

PERSONAGGI E INTERPRETI

Mario (studente)	Jacopo Micheletto
Madre del suddetto	Giorgia Rizzi
Shakespeare	Lorenzo Paiola
The Actor	Elia Vincenzi
Ned Alleyn/Macbeth	Andrea Rizzotti
Lady Macbeth	Valentina Maestrello
Rick Burbage/Hamlet	Federico Lodi
Romeo	Alessandro Catalini
Juliet	Greta Troiani
Ariel	Giorgia Farronato
Puck	Anna Pugno
Three Witches	Andrea Dal Corso, Federico De Guidi, Marco Mezzari

MUSICHE ORIGINALI
e SCELTA MUSICHE Matteo Danzi, Stefano Caregari, Stefano Guerra

VIDEO e SCENOGRAFIE Jacopo Buffolo, Davide Bragantini,
Francesco Dal Corso

COSTUMI e TRUCCO Giorgia Rizzi, Valentina Maestrello

OGGETTISTICA Michele Veneri, Marco Mezzari

PUBBLICITA' Simone Selleri, Zeno Varalta, Marta Spinielli

DIRETTORE DI SCENA Irene Cazzola

SUGGERITRICE Marta Spinielli

TESTO TEATRALE Paola Fattori (con William Shakespeare)

REGIA Paola Fattori

Quando si accendono le luci Mario è in camera sua, sul letto , in pigiama. Ha le cuffie e si muove al ritmo della musica che sta ascoltando (e che si sente anche in sala). Il computer è acceso con la schermata su un videogioco (proiettata sul maxischermo) al quale si dedica contemporaneamente. Alla parete un orologio segna le 11.30. Una catasta di libri vicino al letto, in grande disordine. Jeans, maglietta e scarpe ammassati in un angolo. La madre entra da destra con impeto. Mario è di spalle e non la sente. Continua a muoversi a ritmo di musica.

Madre: Mario! (Nessuna risposta) MARIO!! MARIO!!! (Grida)

Mario: (si gira, sempre muovendosi al ritmo della musica, vede la madre, guarda terrorizzato il maxischermo e si affretta a spegnere tutto, facendo un po' di confusione. Guarda la madre in silenzio, poi, come illuminato da un'idea) Ah, scusa, non ti ho sentita ...

Madre: Per forza, con quelle cuffie! (tutto d'un fiato, senza aspettare risposta) Perché era acceso il computer? Non dovevi finire di studiare per domani? Hai l'interrogazione di inglese, no? Hai fatto tutti i compiti? E' un'interrogazione su tutto il programma, vero? Che ci faceva il computer acceso? Lo sapevi da un bel po' che ti interrogava, no? Dove sono i libri di inglese? (Mario è muto ormai. La madre si guarda in giro per un istante) Questa camera è un DISASTRO!!!

Mario: (rassegnato, sospira) Tutto sotto controllo, non ti preoccupare. Ho guardato alcuni dati su wikipedia, poi ho giocato solo per qualche minuto. E' TUTTO sotto controllo, ti dico. (Con esagerato entusiasmo) Dai, esci, ora vado a letto così domani sono ben riposato per l'interrogazione. (Spinge la madre, con decisione, verso la porta, lei oppone resistenza).

Madre: Ma... (Cerca di fermarsi) E come...

Mario: (Ha un'idea) Prometto che domani metterò in ordine la stanza. Giuro.

Madre: (rabbonita) Ah, bene, allora... buonanotte. (Esce da destra).

Mario: (*comincia a rovistare fra una catasta di libri*) No, no, NOOO! (*Stringe i pugni con rabbia, impreca a bassa voce e ricomincia a cercare*). Ah, eccolo! (*Estrae dal mucchio un libro tutto sgualcito, fa una smorfia di disgusto, lo sfoglia e trova quello che sta cercando, si mette a leggere con forte accento italiano e senza la minima intonazione*) The most famous playwright in the world, William Shakespeare, was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a market town about 100 miles north-west of London, in 1564. Although (*pronounces "Aldo" stammers and repeats the words he evidently doesn't understand*) he was born into a well-to-do middle-class family, he never went to university. We know that after (*starts to yawn*) his marriage (*yawns again*) and the birth of three (*makes himself more comfortable and, while uttering the last words, falls asleep*) children he left his home townfor London, ...where he worked as an actor ... (*falls asleep*).

