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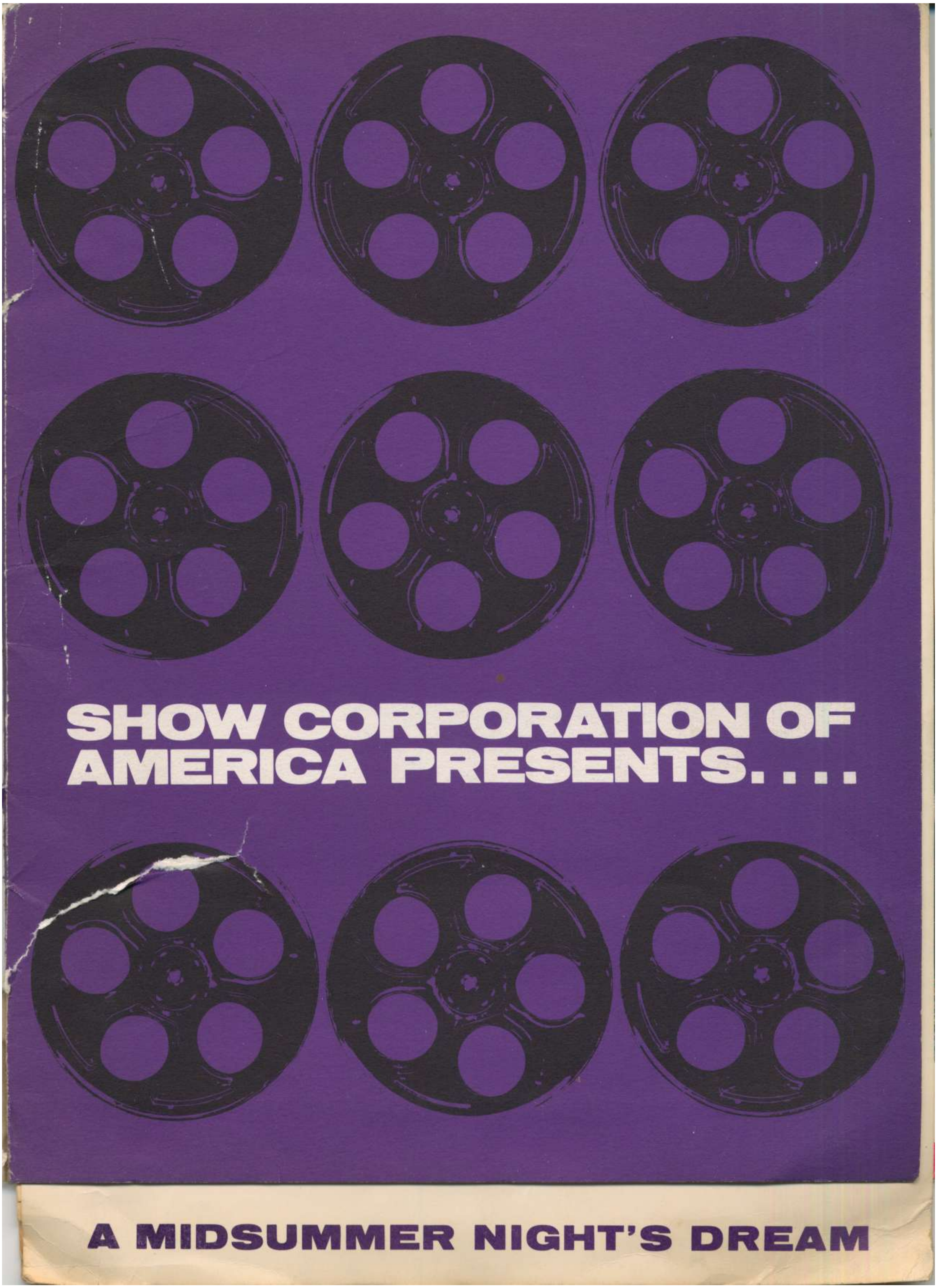

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The Exhibitor's Workbook for A Midsummer Night's Dream

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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

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January 1962

Promenade

Magazine

espeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, *film acted by Jiri Trnka puppets, told by Richard Burton, at the Guild Theatre*

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WINNER OF A CANNES FESTIVAL GRAND PRIX

"ONE of the FINEST...

AN EXQUISITE JOB IT IS!" *Beckley, Herald Tribune*

RICHARD BURTON "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Cinemescope and Eastmancolor

"YEAR'S 10 BEST!"

Time Magazine

"SHEER DELIGHT!

Enchanting fantasy!"

—Life Magazine

"A WELCOME TREAT!"

—Cook, World-Telegram

"EARNESTLY RECOMMENDED!

Richard Burton does such a splendid job that he may be longer remembered for this than for 'Camelot'!" *—Gilbert, Mirror*

"WONDERFUL!

A rare treat!"

—Zunser, Cue Magazine

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Well Met by Moonlight

A Midsummer Night's Dream (Showcorporation). Presenting Shakespeare with puppets is like playing Beethoven on a kazoo: it sounds awful, but if you can get used to the idea it can be fun. Indeed, when the trick is brought off as brilliantly as it is here, even the Shakespurists may indulge in a delighted suspension of disbelief. *Dream* was produced in Czechoslovakia by a 49-year-old gimcrack genius named Jiri Trnka (pronounced Trnka), the Walt Disney of the Communist bloc; it is incomparably the best puppet picture ever made, a shimmering translation of poetic fancy into technological fantasy, a planned delirium of light and color for the educated eye, and for literary innocents of whatever age the perfect introduction to Shakespeare.

For the first few minutes, the spectator is inevitably aware of Trnka's technology. The puppets, flesh of pliable plastic poured on strong steel frames, are marvelously alive but not necessarily human. They are, in fact, inspired refractions of the poet's entities, born of a fancy quite as wild as Will's. "Sweet Puck," for instance, Shakespeare's "knavish sprite," is imagined as a sort of naughty Ariel, a boy with the soul of a faun. "Jealous Oberon" is a grand abstraction of stag, noble and serious but indifferent, a thing of dells and vanishings, a silence of eyes, the spirit of the forest watching. And Huntress Hippolyta looks like a sort of Katharine Hepburn on a Grecian urn. Moreover, the puppets move with amazing fluidity and naturalness—every second of screen time represents 24 changes of position; the complete film, running 74 minutes, required exactly 106,560 moves —through scenes designed with antic charm and persistent style. The spectator soon accepts the intricate artifice and sinks happily into a swoon of poesy and forms, well met by moonlight.

The story and the dialogue, though mildly abridged, are purely Shakespeare's. Lob and lovers, oafs and ouphes by peradventure meet and mischief in the wold, and afterward convene at court to celebrate the prince's nuptials with "The Most Lamentable Comedy, and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby," performed by a cast of coxcomical clods. Alas, this "palpable-gross play," even with actors from London's Old Vic Theater to read the roles in the U.S. version, is far less funny in puppetry than it is in person—the soul of the joke, as Shakespeare tells it, is that real live people are making such asses of themselves. But whenever the film depends less on what is said than on what is seen, it is fantastically good. Let an acorn fall from a tree, does it lie there like any natural nut? No, it is an acorn of the mind that spins like a top, turns suddenly into a busy little

BOTTOM AS ASS
Kazooing it.

brownie and goes bustling off into the grass. Let "proud Titania" glide through a glade, does she flutter like any common fairy? No, she is borne on a whispering bejeweled wind of minikin glittering wings.

Truly, in Trnka the play and its poet have found a richly susceptible servitor whose "eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,

. . . bodies forth
The forms of things unknown . . .
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination . . ."

TIME MAGAZINE

THE BEST PICTURES OF 1961

FOREIGN

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. Shakespeare's fantasy re-enacted with puppets (*see above*).

BALLAD OF A SOLDIER. The best Russian movie since World War II: Director Grigori Chukhrai's tender, sentimental, humorous, passionate, imaginative story of love without benefit of Lenin in a Russia without time for love.

BREATHLESS. Director Jean-Luc Godard, a 30-year-old Frenchman, produced a striking piece of cubistic cinema —technically and experimentally the most original film of the year—that describes the last three days of sex and violence in the life of a young thug (portrayed in feral fashion by Jean-Paul Belmondo).

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NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

A MIDSUMMER IGHT'S DREAM"

JILD THEATER

A full-length animation version in Eastncolor of the play by William Shakeeare, narrated by Richard Burton and ading players of The Old Vic, created d designed by Jiri Trnka, text adapted d directed by Howard Sackler, presented Showcorporation. Running time: 74 nutes.

One of the finest of the oliday films is the Czechoslokian-British "A Midsumer-Night's Dream." Puppets y their nature suggest ildren, and it may well be at many an imaginative ild will respond immediately nd permanently to this film. ut, in any case, adults of like erceptiveness surely will, for ot only is this the work of e famed Czechoslovakian nimator, Jiri Trnka (prounced as though there were n "i" between the "r" and the n") but the soundtrack is argely Shakespeare's poetry ead by a superior British cast, eading players of the Old Vic, arration by Richard Burton.

The text of this English ersion of Trnka's film was adapted and directed by Howard Sackler, and an exquisite job it is—and it should e noted that Trnka's puppets o not move their lips and consequently present no synchronization problem for the dubbing.

