoming wedding of Lady Diana Spencer to Prince Charles (Nightingale, 1981; Wardle, 1981).

The royal wedding occurred on 29 July 1981 at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London only two weeks after the Daniels/Bjornson *Dream* debuted at the RSC: “The show begins with a woman alone in a new palace, watched by her hidden betrothed. Just a flicker of the limelight and, in our mind’s eye, we are watching Lady Diana on her first visit to Buckingham Palace” (“Dream of a wedding”). Indeed, given the period of time between production and wedding, Daniels and Bjornson must have wished to give a nod to or even provide commentary on the historical event. Since this correlation features heavily in critical reviews of the production, the design of these four characters is then relevant to the commentary the 1981 *Dream* was making on the institution of royal marriage.



Figure 37. Daniels/Bjornson. *Theseus and Hippolyta*. 1981.
Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.



Figure 38. *Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Andrew*. 9 June 1963.
Photograph by Keystone-France/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images.

In Daniels/Bjornson, the two mortal royals were dressed in warm pinks and browns, the same colours that had been used in the costumes for the rest of the Athenian court. Theseus wore a stiff-collared frock coat, jodhpurs or riding trousers, and knee-high riding boots.

Hippolyta wore a high-necked bodice and crinoline-framed, floor-length dress with her hair in a tightly wrapped bun at the back of her head. Both of these characters looked reserved and virtuous by comparison to their fairy counterparts. The characters of Oberon and Titania were both draped in black, purple, and deep shades of red, and the actors' clothes were far more sexualized versions of outfits they wore as mortals (see figure 39). Titania's hair was wild and unkempt, and she wore a low-neckline dress that sparkled with fish scale-like sequin. The hem of her dress did not reach the floor and sometimes showed the crinoline underneath like bones or scaffolding.



Figure 39. Daniels/Bjornson. *Oberon and Titania*. 1981. Photograph by Thomas Holte. SBT.

Oberon wore an ankle-length coat, similar to his queen's costume, textured with sparkling sequins, with an extremely low neckline blouse separated from his shiny gold trousers by a brocaded sash with tassels around his waist. These costumes for the fairy royals were the polar opposite in colour and style of their mortal counterparts. In effect, Oberon and Titania were the dark, sexualized mirror images of Theseus and Hippolyta. As the 1981 *Dream* is described as a tribute to the royal marriage of Lady Diana and Prince Charles, if audiences had taken the commentary on royal weddings from a romantic standpoint, they would believe Daniels and Bjornson were attempting to sentimentalize and give a tacit blessing to this important cultural event. An entirely different idea would be that Daniels and Bjornson were trying to draw connections between the tawdry and contentious relationships of Theseus with Hippolyta, and Oberon with Titania, to real-life couple Lady Diana and Prince Charles.³⁸

All in all, this concept upon concept, theatre within theatre model made for a stratified, sometimes profound, and sometimes offensive interpretation of *Dream* in 1981. As such, the reviews for Daniels/Bjornson were mixed when critics attempted to make sense of what they had seen. As it happened, only a few critics commented on what the double casting of Theseus/Oberon and Hippolyta/Titania meant to the production. Taking a more critical stance here, the 1981 *Dream* did indeed jumble many ideas together, which likely explains why critics and academics generated such a variety of interpretations and reactions to the production. Several critics faulted the 1981 production for unnecessary tricks (Cook), calling it "a load of gaudy frippery" (Billington), or summed it all up as "tricksy and confusing" (Nightingale). Writing for

³⁸ See Benedict Nightingale's article, "Professional," for his observations on the correlation between the marriages of Lady Diana Spencer to Prince Charles, and the marriage of Hippolyta to Theseus.

the *Oxford Mail*, Don Chapman described the view of the backstage onstage as a disappointment, preferring an actual reproduction of a more illustrious Victorian *Dream*: “When the cardboard of Theseus’ court makes way for the gauzes of the Athenian woods I could wish we got a front-stage view of some Beerbohm Tree extravaganza not a backstage one with discarded scenery and property baskets lying about” (“Dream of an update”). Either he did not understand the significance or reason for combining certain design elements, or, more likely, Chapman thought the production had not gone far enough in its attempts to recreate history, either of which suggests that not everyone found it easy to follow along with this patchwork of ideas.

It is my opinion that the goals of this production were muddled by the incorporation of so many conflicting design theories. From allusions to the theatre of Brecht, the darkness of Abel’s fairies, and the practices of Victorian theatre as well as Brook/Jacobs, this production incorporated too many ideas into the design for audiences to immediately comprehend all that was happening. Doubling the fairy and mortal royals in the Daniels/Bjornson *Dream* were metaphoric representations of real-life royalty, and an overlay of a Victorian time-period was a commentary on the modern wedding traditions of the royal family. The fact that the incorporation of concepts into the Daniels/Bjornson production design that were championed first by Brook and Jacobs in 1970 also occurred in some fashion for Barton/Napier, makes the relationship between the designs of the 1970, 1977, and 1981 productions the beginnings of a new style in theatrical design. As it happened, the design of the Daniels/Bjornson production and its summary reaction to Brook/Jacobs suggested something far more significant to the design history of the play at the RSC. Realised as an initial movement away from the affirmed ideals of a predecessor, this production began a tradition of intentional visual discontinuity with Brook/Jacobs

while simultaneously reconceptualising the practices and theories that the 1970 *Dream* had championed.

2.3. “*This could have been a little close to the Brook production*”: The Alexander/Dudley *Dream* (1986)

The next RSC production of *Dream*, directed by Bill Alexander and designed by William Dudley, premiered on 8 July 1986 in Stratford-upon-Avon. At the SCLA, there is a video of this performance as well as a copy of the promptbook used by the stage management team in 1986.³⁹ Unlike its two immediate predecessors, there was a reaction against Brook/Jacobs during the production process of the 1986 design of *Dream* that was a source of contention between Alexander and Dudley. As a result of this disconnect, after the production finished its run in Stratford-upon-Avon, when it moved to the Barbican in 1987, drastic changes were made to the entire design and concept of the production, which led to Dudley removing his name altogether from the programme as production designer. After the 1986 *Dream*, Alexander and Dudley never worked together again.

The design of Alexander/Dudley at the RST performances in Stratford showed that Act 1 and Act 5 were set in a large 1930s Art Deco-inspired palace. It was built with a white stone backdrop that filled the entire proscenium arch complete with two Grecian columns that flanked a large, central door used as the principal entrance and exit by the actors in those scenes. At the opening, the mortal court members were all dressed in ball gowns and dinner jackets, circa the 1930s or 1940s (see figure 40).

³⁹ SCLA Call Number: RSC/SM/1/1986/MND1



Figure 40. Alexander/Dudley. *Egeus complains to Theseus about Hermia*. 1987. Photograph by Reg Wilson. RSC.

Eric Shorter of the *Daily Telegraph* sums up the scene: “We start in classic Greece as usual, with echoes of Art Deco. That is to say, the men wearing evening dress and the women long, clinging, satin costumes” (“A fairy-tale evening”). Some critics agree with Shorter, calling the initial setting of the production, “an indeterminate Athens” (Billington, “Bland New Dream”) others thought more specifically about the setting, saying it looked like the exterior wall of the Temple to Hephaestus in Athens (King, “Where the times”). When the mechanicals came on in Act 1, Scene 2 of this production the backdrop remained a Grecian stone edifice, with all of them were dressed as contemporary middle-class labourers just off from work, one dressed in a cheap suit, and another in a labourer’s coveralls. The Athenian court began the production in modern evening wear, tuxedos for the gentlemen and gowns for the ladies. It was when the characters stepped out from the palace and into the fairy forest, however, that the design progressed from a solid marble-looking structure to, as Shorter described, a forest that was, “ready for Alice” (“A fairy-tale evening”).

When the back wall of the palace lifted off the stage and into the fly space above, the forest setting behind the wall filled the entire area with over-sized leaves, larger-than-life toadstools, and, most impressively, a gigantic spider's web that spanned the entire proscenium as it hung, sparkling with supposed dew drops, above the actors' heads (see figure 41). It was unremarkable as the lovers, as they progressed from Athenian court to the fairy forest, went from evening wear to an immediately dirty, somewhat torn, and decidedly rugged version of the same wardrobe they had on only a few scenes prior. Unlike the period exactness of Barton/Napier, Daniels/Bjornson, or even Brook/Jacobs with its tie-dye and flared trousers, the costumes for the lovers and mechanicals in 1986 placed the costume concept as modern dress, yet confusing in its ambiguity.



Figure 41. Alexander/Dudley. *The lovers lost in the forest*. 1986. Photograph by Reg Wilson. RSC.

H.R. Woudhuysen writing for the *Times Literary Supplement*, suggests that the purpose of this setting and costume design was no more meaningful to the production than the design of a nursery is to a child who once slept there: “Oblivious to the text, unworried by the words, dazzled by its own prettiness, this production moves the play away from the world of the theatre to set it in a nursery world fabricated from modern, sentimental notions of Edwardian childhood” (“Stylish touches”). Following Woudhuysen’s suggestion of textual ignorance in 1986, Oberon mentions different types of plants in his poetic description of where Titania sleeps, but none are framed in the text as what Dudley literally realised as a fantastical terrain of oversized plant-life:

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull’d in these flowers with dances and delight; (2.1.254-8)

Looking at the photograph of the stage (see figure 42), the design looks to be textually based if there are no actors present to upset the scale of it all. The opportunity to realise the stage design as an over-sized adaptation of Titania’s bower was there, rather than presenting the audience with a solitary bed or de facto sleeping pallet, the entire stage could have been Titania’s cradle. It was clear to several critics, however, that the design was impressive but did not seem to mix well with the text at all or even with what was occurring onstage (Shorter; Billington; McGarry). Instead, on the video of the 1986 *Dream*, Titania fell asleep near the giant leaf of an indeterminate stage plant, with no bower of any kind present in the design.



Figure 42. Alexander/Dudley. *The forest*. 1986. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

In an interview with John Higgins of *The Times*, given a week prior to their production opening, Alexander and Dudley sum up their production design for *Dream*:

Alexander's first concept of 'the wood near Athens' was of a children's playground, a space with ropes and bars. This could have been a little close to the Brook production, which is likely to linger in the memory of at least a part of the 1986 audience. Dudley took the playground idea, first thinking of the bomb-sites of his native Islington [...] but then turned to the children's books our parents might have read. ("Dreaming for Everyone")

According to Higgins, the two practitioners rejected their original visual concept for *Dream* because a simple playground may have been too similar to the trapezes and circus performers from 1970—they wanted to differentiate themselves from the Brook/Jacobs production. As Higgins continues, Alexander and Dudley then reworked their initial idea until they both settled on a production design that set *Dream* within an Edwardian fairy-tale. This is not what actually happened.

In a personal interview with Alexander on 15 February 2016, he relayed a different narrative for how this design for *Dream* originated. The inspiration for the design, for Alexander at least, was a rope-swing that sat in his own backyard: "My first ideas that I took to him were basically all about the land around my cottage where I live" (Alexander). Although Higgins characterizes as such in the interview, Alexander claims, "The phrase 'children's playground' isn't really right. That wasn't what I saw" (ibid). Alexander's description of the set design for the fairy forest, one that he had once illustrated to Dudley, was of a stage filled with many large ropes hanging down from the top of the stage—groups of them tied together to represent the forest trees—some of them for Puck and the fairies to swing about on: "I don't think that would've looked like Brook's white box" (ibid). There was also a gypsy caravan,

similar to one that stood in Alexander's backyard at the time, which was to represent Titania's bower, and "little tree houses that the fairies inhabit from time to time" (ibid). The process and the conversation between practitioners in the Higgins interview are toned down from what really occurred between director and designer.

Alexander also details how the collaborative process with Dudley broke down; he describes how Dudley took the design in a new direction on his own, in an effort to create something more "interesting," and perhaps something that could set his production apart from that of Brook/Jacobs (Alexander). Higgins may attribute the design evolution from children's playground to bomb site to storybook fairy-tale as ideas that came from both practitioners, but according to Alexander this progression of ideas is not representative of his and Dudley's process together. Alexander indicates that, for his own part, he was not so fixated on whether or not the design would resemble that of Brook/Jacobs.

In the Higgins interview as well as the personal interview in 2016, Alexander notes, however, that it was impossible not to feel the shadow of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* hanging over the process, yet there is a distinction between that and actively shaping the design of his own production around that shadow. In fact, in the 2016 interview, Alexander admits to never having seen the 1970 RSC production of *Dream*, "but it seemed as if I had. You know, it loomed that large. That even without having seen it, I kind of felt that it was hanging over me, like a terrible Sword of Damocles" (Alexander). When, in 2016, I specifically asked about what Higgins calls, "the shadow of Peter Brook", Alexander conveys his frustration that the distant memory of Brook/Jacobs could still eclipse productions of *Dream* even sixteen years later. He is quoted in Higgins saying that the 1970 production had become famous because, "it hit on the image of how society—and theatre—was moving in that particular moment in

time. That's something which happens perhaps once every 50 years" ("Dreaming for Everyone"). Though Brook and Jacobs may not have known it at the time, looking at the 1970 *Dream* in hindsight, the conglomeration of everything coming together in their production seemed perfectly synced with the culture of theatre and where it was heading. Sixteen years after Brook/Jacobs, this was foremost in Alexander's anxiety and acceptance of its shadow over his own production. In Higgins, Alexander and Dudley absolutely see Brook/Jacobs as a catalyst for changing their own ideas about the production and its design. In the 2016 interview, it is clear that both practitioners had different responses to the design from 1970, and thus, different ideas about what the design should be. In this, the exploration of the design for the 1986 RSC *Dream*, it is the discord that occurred between Alexander and Dudley that makes this production an interesting study.

According to Alexander, it was in the design of the forest where he and Dudley conceptually parted ways. Dudley had cut from the design the long ropes, swings, and bars to climb on, that Alexander had initially proposed, and ultimately created what critics saw as a child's story-book fantasyland. The setting that Dudley created, described by Michael Ratcliffe in *The Observer*, "marries Klingsor's Magic Garden to Selfridges' southwest corner window with allusions to Tenniel's 'Alice' and the disorienting botanical dream-world of Richard Dadd" ("Trouble with the RSC"). Somewhere in between the production closing in Stratford and opening again in London in 1987, the entire design changed, and critics noticed the difference. Jane Edwardes for *Time Out* pointed out the rather large discrepancy:

A spring clean has obviously taken place since Bill Alexander's production opened at Stratford last summer when it was much criticised for its plethora of cobwebs and fairyland clutter... the wood's potent atmosphere is now

effectively created entirely with pools of light. (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”)

When Dudley removed his name from the programme, Jill Jowett took over as the production’s principal designer.

It is also remarkable that Alexander and Dudley ended up practically defining the anxiety of influence that Brook and Jacobs had created for many of their successors at the RSC. This is an especially pertinent idea now, in this thesis, as because by 1986 a pattern of designing *Dream* at the RSC had formed. According to Halio, Alexander and Dudley’s quest to distinguish themselves from the design of their predecessor was not a new impulse:

When Bill Alexander staged the *Dream* in 1986, he had not only Brook’s monumental accomplishment behind him, he had the more recent work of Barton and Daniels to contend with as well. Unless a company, like the Metropolitan Opera in New York, has a policy of reviving previous productions, directors thus inevitably face the dilemma of doing something new and different when they mount a production in a repertoire that repeatedly includes the play. The RSC rarely stages revivals. (79)

The idea of creating something original or distinct within their design of *Dream* was, and still remains, a hurdle for directors at the RSC. This is an inevitable institutional hazard for a company that is devoted to staging and restaging all of the plays of Shakespeare. At the same time this was happening, however, there was a changeover of the artistic directorship as Nunn left the company in the charge of Terry Hands, the newly finished Swan Theatre was opened to the public, and there was a growing amount of pressure on the RSC to bring back the critical and financial successes of the previous two decades. During the five years under Hands’s directorship (1986 - 1991), the RSC did not live up to those expectations. His successor at the RSC,

Adrian Noble, claimed that the first few years as acting Artistic Director were spent, “getting the company back onto the stable artistic and structural financial footing” (qtd. in Adler 9). The artistic discord between Alexander and Dudley reflected a breakdown of communication between director and designer within a company that was, itself, faltering.

Holding onto the belief that his was too close to the design concept for the 1970 *Dream*, Dudley discarded most of the original visual design that he and Alexander had discussed and came up with an entirely new one. It is clear, however, from the personal interview with Alexander that the concept each of these practitioners had for *Dream* was dramatically different from one another. Alexander recalls how Dudley had changed the design last minute. Here is what Alexander remembers of the conversation that took place after Alexander first set eyes on the design, only one day before the first rehearsal:

[**Alexander**] “This is not what we talked about. We talked about ropes. Which I imagined simply hanging, having various thicknesses, being able to be quickly looped, to be moved about by the actors to make different parts of the forest, and then to use little white discrete tree houses as vantage points and then for the caravan to be a bit of a coup, as the bower.”

[**Dudley**] “Well this is much more interesting.”

[**Alexander**] “Well it may be more interesting to you [...] You’re asking me to just direct on something you’ve designed completely out of your head.”

(Alexander)

It was during this production that the collaborative process Alexander and Dudley had developed over the previous two years broke down. Their previous collaborations produced two award-winning productions: *Richard III* in June 1984, which earned actor Antony Sher the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Actor that year, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in April 1985, notably set in the 1950s, which earned

Alexander the Olivier Award for Best Director. According to Alexander, after Dudley had co-opted the entire design plan without any discussion or any time in which to change those decisions, that a once successful working relationship came to an abrupt end.

Despite this dysfunction in communication, and maybe because of it, the 1986 production of *Dream* represents the first time since Brook/Jacobs that both practitioners actually commented on their production process. Dudley's concept—a 1930s Art Deco Athens—represented the grown-up world, which was to stand in direct opposition to a light-hearted playful world of the fairies. This was the design that was realised on the RSC stage. It was clear from the outset of the 1986 production, however, that Kott and the dark eroticism of *Dream* had no place in this world. There was no bower for Titania, the Ass's head for Bottom was a furry headdress with ears that looked more like a stylish fur Ushanka from Eastern Ukraine, and the interactions between the two characters, at least on the video, were awkward and dispassionate. According to Woudhuysen, this production was, “a devastatingly unerotic ambience for a play that is so concerned with love and desire, poetry and imagination” (“Stylish touches”). There was more childlike fantasy in this stage design than dusky sexuality, but the production was not created without a sense of historical points of view. In the Higgins interview, Dudley explains what he used as inspiration for the design of his fairy forest:

The sets are influenced by the post-Rackham, post-Dulac period... The other influences, I suppose, are the world of faerie as seen by the artists like Fuseli and Dadd and, on a simpler level, those picture-books so fashionable at the moment of life in the hedgerows... Maybe it's a bit Peter Pan... and maybe it is a bit 'If you go down in the woods today.' (“Dreaming for everyone”)

Like Barton/Napier had been a study in Elizabethan and Kott-inspired grotesques, this production was to be an investigation of Edwardian and J.M. Barrie-inspired fairies. The design for the grown-up Athens in 1986 looked less and less like a polarity to the childlike fairy forest, however, if only because of the multitude of ideas that Dudley tried to incorporate into his illustration of the forest. He replaced Alexander's original idea of an abstract forest made of ropes, swings, small fairy houses, and a large gypsy caravan, with a larger-than-life forest combined with images from many different artists and influences. According to Dudley, those influences were Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, and Richard Dadd (see figure 43). All three were painters of anthropomorphised fairies and unusually small supernatural beings. Fuseli, however, painted in the late eighteenth-century, almost one hundred years before Dadd, Rackham, or Dulac, and though he depicts fairies of different shapes and sizes, his creatures were often in the nude or wearing sparse outfits in sexually charged poses with one another, with plenty of dark or negative space in his painting. Fuseli was nowhere to be seen in the design of the Alexander/Dudley *Dream*.

