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## Slightly off with the fairies

big old TV, that it's hard to suspend disbelief.

More layers of mystery are added by the six cast members having to play multiple parts, leading to some awkward on-stage transformations and raising interesting, even disturbing, implications about characters' relationships.

Is Duke Theseus (Brian Lipson) really the sinister pyjama-wearing fairy king Oberon (Brian Lipson again) in disguise? And what of Peter Quince (also Brian Lipson)? Is he connected to the other two in some ethereal way? Those sorts of questions, amplified by an undercurrent of horror movie atmospherics, help create a strange, heady mood.

Having a small cast also necessitates some fancy theatrical footwork. For example, Christen O'Leary as Titania has fun embodying the voices of her (invisible) fairy retinue, as they minister to bewitched would-be actor Nick Bottom (Kieran Law). Also invisible is the poltergeist-like Puck, clev-

erly imagined only as a burst of static or flickering light bulb.

Elsewhere, the need to adapt leads to odd situations. For instance, Quince and Co's theatrical performance for the Athenian court occurs minus most of the usual repartee from the watching aristocrats, because six actors can't be in two places at once.

Some of the aristocrats' dialogue survives, uttered by Quince, Bottom et al. Thus, at one point, Bottom seems to be heckling his colleagues – arguably a serious distortion of that relationship.

For all its inventiveness the production often settles for cliché. At any suggestion of conflict or exuberance, whole stretches of dialogue degenerate into shout-a-thons.

The underlying concept is ambitious and the cast get stuck right in – it's just that sometimes Shakespeare's scenario and Schostakowski's don't match up that well, creating a sense that the whole thing is slightly off with the fairies.

### A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

**Venue:** Roundhouse Theatre, Kelvin Grove

**Reviewed:** February 11

**Reviewer:** James Harper

In a wood near Ancient Athens... well, in a wooden house, sometime in the early 1960s... the characters from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* enact their tale of love lost, found and mixed up.

Director Benjamin Schostakowski's main stage debut at La Boite is an intriguing reimaging of the *Dream* performed in a kitsch suburban home by a... a what? A family? A coven? Nerds from another dimension?

The location is hard to pinpoint. Is the house "really" a forest or a house and a forest at the same time?

The text is full of references to the action occurring among trees, glades and groves, yet the setting is so specific, with its lounge chairs, staircase and



INTRIGUING: Kieran Law as Nick Bottom in the ambitious *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

