



TRIGGER
By Paul Smith

This script is protected by copyright laws.
No performance of this script – IN ANY MEDIA – may be undertaken without payment of the
appropriate fee and obtaining a licence.
For further information, please contact theatreplays@proton.me

TRIGGER

by Paul Smith

CHARACTERS

MAX/MAXINE – probably 30-50

MAX enters – maybe to applause - and stands at a lectern. MAX has notes and refers to them throughout – the whole script can largely be read, but it is important that the non-bulleted list below is memorised as much as possible.

Please note – there is no need to provide any visual aids when performing this script.

MAX Thank you. Thank you so much. Very kind of you. Welcome. Welcome. Sincerely.

When I first mooted the idea of forming a new theatre group, it didn't occur to me that there would be such enormous interest and I am delighted to see you all here this evening at this, our inaugural meeting. Thank you for showing so much interest in being a part of our very first production. To say I am excited is a real understatement.

The Awesome Theatre Company – as we have called ourselves – are going to enter the theatrical world with bright lights and a follow spot picking us out amongst the ordinary theatre groups in the area. We are entering stage right at the very top. When I suggested we should take on the Bard himself I am not ashamed to admit there were a few smirks, but we have weathered that storm and we are happy to launch into Shakespeare's greatest comedy – a show for the whole family – 'A Midsummer Nights Dream'.

Applause

Yes, thank you. Thank you again. So exciting isn't it?

Now, I am also delighted to let you know that we have a fabulously talented production team ready to take this play and launch it into the stratosphere. So, we just wanted to enthuse you all with a few images of what we are planning to present to the paying public when we open the show in June.

So our first slide shows the mock-up of the poster.

Yes, a tree. Trees are so significant in the play – as many of you may know, much of the action of the play takes place in a wood just outside Athens - so the tree is our theme. Now you will notice that we have quite a lot of wording on the poster but you will understand, as is the norm in theatre these days, we have to let people know as much as possible about what to expect when they come and see the show.

Not only do you need to put the licensing information on the posters – but, of course, there isn't the worry about this with dear old William's plays cos he's been dead for so long – but you must take account of everyone's sensibilities. Alert people to certain themes and content which might cause offence or upset in some way. We don't want to do that, we mustn't forget that this is a family targeted production.

Thus we will be listing on all publicity materials as well as on signs around the theatre before the performances and next to the box office our trigger warnings. We don't want anyone not be forewarned about what they are coming to see.

I thought it might as well to just take you through some of these as it is important that you, the prospective cast, find out more about the play – I mean, not everyone has studied it or even read it – so you can make an informed decision as to whether you wish to participate or if this is one you might just let pass by.

During the delivery of the trigger warnings, the 'audience' begins to dwindle as people leave. The actor can insert gentle acknowledgments of this throughout – though maybe only up to three times - lines such as "Ah, so this isn't for you then? Well, thank you for popping in." "Oh dear, some others for who this isn't their cup of tea".

So, the trigger warnings.

1. 'Contains language written in the 17th Century.' Now this may seem obvious, but it is as well to point it out. We won't be doing this in what is referred to as 'a modern English translation'. The addendum to this is that some of it won't be understood by everyone. I realise this can be very off-putting.
2. 'Contains references to the supernatural.' We must be tolerant of the fact that some people are avidly anti anything which is not of this earth and they can be disturbed by elements by what is seen as magical or mystical.
3. In Shakespeare's day all the roles in the play were performed by the male of the species – these days anything goes – but for comic effect the role of Flute – a male – requires cross-dressing in the play within the play about Pyramus and Thisbe – it can come upon you unexpectedly and so a warning about a man in a dress is required.
4. Now Puck uses herbs – or rather, we must realise, mind-altering drugs to fulfil the will of his Master, Oberon. We abhor drug use in such a casual fashion, so we

need to alert anyone for whom this is a problem that the play does include the use of recreational drugs.

5. Although there are actually not many real animals in the play, only Starveling's dog when he is Moonshine and the transmogrification of the character of Bottom into an ass, there are many who are afraid of animals so we must warn them of this, thus; 'Could affect those with Zoophobia' and, bearing in mind the strange occurrence I have just outlined, we need to indicate that the play could also upset those with the condition of Hippophobia – the fear of horses and similar animals, added to this Cynophobia – anyone who has a fear of dogs – of which I know a few and this element may be enough to put some people off coming to see the play and we must be aware this.
6. Now, I know the explanation is in the title but when we are talking about dreams we come across other issues. There is a lot of dreaming in the play and indeed maybe nightmares and so we add a warning to anyone suffering from Somniphobia – the intense fear of sleep, nightmares and dreams.
7. I mentioned our theme of trees, and although we hope no one suffers from this, the fear of trees is a very real thing for some; Dendrophobic theatre-goers should be informed in advance.