Among these visual artists, Dudley was also inspired by Victorian children's stories, namely J.M Barrie's *Peter Pan* and *The Teddy Bears' Picnic*, a poem/song with lyrics by Jimmy Kennedy. Like many children's stories of that era, both have a threatening air of danger to them as if, in the telling, they might ward children off of their adventures to lands that are unknown to them. The *Teddy Bears' Picnic*, with lyrics written in 1932, describes a picnic of teddy bears that children are not welcome to attend. As the line of the poem/song suggests, "If you go out in the woods today,/ You'd better not go alone./ It's lovely out in the woods today,/ But safer to stay at home" (J. Kennedy). Dudley, indeed, may have wanted to see a darker, more malevolent forest in his design of *Dream*.



Figure 43. Edmund Dulac. *Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves*. 1908. Colour plate from *Shakespeare's Comedy of The Tempest*, (Hodder and Stoughton, London).

Without the conceptual agreement and artistic direction under Alexander to help justify Dudley's design choices, the production looked more like a clutter of ideas that never came together. From both a practical and conceptual design point of view, the production did not reconcile the disparate concepts of a mortal 1930s Art Deco Athens and an over-sized fairy forest. It was pretty, but it was not practical, nor was it dark and malevolent. First, there was the question of scale. In Athens, all of the characters were situated in front of a giant stonewall. In the fairy forest, all of the characters had seemingly shrunk to the size of fruit, without any textual or story explanation as to why they had done so. Puzzlingly Dudley kept one element of Alexander's initial idea for the design, a gypsy caravan, which survived as a background set piece in the over-sized fairy forest. This design element, however, became an easy thread of inconsistency in the stage design for critics to pull upon. Irving Wardle of *The Times* points out the uniformity issue with having a human-size gypsy caravan in the same picture as giant toadstools and enormous leaves: "Is it a fairy-sized caravan: and, if so, how are the humans to be scaled down when they arrive? Or are they supposed to have shrunk? Mr Alexander's production provides no answer" ("Problem of scale"). Halio gives a reason for that inconsistency: "Originally meant to be Titania's bower, it was found to be unusable for that purpose but too charming to be discarded altogether" (80). These critical and academic explanations of the production, however, only show that the director and designer failed to work together and hone the concept and execution of this design. In keeping the caravan, Dudley retained a charming element from Alexander's first concept, but, in the process, further muddled a decidedly failed production design.

The visual discord that plagued the depiction of fairies as inhabitants of a larger-than-life forest also spilled over into the design of Oberon, Puck, and Titania,

yet not as a problem of scale but more as a question of concept in costume. Each of the fairy triumvirate was outfitted in shiny gossamer and loose netting (see figure 44), a style that was reminiscent of the designs of fairies onstage in the late nineteenth-century spectacles of Beerbohm-Tree and Reinhardt. These ideas were then mixed with Dudley's costume design of Titania's entourage. In the video of the 1986 production, one of these fairies wore a blue dress with a white apron, reminiscent of the cinematic Alice from Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* (1951). Another fairy is dressed as what appears to be a miniature Prince Charming from Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950), or *Sleeping Beauty* (1959). In the video, all of the fairies are caricatures in the same way that Disney satirizes and sterilises real-life archetypes.



Figure 44. Alexander/Dudley. *Titania with fairies (left), Oberon and Puck (right)*. 1986. Both photographs by Joe Cocks. SBT.

In the photograph below, a third fairy wears a straw-hat and overalls in a cartoonish replication of Tom Sawyer; and two other fairies are dressed as a clean, colourful gypsy and the child-size caricature of a bellhop (see figure 45). This was not a novel interpretation of fairy tale characters within the 1986 design, but rather, to any modern culturally literate audience, it was a recitation of a familiar and safe allegory via Walt Disney. What is unclear, however, is how Dudley arrived at a Disney-centric interpretation of the fairies, when the inspiration for the rest of the design was categorically neither so mainstream nor so light-hearted.



Figure 45. Alexander/Dudley. *The child fairies*. 1986. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

Another piece of conceptual disharmony in the production's design came at the end, in the play within the play of Act 5. The mechanicals appeared onstage dressed all in black (see figure 46), as Nicholas Shrimpton describes them in *Shakespeare Survey*, inexplicable beat poets entering a 1950s espresso bar to perform an avant-garde production of *Pyramus and Thisby*: "The style was as obtrusive as it was inconsistent, swamping the action with grandiose transformation scenes, unhelpful detail... and unnecessary scene changes" (173). Billington in *The Guardian* briefly lauds the play within the play, yet, as with other disparate elements of the production, he describes the design and characters as incongruous with the rest of the scene:

I like the idea of the playscene being given in blackberries and tights with Brechtian touches such as a halter representing Starveling's dog. But, good as the Mechanicals are, you feel they have for the most part been given costumes but haven't quite discovered the characters who belong inside them. ("Bland new Dream")



Figure 46. Alexander/Dudley. *Athenians watch as the mechanicals perform Pyramus and Thisbe*. 1986. Photograph by Reg Wilson. RSC.

The mention of Brecht by Billington is off-hand, but then the integration of those elements into the design seemed to be an afterthought as the costumes for the mechanicals in Act 5 were a reflection of, or at least a result of discord in the overall production design. The relationship of designer and director echoed the muddled design concepts of the production. The origins of which could be traced to the moment that Dudley decided Alexander's idea for the set was too close to the design of Brook/Jacobs.

Alexander admits that he did not have a compelling justification for setting the play within the play in a 1950s beatnik espresso bar (Halio 79; Berry 182). Halio attempts to provide his own possible explanation for this directorial choice: "The period 1930-50 was about the last time one could possibly acknowledge or understand the kind of male chauvinism that dominates parts of this play" (80). The political and cultural atmosphere of the 1930s to 1950s in England was indeed a poignant time for human rights, specifically those of women. An adoption of that time period, though it may not have been purposefully addressing the male chauvinism of the 1950s, fit with another concept that Alexander adopted into the production. From the time of Brook/Jacobs, the double casting of the mortal and fairy royals had become a standard practice at the RSC. In the 1986 production, however, Alexander made the decision to double only Hippolyta with Titania as two separate actors played Theseus and Oberon. Alexander and Dudley's decision to double-cast only Hippolyta and Titania made the production look more female-centric.

On the surface, critics and academics ascribe this unusual way of double casting *Dream* to a feminist interpretation of the play centred around the two lead female parts, effectively making this production to critics, "Hippolyta's *Dream*" (Higgins; King; Wardle). Only one critic, Richard Edmonds of *The Sandwell Evening*

Mail, finds this feminist agenda distasteful: “It is a vulgarity—suggesting the balance of fairy power has shifted in favour of women’s lib” (“Harsh reality”). It is unclear why a feminist notion would be considered vulgar; beyond the obvious chauvinism in that statement, it is more productive to critique this idea as being poorly executed. This is the stance that many other critics take when they explore the concept (Woudhuysen; King; Billington). While Wardle does not dismiss the notion that the entire production should be translated as the *Dream* of Hippolyta or Titania, he admits that the idea in 1986 might have become a concept that was forced onto the characters of the play:

There may be successful ways of turning the *Dream* into Titania’s play; but the method adopted here lays an axe to its central structure. Instead of a comedy celebrating marriage, the production perverts the action into a study of compensation fantasy, and its contours start dissolving. (“Problem of scale”)

Wardle points specifically to only one of the textual problems that plagued this decision when he referenced Alexander’s staging of Hippolyta at the end of Act 1.

The most interesting commentary on the 1986 *Dream* had less to do with the actual performance of the production and more to do with how this concept might have been interpreted. Halio sees this Hippolyta-centred production as being a reflection of, or counterpoint to, the sexism inherent within the actions of Theseus and Oberon throughout the play: “Why she and not Theseus was doubled may be explained... as a means to resolve any lingering conflict between Theseus and Hippolyta, so evident at the beginning of the play, in a happier ending” (81). It was Hippolyta who, through her dream-journey as Titania, had experienced a truly life-altering adventure and could therefore be seen as the harbinger of change within the relationship between her and Theseus. Thus, Halio concludes that the

Alexander/Dudley *Dream* centred on the idea that even a woman's imaginative vision of a fairy excursion or fantasy of a random sexual encounter could not have escaped the male-centric world of the play. "Having found male chauvinism prevalent even in her own female fantasy, she could then reconcile herself to marriage with Theseus with greater equanimity" (ibid). The intent of doubling only Hippolyta and Titania then was to show that even a woman's fantasies are subject to the whims of men. If this had truly been the case, at the end of each performance, Hippolyta would not have reconciled herself, but rather resigned her life to a decidedly unhappy marriage. This would be an interesting end to Shakespeare's comedy, but in 1986 it was not staged that way.

Similar to his decision to make the mechanicals into beatniks, Alexander later said "his decision to double just Hippolyta eventually seemed to him wrong" (Halio 83; see also Warren 88). When the 1986 *Dream* moved from the Stratford stage to the Barbican the following year, Alexander had done away with the practice of double casting altogether and four separate actors played the two mortal and two fairy royals.⁴⁰ The Alexander/Dudley idea that the *Dream* could be Hippolyta's alone was clearly a re-imagined version of what had already, or what was to become a common practice at the RSC, that is the doubling of both the fairy and mortal royals. Even though textually it was a somewhat flawed concept, doubling only Titania and Hippolyta is one that critics at the time thought might one day be realised at the RSC or elsewhere. As of this writing, no production at the RSC has attempted this combination of doubling only one set and not the other of the mortal and immortal royals.

⁴⁰ In the 1987 tour to the Barbican Theatre in London, Penelope Beaumont played Hippolyta, Frances Tomelty played Titania, Gerard Murphy played Oberon, and Richard Easton played Theseus.

The Alexander/Dudley production was a reaction against the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, or at the very least, it was perceived that way. Though it seemed the pinnacle of a trend in reacting against a predecessor, this production was unique in the history of designing *Dream* at the RSC for two reasons. First, the designer and director in 1986 both publicly acknowledged a shadow left by Brook/Jacobs. Second, the production ultimately failed and was recast and redesigned in the middle of the production run as a result of the stress between the director and designer. The anxiety of imitating the design of Brook/Jacobs was a key factor in Dudley's interpretation of the play. Wardle suggests that Alexander and Dudley chose a design that was impetuous simply because it had not been done in decades: "If any director wanted to do something bold with the *Dream*, it would be to restore the comedy to a wood near Athens" ("Problem of scale"). Wardle is perhaps intentionally ironic in his commentary, as the 1986 production had returned the design of *Dream* to a de-facto Athenian palace and a fantasy-like forest torn from the pages of Edwardian fairy tales. Unsurprisingly, this representation of the fantastical forest and Athenian palace was exactly the type of design for *Dream* that Brook and Jacobs were perceived to have been reacting against in 1970. Conceptually, by 1986, the design of *Dream* had artistically come full circle.

The confusion created by all of these disparate visual and conceptual elements proved too much for many critics to reconcile and brought dismissals rather than attempts at understanding. Sadly, the design for *Dream* that Alexander has imagined and described in his 2017 interview has, to this day, still not been realised onstage at the RSC or elsewhere. That production would still, in my mind, be far more interesting than the production that happened in 1986. Billington, somewhat paradoxically, states, "My objection to all this is that it doesn't actually lead anywhere

and that exotic design has become a substitute for directorial concept” (“Bland new dream”). The designer was most definitely substituting the director. On their own—the lesser fairies, the fairy royals, the Art Deco Athens, the beatnik mechanicals—would have made sense if they had been the sole concept or premise for their own production. All together, however, these ideas battled each other for supremacy, and made for a muddled production both visually and thematically. Dudley’s initial efforts to depart from Brook/Jacobs clouded the ideas and the execution of design, creating an overly complex production with no overarching or unifying concept to hold it together. Not too strangely, all of the concepts, from Alexander’s backyard rope swing to Dudley’s over-sized forest floor were legitimate and strong ideas for *Dream* that a director and designer could embrace. The 1986 *Dream*, instead, was a reflection of what happens to a production that uses negation as its principal concept.

2.4. Living Up to the Memory of Brook/Jacobs

This discussion is based on the premise that all decisions made by Barton, Napier, Daniels, Bjornson, Alexander and Dudley, were shaded in different ways by the design and the subsequent critical and academic memory of Brook/Jacobs. Rather than metaphorically viewing the relationship of Brook/Jacobs to its successors as a burden that continually flattens the artistic expression of modern practitioners at the RSC, the cultural memory of a bond between the RSC productions of *Dream* can now, only in hindsight, be seen as historically symbiotic. In Halio’s 1995 exposition of the Alexander/Dudley production, wherein he uses the Higgins interview from 1986 as his primary source, he claims that it was Alexander alone who was anxious about re-creating the Brook/Jacobs design:

In his interview with John Higgins a few days before opening night, Alexander recounted briefly the evolution for the design of his *Dream*. He originally thought of the ‘wood near Athens’ as a children’s playground, a place with ropes and bars and jungle-gyms. But this he saw, would have been too close to Brook’s production, which he knew would linger on in the audience’s memory (as how could it not?) (Halio 80)

The Higgins interview, however, does not support the statement that it was Alexander who did not want his design to overlap with that of Brook/Jacobs. Indeed, a section of the Higgins interview reads a great deal like Halio’s statement, but with notable changes in the language. Alexander did not make a comparison to the design of Brook/Jacobs in his interview, Higgins did. Halio, however, interpreted Higgins’s words to mean that Alexander had changed his mind (“but this, **he saw**, would have been too close to Brook’s production, which **he knew** would linger on in the audience’s memory” (Halio 80; emphasis mine)).

In a 2016 personal interview with Alexander, he clarified that he had not been concerned with a similarity to the 1970 production:

I think if I’d really felt what I was seeing in my mind was done, I don’t think it would’ve been compared to Brook’s *Dream*, not visually. Because the elements would’ve been different, the whole sense of the space would’ve been different, the idea of doing the very opposite of the white box... Maybe Bill Dudley felt that. Maybe he felt it would’ve reminded people too much of Brook. (Alexander)

Although Alexander recognizes the weight of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, he was not concerned about his design appearing too similar to it. In addition, without critics viewing or re-viewing the Brook/Jacobs production, some subtleties or connections may have been lost comparing it to more modern productions. The design of Brook/Jacobs should, therefore, not be viewed as an isolated or solitary authority on

successive productions of *Dream*. Despite viewpoints to the contrary, Brook/Jacobs should be seen as the notable beginning of many threads or trends in design that, due to their success and popularity, have inexorably laced themselves into the processes of practitioners designing *Dream* at the RSC. Every subsequent team of director and designer who produced *Dream* at the RSC had many responses to the design of Brook/Jacobs, and only by looking closely at each element and re-examining all that has been said about each production, as this chapter has done, can the style and nuance of the artistic response be discerned. A few elements and concepts of the design for *Dream* carried through all three of these successors as responses to Brook/Jacobs, and, if taken all together, they are a part of a larger, institutional trend.

Given the propensity of artists to attempt originality, it is no surprise that the immediate successors of the 1970 *Dream* broke away from the visual design in Brook/Jacobs. The stage design revolution set in opposition to the white box, as well as the bright colours, and light-hearted sexuality, however, was not always a response that practitioners at the RSC had to Brook/Jacobs. Around the time of Alexander/Dudley, Cheek by Jowl,⁴¹ put on a production of *Dream* that was set against a white backdrop. Nicholas De Jongh, for *The Guardian*, describes the design for the 1985/86 production as, “a white-floored space with matching back cloth on which are printed a haze of blue and green... [and] the way in which the mechanicals remove their outer clothing to reveal them in the black and sinister garb of the fairies is a dashing comic idea” (“A dream that takes liberties”). This design of *Dream* was a bare white stage with a white backdrop, and the mechanicals were double cast with the roles of the fairies. The influence of the design for Brook/Jacobs, of course, extended beyond the boundaries of the theatre in Stratford, but not all responses to its

⁴¹ An international theatre company founded in the UK in 1981 by director Declan Donnellan and designer Nick Ormerod,

design were attempts at eschewing the white box. In the next chapter, I focus on the productions at the RSC that followed these three successors, and discuss how trends dramatically shifted in the late 1980s from what was perceived by critics as a reaction against Brook/Jacobs to a reverence for and subsequent emulation of this famed production.

Chapter Three: The Atavistic Legacy of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* at the RSC

Well, now I believe that the “quality” of an artist derives from the quality of the past that he carries in himself—from his artistic atavism. The more of this heritage he has, the more quality he has. This has nothing to do with his natural gifts or talent, that is to say his accomplishments or even his style... One’s resemblance to one’s parents is always strong enough without putting on their clothes. (Juan Gris in a letter to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, 27 November 1921; Gris and Kahnweiler 128)

Juan Gris, a painter and sculptor of the modernist and cubist school and a contemporary of fine artists such as Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, asserts in this letter to Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler exactly what he thinks should be the measure of quality in art in a modernist painter. Gris indicates that the amount of technique which he and his peers adopted from the old Grecian and Italian masters into their own work was directly related to the overall, albeit subjective, value of their work. Gris also implies that artists need not pay homage to their immediate predecessors, for the modern work will always resemble those masters enough without having to consciously recreate their practice or style. An atavistic quality in a fine (or performing) art form, according to Gris, is one that was first envisioned by an artist’s ancestors and then rediscovered and reused after many years out of fashion. The term atavism is derived from the Latin, *atavus*, meaning “forefather.”

Atavism is an especially relevant concept for understanding the designs of the next three productions of *Dream* at the RSC—the 1989 production directed by John Caird and designed by Sue Blane, the 1994 production directed by Adrian Noble and

designed by Anthony Ward, and the 1999 production directed by Michael Boyd and designed by Tom Piper—because all of these productions were clear adaptations of Brook/Jacobs in ways that Barton/Napier, Daniels/Bjornson, and Alexander/Dudley were not. It was not until 1989 that directors and designers of *Dream* at the RSC began to pay homage to the 1970 *Dream*, intentionally appropriating the striking visual signifiers and themes into their own versions of the play. In an interview conducted by Terry Grimley of *The Birmingham Post* on opening night of the 1989 Caird/Blane production, Caird candidly acknowledged the influence of Brook/Jacobs on his production in a way that none of his RSC predecessors had acknowledged before:

I think it did cast a shadow for a while [...] I think now it's remembered with great love and affection and any director doing the *Dream* would be silly not to acknowledge it [...] There are one or two things I have borrowed quite shamelessly from Peter's production, but its style was very late 1960s/early 1970s and wouldn't be appropriate now. ("Harsh reality")

Though Caird never specifies which elements he borrowed, the fact that he recognizes copying a few elements from Brook/Jacobs marks a turning point in the design history of *Dream* at the RSC. Caird's acknowledgment of the influence of the 1970 production signals a new trend of atavistically commandeering and adapting, rather than avoiding, the designs and abstract settings long associated with the Brook/Jacobs production.

