

Pucker Up for Love, Magic, and Mischief in Portola's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'
written by Cherry Xue, a junior at University High School

Portola High School's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is a delightfully romantic tale that follows a group of young lovers and amateur actors who find themselves caught up in the mischievous plans of the fairy king, and his assistant Puck.

David Sloan as Nick Bottom commands attention as he saunters across the stage, exuding confidence with every step. He fully embraces Bottom's arrogance and penchant for dramatics with broad spreads of his arms amid monologues, and wide eyes darting with excitement. Even when his expressions are obscured by a donkey mask, his performance still shines through with exaggerated inflections, and boisterous energy that amplifies the comedic nature of the role.

Sprinting in pursuit of her beloved Demetrius is Deniz Ertan as Helena, whose performance is a spectacular blend of desperation and determination. She conveys jealousy and aggravation through bitter glances and snappy body language, and infatuation with desperate clings to her lover's arm, underscoring the character's lovesick nature. Ertan's performance is accompanied by Val Estrada as Hermia, who asserts her independence with a palpable aura of confidence, yet still maintains her softness with tender smiles when faced with her lover, Lysander's, affections. Together, Ertan and Estrada expertly navigate the complex dynamic between their characters, showcasing a balance of friendship and competition.

From fountains to flower-covered logs, tree stumps to vine-covered benches, set design by Thomas Lam, Sophia Schneider, and Manpria Sandhu is nothing less than gorgeous. Towering trees and spilt logs set the ethereal ambience of the magical woods, all while remaining accessible for efficient and swift transitions executed with fluency by the stage management team, led by Aiza Khalil and Marco Machado, and the running crew.

The overarching theme of colourful floral is also carefully woven into costume designs by Chakrika Shyamsundar, Spencer Rydman, and Aiden Han, as seen in Titania's diaphanous cape embellished by flowers, or Oberon's wings made of Monstera leaves. The consistent floral motif emphasizes the play's mystical qualities and sets the playful undertones of the performance, all while allowing for technical aspects to blend together in perfect harmony.

With stellar tech and acting, Portola High School's rendition of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is an enchanting delight!