Trnka works in what is called stop movement puppetry, that is, each puppet or drapery or background is photographed, moved and re-photographed until in the finished movie all movement is marvelously supple. So ingeniously does Trnka (who may be remembered for his earlier "The Emperor's Nightingale") handle his puppets that there is almost the illusion of flesh at times. And his designs are cunningly apt, whether acorn elves or heart-shaped heroines—even Theseus' Amazon bride is portrayed with relish leaping from her horse to bound quicker after the hind on foot.

Soon you begin to forget these are puppets pinched here and there and pushed along shot by shot. Trnka's figures and Sackler's judicious selecting from Shakespeare restores wonderfully the Renaissance spirit, by the most modern of animation techniques bringing old illusions to life. By all means take the children. They are not likely to get a nicer introduction to Shakespeare. P.V.B.

NEW YORK MIRROR

Czech Puppets a Joy

By JUSTIN GILBERT

Today's New Movie

A Mid-Summer Night's am," an animated puppet vie at the Guild, may certainly considered the cleverest of its l ever produced.

nported from Czechoslovokia, entire production was conved by a man named Jiri ka, who has done more with -motion technique and adced photographic processes n any animator before him.

HOUGH the puppets never ve their mouths, and all of ir lines are supplied by Eng actors, the movements of ir bodies are so lifelike that may find himself hard put to ept the fact that they are re miniatures.

he flesh tones are remarke, the musculature of the tiny ures frequently beyond belief. What they do is neither cute nor typically cartoon-like. And as they go through the paces of one of Shakespeare's more joyous comedies, they communicate a sense of live theatre.

If your children (or any adults you know, for that matter) want to see and hear Shakespeare without tears or trouble, this movie is earnestly recommended.

NOT ALL of it is pure Shakespeare, but where Trnka has extemporized, he has created glowing addenda.

Richard Burton narrates the story, does such a splendid job that he may be longer remembered for this puppet picture than for his appearance in "Camelot."

NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM AND SUN

Puppet Version Of Shakespeare

"A Mid-Summer Night's Dream" is given a charming, fanciful treatment in a puppet version at the Guild. The color is a mood theme in itself, bright and gay for happiness and forbiddingly drear when events turn ominous.

QUINCE, THE CARPENTER . . . in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

The puppets are fetching little creatures, apparently designed to approach their Shakespearean tasks with wide-eyed wonder. They seem endlessly amazed at fairy magic and bustle eagerly through love sequences.

Echo of Play.

Naturally, this movie lasting only 74 minutes can be only a vague echo of the play. The fantasy is given full attention with occasional accompaniment of Shakepearean language. Shakespeare or not, the spirit of the puppets and the script created for them is ingratiating.

The puppets are the creation of Jiri Trnka, a Czech puppeteer and animated cartoon producer, remembered here mainly for his delightful fairy tale with puppets, "The Emperor's Nightingale," a decade ago. He made the film in his Prague studio and then sent it abroad for addition of the spoken text.

Treat for Children.

Richard Burton is the main narrator and members of The Old Vic in London spoke the lines that the puppets were allowed to preserve from Shakespeare.

This should be a welcome treat for children and for Shakespeare buffs who can relish seeing their master given a l. t though by no means irreverent treatment. Shakespeare's ghost thus may feel relieved of the onus left by the last film production of the play in 1935.

That production, staged by Max Reinhardt with all the Warner Bros. stars, still rates as one of the great financial flops of all movie history. This should wipe away the stain.

COOK.

LIFE MAGAZINE

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM is sheer delight. Here Shakespeare's enchanting fantasy of humans beset by elves and fairy monarchs is acted by some of the funniest and most appealing plastic puppets ever. A Czechoslovakian genius named Jiri Trnka created them and made them move for the camera. The voices belong to actors of London's Old Vic Company.

Bottom is top puppet in a good new winter night's film

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MAT 2A

Hermia sees Demetrius and Lysander duel for her hand in marriage.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the ..... theatre.

MAT 2B

Quince, the amateur playwright (center), rehearses his fellow artisans Flute, Bottom, Snug and Starveling.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the ..... theatre.

MAT 2C

Titania, Queen of the Fairies, rebuffs the attentions of Oberon, the Fairy King.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the ..... theatre.

MAT 2D

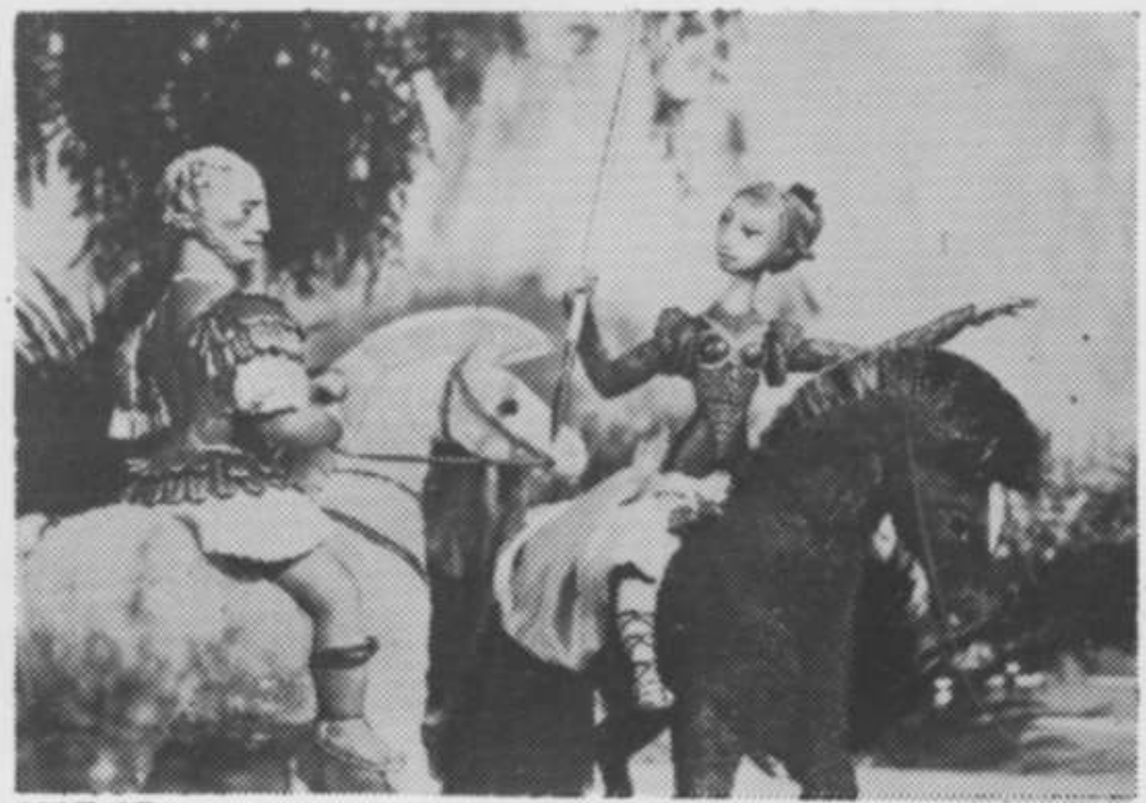
Puck plans further mischief.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the ..... theatre.

MAT 2E

Titania falls in love with Bottom, who is bewitched with an ass's head.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the ..... theatre.



MAT 2F

Theseus, duke of Athens, and his betrothed Hippolyta, former queen of the Amazons, lead the royal hunt.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the ..... theatre.

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MAT 1C

Puck looks gleefully at the hilarious high-jinx he has created.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the .....theatre.

MAT 1D

Titania, Queen of the Fairies, dons her magic cape made up of millions of tiny forest creatures.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the .....theatre.

MAT 1A

Barbara Jefford, leading actress of the celebrated Old Vic Company in London, speaks the role of Titania.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the .....theatre.

MAT 1B

Richard Burton weaves the story of A Mid-Summer Night's Dream.

A Showcorporation release in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor of the feature-length film production of William Shakespeare's A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, created and designed by Jiri Trnka, in full dimension animation, told by Richard Burton and leading players of the Old Vic. Now at the .....theatre.

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A 'DREAM' OF POETIC BEAUTY

'If we shadow have offended
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have slumber'd here,
While these visions did appear
And this weak and idle theme
No more yielding but a dream. '

And so William Shakespeare, with poetry and a roll of drums, assures us that his 'Mid Summer Night's Dream ' belongs to the magic fantasy world, the world of Puck, Titania, Quince and Bottom.

The producers of the newest film treatment of the Shakespeare classic, the story of moon-madness, elves and fairy kings and queens, enrich this magic fantasy world by giving us 'A Midsummer Night's Dream" in full dimension animation. As this unusual film, created in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor, opens, it is as if Cupid himself turns his bow and arrow at the audience and wounds us with beauty and poetry. In a moment, we are transported to the world of 'Midsummer Night's Dream ' not inhabited by mere mortals but animated creatures, moving sprightly about with grace and humor.

Richard Burton, the distinguished Shakespearean actor, serves as narrator for the film, presented by Showcorporation, and leading players of The Old Vic speak the parts as the fascinating animated characters go through their roles.

Showcorporation's presentation of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream ' is no mere cartoon approach to Shakespeare. With the marvelous figures of Jiri Trnka, who created another great animated film, 'The Emperor's Nightingale ', 'A Midsummer Night's Dream ' retains all its poetry and yet acquires a new dimension ....one of incredible beauty and illusion. Trnka's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream ', gives beauty and excitement to the eye and ear.