In 2017, when Caird was asked to comment on this quote in a personal interview, he remarked that his was a generation removed from the 1970 production and the shadow of Brook had not loomed quite so large over him and Blane in their production process (Caird). The time that had passed, since Brook/Jacobs, was the key ingredient in 1989 that separated Caird's attitude from that of his immediate

predecessors. The nonchalance with which Caird acknowledged the design of Brook/Jacobs as being influential to his process, while also calling the production too dated to copy for more than a few elements, indicates that he was unaware of how much of the Brook/Jacobs design he and Blane actually ended up incorporating into their own work. In a 2017 interview, Blane said that she had not purposefully borrowed any of Jacobs's ideas for *Dream*, but that because she had seen the white box production in 1971 on tour at the Aldwych, she said it was possible that she had done so without realising (Blane).

Both the 1994 Noble/Ward and the 1999 Boyd/Piper productions of *Dream* also actively and intentionally incorporated numerous visual and conceptual elements of the Brook/Jacobs design into their own stage adaptations as clear tributes to the 1970 *Dream*. Critics recognize the homage. Michael Billington from *The Guardian* helps disseminate this idea in a review from 1994 and again in 1999. He raises the possibility that creating a tribute to Brook/Jacobs was a new trend in designing *Dream* at the RSC in the 1990s, and this is an idea that this chapter expands on:

The legend lives on: Peter Brook's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* casts a shadow even on a generation that probably never saw it. Like Adrian Noble's 1994 production, Michael Boyd's brilliant new version at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre is consciously post-Brook: athleticism and energy are paramount and magic is visible. ("A Dream that will never die")

Billington asserts that Boyd and Piper had not only adapted the Brook/Jacobs design, but had also continued an artistic movement of designing *Dream* that began with, in his view, the Noble/Ward production of 1994. This chapter, however, posits this trend as having begun five years earlier with Caird/Blane. Billington never reviewed the Caird/Blane production, so it is possible he never saw it.

In order to fit the memory of Brook/Jacobs into a modern critical narrative, however, Billington and other critics in the 1990s reinterpret elements of the design and execution of the 1970 *Dream*. For instance, consider Billington's 1994 review of Noble/Ward, in which he explains how the modern *Dream* incorporated themes and practices that the 1970 *Dream* had first championed:

It is now commonplace to double as Theseus/Oberon and Hippolyta/Titania. Noble ups the ante by doubling Philostrate and Puck... by having the actors who play the Mechanicals turn up as Fairies and by suggesting endless cross-currents between human and non-human worlds. ("Design for dreamers")

Here, when Billington writes, "Noble ups the ante..." by doubling Philostrate and Puck, he implies that these characters had not been double cast before. Yet they had also been doubled in Brook/Jacobs. In fact, the 1970 production marked the only other time, until that point, that Philostrate and Puck had been doubled at the RSC. Though Billington had forgotten the specifics of the doubled characters in Brook/Jacobs, what is clear is that, by 1994, the practices of Brook/Jacobs had started to blur with the institutional practices at the RSC for designing *Dream*, at least to some critics. This chapter addresses the shifting memory of Brook/Jacobs as well as how three RSC adaptations, performed two to three decades later, were an effort to pay homage to, or at least try to tap into, the cultural relevance of the design for the 1970 production.

That the 1989, 1994, and 1999 *Dreams* can be and were at times seen as tributes to the design of Brook/Jacobs is not in question here. Rather, how the influence of Brook/Jacobs manifested within those many stage designs is pertinent to the argument of this thesis. The 1970 production introduced to the RSC stage a number of ideas for *Dream* that were copied or adapted in later RSC productions: the abstract or post-modern/blank canvas setting, the metaphorical fairy forest, an athletic

circus-built company, Titania's hanging bower, the doubling of mortal and fairy characters, a colour design for the costumes that polarized the mortal and fairy worlds, and the over-sexualized relationship between Bottom and Titania. The argument of this chapter is that these three productions not only adopted these practices, but were designed to employ and summarily appropriate these practices for a new generation of theatre-makers.

For example, it is my contention that the 1999 production engaged with and challenged the sanctity that critics, academics, and practitioners designate to the design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*. In Boyd/Piper, the fairies of *Dream* literally invaded the clean white space, with a large incursion of dirt as Puck used his 'love-in-idleness' flower on the lovers. The flower, as it was in 1999, was designed as an entire plant that could only be transported onstage by a wheelbarrow ("On the ground/ Sleep sound/ I'll apply /To your eye," 4.1.464-79). Paul Taylor, writing for *The Independent*, comments that:

Puck is surely the first ever to have administered the magic juice by dumping the whole flower, plus its roots and a great deal of soil, on to the sleeping lovers' faces... an exercise he later takes further by just plonking these daft horticultural deposits directly onto their crotches. ("Laugh if you believe")

This was a funny, if graphic, depiction of Puck's interactions with the four lovers as he unceremoniously dumped mounds of dirt and flowers on the crotches of the Demetrius and Lysander, and one onto the face of Hermia. The creation and use of such a stage property on the white set suggested a dirty sexuality that pervaded the entire production, not just the elements of the play that were traditionally imbued, such as Bottom's ass's head or Titania's bower.

In a more overtly sexual translation of administering the love juice, these flowers are seedlings of the natural world or fairy forest. As the pure white space was

gradually being sullied each time Puck planted his muddy, phallic flower onto one of the lovers, so too was the memory and sanctity of Brook/Jacobs. Taking the metaphor one step further here, the Boyd/Piper design represented an explicit occupation of the Brook/Jacobs set design; instead of maintaining the purity of the white box, as Brook/Jacobs had done, Boyd/Piper designed these natural elements to defile the white space. The invasion of flowers and soil in 1999 quite literally left a residue of dirt and filth that represented a resolute defilement of the white box design or an annexation of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*.

This chapter explores the extent to which each of these newer productions adopted and adapted the Brook/Jacobs concepts, imagery, and practices for their productions of *Dream*. It also considers how critics interpreted (and sometimes misinterpreted) these similarities, and how these newer productions made their own mark on the design of *Dream*. Special attention will be given to exploring why this atavistic influence occurred with such regularity in three subsequent productions at the RSC, when, in the decades prior to 1989, productions did almost the exact opposite. Herein, I will also be investigating instances of misappropriation or misattribution in any written accounts of these productions so that I may posit the effects these slight inaccuracies have had upon the cultural and critical memory of the RSC.

3.1. “*Sue Blane’s set promises to evoke the celebrated Peter Brook Dream*”: The Caird/Blane *Dream* (1989)

The John Caird/ Sue Blane *Dream* opened at the RST in Stratford-upon-Avon on 11 April 1989. In this design, Athens was not metonymically depicted with a real-

looking stonewall at the back of the stage, a marbled floor, or art deco fixtures with chaise lounges as it had been designed for the three previous main stage productions of *Dream* in the RST. This *Dream* opened to a white backdrop that hung at the mid-stage line, parallel to and midway between the lip of the stage and the back wall (see figure 47). The white backdrop filled the entire proscenium arch window. The cloth that filled the stage was dressed to look like a giant wedding marquee or tent. Two large, white columns split the centre of the stage and gave the appearance of holding up the white fabric. This gave the scenes of Athens the look of being inside a wedding marquee for the upcoming royal nuptials to the production; so large was the backdrop, however, that it looked more like one of the tents that are commonly used by traveling circuses.

In his review of the Caird/Blane *Dream*, Bob Keogh of the *Yorkshire Post* pointed to the fairly obvious visual connections between the 1970 *Dream* and the 1989 production:



Figure 47. Caird/Blane. *Egeus comes with complaint to Theseus*. 1989. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

“At first, with its white marquee for the wedding celebrations, Sue Blane’s set promises to evoke the celebrated Peter Brook *Dream*” (Keogh, “A Midsummer Night’s *Dream*”). It was not only the colour of the white background that was a reference to Brook/Jacobs, but the marquee’s placement made the acting space smaller and closer to the audience as the white box had done in 1970. The similarity of the wedding marquee to a festival tent would have introduced the prospect of the fairies as being circus performers, as they also had been in 1970, as it is not hard to imagine a trapeze swinging between the two posts in the above photograph.

All of the Athenian court also appeared in their first scenes wearing formal costumes, tuxedos for the men and long-sleeved, floor-length gowns for the women. Though the costumes were fashioned differently, the black and white colour scheme for the mortal costumes matched the colour design that Brook and Jacobs had used for the costumes of their production. The formal dress of the wardrobe and the imprecision of time period are also practices that belonged to several other RSC productions. Though both were situated in a time period, Barton/Napier and Daniels/Bjornson both used formal costume for these scenes in the Athenian court, and a few of the tuxedos from Alexander and Dudley’s court would fit seamlessly into Caird and Blane’s wedding marquee. Given the inherent repetition of Shakespeare’s plays every few years, the many such rituals of design for *Dream* were by 1989, institutional at the RSC, and not only those that had been espoused in 1970.

Using this model of positing institutional practices at the RSC, and rather than adopting only a speculative position that Caird/Blane tailored their theatrical practices around what Brook and Jacobs had done, by comparing pictures and video from these productions it is possible to isolate specific design elements and practices that were present for both the 1970 and 1989 productions by visually comparing the two

designs of *Dream*. Rather obviously, the 1989 production was the first since 1970 to design a completely white or blank space for a production of *Dream* at the RSC. In the first and fifth act of the Caird/Blane production, the mortal characters entered and exited the stage from two slits in the marquee that had been cut upstage right and upstage left, respectively, just as the actors used the placement of the doorways in the white box of 1970.

Perhaps the most obvious reference to the practices of Brook/Jacobs had become theatrical routine by 1989: the doubling of mortal and fairy royal characters. In 1989, some critics already regarded the double casting of Oberon/Theseus and Titania/Hippolyta as an institutional practice, though the trend was more widespread than only the productions at the RSC, and it was no longer an innovation credited to Brook/Jacobs (Coveney, 1989; Goy-Blanquet, 1989). In the 1980s, there was a rash of companies that had also adopted the doubling practices including the New Shakespeare Company at Regent's Park (Biggins/Goodchild, 1983 and Robertson/Higlett, 1985), Cheek by Jowl (Donnellan/Ormerod, 1986), the Lindsay Kemp Company (Kemp/Haughton, 1983), and the Young Vic Theatre Company (Thacker & Bell/Keegan & Bowles, 1986).⁴² The RSC was not the only company at the game of doubling the mortals with the fairies. So ubiquitous was the practice, however, that the practice of doubling had even informed Caird's reading of the play before rehearsals had begun. In an interview he gave to David Self for the *Times Educational Supplement*, Caird justified his use of doubling as a reflection of a central theme to the production: "Just as the humans are 'transformed' and matured by their night in the wood, so is Theseus through his nightmare of seeing himself as Oberon observing his wife's passion for an ass" (qtd. in "Enter Fairy King"). It is not a

⁴² See Designing Shakespeare website (Carson) for more information on these productions.

foregone conclusion that the character of Oberon should be viewed as the dream state of Theseus, or Titania of Hippolyta, yet, after 1970, this interpretation of the four characters was of great interest to practitioners at the RSC.

In Caird/Blane, the practice of doubling had once again helped to dictate the design of fairy and mortal costume. The outfits that both Titania and Oberon wore in the fairy forest reflected a doubling with Theseus and Hippolyta, as some of the costume elements from their mortal counterparts were incorporated into their fairy wardrobe. The most interesting addition to all of the fairies costumes was the gauzy set of fairy wings they could put on and take off like a knapsack. Oberon wore the same formal tailcoat as Theseus had worn as part of his tuxedo a few scenes prior, yet, as Oberon, the actor, John Carlisle, also wore a dirty pair of white trousers and black boots. There were a group of boy fairies to accompany Puck that looked much like Oberon, dressed in military-style boots and dishevelled school uniforms. While her fairies wore torn tutus and jackboots, Titania wore a tight and sleeveless white bodice with a gauzy white skirt that flared out at the hips, which was slightly different from the floor-length simple white gown the actor, Clare Higgins, had worn as Hippolyta (see figure 48). The design allowed mortal elements to cross over into the immortal's costume.

As the Grimley interview indicates, the design of the 1989 production had indeed appropriated concepts, elements, and practices from the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*. Yet, according to Caird and Blane in separate personal interviews in 2017, both attest to the fact that they were not aiming to model their design on the 1970 production, only borrow elements from it (Caird; Blane). While both had seen Brook/Jacobs during its world tour, neither had intentionally recreated that design. How is it then possible to borrow key visual elements without intentionally emulating a production?



Figure 48. Caird/Blane. *Oberon, Titania and the forest of junk*. 1989.
Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

Caird and Blane had incredibly similar ideas and visions for the play as Brook and Jacobs, but given the company's practice of rarely staging revivals of other productions and pressure on practitioners to create something original (Halio 79), there is another possible rationalization for this occurrence, and an explanation for why practices so often become institutionalized at the RSC.

A modern explanation for this phenomenon came in 2010, when researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago published a study on the innovation of technology in the field of computer and software design in *Design Studies Magazine*. Conducted by Robert J. Youmans, then an Assistant Professor of Applied Cognition at California State University, Northridge, the study addressed a number of general

issues that apply to design, but specified one that is particularly relevant here.

Youmans explored what he called, design fixation: “Unlike cases of artistic homage or other deliberate references to prior work, designers who experience design fixation may be unaware that they were copying prior examples, leading some researchers to label the effect ‘unconscious plagiarism’” (Youmans 116). This study sets up an argument for the Brook/Jacobs production having influenced Caird and Blane’s design process even more than they realized, and also intuitively led them to create a production that was visually and conceptually similar to other productions created for the same stage.

After the first act of the production, however, the visual similarities between Caird/Blane and Brook/Jacobs became less obvious. The wedding marquee lifted to reveal Caird and Blane’s fairy forest. The 1989 fairy forest was a sparsely lit, multi-levelled, rubbish tip that had three clearly delineated, giant piles of junk, evenly spaced across the back of the stage that formed metaphorical trees (see figure 49). It looked as if the entire scene were an impractically built forest of, according to Michael Schmidt of *The Daily Telegraph*, “wrought-iron trellising and spiral stairs up trees, crashed pianos, cobwebs, suspended bicycles and guitars” (“A fresh dream”). The centre ‘tree’ had a circular staircase going from stage level to the tops of the three junk piles. The fairy denizens of the forest climbed each tree as if it were a jungle gym, sometimes using the staircase and sometimes precariously climbing the junk-heap. A second level at the top of those trees is where most of the fairies entered before descending to the stage level. Paul Taylor of *The Independent* described the setting of the fairy forest in Caird/Blane as “a kleptomaniac’s fantasia of superannuated violins, chamber-pots, bed springs, and even a crippled grand piano” (“Well met by moonlight”).



Figure 49. Caird/Blane. *Titania's bower surrounded by fairies*. 1989.
Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

Taylor observed that the fairies of this world seemed to rely on the second-hand scrap and cast-offs from the human world in order to build their own. The metaphorical forest, built by the fairies rather than grown in nature, implied that the very existence of the fairies was a product of or even engineered by man.

In his review, Bob Keogh of *The Yorkshire Post* examines some of the specific elements within the design of the fairy forest, of which several ideas were akin to those depicted in Brook/Jacobs. Keogh writes, “The white drapes lift to reveal what might almost be a Nibelheim built by Rowland Emmet, with suspended bed and fire escapes, a gymnasium for athletic fairies” (“A Midsummer Night’s Dream”). As inspiration for the design, Keogh notes that the work of one particular artist, Rowland

Emett, who, in the early to mid-twentieth century, was a cartoonist for *Punch* magazine. Emmet invented many whimsical, yet impractically complex machines. Although a number of his quirky designs remained on paper, he did contrive and build the fictionally steam-powered flying car for the 1968 movie, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (United Artists). Emmet called his invention the *Featherstone Kite*, and though his design would never actually fly, it was his imagination that inspired the moviemakers to build a story around the invention (see figure 50). Emmet was, however, not the only artist to pop into the minds and reviews of critics.

To many critics, and in my own opinion having seen the production on video, another artist—William Heath Robinson—may have been the true inspiration for the forest design. It was Robinson who drew a complete set of illustrations for a 1914 edition of *Dream*, published by Constable & Company.



Figure 50. Rowland Emmet. *The Featherstone Kite Openwork Basket-Weave Mark Two Gentlemen's Flying Machine*. 1977. Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.

His drawings for that edition of *Dream*, however, were not the inspiration for this production. Similar to Emmet, Robinson's name had become synonymous with-overly complicated machinery during World War I and World War II.⁴³ Unlike Emmet, however, these inventive mechanisms are anything but delicate. Lucy Townsend, for the BBC New Magazine, writes that he, "captured the enduring playfulness of invention" ("The elaborate appeal"), and one particular picture of Robinson's stands out. The painting resembles not only the look of the 1989 fairy forest but also the manner in which it was used by the fairies. "Carrying out the Correspondence Course for Mountain Climbing in the Home," was a 1928 drawing of six climbers tethered together as they scaled a dangerous construction of household items carefully balanced on one another (see figure 51). This assembly included a table and chairs, a roll-top desk, a grandfather clock, a piano, and a full tea-set sitting perched at the apex of this man-made mountain.

Many critics saw the same parallels. Jeremy Brien of *The Evening Post* describes the Caird/Blane design as "a sort of Heath Robinson-like scrapyard" ("Dream comes alive"). Jeremy Kingston of *The Times* ("Oddity and invention"), Paul Lapworth of the *Stratford-Upon-Avon Herald* ("Wonders in Fairyland"), and Dan Jones of the *Sunday Telegraph* ("A Victorian dream") all invoke Robinson's name as a clear influence on the design of Caird/Blane.

⁴³ A WWII code-breaking machine constructed in 1943 at the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park was named "Heath Robinson" in honour of the cartoonist: "The Wrens, who operated it in shifts, soon named the machine 'Heath Robinson', after a famous cartoonist who drew overly ingenious mechanical contrivances" (Copeland 65).



Figure 51. William Heath Robinson. *Carrying out the correspondence course for mountain climbing in the home*. 1928.

Unlike his successor Emmett (who drew his machines in the 1950s and 60s), Robinson's overly convoluted inventions all serve a definite, yet fictive purpose and were usually named after that occupation. The fairy forest junk heap for Caird/Blane was a similar type of functional decoration.

