

= Philostrate =

Philostrate ( meaning " lover of battle " ) is a fictional character in a number of literary works , including William Shakespeare 's A Midsummer Night 's Dream ( 1596 ) . In that play , he is the Master of Revels at Theseus ' court , meaning he is in charge of his lord 's entertainments , making recommendations to Theseus , as well as altering the text of some of the plays performed in his court . Shakespeare may have used this character to poke fun at play censorship in London at the time . In early performances of the play , the actor who played this character probably also played the part of Egeus , Hermia 's strict father . There is only one scene in Act V where both Egeus and Philostrate are present , and in this scene Egeus ' character would have taken all of Philostrate 's lines as his own .

= = Role in the play = =

As Theseus 's head guard , Philostrate is asked to defend his Lord and also makes recommendations for plays to help while away the time . Theseus rejects all of the plays except " Pyramus and Thisbe " , which Philostrate has given a particularly bad review . He advises the betrothed king not to choose " The Mechanicals ' " ( the workers ' ) play because it is badly rehearsed :

Theseus , eager to please his fiancée , Hippolyta , and the rest of his court , chooses Pyramus and Thisbe despite Philostrate 's efforts . Because of its amateurishness , the play turns out to be humorous .

= = Pronunciations = =

In most contemporary performances Philostrate 's name is usually pronounced : FILL @-@ uh @-@ straight , ( to rhyme with " illustrate " ) with a short " uh " rather than a long " oo " because the medial vowel is unaccented .

However , a variation to this would be based on the conventions of classical Greek . In this case , the final " e " would be pronounced ( as an " ee " or " aye " ) , giving the name four syllables , and the accent would shift from the first syllable , to either the second or third syllable , depending on whether the medial syllables are considered short or long . It would then be pronounced : fill @-@ uh @-@ STRA @-@ tay .

= = Context = =

Shakespeare is known for borrowing plots and characters from other stories , but the source of A Midsummer Night 's Dream has proved difficult to trace . There is no clear parallel to its plot in the literature of his time . However , many of its characters ' names and relationships are borrowed from Chaucer 's Canterbury Tales and Philostrate is no exception . His name is the pseudonym adopted by Arcite upon covertly returning to Athens in The Knight 's Tale to work for Theseus . ( A Knight 's Tale was dramatized nearly twenty years later by Shakespeare and Fletcher as The Two Noble Kinsmen . ) Chaucer himself took the name Philostrate from Boccaccio 's poem Il Filostrato , a story about Troilus and Criseyde . Because Chaucer 's Arcite adopts this identity to become a servant at Theseus ' court , it is possible that the Midsummer Night 's Dream character is meant to be the same person in a continuation of the story . However , the two characters have little else in common . Another candidate for the source of Philostrate 's character is Philostratus the Elder , the author of Comus , a play which has similarities to Midsummer Night 's Dream .

Philostrate 's duty in Theseus ' court is to examine the play that Nick Bottom and the others are about to perform and to make suggestions for improvement . It is also his duty to advise Theseus on matters of entertainment . Theseus calls him " our usual manager of mirth " . The official term for Philostrate 's position in the Court is the Master of Revels .

In Shakespeare 's day , the Queen of England had her own Master of Revels ? appointed to

oversee all entertainment in London . Before a play could be performed , its script had to go through him , and whenever the Queen wanted to see a play , he would make recommendations . By 1581 ( over a decade before the writing of Dream ) , all plays had to be approved by the Master of Revels prior to being performed . Shakespeare seems to be poking fun at the profession through Philostrate . At one point , when Theseus asks Philostrate to recommend a play to help pass the time , he lists several which sound ridiculous , such as " the battle with the centaurs to be sung by an Athenian eunuch to the harp . " These names are humorous examples of the types of plays that were actually being performed around the time of Dream . They were becoming old however , and , like Theseus , monarchs were searching for something new , refreshing , and sophisticated .

= = Performances = =

In original performances of A Midsummer Night 's Dream , the actor who played Egeus and the actor who played Philostrate were probably one and the same . This can be gathered through discrepancies between the First Folio and earlier quarto versions of the play . In Act V , scene 1 , for example , the quartos say " Call Philostrate " in several places where the 1623 Folio says " Call Egeus " . This would be an easy mistake to make if one actor had spoken both parts in this scene . One actor filling both roles explains the jumbled dialogue in this scene . Howard Furness , editor of several Shakespeare editions , interprets this a little differently , saying that Shakespeare may not have originally intended both roles to be played by the same person , but that directors combined the roles to save money . In any case , Act V , scene 1 is the only scene in which both men are present at the same time . In cases where one actor was playing both roles , Egeus ' character would probably have filled both roles in this scene , absorbing Philostrate 's lines into his own .

However , during Act V , there is no mention of Egeus , nor does he have a speaking role . It is logical , however , that he would have been in attendance since it is also his daughter Hermia 's wedding that the group is there to celebrate .