



Queensland Ballet performing A Midsummer Night's Dream in 2016. Photography David Kelly.

From the Artistic Director

Arguably Shakespeare's most famous comedy, A Midsummer Night's Dream translates beautifully from page to stage through dance.

Liam Scarlett's rendition is a whimsical delight, created in 2015 as a co-production for Queensland Ballet and the Royal New Zealand Ballet. His witty choreography dissolves the boundaries between fantasy and reality, transporting us to a dreamscape where the mortal and fairy realms intertwine.

A Midsummer Night's Dream holds a special place in my heart; I portrayed Titania for many years in Fredrick Ashton's production. Liam's reimagining of this timeless Shakespearean tale is a true gift to us all.

This fantastical masterpiece has captured the imagination of audiences and creatives across generations with its story of love, mistaken identities, mischief and mayhem. We recently performed this ballet on tour across Queensland and in Canberra last year, and it is wonderful to share this ballet again in Brisbane.

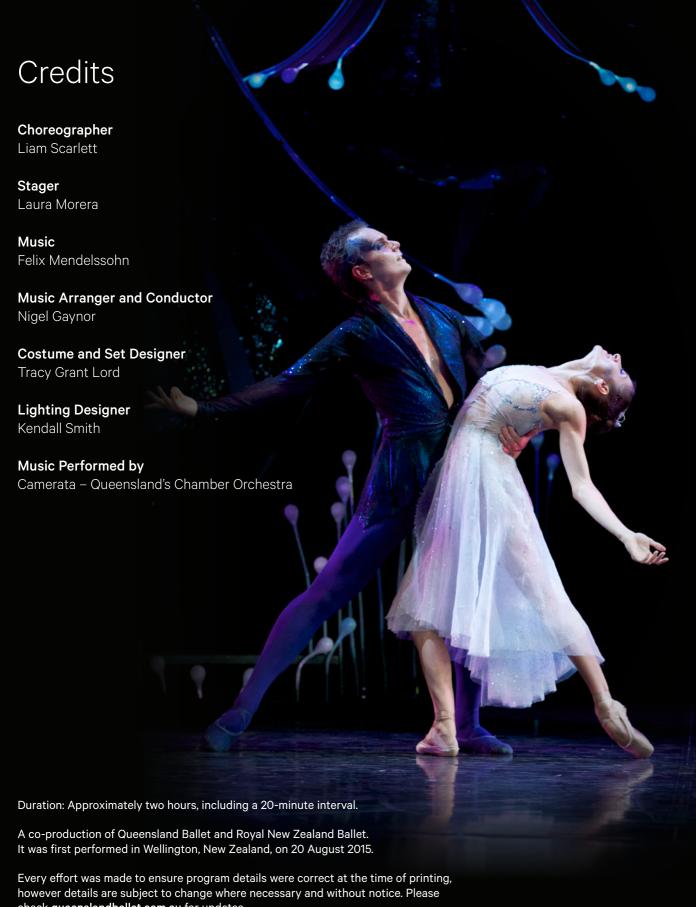
This production is enhanced by the remarkable vision of costume and set designer Tracy Grant Lord and lighting designer Kendall Smith, whose accompaniments bring the moonlit woods and characters to life. Felix Mendelssohn's stunning score, arranged by Queensland Ballet Music Director and Principal Conductor Nigel Gaynor, is transportive and played wonderfully by Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra.

Behind each Queensland Ballet season are valued supporters who bring it to life, and my gratitude goes to the Australian and Queensland Governments, our Partners, and our cherished donors who enable us to share this beautiful art form with as many people as possible.

A final thanks must go to you – our audience, for your support. I hope you enjoy this enchanting story.







check queenslandballet.com.au for updates.

Queensland Ballet acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we train and perform. Long before we arrived on this land, it played host to the dance expression of our First Nations Peoples. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the valuable contribution they have made and continue to make to the cultural landscape of this country.

About the Choreographer

Liam Scarlett was born in Ipswich, England, and trained as a dancer at the Linda Shipton School of Dancing and then The Royal Ballet School before joining The Royal Ballet in 2005. He was promoted to First Artist in 2008.