The impression of movement in Trnka's magic 'cast ', according to the producers, is achieved by the animator's minute alteration of his figures for each frame of the film.

A movement which flashes across the screen in one second is composed of 24 different positions. One minute of the film requires 1,440 such movement, and the completed motion picture you are viewing represents 106,560 position changes. Movement does not end with the bodies of the 'actors '. Their clothes and veils are also made to move. Shawls and cloaks have thin wires attached so that only the edges move. Under Jiri Trnka's supervision of 'Dream ', each major character was assigned his own human technician who preserved its particular traits and qualities throughout the course of the film. The film's detail is as impressive as that going into the most elaborate Broadway or Hollywood musical, but all in miniature. Not to be overlooked is the utilization of the most modern techniques in film photography which have been employed exactly as if the actors were humans.

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Feature Story #1

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM INTERPRETED BY ITS AMERICAN DIRECTOR

(Howard Sackler, Maxwell Anderson Prize poet and director of the Caedmon stereo record albums for the Shakespeare Recording Society is a practicing authority on the sound of Shakespeare. Mr. Sackler adapted the text and directed Richard Burton and members of the Old Vic Company in recording the sound track for "A Midsummer Night's Dream", the animated color film by Jiri Trnka.)

Howard Sackler made a flying trip to New York from London to put the finishing touches to "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (which opens at the _____ Theatre on _____) and talked for a brief moment about the project.

"One deviation from the play was an addition. I selected one of Shakespeare's sonnets, the fifteenth, 'When I consider everything that grows,' and gave it to Richard Burton as a prologue. It reflects the essential mood of the play and sets the tone.

"The narration is done with the idea of simple elegance. With regard to the animated puppets, I tried to make them speak whenever there were gestures indicating speech. Actually, the music and color in this film so enhance Shakespeare's text, that it does not need so many words.

"Trnka has given the characters the personality of what used to be called 'humours', such as angry, poetical, etc. For example, Demetrius is physically presented as a sort of brigadier, whereas Lysander is poetical and Hippolyta is presented as more of an Amazon in the film than in the play.

"In selecting Richard Burton for the overall narrating voice, I felt we had exactly the right combination of the romantic and the humorous, the main elements of the play.

"For the characters, I chose voices that approximate the feel of the individual puppet. Oberon has a good, dark brown voice. Helena's is that of a pushy, neurotic nag. The addition of voices adds characterization and personality. Bottom is generally portrayed as a heavy, but since the film's puppet is light, his voice had to be light.

"Fitting the speech on the sound track to the image on the screen in this particular film gives one more leeway than synchronizing for human actors. Here with the puppets there is much greater room for improvisation. I looked for a style to go with the picture. To have played the lines realistically would have been death. Richard Burton provides the strictly human relationship between the film and the audience.

"The music would generally dictate the method of speech. It was necessary to shape the dialogue to the music that was there. When directing the voices, I kept one ear tuned in on the music. In a few places I directed the actors synchronously with the music. I felt the music was good and right and gave the film a consistency which I should build upon rather than change.

"Trnka's most important change in the treatment of the Pyramus and Thisbe play-within-a-play. It was conceived by Shakespeare originally as a satire of the current period. It is usually played for laughs. Somehow, for modern audiences, the idea of suicide never registers. As a result, I think Trnka's idea of bringing Puck back near the end of the play to make the death of Pyramus and Thisbe a romantic one is a singularly brilliant stroke."

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Feature Story #2

HOW MASTER ANIMATOR WORKS by John Hubley

(Academy Award winner for the animated short. "Moonbird" and creator of the new feature-length animated film. "Of Stars and Men.")

If you were to shoot a movie of any object, say a toy train, one frame at a time and you moved the train one inch to the left between each exposure, when you project this film you'd see the train roaring by in full motion..

This is the way "stop action" animated puppet films are made. The puppeteer uses mobile, flexible puppets for models and moves their arms, legs, eyes or trains; shooting them a frame at a time. This mechanical life-giving process produces walking, talking dolls on the screen. The esthetic problem posed here is to overcome the robot effect and create a sense of life, or, a style of natural motion.

The indisputable master of this form is Jiri Trnka, whose latest feature-length film is "A Midsummer Night's Dream," opening at the _____ Theatre in _____ Beginning _____ through_____.

Originally an artist, illustrator and cartoonist, Trnka began making puppet films about fifteen years ago. An earlier work. "The Emperor's Nightingale," has been shown here.

Born in Czechoslovakia, Trnka grew up in an environment of exceptionally expressive puppetry. Several centuries ago, the legitimate theatre of Prague was suppressed and its artists turned to expressing themselves through puppets, establishing a traditional and flourishing art form..

Trnka and his crew have applied themselves to the problem of rhythmic action - and have succeeded like no others. As an example, in the courtyard scene between the lovers, Hermia and Lysander, the dance motion of those puppet figures achieves the sense of life of a master drawing in terms of simplicity, grace and beauty.

The puppeteers were reported to have sketched ballet dancers, studied their movements, and then proceeded to move the models through these motions not by measuring each move with a tape or scale of each area or step, but by an intuitive, empathetic sense of how far the leg should move, how far the head should tilt, much as if they were dancing themselves. To achieve the ultimate illusion, Trnka gave the puppets an extra joint in their insteps to permit them to dance on tiptoe.

Note also that his figures have five fingers, a minute detail perhaps, but a departure from the traditional four-fingered hands of puppets.

When shooting a puppet film, the puppet's movements are broken up into minute, hardly visible, shiftings of all the body parts. An action that flashes across the screen in a second is composed of twenty-four of these inconspicuous shifts. One minute of action would require 1,440 such movements. And in a scene with several characters, that sum would have to be multiplied by the number of those characters.

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In "A Midsummer Night's Dream" there occurs one of the longest single scenes ever shot in a puppet film. It comes at the beginning - Lysander's appearance under Hermia's window wherein his serenade is interrupted by the appearance of his rival Demetrius - and runs more than 300 feet, almost three and a half minutes. But we see only movement, not the meticulous craftsmanship.

One other outstanding technical aspect of the film is the puppets themselves. Over a carefully constructed skeleton, the bodies were moulded out of a rubbery plastic. It is a fine, smooth, flexible substance resembling human skin, but so easily soiled that the puppeteers had to choose between literally handling them with kid gloves or replacing them from time to time. The puppeteers found that they absolutely lost the feeling for subtle movement when wearing gloves. The result - five models of Helena, four of Hermia, three of Titania, seven of Puck.

Some of the scenes are unusually detailed. For example we first see Titania, the Fairy Queen, floating through the forest wearing a long cloak composed entirely of blossoms out of which peep the tiny heads of elves. Titania stops, issues a command, and her cloak disintegrates as the seemingly thousands of fairies, with wings fluttering, scatter over the meadow and into the air.

This feeling of life, love and fun is apparent throughout the film. It is the reason why this film and Trnka's work in general are so compelling.

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Feature Story #3

NOW ANIMATED CREATURES DO 'MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

Such tricks hath strong imagination, wrote Shakespeare in "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

He should see the movie!

For Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" has been brought to the screen in a unique version of animated puppetry. Hand-made flexible statuettes of carved wood and plastic dance across the screen in the roles of Lysander, Hermia, Demetrius, Helena, Titania, Queen of the Fairies, Oberon, her King, and Puck, a mischievous sprite. Their lines from the play are spoken by members of England's Old Vic theater company and actor Richard Burton narrates the film's introduction and story line.

The 74-minute film, which won a Grand Prix award at the Cannes Festival, invokes the art of Jiri Trnka, creator of what is known as the Trnka Method of animated puppetry. This method was also employed in an earlier Trnka Film, 'The Emperor's Nightingale,' which was shown in this country about 10 years ago.

In a brochure distributed at special prevues of the film, the Trnka Method was described as creating the impression of movement by a minute alteration of the position of the (puppet) figures for each frame of film. A movement which flashes across the screen in one second is composed of 24 different positions... The completed motion picture represents 106,560 position changes. Movement does not end with the bodies of the "actors". Their clothes and veils are also made to move.

The position of each puppet's feet, hands, head and body are set by hand. When the figures are 'set' they are photographed. This is done for every frame in the film. The principle is basically like a cartoon film -- except that in "Dream" figures are actually photographed on a scale-sized set.

Although the shortened film involves some 'liberties' with Shakespeare's original script, the Eastmancolor-Cinemascope movie enhances the inherent meaning in the play.

The puppets, the color, the music, the sets --- everything adds to the magical fantastic qualities of this play. There's more reality in the animation of fairyland than trying to do this with human actors.

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Feature Story #4

"MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM" HAS UNIQUE ACTORS AND TECHNIQUES

Perhaps one of the most ingenious films in movie history is "A Midsummer Night's Dream," the new Showcorporation film of Shakespeare's comedy-fantasy starring Richard Burton and members of the Old Vic Company in its local premier as the special feature at the _____ Theatre in _____ beginning _____ through _____.

Created and designed by Jiri Trnka in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor, the film employs a unique new process known as full dimension animation. The impression of movement in the film is produced by the minute rearrangements of the scene and all of the characters for each frame of film. Some scenes required up to 500 individual movements per frame.

A movement which flashes across the screen in one second is actually composed of 24 different frames. One minute of the film requires 1,440 such frames, and the completed motion picture represents an incredible number of changes for 106,560 frames.

