

The New Criterion

Theater

September 2009

Tarting up the bard

by [Kevin D. Williamson](#)

On *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Shakespeare on the Sound and *The Europeans* at Atlantic Stage 2.

Shakespeare in the park is a summer tradition that at its best can be really quite lovely: blankets, Bordeaux, all the world's a freshly mown stage. But summer is also a time of sundry discomforts, and to go piling avant-garde pretensions on top of the humidity and mosquitoes and the hideous khaki shorts is an act of artistic sadism. Scold us in March if you must, challenge our comfortable middle-class cultural assumptions with *Coriolanus* in a cocktail dress on a brisk evening if you feel it obligatory, but in the summer, only entertain us. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an inescapable favorite in the muggybuggy evenings: It is an undemanding play, so it is not too much work to produce, and it is as gay as a Dutch window, so it is a cinch to cast. It can seduce costumers and set-designers with an inviting canvas—trees! shrubbery! fairies! The gentle whimsicality of the story, which might strike more severe theater types as insuffi ...

Kevin D. Williamson is a Deputy Managing Editor at *National Review*.

[more from this author](#)

This article originally appeared in *The New Criterion*, Volume 28 September 2009, on page 35

Copyright © 2012 The New Criterion | www.newcriterion.com

<http://www.newcriterion.com/articles.cfm/Tarting-up-the-bard-4189>