I see a few people have left already – not one for you then, I guess – we will continue with all you who have decided to stay.

8. Now it won't have escaped your notice that the play is set in the summer. Mid-summer that is – hence the title – and Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD is as relevant in summer as winter or any other season, and Summer Anxiety is another condition which we must warn people of in our list of triggers.
9. I turn to Act Three Scene Two and Helena talks about her friendship with Hermia – a speech laden with references to their lesbian relationship – not that there is anything wrong with this at all, but being forewarned is forearmed.
10. What we make of the changeling child I do not know and having done some reading, and just to be on the safe side, I do think we have to issue a warning about potential racial stereotyping and prejudice.
11. Now, the character of Egeus is not nice to his daughter Hermia – he is a bully and threatens her with death, so we have two more triggers here.

'Contains threat of Filicide' – the act of a parent killing their own child – though, to be fair Egeus isn't talking about doing the killing himself, but the trigger warning should be there just in case of misinterpretation.

What isn't in doubt is that Egeus is a bully. So we have 'References to Bullying'

12. Theseus suggests that if Hermia does not do as she is told by her Father that she might become a nun. Now, no nuns actually appear in the play, but even the mention of a nun may surprise and worry people who suffer from Scenisciphobia – a fear of nuns.
13. Death is ever present – even in what is called a comedy and we must make people aware of this so Thanatophobia – the fear of death and dying – needs to be flagged up.
14. ‘Could cause concern to those suffering from Neraidaphobia.’ Possibly not a common condition, but we must consider that causing just one person concern when they are not forewarned means we have failed. Ah, yes of course, I should explain, Neraidaphobia is a fear of fairies. There are quite a few in the play and we really must let people know. Just in case.
15. I don’t like to bring the level of things down to the lowest common denominator, but Titania falls in love with Bottom when he is an ass – admittedly she is high on drugs at the time – but there is a suggestion of love-making. Now, Titania is a fairy and Bottom is a human but turned into an ass – it’s mixed up – problematic and has undercurrents of unusual and probably illegal sexual activity – we haven’t quite come up with the correct wording yet, but it is important to bring this to people’s attention.
16. Now how many of you have a dread of weddings, maybe your own, maybe someone else’s, well nuptials are a constant element of the play and for those who suffer from Gamophobia, a fear of marriage and commitment, this might not be the play for you.
17. Now, the biggest warning we need to offer – bearing in mind the target audience – are in the words of the play themselves. To say that William Shakespeare used to like a bit of fruity language is a considerable understatement. I won’t go into too much detail here, but I would just like to offer you a few examples of where the Bard oversteps the mark and offers us nothing short of filth.

At the beginning of Act 2, Puck has a speech beginning “I am that merry wanderer of the night. I jest to Oberon, and make him smile...” well, for ‘merry’ read ‘horny’ and for ‘jest’ read ‘fart’ – you see where I am going here. And in the same speech he mentions a ‘gossips bowl’ and ‘lips’, ‘bob’ and ‘withered dewlap’ – well, it’s virtually pornographic.

I referred a moment ago to the play within the play. Well at the beginning of the Act Five where the Mechanicals put on their show, Pyramus – played by Bottom (the name itself may cause some offence and so we have added that as a Trigger too) and Thisbe, played by Flute (and we need to point out that a fear of flutes or Aulophobia is a real condition) have a scene with a wall between them – the wall has a hole which they try and kiss each other through – the wall’s hole is not

what you might think and nor are Pyramus's 'stones', that are referred to. This is smut. Nothing else. It's not even particularly funny.

So, these are some of the Triggers we are using on all publicity. We may have missed some out – I am sure we have – but we will add these as we go along. Now we do realise with all this information needed on the publicity material that it is quite tricky to see the title of the play, the name of the writer, the location of the production or the dates that it is on. But these triggers are important.

Now, are there any questions?

Oh (*Looks out into the distance*) is anyone still here? You've all gone?

Maybe a rethink on the play.

Titus Andronicus anyone? The Romans in Britain? Something by Joe Orton?
Game of Thrones?

Blackout