

A Midsummer Night's Dream: A Queer Tale



GOD SAVE THE QUEEN Kary Markey takes a camping trip.

★★★★★

MidTangent Productions at Kinetic Playground (see Fringe & storefront). By William Shakespeare. Dir. Tony Lewis. With ensemble cast.

Titania's a drag queen, Lysander's a dyke, and Helena's a swishy fag. But don't wince: This queer reimagining of Shakespeare's comedy is not a thin pretext for body glitter and cock jokes. Lewis's adaptation is more Baz Luhrmann than *Xanadu*, more rave than roller disco. Charged with the infectious energy of the club scene, this gay fantasia on Shakespearean themes captures both the playful frisson of the original as well as its dark menace. And in relation to contemporary attempts to legislate desire, all the gender swapping simply adds resonance to the Bard's pastry-light confection. Not bad for a

shoestring staging in a nightclub.

Mind you, purists and elocution coaches should stay away. Most of the players are Shakespeare newbies, and it shows. Some of Lewis's changes are predictable; a heap of contemporary references is no surprise. Yet others are startling and effective, as in the deepened gravitas of the Mechanicals' *Pyramus and Thisbe*. And then, of course, there are choreographer Joe Schenck's white-hot dances.

And while the whole exceeds the sum of its parts, more than a few of the performances are engaging on their own. Meg Harkins's Puck is an Artful Dodger of the club scene. As Lysander, bewitching Kelly Yacano transitions from dyke to sex kitten. And goggle-eyed, bandy-limbed Aaron-Michael Adamkiewicz matches her as a funny and endearing Helena. —*Kay Daly*