

## Why we don't use the Wedding March

by Rev Richard Jordan

*The Wedding March* from Mendelssohn's incidental music to A Midsummer-Nights's Dream is hardly appropriate for a Church Wedding. For the music tells the story of a woman who is drugged and in her drunken state marries an ass. Listen to the pertinent verse:

*My mistress with a monster is in love. Near to her close and consecrated bower,*

*While she was in her dull and sleeping hour, ....*

*Were met together to rehearse a play intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.*

*The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,*

*When I did him at this advantage take, An ass's nolle I fixed on his head:*

*....Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;....*

*When in that moment, so it came to pass, Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.*

ACT I. Theseus, Duke of Athens, about to marry Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazons, plans extensive revels to celebrate the occasion. He is soon disturbed, however, by a domestic squabble. Hermia, a fair Athenian girl, loves Lysander; but her father has promised her to a rival, Demetrius. The father, Egeus, now complains to Theseus of his daughter's willfulness. The Duke upholds Egeus; Hermia, he says, must either marry according to her father's wishes or accept one of two unpleasant alternatives: she must either die or "abjure forever the society of men."

In order to escape this judgment, Lysander and Hermia plan to elope, and arrange to meet in a wood nearby. Unwisely, as it turns out, they confide their plans to Helena, who is madly in love with Demetrius, hoping to ingratiate herself with him.

Meanwhile, a group of artisans meet to discuss their plans to play an "interlude" as one of the revels for the Duke. The actors arrange to meet the following night for rehearsal-their meeting place to be the same wood chosen by the lovers.

ACT II. In this very wood a quarrel is raging between the rulers of the fairies about the custody of a "changeling," a little Indian boy. Titania, the Queen, has the boy and flatly refuses to give him up to her husband, Oberon, King of the Fairies. Angry with his queen, Oberon send his fairy jester, Robin Goodfellow, to find a flower whose juice will make the queen love madly the first living thing she sees upon awakening, "Be it lion, bear, or wolf, or bull." While waiting for Robin's return, Oberon overhears Demetrius and Helena talking. Helena has betrayed the eloping couple to Demetrius, who has gone in search of them. Oberon, overhearing him scold Helena, plans to make matters right between the quarreling mortals. He sends Robin to rub some of the magic juice upon Demetrius' eyes after the youth has gone to sleep, then goes to find Titania, who sleeps in the wood near where Hermia and Lysander are also sleeping. Oberon anoints her eyes, while Robin finds the sleeping Lysander and squeezes the magic juice upon him, mistaking him for Demetrius. Demetrius, followed by the persistent Helena, wanders by, and Helena awakens Lysander. Since Helena is the first living thing he sees upon awakening, Lysander immediately loves her. Leaving Hermia, he follows Helena into the woods.

ACT III. Robin overhears the clowns rehearsing their "interlude." The knavish elf enchants Bottom, changing his head into a donkey's. Titania awakes from her sleep nearby, sees Bottom, and is Hopelessly smitten, ass's head and all. Meanwhile Hermia has wandered off in search of Lysander. She finds Demetrius instead and accuses him of murdering her lover. Robin and Oberon witness this by-play and realize that the sprite has mistakenly anointed the eyes of the wrong "Athenian youth." After Hermia leaves, Demetrius goes to sleep and the fairies anoint his eyes, while Oberon orders Robin to bring Helena so that she will be the first person seen by the sleeping youth when he awakens. This stratagem works admirably, but now both Lysander and Demetrius love Helena, and they begin to quarrel over her, both now spurning Hermia. When the two youths leave to find a place to fight, Oberon orders Robin to lead them astray by false voices until they are so tired that they will fall asleep. The elf is then to apply an antidote to Lysander's eyes do that he will love Hermia again.

ACT IV. Oberon, who has obtained the changeling from the bewitched Queen, sees her sleeping with the foolish Bottom clasped in her arms. Pitying her, he applies the antidote to her eyes and removes the enchantment from Bottom's head. The four lovers, sleeping nearby, are discovered by Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and a retinue, who have come to hunt in the woods. The angry father demands that Theseus invoke the law against Hermia. But when Demetrius tells Egeus that he no longer loves Hermia, Theseus approves the new pairing off of the lovers.

ACT V. The three couples-Theseus and Hippolyta, Lysander and Hermia, Demetrius and Helena-happily gather in Theseus' palace to watch the wedding revels. The clowns present their ridiculous play, "the most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe." When the mortals have gone, the fairies dance and sing. Finally Robin Goodfellow is left to close with an epilogue asking the audience's approval.