Movement does not end with the bodies of the "actors". Their clothes and veils are also made to move. Shawls and cloaks have thin wires attached so that only the edges move.

Under Trnka's supervision of "midsummer", each major character was assigned his own human technician to carry through the particular traits and qualities of each "actor."

And the patient skill of Trnka extends to the creation of the settings, costumes and colorful lighting. The detail is as impressive as that going into the most elaborate Broadway or Hollywood musical, but all in miniature.

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Press Release #1

LOCAL PREMIER OF UNUSUAL "MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM" FILM
RICHARD BURTON STARS WITH MEMBERS OF FAMED OLD VIC COMPANY

The local premier of the new prize-winning film version of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" starring Richard Burton will be the special feature at the _____ Theatre in _____ beginning _____ through _____.

Winner of the Grand Prix at the Cannes Festival, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" features members of the world famous Old Vic Company in this Cinemascope and Eastmancolor presentation released by Showcorporation. Animated in full dimension, this entirely new version of Shakespeare's celebrated comedy-fantasy was created and designed by Jiri Trnka. The play's text was adapted and directed by Howard Sackler and the original score was composed by Vaclav Trojan.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" has been a world-wide favorite since it was first performed in 1598. The enchanting story of Titania and Oberon, the band of comic artisans (including Bottom who is transormed into an ass), the two sets of spirited lovers and the mischievous Puck has appealed to audiences of all ages for 400 years.

"Midsummer" has inspired great artists in all fields to creation. Nearly 50 operas and ballets have been written to the Shakespearean themes, three movies, countless songs and many musical suites, the most famous being that by Felix Mendelssohn. In this Showcorporation production, entirely new levels of achievement have been reached visually, musically and vocally, levels which made the film an international prize-winner.

This unique version of "Midsummer" employs all the artistry and wizardry of film magic and stop-motion photography to depict the romantic story in full dimension animation.

Richard Burton, one of the world's great stage and film stars, performed his portions of "Midsummer" just before he left his starring role as King Arthur in the Broadway musical "Camelot" to go to Rome for the filming of "Cleopatra". Such brilliant Old Vic artists as Barbara Jefford, Jack Gwillim, Alec McCowen and Barbara Leigh Hunt were engaged for the film in London.

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Press Release #2

RICHARD BURTON'S ROLE IN NEW "MIDSUMMER" FILM A LABOR OF LOVE

For Richard Burton, the starring role in the new Showcorporation film of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night' s Dream" was more than just an acting job -- it was a labor of love. The local premier of the prize-winning film created and designed by Jiri Trnka in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor is the special feature at the _____ Theatre in _____ beginning _____ through _____.

In order to make the film last summer, the ruggedly handsome actor had to give up what little leisure time was left over from playing King Arthur in the Broadway musical "Camelot" and preparing for his assignment as Marc Antony in "Cleopatra" opposite Elizabeth Taylor, currently before the cameras in Rome.

The filming of Shakespeare's ever-popular comedy-fantasy also marked a reunion for the distinguished actor with the celebrated Old Vic Company, with whom Burton first came to fame in England. This is his first association with "Midsummer" although he was practically weaned as an actor on the plays of the Bard. Still in his mid-thirties, the dashing star has already scored in such diverse Shakespearean roles as Hamlet, Othello, Iago, Sir Toby Belch in "Twelfth Night" and Prince Hal in "Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2."

The film "Midsummer" will be American movie audiences first opportunity to appraise Richard Burton in a Shakespearean work. He is best known here for his film appearances in "Look Back in Anger," "Desert Rats" and "The Robe". He has also made rare but memorable appearances on television, recently narrating the highly praised series on Winston Churchill.

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Press Release #3

ACTOR IS A NATURAL IN "MIDSUMMER" FILM

Sir Laurence Olivier and Sir John Gielgud had better look to their laurels! There's a talented new English actor making his local debut in the new Showcorporation film of "A Midsummer Night's Dream", now in its local premier as the special feature at the _____ Theatre in _____ beginning _____ through _____.

The actor is Roger Shepherd, and at the age of 12, his performace as the voice of the mischievous Puck makes him the youngest Shakespearean veteran extant.

Director Howard Sackler found young Roger at the Corona School in London after an intensive search for an actor who would bring the genuine youthful exuberance to the part of Puck naturally.

Arriving for rehearsals with an illustrious cast from the Old Vic Company, the friendly and unaffected young actor impressed even his most experienced coworkers with his professional approach to acting. He had memorized all his lines beforehand, but remained flexible in responding to all of director Sackler's suggestions.

Roger, who lives at home with his parents and a brother, is very active in sports when he's not acting. He is especially adept at swimming and tennis, and organized a fishing club at school.

An out-going fun-loving boy, Roger Shepherd proved to be a natural as Puck in a most successful case of type-casting.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" starring Richard Burton was created and designed by Jiri Trnka in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor.

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Press Release #4

SACKLER DIRECTS BURTON & OLD VIC IN UNIQUE NEW "MIDSUMMER" FILM

London's celebrated Old Vic Company participates in a rare film venture in the new Showcorporation release of Shakespeare's comedy-fantasy "A Midsummer Night's Dream". The local premier of the prize-winning film starring Richard Burton, created and designed by Jiri Trnka in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor, is the special feature at the _____ Theatre in _____ beginning _____ through _____.

The man responsible for bringing leading players from the distinguished stage company and Burton into the film project is adapter-director Howard Sackler, who at 32 has already built up a reputation as one of the most versatile directors around.

Sackler is best known for his work in the field of dramatic recordings. He has directed such stars as Ingrid Bergman, Trevor Howard, Julie Harris, Paul Scofield and Margaret Leighton in disc sessions of classic and contemporary plays and poetry for Caedmon Records.

The young director became a trans-Atlantic commuter for his work on the "Midsummer" film. After completing final revisions on the script he went to London to select his cast at the Old Vic and put them through their paces there last spring. When that was finished, he came to New York to work with Richard Burton, who did the film in the afternoons while acting on Broadway at night as King Arthur in the musical "Camelot."

Burton stated that one of the main reasons for his interest in the film was the sense of a unique view of Shakespeare that Sackler's own enthusiasm for the picture had created.

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Press Release #4

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Press Release #5

"MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM," NOW ON FILM, IS STILL A SMASH HIT AFTER NEARLY 400 YEARS

After all these years, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is still a comedy favorite of audiences all over the world. Movie-goers will have an opportunity to enjoy Shakespeare's comedy-fantasy when the local premier of the new Show-corporation release starring Richard Burton and members of the Old Vic Company opens as the special feature at the _____ Theatre in _____ beginning _____ through _____.

Written in 1595 when Shakespeare was about 30 years old, "Midsummer" was further polished and revised as a wedding gift for Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, in 1598. However, no details of any performance before the 17th century have been preserved.

In his famous diary, Samuel Pepys records seeing the play in 1662, and 30 years later there are references to an adaptation entitled "The Fairy Queen" with music by Henry Purcell. The first recorded revival of "Midsummer" in London with an authentic text and the music by Felix Mendelssohn was brought out at Covent Garden in 1840. The play's fame and popularity spread all over the world, having a universal appeal stemming from its humor, poetry and fantasy.

More recently the Old Vic has presented the play with great frequency in London ever since 1914, and sent an elaborate version on an American tour in 1954. There have been three major productions in North America in the last decade, offered at Stratford, Conn., and Ontario, and in Central Park by the New York Shakespeare Festival.

The new "Midsummer" film was created and designed by Jiri Trnka in Cinemascope and Eastmancolor.

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Press Release #6

SHAKESPEARE SAID IT FIRST IN "MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

The plays of William Shakespeare abound in notable quotes, and his popular comedy-fantasy "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is no exception. The delightful lines of Puck, Titania and Oberon are spotlighted again in the new Showcorporation film of "Midsummer", currently in its local premier engagement as the special feature at the _____ Theatre in _____ beginning _____ through _____.

Two particularly famous quotes attest to the timeliness of Shakespeare throughout the ages. The Bard summed up the state of love rather simply: "The course of true love never did run smooth". He also opined: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Times may have changed, but "true love" and "mortals" have not.

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COLUMN NOTES

Shakespeare said it first. One of the best-loved lines in the Bard's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' vows that "The course of true love never did run smooth."

* * * * * * * *

Shakespeare's view of the world proves that things haven't changed much in 300 years. In the Bard's "A Midsummer Night's Dream", the irrepressible Puck sums up the status quo with "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

* * * * * * * *

It took director Jiri Trnka more than two years of actual filming to bring Shakespeare's delightful comedy to the screen. Each second of film represents 24 frames, and the puppet actors required a minute position change for each frame. One minute of film necessitated 1,440 such position changes. The entire film represents 106,560 separate camera shots.

* * * * * * * *

The role of Puck, the mischievous child in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', is usually played by a girl or a dancer. In the new Showcorporation film version of Shakespeare's comedy-fantasy, the part is played by 12 year-old Roger Shepherd.

* * * * * * * *

Asked about the biggest problem in making his new film "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Jiri Trnka replied, "The little finger!" The noted puppet-film maker went on to explain that he meant the little finger on the puppets' hands. "You wouldn't believe how difficult it is to work with a five-fingered puppet when for 10 years I have animated only four-fingered ones."

* * * * * * * *

Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream", currently the subject of a colorful film version, has been a source of inspiration ever since its original production. For example, over 13 full length operas and operettas have been based on the play, and over 100 other musical works.