In 2012, Liam retired from dancing to pursue his choreographic career and was appointed the first ever Artist in Residence with The Royal Ballet. He went on to create his first full length work Hansel and Gretel (2013) in the Linbury Studio Theatre. He also choreographed new works for Ballet Black, Miami City Ballet, Norwegian National Ballet, the BalletBoyz, English National Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Atlanta Ballet, Polish National Ballet, and The Royal Ballet School.

"Liam was a creative tour de force and his passion and artistic sensitivity were infectious."

Lucy Green, Queensland Ballet Principal Artist



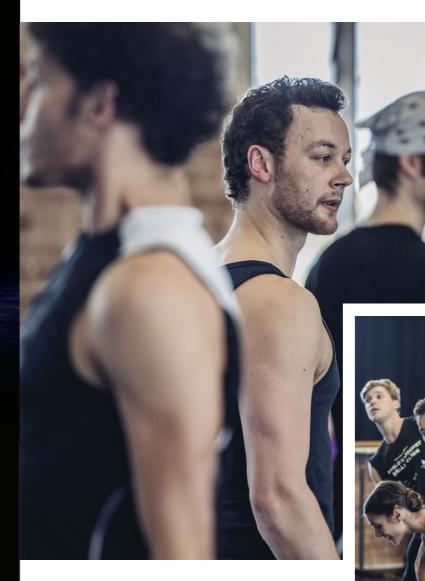
Choreographer

In 2015, Liam created A Midsummer Night's Dream as a co-production for the Royal New Zealand Ballet and Queensland Ballet, bringing to life the whimsical masterpiece with his witty choreography, detailed characterisations, and charming blend of classical ballet with touches of modern dance. Queensland Ballet later toured the production to Melbourne, China, regional Queensland and Canberra to great critical acclaim.

Liam became Artistic Associate with Queensland Ballet in 2017. Queensland Ballet's 2018 Season included Liam's The Firebird – the production from the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet, where he brought his hallmark musicality and finely-crafted choreography to the iconic 20th century ballet.

In 2019 Queensland Ballet premiered Liam's Dangerous Liaisons - a co-production with Texas Ballet Theater. Based on Pierre Choderlos de Laclos' time-honoured novel which had captured audiences for the past 200 years, Liam's rendition of the sultry tale, set amongst

> the aristocratic elite of late 18th century France, was a hedonistic tale of love, virtue and humanity, reimagined into a dramatic new ballet for mature audiences.



Liam Scarlett and Queensland Ballet rehearsing A Midsummer Night's Dream in 2016. Photography Eduardo Vieira.

The Characters

A Midsummer Night's Dream is full of vibrant and mischievous characters who find themselves in some very peculiar situations. Meet the fairies, woodland creatures and explorers that inhabit this mystical realm.



Titania

Queen of the fairies and married to Oberon. Elegant and romantic with a fiery personality, she is swift to fall in love.



Oberon

King of the fairies and married to Titania. This complex character is proud and powerful, mischievous yet possessive of a softer side.

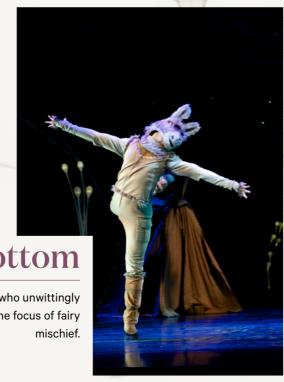
Puck



A fairy and Oberon's apprentice. Dazzling and irrepressible, Puck is the ultimate mischief-maker who delights in causing chaos with his magical antics.

Bottom

A young rustic who unwittingly becomes the focus of fairy





An explorer and strong female character, Hermia is in love with Lysander but is pursued by Demetrius, whose feelings she does not return.







From the Costume and Set Designer

On the creative process leading up to the Queensland Ballet première in 2016

It's a story that takes place in moonlight in the middle of a fairy wonderland. I had early discussions with Liam about the kind of space he would like to create, and he described a sort of jungle [with lots] of possibilities for positions [where] he could put the dancers in. He talked about it just being one place but having lots of opportunities to fly and jump and possibly elevated above the floor.

