

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: A PLAY FOR THE NATION

CALLING AMATEUR THEATRE MAKERS, SHAKESPEARE NEEDS YOU!

The Royal Shakespeare Company is touring a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to 12 theatres across the UK. It will be a play for the whole nation, to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016.

A Midsummer Night's Dream contains probably theatre's most famous amateur company, the Mechanicals. They include some of Shakespeare's best-loved characters, such as Bottom, the group's enthusiastic leading man, and Peter Quince the company's long-suffering director.

To celebrate Shakespeare's unique role as the people's playwright the RSC is looking to work with a local amateur theatre company in each city or town the production visits. From each of these amateur theatre companies six amateur actors (plus a director) will be cast to play the role of the Mechanicals when the play is performed in their city or town. They will also be invited to come and perform at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon at the end of the tour.

The production will be directed by the RSC's Deputy Artistic Director Erica Whyman, performed by a professional company of RSC actors with the amateur companies playing the Mechanicals, and produced in partnership with our 12 Partner Theatres:

Northern Stage and Theatre Royal, Newcastle

Citizens Theatre, Glasgow

Grand Theatre, Blackpool

Alhambra Theatre, Bradford

Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury

Norwich Theatre Royal

Nottingham Theatre Royal

Hall For Cornwall, Truro

Barbican, London

New Theatre, Cardiff

Grand Opera House and Lyric Theatre, Belfast

FAQ:

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM: A PLAY FOR THE NATION

Eligibility and applying

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for one team of Mechanicals from an amateur company local to each partner theatre, except in Stratford-upon-Avon and Newcastle where two amateur companies will be selected as the production has a longer run.

Each group should consist of six actors who will play the Mechanicals – Peter Quince, Nick Bottom, Francis Flute, Snug, Tom Snout and Robin Starveling plus a director.

All performers must be aged 18 or over. At present we are open to applications from everyone as we have no fixed idea on what age or sex these characters should be. We are committed to building a diverse company.

"I am excited to hear voices from all over the UK, so I am looking for groups who have confidence in who they are. For instance Welsh-speakers, Yorkshire and Cornish accents, all-women groups would all be very welcome. The Mechanicals are people with real jobs, and this production has a unique opportunity to honour what that might mean wherever you are. You will certainly need to be good-humoured, patient, open-hearted, prepared to learn and excited to perform on these wonderful stages. You do NOT need to have previous experience of performing Shakespeare and we can fully support any access needs and requirements you might have."

Erica Whyman, A Midsummer Night's Dream Director

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO TAKE PART?

Any amateur theatre company local to the partner theatre is invited to apply. By amateur we mean theatre companies or groups that are run by volunteers and whose participants are volunteers. Participants must be over 18 years of age.

Commercial youth theatres, youth theatre franchises, professional led or run community groups, professional led or run youth theatres or school groups are not eligible to take part. If the group is led or run by someone who is paid to do so you are not eligible to take part. If those participating are paid to take part in the production or share the profits of productions you are also not eligible to take part.

Participants must be amateurs defined for the purposes of this project as members of a pre-existing amateur or community theatre company who do not make their living as an actor, regularly take on paid work as an actor or list their profession as actor. Participants may however have had some professional training in the past and may have in the past done some paid acting work. They may be retired from acting professionally or have left the profession some time ago.

WHAT DO THE RSC MEAN BY 'LOCAL' AMATEUR COMPANIES?

The auditions are open to amateur companies based within or around the towns and cities that the production is touring to. We are working with the venues where we are performing to identify those groups. The venue will then invite amateur companies to apply. If an amateur company considers themselves to be local to one of the partner theatres listed above they should contact that theatre for an application form.

HOW MANY PEOPLE FROM OUR AMATEUR GROUP CAN TAKE PART?

Six actors and one director.

HOW CAN OUR GROUP APPLY TO TAKE PART?

Each partner venue will issue application forms to amateur companies within the local area inviting them to apply. Any amateur companies local to a partner theatre taking part are encouraged to contact them directly.

HOW MANY GROUPS CAN AN AMATEUR COMPANY ENTER?

Initially we will only be accepting an application from one group per amateur company. However, in areas with fewer amateur companies large amateur groups may be allowed to enter more than one group, but this will be at the discretion of the partner venue.

HOW DO YOU SUGGEST WE CAST THE CHARACTERS WITHIN OUR GROUP?

On the application form we will ask you to say which of the actors you suggest should play each of the characters who form part of the Mechanicals. We would suggest assigning or choosing your director first. They can then hold their own auditions for a team of six Mechanicals within your amateur company as they would for a usual production.

WHAT WILL BE THE ROLE OF THE AMATEUR DIRECTOR BE?

The amateur company's director will be responsible for leading and organising their team of actors and being the main point of contact. The director will work and liaise with the RSC's directing team, assistant producer, stage manager, company manager and the professional actors involved in the production. They will also work with the RSC's team of practitioners on a training programme for their team.

They will have a creative input into the scenes involving their group, with the RSC's directing team having overall creative control. This gives them a unique opportunity to be an important part of the process of making a large scale professional production.

I'VE SENT MY APPLICATION FORM OFF, NOW WHAT HAPPENS?