Enter Shakespeare from the right, looks around, sees Mario sleeping, goes near him. It looks as if he wanted to wake him up, but then he changes his mind, he paces to and fro.

Shakespeare: Who could have imagined? My genius reduced to this... this... (*points at Mario*) How strange! I've never been short of words in all my life but this... (*points at Mario again*) I know that "brevity is the soul of wit"¹, but being speechless, wordless, powerless... Never in my life... (*sits on the edge of Mario's bed and leans his cheek upon his hand*).

Enter the Actor from the right, wearing black, barefoot. He touches the Bard's shoulder who is forced to notice him. He observes the Actor with interest, as if evaluating something to be bought.

Actor:(*addressing Shakespeare*) Unbelievable, truly unbelievable! You, who have filled the universe with new words: (*counting on his fingers*) accommodation, assassination, indistinguishable, obscene, pedant, premeditated, submerged²... You, who have made everyday English speech memorable... who have produced

¹ *Hamlet*, act 2 scene 2.

² For this list and the following quotations see McCrum-Cran-MacNeil, *The Story of English*, Penguin, 1987, pp. 98-104.

the best collection of quotes for the average English speaking people... You who said that your "wish is father to the thought"³... should WISH something helpful for this boy. Shall we let him sleep on, or shall we TEACH him something? (*Shakespeare remains silent, frowning*) Stop being "tongue-tied"⁴ and do not "knit your brows"⁵. Well, be the "tower of strength"⁶ you have shown us you can be.

Shakespeare: (*resigned, stands up*) Alright, alright. Maybe this boy has "seen better days"⁷ or maybe he has "lived in a fool's paradise"⁸. But it is my duty to put an end to this. "Come, you spirits that tend on" students' ignorance. "Fill me from the crown (*touches his head*) to the toe" (*points at his toes*) of the greatest creativity. "Come, thick night and fill" this empty head with the power of knowledge. (*He sighs as if he had made a great effort*).

Actor: (*relieved*) "Your face, oh Bard, is as a book where men may read strange matters"⁹. (*sits down downstage left*)

Shakespeare: "Come, you spirits", I said! (*rather annoyed*)

Enter Puck (from the right) and Ariel (from the left). They run gracefully and stop at Mario's bed. They look at him.

Puck: I can read your mind, Master. Fear not, your servant shall present this

foolish boy with the best of your plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that is. (*matter-of-fact tone*).

³ Proverb based on Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part 2*.

⁴ *Sonnet 140*.

⁵ *Henry VI*, act 2, scene 1. But a similar expression was also used by Chaucer.

⁶ Derives from *The Book of Common Prayer* (1549) but was later used by S. in *Richard III*: "The king's name is a tower of strength".

⁷ *As you Like it*, Act 2, scene 7.

⁸ First recorded in Paston's Letters (1462). Shakespeare used it in *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, scene 4.

⁹ All Shakespeare's speech and the Actor's reply, contain several quotes from *Macbeth*, act 1 scene 5 (Lady Macbeth's speech).

Ariel: (*speaking to Puck*) Who are you to say this? Why would the Bard call me? To play your silly comedy? Certainly what he needs, to fill this ignorant (*points at Mario*) head with knowledge, is his farewell play, his last play, his BEST play. *The Tempest*, that is (*matter-of-fact tone*).

Puck: Friend, fellow-spirit, lend me your ears. I come to¹⁰ act MY part, not to watch YOU play yours....

Music. Puck and Ariel move around in a sort of dance-fight. Puck starts singing.

Through the forest have I come,
But of spirits found I ...

Ariel: Stop, this is unfair! (*tries to cover Puck's mouth, but Puck moves around the bed swiftly, mocks Ariel, makes grimaces, and resumes his speech*).