Although the designs of the fairy forest looked completely different in Caird/Blane and Brook/Jacobs, the design processes for both were surprisingly similar. According to Jacobs, when Brook first courted Jacobs as his designer for the project, he told Jacobs that he wanted to strip it down to its base elements without literally

illustrating the play (“Designing Dream”). In a similar vein, Caird made his vision of the text clear:

If you look at the text rather than the 19th century pictorial tradition of what fairies ought to look like, Shakespeare isn’t at all interested in the sentimental world of airy-fairy spirits. His depiction of the fairy world is precisely the same as his depiction of the human world, with the same sexual jealousies and normal human emotions. (Caird qtd. in Grimley, “Harsh reality”)

Titania’s first words to the Fairy King are: “What, jealous Oberon” (2.1.62)? The antagonism of each immortal royal by the other in *Dream* is as human a passion as Demetrius’s hate, and then love, for Helena. On the surface, Brook’s and Caird’s interpretations of the play seem to stem from the same initial understanding of the text; both directors wished to dispel the iconographic images of fairies playing in pastoral settings carried forward from late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even with a similar goal in mind, however, both productions ended up in very different places, visually.

Although the two fairy forests looked completely different in most respects, within the junkyard fairy forest there were a few small tributes, or artistic nods, to the design of Brook/Jacobs. The first was the walkway along the treetops, which resembled the gallery on top of the walls in the Brook/Jacobs production. In 1989, only the fairies used the treetops, whereas in 1970 everyone used the gallery above the wall. In 1989, several fairies often perched on the platform, observing the action on the stage. Oberon and Puck did so when they wished to observe Act 3, Scene 2 without being detected. Caird and Blane placed the fairies above the action so as not to interfere with the stage action of the mortals. Not surprisingly, this was precisely

the solution Jacobs had come to when she was trying to solve the same problem in 1970 (Loney 48).

Another key element that Caird/Blane adapted from Brook/Jacobs was the symbol of a hanging bower for Titania. The 1989 bower was an antique iron bed frame which was lowered from behind the centre of the proscenium arch (see figure 52), down to the centre of the stage when Titania wished to rest at the beginning of Act 2, Scene 2 (“Come, now a roundel and a fairy song...”, 2.2.1), and again in Act 4, Scene 1 when Titania, Bottom, and the other fairies in Titania’s train enter (“Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed...”, 4.1.1). The design of this bower was definitely an adaptation of the design to Brook/Jacobs, yet neither the fairies in their gauze wings, nor Bottom, seen below in a giant animatronic ass’s head that blinked and moved its puppet-like mouth, looked as if they belonged there.



Figure 52. Caird/Blane. *Titania and Bottom with assorted fairies*. 1989. Photograph by Joe Cocks. SBT.

In 1989, the bower and the gallery above the stage, along with the white backdrop for Theseus's palace, were significant visual adaptations of the Brook/Jacobs design of *Dream* yet not at all conceptually related to the 1970 production. Rather than expressly avoiding symmetry in design with their predecessor, Caird and Blane embraced both symbolic and iconic pieces of design that would help bring their production to life. All this perhaps without acknowledging the reasons why a floating bower and an actor's gallery are effective crowd-control devices for small spaces, or if a white backdrop was intended as pastiche of Brook and Jacobs's design or something else entirely.

The design of the bower was important to the Caird/Blane production, both in its relationship to its iconic representation of Brook/Jacobs and in its significance to the rest of the 1989 design. The 1970 bower was a red ostrich feather, which had been an obvious reference to the burlesque and striptease fantasies of the early-twentieth-century vaudeville theatre. Painting Titania as a grand dame of burlesque, or a seductress with these cultural associations, was one of the reasons that Brook/Jacobs was seen as a powerfully sexualized production. The bower in Caird/Blane—an antique iron bed frame—did not come with the same seductive subtext of a giant red feather, but in itself it was far more overt in symbolizing the sexual overtones in the relationship between the two primary residents of the bower in the play, Bottom and Titania. In this design and within the context of the scene, the Caird/Blane design suggested the obvious idea that a bed was a place for sexual congress, yet was not played that way by any of the action onstage. Titania's bower is also a symbol of her marriage bed, the desecration of which put an emphasis on the infidelity evident in the text as well. In Act 2, Scene 1, Titania accuses Oberon of seducing "amorous Phillida" (2.1.69), and Oberon accuses Titania of leading Theseus to "break his faith" (2.1.80)

from other women in his past. Oberon then conspires with Puck to drug his Queen into infidelity (2.1.180-90). It is clearly a complicated relationship between the two fairy royals, and the wedding-bed association should have been clear in its symbolism within the 1989 design. Many of the critics understandably did not make this connection.

Given the staged context of the bed frame lowered to the stage, Maureen Paton, for the *Daily Express*, of another live-action Disney film where a bed-frame actually flies, “Like something out of *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*” (“Dream of a show”). The background of the junk heap washed out the significance of Titania appearing in a bed with her donkey lover for Dominique Goy-Blanquet of the *Times Literary Supplement*, who writes: “the iron bedstead lowered from the heap to adorn Titania’s bower is exactly what one would hunt for in these surroundings” (“Unruly elements”). Though they had given the audience a more overtly carnal image in their design, Caird and Blane’s bed as Titania’s bower was, if anything, more of a picture of cold sexuality that did not focus on the themes of sensuous burlesque or fantasy as Brook/Jacobs had done.

Along with Youmans’s theory of design fixation, the postmodern concept of pastiche is helpful in explaining how and why Caird and Blane artistically appropriated those elements of design from Brook/Jacobs, but also why some of those appropriations did not register with the audience. Pastiche and parody are closely linked theories of how audiences translate certain visual signifiers. There is, however, a significant difference between these concepts. According to Fredric Jameson in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Post-Modern*, “Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style [...] but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody’s ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse” (5). In his assessment,

Jameson likens pastiche to nostalgia as he focuses on historical fictions with mere trappings of the past:

If there is any realism left here, it is a 'realism' which springs from the shock of grasping that confinement and of realizing that, for whatever peculiar reasons, we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach. (ibid 10)

Jameson's explanation of this theory is useful here as it explains the type of homage that Caird and Blane paid to their predecessor, playing on the audience's nostalgia for the RSC by capitalizing on several historical images and practices. Yet it also explains why an audience may have mistook the tribute for a parody of its predecessor (i.e. Paton's reference to Disney's *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*). From the design of the 1970 *Dream* they used the white box and the black-white colour scheme, the actor's gallery above the stage, the double casting of fairy and mortal royals, and the floating bower. Yet the symbolic or iconic references, which were embedded within RSC designs of *Dream* in the late 1970s and early 1980s, focused on a more general history of theatre and had incorporated designs that evoked early Twentieth century practices. By 1989 that emphasis shifted from the symbolic to a pastiche history of designing *Dream* at the RSC.

A pastiche concept for the production design, however, also implies the 1989 *Dream* retained a sense of its own identity. In 1989, the abstract white box of 1970 became a white wedding marquee. The non-specific white robes for the mortal courtiers in Brook/Jacobs were translated into fashionable and formal white and black tuxedos and gowns of Athens in Caird/Blane. Titania's bower was presented to the audience in the same fashion it had been in 1970, yet the symbolism had changed from a suggestive burlesque to a less-than-carnal adulterous boudoir as the sexuality

of the scenes was meant to change from implicit to explicit, yet missed its mark with at least the critics. All of these elements of design were considered nonrepresentational and ambiguous in 1970. In 1989, each of these components was translated to an explicit concept. Even the double casting of Theseus with Oberon, and Hippolyta with Titania, in 1989 was used as a device to support the idea that in 1989, the mortals dreamed of being fairies in a forest of man-made junk. Caird/Blane's adaptation of Brook/Jacobs was, however, only the beginning, and therefore, still subject to misinterpretation. These themes, practices, and design elements were reimagined and often magnified in the two subsequent productions of *Dream* at the RSC.

3.2. "A sly homage to Peter Brook's famous adventure-playground production": The Noble/Ward *Dream* (1994)

Charles Spencer, for the *Daily Telegraph*, calls the opening scene of the 1994 production, "a sly homage to Peter Brook's famous adventure-playground production, with Hippolyta first encountered on a swing. Having paid this historical debt, however, the show moves into its own distinctive terrain" ("A perfectly haunting *Dream*"). The production of *Dream* directed by Adrian Noble and designed by Anthony Ward, which opened on 3 August 1994, was another clear tribute to Brook/Jacobs, an obvious visual and conceptual appropriation of the design for its 1970 predecessor in ways that Caird/Blane had used, what I will call, a lighter touch.

The first image of the production that greeted the audience was a box set with bright red walls that vertically filled half the proscenium arch. Hippolyta sat suspended on a swing hanging down at mid-stage right, gently rocking back and forth. The Noble/Ward design of an Athenian palace—save for the placement of a central

solid framed door and the addition of a thrust stage in 1994 —mirrored that of Brook and Jacobs’s white box (see figure 53). The Noble/Ward production had, quite obviously, re-imagined the shape of the box set and the trapeze from the design of the 1970 *Dream*. The conglomeration of these visual references was enough for Bill Hagerty who, in *Today* magazine, highlights this opening image as referencing and paying tribute to the design of Brook/Jacobs:

Those who had seen Peter Brook’s all-white *Dream* here in 1970 were soon nodding knowingly. It was the trapeze-cum-swing that did it. Mr Brook used trapezes. And the back wall, although not white, was a single colour, a vivid red to begin with, its plainness disturbed only by a central door. This is, said the veteran Dreamers, Adrian Noble’s homage to Brook’s landmark production. (“Dream team’s Noble effort”)



Figure 53. Noble/Ward. *The Athenian court*. 1994. Photograph by Donald Cooper. Designing Shakespeare.

The post-modern trend that had begun in 1989 of pastiche, and borrowing a few of the design elements from Brook/Jacobs had evolved yet again by 1994 into a full adaptation of the design for the 1970 production.

That the RSC veterans recognized the 1994 production as a tribute to Brook/Jacobs is testament to the number of design elements these two productions shared, yet also signified that the audience and critics were finally ready for a post-modern take on Brook/Jacobs.

In fact, Noble/Ward was the first production since 1970 to follow through almost completely with an abstract design for *Dream*, with only a few alterations to the design from 1970. It seemed that each element Noble and Ward borrowed was, in turn, purposefully rendered in a fashion that was slightly different from what Brook and Jacobs had done. This was not a case of design fixation, as I believe that Noble and Ward were well aware of what they were doing, so rather this was an overt RSC adaptation of the design for Brook/Jacobs. The visual resemblance between the Noble/Ward *Dream* and Brook/Jacobs was striking enough for many critics, including Hagerty and Spencer, to assert that the Noble/Ward production had paid homage to Brook/Jacobs (Coveney; Parsons; De Jongh).

First, the 1994 design did not focus on placing the production in any specific time period. The Athenian court employed a middle-eastern styled wardrobe, with loose fitting polished cotton or satin blouses and linen trousers for the men, and ankle-length dresses of the same material for the women and all the actors were barefooted. Neither the hairstyles nor the cut of clothing were specific to any time period or era. The material of the costume, the flowing and uniform style of the clothing all were remarkably similar to the costumes in Brook/Jacobs, yet the design retained a style suited to an East-Asian locale and warmer climate.

Second, as with the set design, the colour of the clothing in 1994 was more dramatic. Similar to Brook/Jacobs, Noble/Ward used colour in the costume to connect the doubled characters. In Noble/Ward, the entire mortal court was dressed in a different saturated colour from one another, and as each doubled character shifted from one to the next, so too did the colour and/or costume the actor had been wearing. Gordon Parsons, a critic for the *Morning Star*, writes an exposition on the many ways in which he thought Noble and Ward had not only visually but also conceptually referenced Brook/Jacobs: “The dramatic mirroring across a quarter of a century does not end with the numerous visual echoes. Like Brook, Noble doubles the casting” (“Dream destined to fade”). As in the Brook/Jacobs production, the switch of Theseus with Oberon, and Hippolyta with Titania, made an impact on the costume design and occurred with the donning or doffing of a robe that was worn only when the actor was playing a mortal character. Like Brook/Jacobs, Noble/Ward doubled Philostrate with Puck, and yet, unlike the 1970 production, the mechanicals were doubled with Titania’s fairies. In the 1994 switch from mortal to fairy and back again, elements of the mortals’ costumes each carried over to their fairyland twin. This was a similar approach to the costumes used for the double cast actors in Caird/Blane, when Oberon and Titania retained some of the clothing worn by Theseus and Hippolyta.

All of the doubled characters in 1994 differed only slightly from their alter egos. The mechanicals wore silly hats, wigs, and fake beards with the plain clothes of their drab workaday outfits as they came in as Titania’s fairies, sometimes adding one or two colourful and surreal pieces to their otherwise plain outfits. For instance, when actor Philip Voss came out onstage as a fairy in Act 3, to help lull Titania to sleep, the hat he had worn as Quince a few scenes earlier was now topped with a colourful bouquet of paper flowers (see figure 54, third from the left).



Figure 54. Noble/Ward. *Bottom with the fairies*. 1994. Photograph by Malcolm Davies. SBT.

The base costume in 1994 for Alex Jennings (Theseus/Oberon) was a white cotton chemise and white trousers, with a long blue robe for Oberon that served as a lining for a new iteration when he donned a golden robe of similar length for Theseus. The base costume for Stella Gonet (Hippolyta/Titania), a pink bustier and dress that flared at the knees, was worn plain as Titania, but the simple pink dress also acted as a petticoat when she wore a floor-length tailored gold coat over it for Hippolyta's costume. In 1994, there was no other costume whose colour could be seen as tribute to Brook/Jacobs more than that of Barry Lynch (Puck/Philostrate). While his Puck was bare-chested, he wore a baggy set of trousers and the colour was the exact same yellow with which Puck had been outfitted in 1970. While Lynch was playing Philostrate, he donned a bright yellow coat to match the trousers.

These remarkable and obvious similarities in costume pointed to more than a simple tribute to Brook/Jacobs. According to Coveney, for *The Observer*: "Noble's first impulse is to both evoke and subvert the white gymnasium of Peter Brook's landmark 1970 revival" ("Filth well worth"). The 1994 production simultaneously

presented and challenged the themes championed by the design of Brook/Jacobs. Noble and Ward directly substituted the symbolism of Brook/Jacobs with their own; a subversion, as Coveney puts it, of the RSC's own history. For example, the 1970 white box was replaced in 1994 with a red box set design. De Jongh, for *The Guardian*, writes: "Ever since Peter Brook's tumultuous 1970 *Dream*, directors have tried to jolt us into seeing the play with fresh eyes and minds. That is obviously Noble's aim too" ("Fresh approach"). The attempt to create an original interpretation of *Dream* after Brook/Jacobs was hardly a new endeavour and yet it is easy to see why critics believed the Noble/Ward production to have succeeded in this effort. Brook and Jacobs's idea was that *Dream* needs an abstract sense of reality, the essence of an entertaining sexuality to the characters, and a substitution of stage magic for real magic were, if not espoused by the 1994 production, they were concepts that were at least acknowledged. The Noble/Ward production also augmented the Brook/Jacobs design with a strange sense of a dream's surreal nature that in turn allowed the audience to accept the surroundings not as a setting for a play, but as the memory of a dream they once had themselves.

Noble/Ward achieved that sense of surrealism by inventing creative interactions with objects adopted from surrealist paintings, and surrounding them with abstract settings similar to Brook/Jacobs. In the 1994 RSC Education Pack, Ward is clear about a key conceptual inspiration for his production:

We found ourselves talking in terms of abstract design [...] We were inspired by the idea of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a study of the world of dreaming and sleep. So what we needed was a design style which would allow us to present the conscious, real, world overlapping with the world of the sub-conscious. (Ward; see also Bate & Rasmussen 108)

Without saying so, the world that he and Noble fashioned to represent the real world of the mortals was the reimagined yet still abstract box set of Brook and Jacobs; it was a design that RSC audience members would recognize and critics would write about. Billington, for *The Guardian*, asks if the design is, “an ironic echo of Peter Brook’s legendary production? If it is, the idea is soon forgotten, since Noble’s pleasing and imaginative version stakes out its own territory” (“Design for dreamers”). He describes this homage as a pastiche progression from Brook/Jacobs to something else entirely, and if Ward was to be taken at his word, the world of dreaming in 1994 was meant as the overlapping memory of the Brook/Jacobs production combined with an artist of Ward’s own choosing.

Ward cited the work of René Magritte as visual inspiration for how he and Noble combined the abstract with the surrealist nature of dreaming into their stage design (Bate and Rasmussen 108). The entire design was predicated on the introduction of surrealist imagery to show the difference between the world of the mortals and the world of the fairies. This artistic influence explained the presence of common household items onstage in 1994, such as bare light bulbs and large umbrellas, as well as disembodied doorways that popped up out of the middle of the stage and led nowhere. For instance, at the beginning of the second scene in the Noble/Ward *Dream*, the setting noticeably shifted from the red box to another abstract and slightly surreal space. A shimmering purple curtain was lowered at mid-stage, filling the proscenium arch to mask the red box set (see figure 55). These shifts from one abstract setting to another were a change of colour to the backdrop and a scene change but nothing about them was natural, and that was the point.



Figure 55. Noble/Ward. *Set Design, Act One, Scene Two*. 1994. Photograph by Malcolm Davies. SBT.

In front of the purple curtain, a door rose up out of the stage, directly under where Hippolyta's trapeze had been in the previous scene, and a bare light bulb descended from above the stage to light the non-descript space. The mechanicals entered for the next scene (Act 1, Scene 2) carrying chairs and a hat stand. The image of a bare light bulb as well as the doorway reflected the influence of Magritte's work, and were featured symbols throughout the design that were present in the mortal world of the production yet were given unnatural, surrealist properties by the fairy characters.

According to Ward, "[Magritte's] paintings juxtapose items from the ordinary, real world in a way which makes them seem strange and gives them new and interesting resonance" (qtd. in Bate and Rasmussen 108). These real world items used in the surrealist design, however, were also a strict translation of the practices from

Brook/Jacobs to any discerning audience member. In Act 2, Scene 1, when Puck and the First Fairy meet, more light bulbs, like the one that hung above the mechanicals' first rehearsal, were lowered from above the stage to symbolize a starry night. At the same time, Puck and the First Fairy were also lowered to the stage, each holding on to an umbrella. These umbrellas were lowered at the exact same place where two trapezes had first been lowered in 1970. The 1994 production was not meant as a production grounded in the natural world, but rather one that was justified by our human subconscious, and the recognition of a familiar design. The images and world of René Magritte were quite literally laid over the model of the 1970 *Dream*.

