

A Midsummer Night's Dream – Character Descriptions

The character descriptions are given as a suggested starting point to help you work on your audition. We are looking for you to bring your own take on the role. Age ranges are given as a guide only.

The roles of Puck, Bottom, Quince, Starveling, Snug, Flute, Snout, Philostrate, Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mustardseed, Moth and any of Theseus/Oberon's courtiers/sprites could be played by a person of any gender.

The Magicians

Oberon, King of the Fairies: 30-50yrs. Titania's husband, Oberon is a marvellously drawn character. Charismatic, scheming, vengeful, kindly, self-centred, manipulative, hugely attractive, you name it, he's got it! A physically demanding part, Oberon also delivers some of the play's most wondrous verse.

Titania, Queen of the Fairies: 30-50yrs. Oberon's wife. Strong, uncompromising, direct and passionate, she is more than a match for Oberon until he employs underhand methods to cast a spell on her. Some marvellous verse and scenes of rich comedic value make this a challenging and immensely rewarding part.

Puck, a sprite: 20-40yrs. Regarded by some as the most important character in the play. Mischievous, crafty, quick witted, funny, the player of both deliberate and misplaced pranks, Puck weaves through the play leaving an indelible impression. Some great verse to speak. A physically demanding part.

Peaseblossom, Mustardseed, Cobweb, Moth: 16-20yrs. Titania's sprites. Mischievous, energetic, cheeky. Small speaking parts – most lines spoken by Peaseblossom – but a good deal of stage time. Must be able to sing unaccompanied and experience of physical theatre and/or training will be an advantage.

Theseus/Oberon's courtiers/sprites: 16-20yrs.

There will be **four** courtiers/sprites. Non-speaking but very physical parts and a good deal of stage time. Experience of physical theatre and/or training will be an advantage.

All those auditioning as Sprites will be asked to take part in improvisation/movement exercises at their audition.

The Mortals

Theseus, Duke of Athens: 30-50yrs. Having defeated and now about to marry Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, Theseus is a man at the height of his powers. Dynamic and powerful, he is an arrogant, attractive, charismatic and highly regarded leader. The representative of power and order in the play. Requires a strong physical presence.

Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons: 30-50yrs. Defeated by Theseus in battle she is now on the verge of marrying him but, at the beginning of the play, still harbours resentment at having been 'won' by Theseus in battle. She is, to all intents and purposes, the female equivalent of Theseus in terms of her personal qualities – she's the Queen of the Amazons for heaven's sake! Requires a strong physical presence.

Egeus, Hermia's father: 50-70yrs: A senior courtier, Egeus is so determined that his daughter Hermia marry Demetrius that he will allow the law of Athens – which would see her put to death if she disobeys her father – to take its course. A severe and rule bound autocrat, he and Philostrate are the only characters in the play untouched in any way by magic.

Demetrius: 20-30yrs. Although promoted by Egeus as his preferred husband for Hermia, Demetrius has a history of putting himself about a bit! His appalling treatment of Helena marks him out as the guy we love to hate. Handsome and vain. A physically demanding part.

Lysander: 20-30yrs. Unlike Demetrius, Lysander is a one-woman man. He is the play's embodiment of chivalry, a young man with passion and poetic leanings, deeply in love with Hermia. A physically demanding part.

Hermia, Egeus' daughter: 20-30yrs. A wonderfully strong young woman who rejects forcefully the idea of male authority. In love with Lysander and willing to die rather than marry Demetrius, her father's choice of husband. Carries this defiance and strength throughout the play. For the purposes of the play, the actor playing Hermia must be shorter than the actor playing Helena. A physically demanding part.

Helena: 20-30yrs. Deeply in love with Demetrius, who spends most of the play rejecting her, Helena is far less confident than Hermia and continually expresses her concerns about her appearance. She is, of the four lovers, the most completely drawn and is the play's commentator on the nature of love. Must be taller than Hermia. A physically demanding part.

Philostrate, Theseus' Master of The Revels: 40-70yrs. Think Sir Humphrey from 'Yes, Minister'. The ultimate, hugely conservative diplomat whose sole purpose is to ensure that the entertainment is befitting his demanding master. Very, very keen that 'Pyramus and Thisbe' is taken off the agenda!

The Mechanicals

Nick Bottom, a weaver/Pyramus: 40-70yrs. One of Shakespeare's greatest comic creations. Completely lacking in self-awareness but without a mean streak in his body. Had Will come looking for actors, Bottom would have declared himself perfect casting for Hamlet, Romeo, Lear or Falstaff. And he would have believed it. The truth is very different as his performance as Pyramus in the play within a play graphically demonstrates! Great comedic skills required in another physically demanding part.

