

# The course of true love for never did run smooth

**What:** Shakespeare in the Summer Festival  
**Where:** Camosun College, Landsdowne campus (outdoors)  
**When:** July 15–August 13, 8 p.m.  
**How much:** students and seniors \$14, adults \$17, 12 and under free

by Deena Kinarthy

When I broke the news to my parents that I was in love with a 400-year-old poet, they were thrilled. Others, however, didn't see the attraction.

In an attempt to win over some of those people, many Shakespearean companies and directors are modernizing the bard's plays with the hope of appealing to a younger generation.

Film director Baz Luhrmann's 1996 version of *Romeo and Juliet*, set in Venice Beach, California, defined a whole generation. In 2003, the Victoria Shakespeare Society (VSS) staged a role-reversal adaptation of *Taming of the Shrew* where Petruchio was a domineering career woman, and Kate was an untamed, tattooed bachelor.

With all this modernization, one has to ask: what is wrong with the original works? Nothing. In fact, one thing both scholars and artists agree upon is that despite the change in costume or direction, Shakespeare's language remains the same as it was 400 years ago, with every iambic pentameter intact.

This July and August the VSS bridges the gap between old and new, giving audiences a



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Shelley Dusterbeck and Kevin Matviw as Tatiana and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

taste of both worlds. Two plays — *Cymbeline* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* — will be performed outdoors in the Shakespeare in the Summer (SITS) Festival at the Landsdowne campus of Camosun College July 15–August 13.

Director of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and acting coach Paulette Hallich insists that

these plays are timeless because people go through the same human experiences despite the time period. "Shakespeare's characters are universally appealing, because they are just like us," she said. "They share human experiences. They are still people. They want to do the right thing . . . our emotional humanity hasn't changed that much."

Many people are puzzled when I admit to my love affair. They studied Shakespeare's work in class and needed a ten-inch thick dictionary just to get through the archaic language.

"We see Shakespeare and we think of it in academic terms," said Hallich, "but it is viable to anyone who has eyes or ears. I tell students to read the words out loud and on their feet and suddenly they understand that Shakespeare is meant to be heard and to be seen . . . It's a performance art."

Audiences will have a chance to see and hear Hallich's modernized staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the "civilized" mortal world is portrayed as establishment types, the "invisible" world of the fairies are those people in Victoria who are homeless, or wanderers, and the mechanicals are our city laborers.

Barbara Pogemiller directs the rarely staged *Cymbeline*, which she describes as "an action-packed, plot-driven fairytale." It is about lovers cast apart, princes kidnapped at birth, and a king whose kingdom is eroding as he is poisoned and held in the seductive grasp of his beautiful power-driven queen.

Pogemiller deliberately chose not to date her version of the play, saying, "[Shakespeare's] stories are timeless. They still reflect our world today."

For tickets visit [www.victoriashakespearesociety.com](http://www.victoriashakespearesociety.com) or call the box office at 250-370-3080.