Instead of using a large red ostrich feather for Titania's bower, as Brook/Jacobs had, in Noble/Ward the bower was a giant red umbrella, this time upside-down for the two lovers to lie in, and lowered from the space above centre stage. The basket of the umbrella was lined with red felt and big enough for not only Titania and Bottom but several of the fairies as well. The image of the umbrella has featured prominently in several surrealist painters' work, most notably in the painting *Hegel's Holiday* (1958) by Magritte (see figure 56), *Young Woman with an Umbrella* (1920) by Francis Picabia, and *Sewing Machine with Umbrellas* (1941) by Salvador Dalí. The bare light bulb was a focal point in Magritte's *The Pleasure Principle: Portrait of Edward James* (1937; see figure 57), where the bulb replaced the subject's head as he sits at a table. It is clear that Ward used the iconography of Magritte and his contemporaries as a way of interpreting and appreciating the symbolic makeup of Titania's bower and the trapezes of 1970. The repetitive nature to these everyday symbols is a clever pastiche structure to substitute elements of the Brook/Jacobs design.



Figure 56. René Magritte. *Hegel's Holiday*. 1958. Oil on canvas. Private collection.



Figure 57. René Magritte. *The Pleasure Principle: Portrait of Edward James*. 1937. Oil on canvas. West Dean House, Sussex, UK.

The most compelling image of the Noble/Ward design as tribute was a shrewd combination of Magritte and Brook/Jacobs, at the end of Act 3, Scene 2. All four lovers fell asleep onstage and were wrapped in off-white bed sheets, suspended from wires above the stage. It appeared as if Puck was swaddling the lovers as he gently wrapped each of them up when casting his spell (“On the ground, sleep sound...” 4.1.464). In this artfully choreographed sequence onstage, each of the lovers fell to the ground, on top of one of Puck’s cleverly placed bed-sheets, and Puck lifted him or her into the air by attaching a cable to each of their bed-sheet cocoons (see figure 58). This image of the four lovers falling asleep in mid-air was taken straight from the design of Brook/Jacobs. Wrapping the lovers in sheets, however, was also an idea taken straight from two Magritte paintings entitled *The Lovers I* (1928) and *The Lovers II* (1928; see figure 59), wherein two figures, one ostensibly male and the other female, were made anonymous by Magritte having painted white sheets wrapped around their heads as they kiss.

Lastly, the Noble/Ward set, light, and costume design used bold saturated colour to help define each scene of the production and re-imagine a white box while also incorporating the colour palette and texture of a surrealist painting. Yet a steady transition of colour continued throughout the 1994 production, as if the whole design were slowly moving through the primary and secondary colours of a colour wheel. Each colour in costume, set, or light design was used for the express purpose of distinguishing characters onstage and settings within the production. Bate and Rasmussen highlight this point: “In order to differentiate between the Athenian court and the forest, Noble’s lighting designer, Chris Parry, lit the bare set with colours that were descriptive rather than representational” (109).



Figure 58. Noble/Ward. *Four lovers in bed-sheet cocoons*. 1994.
Photograph by Malcolm Davies. SBT.



Figure 59. René Magritte. *The Lovers II*. 1928. Oil on Canvas. National
Portrait Gallery, Australia.

In 1994, warm tones and hues such as red, yellow, or orange, were not used to signify passion, heat or daylight, and cool colours such as blue, cyan, or green, were not used to signify cold emotionless characters, midnight, or even the presence of water. Given the abundance of colour everywhere in the set, costume, and light design from Theseus's palace to the fairy forest, one interpretation of the symbolism drawn from the use of colour in 1994 is a designation of identity and symbolic of change: as in, Act 1, Scene 1 and Act 1, Scene 2 were seen as different locations because the first had a red backdrop, and the second was purple. However, the way that I interpreted this production was when all elements of the design worked in harmony, the Noble/Ward design looked as if it were the Technicolor rendering of the monochrome design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*. The best justification I can see to this inundation of colour to the stage design in 1994 is also symbolic of change, not only from scene to scene or distinguishing one character from another, but as a conscious effort to show that this production was not the same design as that of its RSC predecessor.

Noble and Ward paid homage to Brook/Jacobs through their direct adaptation of the white box design and of several key design elements and practices. They took many of these elements and practices and reinterpreted them in the style of a surrealist painting, specifically the work of Magritte, to reflect an abstract state of dreaming. In hindsight, however, Noble/Ward best highlighted a trend in designing *Dream* at the RSC that began with the stage design of Caird/Blane. The 1994 *Dream* built on this trend of pastiche as Noble and Ward boldly and openly referenced the design of the Brook/Jacobs production, whereas Caird and Blane were scarcely aware they had done so. Not unlike the play itself, this trend was certainly a playful engagement with the history of the RSC, its practitioners, and a challenge to any future productions to either continue or abandon this trend of pastiche design at the RSC.

3.3. “*The simplicity of Brook’s design is echoed in his set*”: The Boyd/Piper *Dream* (1999)

The production of *Dream* directed by Michael Boyd and designed by Tom Piper opened at the RST on 25 March 1999. This production picked up the cultural gauntlet left by Noble/Ward and Caird/Blane, in that the production held a keen visual similarity to that of the design for Brook/Jacobs. According to Rex Gibson, writing for *The Times Educational Supplement*, living in the shadow of the 1970 *Dream* was almost an institutional hazard by 1999: “Boyd is too young to have seen Peter Brook’s legendary 1971 production, but the simplicity of Brook’s design is echoed in his set” (“Erotic dream”). In a personal interview given in 2013, Piper said that he had never seen the Brook/Jacobs or the Noble/Ward productions, but that he was familiar with the designs for both. Harmonizing the design in 1999 with an homogeneous and not an actual memory of either Noble/Ward or the 1970 *Dream* would have been difficult were it not for a number of different factors, some of which were not even under his control.

First, a temporary thrust was added to the front of the RST stage in 1999, and all productions that year were told to incorporate it into their design. This layout primarily consisted of a rounded half-oval thrust attached to the front lip of the proscenium arch stage, which extended out into the audience about three metres at its horizontal apex. The stage layout took out the front three rows of the house stalls and summarily rounded out the audience seating that remained to match the shape of the thrust, ostensibly placing the audience on three sides of a stage that juttied out past the proscenium arch (see figure 60).



Figure 60. Boyd/Piper. *The white oval*. 1999. Photograph by Malcolm Davies. SBT.

Spencer, for the *Daily Telegraph*, points to another RSC concept that year that helped to create a bare feeling to the design: “Both the proscenium arch and the back wall have been stripped back to bare bricks, the stage has been reworked as a simple wood plank oval which thrusts out into the auditorium, and the four main productions will be staged with the simplest scenery” (“Promising start”). What is significant to this argument is that the stage designs for all of the 1999 productions, as Spencer points out, were to be kept simple. Adrian Noble, the Artistic Director of the RSC at the time, had decided to incorporate a thrust stage and sparse environment to the stage design for a specific purpose. According to Steven Adler’s *Rough Magic: Making Theatre at the Royal Shakespeare Company*, Noble changed the stage layout in order to alleviate some of the practical problems that stemmed from issues of sightlines and perceived intimacy between actor and audience that plagued this proscenium-arch theatre (31).

In 1999, the stage of the RST was also raked, sloped downward towards the front, so that audience members seated on the ground floor of the auditorium could see more of the action as actors walked towards the back wall of the theatre and, quite literally, up the stage. The thrust that had been added to the front lip of the stage that year was also raked, extending the stage out into the auditorium, thus not only bringing the actors closer to the audience but also lowering the lip of the stage, correcting the sightlines from the front rows of the ground-floor stalls. The sparse designs were necessary so that no large set piece could be introduced onto the thrust stage and obstruct any of those sightlines.

As can be seen in the photograph above, Boyd and Piper designed a giant rounded white wall that extended laterally out from the proscenium arch onto the stage. The significance of the thrust staging to this design was that this giant white

wall—the most prominent design element and clearly reminiscent of Brook/Jacobs’ white box—was designed by Boyd and Piper to curve towards the back of the stage at exactly the same gradient and oval shape that had been built into the thrust. In an interview for Bate and Rasmussen’s RSC Edition of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Boyd called this design, “a smooth raised egg shape rising over the front of the stalls and enclosed by a seamless, seemingly doorless, curved wooden wall at the back of the curve” (120). From above, the curve of these two shapes, the white wall and the thrust, looked like a perfect oval.

Anthony Holden writing for *The Observer* was not the only critic to notice that “There are faint echoes of Peter Brook’s miraculous RSC production of 1970” (“All the fun”). Several of his contemporaries also mentioned the striking visual semblance that the design of Boyd/Piper held to Brook/Jacobs, yet, like Holden, they did not go any further and mention any specific visual similarities beyond the obvious bare stage (De Jongh; Gibson; Woddis; Billington). So it falls to this inquiry to point out that there were several notable visual similarities these critics may have noticed but did not mention. In so doing, however, there will be a more detailed account of this production, not only in its design but in its performance, as how the actors interacted with the design was significant to its purpose. Brook/Jacobs was designed with two doors at the back wall of the white box; Boyd/Piper was designed with five evenly spaced doorways that were built flush into the curved white wall so that the doors were invisible when closed. In 1999, actors would appear at the top of the wall to look down and observe the action below in a similar fashion to the staging of Brook/Jacobs in 1970. Notably, in Act 3, Scene 2 of Boyd/Piper, Oberon retired to the top of the curved wall to observe the lovers chase each other below.

What is significant about this is that Boyd and Piper did not go further with this type of staging as there was, very clearly, a compromise that was reached due to conditions that were imposed upon them by the RSC. From a designer's perspective, the curved white wall was the most important piece to Boyd and Piper's concept, it filled in the proscenium arch from edge to edge and was built to the approximate height of the 1971 white box. Not the Brook/Jacobs wall as it was first installed at the RSC (which stood approximately three metres high), but the wall that went on tour at half the height of the original. At this height, and with the rake of the stage literally lifting the curvature of the wall higher as it covered the upstage area, the set design in 1999, like Brook/Jacobs, still looked larger in the eyes of the audience than it actually stood. This was, indeed, the first design of *Dream* since 1970 to actually play with the perceptions of the audience. A barely noticeable vanishing point, built into the curvature of the wall and the rake of the stage, necessitated the downstage edges of the wall actually be built taller than the centre stage curve. The placement of the curved white wall at mid-stage once again cut off most of the backstage area and thereby kept the actors close to and larger in the audience's eyes. Due to the curve of the wall, the vanishing point built into it, and the rake of the stage, however, the tops of the walls were not level with the ground. If Boyd and Piper had wanted to put a full gallery on top of the wall from end to end, like Brook/Jacobs, they would have been risking the actors' safety as they walked along the walls that literally sloped up as they walked downstage. During the production, only a few actors appeared above the wall at the centre.

Despite the lack of a full gallery above, Boyd and Piper continued the atavistic trend of pastiche, by designing their production of *Dream* in acknowledgment of Brook/Jacobs but without any attempt at recreating the 1970 production. Despite the

visual and conceptual similarities to the 1970 production, as with Caird/Blane and Noble/Ward, the design of Boyd/Piper was not a replica, but rather it was an adaptation. Within the trend of devising Athens as a white, or rather clean backdrop, both the designs of Caird/Blane and of Boyd/Piper justified this use by implying an abstract milieu like Brook/Jacobs (or Noble/Ward) had, but rather they superimposed a realist (not surrealist) concept over the non-descript space that fit within the world of the play. Caird/Blane was a white wedding marquee set to signify the upcoming nuptials of Theseus to Hippolyta. Boyd/Piper used the white setting as a metaphor for a snow-covered eastern-European backdrop. This was made clear by the costumes the Athenian court was wearing when they entered for the first scene of the production.

The 1999 production was remarkably similar to Brook/Jacobs in its use of stark colour and design, yet, in the staging of the initial scene, all of the mortal characters of *Dream*, including the mechanicals, entered as if they were about to attend a military funeral, and stayed onstage throughout the entire scene (see figure 61). The actors who were not speaking stood still at the base of the curved white wall, all dressed in conservative black winter clothing, observing the action. Many of the actors wore winter hats, scarves, and/or gloves, and all, save for Theseus and Hippolyta, wore black or dark grey knee-length winter overcoats, making them stand out against the white background. In Brook/Jacobs, the production opened with the actors running onstage, yelling and clapping, all wearing the same uniform white capes, and then shedding them like acrobats would before a performance was about to begin. By comparison, the Boyd/Piper production design, at least at the outset, was not a happy setting for Athens.



Figure 61. Boyd/Piper. *Theseus, Hermia, and Hippolyta (seated) with court*. 1999. Photograph by Donald Cooper. Designing Shakespeare.

Boyd/Piper used a costume colour scheme similar to Brook/Jacobs (all dark clothing instead of all white). Nicholas De Jongh, for the *Evening Standard*, describes the scene: “a snowy midwinter Athens, where scarved citizens gather in grey coated conformity” (“A playground”). This impression of a harsh and cold Athens was not wrong, and Piper corroborated in a personal interview:

This is a world where somebody is prepared to sentence their daughter [...] to death for disobeying them. This is a world where the ruler has conquered his future wife in war, and Titania talks about [...] how the conflicts between the fairies has caused the seasons to go out of kilter, so I think we very much began with the feeling [...] that it would be a cold place politically, emotionally, and in weather. (2 July 2013)

The dark winter garments, worn by all of the mortals in 1999, were designed to imbue the white landscape with a sense of cold. This aspect of the production provided an interesting introduction to the world of the play, and also set the scene for a dramatic transition from the mortal to the fairy world.

In the second scene of the 1999 production, the design looked identical to the first scene—a bare stage with a white wall. The actors onstage wore the same black overcoats and winter outfits as they had in the previous scene. At the end of Bottom's line, "Enough. Hold or cut bow-strings" (1.2.103), Daniel Ryan, who played Bottom, fired his imaginary bow towards the back wall. At that moment, a real arrow appeared in the wall where he had shot his imaginary bow and red flowers began to slowly sprout out of the wooden stage floor. The transition from Athens to the fairy forest had begun. In 1999, the transformation of Bottom's arrow, from imagined to real, marked a shift from the mortal to the fairy worlds.

During this transition, however, the Boyd/Piper production highlighted another idea that had been a key concept in 1970: the fun yet often wildly erotic nature of the play. In Act 2, Scene 1, where Puck and the First Fairy meet for the first time ("How now spirit, whither wander you?" 2.1.1), Philostrate and a female member of the mortal court of Athens appeared onstage through the back centre door still dressed in their winter attire (see figure 62).



Figure 62. Boyd/Piper. *Philostrate and member of the Court*. 1999. Photograph by Donald Cooper. www.tompiperdesign.co.uk

Similar to Brook/Jacobs, it was at this point in the production that the design transitioned not only from Athens to the fairy forest, but also from monochrome to colour. Both characters began to flirt aggressively with one another in a choreographed and sexualized pseudo-dance. This brief physical scene climaxed when the two actors ripped off each other's clothes, kissed, and began speaking the lines of Puck and the First Fairy. This scene depicted a fairly violent sexual encounter. Billington writes that the Boyd/Piper production of *Dream* was breaking new ground in doing so: "What makes Boyd's production original is its treatment of the play as a highly erotic fertility rite" ("A Dream that will never die"). If Brook/Jacobs can be considered the humble beginnings of staging the eroticism that Kott so graphically describes and on numerous occasions in "Titania and the Ass's Head," then Boyd/Piper is an amplified repercussion of that event. They designed an erotic interaction between two characters that are typically at odds with one another in production as they are in the text. The First Fairy calls Puck a "lob of spirits" (2.1.16), a "shrewd and knavish sprite" (2.1.33), "hobgoblin and sweet Puck" (2.1.40), all in the span of a first meeting. In a particularly astute review of this clever transformation, Alistair Macauley of the *Financial Times* comments: "The change from black and white to colour, from containment to wildness, from civilised inhibition to animal spontaneity, from tension to joy, from two humans into Puck and one of Titania's fairies is the best kind of magic" ("Take thee"). It was this scene, flowers, arrows, and all, that began the ritual, as Billington saw it, or rather magic, that was to continue throughout the rest of the production. In fact, the whole 1999 production was so sexually explicit that the RSC had to issue a statement saying this production was not suitable for schoolchildren ("Midsummer Night play is too hot for youngsters"). Boyd/Piper highlighted the sexual charge between characters as well, yet, instead of

leaving the sex acts to the imagination, the interactions were quite explicit; the scene between Puck and the First Fairy was only the first graphic sexual exchange. The transition between worlds in 1999, however, was significant for other reasons as well.

The costume designs in Brook/Jacobs, Caird/Blane, Noble/Ward, and Boyd/Piper all used costume pieces for the Athenian mortals to mask the costumes of their fairy counterparts. Following the model of pastiche, the character doubling in Boyd/Piper was highlighted through this first, albeit violent, costume change. Instead of doffing a robe to become his other character, Puck's costume became a ripped up version of Philostrate's shirt; Aidan McArdle, the actor in those roles, wore a shirt that had been ripped apart by the woman playing the First Fairy until he was mostly bare-chested. Similarly, Hippolyta appeared onstage in the first scene wearing a dark ankle-length dress and Theseus wore a black, ankle-length frock coat. Both royal costumes were buttoned all the way down the front, from neck to ankle, and both were slightly loose fitting to soften the lines of each actor's body. Exactly like Brook/Jacobs, each actor who was doubled removed layers of clothing to shift from playing Theseus to Oberon, Hippolyta to Titania, and Philostrate to Puck. True to the pastiche model in 1999, it was the method by which these clothes were removed that made interesting the transitions from fairy to mortal and back again. The fairy costume was a more exposed, raw, even animalistic, version of the doubled actor's mortal costume. In the play, Oberon and Puck derive satisfaction from casting a spell on Titania while she sleeps in her bower that compels her to love, "The next thing she waking looks upon,/ Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull/ On meddling monkey or on busy ape" (2.1.83-5). In Act 4 of the Boyd/Piper production, that trick ended with Titania's seduction of and subsequent onstage lovemaking to Bottom the Ass (4.1.1-4). The costume first transformed at the beginning of Act 2 reflected Josette Simon's

overtly passionate and sometimes terrifying portrayal of Titania throughout the rest of the production. As Titania, Simon wielded this dress like a lizard might flare its collar to frighten away predators, waving and brandishing it. The angrier she got onstage, the more she held up the bright red lining to scare her fairies and Oberon into submission.

The element of the Boyd/Piper design that most cleanly referenced the overtly sexual nature of *Dream*, yet also neatly tied the production into the atavistic trend of referencing Brook/Jacobs was the design and presentation of Titania's bower. In Act 2, Scene 2 of Boyd/Piper ("Come, now a roundel and a fairy song...", 2.2.1), the bower was lowered to the stage in exactly the same manner as had occurred in both Caird/Blane and Noble/Ward (see figure 86). In 1999, the bower was designed as a large bed—a dark walnut, wood-framed, queen-sized sleigh—solid, and indeed a symbol of her union with Oberon and not the tryst with Bottom. Though the bower did not provide any definitive information about time period or place, by using an actual bed, the bower provided a lasting clear reference to sexuality and the infidelity implied by such a design.