The fact that the whole thing takes place at nighttime and is a dream informed the palate. He talked about the idea of the rustics and the romantics and the ballet being as if they were on safari, explorers on the hunt for fairies. Even though the fairies were under their noses, they couldn't see them.

The fairies are just gorgeous and magical, they're almost flying around stage. And then you get the regality of Titania, Oberon and the devotion and tomfoolery character of Bottom. I love them all.



Tracy Grant Lord
Costume and Set Designer

You spend often up to a year working on these jobs, and once they are on stage, we have a very limited amount of time to adjust anything. So we have to really make sure that everything we put on stage is there for a reason. In our heads we didn't know what it is going to be, but there's an alchemy that happens when everybody who in their various areas comes together for the first time. It was just a joy to see and be part of.

"This is a lavish production, which takes a "more is more" approach to nearly every element. Tracy Grant Lord's set design is part storybook, part amusement park – with its strings of fairy lights, glowing fauna and a treetop bridge."

The Sydney Morning Herald, 2018.



Q&A with the Music Arranger and Conductor

Tell us a little about the history of Felix Mendelssohn's score for A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Mendelssohn was just seventeen when he composed the overture opus 21 in 1826. At that time, it was intended just for concert use. Sixteen years later (1842) he was commissioned by King Frederick William IV of Prussia to write incidental music for the play. Mendelssohn incorporated his overture and completed his extraordinary masterpiece.

The original *A Midsummer Night's Dream* score is approximately 50 minutes in length, however Liam Scarlett's choreography is 100 minutes over two acts. How have you rearranged the score?

To emulate Mendelssohn's orchestral sound I used only orchestral instruments that he had previously used, with one exception. In Act II Puck kicks the slumbering Bottom who was transformed into an ass. I included the percussion instrument Ass's Jaw (from Central America), which is literally the jawbone of an ass with the teeth wired in. When shaken or hit the teeth rattle, producing a macabre and sinister effect! While arranging or composing the transitions between sections of music, I had to consider the key (signature) relationships, as



Nigel Gaynor Queensland Ballet Music Director and Principal Conductor

well as the motifs of each character. Strong harmonic relationships make the score sound more unified, as does the reoccurrence of each character's theme. When choosing which instrument/s carry the tune, you consider which tone or colour best suits the moment. A very general example would be to say that usually a flute has a 'happier disposition' than

the clarinet, so for a section that should be brighter or more optimistic than the previous section, the flute is usually the best choice.

How has music been used in Scarlett's production to communicate meaning, intent and create imagery?

Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* score is widely considered to be the greatest fairy music written in the 19th century. Conveniently for us, much of Mendelssohn's other orchestral music lends itself to portraying a fairy landscape, with delicate rapid string passages, shifting harmonies and restrained use of brass instruments.

For example, I selected the Hebrides Overture as Oberon's theme. This music was originally intended to portray the oceanic power and mystery of the Scottish West coastline. The piece starts softly in a minor key and builds and surges in much the same way as a rugged seascape does. This creates an eerie, threatening atmosphere, which is ideal for this character, who is the king of the fairies.

Puck is described by Shakespeare as being able to run around the girth of the globe in 40 minutes which is why he is superbly personified by the 'quicksilver' Scherzo from Mendelssohn's String Octet. This rapid and intense music hurtles onwards, helping to create comic moments for a hasty Puck, who is very keen to serve his master, yet fails to fully consider the consequences of his actions!



The start of the music is breathtaking, instantly creating an atmosphere that transports us to a magical forest with fairies and mystery. I especially love Oberon's theme which is the Hebrides overture, and my favourite character is Puck!

Nigel Gaynor and Camerata – Queensland's Chamber Orchestra in 2023. Photography Jakob Perrett.

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The role of the Changeling will be performed by one of the following Queensland Ballet Academy Foundation Program students: Oscar Peet, Richard Statham, or Oscar Ziolek.

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Camerata - Queensland's Chamber Orchestra is a two-time Helpmann Award nominated ensemble and has established itself as a chamber orchestra of national significance. Known for its innovative and adventurous programming, Camerata thrives on collaborations with artists across a range of artforms.



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