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PHILOMATH FILMS PRESENTS A FILM BY HANK ROGERSON & JILANN SPITZMILLER

STARRING MAYLEEN ADAMS GLORIA ALBEE NOAH BRODY HAROLD CHERRY DIMO CONDOS MARY DEPAULO ROBERT A. EVANS CHARLOTTE FAIRCHILD JOHN GRAY JOSEPH LA ZIZZA LYNETTE LOOSE BASIA MOORE AIDEEN O'KELLY LUCILLE SEGAL JOAN STEIN BEN STEINFELD CHARLOTTE WALDORF CINEMATOGRAPHY BY SHANA HAGAN & JILANN SPITZMILLER

ORIGINAL SCORE BY JAMES STEMPLE ADDITIONAL MUSIC PERFORMED BY JOAN STEIN ORIGINAL SONG "EVEN I" SUNG BY ROBERT MORSE SOUND RECORDIST MATT SUTTON

WRITTEN, DIRECTED, PRODUCED AND EDITED BY HANK ROGERSON & JILANN SPITZMILLER

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PHILOMATH FILMS

STILL DREAMING

A new film from the makers of ***Shakespeare Behind Bars***

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WINNER! ***Excellence in Filmmaking Award*** – Sedona International Film Festival
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"***Everyone should see this***. *STILL DREAMING is a* ***candid, open, and life-affirming film***."
-- Tim Carpenter, founder EngAge and host of Experience Talks

LOGLINE

Stretching physical, emotional and mental limits, a group of long-retired Broadway actors, musicians and dancers bravely dive into a production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and find that nothing is what it seems to be.

SYNOPSIS

Still Dreaming documents a unique take on Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" as performed by a group of retired actors, dancers and musicians at the Lillian Booth Actors Home just outside New York City. These former Broadway stars embark on a journey through the magical play at the urging of the Home's administrators, who see this as an opportunity to boost quality of life for the residents. As the rehearsal process unfolds, the actors find themselves experiencing both the pain and exhilaration of re-immersion in their life's work amidst the difficulties of old age. At the same time, the troupe's young Shakespearean co-directors struggle to maintain forward momentum with this acting ensemble of octogenarians. Alzheimer's, Dementia, and even minor issues such as sight and hearing loss create constant crises and obstacles for all involved. As the troupe pushes forward, the play's themes of perception, reality vs. dreaming, and memory become relevant in sharp relief. Ultimately the performance of the play turns out to be surprising, mysterious and resonant, and a vital reminder of the value of engaging in our dreams and creative pursuits no matter the circumstance.

THE CAST

Featured in the film are some of entertainment's finest performers including **Charlotte Fairchild** (***42nd St, Damn Yankees, Mame, All the Girls Came out to Play, Mr. President***), **Aideen O'Kelly** (***Othello, A Life, Philadelphia Here I Come!),*** Robert A. Evans **(*Damn Yankees, Pajama Game, Guys & Dolls*)**, Joan Stein **(Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*) and** Dimo Condos **(*Waiting for Godot, Richard III*)**. **Also featured are** Ben Steinfeld **and** Noah Brody, **co-directors of the acclaimed Fiasco Theater Company (*Into the Woods, Cymbeline*), who direct the Lillian Booth troupe.**

In addition to the entertainment veterans, a hand-full of non-actors also step up to the challenge of the production and find talents, capabilities and interests they didn't know they had. The film's music includes **Charlotte Fairchild's** impressive vocals and **Joan Stein's** astounding piano virtuosity at age 87. A special end credit song written for the film "Even I", is sung by famed Broadway veteran **Robert Morse** (*How To Succeed in Business*, AMC's *Mad Men*), and played by Grammy award winner, **Bill Cunliffe**.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT: ***Aging in a Positive Context***

We were first and foremost attracted to this story because of the amazing people who reside at the Lillian Booth Actors Home in the quiet and suburban town of Englewood, New Jersey. You're just 10 miles from New York City, but indeed it seems a lifetime away. At the Lillian Booth, we discovered a group of people who have spent their whole lives following their dreams, some wildly successful, and some hardly at all. And here they are, retired, supposedly having given it all up. But what we witnessed during the rehearsal and performance process of "Midsummer" is that the huge talent of these former entertainers is still alive and well, despite their physical and mental challenges. It was quite a surprise to see the level at which they could still play the game. And their energy, humor and candidness made it even all the better. We were amazed by what this unique cast achieved in spite of their formidable obstacles. What we witnessed was an awakening, and it was truly profound and most certainly inspiring.