Though it had been alluded to in many productions at the RSC, this was also the first time that a production of *Dream* had been so visually candid. Boyd/Piper was the first production to cut through metaphor at the RSC and depict a straightforward sexual act between the Queen of the fairies and her mortal lover on a bed at the beginning of Act 4, Scene 1. This scene even steered one teacher, who had led his students out of the theatre in disgust, to cite this moment in the production to a reporter as the reason for his early departure ("Such bard taste"). Decency aside, however, Boyd/Piper continued the pastiche trend of rendering of not only the Brook/Jacobs design but also a new translation of one of the fundamental concepts

that had influenced Brook and Jacobs at the outset of their production: a Kottian *Dream*.

The two immediate predecessors of Boyd/Piper (Caird/Blane and Noble/Ward) visually referenced Brook/Jacobs in their designs to varying degrees, but the 1999 *Dream* did so almost completely. The vertically half-high white wall that filled the proscenium edge to edge, the double casting, the design of Titania's bower, all of these elements accompanied by Kott's understanding of the text, suggested that this production was more than a tribute to the design of Brook/Jacobs. It was not until Puck decided to dump mud onto the faces and crotches of the lovers, sullyng the white box with the natural world that the design of *Dream* had had come full circle, again. The desire to invade the white box with dirt and mud, however, came from the design of an entirely different production and company than the RSC yet of the same school of abstraction as the design for Brook/Jacobs.

In 1992, two years prior to the Noble/Ward production, Robert Lepage directed and Michael Levine designed a production of *Dream* for the National Theatre that was staged with the centre of the stage as a giant pool of water. It is described by Sarah Hemming, for *The Independent*, as the visual opposite to Brook/Jacobs: "Where Brook's production was airy and trapeze-borne, Lepage's is earthy and wet, performed solely in a huge puddle of water circled by oozing, black mud, into which the actors frequently fling themselves" ("The Watered-down Version"). It was the experimental nature of Lepage and Levine's design that likely sparked the comparison. In his book, *The Theatricality of Robert Lepage*, Aleksandar Saša Dundjerović claims that, "In fact, Levine's design deconstructed Brook's light, white-walled, and airy space and turned it into its opposite, a dark, earthy, and slimy world full of traps of the unconscious and repressed desires" (167). In the design of Lepage/Levine, there was

no white box or circus motif, yet Dundjerović describes the production as a ‘deconstruction.’ Seven years later at the RSC, an overt annexation and literal deconstruction of the Brook/Jacobs model occurred when Boyd and Piper shot arrows into the back wall and flowers up through the stage floor. They heaped dirt onto the white stage and onto the lovers, and they brashly displayed the lovemaking of Bottom and Titania that, beginning with Brook/Jacobs, other productions at the RSC had only ever suggested. This production design was a marriage of design elements from Brook/Jacobs and Lepage/Levine, as if when Puck placed the ‘Love-in-Idleness’ flower on the faces and crotches of the lovers in 1999, he had retrieved them from the peripheries of Levine’s mud-ridden pool seven years prior.

Piper acknowledges the metaphor intrinsic to Lepage/Levine in concert with Brook/Jacobs (2 July 2013), and speaks about how that imagery was also important to Boyd: “Michael has always... wanted that mess, that dirt, and that for me feels much more Eastern European than the cleaner tradition of Brook” (ibid). Piper’s design was to lay his messy interpretation of an Eastern European *Dream* over the already well-established design of Brook/Jacobs. Boyd and Piper used the dirt and mud to literally show the invasion of the fairy realm into the mortal world while metaphorically representing the mess that love creates within *Dream* and, for the sake of this argument, also the organized chaos that RSC practitioners since 1970 have made of re-interpreting and reacting to the design of Brook/Jacobs. Boyd and Piper, however, as practitioners had another design of Shakespeare in mind when they developed the stage.

According to Piper, the design of the Globe Theatre in London had a significant influence on the design of the 1999 *Dream*:

I think yes, the idea of a blank space with doors to get in and out of it, a contained space, that all kind of comes from Brook. But in a sense, also comes

from the Globe and from Shakespeare's writing. You know that he creates a blank space with a couple of doors at the back that people come in and out of, and heavens above that people can fly in on, and some holes in the ground that people can come up from. So in a sense you're also drawing on that very simple theatre tradition of 'what is basic architecture?' (Piper, 2 July 2013)

Looking at the 1999 *Dream* in retrospect, the design of this stage could indeed act as an artistic or conceptual bridge between the minimalist stage designs of the Jacobean and Elizabethan theatres and the white modern design of Brook/Jacobs. The 1999 production contained key elements of both. Boyd describes the design in 1999, however, in another way to Rex Gibson, for the *Times Educational Supplement*. Boyd calls it, "a space for playfulness, very simple, a wooden O, or rather a wooden oval, a white box, but not like the Globe" (qtd. in "Erotic Dream"). Despite his protestation to the contrary, he is definitely describing the architecture of the Globe, calling the bare stage ("a wooden O") and even throwing in Brook/Jacobs ("a white box") as a descriptor of his own design. This design made the entire production look like it had been set inside a large round wooden structure. Piper was inspired by the basic architecture of the Globe stage, and Boyd wanted a simple wooden oval, and the rounded white wall is what they compromised with in the end.

In admitting the influence of the original Globe, however, Piper tacitly recognises the influence on the design of the 1999 production imposed by the modern reconstruction and the practices of the new Globe stage in London. In this production, he built the stage so that actors could enter from all places that are indicative of a Globe stage design. They entered through the doors at the back wall, were flown in from above the stage, and indeed, emerged from underneath the stage through trap doors. In creating a design of *Dream* that was evocative of other spaces, cultural events, and productions, in hindsight, Boyd/Piper brought new significance to a white

box/ *tabula rasa* design of *Dream*, making the 1970 design not a symbol of modern design in theatre anymore, but rather a harkening back to the bare stages of Shakespeare's time.

From the modern Globe, to Lepage/Levine, to the design of the 1999 *Dream*, the significance of these and other analogous circumstances serves to point out that Boyd and Piper created a design that was as much a part of British theatre culture at the time as it was a response to well-known productions and atavistic practices at the RSC. They were not, however, setting out to change the history of designing *Dream* at the RSC. They began with far more modest goals. Whereas Noble/Ward had laid a veneer of surrealist paintings across the model of the 1970 *Dream*, Piper and Boyd approached their translation of Brook/Jacobs with a nod to Eastern Europe, as a conceptual acknowledgement to Eastern European mud pool of Lepage/Levine suggests. According to Piper, it was Boyd's interest in Russian theatre and the, "totalitarian state of... thirties Russia," (Piper, 2 July 2013), stemming from an interpretation of Athens where Theseus is prepared to kill Hermia if she does not obey her father's will. Theseus says, "To death or to a vow of single life" (1.1.123), which, in turn, prompted Boyd and Piper to imbue *Dream* with a cold, sterile Russian atmosphere. Piper came to share Boyd's interest in the political state of Russia in the 1930s through his own interest with the historic collapse of the Berlin Wall (1989-90): "The fall of the Berlin Wall... I think that there was still probably a fascination for people of my generation with that East/West bloc sort of thing, and... the Russian Eastern Bloc theatre tradition" (ibid). This concept was evident in more than the creation of an all-white set design built as an actual wall. The opening scene was as much a political statement about the condition of Theseus's regime as it was about the seasons being out of kilter ("The spring, the summer, / The chiding autumn, angry

winter change/ Their wonted liveries” 2.1.112-4). Boyd speaks to this interpretation in an interview: “Athens was populated by grey, buttoned-up people in buttoned-up coats, and it snowed. Fur hats and a general air of frigid obedience gave an Eastern European feel to the opening scenes” (qtd. in Bate & Rasmussen 121). What was more significant to this world concept was that Piper saw the invasion of nature into the white space as the crumbling border between the cold mortals and the passionate fairies, symbolized by his wall de-constructed, with all five of its doors standing wide open at the end of the production.

In Act 5 of Boyd/Piper, Athens had become a fragmented version of the solid wall it had been in Act 1. The setting changed in other ways as well, as the characters in Act 5 were no longer wearing dark, cold weather outfits. They were now dressed in bright colours and modest cuts of clothing suited to warmer weather. Hippolyta was outfitted in a bright blue, one-shoulder, sleeveless dress, and Theseus was in a white suit and light brown waistcoat. All other members of the mortal court, save for the mechanicals and, of course, Philostrate, were dressed in similarly light and colourful outfits, presumably for the royal nuptials. Philostrate made his final change as he shifted back into Puck, after *Pyramus and Thisbe* concluded (“Now the hungry lion roars” 5.1.368). This dramatic change in the clothing worn by the Athenians continued the metaphor used by Piper for deconstructing his makeshift Berlin wall. Athens was reborn and no longer cut off from western society, it brought warmer weather, comfortable clothing, and bright colours to the costumes of all the mortals of the production.

Beyond viewing Boyd/Piper’s *Dream* as an appropriation or tribute to Brook/Jacobs, the 1999 production also represents an echo of Caird/Blane and Noble/Ward productions, in that Boyd and Piper explored artistic atavism within the

context of designing *Dream* at the RSC. What is most fascinating about the Boyd/Piper process was that their pastiche was not the combination of Brook/Jacobs and a piece of artwork or style of painting, but rather it was a sense of European and UK history that inspired them to translate Brook/Jacobs into something relevant to the modern-day RSC. Ultimately, the design and performance of both the 1970 and 1999 productions relied on the imagination of the audience because they were forced to strip away all cultural assumptions of what *Dream* should be. This similarity between the philosophical approaches of 1970 and 1999 productions might be another indicator that the design of Boyd and Piper's production attempted a similar brand of atavism as had been adopted for Caird/Blane and Noble/Ward. That Boyd/Piper followed its two immediate predecessors in its pastiche tribute to Brook/Jacobs only helps solidify artistic atavism as the trend of designing *Dream* at the RSC in late 1980s and all the way through the 1990s.

3.4. Visual Atavism and the Design for Brook/Jacobs

All three of these productions, Caird/Blane in 1989, Noble/Ward in 1994, and Boyd/Piper in 1999, ultimately reflected a trend in producing *Dream* at the RSC to adopt and appropriate the visual elements into a pastiche design of Brook/Jacobs. In 1989, Caird made a public acknowledgement that to ignore Brook and Jacobs's contribution would be an absurd pretence, and that he and Blane had "shamelessly" borrowed certain elements from the 1970 *Dream* (Grimley). As the wedding marquee lifted off the stage in 1989, Caird and Blane showed the audience what they thought lay beyond the borders of Brook and Jacobs's wall. The two productions that followed Caird/Blane took that appropriation several steps further. Each one of these three productions visually referencing the Brook/Jacobs design of *Dream*, and then

each, in its own way, deliberately adapting the visuals and concepts to create a different, yet innovative appropriation of that historic *Dream*.

What is significant about this particular trend in design at the RSC is that across the span of three productions a reverie of the past was superseded by a desire to comment on the history that had been and was being made in British theatre. In 1989, Caird and Blane broke through the expectation that they too would avoid all possible derivations of Brook/Jacobs and its design, and shed the institutional anxiety that had plagued the RSC for almost two decades. In 1994, the Noble/Ward *Dream* was not only a show of solidarity to that notion, but a redoubled effort to show the Brook/Jacobs design was revered, yet not untouchable, as they overlay the design with a new surrealist concept to give the production a dream-like feel. The Boyd/Piper *Dream* paid tribute to the design of Brook/Jacobs as the other two productions could not have done. Elements created in tribute in Caird/Blane, like Titania's bower as a bed, may have been received as parody in 1989, but by the time Boyd/Piper lowered Titania's sleigh bed from the rafters above the stage, this repetition of the symbolic bower was recognized as a tribute to the iconic red feather of 1970.

Over the course of a decade, this trend in design had become a series of new depictions, adaptations, and subversion of the design for Brook/Jacobs into a design of a Jacobean stage, a giant mud pool, or even, another white box. One of the principal ideas behind the 1970 design was to create a space in which the audience could imagine anything happening. An audience member might well have imagined the white box as a wedding marquee, a junkyard, a surrealist nightmare, or even a Russian winter. Noble/Ward and Boyd/Piper, in following the example set in 1989, tacitly agreed with Caird's bold idea that borrowing from the design of Brook/Jacobs

was necessary. Taking the idea a step further was the RSC company policy in terms of designing *Dream* in the 1990s, adapting Brook/Jacobs *Dream* more directly in the decades to come should be a foregone conclusion given that many ideas derived from the design of Brook/Jacobs are already intrinsic to production practices at the RSC.

Conclusion: Designing *Dream* at the RSC in the next millennium

As a practitioner myself, examining the Brook/Jacobs production and the six productions that followed, I have come to the conclusion that no one, whether they wish to or not, may produce *Dream* at the RSC without first visualising the work of one's predecessor. Youman's theory on design fixation is not adaptable to all theatre practitioners, but it is an apt theory that defines the anxiety of influence every designer and many directors feel prior to producing their own version of Shakespeare, especially within the confines of the RSC. I believe that the trend of practitioners in the 1980s and 90s, beginning with Caird acknowledging Brook/Jacobs as more than a passive influence on their design in 1989, was a series of artists embracing the inherent weakness in designing Shakespeare: it has all been designed before. Instead of trying to find something original to design onstage as a background to a four hundred year old play, they found something new to say about the nature of theatre; paying tribute to an historical practice or ideology in Shakespeare does not necessarily mean recreating or paying homage to theatre productions that were once performed centuries ago. All three of those post-modern productions (Caird/Blane, Noble/Ward, and Boyd/Piper) succeeded in breaking new ground in that respect. The legacy of Brook/Jacobs evolved from a frustrating shadow that enveloped the entirety of the RSC design of *Dream* to comforting shade from which designers and directors could begin their journey through pastiche and into a new age of enlightenment on Shakespearean performance.

Piper made a return to designing *Dream* for the 2016 RSC production with Erica Whyman. He invokes Brook's name again as inspiration for his stage design of *Dream* for an article in *What's On Stage*:

It took Peter Brook to famously remind us that all you need is an empty space and an actor and the act of theatre is engaged. His *Dream* blew away fusty conventions of picturesque fairies and became about the discovery of images created by the actors in the rehearsal room to convince us that in a white box we are in a forest. (“Let’s Talk About Sets”)

It is incredible to see Piper’s journey through from his first production of *Dream* at the RSC with Boyd wherein the forest needed to literally break through his white box to be seen, to 2016, where there was no forest to be seen at all. The lasting effect the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* has had upon practitioners at the RSC is evident in Piper’s current understanding of the design for the 1970 production. He has evolved to see the Brook/Jacobs production as having reclaimed the power of an empty space on an imaginative audience, and as such, the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* has made a constant commentary on the nature of theatre and theatre design because practitioners keep using them as inspiration. From 1999 to 2016, Piper has changed his views on designing *Dream*, and with it, his point of view on how Brook/Jacobs has affected his process. With each distinct interpretation of Brook/Jacobs, Barnes’s prophecy holds true for critics, academics, and, in this case, practitioners like Piper. With the advent of new research that has either quietly resurfaced after four decades or that has been created for this project, this thesis traces the influence of the Brook/Jacobs production through the years—as directors and designers have cast off certain ideas and embraced others, the practitioners of the RSC have built on the innovative concepts and, in Piper’s case, their own personal interpretation of the design for the 1970 *Dream*.

The Brook/Jacobs production has left an indelible mark on the designs of *Dream* within the company since its inception in 1970. Having traced that legacy within the RSC, I have also concluded that the artistic, critical, and academic

reverberations from the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* have made fundamental an expectation of innovation and imagination to design that was not previously so intrinsic to the practices of directors and designers approaching that play both inside and outside the RSC. Principally, what this thesis brings to the legacy of Brook/Jacobs is that the memory of that production, though static in production photographs, has slowly transformed over time into something more than iconic or ground-breaking: it has become the institutional standard of Shakespearean production in the UK. I can say that it is fact, not conjecture or theory, that every RSC production of *Dream* since 1970 has had this benchmark of innovation to live up to, and it is ironic that, through the propagation of critical and academic myths surrounding Brook/Jacobs, the concept of innovation and originality has since become a touchstone for quality in Shakespearean production.

Lastly, I have concluded through the examination of technical framework and archival material for Brook/Jacobs that an artistically rewarding and successful process of designing Shakespeare is always collaborative. In a collective not only with the practitioners and artists in close proximity to the production but also a stage design in concert with the history of the theatre, its audience, and the artists that have helped shape that legacy. From a designer's perspective, the study of the process leading to the production is equally as important as the study of that production's critical and academic aftermath.

4.1. Remembering the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*

Overall, this thesis showcases two distinct creative trends of designing *Dream* at the RSC influenced by the 1970 *Dream*. The surfeit of critical and academic studies

simultaneously speaks to that pattern and the propagation of design practices pioneered by Brook/Jacobs as they continued to artistically reverberate for decades after the production had closed. However, upon a deeper exploration, expressing these as theatrical trends—a devout reaction against, followed by a trend of adapting the practices and concepts from the 1970 *Dream*—is an oversimplification. Though, on the surface, each production in these groupings seem to fit the character of those responses to Brook/Jacobs, each subsequent production responded differently to the 1970 production and all are examined and documented in this thesis as more than only pieces of a larger fashion or trend to designing *Dream* at the RSC.

The six productions of *Dream* at the RSC that followed the 1970 production highlighted the immense influence of and shadow cast by Brook/Jacobs, each in their own way. Their reactions to that opus have, in fact, helped shape and reshape the cultural memory of the 1970 production. Critics and academics see the 1977 Barton/Napier *Dream* as reacting against the visuals of Brook/Jacobs because it seemed a traditional interpretation of a natural forest when compared to the abstract white box of 1970. The 1981 Daniels/Bjornson design was also viewed as a scenographic polarity to Brook/Jacobs, as the two-dimensional Victorian sets and puppets as fairies focused on the artifice of theatre and not the imaginative enchantment of *Dream*. The 1986 Alexander/Dudley production was a cautionary tale in divisive attempts to stage the visual opposite to the Brook/Jacobs design, and judging by what Alexander intended and what Dudley actually realised, an answer to that question is not obvious. These practitioners are portrayed as having avoided the design of Brook/Jacobs, yet, in the case of these last two practitioners and the breakdown of communication between them, the truth of the matter was more complex. What is captured in this thesis is that Alexander and Dudley's production is

a prototypical example of the anxiety any practitioner that has attempted *Dream* at the RSC must feel even today.

But these three productions can only be called reactions against Brook/Jacobs in a visual sense, as conceptually all three adopted and reinterpreted ideas of *Dream* that were first advocated by or have since been attributed to Brook/Jacobs. The Barton/Napier *Dream* also presented an understanding of the fairies as dark and malevolent creatures that was, in theory, the same vision that Kott had embraced of them in the 1960s. Only later did Bate and Rasmussen credit this sinister interpretation of *Dream* as having begun in 1970 (109). The design of the Daniels/Bjornson production was a literal realisation of Abel's metatheatrical and a Brechtian epic about the nature of the Victorian staged spectacle, the design of this production addressed the truth and nature of theatre as a medium. All of these ideas have since been dubbed as clearly part of the design and production process in 1970. In 1986, Alexander and Dudley attempted a daring reinterpretation of doubling the mortal and fairy characters, an idea that had become popular with its use in Brook/Jacobs, yet their practice of doubling Hippolyta with Titania and none of the other characters was hard to justify and done away with before the production transferred to London the following year. In retrospect, however, this translation of the play can be seen as a visceral, if misguided, response to the fashion of doubling many other mortal and fairy characters in *Dream*. It makes sense that Alexander and Dudley were also the first to openly acknowledge the pressure of living up to the memory of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* (Higgins). Instead of only reacting against the design of Brook/Jacobs, these three productions were the pinnacle of the RSC's historical symbiosis. They rejected their predecessor's illustrations of the play in their

stage designs while at the same time they embraced similar conceptual visions of the play.