Puck: (*singing*)

Through the forest have I come,
But of spirits found I none.
Night and silence! Who is here? (*looks at Mario sleeping*)
And pyjamas he does wear.
This is he, my master said,
He's a boy and not a maid
When he wakes let English be
The school subject to study.¹¹

While Puck is singing and dancing, Ariel shows his anger by stomping around, covering his ears, putting his hands on his hips. Before Puck finishes his last line Ariel pushes Puck away and begins with his song and dance.

Ariel: (*singing*)

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.

Hark! Now I hear them—Ding-dong, bell.¹²

Puck: This has nothing to do with our situation!

Ariel: But it's a beautiful song. And it's MY song.

Puck: Damn YOUR song! There lies a possible member of THE AUDIENCE (*pointing at Mario*) And HE is our problem!

Shakespeare: Hush, no more!¹³ (*Pause. Ariel and Puck come closer to him*)
When he wakes up I want him to see a scene he will never forget. You, my servants, let Romeo and Juliet come here, ready to play their parts in front of him. (*during this speech Ariel and Puck go on bothering each other, unseen by Shakespeare*).

Ariel and Puck: We'll be as swift as a coursing river!¹⁴ (*They exit right, running*).

Shakespeare joins the Actor and sits down downstage left.

Music. Enter Juliet from the left carrying a ladder which she opens upstage right. She makes sure it is in the correct position, slightly changing angle. She climbs up, straightens her dress, combs her hair. Then she remembers she needs a rose, she climbs down and picks up one from under Mario's bed, climbs up the ladder again, puts the rose next to herself, making sure it's ready when needed. She's ready and waits "leaning her cheek upon her hand". While all this happens Mario begins to stir, to toss and turn in bed. Wakes up completely, sits on the

¹⁰ An echo of *Julius Caesar*, Act 3, scene 2.

¹¹ This song, with omissions and some changes to fit the situation, comes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 2, scene 3.

¹² "Ariel's Song" from *The Tempest*, Act 1, scene 2.

¹³ *Macbeth*, Act 3, scene 1.

¹⁴ From the song *I'll Make a Man out of You* in the Disney film *Mulan*.

bed and looks at Juliet, mesmerized. Enter Ariel and Puck and sit down downstage left with Shakespeare and Actor. Mario is initially uncertain about what to do but then he timidly joins the group and sits down. His expression, in profile, shows that he is more and more interested in the following dialogue.

Juliet: Ay, me! ¹⁵(waits, then repeats) Ay, me! (Louder. She looks around, annoyed). Where is my Lord? (Impatiently) I do remember well where I should be, and there I am. Where is my Romeo? ¹⁶

Romeo enters running from the left. Not noticing the people sitting on the floor, he crosses the stage. He is half-dressed. He tries to button up his shirt while running, stumbles in his trousers. He is barefoot. He stands behind the ladder, panting, changes expression: he is ready to start and show his love for Juliet. Looks up at her. Spotlight on Juliet.

Romeo: But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon. (mimes "arise" and "kill")
It is my lady, O, it is my love! (Pause)
Her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand! (while Juliet does so)
O, that I were a glove upon that hand, (touching his own hand)
That I might touch that cheek!(reaches up with his hand but he can't touch her).

Juliet: Ay me!

Romeo: She speaks!
O, speak again, bright angel!

Juliet : O Romeo, Romeo! why are you Romeo?
Deny your father and refuse your name;

¹⁵ The dialogue, abridged and with slight changes, is from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2 sc. 2.

¹⁶ *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 5, scene 3. This is said in the play when Juliet wakes up before she realizes that Romeo is dead. It seems quite appropriate here, in a completely different meaning.

Or, if you will not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Romeo (Aside): Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

Juliet : It is but your name that is my enemy;
What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, (looking at the parts of body she mentions) Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part (touches her face)
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name? That which we call a rose (takes up the rose, looks at it, smells it) by any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called.
Romeo, doff your name, (throws away the rose; Romeo picks it up and smells it) And for that name, which is no part of you,
Take all myself. (Crosses her arms around herself)

Romeo: (Looks excited) I take you at your word.
Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized;
Henceforth I never will be Romeo.

Juliet: What man are you that, thus bescreened in night,
So stumble on my counsel?

Romeo: By a name
I know not how to tell you who I am.
My name, dear love, is hateful to myself
Because it is an enemy to you.