We have passionately created this film to be both entertaining and thought-provoking. Our society tends to look away from the Aging issue. This film looks right at it – as a time of potential creative fulfillment rather than decline. We witness a group of elders coming out of retirement mode, and subsequently reawakening their minds, bodies and spirits in very moving and significant ways. Staff of the Lillian Booth Actors Home reported that over the 6 weeks of production, several participants had their medication decreased. Others demonstrated increased self-esteem and improved disposition. There was a marked strengthening of community, not just within the cast of 15, but throughout the Home.

Not wanting to get stagnated visually within the retirement home setting, we chose to incorporate the themes from **'A Midsummer Night's Dream'** into the stylistic vision of the film. We often crossed over into the realm of the mysterious woods. DSLR footage flirts with magical realism and creates a stunning portrayal of the luminous fairy spirit in the play. Several elders take their roles outside the Lillian Booth, and into the natural landscapes that surround the Home, exploring their characters in intriguing ways. The visual and thematic explorations of the natural "fairy" world are meant to represent the spirit, richness and spontaneity of the creative process, while also adding a beautiful visual dimension to the film.

THE CAST – SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

17.

1. CHARLOTTE FAIRCHILD (Puck) Charlotte is a beloved Broadway veteran, having sung and danced in the original productions of *42nd St, Damn Yankees, Mame, All the Girls Came Out to Play, Mr. President* and *Fiorello*. This is her first Shakespeare play.

2. DIMO CONDOS (Theseus/Oberon) Dimo is a former member of the Actors Studio and studied with the greats including Harold Clurman, Elia Kazan and Uta Hagan. He has performed in productions such as *Waiting for Godot* and Shakespeare's *Richard III*. He is co-founder of the Lillian Booth Shakespeare group.

3. GLORIA ALBEE (Helena) Gloria is a playwright whose work is included in archives of The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. She wrote an adaptation of the short story The Yellow Wallpaper which has been performed all over the US. This is her first time with a major role in a Shakespeare play.

4. AIDEEN O'KELLY (Quince) Aideen hails from just outside Dublin, Ireland, where she studied acting. In the US she scored accolades for her portrayal of Emilia in Othello on Broadway with James Earl Jones and Christopher Plummer. She was also in A Life and Philadelphia Here I Come! One of her career highlights was headlining Samuel Beckett's Happy Days and meeting the playwright.

5. JOAN STEIN (Pianist & Snout) Joan got an early break in show business as a pianist on Your Show of Shows with Sid Caesar, Zero Mostel and Imogen Coca. She later formed the Walden Trio and performed in the northeast for many years. She has also been a beloved teacher to many. She currently holds a weekly music salon at the Lillian Booth.

6. MARY DEPAULO (Quince) This is Mary's first time acting. Although she was clearly born for the stage, she spent most of her life as a housewife and mother in Brooklyn. Upon coming to the Lillian Booth Actors Home, she began singing and now adds acting (not to mention comedy) to her list of talents.

7. NOAH BRODY (Co-director, Helena) Noah is an actor, director, writer and teacher. He is co-artistic director and head of producing for Fiasco Theater. He has co-directed and acted in Fiasco's productions of Cymbeline, Twelfth Night, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Into the Woods, and Measure for Measure.

8. BEN STEINFELD (Co-director, Philostrate) Ben is an actor, director, teacher and musician. He is Co-artistic director and Head of Artistic Development for Fiasco Theater. He has been seen on Broadway in Cyrano de Bergerac and Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson. Ben's film and television work includes "The Good

Wife," "Law & Order: Criminal Intent", "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon" and Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight.

9. BOB EVANS (Flute/Thisbe) Bob Evans has had a long and distinguished career as a dancer, performing in 14 original Broadway productions including Damn Yankees, Pajama Game and Guys & Dolls. This is his first Shakespeare play.

10. LYNETTE LOOSE (Hermia) This is Lynette's first time acting, although she has children who are involved in the theater. She worked at UPenn for many years and raised 5 children before coming to the Lillian Booth.