* * * * * * * *

'A Midsummer Night's Dream', Shakespeare's romantic comedy, was inspired by a real-life romance. The play was commissioned by Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, in honor of his wedding to Mistress Elizabeth Vernon.

* * * * * * * *

Richard Burton, who was so enchanted with the film version of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' that he agreed to take time off from "Camelot" to provide the narration, chose this as his only film assignment before the monumental undertaking of Marc Antony, suitor to Elizabeth Taylor's "Cleopatra".

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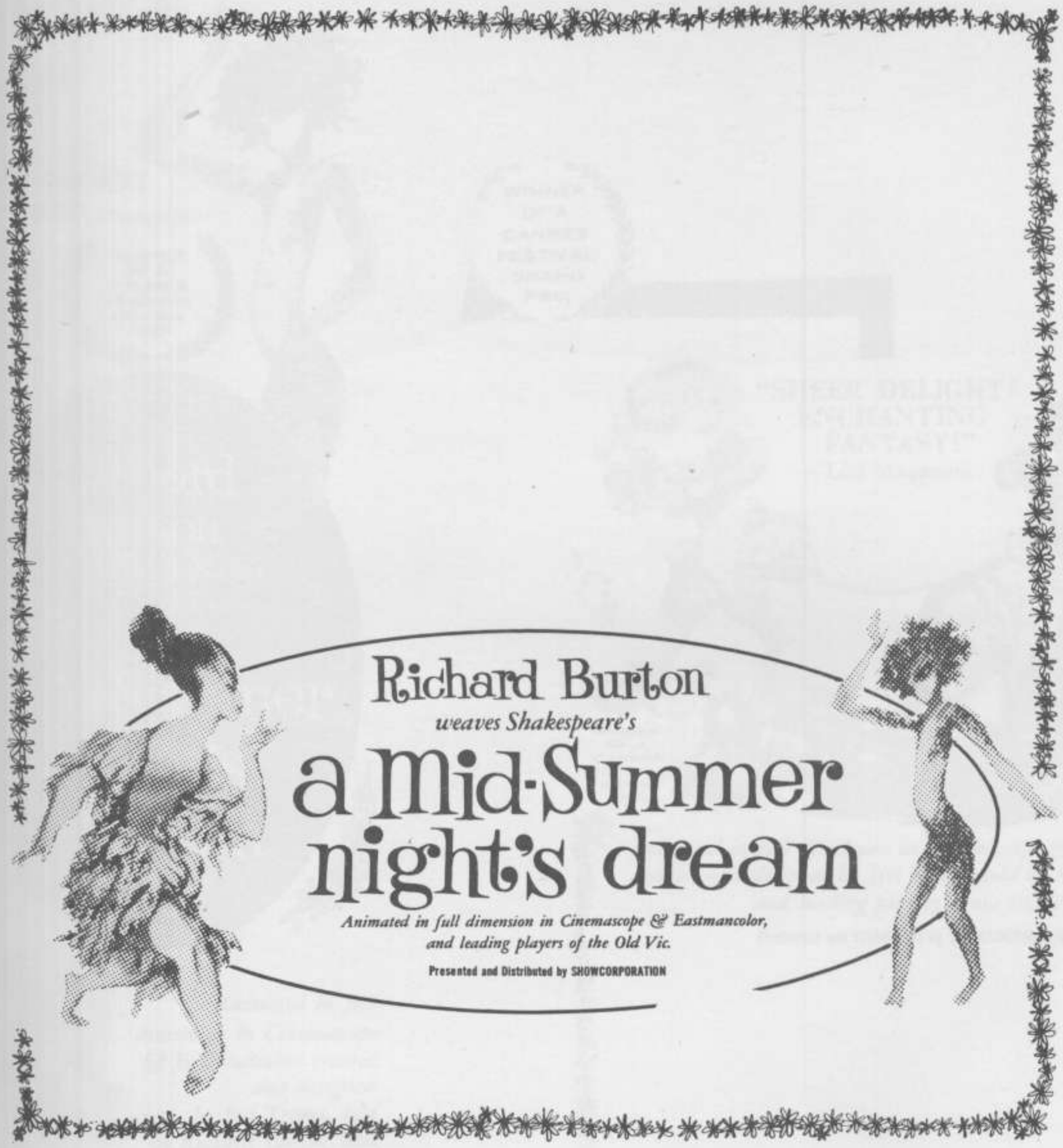

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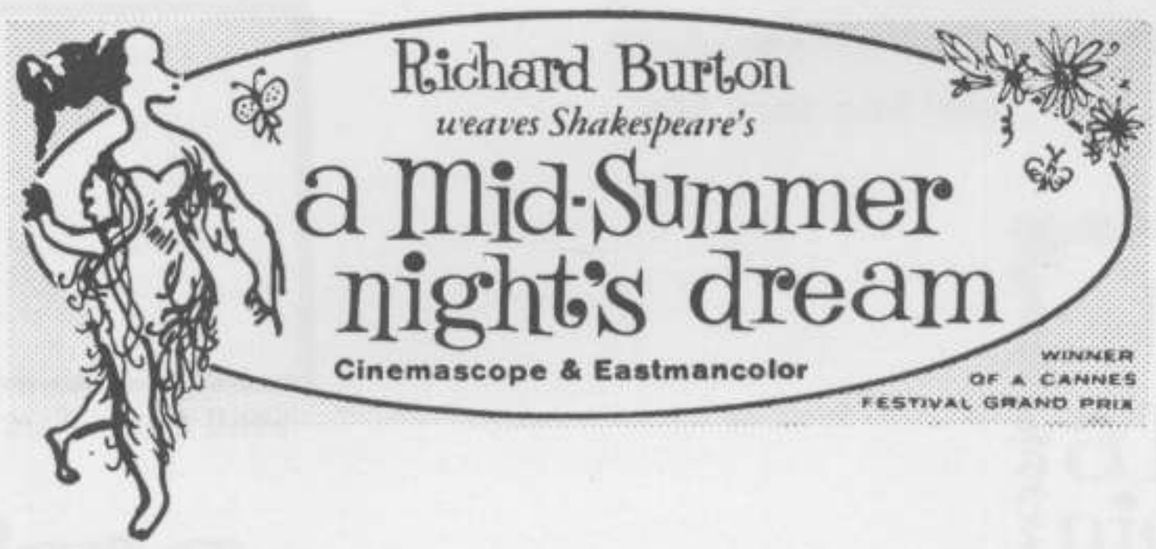

201 2 col. x 26 lines

202 2 col. x 16 lines

302, 207, 203, 201, 104, 102 are available as a combination mat.