Juliet: Are you not Romeo, and a Montague? (Romeo shakes his head in denial)
How did you come here, tell me, and why?
The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,
And the place death, considering who you are.

Romeo: Your family cannot stop me.

Juliet: If they do see you they will murder you.

Romeo: I have night's cloak to hide me from their eyes,
And if you love me, let them find me here.

Juliet: O gentle Romeo,
If you love me, pronounce it faithfully.

Romeo: Lady, by yonder blessed moon I vow...

Juliet: O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon...

Romeo: What shall I swear by?

Juliet: Do not swear at all. I know you love me.
Sweet, good night.
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet.
Good night, good night!

Romeo: O, will you leave me so unsatisfied?

Juliet: What satisfaction can you have tonight? Dear love, adieu.

Romeo: O blessed, blessed night! I am afraid,
Being in night, all this is but a dream. Good night. Adieu.

Juliet: Tomorrow will I send. A thousand times good night!
Parting is such sweet sorrow that I shall say good night till it be morrow.

Exit Romeo from the back, Juliet climbs down and goes to get him. They bow to the public, as professional actors do.

Puck, Ariel, the Actor clap vigorously, nodding and cheering. Shakespeare, self-satisfied, looks at Mario who joins them but without much enthusiasm. Romeo and Juliet join the audience on stage. Mario looks at Shakespeare, puzzled, and goes on clapping, unconvinced. Music. Puck and Ariel stand up, go downstage centre and start discussing, repeating the words "love", "death", "murder",

"power", "ambition", "madness" ... They start speaking softly but gradually raise their voices.

Puck: Blood.

Ariel: Assassins!

Puck: Maybe that's what the boy wants!

Ariel: But, on the other hand, he may want a magical tale.

Puck: Nah, *Othello*, I say.

Ariel: *The Tempest* (with enthusiasm), I say.

Puck: *King Lear*.

Ariel: *The Tempest* (with determination).

Puck: *Julius Caesar*.

Ariel: *The Tempest* (still more convinced).

Puck: *As you Like it*.

Ariel: As I like it?¹⁷ *The Tempest*, then.

Puck: Don't be foolish AND stubborn. We are NOT here to play our plays, but to turn that empty mind (*points at the boy, rather disgusted*) into a cultivated student who is convinced that our Master was not for an age, but for all time!¹⁸

Ariel: *The Tempest*, I say. (*Like a spoilt child*).

They look at Shakespeare who stands up and goes near them. They say

¹⁷ This is a pun: *As You Like it* is one of Shakespeare's pastoral comedies.

¹⁸ The line appears in the Preface written by Ben Jonson to the *First Folio* of Shakespeare's plays published in 1623.

something in Shakespeare's ear. He shakes his head and gestures to the Actor to come close to him. Mario is ill-at-ease but doesn't move.

Shakespeare: You are THE Actor. You deal with these two, then. They are unbearable: they believe that this stage is the world, while they should know that "all the world is a stage"¹⁹.

Actor: I think they should cast lots.

Shakespeare: Let it be so ²⁰. It is the stars, the stars above us, govern our conditions.²¹ (*moves upstage right, near the ladder*)

Actor: I have something here with me which can be very useful. (*He takes a satchel out of his pocket*). This contains ALL the titles of your 37 plays. We will simply let fate decide. Come here, you spirits!

Ariel: Just we two (*looking around*)

Puck: Or all the others?

Actor: We shall see. Throw a coin to see who of you will draw a title out of my bag: I'm THE Actor. I can be anything fate decides. (*joins Shakespeare near the ladder*)

Suspense music. Ariel takes out a coin. He and Puck decide head or tail. Ariel throws the coin up. He wins. Change of music. He shows great enthusiasm, makes a pirouette and dances a few steps, with great grace. He finally puts a hand into the satchel. The music plays on.

Ariel: Let it be *The Tempest!* (*he takes out a piece of rolled-up paper, unfolds it, the music stops and he reads*) *Macbeth...* Well... (*resigned*) ... Alright! (*He sighs*) We need other magical creatures then.

