SIDE 16 – Philostrate

PHILOSTRATE, *coming forward* Here, mighty Theseus.

THESEUS
Say what abridgment have you for this evening,
What masque, what music? How shall we beguile
The lazy time if not with some delight? 45

PHILOSTRATE, *giving Theseus a paper*
There is a brief how many sports are ripe.
Make choice of which your Highness will see first.

THESEUS
"The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp."
We'll none of that. That have I told my love 50
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.
"The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage."
That is an old device, and it was played
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror. 55
"The thrice-three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceased in beggary."
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.
"A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus 60
And his love Thisbe, very tragical mirth."
"Merry" and "tragical"? "Tedious" and "brief"?
That is hot ice and wondrous strange snow!
How shall we find the concord of this discord?

PHILOSTRATE
A play there is, my lord, some ten words long 65
(Which is as brief as I have known a play),
But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
Which makes it tedious; for in all the play,
There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
And tragical, my noble lord, it is. 70
For Pyramus therein doth kill himself,
Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
The passion of loud laughter never shed.

THESEUS
What are they that do play it?

PHILOSTRATE
Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never labored in their minds till now,
And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.

THESEUS
And we will hear it.

PHILOSTRATE No, my noble lord,
It is not for you. I have heard it over,
And it is nothing, nothing in the world,
Unless you can find sport in their intents,
Extremely stretched and conned with cruel pain
To do you service.

THESEUS I will hear that play,
For never anything can be amiss
When simpleness and duty tender it.
Go, bring them in—and take your places, ladies.

Philostrate exits.