11. JOHN GRAY (Lysander) John acted while in college but then put away his thespian dreams to work in a more conventional career. He is happy to have the chance to flex his Shakespearean muscles once again.

12. JOSEPH LaZIZZA (Demetrius) Joe enjoyed a long and successful career in radio broadcasting. He was also a supernumerary in productions at the old Metropolitan Opera House. He was also a member of the Gagwriters Institute.

13. MAYLEEN ADAMS (Fairy) Mayleen is a dedicated full-time aide and caregiver who sees her job as a divine calling. She also aspires to dance and sing as much as possible and was happy to be able to participate in this production under the tutelage of her beloved client Charlotte Fairchild.

14. BASIA MOORE (Hippolyta/Titania) Basia Moore is a jazz singer who hails originally from Poland. She had dreams of acting when she was young and is happy to reconnect with those dreams in this production.

15. CHARLOTTE WALDORF (Egeus/Snug/Lion) Charlotte spent her life working in retail and has never acted before this production. She thoroughly enjoyed the amusing rehearsal and performance process, and getting to roar like a lion.

16. HAROLD CHERRY (Bottom) Harold has been in numerous theater productions and an extra in films over the years. He has also participated in many Shakespeare festivals around the country. He is happy to finally get the chance to play the inimitable character of Bottom.

17. LUCILLE SEGAL (Starveling/Wall) Lucille worked under the stage name of Harriet Green and was in 150 Opera productions, many of those during her 25 year stint with the New York City Opera. She graduated from Julliard in 1936 and also raised 3 children.

ABOUT THE LILLIAN BOOTH ACTORS HOME

The Lillian Booth Actors Home is a very special assisted living and skilled nursing facility in Englewood New Jersey that is owned and operated by The Actors Fund. The Home welcomes all entertainment professionals--designers, writers, sound technicians, musicians, dancers, administrators, directors, film editors, stagehands and actors. Relatives of career entertainers and industry members can also gains residence to The Home. The Lillian Booth was given the coveted "Best Nursing Homes in America" award by U.S. News and World Report. Read more about The Lillian Booth Actors Home here.

THE STILL DREAMING CREATIVE TEAM

Hank Rogerson – Producer/ Director/ Writer/ Editor
Hank directed SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS, which picked up 11 awards on the festival circuit, was broadcast worldwide and had a theatrical run of over 25 U.S. cities. He also co-produced, directed and edited HOMELAND, an award-winning documentary about 4 families on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Hank has freelanced as a writer, director and producer within the film industry, and has been a Sundance Institute Fellow. Hank has performed in film, television, theater and improv. You can see him most recently on BREAKING BAD and LONGMIRE.

Jilann Spitzmiller –Producer/ Director/ Writer/ Editor/Cinematographer
Jilann's documentary work has been broadcast around the globe on outlets such as BBC, Canal+, PBS, Sundance Channel, Discovery Health and StarzEncore. She produced the award-winning SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS and co-directed, produced and edited HOMELAND, which aired on National PBS in 2000. Along with Hank, she is a 3-time recipient of ITVS funding and a 2-time recipient of the Sundance Documentary Fund. Her work with Hank has won over 20 festival awards, including Special Jury Prize, Best Documentary, Audience Award, Best Feature and Best of Show. She was also a co-director/producer on CRITICAL CONDITION which aired on PBS' POV and Bill Moyer's Journal.

Shana Hagan – Cinematographer
Shana has photographed over 30 documentary and narrative films including SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS and HOMELAND with Hank and Jilann. Hagan has worked with such distinguished directors as Michael Apted, Lauren Greenfield and Jessica Yu. Her work includes BREATHING LESSONS, which won the Oscar for Best Documentary Short at the 1996 Academy Awards, an IDA award and an Emmy. Additional credits include FOOD INC, IN THE REALMS OF THE UNREAL, AFTER INNOCENCE, WALT & EL GRUPO, SUNSET STORY, MARRIED IN AMERICA and THE QUEEN OF VERSAILLES.

James Stemple – Composer
James composed the music for SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS, and other notable documentaries including, WALT & EL GRUPO and BUKOWSKI: BORN INTO THIS. He has been nominated for two Emmy Awards and to date has worked on over 20 films, scores of commercials and written hundreds of hours of music for television. He has been selected as a Sundance Composing Fellow, a Peer Judge for the Emmy Awards and Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival.

Full crew list available upon request.

PHILOMATH FILMS' COMPANY FILMOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTARIES (selected)

'SHAKESPEARE BEHIND BARS" www.shakespearebehindbars.com	PBS, SUNDANCE CHANNEL, STARZ, BBC 92 minutes • Funded by Sundance, ITVS and BBC
"HOMELAND" www.itvs.org/homeland	National PBS 60 minutes • Funded by ITVS and Soros Doc Fund
"CRITICAL CONDITION" www.pppdocs.com/criticalcondition.html (Jilann Co-produced/Co-directed with Public Policy Productions)	POV, National PBS; Bill Moyer's Journal 82 minutes • Funded by Annie E. Casey Foundation, WNET and other foundations
"CIRCLE OF STORIES" web site www.pbs.org/circleofstories	Interative Native Storytelling at PBS.org Funded by Corporation for Public Broadcasting, ITVS
"CIRCLE OF STORIES"	Educational DVD based on the PBS web site
"BLESS ME WITH A GOOD LIFE"	PBS, FREE SPEECH TV, US Congress

DOCUMENTARY SERIES (as freelance producers/directors)

"MEDICAL DIARY"	Discovery Health Channel
"LIFE MOMENTS"	NBC
"THE IT FACTOR"	Bravo
"BIOGRAPHY"	A&E

FESTIVALS, HONORS AND AWARDS (selected)

Sundance Film Festival, Documentary Competition, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Best in Show, BendFilm Festival, Bend OR, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Special Jury Prize, Independent Film Fest of Boston, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Audience Award for Best Documentary, Orinda Film Fest, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Best Documentary, Ojai Film Festival, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Best Documentary, Bethel Film Fest, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Feature Film Award, Rivers Edge Fest, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Best Documentary Award, Bluegrass Independent Film Festival, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Director's Choice Award, Bluegrass Independent Film Festival, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Best Spiritual Documentary, Beliefnet Film Awards, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

An Essential Southern Documentary, Oxford American, "Shakespeare Behind Bars"

Best Feature Documentary, Fargo Film Fest, "Homeland"

Audience Award for Best Documentary, AFI FEST, "Homeland"

Best Short Documentary, Nashville Independent Film Festival, "Homeland"

Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism, "Critical Condition"

Gold Remi Award - WorldFest Houston, "Critical Condition"

Best Documentary, PhilaFilm: International Film Festival, "Critical Condition

Best Short Documentary, American Indian Film Festival, "Bless Me With a Good Life"

STILL DREAMING Selected Screenings:

DOCNYC – World premiere
SEDONA INT'L FILM FESTIVAL – Winner! Excellence in Filmmaking Award
LAKE ERIE ARTS & FILM FESTIVAL – Winner! Best Feature Documentary
BENDFILM – Finalist! Audience Award Best Documentary
CINEQUEST FILM FESTIVAL, San Jose, California
CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, Cleveland, OH
OJAI FILM FESTIVAL, Ojai, CA
ON SCREEN/IN PERSON – 6 city tour sponsored by the *National Endowment for the Arts*
THE SCREEN, Santa Fe, New Mexico (extended two-week run)
HOPKINS CENTER FILM, Dartmouth College
PENTANGLE CENTER FOR THE ARTS, Woodstock, VT
GREAT RIVER SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL, Winona, MN
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
ACADEMY FOR THE LOVE OF LEARNING, Santa Fe, NM
SONOMA FILM INSTITUTE, Sonoma, CA
ARTPRIZE on FILM, WATERFRONT FILM FESTIVAL, Grand Rapids, MI

Please check our website for the latest information: www.stilldreamingmovie.com

SCREENING PARTNERS & HOSTS INCLUDE:

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Lake Erie Arts and Film Festival
Great Lakes Theater
Northeast Ohio Medical University
Black Rock Center for the Arts
Monmouth University
Light Up the Queen Foundation
Kingston Residence
Thompson Senior Center
Association of Gerontology in Education (AGHE)
American Society on Aging (ASA)
Shakespeare Association of America
Folger Library
LeadingAge Nebraska
LeadingAge Massachusetts
American Therapeutic Recreation Association
EngAGE
Aroha Philanthropies

CHARLOTTE FAIRCHILD as PUCK

HAROLD CHERRY AS BOTTOM/PYRAMUS

BOB EVANS AS THISBE/FLUTE with NOAH BRODY

MARY DEPAULO AS QUINCE with BEN STEINFELD

PHOTOS BY GENEVIEVE RUSSELL,

Many more and higher resolution images available upon request

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San Jose Mercury News
ENTERTAINMENT

ARTS SCENE
BAY AREA CULTURE & ENTERTAINMENT

Hark! “Still Dreaming” doc shines at Cinequest

Posted on March 5, 2015 by Karen D'Souza

Lord, what fools these mortals be if they miss the thoroughly enchanting “**Still Dreaming**“ at the Cinequest Film Fest. A lovely, not to mention absolutely heartbreaking, valentine to showbiz, art and mortality, this is a gem of a documentary that will stay with longer than you think possible. It’s a film about two young NYC theater directors who go into a nursing home for elderly thespians to stage one last moment in the sun via **“A Midsummer Night’s Dream.”** These are Broadway babies turned seniors who used to work with Samuel Becket and Bob Fosse now addled by the vagaries of age, sometimes forgetting who and where they are, as well as their lines. Their valiant struggle to regain their past glory results in not only a very compelling artistic process that illuminates the infinite complexities of Shakespearean verse but also in many cases a real and quantifiable boost to their health. This is art as healing, art as the will to live, and it’s unforgettable.

VARIETY

Film Review: 'Still Dreaming'

JANUARY 2, 2015 | 05:23PM PT

In a nursing home, the thin line between illusion and reality plays out on and offstage as elderly actors plunge into 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' *Ronnie Scheib*

In Hank Rogerson and Jilann Spitzmiller's intriguing documentary "Still Dreaming," residents of an Actors Fund retirement home put on a play under the aegis of two young New York directors. The play is "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and before long the world of the nursing home and Shakespeare's enchanted forest begin to mirror each other in disquieting ways, as mental and physical disabilities, rather than fairy spells, shift time and sow confusion. Yet the play also reawakens and reconnects these thespians to each other and to the most vital parts of their past. Arthouse play, though merited, is probably a long shot.

In 2005's "Shakespeare Behind Bars," the filmmakers staged "The Tempest," with its themes of redemption and forgiveness, in a maximum-security prison. Here they tackle "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with its all-too-relevant specters of confusion and identity loss, in a nursing home.

At first glance, aside from the obvious physical limitations evinced by all the walkers, canes and wheelchairs, the residents of the Lillian Booth Actors Home in New Jersey seem a relatively “together” bunch, and casting initially presents no problems. This is particularly true of two of its denizens, introduced before the official theatrics even begin. Broadway song-and-dance veteran Charlotte Fairchild, whose energetic enthusiasm fairly effervesces, seems born to play Puck, and her sung refrains are a high point of rehearsals. On a darker note, Dimo Condos practically incarnates Oberon, wandering the woods admiring “nature’s art” in the textures of decaying wood and mushroom gills, and bemoaning the vagaries of fate. Others in the cast appear equally well suited to their roles.

But appearances, as the Bard well knew, can be deceiving. Halfway through rehearsals, it is mentioned in passing that Fairchild suffers from Alzheimer’s, and indeed she misses her singing cue in the actual performance. Condos’ passionate commitment to the play leads him to try to take over direction, overzealously prodding the other players to greater efforts, leading to an angry confrontation with actual directors Ben Steinfeld and Noah Brody, who lean toward a more supportive approach.

As physical and mental limitations make themselves felt, cast members drop out, replaced by impromptu stand-ins with little or no acting experience — or, in one case, of the wrong gender. A particularly talented performer suddenly declares she is leaving the home, a statement that proves to be a recurrent but stubborn delusion. “I just feel like we’re operating on nine or 10 realities in this room at any given time,” bemoans Steinfeld, hastily adding, “but that’s all right.” Curiously, however, all this uncertainty and the constant casting changes gift the production with an antic spontaneity and madcap giddiness that belie the age of the performers and intensify the atmosphere of the play.

A similar ambiguity affects the play’s setting, as the filmmakers fill “Still Dreaming” with evocative images of the woodland surrounding the home. They open on shots of flora (familiar and strange) and fauna (including a stately egret and a dainty fawn), and the woods echo with disembodied passages from the play. Later, the more ambulatory actors roam among the grass and trees, declaiming their lines. Thus, although the play is performed indoors in the same room where rehearsals took place, the memory trace of the insistent outdoor imagery overlays the proceedings until Shakespearean Nature virtually invades the theater space.

Film Review: 'Still Dreaming'

Reviewed at DOC NYC, Oct. 29, 2014. Running time: **94 MIN.**

Production
(Documentary) A Philomath Films production. Produced by Hank Rogerson, Jilann Spitzmiller.

Crew
Directed, edited by Hank Rogerson, Jilann Spitzmiller. Camera (color, HD), Shana Hagan, Spitzmiller; music, James Stemple; sound, Matt Sutton, Mark Maloof; supervising sound editors; re-recording mixers, Kathleen Edwards, Tor Kingdon.

With
Charlotte Fairchild, Dimo Condos, Joan Stein, Gloria Albee, Lynette Loose, Mary DePaulo, John Gray, Harold Cherry, Aideen O’Kelly, Ben Steinfeld, Noah Brody.

WILL POWER ON SCREEN

Past the Wit of Man to Say What Dream It Was

Still Dreaming

Philomath Films
Directed by Hank Rogerson and Jilann Spitzmiller. Featuring Ben Steinfeld, Noah Brody, and the residents and staff of the Lillian Booth Actors Home.

Bob Evans rehearses Flute playing Thisbe and stabbing herself in her heart as co-director Noah Brody watches in the Philomath Films documentary *Still Dreaming* about Lillian Booth Actors Home residents mounting a public production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Photo by Genevieve Russell, © Still Dreaming, LLC

People refer to the different worlds of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: the world of Athens, the world of the woods, the world of the royal court and that of the royal fairies, the world of the rude mechanicals, the world of the play, the world of the play within the play. All of these worlds collide and create 24 hours (or three days—Shakespeare is a bit muddy with his timeframe) of confusion for the characters in the play.

In real life, as well, people live in colliding worlds of reality, illusion, and delusion, but they do so 24/7—though their own timeframes tend to be muddled, too. Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* says this is the state for "the lunatic, the lover, and the poet." It also is the state for people who age into some degree of

dementia in which memories blur and the present becomes a slippery slope—people who end up living in long-term health-care centers and retirement communities.

That is the setting for *Still Dreaming*, the enchanting new documentary by Hank Rogerson and Jilann Spitzmiller that premiered in November at the DOC NYC film festival. Rogerson and Spitzmiller are the filmmakers who produced the landmark 2005 documentary *Shakespeare Behind Bars* about Kentucky's Luther Luckett Correctional Facility inmates producing *The Tempest*. On their second Shakespearean outing, the duo follows the residents of the Lillian Booth Actors Home in Englewood, N.J., as they mount a public performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Located 15 miles from mid-town New York, the Lillian Booth Actors Home is an assisted living and skilled nursing facility owned and operated by The Actors Fund. Its residents are retired actors, dancers, musicians, and other entertainment professionals or their spouses. Hired to direct the production, though, were two young theater impresarios, Ben Steinfeld and Noah Brody, co-founders of the Fiasco Theater Company.

Still Dreaming could have come off as an awe-shucks Hallmark-style weepy, but along with a cast of naturally engaging characters and some dazzling cinematography, the film goes much, much deeper by paralleling the hallucinatory world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the cognitive issues the members of the cast encounter in their daily lives. "I'm getting to hear the play the way I never heard it before," Brody says. So do we, for even as they are playing their parts, these actors are living *Dream*'s themes in their own private, physiological worlds. Yeah, you might need to tug on a tissue, but chances are that will be prompted by a particularly ascendant performance rather than any sense of tragedy. For, as with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, while the characters may be struggling with the blurring of reality, illusion, and delusion, *Still Dreaming* plays as a comedy with a few key dramatic moments.

The film's title is a double entendre. "Still dreaming" in one sense refers to these former entertainers being given an opportunity to mount a professional stage version of a Shakespeare play for the public. In another sense, the title refers to the ever-present dream state that some of them live in. "How do we know if what we are experiencing is the real thing or the imagined thing?" Steinfeld poses in his analysis of Bottom in one of the rehearsals. "That's incredibly frightening." He would come to learn that some of these residents are far beyond that point.