Music. Ariel and Puck make a little dance, like a sort of enchanting rite.

¹⁹ *As You Like It*, Act 2, scene 7.

²⁰ *King Lear*, Act 1, scene 1.

²¹ *King Lear*, Act 4, scene 3.

The music changes into a drum beat. The three witches enter, bent down and ugly, sneering with shrieking voices. They walk to the bed and stomp around it in a circle. Drum music goes on while they speak.

The three witches: Fair is foul and foul is fair, hover through the fog and filthy air. ²²(*They repeat this three times. At the second time Ariel and Puck decide to join them in the chanting. They dance. Then the witches sit down with the "audience" on stage. Puck and Ariel sit on Mario's bed*).

Actor: (*Moves forward. Plays Macbeth with great pomposity, showing that he knows the part*) So fair and foul a day I have not seen ²³...

Shakespeare: (*irritated, going towards him*) No, no, NOOO! My Macbeth would never speak like that! What sort of actor are you? Aren't you ashamed? You should have seen Edward Alleyn! HE was perfect for the part. My lovely Puck, my sweet Ariel, let him come here, will you?

Ariel and Puck: (*together, standing up and going towards Shakespeare*) Great master! We come to answer your best pleasure²⁴.

Ariel: Before you can say "come" and "go"...

Puck: And cry "so, so"...

Ariel and Puck: He'll be here with mop and mow. Do you love us, master? No?²⁵

They dance away through the audience and exit from the centre.

Shakespeare: (*While they are leaving*) Dearly, my delicate spirits!²⁶
Re-enter Ariel and Puck immediately, dancing and leading the way for Edward Alleyn/Macbeth.

²² *Macbeth*, Act 1, scene 2.

²³ *Macbeth*, Act 1, scene 1.

²⁴ *The Tempest*, Act 1, scene 2.

²⁵ *The Tempest*, Act 4, scene 1.

²⁶ *The Tempest*, Act 4, scene 1.

Shakespeare: My dear Edward, my noble Ned! Will you be my Macbeth again tonight?

Alley nods his assent and starts speaking, showing that he knows the part well.

Ned/Macbeth: So fair and foul a day I have not seen ²⁷...

Shakespeare: *(rather annoyed)* Yes, yes, yes, we all know how the play begins; what we need here is the bloody scenes.

Ned/Macbeth: *(to Shakespeare, speaking as Ned, not as Macbeth)* We need the Lady, then.

Ariel and Puck look at each other. They know what they have to do: they exit from the centre. They enter from the left, dancing like before, leading the way for Lady Macbeth. They sit on Mario's bed. The lady stops downstage centre. Ned/Macbeth prepares to speak to Lady. He moves downstage left. Haunting music, spotlight on Lady Macbeth.

Lady M. : *(With cruelty in her tone)*

The raven croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

Under my battlements. *(Pause)*

Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,

And fill me of the direst cruelty. Make thick my blood.

Come to my woman's breasts,

And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,

Come, thick night, come smoke of hell,

That my knife see not the wound it makes.

Macbeth comes up to her from behind. She does not see him. He hugs her from the back. Feeling his arms around her she changes tone immediately and becomes sweet and gentle. The cruelty stays in her look.

Great Macbeth, loving husband!

²⁷ *Macbeth*, see note 24.

Macbeth: My dearest love, Duncan comes here tonight.

Lady M. : O, never shall Duncan tomorrow see! *(She looks at him)*

Your face, my lord, is as a book where men

May read strange matters... *(caresses him)*

Look like the innocent flower, *(holds close to him, caresses his shoulder)* but be the serpent under it. *(hugs him)*

You shall put this night's great business into my hands.

Macbeth: *(unconvinced, moving apart)* We will speak further.

Lady M.: *(With great energy)* Only look up clear.

To alter favour ever is to fear. Leave all the rest to me.

Macbeth: *(still unconvinced, moving up and down)* King Duncan's here in double trust: First, as I am his cousin and his subject, Then, as his host, I should shut the door against his murderer, Not bear the knife myself. *(Mimes the gestures of holding a knife and stabbing someone)*

Besides, this Duncan is so meek,

So honest in his great office, that his virtues

Will plead like angels against his assassination.... *(Pause)*

(Determined) We will proceed no further in this business.