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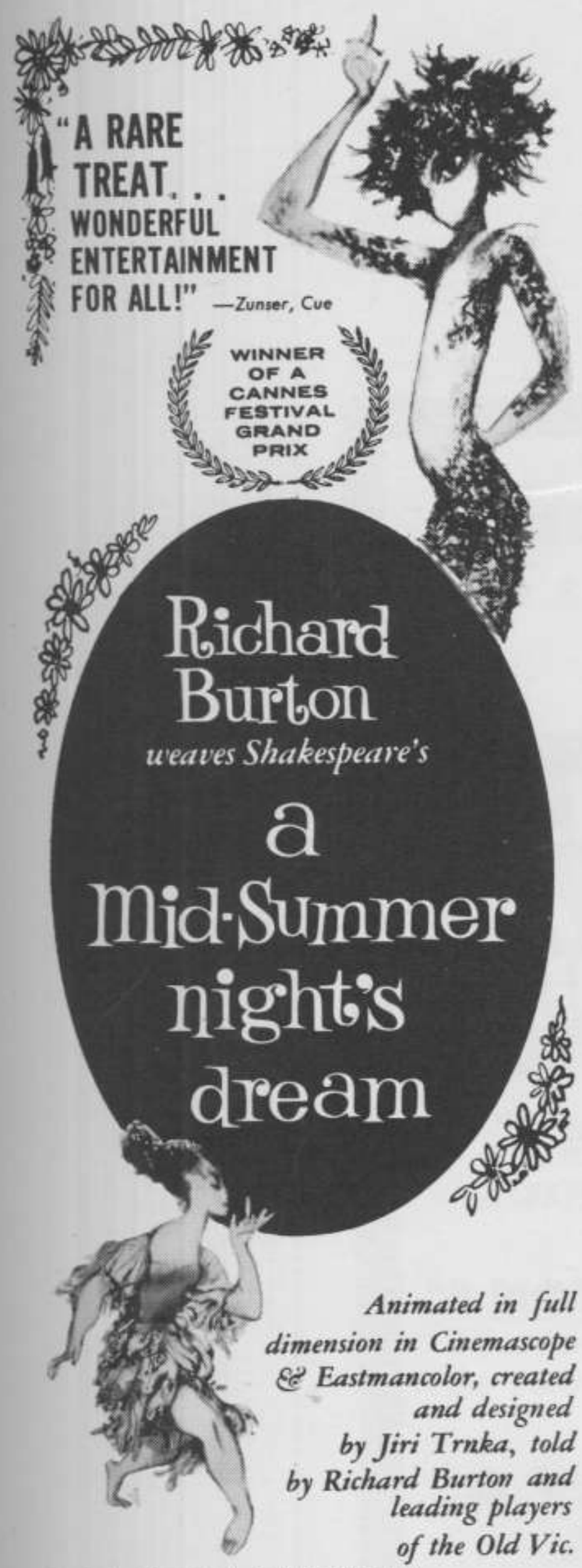
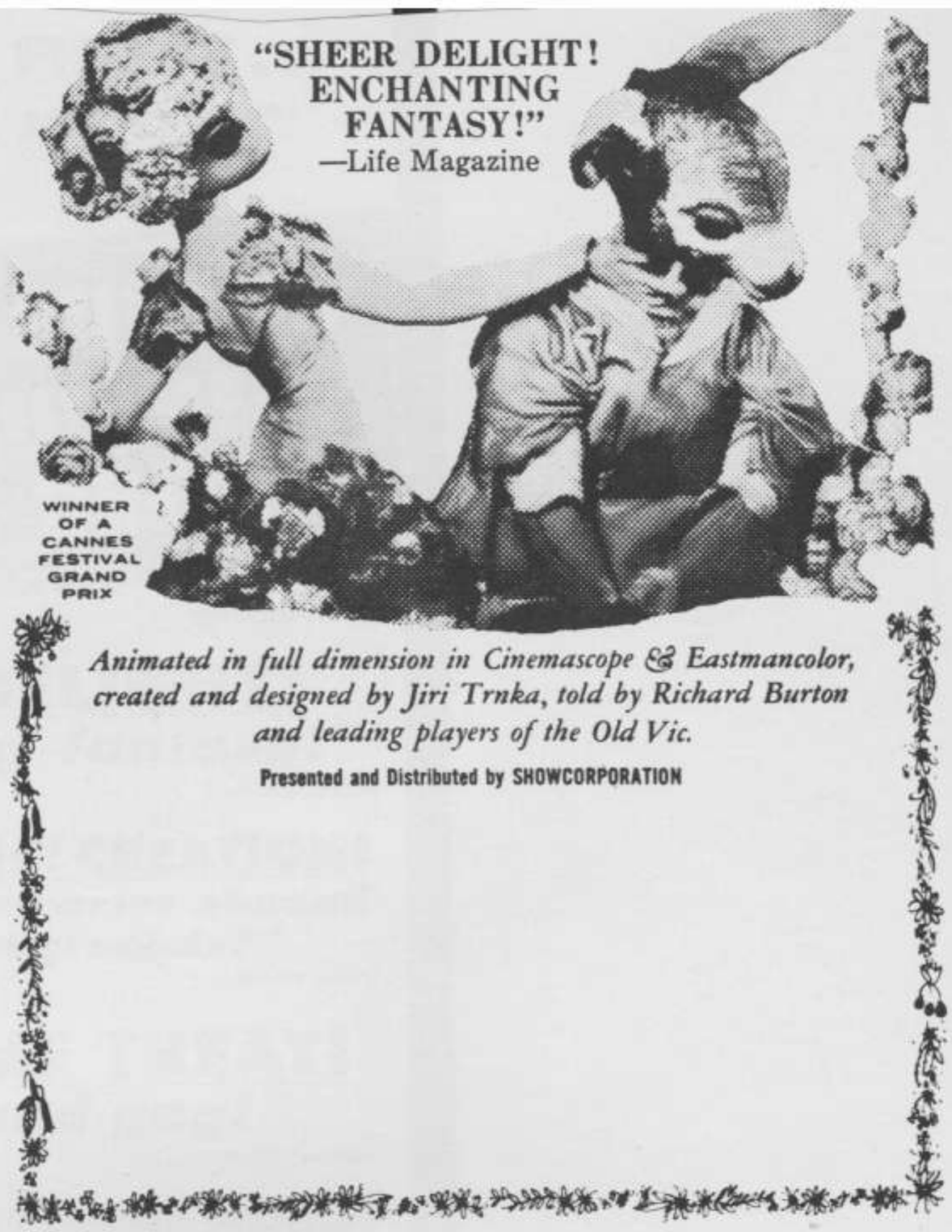


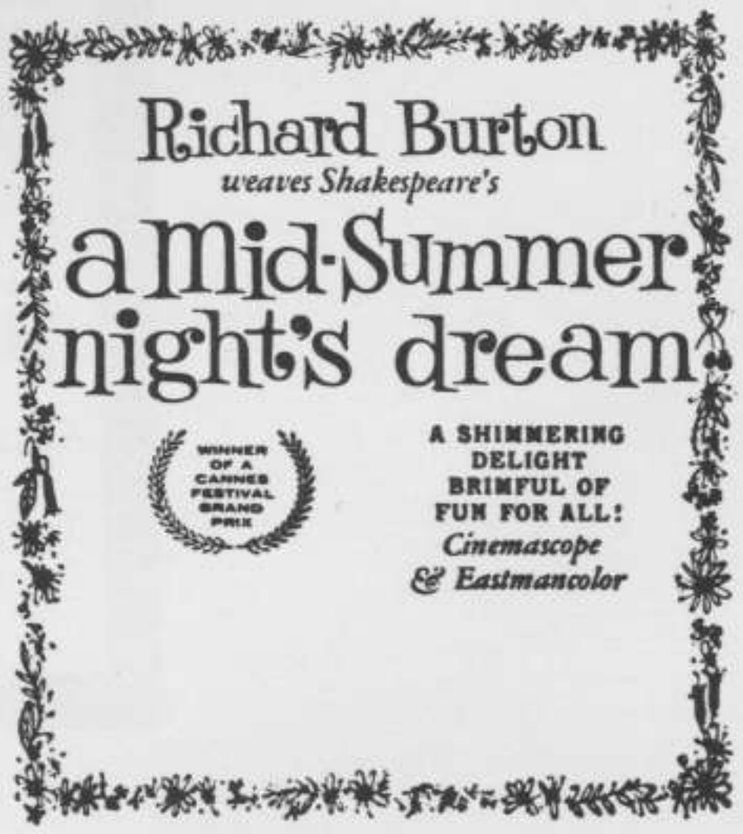
101 1 col. (column width 2¼") x 108 lines



203 2 col. x 94 lines

Richard Burton
weaves Shakespeare's
a Mid-Summer night's dream

207 2 col. x 28 lines



102 1 col. (column width 2¼") x 36 lines

This Page

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WINNER OF A CANNES FESTIVAL GRAND PRIX

"ONE of the FINEST...
AN EXQUISITE JOB IT IS!"
Beckley, Herald Tribune

RICHARD BURTON "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Cinemescope and Eastmancolor

Presented and Distributed by
SHOWCORPORATION

"SHEER DELIGHT!
Enchanting fantasy!"
—Life Magazine

"A NOTEWORTHY CREATION!
Photographic miracles abound in fabulous backgrounds!"
—Masters, News

"A WELCOME TREAT!
Bright and gay!"
—Cook, World-Telegram

"EARNESTLY RECOMMENDED!
Richard Burton does such a splendid job that he may be longer remembered for this than for 'Camelot'!"
—Gilbert, Mirror

"WONDERFUL!
Entertainment for all... for all ages and on all levels. A rare treat!"
—Zunser, Cue Magazine

"YEAR'S 10 BEST!"
Time Magazine

206 2 col. x 120 lines

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'One of the finest!'
—Paul V. Beckley, Herald Tribune

'Sheer delight!'
—Life Magazine

'Bright and gay!'
— Alton Cook, World-Telegram

'A rare treat!'
—Jesse Zunser, Cue Mag.

RICHARD BURTON
"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Cinemescope and
Eastman color

204 2 col. x 58 lines

Richard Burton
weaves Shakespeare's
a Mid-Summer night's dream

104 1 col. x 15 lines

'One of the finest!'
—Paul V. Beckley, Herald Tribune

RICHARD BURTON
"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Cinemescope and
Eastman color

205 2 col. x 35 lines

'One of the finest!'
—Paul V. Beckley, Herald Tribune

'Sheer delight!'
—Life Magazine

'Bright and gay!'
—Alton Cook, World-Telegram

'A rare treat!'
—Jesse Zunser, Cue Mag.

RICHARD BURTON
"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Cinemescope and
Eastman color

103 1 col. x 28 lines

Richard Burton
weaves Shakespeare's
a Mid-Summer night's dream

302 3 col. x 38 lines

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Full color 40 x 60 easel display

Full color 1 sheet also available as a 14 x 22 window card.

Full color 22 x 28

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Full color 11 x 14's

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SHOW CORPORATION
0 EAST 56TH ST., NEW YORK 22, N.Y., CABLE ADDRESS: SHOCORPAM/PHONE: PLAZA 9-6840

MEMO TO: The Exhibitor

EXPLOITATION-PROMOTION-MERCHANDISING PLANS

'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Critical acclaim alone (and "Midsummer" has it) will not do the job for this movie. A complete exploitation-promotion-merchandising plan must be rolling in high gear prior to your opening.

The entire campaign must be well conceived and well executed. It need not be expensive, but timing and coordination (particularly pre-opening) must really mesh. What follows is an assortment of ideas meant to stimulate your own creative powers.

A. Elements Conducive to Promotion

1. Highly stylized character puppets and sheer beauty throughout.
2. The cultural-intellectual aspects of this Shakespearian classic.
3. Parents who would like their children to see and enjoy this movie.
4. The sound track is a brand new symphonic score.
5. Richard Burton is a top name -- one you can publicize and promote.
6. Actors of the first caliber are featured. All Old Vic veterans.
7. An audience target in the schools and colleges.
8. Artistically beautiful full-color transparencies are available, applicable to brochures, programs and other types of reproduction.
9. Critical acclaim for the movie, the musical score and from the standpoint of visual art. This is craftsmanship at its best.
10. This is 'mass' Shakespeare.