After the 1986 production, the next generation of practitioners at the RSC were not so intent on setting themselves apart from Brook/Jacobs, at least visually. Caird/Blane, Noble/Ward, and Boyd/Piper embraced the abstract setting, the narrative colour palette, the double casting of mortal and fairy, and the acrobatic elements of the 1970 *Dream*. Caird/Blane made the white background into a wedding marquee, and the fairy forest was the junk heap that lay beyond its white cloth border. Noble/Ward reimagined Brook/Jacobs as an abstract red box designed as a boundary between the real world and a surrealist realm of dreams and fairies. Boyd and Piper, who associated the colour white with snow, set Athens in a cold Russian chill and then transformed the stage from winter to spring by having the fairy forest literally invade the stark white oval set design with flowers that popped up from underneath and piles of dirt heaped onto the stage with the help of Puck and a few fairies. All three productions meaningfully borrowed identifiable visual and conceptual elements from the design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, playing upon the judicious audience members to recognize the homage, and then adapted the purpose of those elements to fit their own productions.

Despite the influence of and shadow cast by the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, many reviewers, critics, and practitioners who celebrate its importance never actually saw the production. Without the ability to view the production—either for the first time or again—the critical and academic memory of Brook/Jacobs has faded and, in some cases, even changed. For instance, some critics and academics may have begun to simplify their descriptions of the design and scenic illustration to make crisper comparisons with newer productions of *Dream*. It is no surprise then that at the RSC,

rather than avoiding any pretence of copying their predecessor, scenic designs and colour schemes returned to that familiar ground in the late 1980s.

When comparing the Alexander/Dudley production to its predecessors, Trewin writes in *The Birmingham Post* that there had been four landmark productions of *Dream* in the twentieth century: “The rabbits and moss of Beerbohm-Tree, the stylisation of Granville-Barker, the Victoriana of Guthrie, and Peter Brook’s circus treatment in 1970” (“Midsummer Night’s Dream”). Trewin’s description of Brook/Jacobs only referred to one of its themes: the circus. Nightingale, for *The Times*, also highlights the circus elements of Brook/Jacobs to make a similar point in his review from 1994: “Years ago, Peter Brook transformed the Royal Shakespeare Theatre’s stage into a vast white box from which trapezes dangled, ready for Oberon’s flying circus” (“Jung man’s guide”). Though there were trapezes in the design of *Dream* in 1970, a flying circus is a place for trained performers to act out death-defying feats of acrobatic aerials; there were no such feats in 1970. One potential concern with critics highlighting only one feature of Brook/Jacobs is that it will eventually become the defining feature, when there are other more notable elements that make Brook/Jacobs so relevant to a modern production. The other potential concern is that some details of the Brook/Jacobs production are forgotten or misremembered.

Another modern yet skewed implication of defining this production by its circus theme is that, looking back, a more professional training in the circus arts would have benefited the performers of *Dream*. Doyle Ott, in “Fitting the Globe into the Ring: Circus in Shakespearean Performance,” defines two different types of performances that highlight both the circus and Shakespeare: “one privileging Shakespeare, and other foregrounding the circus performance” (111). Ott compares

the circus skills of the actors in the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* to a production of *Comedy of Errors*, performed by the Flying Karamazov Brothers at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago in 1983. In this comparison, the actors in 1970 were, in his assessment, “performed with adequate competency, they were by no means high level and none of the performers were trained circus performers” (ibid.). Ott comes to the conclusion that, “actors with a more thorough grounding in circus arts would have allowed Brook a broader palate to draw on for his *Midsummer Night’s Dream*” (116). My point in mentioning this is that an assessment of quality and critical ideas for improvement in the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* are focused on only one of its themes and not the production as a whole. While I do not disagree with Ott, that a performance of *Dream* is dramatically improved by employing actors with physical prowess enough to skilfully perform acts of tumbling, artfully swinging from a trapeze, or dancing with the grace of a ballerina, I also think that there are degrees of skill in between the physical competency of the average theatre-goer, the professional actor, and that of the Flying Karamozov Brothers. Having seen the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* and witnessed countless performances of the circus myself, I would argue that the performances of the actors in 1970 were more than adequate; they were purposeful in their imbalance so as to create a kind of relatable humour. Focusing in on this aspect of the 1970 production, the circus skills and the basic nature of a performance there, and making it the defining characteristic, alters the critical and academic memory of a funny, significant, and magical production, and makes it somehow, less-than.

Although only a minor error, sometimes such errors can mutate into facts over time and alter the historical narrative of the play in production or intentions of the designers and directors. For instance, Halio claims that both Daniels/Bjornson and Alexander/Dudley had, in tribute to Brook/Jacobs, adopted a similar practice

regarding double casting the fairies and mortals (72). Although Daniels/Bjornson and Alexander/Dudley also used doubling, they did so with different intentions.

Daniels/Bjornson adopted the practice to show Oberon and Titania as backstage shadows of the forestage characters of Hippolyta and Theseus, fitting neatly into their concept of the play. The 1981 doubling of the characters highlighted the design in which Athens was onstage and the forest was backstage. Alexander and Dudley only doubled Titania and Hippolyta in their production as a way to highlight feminist themes. No matter how successful either of these attempts was, both productions used features of the Brook/Jacobs design yet reinterpreted the elements. More generally, subsequent productions at the RSC were inspired by the 1970 *Dream* but this influence was more nuanced than a simple homage.

For these reasons, the 1972 video of Brook/Jacobs, held at the SCLA, and the story of its discovery will hopefully change how this production and its legacy are studied from this point forward. Being able to view the production means that critics and academics can provide fresh and direct comparisons with current versions and supplement critics' first-hand accounts of the 1970 production. It also means that new researchers may begin to challenge assumptions and the critical revisionist history that has permeated the cultural memory of this production and all of its successors at the RSC.

4.2. The Influence of Brook/Jacobs both Inside and Outside the RSC

The practices that the 1970 production espoused have reverberated beyond the six RSC productions explored in this thesis. Since 1970, many productions from other theatres in England have used Brook and Jacobs's iconic all white setting and have

doubled the mortal and fairy characters. The 1985/86 Cheek by Jowl production of *Dream* (Donnellan/Ormerod) was designed with a white floor and white backdrop, with the mechanicals doubling as the fairies in this production. In 2009, Michael Pavelka, designer for the Propeller Theatre Company, an award-winning all-male Shakespearean performance troupe, claims that the aesthetic for his design of Edward Hall's *Dream* in 2003 was "homage to Sally Jacobs' 1970 RSC production" (Pavelka; see figure 63). Simon Bishop describes the Hall/Pavelka set design for *Stagetalk* magazine as, "a simple tableau of white walls, dust sheets, and a suspended row of white-painted wooden chairs that double as a gangway" ("Propeller's A Midsummer Night's Dream"). The white walls, box shape of the design, and the gallery above the stage did indeed greatly resemble the 1970 design by Jacobs. In retrospect, the similarities to the design of Brook/Jacobs are obvious, and the ubiquity of these practices points to the tremendous impact the 1970 *Dream* had upon not only the history of the RSC but designing *Dream* elsewhere in the UK.



Figure 63. Hall/Pavelka. *Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus with the lovers*. 2004. Photograph by Florin Chirea. Propeller Theatre Company.

The influences of Brook/Jacobs outside the RSC go beyond co-opting features of its design, as some practitioners also reacted against the design. Critics consider Lepage and Levine's 1992 production, a reaction against the 1970 design. In a review for *Theatre Journal*, William Demastes writes that the 1992 production was, "consciously working to rival Peter Brook's 1970 original and provocative Royal Shakespeare Company production" (238). Jasper Rees, for *The Telegraph* also describes the Lepage/Levine production as, "reacting against Brook's clean, white vision" ("Wildest of all possible Dreams"). Given these visual and conceptual differences, why did reviewers compare the two productions at all?

The reviews of Lepage/Levine, in general, did not consider it a successful interpretation of the play (which was a fairly typical conclusion, once critics and reviewers compared a new production to Brook/Jacobs). In the vernacular of these critics, however, Brook/Jacobs had become the prototype or shorthand for adopting experimental ideas to superimpose upon *Dream*. Coveney, writing in 2015, even makes a comparison between the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* and the, then upcoming, 2016 Globe production, directed by Emma Rice with set designer Börkur Jónsson and costume designer Moritz Junge. According to Coveney, thinking about the 1970 production is, "part of the baggage whenever I go to a new production, though I'm careful, I hope, to park it at the cloakroom before a new version begins" ("Will Emma Rice bring circus"). Coveney had not even seen what Rice, Jónsson and Junge had to offer before invoking Brook/Jacobs as the benchmark for their production. Yet it is not the problem of the director or the designer when a critic has expectations of a production that he or she has not already seen, it is, as Coveney states, the responsibility of that critic to keep their biases in check. That, however, is not always what occurs when reviewers write down their thoughts and feelings on a performance.

Inside the RSC, the influence of Brook/Jacobs has become less apparent since the 1999 Boyd/Piper production. As of this writing, the RSC has staged four productions of *Dream* in the RST after the 1999 Boyd/Piper *Dream*: a 2002 production directed by Richard Jones with sets designed by Giles Cadle and costumes by Nicky Gillibrand, a 2005 production directed by Gregory Doran and designed by Stephen Brimson Lewis, a 2011 production directed by Nancy Meckler and designed by Katrina Lindsay, and finally, a 2016 production directed by Erica Whyman and designed by Tom Piper. There were also two subsequent productions of *Dream* that have been staged on the two smaller RSC stages, the Courtyard and Swan: a 2006 production directed by Tim Supple and designed by Sumant Jayakrsihan at the Swan, and a 2008 restaging of Doran/Brimson Lewis at the Courtyard.

There are only two of these productions that bear mentioning here—the 2006 Supple/Jayakrsihan *Dream* at the Swan and the 2016 Whyman/Piper *Dream* at the RST—given each production’s relationship to the legacy of Brook/Jacobs. Spencer, for *The Telegraph* in 2007, harkens back to what is perhaps the most oft-quoted critical memory of Brook/Jacobs in his review of the 2006 production at the Swan: “This is the most magical, fantastical *Dream*, and one, I suspect, that will be remembered, and talked about, for decades to come, just like Peter Brook’s landmark staging for the RSC in 1970” (“A fantastical, unforgettable *Dream*”). Spencer not only made a comparison to Brook/Jacobs, but also framed his glowing critique in the same manner as Barnes in 1970 (“Historic Staging of ‘*Dream*’”).

The Supple/Jayakrsihan production looked nothing like Brook/Jacobs. The design reflected a street scene of an Indian city, what Spencer called an “Indian *Dream*” (ibid). The design, presumably of New Delhi where the production had actually premiered in 2005, used a giant bamboo scaffold as a background to the

entire production. Given the specific locale of the design, the cast switched back and forth between seven different languages including Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil, Sinhalese and English. Despite the differences—visually and culturally—Supple/Jayakrsihan reminded critics of Brook/Jacobs, and for good reason. The 2006 production shared many design elements and textual interpretations with the Brook/Jacobs *Dream*, namely the violent and sexual interactions among the lovers, the brightly coloured loose-fitting outfits, and the circus theme, that in 2006, was depicted by a series of ropes and silks that the performers climbed and swung down to the stage upon. This logic, however, means that this production's costumes also looked like Noble/Ward, and had the violent sexuality in common with Boyd/Piper. Billington, writing for *The Guardian*, joins Spencer in his own praise-full comparison and wrote: “in its strangeness, sexuality, and communal joy this is the most life-enhancing production of Shakespeare's play since Peter Brooks's [sic]” (“A Midsummer Night's Dream,” 2006). As Billington suggests, the 2006 production was a reflection of the energy, the design, the sexual chemistry, or indeed the innovative and imaginative approaches that Brook and Jacobs had pioneered decades previous. It was not simply one thing that reminded these reviewers of Brook/Jacobs, it was the entire production from concept to build. Still, the Supple/Jayakrsihan production and its reviews provide yet another example of how, decades later, the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* continues to occupy the minds of critics. As this thesis shows, the Brook/Jacobs production also remains on the minds of RSC practitioners, but its influence manifests in different ways now, than it had done in productions of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s.

4.3. “*A Play for the Nation*”: The Whyman/Piper *Dream* (2016)

The 2016 *Dream*, especially its design, reflected the influence of the Brook/Jacobs production as well. But, unlike previous successors to Brook/Jacobs, the 2016 *Dream* (or “*Dream 16*” as it was colloquially known), which opened on 15 June, seemed to reflect an even broader history and legacy of the play at the RSC. This most recent production, directed by Erica Whyman and designed by Tom Piper, appeared to pay tribute to not one, but almost all of the productions that had graced the stage of the RST from 1970 to 1999, in a new pastiche reclamation of the RSC’s history.

Natasha Tripney, writing for *The Stage*, neatly sums up Piper’s 2016 design as having:

[...] remade the Royal Shakespeare Theatre as, well, a theatre, albeit one in state of decay, with crumbling brickwork and tumbling red velvet drapes, a grand piano standing in for Titania’s bower. The costumes are drawn from the 1940s and the production evokes a post-war world in transition.
 (“Celebratory”)

For the Whyman/Piper production, there were three wooden doorways set into a half-height brick wall that was the main piece of the set design (see figure 64). Two of the doorways set into the wall were on wheels and often-positioned upstage left and upstage right, respectively, but were moved around onstage to serve as makeshift, albeit disembodied, doorways for several other scenes. The third doorway was only accessible via a metal staircase, which was also on wheels and moved about the empty stage throughout the performance.



Figure 64. Whyman/Piper. *Model of the set design*. 2016. Photograph courtesy of Tom Piper. www.tompiperdesign.co.uk.

Beneath the third doorway, a large gap in the brick wall hid a dusty and seemingly broken baby grand piano that emerged on wheels as Titania's bower; when the lid was opened, the hammers and strings were gone, and the inside was lined with red velvet. There were wooden ladders, fire buckets, ropes, and sand bags at the base of the crumbling brick stage wall, which, accompanied by the movable set pieces, made the performance look as if it were taking place in an empty or disused theatre (see figure 65). In a jarring scenic change from the Athenian palace to the fairy forest, the shoddy and ripped red curtains that had framed the stage in the first act blew apart into strips (as if a bomb had just hit the theatre itself) and several long, thin, red fabric tubes quickly dropped to the stage to stand, metaphorically, as trees.

The shape of the brick wall—the largest piece of the Whyman/Piper set design—was approximately the same height as the white box from 1970, yet was also the same height as the red box from Noble/Ward and Piper's own white wall from 1999.



Figure 65. Whyman/Piper. *Pyramus, Thisbe and Wall, The Belvoir Players, Belfast*. 2016. Photograph by Topher McGrillis. RSC.
www.dream2016.org.uk

The design was not only reminiscent of Brook/Jacobs but also the responses that other RSC productions of *Dream* had presented in their time. The red lining of the piano in 2016, which by its colour represented Titania's bower, was suggestive of the red feather in 1970, but also of the red upside down umbrella in Noble/Ward. The doors set into the back wall in 2016 were similar to the placement of the doors in the white wall of Brook/Jacobs, as well as the doors in the back walls of Noble/Ward, Boyd/Piper, and even the entrances cut into the wedding marquee of Caird/Blane. Boyd/Piper had five doors inset into the white wall and Noble/Ward had five doors inset into the back wall behind the red box, but the 1994 design also had doors rising out of the floor. The mobility of the two doors in 2016, being used as disembodied thoroughways to symbolize passing from consciousness to sleep, acted in the same fashion as the doors in the Noble/Ward design had done. Finally, the fact that the 2016 production was set inside a run-down theatre was evocative of the Daniels/Bjornson production that was set in a Victorian playhouse. Piper's design in

2016 was inextricably linked to the Brook/Jacobs production, and on the surface, the design was even an amalgamation of various other RSC designs as well.

Still, there are features of design of the 2016 *Dream* that did not fall into line with previous productions, and for good reason. The Whyman/Piper production was dubbed “A Play for the Nation” because the RSC used local amateur companies of actors from across the U.K. to play the mechanicals and local schoolchildren to play some of Titania’s fairies. Fourteen separate amateur companies and twenty-eight schools were chosen to participate in the project as the company toured all over England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. According to Piper, “we [...] needed to be able to do a weekly tour and in each venue embrace a new set of actors as the mechanicals” (“Let’s talk about sets”). As a result of this concept that drove the 2016 production, certain design choices were dictated by a decision to cast amateur actors.

First, in order to employ six amateur actors in each performance, according to Actor’s Equity (the professional actor’s union) and their Summer 2015 magazine, the RSC also had to employ “18 [professional] actors on the normal terms of the Equity/RSC house agreement” (“Amateur Actors”). When it opened, the 2016 *Dream* had nineteen professional cast members, one of whom was also the Music Director for the show (Tarek Merchant), six amateurs, and several schoolchildren for every performance. Given the pragmatic casting requirements set out by Equity, Theseus and Hippolyta could not have been double cast with Oberon and Titania.

The mechanicals for Whyman/Piper were dressed as simple day labourers from the 1940s. Though this was the style the mechanicals were dressed in for Brook/Jacobs, there was no evident time-period or style to the costumes of the 1970 *Dream*. In 2016, these costumes presented a unique problem to the design of the production: they were not uniform across the entire production run because the amateur actors from each

city it toured to were different genders, heights, weights, and body types. The costumes had to accommodate fourteen different versions of the same characters. Though the colours of each character's costume remained consistent throughout the productions, each costume was tailored to the actor. For instance, a woman played Bottom in the Nottingham as well as the Canterbury cast of *Dream 16*, Becky Morris of the *Lovelace Theatre Group* in Nottingham (see figure 66, centre), and Lisa Nightingale for *The Canterbury Players*. Both actors wore a handkerchief on her head in the same manner that Rosie the Riveter was depicted in World War II advertisements, supposedly to keep each of the actors' hair back. The handkerchiefs were incorporated into those actors' versions of the ass's head (see figure 67). Other Bottoms, played by male actors in different cities, did not wear handkerchiefs and wore caps instead.



Figure 66. Whyman/Piper. *The Mechanicals*, Lovelace Theatre Company, Nottingham. 2016. Photograph by Topher McGrillis. RSC.
www.dream2016.org.uk



Figure 67. Whyman/Piper. *Bottom/Lisa Nightingale, The Canterbury Players*. 2016. Photograph by Topher McGrillis. RSC. www.dream2016.org.uk.