Peter Quince, a carpenter: 40-70yrs. The leader or 'director' of the group of 'rude mechanicals' who perform 'Pyramus and Thisbe' in front of Theseus and Hippolyta at the end of the play. Quince has written the play. Probably not destined for Athens' 'Play of The Month' award! Quince's main role is keeping this band of less than talented amateur actors focussed and prepared. No easy task since, as well as Bottom, the group consists of:

Francis Flute, a bellows mender/Thisbe: 18-25yrs. The youngest of the Mechanicals – 'I have a beard coming' - he plays Thisbe in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. Ability to access a high register would be more than useful!

Tom Snout, a tinker/Wall: 40-70yrs. Plays the wall in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. Well cast!

Snug, a joiner/Lion: 40-70yrs. Plays the Lion in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. Lacks confidence in line learning but must be good at roaring!

Robin Starveling, a tailor/Moonshine: 40-70yrs. Plays Moonshine in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. This entails carrying around a pole with a lantern on the end of it!

A Word About the Mechanicals

For those not familiar with the play it may seem from the descriptions that there is not much to the Mechanicals compared with other characters. Nothing could be farther from the truth. They are the embodiment of humanity in the play. Each of them, though they don't necessarily say a lot, brings their own life onto the stage. They MUST be real people and not just caricatures.

Oberon

Determined to teach Titania a lesson because of her refusal to hand over a changeling boy whom Titania is raising, Oberon hatches a plot with Puck.

That very time I saw, but thou could'st not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all armed: a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal thronéd by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once:
The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck has brought Oberon the flower and he now tells Puck how he intends to administer it. He also sends Puck on a mission to ensure that, by using the same juice on Demetrius, he falls in love with Helena. The best laid plans...

I pray thee, give it me.
I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamelled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady: thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love:
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

Titania

Oberon and Titania are fighting over a young changeling boy whom Titania is raising. Oberon accuses Titania of infidelity, and she in turn accuses him of being infatuated with Hippolyta. Titania's speech describes the chaos and destruction that their argument has caused.

These are the forgeries of jealousy:
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beachéd margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs; which falling in the land
Have every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents:
The human mortals want their winter here;
No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
The seasons alter: the spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazéd world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

Oberon has squeezed the magic juice into Titania's eyes as she sleeps. She wakes and falls in love with Bottom, ass's head and all! Here she woos him...

I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamoured of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.
Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate;
The summer still doth tend upon my state;
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep;
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.

Puck

Having been given his instructions by Oberon to anoint the eyes of an Athenian youth, Puck mistakenly applies the magic juice to Lysander instead of Demetrius.

Through the forest have I gone.
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love.
Night and silence! Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:
This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground.
Pretty soul, she durst not lie
Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
All the power this charm doth owe.
When thou wak'st, let love forbid
Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
So awake when I am gone;
For I must now to Oberon.

Incredibly pleased with himself for having given Bottom an ass's head, Puck returns to tell Oberon what he has done.

My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
Forsook his scene and entered in a brake
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's noll I fixéd on his head:
Anon his Thisbe must be answeréd,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
Away his fellows fly;
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

Peaseblossom

Peaseblossom, one of Titania's band of sprites, explains to Puck what their duties are.

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
Farewell thou lob of spirits, I'll be gone.
Our queen and all her elves come here anon.
Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Called Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he?

Titania's Sprites

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Mustardseed, Moth

All those auditioning as Sprites will be asked to take part in improvisation/movement exercises at their audition.

You should prepare any short song (just 1 verse or chorus) that shows off your voice. You will also be asked to perform the following (same piece for all four)

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen.
Weaving spiders, come not here;
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
Beetles black, approach not near;
Worm nor snail, do no offence.

Theseus

Egeus, Hermia's father, has ruled that she must marry Demetrius even though she loves Lysander. He brings the issue before Theseus since the laws of Athens demand either death or a nun's life if she disobeys her father. This is Theseus' response.

What say you, Hermia? be advised fair maid:
To you your father should be as a god;
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.
And in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
Must be held the worthier.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
Take time to pause; and, by the next new moon—
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life.

In this, the opening speech of the last act of the play, Theseus, ever the realist, dismisses as imaginary the lovers' account of their night's experience.

More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination.

Hippolyta

Hippolyta's opening speech appears on the surface to indicate enthusiasm for her wedding to Theseus. The challenge is to convey the undertow of her anger at being defeated in battle by Theseus and being forced into marriage.

Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

This speech towards the end of the play shows that Hippolyta, too, is touched by the magic of the wood and the lovers' transformation.

'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.
But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

Egeus

Egeus, Hermia's father has ruled that she must marry Demetrius even though she loves Lysander. The laws of Athens demand either death or a nun's life if a woman disobeys her father. He is determined that law shall have its way. This is his appeal to Theseus.

Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.
Stand forth, Lysander: and my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child;
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice verses of feigning love.
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
Be it so, she will not here before your grace
Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case.

Helena

Helena is deeply in with Demetrius, who spends most of the play rejecting her and wooing Hermia. Here she bewails the fact and decides to 'spill the beans' to Demetrius about Hermia and Demetrius' elopement plans.

