Who is Titania's Fairy?

Tell me more!

Thank you for joining our group of “players,” or Shakespearean performers. With your help, we can help Mr. Shakespeare pull off his all-kids performance of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”!

So you’ve volunteered to take on the role of Titania Fairy (the Queen’s name is pronounced “TiH TAHN yah”). Thank you! The fairies have wonderful lines and are great fun to play.

This section will give you some background information on the Titania Fairy from different parts of the play. Here you will find:

1. Let’s get started: What is a Titania Fairy?
2. “And I serve the Fairy Queen”
3. “Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed”
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Be sure to also check out the “Do It in Action!” section of this site, which will give you plenty of ideas about how to begin working on your own performance of Titania Fairy.

Even if you don’t get to perform right away on the Globe stage – sometimes it takes a while – you’ll enjoy transforming yourself into a Titania Fairy and learning her lines. Have fun!

Let’s get started: Who are Titania’s Fairies?

If you are new to Shakespeare and his “Dream,” you may be wondering, “Who exactly are Titania’s Fairies?”

There is no simple answer to that question.

It’s a mystery, in a way. One of the fascinating things about Shakespeare is that we cannot say for certain what he was thinking when he created these characters. He left behind no interviews with newspapers, no journal entries, no scribbled notes for his actors. He wrote only a few stage directions in his texts. All we really have is language – the words written for Shakespeare’s actors to speak.

So the first step is to look at the Fairy’s words. You will be the lead detective in solving this mystery, as you begin to speak the Fairy’s language and memorize her lines.

A second place to look at the Fairy’s actions. You’ll learn these as you work on the scene, and by reading on in the play to the next scenes.

A third place to look for a clue is in what other characters say about the Fairies. These lines are clues sprinkled throughout the play by Shakespeare, and you have to listen carefully and read carefully to find them.

It’s good to read with a pencil or highlighter handy to mark any clues you find, so you can refer to them later. The more detective work you do, the better prepared you will be for your performance!

Remember that even if you’ve seen someone play one of Titania’s Fairies before, on stage or in a movie, there is no one right way to play the role. Your Fairy will be a wonderful and unique mix of Shakespeare’s character and you way of moving, speaking, and thinking. (By the way, boys can play Fairies too and we’ve also seen them done very beautifully with hand-puppets!)
Even as you read this, there are probably hundreds of different Titania Fairies being performed in different schools and theaters around the entire world, and each one is completely different though they are all using Shakespeare’s words.

So it’s your turn to play a Titania Fairy and make her words come to life!

“And I serve the Fairy Queen”

In the first fairy scene, the stage directions say, “Enter a Fairy at one door; and Robin Goodfellow at another.” The Globe had two main doors that opened from the backstage area onto the stage; so apparently, the performers simply walked or ran in, one from each door.

In working with the Shakespeare Kids, we often like to take the Fairy’s lines and split them up. There are many ways to do this sometimes each Fairy gets one line, sometimes each Fairy reads until they come to a punctuation mark of any kind (doing it the second way gives the speech a more varied rhythm). You can also choose some lines for all the Fairies to say together.

The Fairy describes her work for the evening:

“I do wander everywhere Swifter than the moon’s sphere; And I serve the Fairy Queen To dew her orbs upon the green.”

So the Fairy is hanging dewdrops on the tips of grasses and flowers – perhaps simply to make them beautiful.

In the next scene, the job of two fairies (First Fairy, Second Fairy) is to sing Titania to sleep with a lovely lullaby, and to keep away the noisy night creatures and insects that might wake her.

In the third and fourth Titania scenes, the fairies attend on Titania’s new love, Nick Bottom!

“Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustardseed!”

Shakespeare has given us a lot of creative room when it comes to the fairies. Often, the stage directions simply say, “Enter fairies.” We are not given a specific number, nor any specific costumes. Though many people assume they had wings, for example, that is more the image of fairies that came later in English folklore. So we have no idea what they originally looked like in Shakespeare’s theater.

But once she awakens with the love juice on her eyes, and falls in love with Nick Bottom and his donkey’s head (Scene Five, or Act 3, scene 1), she summons four fairies by name. These fairies seem to work as a foursome, and their entrance creates a kind of musical effect:

PEASEBLOSSOM:
“Ready.”

COBWEB:
“And I.”

MOTH:
“And I.”

MUSTARDSEED:
“And I.”

ALL
“Where shall we go?”

In the next scene with Titania and Nick Bottom, all reappear except for Moth, who is mysteriously absent, though the stage direction includes “fairies,” so Moth may be in that mix...

Begin your own exploration
It bears repeating: Every person who plays a Titania Fairy will bring something different to
the role. There is no one “right” way to play such an unusual part.

In the end, it is through sounding out the Fairy’s language— the words Shakespeare wrote for her—that you will learn the most about this character.

So have fun learning the Fairy’s lines, saying them out loud in a hundred different ways, and creating your own very real and unique Titania Fairy, servant to the Fairy Queen!