

Stage Review: 'Midsummer,' 'Fingers' worth 2nd look from Ballet Memphis

By Christopher Blank

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Evokes different feelings and emotions without obviousness.

Over the years, Mendelssohn's well-known incidental music to "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (with its ubiquitous "Wedding March") has inspired many choreographers, from George Balanchine to Frederick Ashton.

Godden certainly provides a wealth of bold, gorgeous classical dancing, but his streamlined adaptation of the story and witty comic touches are just as compelling.

His "Midsummer" focuses on three interwoven conflicts: Oberon and Titania are at odds because he wants Titania's ability to create life. A writer (a Shakespeare type in a puffy shirt) is working on a manuscript with help from his enthusiastic friend Bottom. Finally, there are the two couples, magically mixed up, who spend most of the ballet in pursuit of their true loves.

Godden has a flair for poses that stick with you. When Titania shows love and submission, she makes herself small on the ground, like a beetle, holding her arms in a square shape behind her back. The sublime humility of that gesture contradicts the often-breathtaking majesty of Crystal Brothers' imperial dancing as the fairy queen.