From the applications, up to 20 amateur companies will be invited for a workshop audition.

Audition process

STAGE ONE: WORKSHOP AUDITION

The first stage of the audition process is the workshop audition. The RSC will hold a weekend of workshops at each of the 12 partner venues for the amateur companies which have been selected. These will take place between February and May 2015. A short-list of three amateur companies per partner theatre will then be invited to attend a second hub audition.

STAGE TWO: SECOND HUB AUDITIONS

The three amateur companies from each partner theatre selected from the workshop audition will be invited to the second stage of the audition process, the second hub auditions. These will be held during May and June 2015 in Newcastle, London and Nottingham. Travel costs as appropriate will be covered for all the amateur companies involved in this stage.

I LIVE IN - BELFAST, CARDIFF, GLASGOW, CORNWALL...

Groups based in Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow and Cornwall will have both audition stages in one weekend to reduce the amount of travel these groups are required to do.

THEN WHAT HAPPENS?

After the second hub auditions, the RSC directing team will choose one amateur company from each partner venue. In Stratford-upon-Avon and Newcastle, there will be two amateur companies selected.

HOW WOULD THE REHEARSALS WORK?

1. Before Rehearsals

PRE-REHEARSAL TRAINING AND PREPARATION

After the audition process, if your group is selected you will be required for pre-rehearsal training and preparation from September to December 2015. During this time your group will work on up to three pre-rehearsal tasks with training visits from RSC practitioners working on voice, movement and acting. The actor playing Bottom will be given their own specific tasks.

This would require a minimum commitment of four sessions of 3-4 hours working directly with RSC practitioners and directors from September to December 2015. These sessions will take place in the evenings or on Saturdays and Sundays. In addition your group would be expected to do some independent work on the tasks.

2. During Rehearsals

The production will be in rehearsal from 4 January to 22 February 2016. During this period your group will need to be available each week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday day time.

WHERE WILL AMATEUR COMPANY REHEARSALS TAKE PLACE?

These rehearsals will happen at the amateur company's own venue or rehearsal space at the partner theatre where you will be performing. During the production rehearsal period we will establish a digital video connection to each group allowing them to remotely join rehearsals with the professional cast. The RSC's directing team will also travel around the country working with each group.

REHEARSALS FOR LONDON, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON AND NEWCASTLE AMATEUR GROUPS

The London, Stratford-upon-Avon and Newcastle amateur groups will be required to spend one of their three evening sessions during the production rehearsal stage at the rehearsals with the professional cast. This is because the professional acting company will split their rehearsal time between London, Stratford-upon-Avon and Newcastle.

All amateur groups are welcome to attend the professional rehearsals if they are able to.

3. When the Production comes to your Partner Theatre

THE WEEK BEFORE THE PRODUCTION ARRIVES

The amateur company will be required for every evening and the weekend of the week before the production arrives at their venue. This time will be used for final rehearsals with the RSC's directing team in preparation for the production week.

TECHNICAL REHEARSALS, DRESS REHEARSALS AND PERFORMANCES AT EACH VENUE

When the production arrives at each venue, the amateur company will be required for the first two days for technical and dress rehearsals, Monday and Tuesday. You will then be needed for every evening performance and for two matinees. We may also require extra rehearsals in the daytime of that week.

In Stratford-upon-Avon and Newcastle amateur groups will be required for two weeks of technical rehearsals and previews; they will then alternate performances.

COSTUME

The RSC will supply costume for all amateur actors involved in the show.

HOW MUCH TIME WOULD I NEED TO COMMIT TO THE PRODUCTION?

Your group would need to be prepared to be available for the following;

Pre Rehearsal September to December 2015:

3 training sessions with RSC practitioners.

1 task based session with the RSC directing team.

Plus additional task rehearsals at the discretion of the group (times and dates to be set in consultation with the amateur company).

During Rehearsal 4th January to 22nd February 2016:

3 evenings plus Saturday day time each week.

When the production is at your venue:

1 week of evenings plus the weekend before the production arrives.

2 full days (tech and dress)* and then all evening and matinee performances.

*this will vary for Stratford and Newcastle groups.

WHEN YOU COME TO STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

You will need to arrive the day before your first performance to be ready for technical and dress rehearsals during the day of the first performance.

There will be two evening performances and a matinee if your calls fall on a Saturday or a Thursday.

The admin bit

The RSC has agreed with Equity the following terms for all amateur companies involved in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Play for the Nation*.

- Amateur theatre companies will be scheduled in line with the non-monetary terms of the house agreement in relation to hours, breaks etc from commencement of the rehearsal period
- The RSC will cover travel and accommodation expenses to Stratford, rehearsals and auditions if we require you to travel outside of your area, more details will be available after casting
- Amateur theatre companies will be paid as per the national minimum wage for the hours the amateur cast work together with RSC directing team
- The RSC will include on all posters and in all programmes the following statement:
A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Play for the Nation is a co-production between the Royal Shakespeare Company and amateur theatre companies across the UK.
This is an arrangement developed between the RSC and Equity
- Equity may require access to amateur companies for the purposes of workplace meetings during the production