Shakespeare Termed Enchanting

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A Midsummer Night's Dream for the Rice Players had a similar effect on everybody lucky enough to get a seat or standing room in Hamman Hall last Friday, Saturday or Sunday. The audiences, like several of the fools in the play itself, were completely enchanted and remained so, long after the final curtain.

WITH JOSEPH K. Rider as his assistant director and with an obviously devoted crew, Mr. Preston presented a tinsel spectacle in which sets, lighting, costumes, music and dancing contributed to turn an "airy nothing" into reality. His performers delivered their lines as if they knew what they meant. Even the two intermissions, shrewdly abbreviated, didn't break the spell.

Dee Owsley, as Puck, embodied to perfection the spirit of Shakespeare's fantasy, combining grace and sauciness with just the right amount of immortal scorn at the absurdity of mortals.

Glenn Howard and lovely Pat Jones, playing Oberon and Titania, wisely subordinated the comedy in their roles to the music and poetry. Exquisitely costumed themselves, they governed a court of silvery attendants whose every movement suggested sprightly moonbeams. By some magic, Miss Jones was able to maintain her fragile dignity even while caressing the asinine Bottom. The lullaby which Christelle Shawley sang to Titania was one of the purest delights of the evening.

IN CONTRAST, the court presided over the Theseus and Hippolyta (David Rosenberg and LaJuana Osborn) was somewhat stuffy, possibly because Shakespeare made it so. It is regrettable that Miss Osborn, of proven talent, couldn't have had a richer part.

One of the best surprises of the evening was what DeLinda Frazier was able to do as the love-bom Helena, turning the very insipidity of the role into an asset and successfully rivaling Trudy Haarman's plucky, lovable Hermia. Their respective swains, Edwin Meadow and Preston Breshears, played gallantly but were unavoidably eclipsed by the ladies.

MANY SPECTATORS will remember longest the perennially hilarious spoof on amateur theatrics, the play within the play. To vie with the splendor of the fairy world the Athenian mechanics had to be good — and they were.

Martin McClain as the disfraught producer; Jim Kuttler as Bottom, his insubordinate star; Joe Binford as a squeaky Flute and especially as Thisbe; and Robert Castroll, Bill Delaney and Steve Rogers, impersonating Wall, Lion and Moonshine — made up a comedy team which kept spectators in an uproar and would have had them rolling in the aisles if the isles hadn't been packed already with late-comers.

IT IS THE established privilege of the critic to point out the faults of a performance. Having found none worth mentioning, this reviewer, grateful for an evening of superb entertainment, waived that right.