Coveney, who, in his reviews for every production of *Dream* since Daniels/Bjornson in 1981 has mentioned Brook or his 1970 production, a critical obsession of his, did so again in 2016 when he mentioned the casting of amateurs in this production:

Drama teacher Chris Clarke's broad Brummie amateur Bottom - on the stage where David Waller in a string vest and red nose gave one of the greatest Bottoms of all time in Peter Brook's production - is okay until he goes a bit too camp in Titania's bower. ("A Midsummer Night's Dream", 2016)

This mention in Coveney's review is significant for two reasons. First, his mention of Brook/Jacobs (or Waller as Bottom in 1970) was proof that the 1970 production is still on the mind of at least one critic. Secondly, true to form of criticism for productions of *Dream* at the RSC, there would be no mention of Brook/Jacobs without at least one design misappropriation, as Coveney makes an error in his recount of the 1970 *Dream*: it was not a red nose. It was black.

Throughout this exposition of Brook/Jacobs and its successors, it has become clear that many of the practices and concepts championed in 1970 have been appropriated to other productions and, in fact, as I argue here, have become an institutional tradition of designing and re-designing *Dream* at the RSC. The 2016 production—in the ways that it borrowed elements from Brook/Jacobs and other productions of *Dream*—appears as a testament to the history of the company as it reinterpreted Brook/Jacobs in similar ways to several other successors' productions at the RSC.

4.4. Epilogue

The design of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* has been adopted and adapted over time, reverberating in one fashion or another through successive RSC productions of *Dream* and each, in their time, has become a piece of the RSC tradition in design. Though the shadow of Brook/Jacobs continues to loom large at the RSC and beyond, there are still innovative practices that continue to appear within the confines of the RSC and designing the same plays over and over again. With the revelation that a video of a 1972 production of the Brook/Jacobs *Dream* exists and may be viewed by researchers, the existing paradigm of how academics and critics view and write about

this famed production will shift and begin to be re-interrogated. New and old practitioners alike, at the RSC and throughout the world, will reimagine the Brook/Jacobs design with fresh perspective, and new ideas for designing *Dream* and indeed, new productions of Shakespeare will emerge from those experiments.

APPENDIX A

These are copies of handwritten notes by Roger Howells.
RSC General Stage Manager and Production Manager, 1962-1994
Administrator, RSC Archive, Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive, 1995 –
2017.

Brook's 1970 "Dream"

- a simplified narrative of its performance history, with an explanation of how the DVD recording arrived in the archives of the SBT.

- July 30th 1970 - Rehearsals begin in Stratford
- Sunday 16th August - First Production Weekend.
- Monday 17th August - A one-off "Dream" performance for Theatrego-round at 7.30 pm in the Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham. — with no scenery and the minimum of props.
- Sunday 22nd August - Second Production Weekend.
- Tuesday 25th August } - Two "Club" "Dream" performances.
Wednesday 26th August }
- Thursday 27th August - Press Night.
- Wednesday 2nd September - Photo Call
- Wednesday 4th November - "Dream" Company Meeting in T. Wynn's office re impending American trip.
- Tuesday 17th November - Trial pack of "Dream" in Conference Hall.

Friday 4th December

- A single performance of the "Dream" in the Round House (London) as part of a Theatre round season. A simplified, modified version, as also performed by two other single transfers from the Stratford repertory - "Hamlet" and "Richard III".

1971

Wednesday 6th January

- Roger Howells (General Stage/Company Manager) and Fred Jenkins (Head of Scenic Construction) fly to New York to supervise transfer of "Dream"

Thursday 7th January

- Get-in and Set Build "Dream" at Billy Rose Theatre - David Merrick American Management.

Friday 8th January

- Light "Dream"

Wednesday 13th January

- "Dream" Company fly to New York.

Friday 15th }
Saturday 16th } January
Sunday 17th }

- Rehearse "Dream"

Monday 18th }
Tuesday 19th } January

- "Dream" - Previews

Wednesday 20th January

- "Dream" Opens

Thursday 21st January - Roger Howells and Fred Jenkins leave New York, having handed over "Dream"

Friday 22nd January - Roger Howells + Fred Jenkins arrive Heathrow.

An American short tour continues at the Billy Rose Theatre and subsequently in Brooklyn, Chicago, Boston, Toronto and Philadelphia. [SEE ADDENDUM - PAGE 8]
Upon return from America —

Sunday 23rd May - The "Dream" Fits Up at The Aldwych - As there was a sight line problem the decision was made to reduce the height of the set overnight. (The effect of this is clearly seen in the SBT archive rehearsal photos + contacts).

Sunday 6th June - "Dream" Technical Rehearsals at Aldwych

Monday 7th }
Tuesday 8th } June
Wednesday 9th }

- "Dream" Rehearsals

Thursday 10th June - "Dream" Opens at Aldwych.
There were four Cast Replacements:

"Stenveling" - Philip Marikun replaces Terence Hardin
"Snout" - Patrick Stewart replaces Norman Redway
"Lysander" - Terence Tophin replaces Christopher Gable
"Peeblossom" - Gillian Rhind replaces Celia Quicke

"The Dream" continues in the Aldwych repertoire throughout 1971 - (for details see programmes and performance schedules held in the SBT programme archive.) - until

1972

Friday 14th January	-	"Dream" performance
Wednesday 8th March	-	Two "Dream" perfs.
Thursday 9th March	-	"Dream" perf
Friday 10th March	-	"Dream" perf
Saturday 11th March	-	Two "Dream" perfs

According to Sally Jacobs, as revealed in 2011, she set up a VHS recording of the final performance by means of a camera fixed to the centre front of the Aldwych Dress Circle.

The next stage of the "Dream's" performance history is the World Tour, with a largely changed cast, which began later in the year.

The Tour/Stage Manager was Hal Rogers, and it was to him that Sally entrusted the recording, to accompany the Tour as a reference.

Details of the Tour are held in the SBT Archive, but here is a simplified version.

World Tour "Dream" rehearsals took place at the Mobilier National in Paris in July 1972.

Performances began at the Aldwych Theatre on August 8th, then proceeded to Bristol, Southampton, and then Berlin, Munich, Paris, Venice, Belgrade, Milan, Hamburg, Budapest, Bucharest, Sofia, Zagreb, Cologne, Helsinki, Warsaw. [a brief return to Great Britain — Cardiff, Liverpool, The Aldwych, Stratford-upon-Avon] Los Angeles, Washington, Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya, Adelaide, Melbourne and finally Sydney in August 1973

FOR TOUR DETAILS SEE ATTACHED
SEPARATE LIST AND PROGRAMMES HELD
IN SBT ARCHIVE.

Some time after the completion of the tour Hal Rogers returns the VHS recording made in March 1972 to David Brierley, then General Manager of the RSC at Stratford. He, in turn, gives it in to the safekeeping of David Howells during his curatorship of the RSC Collection. David Howells arranges to have the VHS tapes, which are starting to deteriorate, transferred to DVD.

Subsequently D.H. hands over the DVDs into the care of ~~the RSC~~ the RST Archive held at the SBT, early in 2011

There is a tacit understanding that Peter Brook has imposed some sort²⁹² of embargo on the

showing of the recording. Indeed, before it emerges in 2011, there is a rumour that a filmed recording had been destroyed at P. Brook's behest. [NB. The Archive held at the Shakespeare Centre also holds the three original VHS show tapes.]

On Sunday September 4th, 2011 an event was held in the RST entitled "Designing the Dream" - a discussion involving four designers: Sally Jacobs, Sue Blane, Stephen Brimson Lewis and Tom Piper.

[SEE ATTACHED PROGRAMME]

In conversation afterwards Sally Jacobs asked me (the writer of these notes, retired RST Stage and Production Manager and now volunteer in the SAT Theatre Archives) if I could help her track down the recording by contacting Hal Rogers.

Sadly, Hal had died a couple of years previously, but, of course, I was able to tell her where the recording was held and the understanding under which it was being held.

Sally vehemently denied that any sort of embargo existed and it is now agreed that it is ~~permitted~~ ^{permitted} ~~to view the recording~~ to view the recording for research purposes.

As a post-script to this narrative, recently (earlier in 2015) the BBC broadcast a programme, "The Reunion", dealing with this iconic production, with a number of people involved in the original production participating - Peter Brook, Sally Jacobs, ²⁹³ Frances de la Tour, Ben

Kingsley and Barry Stanton.

Barry, who played "Bottom" on the World Tour, related that a film was made of one of the performances in Japan and recalled seeing it on several occasions before the copy was ceremonially (!) destroyed.

Presumably herein lies the origin of the story of an embargo.

Roger Howells

Following the run of the "Dream" at the Billy Rose theatre re-casting of three characters took place for a short continuity North American tour as follows -

"Starveling" - Philip Manikun
 "Snout" - Patrick Stewart
 "Lysander" - Terence Taplin

Brooklyn Academy of Music - March 15th - 21st 1971
 - March 30th - April 4th 1971
Chicago - April 5th - April 10th 1971
Boston - April 12th - April 18th 1971
Toronto

ALDWYCH THEATRE - July 30th 1971 - Back in repertoire in the U.K. bringing the three replacement actors from the U.S.A. (plus Gillian Rhind to take over from Celia Quicke as "Peaseblossom") until the final performances with this cast on the 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th of March 1972

The next performances at the Aldwych were with the new cast of the touring production prior to its World Tour.

Travel and Performance Schedule

Sunday, 27 August	Company travel to Berlin BE 614 depart Heathrow arrive Berlin	18.00 hrs 19.45 hrs
Monday, 28 August	Berlin, Freie Volksbuhne	Performance
Tuesday, 29 August	"	"
Wednesday, 30 August	"	"
Thursday, 31 August	"	"
Friday, 1 September	"	"
Saturday, 2 September	"	"
Sunday, 3 September	Company travel to Munich	
Monday, 4 September	Munich, Residenztheater	Performance
Tuesday, 5 September	"	No performance
Wednesday, 6 September	"	No performance
Thursday, 7 September	"	Performance
Friday, 8 September	"	Performance
Saturday, 9 September	"	Performance (Mat)
Saturday, 9 September	"	Performance (Eve)
Sunday, 10 September	Company travel to Paris	
Monday, 11 September	Paris, Theatre de la Ville	Performance
Tuesday, 12 September	"	"
Wednesday, 13 September	"	"
Thursday, 14 September	"	"
Friday, 15 September	"	"
Saturday, 16 September	"	Performance (Mat)
Saturday, 16 September	"	Performance (Eve)
Sunday, 17 September	Paris, Theatre de la Ville	No performance
Monday, 18 September	"	Performance
Tuesday, 19 September	"	"
Wednesday, 20 September	"	Performance (Mat)
Wednesday, 20 September	"	Performance (Eve)
Thursday, 21 September	"	"
Friday, 22 September	"	"
Saturday, 23 September	"	Performance (Mat)
Saturday, 23 September	"	Performance (Eve)
Sunday, 24 September	Company travel to Venice	
Monday, 25 September	Venice, La Fenice	No performance
Tuesday, 26 September	"	Performance
Wednesday, 27 September	"	"
Thursday, 28 September	"	"
Friday, 29 September	"	No performance
Saturday, 30 September	"	No performance
Sunday, 1 October	Venice	No performance
Monday, 2 October	Venice	No performance
Tuesday, 3 October	Company travel to Belgrade (by train overnight)	
Wednesday, 4 October	Belgrade, National Theatre	No performance
Thursday, 5 October	"	Performance
Friday, 6 October	"	"
Saturday, 7 October	"	"

Sunday, 8 October
 Monday, 9 October
 Tuesday, 10 October
 Wednesday, 11 October
 Thursday, 12 October
 Friday, 13 October
 Saturday, 14 October
 Saturday, 14 October

Company travel to Milan
 Milan, Teatro Lirico
 "
 "
 Company travel to Hamburg
 Hamburg, Deutsches Schauspielhaus
 "
 "

Performance
 "
 "
 Performance
 Performance (Mat)
 Performance (Eve)

Sunday, 15 October
 Monday, 16 October
 Tuesday, 17 October
 Wednesday, 18 October
 Thursday, 19 October
 Friday, 20 October
 Saturday, 21 October

Company travel to Budapest
 Budapest, Vigszhinag
 "
 "
 "
 "
 Company travel to Bucharest

No performance
 Performance
 "
 "
 "
 No performance

Sunday, 22 October
 Monday, 23 October

Bucharest, Opera House
 "

No performance
 Performance (to be confirmed)

Tuesday, 24 October
 Wednesday, 25 October

"
 "

Performance
 Performance (Mat - to be confirmed)

Wednesday, 25 October
 Thursday, 26 October
 Friday, 27 October
 Friday, 27 October
 Saturday, 28 October

"
 "
 "
 "
 "

Performance (Eve)
 "
 Performance (Mat)
 Performance (Eve)
 Performance (to be confirmed)

Sunday, 29 October
 Monday, 30 October
 Tuesday, 31 October
 Wednesday, 1 November
 Thursday, 2 November
 Friday, 3 November
 Saturday, 4 November

Company travel to Sofia
 Sofia, Opera House
 "
 "
 "
 "
 Company travel to Zagreb

Performance
 "
 "
 "
 "
 No performance

Sunday, 5 November
 Monday, 6 November
 Tuesday, 7 November
 Wednesday, 8 November
 Thursday, 9 November
 Friday, 10 November
 Saturday, 11 November
 Saturday, 11 November

Zagreb, National Theatre
 "
 "
 Company travel to Cologne
 Cologne, Bühnen der Stadt
 "
 "
 "

Performance
 "
 "
 No performance
 Performance
 Performance (Mat)
 Performance (Eve)

Sunday, 12 November
 Monday, 13 November
 Tuesday, 14 November
 Wednesday, 15 November
 Thursday, 16 November
 Friday, 17 November
 Saturday, 18 November
 Saturday, 18 November

Cologne
 Company travel to Helsinki
 Helsinki, National Theatre
 "
 "
 "
 "
 "

No performance
 "
 No performance
 Performance
 "
 "
 Performance (Mat)
 Performance (Eve)

Sunday, 19 November
 Monday, 20 November
 Tuesday, 21 November
 Wednesday, 22 November
 Thursday, 23 November
 Friday, 24 November

Helsinki, National Theatre
 Company travel to Warsaw
 Warsaw, *Teatr Narodowy*
 "
 "
 "

Performance
 No performance
 Performance
 "
 "
 "

For *see*
 Shakespeare
 birthplace trust
 Aug. 27,
 1972

MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (Peter Brook) Winter, 1972/3

Dec. 4-9 Cardiff, New Theatre *see list*
 Dec. 11-16 Liverpool, Royal Court Theatre *see list*
 Dec. 26-Jan. 6 Aldwych *propose*
 Jan. 8-13 R.S.T. (winter season) *see list*

for continuation see Jan. 19th, 1973

Jan 23 - March 3 - Ahmanson Theatre, Los Angeles
 April 7 - 21 - John F. Kennedy: for Performing Arts, Washington
 May 3 - 20 - Nissei Theatre, Tokyo
 May 22 - Osaka
 May 24 - Kobe
 May 26 - Nagoya
 June 5-9 - Adelaide
 June 12 - July 7 - Melbourne
 July 10 - August 4 - Sydney

THE SUNDAY TALK

DESIGNING THE DREAM

THE THEATRE DESIGNERS' DESIGNER

I am delighted to welcome our panel today to discuss our approaches to one of Shakespeare's most inspiring and demanding texts. The very familiarity of the play, with audiences and practitioners alike, makes it a real challenge for creative teams to create their world of the play for now, rather than simply for novelty or shock value. Questions such as 'how do the worlds of the mortal and fairy courts relate', 'who are the mechanicals', the nature and theatricality of the magic within the play, the transforming power of the night in the woods and how all these elements cohere, are some of the varied challenges we have all faced. It is also iconic within the RSC repertoire for the acclaimed 1970 production and in putting together the slides for today's talk I was struck by how influential Sally's production has been on us all since. It seems to my eyes to be the first Shakespeare design that really trusted to the audience's imagination and the actor's skill to transport us into a night of dreams without the need for illustrative scenery. Sue's design introduced real wit, with her punky fairies and giant bed bower. My own owes an obvious debt to Sally in its spare setting while being shockingly sexy enough to cause a school's walk-out! Stephen's work with Greg Doran and the puppeteer Steve Tiplady brought us back some of the visual romance in a contemporary theatrical way, while still remaining firmly true to Shakespeare's text. I hope through our discussion you will get an insight into the role of the designer and how our practice has changed (or not!) over the last 40 years.

Tom Piper

Sue Blane studied under Ralph Koltai at Central in the 70s and has gone on to be one of the country's leading designers with a bold theatrical style. For the RSC she has designed *King John*, *The Learned Ladies* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, she created the *Dream* in 1989 with John Caird and later revived the production for Stockholm. For the National Theatre she has designed *Guys and Dolls* and *The Relapse*. She has worked extensively in opera at ENO and Glyndebourne, and designed the clothes for several films including *The Draftsman's Contract* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Sue is a Royal Designer for Industry (RDI), and in 2007 she was awarded an MBE for her services to drama.

Stephen Brimson Lewis had designed over fifteen productions for the RSC and is a long time collaborator of Greg Doran's; highlights include *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Their acclaimed production of the *Dream* opened in the old RST in 2005 and was later revived in the thrust for the Courtyard. He has won several Olivier awards for *Design For Living* and *Les Parents Terribles* and worked extensively in the West End and for the National Theatre, including productions of *Marat/Sade*, *Uncle Vanya* and *A Little Night Music*. He has designed many operas internationally and his design for *Dirty Dancing* has been seen around the world.

Sally Jacobs has been a designer and director since 1960. She designed many of Peter Brook's productions including *Theatre of Cruelty*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Marat/Sade*, *US*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Conference Of The Birds*. She lived and worked in the USA until the early 80s, working in opera and theatre with directors such as Joe Papp and Joseph Chaikin. In the UK she has worked extensively with Max Stafford Clark and Anna Furse, while designing many large scale opera such as *Turandot* for the Royal Opera House and Wembley! She has also taught at the Central, Slade, Goldsmiths and in California and New York.

Tom Piper studied biology at Cambridge University but soon got sidetracked into theatre design, then while on a post grad diploma at the Slade he met Chloe Obololensky, who had designed *The Mahabharata* with Peter Brook, who invited him to assist on their production of *The Tempest*. He worked with Michael Boyd at the Tron theatre, before staging their first RSC production in 1994. He has since designed over thirty shows for the RSC, including the eight-play *Histories* cycle which opened the Courtyard and the first brand new show in the RST, *Macbeth*. He designed the *Dream* in 1999 with Michael Boyd, and was made Associate Designer in 2003.

SUNDAY 4 SEPTEMBER, 11.30AM, ROYAL SHAKESPEARE THEATRE

APPENDIX B

-ATTACHED CD-ROM DISC-

This is a copy of the Ground Plan for the set design of the 1970 Production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as it was installed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, held at the RSC Archive at the Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive in Stratford-upon-Avon, UK. Drawn by David J. Graybill Jr. for his PhD thesis, please do not distribute.

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