How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
He will not know what all but he do know:
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
So I, admiring of his qualities:
Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
Love can transpose to form and dignity:
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:
And therefore is Love said to be a child,
Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
As waggish boys in game themselves forswear,
So the boy Love is perjured every where:
For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.

With all the other lovers, Demetrius, Hermia and Lysander, seemingly ranged against her, Helena lets fly...

O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and super-praise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! None of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Hermia

Demetrius is continuing to pursue Hermia through the wood. Here she confronts him.

Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.
Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Lysander, as a result of Puck squeezing the juice into his eyes instead of Demetrius's eyes, is now swearing love to Helena. Hermia is less than impressed...

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:
Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem;
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Demetrius

Puck has squeezed the magic juice into Demetrius's eyes by mistake. He wakes and the first thing he sees is Helena.

[Awaking] O Helena, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure congealed white, high Taurus snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

Puck has squeezed the juice into Lysander's eyes while the lovers have slept. They are woken by Theseus and find themselves transformed. Theseus asks for an explanation and Demetrius obliges.

My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;
And I in fury hither followed them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,
But by some power it is, my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gaud
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betrothed ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

Lysander

Theseus has ruled that Hermia must obey her father's command to marry Demetrius or face either death or life as a nun. She is left alone with Lysander who bewails their plight.

Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in blood-
Or else misgraffed in respect of years –
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends –
Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.

Puck has squeezed the juice into Lysander's eyes by mistake. Lysander wakes and the first thing he sees is Helena.

[Awaking] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake!
Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.
Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!
Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd;
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.
Hermia, sleep thou there:
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
And, all my powers, address your love and might
To honour Helen and to be her knight!

Philostrate

Tasked with arranging the entertainment for Theseus and Hippolyta's pre-nuptial bash, Philostrate gives Theseus feedback on the Mechanicals' rehearsals!

A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
Which is as brief as I have known a play;
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
There is not one word apt, one player fitted:
And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.
It is not for you: I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world;
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain,
To do you service.

Theseus/Oberon's courtiers/sprites

These are non-speaking parts. All those auditioning as Courtiers/Sprites will be asked to take part in improvisation/movement exercises at their audition.

Bottom

Puck has removed the ass's head from Bottom. They wake, remembering only that they were rehearsing 'Pyramus and Thisbe'.

[Awaking] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.' Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was – there is no man can tell what. Methought I was – and methought I had – but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of a play, before the duke.

Bottom, now in the role of Pyramus, believes Thisbe to have been killed by a Lion. For a gallant lover there is only one way out...

O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here deflowered my dear:
Which Is – no, no – which was the fairest dame
That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked
with cheer.
Come, tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus;
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth hop:

Stabs themselves

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky:
Tongue, lose thy light;
Moon take thy flight:
Now die, die, die, die, die. (*Dies*)

Quince

Quince is the author and director of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. In this scene they prepare the cast for the first rehearsal...

Here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal.
This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake
our tiring-house, and we will do it in action as we will do it before
the Duke. We will have a prologue, and it shall
be written in eight and six. But there is two hard
things: that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber,
for you know Pyramus and Thisbe meet by
moonlight, so we may leave a casement of the
great chamber window, where we play, open, and
the moon may shine in at the casement
or else one must come in with a bush of
thorns and a lantern and say he comes to disfigure
or to present the person of Moonshine. Then there
is another thing: we must have a wall in the great
chamber, for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story,
did talk through the chink of a wall.
Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts.
Pyramus, you begin. When you have spoken your
speech, enter into that brake, and so everyone
according to his cue.

And here, a bag of nerves, they deliver the Prologue in front of the whole court...

If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come but in despite.
We do not come as minding to contest you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.

Flute

Flute is playing Thisbe, Pyramus's love interest. Here Thisbe finds Pyramus's body after Pyramus takes the gallant way out.

Asleep, my love?
What, dead, my dove?
O Pyramus, arise!
Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
Dead, dead? A tomb
Must cover thy sweet eyes.
These lily lips,
This cherry nose,
These yellow cowslip cheeks,
Are gone, are gone:
Lovers, make moan:
His eyes were green as leeks.
O Sisters Three,
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk;
Lay them in gore,
Since you have shore
With shears his thread of silk.
Tongue, not a word:
Come, trusty sword;
Come, blade, my breast imbrue: (*Stabs herself*)
And, farewell, friends;
Thus Thisbe ends:
Adieu, adieu, adieu.
Dies

Snout

Snout plays the wall in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. No more explanation needed!

In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;
And such a wall, as I would have you think,
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisbe,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall; the truth is so:
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

Snug

Snug plays the Lion...

You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear
The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam;
For, if I should as lion come in strife
Into this place, 'twere pity on my life.

Starveling

And Starveling plays moonshine...

This lanthorn doth the hornéd moon present;
Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be.
All that I have to say, is, to tell you that the
lanthorn is the moon; I, the man in the moon; this
thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog.