

Lavender & Lunatics

by
Tony Howell

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Lorelei Lavender is staging a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but unknown to her, a couple of would-be bank robbers are hiding out in her theatre and have become part of the cast. On top of that she has to deal with backstage drama, divorced movie stars, loan payments, and a tough-guy cop who keeps stopping rehearsals. Designed to work on a bare stage, much of the action plays in the house and is best staged to use all entrances from backstage to light booth. Costumes are modern with rehearsal pieces added throughout the course of the show, if desired. The script also allows for the introduction of Shakespeare as several scenes are played in rehearsal, but audiences and actors are not committed to a full-blown Shakespearean production.

ORIGINAL CAST

"Lavender & Lunatics" was first presented at Central Noble High School, Albion, Indiana in April of 2022.

Lorelei: Courtney Roberts	Ollie / Bottom: Kyle Phillips
Bertha: Levi Meyers	John: Brayden Fletcher
Ophelia: Aubrey Sparrow	Vince / Flute / Thisby: Tucker Jordan
Monrovia / Titania: Savannah Phillips	Detective Kruger: John Kneller
Gertie / Snout / Lion: Amelia Simpson	Sheridan: Jarrett Jordan
Juliet / Hermia: Riley Paris	Quinn: Joselyn Swank
Ursula / Helena: Avery Phillips	Officer Johnson: Kayla Keirn
Anne / Quince / Moon: Lily Phillips	Officer Wilson: Emmy Paris
Marianne: Madilyn Davis	Officer Fitzgerald: Sierra Grigsby
Valerie / Starveling / Moon: Grace Pulver	Owen: Porter Wesson
Randolph / Oberon: Chase Bills	Rory / Puck: Anna Christopher
Bodie / Lysander: Kade Baker	Taylor / Cobweb: Falon Ott
Lance / Demetrius: Robert Thompson	

CAST OF CHARACTERS

24-26 roles + extras

WOMEN: (10)

LORELEI LAVENDER: Owner of the theatre, eternal optimist, rarely angry.

BERTHA LLOYD: Stage manager and assistant, lots of common sense.

OPHELIA OTTLEY: Runs Miss Ophelia's Home for Wayward Children.

MONROVIA RALSTON: Faded movie star, ex-wife of Randolph (Titania).

GERTIE MCCOURTY: Old woman with walker (Snout / Wall).

JULIET LAVENDER: Young ingénue, Lorelei's granddaughter (Hermia).

URSULA CHARLES: Sheridan's star-struck, prima donna daughter (Helena).

ANNE BENTON: Harried housewife who is in a midlife crisis of sorts (Quince / Moonshine).

MARIANNE LENNOX: Costumer.

VALERIE BATTAGLIA: Vince's girlfriend and cohort in crime (Starveling / Lion).

MEN: (7)

RANDOLPH MONTAGUE: Former movie star, ex-husband of Monrovia (Oberon).

BODIE BUTLER: Loves Juliet but can't convince her that he's loyal (Lysander).

LANCE EVANS: Loves Ursula, but at one time he loved Juliet (Demetrius).

OLLIE HALLORAN: Bad comic, loud, obnoxious, conceited (Bottom / Pyramus).

JOHN BENTON: Anne's ignored and pouting husband.

VINCE DELUCA: Bank robber, pretends to be an actor (Thisby / Flute).

DETECTIVE JACK KRUGER: Tough, Humphrey Bogart type cop.

(Cont'd)

FLEXIBLE: (7-9)

SHERIDAN CHARLES: Rich investor, bank president and lawbreaker.

QUINN ADAMSON: Sheridan's sidekick, assistant and cohort in crime.

OFFICER JOHNSON

OFFICER WILSON

OFFICER FITZGERALD: (can be doubled with Johnson if desired).

OFFICER ROSS: (can be doubled with Wilson if desired).

OWEN: The light operator.

RORY: One of the Wayward Children (Puck).

TAYLOR: One of the Wayward Children (Cobweb).

EXTRAS: Cast, crew and children can be added as desired by the director.

SETTING

The Theatre Royale. The set can be appropriate for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or it can be a set in progress or the stage can be empty. The entire theatre from the house to the light booth is actually part of the acting space.

COSTUMES

Most costumes are modern-day. However, the play within the play is merely in rehearsal so it could be costumed with only costume pieces, full costumes or no special costumes at all.

ACT I

(AT RISE: The inside of the Theatre Royale. The only light on is the GHOST LIGHT in the middle of the stage. In the dark, doors to the house crash open. VALERIE and VINCE charge in and slam the doors shut behind them. They stand in front of the doors, leaning with their backs against them and holding them closed. They pant in unison as if they've been running, and then turn their heads towards each other.)

VALERIE: Prison! I'm going to prison! I'll die in prison! I'm a free bird, a sparrow that must fly! A cage will crush my soul!

VINCE: Lights. Lights. Where are the lights?

(VINCE turns on the house LIGHTS.)

VALERIE: The fresh air! The blue skies! My heart only beats because of the freedom of nature.

VINCE: Shut up and give me a chance to think!

VALERIE: What be the use of wings if you're not allowed to use them? What good a heart if it isn't allowed to love? What good—

VINCE: *(Interrupting.)* What good's a mouth if it doesn't SHUT UP once in a while?

VALERIE: My mother warned me! Don't end up on the tempting road to easy street because it only leads to trouble! And now look! WE'RE IN SO MUCH TROUBLE!

VINCE: *(Grabs VALERIE.)* I said calm down or else I'll—

VALERIE: *(Darts away from HIM, stunned.)* You were going to slap me!

VINCE: I was not. I just told you to calm down!

VALERIE: You were going to slap me! Why? Why did you want to slap me?

VINCE: You were hysterical, and I had to do something to snap you out of it!

VALERIE: So, you were going to slap me!

VINCE: Can we concentrate on our real problem here?

VALERIE: After all I've done for you, and you slapped me in the kisser!

VINCE: I did not slap you!

VALERIE: Okay. So, I was hysterical. You needed to calm me down. I get it. But why not try a soothing tone, a relaxing shoulder rub, a tender hug? Any of those seem much more calming than a whack across the whistle!

VINCE: I did not slap you.

VALERIE: You're nothing but a beast!

(VALERIE slaps VINCE.)

VINCE: Why did you do that?

VALERIE: You slapped me.

VINCE: I DID NOT SLAP YOU! YOU MADE THAT UP! IT NEVER HAPPENED!

VALERIE: You'd better calm down before I have to slap you again.

VINCE: I'll calm down when I want to calm down!

(VALERIE raises her right hand to slap HIM. Vince catches it with his right. Valerie tries to slap him with her left. Vince catches it with his left. Vince spins her around half a turn so he's behind her and then wraps his arms around her, so his chest is at her back. Valerie stamps her right foot on Vince's toes. He howls and bends down to his injured foot. Valerie smacks him on the rear end. Vince instantly straightens up to his full height and grabs his rear end. Valerie then slaps him.)

VINCE: *(Cont'd.)* STOP THAT!

VALERIE: That's what you get for slapping me!

VINCE: I DIDN'T SLAP YOU!

VALERIE: And now you know what will happen if you ever do!

VINCE: *(Takes a deep breath to calm himself and speaks in a restrained voice.)* No more slapping! No more hysterics! No more violence! Instead, let's focus and figure a way out of this mess.

VALERIE: You got us into it. You get us out!

VINCE: You take the cake, Valerie! You know it? You REALLY take the cake!

VALERIE: Which one of us looks more likely to eat cake? *(Pause.)* Don't answer that!

VINCE: Just be quiet for a moment so I can see if we lost them or not. *(Peers out the door and after a moment turns around and closes the door.)* No sign of the cops anywhere. I think we're good.

VALERIE: When you first came up with this plan, you swore we were going to be rich. And now we're on the run and for what?! Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

VINCE: I don't know what happened! The plan was foolproof!

VALERIE: It proved you were a fool, that's for sure.

VINCE: And who looks more foolish here? The fool who was fooled by a foolproof plan or the fool who was fooled by the fool who was fooled by the foolproof plan? Huh?

(Pause as VALERIE and VINCE stare at each other.)

VALERIE: When did you start speaking Swahili?

VINCE: The point is... YOU AGREED TO THE PLAN!

VALERIE: The point is... WHAT DO WE DO NOW? You said that we would be rich, but when we opened the safe there wasn't anything in there!

VINCE: You're the one that said she had loaned out seventy-five thousand bucks.

VALERIE: And you're the one that said she had to keep that much cash on hand to cover her loans.

VINCE: And you're the one who said she kept all her cash in the safe.

VALERIE: But you're the one who said we'd break in and steal it on a Friday and no one would know until Monday, but... but we were only two blocks from the bank before the fuzz was everywhere. Two blocks, Vince! You promised two days to make our escape and I didn't even get TWO BLOCKS!

VINCE: Can't you pipe down? I'm trying to think here!

VALERIE: Your thinking is how I got into this mess in the first place!

VINCE: Go check the front of the theatre. See if the coast is clear.

VALERIE: (*Mocking.*) Check the front. Clear the coast. Calm down.

VINCE: Just go check things and give me a chance to think!

VALERIE: How about you follow orders and I'll do the thinking.

VINCE: You think you should think? Because I think you thinking is a waste of a good think, that's what I think! (*Pause while THEY stare at each other.*) What? No smart comeback from the "Mouth of the Midwest!"

VALERIE: I don't even understand what you're talking about!

VINCE: Go check the front of the theatre.

VALERIE: I am a free and liberated woman, Vince Deluca, and I am allowed to ponder my fate and destiny in the grand scheme of things!

VINCE: What is that supposed to mean?

VALERIE: It means, do it yourself! I'm going to sit down for a mo and take a load off.

(VALERIE plops down in an empty seat, pulls off a very high heel and massages her foot. VINCE glares at her for a moment and then storms out into the lobby. Then the front door to the theatre crashes open. Vince repeats the same door slamming business from the beginning.)

VALERIE: (*Cont'd.*) Did you see something?

(VINCE doesn't move, only pants in fear.)

VALERIE: (*Cont'd.* Comes to her feet, still holding one high-heeled shoe.) Is it the cops?

(VINCE doesn't move, only pants in fear.)

VALERIE: (*Cont'd.* Limpes over to him on one shoe.) Vince, baby, talk to me!

(VINCE opens the door a crack and we hear VOICES in the lobby.)

LORELEI: *(From the lobby.)* There is something so special about stepping into a dark theatre! Only the ghost light onstage.

OWEN: *(From the lobby.)* Shall I go in and turn on the rest of the lights, Ms. Lavender?

(VINCE yanks the door shut.)

VALERIE: Prison! I'm going to prison! I'll die in prison! I'm a free bird, a sparrow that must fly! A cage will crush—

VINCE: We have to hide! *(Pause.)* Hide! Hide! HIDE-HIDE-HIDE!

(VALERIE and VINCE begin to run around frantically—Valerie on one shoe.)

VINCE: *(Cont'd.)* Lights! Lights! We have to turn out the lights!

(VINCE runs and turns out the LIGHTS while VALERIE hides among the seats. The doors open and Vince hides in the seats. LORELEI enters with OWEN, BERTHA and MARIANNE. The house LIGHTS come up.)

LORELEI: The theatre! That glorious art form that is like no other. That mystical force that wraps us in its arms and holds us in its heart and tells us over and over, yes, you are home!

BERTHA: A home that's going to belong to Sheridan Charles if this show doesn't make some serious cash.

MARIANNE: Oh, Lorelei! That is not true, is it? Please, tell me that's not true!

LORELEI: There is nothing to worry about, Marianne. First of all, we are doing Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. One of the most loved scripts in the history of the stage. Besides, one doesn't have to pay royalties for Shakespeare, so we can actually afford to do it.

BERTHA: It's going to take more than a few royalty-free performances to pay back the twenty-five thousand you borrowed from Sheridan!

MARIANNE: Twenty-five...thousand?

LORELEI: Don't worry! I have everything under control.

BERTHA: You'd better, Lorelei, or Sheridan will sell this place off to the first land-grabbing real estate developer she can find.

MARIANNE: (*Starting to cry.*) Oh, not this lovely old theatre!

OWEN: She can't do that! We'll chain ourselves to the front doors! No one will ever get in or out!

LORELEI: Everyone calm down! We're not going to lose the theatre. We're going to solve our troubles the same way theatre people have always solved their troubles.

BERTHA: Stick our heads in the sand, ignore the problem and pretend everything's okay?

LORELEI: No! We're going to put on a show!

BERTHA: That's your plan?

LORELEI: Of course! The production will be a huge success! The theatre will be saved, and we'll live happily ever after just putting on shows with the ones we love!

MARIANNE: You really think that will work?

LORELEI: It always worked for Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney. Now, Marianne, you get started on the costumes. And Owen? Why don't you head up to the booth and look things over.

(*MARIANNE and OWEN exit to costume and booth areas.*)

BERTHA: (*Moves up to LORELEI.*) You realize that if this doesn't work, you won't have anything left. Sheridan Charles is going to take your house, your car, and this blasted old theatre!

LORELEI: Oh, Bertha, don't say anything against this theatre. You know this is where I grew up. Grandmama directing productions of Gilbert and Sullivan, my father playing my father in *She Stoops To Conquer*, and my first standing ovation.

BERTHA: Your Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet!*

(LORELEI takes the stage and house LIGHTS go out and a SPOTLIGHT comes on.)

LORELEI: *(Very real and dramatically intense.)*

I have a faint cold fear thrills through my veins
That almost freezes up the heat of life:
O, look! Methinks I see my cousin's ghost
Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
Upon a rapier's point:--stay, Tybalt, stay!--
Romeo, I come! This do I drink to thee.

(LORELEI mimes drinking the sleeping potion and appears to die. A dramatic pause and then BERTHA starts clapping and heads up to the stage pulling out a tissue or hanky. OWEN brings up the house LIGHTS and kills the SPOTLIGHT.)

BERTHA: Bravo! Bravo!

LORELEI: *(Sitting up and back to her cheerful self.)* Well done with the spotlight, Owen.

OWEN: *(Yelling from the booth.)* That's what I do, Ms. Lavender.

BERTHA: Oh, Lorelei, I'm worried. Are you sure that this is going to work?

LORELEI: Everything's going to be fine, Bertha. Now we need to assign dressing rooms before everyone else gets here. *(THEY start to exit offstage.)* And remember, Randolph and Monrovia need to be as far away from each other as possible, and Ursula must feel like she is a star, and Ollie had better be away from everyone else.

BERTHA: We're doomed!

(THEY'RE gone. VALERIE and VINCE come out of hiding and head for the front doors to escape. The doors suddenly fly open and JULIET storms in with BODIE right behind her.)

BODIE: Juliet! You have to listen to me!

JULIET: That's the last thing I'm going to do!

(VALERIE and VINCE dive back into hiding.)

BODIE: How many times do I have to say it? There is nothing between me and Ursula! You're the only one I care about!

JULIET: I'm not a fool, Bodie! You were kissing Ursula, and not just kissing her either, you were Act III, big finale, happily-ever-after kissing her!

BODIE: No, I wasn't! She was kissing me! There's a big difference!

JULIET: Oh, yes! But Ursula's strength overwhelmed you.

BODIE: You're the one that I love!

(LANCE enters.)

LANCE: *(Angry.)* I can't believe you, Bodie!

BODIE: Lance. Would you mind leaving us alone, please? Juliet and I need to have a private talk.

LANCE: You and I need to have a private talk, pal! Why are you trying to take Ursula away from me?

BODIE: I don't want Ursula. Can't anyone understand that?

JULIET: I understand it, but for some reason, Ursula doesn't seem to be grasping the concept!

BODIE: Forget about Ursula! Everyone, forget about Ursula! There is nothing going on between me and Ursula!

(URSULA prances in.)

URSULA: Bodie, baby, sweetheart! Your little Ursula is here! How about another kissey-wissey-poo!

JULIET: That is not nothing!

BODIE: Ursula! Tell them that I didn't kiss you!

URSULA: But you did. And it wasn't any old kiss, either. It was an Act III, big finale, happily-ever-after kiss, that's what it was!

JULIET: SEE!

(JULIET storms off and LANCE follows her. URSULA prances up to BODIE.)

URSULA: Now that we're going to be alone, how about another kissey-kiss-kiss?

(LANCE and JULIET stop and watch in disbelief. URSULA throws her arms around BODIE, dips him and kisses him while Bodie struggles to get away. Furious, Juliet grabs Lance, dips him and kisses him. Bodie sees this and breaks free, grabs Ursula, dips her and kisses her. Lance sees this so he grabs Juliet, dips her and kisses her. LORELEI enters from backstage.)

LORELEI: Rehearsing already? I do love it! *(The two COUPLES break apart, embarrassed.)* And since we have all of you, why don't we run a scene. Owen? Lights?

OWEN: *(From the booth.)* No problem, Ms. Lavender! What scene are you going to run?

LORELEI: The scene where Lysander and Hermia plan to run away to the woods.

(LIGHTS change and BODIE and JULIET take their positions. LORELEI moves into the house to direct the scene.)

BODIE / Lysander: How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?

JULIET: I don't know! Maybe because I can't stand to look at you!

LORELEI: No ad-libbing, my dear. Shakespeare knew what he was doing, so just deliver his lines as written.

JULIET: Sorry, Grandma.

LORELEI: It's all right, sweetheart. Now, give her the cue again, Bodie.

BODIE / Lysander: How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?

JULIET / Hermia: *(Still furious.)*

Belike for want of rain, which I could tell

Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

BODIE / Lysander: Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.

JULIET / Hermia: If then true lovers have been ever crossed,
Then let us teach our trial patience

BODIE / Lysander: If thou lovest me, Hermia, then steal forth
thy father's house tomorrow night, And in the wood a league
without the town; There will I stay for thee.

JULIET / Hermia: My good Lysander,
I swear to thee by Cupid's strongest bow and
(*Over emphasizing the line.*)
by all the vows that ever men have broke.

(*Enter HELENA / URSULA.*)

JULIET / Hermia: Fair Helena. Whither away?

URSULA / Helena: (*SHE's not nearly as good a performer as
the others.*) Call you me "fair"? Demetrius loves your fair.
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye, my
tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.

(*URSULA pauses, trying to remember her next line.*)

URSULA: (*Cont'd.*) Line.

LORELEI: (*Has the lines memorized*) O, teach me how you
look and...

URSULA / Helena:

O, teach me how you look and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart!

JULIET / Hermia: (*Saying this pointedly to BODIE.*)

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

URSULA / Helena: O, that your frowns would teach my smiles
such skill!

JULIET / Hermia: The more I hate, the more he follows me.

URSULA / Helena: The more I love, the more he hateth me.

JULIET / Hermia: His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

URSULA / Helena: None but your beauty. Would that fault
were mine!

JULIET / Hermia: Take comfort. (*Aims the rest of the line right
at BODIE.*) He no more shall see my face since he hath
turned a heaven unto a hell!

BODIE: Oh, come on, Juliet! You know that--

LORELEI: Ah, ah, Bodie. You're breaking character. Stay in the scene please.

BODIE / Lysander: Helena? Tomorrow night through Athens' gates have we devised to steal!

(JULIET storms off to the side of the stage. BODIE follows and tries to talk to her, but she refuses to listen. LANCE moves over to her and puts his arm around her. Juliet allows it. Bodie is angry.)

URSULA / Helena: How happy some can be!
Throughout Athens I am thought as fair as she.
But what of that? *(Pause.)* Line.

LORELEI: Demetrius thinks not so.

URSULA / Helena: Demetrius thinks not so. Ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eye, He hailed down oaths that he was only mine. *(Pause.)* Line.

LORELEI: And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,

URSULA / Helena: And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt, So he dissolved, and show'rs of oaths did melt. *(Pause.)* Line.

LORELEI: I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.

URSULA / Helena: I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight.
Then to the wood will he tomorrow night Pursue her.

LORELEI: Better, children! Better! Now, Ursula, you promised me that you'd have your lines memorized tonight.

URSULA: I know, Ms. Lavender, but they're so hard. Why don't Shakespeare talk like a normal person?

LORELEI: Dear, if his lines sounded normal, how would we have known he was Shakespeare?

URSULA: Oh, yeah.

LORELEI: Now, Marianne is pulling costumes. Go see what she has for you.

URSULA: Yay! I love playing dress-up!

(URSULA runs off to the costume area. BODIE and LANCE follow reluctantly. JULIET crosses to her GRANDMOTHER.)

JULIET: Grandma! You have to do something!

End of Freeview

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