The filmmakers visually play on this theme, too. *Still Dreaming* opens with a line from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "Are you sure that we are awake? It seems to me that yet we sleep, we dream." Cinematographer Shana Hagan employs various methods of distortion and visual allegory to further fertilize that verse planted into our own subconscious. At one point, we see the play's script through a reader magnifier. At another, we see a cloudy sky that suddenly warbles because it's really a reflection in a pond. As the project hits one perilous period, one by one, residents exit the rehearsal room and simply disappear from the picture; one of the directors does, too, indicating that age is not a prerequisite for losing your place in your world. Editing blurs the demarcation between the home's grounds and the surrounding community and sometimes misleads us into thinking that we are where we are not.

The directing duo of Brody and Steinfeld was an inspired choice to helm the play. They not only have a deep understanding of Shakespeare's texts, they have experience in bringing those texts to life in unique spaces and under formidable conditions. Under their direction, Fiasco produced the six-actors-and-a-trunk *Cymbeline* that became one of New York's biggest hits three years ago; the six-actors-and-six-doors *Measure for Measure*for New Victory Theater in New York last winter; and the six-actors-and-nothing-else*Two Gentlemen of Verona* last spring for the Folger Theater in Washington, D.C., a production that will be

revived by Theatre for a New Audience in Brooklyn next spring. (The company's 10-actors-and-a-piano *Into the Woods* will be opening at New York's Roundabout Theatre this month.)

Having two directors also enables the filmmakers to limit voice-over narration and interviews. Most of the exposition comes from directors, cast, and the home's staff talking with each other. On their first day, the two directors walk past an ambulance waiting outside the home's entrance. "Oh good, we get to spend the next six weeks confronting our own mortality," one of them says. That offhand remark earns a laugh, but, really, they have no idea that, rather than facing mortality, they are stepping into an alternative reality: the world of the retirement center, where life is as long as that day and residents, especially those with highly involved physical or mental impairments, become jealously attached to their daily routines. For those with cognitive issues, this is the only day they know, and even the staff adapts to that psychological state, the very essence of a live-in-this-moment zen. "What does success mean for us?" Brody asks when he and Steinfeld first meet the cast, intending to create an ensemble spirit as much as a goal for the production. But for this group, success is having lunch in the dining room and, maybe beyond that, supper, too.

Of all the challenges Brody and Steinfeld have encountered in the theater, perhaps nothing compares with the dawning realization that their Helena, Gloria Albee, may seem perfectly lucid but actually lives in a shifting contextual existence. She drops out of the cast because she says she has to move to Arizona and needs to pack; the next day, she reports that she had just returned from Arizona after several months living there. "I don't know what's weirder," Steinfeld says: "Gloria telling me she's moving across the country tomorrow or finding out that she's not. I don't know what's harder to process." He jokes that he feels like a character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, uncertain what's real or a nightmare. Yet, the directors' primary concern is losing such a strong actor for the key part of Helena (Brody ends up playing her).

It's too easy to see these old people as, well, merely old people, turning age into their primary identity, so the filmmakers prominently display their storied pasts whenever they can. A few cast members, in fact, are seasoned Shakespeare vets. Aideen O'Kelly, cast as Quince, played Emilia in the 1981 American Shakespeare Theater production of *Othello* with James Earl Jones and Christopher Plummer, which moved to Broadway the following year. She is forced to withdraw from this production of *Dream* because of medical issues, and Mary Depaulo, who had never acted before, steps in and kills in the part, her sharp sense of humor and timing not only nearly stealing the play but the movie, too.

Harold Cherry is a veteran of the Shakespeare festivals circuit who is, nevertheless, getting to play Bottom for the first time, walking across the Lillian Booth grounds rehearsing his scenes with a donkey mask covering his face. Donning the long blond wig of Flute playing Thisbe is Bob Evans, new to Shakespeare but, with 14 original Broadway productions under his belt, up to any challenge. In the original production of*Damn Yankees*, choreographer Bob Fosse asked Evans if he could juggle. "I couldn't, but I said yes," he says, and we see a press clipping of him juggling while dancing. Also new to The Bard is John Gray, but he displays immediate insight into the challenges facing all actors as he tries to get his arms around his role as Lysander: "Every time I think I understand the character, Shakespeare screws me up," he tells Lynette Loose playing Hermia.