Lady M.: *(surprised and a little angry)* Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dressed yourself?

My husband!

From this time such I account your love. *(She turns away from him)*

You are afraid to be the same in your act

As you are in desire?

Macbeth: *(Rather offended)* Peace!

I dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is none.

Lady M.: *(Turning round)* What beast was it, then,

that made you break this enterprise to me?

I have given suck, and know how tender

it is to love the babe that milks me. (*Mimes holding a baby in her arms*)
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn, (*mimes the actions she mentions*)
as you have done to this.

At this points all the "audience" on stage look horrified. They hold their breath in disbelief. Mario puts his hands on his cheeks to convey astonishment and pity. Shakespeare, still standing near the ladder with Actor, looks at Mario, satisfied.

Macbeth: If we should fail? (*still a little uncertain*)

Lady M.: We fail?! We will NOT fail! (*with determination*)

Macbeth: (*convinced at last*) I am settled.
(*Facing the public*) False face must hide what the false heart does know.²⁸ (*They move towards Shakespeare, looking at each other lovingly*).

Shakespeare: Well? (*Pause*) This is not enough. How can the boy be left ignorant of how the story ends? Come on. Get to the end, but quickly. We don't have all the time in the world!²⁹

Darkness. Exit Macbeth from the back. Haunting music. Lady moves to the ladder ready to take the cloth with which to wipe Macbeth's hands. Re-enter Macbeth, slightly wavering, with bloody hands. He moves towards Lady M.

Macbeth: I have done the deed. (*Looks at his hands*) This is a sorry sight.

Lady M.: (*scornfully, starts cleaning his hands*) A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight. (*Soothingly*) These deeds must not be thought of after these ways. They will make us mad.³⁰

²⁸ This part draws rather freely from *Macbeth*, Act 1, scenes 5 and 7. Some words have been simplified.

²⁹ *We have all the Time in the World* is a famous Luis Armstrong song, was composed by John Barry with lyrics by Hal David.

³⁰ This part is abridged from *Macbeth*, Act 2, scene 2.

Shakespeare: We don't have all the time in the world, I said! Go to the end, to his desperate final monologue after the Lady's death.

Actor: (*moving away from the ladder and going near Shakespeare*) Ok, Ok, boss. No problem. I will announce the queen's death.

Puck: (*standing up*) No, I'll do it!

Ariel: (*standing up*) No, Master Shakespeare, I'll do it. (*whines like a child*)

Shakespeare: You shall both do it. No more fussing. But you, Ariel, are more like the devil incarnate³¹ than my faithful airy servant!

The Actor, looking disappointed, sits with the "audience", so does Lady M.

Ariel: We are not playing *The Tempest*, are we? (*with impudence*)

Shakespeare: Hush! You shall be free, but then exactly do all points of my command. (*Sits down with the "audience"*).

Ariel: To the syllable.³²

Macbeth: (*Changes tone*) Ehm... ehm...

Ariel and Puck: (*In unison, very seriously*) The Queen, my Lord is dead. (*Very quietly they join the "audience"*).

Macbeth: (*Alone on stage*) She should have died hereafter. (*Pause*)

There would have been a time for such a word. (*Pause*)
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

³¹ This expression is found in both *Titus Andronicus* (1588) and *King Henry V* (1598).

³² Originally an exchange between Prospero and Ariel in *The Tempest*, Act 1, scene 2.

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! (*Moves towards the ladder*)
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player (*Stops there*)
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. (*Moves to the bed and sits down*) It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (*Shakes his head in despair*)

The audience on stage remain silent for a few seconds, underlining the tragic moment. Then they clap vigorously. Mario shows he has enjoyed the piece a lot and looks at Shakespeare admiringly. All look at Mario to check his reaction.

Ned/Macbeth bows to the public and joins the "audience" on stage.

Mario: (*Takes up courage, speaks good English*) That was great! Really cool. Awesome! (*Pause, thinks. Shakespeare and Mario stand up*) I wouldn't mind something from *Hamlet*, though. (*Walking to and fro with Shakespeare*) You know, it's one of my teacher's favourites. I'm pretty sure she'll ask something weird about that awful monologue... You know... the "To be or not to be" thing!