B. Adult Audience Approach

High level controversy may be brought into play to sell 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' to adults. This can be done legitimately. Although the producer of this film goes along with the classic version pictorially and with puppets, he abridges Shakespeare by using a narration plus segments of Shakespeare's dialogue. To this he adds an original musical score.

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The controversy is this: 'it's entertaining, but is it really Shakespeare?' his debate can be fanned, to the benefit of the film, in this manner:

1. Put this question to drama critics viewing the film. They may go with this approach in their reviews.

2. Set up special screenings for groups of Shakespearean scholars, teachers, literary critics, actors, music critics, etc. and ask for their comments in writing. Use them to fan the controversy.

3. Show the film to Impressionist artists and art critics who go for Impressionism. Permit them to draw their impressions and exhibit their art side by side with stills. Sell this 'art show" to a newspaper.

4. Announce an "Is It Really Shakespeare" contest. Entry blanks should be available only at the theatre and through cooperating agencies. Make the contest a 50 word essay and offer prizes in each city. This contest idea could also be extended on a high school or university level with a cash award.

5. Make this controversy hot enough and you will command time and space all over, including TV panel shows and radio interviews.

C. The Younger Set

Matinees are for children. And this is one movie where adults and teachers will help sell the kids. However, a planned effort is necessary. Here's how:

1. Screen the film for the top PTA, Women's Clubs, Community center heads in the area. Sell one group or all the idea of making 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' a major project during vacations and specific school days or weekends. These are Theatre Parties for kids and should sell-out the house. A mid-week arrangement will work only if you can arrange for groups to get out of school.

2. The Theatre Party idea can also be arranged for mid-week evenings with high school English classes and College students, faculty and friends. This is block selling at its best.

3. As for individual children, make each theatre showing of "Midsummer" into drawing card. For example:

   a. All of the art and display work available can be jack-potted into a 'do it yourself' kit for theatre managers to dress up their lobbies into a 'Midsummer Night's Dream.'

   b. Give prizes for school and organization contests that produce art work, essays, and other visual material you can display in the lobby or in space provided by cooperating merchants, libraries, etc.

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c. Each theatre can have a 'Midsummer Night's Dream' costume contest, with prizes at every matinee performance.

Community-Level Activities

1. Group Cooperation

The phone call and the letter are your most effective tools in gathering group support for this film. 'Midsummer" has all the credentials one might wish for in selling educational, religious, social or philanthropic groups. Photostat or extract the reviews of special significance to each group and mail along with a personal letter outlining your exhibition plans.

2. Commercial Tie-ups

Banks, department stores, appliance chains are among the most obvious promotion partners. You have the necessary equipment for an all-out promotion effort. The film title gives you the theme. It is equally applicable to push for air conditioner sales or a lingerie tie-up. You have eye-catching window and store display material available. Local props (donkey's head, laurel wreath, floral display) may be requisitioned as needed. Book stores, record album retailers and toy and novelty sellers are other natural allies.

3. Educational Assistance

'Midsummer' is in the junior high or high school curriculum in most schools throughout the country. Teachers and administrators welcome this opportunity to provide a pleasant introduction to Shakespeare, recognizing the validity of this performance despite its Full Dimension Animation Cinemascope and Eastmancolor sugar-coating. Limited pre-screenings for the educational decision-makers and community opinion-makers will result in the beginnings of an effective word-of mouth campaign.

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Sample Letter #1

Special Preview of
Shakespeare's
'A Midsummer Night's Dream'
as told by
Richard Burton and
Members of the Old Vic

Dear

You are cordially invited to attend a special advance screening of an unusual and delightful new film of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'

This motion picture has been created and designed by Jiri Trnka, whose enchanting puppets you may remember from the motion picture, 'The Emperor's Nightingale.' It is animated in full dimension, in Eastmancolor and cinemascope.

Showcorporation engaged Howard Sackler to adapt the text for the screen and to direct Richard Burton, distinguished Shakespearean actor, and members of the Old Vic, in delivery of lines from the play. There is an original music score which is played by full symphony orchestra.

'A Midsummer Night's Dream' had its world premiere on December 18th at New York City's Guild Theatre, opening to superb critical and audience response.

We hope you will be interested in previewing 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' with us for we sincerely believe this 'Dream' will be as appealing to you as it has been to those who have seen it in other cities.

This film has received the Legion of Decency's classification of a special accolade as 'family entertainment;' and has the enthusiastic endorsement of Superintendents of Schools and leading educators over the nation.

Time of this Special Preview:

Cordially,

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Sample Letter #2

Dear

I am writing you to call your attention to the imminent opening of a unique new motion picture version of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" . . . . at . . . . on

The picture is described in the attached folder. If you haven't already seen it at one of our advance previews, we would like to again offer you this opportunity on . The place will be . Try to make it if you possibly can.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" has been screened, with uniformly high praise, by members of the Board of Education, superintendents, department heads and a great many teachers. Most of them feel that the film is noteworthy as entertainment, and equally valuable as a cultural complement to classroom teaching.

Many teachers are planning to escort students to the theatre. We hope you will want to do this, too.

One more thing . . . . . we will shortly have available posters for bulletin boards, special Student/Faculty tickets (priced at - regular price), and other material. We want to be sure you receive what you would like.

Let me know your interest - whether you would like us to set aside some seats for your students for specific performances - how many posters and tickets you need. And don't forget the preview - we would like you to come!

Cordially,

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Sample Letter #3

Dear Librarian:

I am writing to call your attention to the imminent opening of a unique motion picture version of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'

The theatres in your area, and performance times, are listed on the enclosed material.

We have previewed this picture for many hundreds of school superintendents, members of Boards of Education, department heads and teachers. All have been uniformly complimentary in their praise and feel that the film is not only entertaining but equally valuable as a complement to classroom teaching.

I hope you will want to post notices on library bulletin boards; and would appreciate anything you may want to do to call this picture to the attention of students and adults who use your library facilities.

Cordially,

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Sample Letter #4

Follow up after Screening

Dear

Now that you have seen 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' . . .

and know its charm and enchantment, we hope you will want to call this fine picture to the attention of your students and teaching colleagues.

Many teachers have told us that they plan to escort groups of students to the theatre during school hours. If you, too, have this in mind, may we urge you to contact
, or your nearest theatre -- whichever is more convenient.

If group attendance, for one reason or another, is not practical, we hope you will want to alert students to the fact that special holiday tickets are available at substantial savings to them. We are enclosing a small quantity for this purpose.

Let me know if we can be helpful in any additional way; and we certainly appreciate your taking the time to preview 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' with us.

Cordially,

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43 p
#38307

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THE gossamer delicacy of its art and the robust freshness of its humor have long made this tale of star-crossed lovers, of elves and fairy kings and queens and of a small band of craftsmen-actors one of the best-loved of Shakespeare's works.

Now created anew in the motion picture medium by the genius of contemporary world-renowned artists, this unique entertainment, winner of a Cannes Festival Grand Prix, is presented for the enjoyment and enduring pleasure of all.

SHOWCORPORATION

presents

William Shakespeare's

a Mid-Summer night's dream

As told by

RICHARD BURTON

and leading players of The Old Vic

Created and designed by **JIRI TRNKA**

Text adapted and directed by Howard Sackler
Music composed and conducted by Vaclav Trojan

Photographed by Jiri Vojta
Dialogue production supervised by Len Appelson

Animated in Full Dimension
In Cinemascope and Eastmancolor

Running Time: 74 minutes

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THE PLAYERS

(in the order in which they speak)

RICHARD BURTON as the story-teller

LYSANDER, a young poet in love with Hermia . . . . . **TOM CRIDDLE**
HERMIA, the daughter of Egeus in love with Lysander. . . . . **ANN BELL**
DEMETRIUS, a hot-headed rival of Lysander . . . . . **MICHAEL MEACHAM**
EGEUS, Hermia's stubborn father . . . . . **JOHN WARNER**
HELENA, unrequitedly in love with Demetrius . . . . . **BARBARA LEIGH-HUNT**
THESEUS, The Duke of Athens . . . . . **HUGH MANNING**
QUINCE, a carpenter and playwright . . . . . **JOSS ACKLAND**
BOTTOM, a weaver who also plays Pyramus . . . . . **ALEC McCOWEN**
FLUTE, a bellows mender who also plays Thisbe . . . . . **STEPHEN MOORE**
TITANIA, Queen of the Fairies . . . . . **BARBARA JEFFORD**
OBERON, King of the Fairies. . . . . **JACK GWILLIM**
PUCK, a knavish messenger of Oberon . . . . . **ROGER SHEPHERD**
HIPPOLYTA, Queen of the Amazons betrothed to Theseus . . . . . **LAURA GRAHAM**

HISTORY OF "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

"A Midsummer Night's Dream," one of the most enchanting fantasies in all literary history, was probably written in 1593-94 when Shakespeare was about 30 years old. It is assumed that "Dream," as we have it, was finally revised for the wedding in 1598 of Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, and Mistress Elizabeth Vernon. However no details of any performance before the 17th century have been preserved.