Loose is making her very first attempt at acting. "I want to do this so well that Ben and Noah will say, 'Good job.' That's my goal," she says. When we learn that she had a demanding father who insisted she marry a man she never loved, she seems perfectly cast. Theseus's threatening lines to her in the play's opening scene "Makes me want to cry," she tells the directors. "Are we allowed to do that?" "Of course," they reply. But one

of their biggest issues in bringing the production to a successful public performance is working with Loose to get her past some debilitating insecurity issues.

She's not the only one with a high personal stake in the production. Dimo Condos, a former member of the Actors Studio and the co-founder of the Lillian Booth Shakespeare group, plays Theseus and Oberon. Referring to his journeyman acting days, he says, "I still hope that I can make something of myself that people will remember." Scouring the landscape, picking up rocks, pieces of wood, mushrooms, seed pods, and other natural objects with which he makes sculptures, Condos is a very Oberon in his relationship with nature, and it is out there in nature where he earnestly rehearses, worrying a couple of joggers passing by. He also proves to be quite a Theseus in rehearsal, alternating between diplomatic wisdom and tyrannical action. He helps coach some of the less-experienced players, but he loses patience with Loose, leading up to a major donnybrook with the two directors. It takes Depaulo to cut the tension when she comforts Loose by telling her, "Don't get yourself upset. It's a show we're putting on for nothing."

Dimo Condos (here playing Oberon) and Charlotte Fairchild (Puck) rehearse one of their scenes in the Philomath Films documentary *Still Dreaming*. The two are part of the cast of Lillian Booth Actors Home residents who produced a public performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Photo-Genevieve Russell, © Still Dreaming, LLC

Condos, though, is also responsible for one of the film's most tantalizing scenes as he rehearses with Puck, played by Charlotte Fairchild and her ever-present personal care assistant, Mayleen Adams. Fairchild, a veteran singer and dancer who headlined some musicals on the Great White Way, has Alzheimer's. In the film she sometimes seems more fit to play Poor Tom in *King Lear* than Puck; even in her moments of apparent clarity, we can't be sure what dimension she's in. As they rehearse Oberon's instructions to Puck to fetch the magical flower, Condos talks so vividly of Cupid and the mermaid on a dolphin's back and the arrow striking the little western flower that Fairchild responds by singing snatches of song perfectly suited to Oberon's poetic lines. "Absolutely extraordinary, both of you," Steinfeld says. "Best Puck and Oberon I've ever seen, that's for sure." Each day, Fairchild's performance of Puck changes but each is always fascinating in its weird way. We find ourselves wondering what kind of Puck will show up for the actual performance, though most of us might not see Alzheimer's true cruelty coming.

Rogerson and Spitzmiller cast no judgment on any of the proceedings. They let the cameras roll as Steinfeld works through his conflicted feelings about Albee's mythical Arizona connections and as Brody shouts down Condos. They show us the mundane of retirement center living—or, rather, what might seem mundane to us but the fact that they are getting bottled water instead of tap water at lunch causes excited conversation among the residents. And in what may be their wisest decision of all—for it results in the film's high point—they leave in, unedited, a prolonged segment of Fairchild singing Rodgers and Hammerstein's "You'll Never Walk Alone" accompanied by pianist Joan Stein. It is not germane to the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, except, perhaps, to give us further proof of Stein's skills (we've already seen the former *Your Show of Shows* pianist demonstrate her perfect pitch to the amazement of Brody and Steinfeld).

But it is germane to *life* in an assisted living facility as we watch and hear Fairchild belting out the song with, even at 80-something years old, a set of pipes Jennifer Hudson would envy. As the song rises to its crescendo, Fairchild wavers just a bit but then nails the big finish, and the audience—some moved to tears—applauds. I'm referring to the audience in the theater, by the way; in the film itself, Fairchild and Stein merely smile in self-satisfaction in the silence of an otherwise empty room.

"It's great to be alive," Condos says, expressing a deep sense of personal triumph after the public performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. "I never said that when I was out there struggling. But here I have felt it's great to be alive."

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