Shakespeare: So, the boy speaks English, now. It's not Greek to him anymore!³³ (*Addressing the public*) Is it my genius or the magic of our language, I wonder?

Mario: Why? Yes! (*convinced*) This is MY dream, and in MY dream I can speak any language. I wish it were true when I wake up!

Shakespeare: Sleep on, dear boy. Hamlet's monologue is my masterpiece. It is truly for all time, as my good friend Ben Jonson said.³⁴

Actor: (*Standing up*) Can someone get a skull?

Shakespeare: And Rick Burbage³⁵, my best Hamlet ever! (*To Ariel and Puck*) My dainty spirits, this is your last task!
The Actor, looking sad, sits down again among the "audience".

³³ From *Julius Caesar*, Act 1, scene 2: "Casca: It was Greek to me".

³⁴ See above note 19 p. 6.

³⁵ Richard Burbage was an outstanding actor in Shakespeare's times. He played the title role in the first performances of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Richard III*, *King Lear*.

Puck: We'll put a girdle round about the earth³⁶ (*makes gesture of a circle*)...

Ariel: ...and find what you need at once, my lord!

Ariel and Puck run out, this time following different directions. All the people on stage look at them. They come back in an instant: Puck (from the right) is holding a skull and a mirror and Ariel (from the left) leads the way for Burbage/Hamlet. Puck puts the mirror on the bed and the skull on the ladder.

Burbage: Ehm... Ehm... (*Ariel, Puck and Shakespeare sit down with the audience*).

Shakespeare: Well?

Burbage/Hamlet: Yes, yes! I'm ready. (*Changes expression a couple of times, to find the right one; start his monologue, accompanied by soft melancholic music*).

To be, or not to be, that is the question:

Whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,

No more; and by a sleep to say we end

The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to: it is a consummation

Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;

To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub:

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,

Must give us pause—there's the respect

That makes calamity of so long life.

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,

The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,

³⁶ From *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 2, scene 1.

The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.³⁷

After a few seconds everybody on stage claps with enthusiasm, including Mario who stands up. Burbage bows a few times, as the clapping continues. A violin plays a merry melody. Everybody stands up and gathers downstage right. Burbage joins them. Puck and Mario leave the others. Mario goes back to bed and falls asleep at once. Puck sits on the bed.

Shakespeare: We are such stuff as dreams are made on,
And our little life is rounded with a sleep.³⁸

Puck: On the ground
Sleep sound.
I'll apply
To your eye.

³⁷ *Hamlet*, Act 3, scene 1, 55–87.

³⁸ *The Tempest*, Act 4, scene 1.

Gentle Mario, remedy. (*squeezes flower juice into Mario's eyes*)
When you wake,
You take
True delight
In the sight
Of your English textbook.
And the country proverb known
That every man should take his own
In your waking shall be shown.
Now you Shakespeare study Will.
Nothing ever shall go ill.
And all shall be well.³⁹

The "Audience" clap. Ariel stands up, goes near Puck and gives him a hand shake. Dancing gracefully, they lead the way out for all the others, apart from Mario. Soft lullaby music. Mario sleeps soundly. All lights go out. Then an alarm clock goes off. Low Light is switched on. Mario is in bed. The mother comes in from the right, walking quickly to Mario's bed. Makes gesture of opening curtains. Daylight.

Madre: Mario, è ora di svegliarsi! Alzati subito o perderai l'autobus. La colazione è pronta. (*Uscendo a destra, in tono di rimprovero, a voce alta*) Ricordati che hai la verifica di inglese!

Musica. Mario si alza dal letto lentamente, si guarda intorno, cerca il libro di inglese vicino al letto, lo trova subito e lo guarda soddisfatto, lo sfoglia sorridendo e lo appoggia sul letto con cura. Si toglie il pigiama e si veste, sovrappensiero. Mette il libro nello zaino, sorride ancora guardando il pubblico, esprimendo intesa, ed esce a destra.

The End

³⁹ Adapted from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 3, scene 2.