Samuel Pepys records seeing the play in 1662, and 30 years later there was an adaptation entitled "The Fairy Queen" with music by Henry Purcell. The first recorded revival of "Dream" in London with an authentic text and the music by Felix Mendelssohn was brought out at Covent Garden in 1840. The play's fame and popularity spread all over the world, having a universal appeal stemming from its humor, poetry and fantasy.

More recently, the Old Vic has presented the play with great frequency in London ever since 1914, and sent an elaborate version on an American tour in 1954. There have been three major productions in North America in the last decade, offered at Stratford, Conn. and Ontario, and in Central Park last summer by the New York Shakespeare Festival.

"Dream" is not new to the screen. In 1909 John Stuart Blackton produced a short silent version of the play for the old Vitagraph Studios. Another silent film adaptation was released in 1928 and presented by the 55th St. Playhouse Group. A famous production was Max Reinhardt's opus released by Warner Bros. in 1935. James Cagney, Olivia de Havilland and Mickey Rooney were starred in the extravaganza.

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THE TRNKA METHOD

In the ingenious art of Jiri Trnka, the impression of movement is produced by the animator's minute alteration of the position of the figures for each frame of film. A movement which flashes across the screen in one second is composed of 24 different positions. One minute of film requires 1,440 such movements, and the completed motion picture you are viewing represents 106,560 position changes. Movement does not end with the bodies of the "actors." Their clothes and veils are also made to move. Shawls and cloaks have thin wires attached so that only the edges move. Under Jiri Trnka's supervision of "Dream," each major character was assigned his own human technician who preserved its particular traits and qualities throughout the course of the film. And the patient skill of Trnka extends to the creation of the settings and the selection of color and light. The detail is as impressive as that going into the most elaborate Broadway or Hollywood musical, but all in miniature. Not to be overlooked is the utilization of the most modern techniques in film photography which have been employed exactly as if the actors were human beings.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

Showcorporation's presentation of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is a good example of international co-operation in film-making. Jiri Trnka's production was filmed and scored at his large studio in Prague. The film was then sent to Paris to be processed. Showcorporation made arrangements with Howard Sackler, a talented young poet, playwright and director, to provide a new adaptation of the Shakespearean text. In London, leading members of the Old Vic company were signed to record the script under Sackler's direction. The last major artistic contribution was set when Richard Burton agreed to tell the story of the moon-witched lovers and recorded his part in New York City last July between performances of his Broadway musical "Camelot." Visually, vocally and musically, the entire production was melded together by Showcorporation in New York City.

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SYNOPSIS

The scene is Athens, and the story-teller introduces "A Midsummer Night's Dream" with Shakespeare's 15th sonnet, "When I consider everything that grows."

Beautiful Hermia, daughter of Egeus, loves the poet Lysander, but has been promised by her father to the hot-headed Demetrius. When Demetrius discovers he has a rival, he protests violently until Egeus takes his daughter before Duke Theseus. The Duke orders Hermia to bow to her father's wishes. Hermia and Lysander flee to the nearby wood to escape Theseus' judgment. But Helena, a fair young maiden unrequitedly in love with Demetrius, discovers their plan and reports it. Also headed for the wood is a group of Athenian artisans rehearsing a play to celebrate the forthcoming marriage of Theseus to Hippolyta, the Amazon queen.

It is a midsummer night, full of love, spells and magic. The Fairy monarchs are seen -- the jealous Oberon, who unsuccessfully courts the disdainful Titania, seeks vengeance for her coolness and sends his servant Puck in search of the magic flower whose fragrance causes love at first sight. In the enchanted wood, Lysander and Hermia are discovered by the intemperate Demetrius and the still-hopeful Helena. Oberon overhears Demetrius' rejection of Helena and orders Puck to wave the flower under the nose of the youth. Puck, in a muddle, allows Lysander to smell the flower instead, and the poet catches sight of Helena, falls in love with her and forgets Hermia. Oberon then sets off to bewitch Titania and finds her asleep in a bower of roses.

The playful Puck is intrigued by the amateur actors and forthwith magically transforms the head of one -- Bottom, the weaver -- into that of an ass. Oberon casts his flower's spell upon the Fairy Queen. And when she awakens, she promptly becomes enamored of Bottom. Puck returns to the young lovers to right his mistake. He gives Demetrius a whiff of the flower, but then the young man also falls in love with Helena, and the rivalry is once again roused. They fight until drowsiness overtakes them and Puck can finally rectify his errors. Oberon eventually softens and removes the spell from Titania's eyes and thereby wins her true affection.

Theseus and Hippolyta, hunting in the wood, come upon the young lovers, all happily paired, and after hearing their story give their consent to the double marriage. Back at the palace, the royal wedding ceremony is highlighted by the artisans' mock presentation of the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe. Night falls, Titania, in Oberon's arms, floats above the world and strews the three betrothed couples with a blanket of blossoms.

Running Time: 74 minutes

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FAMOUS ACTORS IN THE "DREAM"

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" has always been an actor's dream, and a spectacular array of famous performers have tackled all of the major parts in the past 25 years. The part of Bottom has run the gamut from the classic postures of Sir Ralph Richardson to the Borscht burlesquing of Red Buttons. Others who have taken their turn are Charles Laughton, James Cagney, Stanley Holloway, Bert Lahr, Hiram Sherman and Anthony Quayle. Titania, the Fairy Queen, has been played in England by Dame Peggy Ashcroft, Moira Shearer and Mary Ure. On this side of the Atlantic, June Havoc, Margaret Phillips and Anita Louise have been the leading exponents. The mischievous Puck has been portrayed by child actor Mickey Rooney, mime Alvin Epstein and dancer Leonide Massine II. Interpreters of the lordly Oberon run to Sir John Gielgud, Robert Helpmann, Victor Jory and Basil Rathbone. Those fair young maidens Helena and Hermia have been brought to life by Olivia de Havilland, Irene Worth, Coral Browne, Inga Swenson and Vanessa Redgrave. The stalwart swains Lysander and Demetrius have been a proving ground for such impressive new talents as Peter O'Toole, Albert Finney and Robert Shaw. And the record shows that the bumbling artisans have turned up in the delighted grasp of Morris Carnovsky, Frank McHugh, Alan Badel and Joe E. Brown.

MUSIC INSPIRED BY THE "DREAM"

Although the overture and incidental music composed by Felix Mendelssohn are the most famous works connected with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," there are at least 50 other composers who have been inspired by the comedy-fantasy.

There are 13 full-length operas and operettas based on the Bard's text. These are Henry Purcell's "The Fairy Queen" (1692), Richard Leveridge's "Pyramus and Thisbe" (1716), Johann Lampe's "Pyramus and Thisbe" (1745), John Christopher Smith's "The Fairies" (1754), Samuel Arnold's "A Fairy Tale" (1777), Carl von Weber's "Oberon" (1826), Franz von Suppe's "Sommer Nachtstraum" (1844), Dennis Arundel's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (premiere date unknown), Georges Hue's "Titania" (1903), Luigi Mancinelli's "Il sogno di una notte d'estate" (1922), Victor Vreuls' "Une songe d'une nuit d'ete" (1925), Marcel Delannoy's "Puck" (1946) and Benjamin Britten's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (1959).

Ballets, song cycles, overtures and incidental music have been composed by Theodore Aylward, Jonathan Battishell, Sir Henry Bishop, Havergall Brian, Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Thomas Cooke, Paolo Giorza, Georg Jacobi, Ernst Krenek, Walter Leigh, Henry Nixon, Carol Orff, Bernhard Paumgartner, Erik Satie, Richard Stevens, Ambroise Thomas, and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Bringing the list up to date is the score for this film by the brilliant modern composer Vaclav Trojan.

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BIOGRAPHIES

RICHARD BURTON has won renown as one of the world's finest actors, playing such great Shakespearean roles as Hamlet, Othello, Iago, Prince Hal and Sir Toby Belch. New York theatre-goers saw him in "The Lady's Not for Burning." "Time Remembered" and as King Arthur in the musical "Camelot." Mr. Burton's extensive film career finds him at present before the cameras in Rome, playing Marc Antony opposite Elizabeth Taylor in "Cleopatra."

JIRI TRNKA is best known to motion picture audiences in this country for "The Emperor's Nightingale." Recognized as a master in this field and also in animated cartoon features, he is the recipient of many film prizes for such works as "How Grandpa Changed Until Nothing Was Left," "Why UNESCO?" and "The Good Soldier Schweik." Trnka's interest in Shakespeare dates back to his youth in Pilsen. At the age of nine he recalls carving a figure of Hamlet (which bore a striking resemblance to Douglas Fairbanks) and later oil paintings of Shakespearean heroes.

HOWARD SACKLER is eminently familiar with the sound of Shakespeare. The young poet and playwright has won wide attention as the foremost director in the field of spoken drama with his Shakespearean and modern play recordings for Caedmon Records. Among the stars he has directed are Ingrid Bergman, Trevor Howard, Margaret Leighton, Paul Scofield and Siobhan McKenna. Mr. Sackler is currently preparing a new volume of poetry on Goya.

SHOWCORPORATION

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PRESS INFORMATION

For additional publicity material, photographs and information, please contact **Seymour Krawitz and Merle Debuskey**, the Playhouse Theatre, 137 West 48th Street, Circle 7-7507.

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Showcorporation

film presentation

Cinemascope and Eastmancolor feature-length production of William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," created and designed by Jiri Trnka, told by Richard Burton and leading players of The Old Vic.

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