



The Tempest

Written by: William Shakespeare

Directed by: Julia Coleman and Ian Pring

Performed: Wednesday 23rd - Saturday 26th July 2008 @ 7.30pm at St Anne's Hall



Cast		Crew	
<i>Prospero</i>	Jason Marchant	Producer	Niki Bencic
<i>Caliban</i>	Eamonn O'Reilly	Sound Operator	Orna Joseph
<i>Ariel</i>	Melissa Williams	Lighting Operator	Rachel O'Reilly
<i>Miranda</i>	Catherine Fox-Kirk	Prompt	Janet McLaughlin
<i>Ferdinand</i>	Peter Nower	Costume design	Sara Curnock Cook
<i>Stephano</i>	Jake Flint	Front of House Manager	Judith Butler
<i>Trinculo</i>	Emma Stallard	Catering Manager	Lesley Tulley
<i>Alonso</i>	Stephen Childs		
<i>Gonzalo</i>	Paul Checkley		
<i>Antonio</i>	Giles Checkley		
<i>Sebastian</i>	Richard Frampton		
<i>Iris/Francesca</i>	Becca Stafford		
<i>Juno</i>	Clare Pepperell		
<i>Ceres</i>	Niki Bencic		
<i>Boatswain</i>	Sian Ashworth		
<i>Adriana</i>	Sharron Stubbs		

Synopsis

Shakespeare's final masterpiece is set on a remote island, where Prospero, a magician and former Duke of Milan, is marooned along with his daughter Miranda. Overthrown by his brother twelve years ago, and put out to sea in a small boat, Prospero instead landed on the island. Now, his brother and fellow conspirators are sailing by on their way home from Africa. With the help of the ethereal spirit Ariel, Prospero summons up a terrible storm, bringing his enemies on to the island and into his power. But faced with the opportunity for revenge, what will Prospero do?

Meanwhile, Caliban, the original inhabitant of the island, plots with two drunken castaways to murder Prospero and take back control of his home...

Mixing tragedy, comedy, intrigue, magic and music, Shakespeare's last play is a summing-up of his life's work, but also a stunningly original take on his obsessive themes: betrayal and revenge, nature and nurture, appearance and reality, parental relationships and the responsibilities that come with power

NODA Review by John Huckle

The Tempest is one of the most Italian of Shakespeare's plays with the characters all having Italian names and the plot ostensibly dealing with the intrigues of Italian politics. The play observes the three unities of location (apart from the opening scene) timing and Plot. All the action takes place within the three hours which the play was written to run. The single main plot of the restoration of Prospero to the Dukedom of Milan then has three subsidiary plots: Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand, Antonio and Sebastian's plot against Alonso and the plot of Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo against Prospero himself.

One of the best aspects of putting on any of Shakespeare's plays is the freedom the production team has in the staging. The team of Julia Coleman and Ian Pring decided to opt for a minimalist set with the action being supported by a strong sound design and thoughtful lighting. I think that this has much to commend it as an approach to staging the play. The open black stage that greeted the audience was supplemented by an eerie sound set which together helped to concentrate the audiences' mind on the complex story.

The opening scene of the fury of the terrible storm with the Master shouting his barely discernable orders to the much beleaguered Boatswain (Sian Ashworth) was well done. The sound, the staggering of the crew and passengers, the general cacophony all blended together to convey the confused horror of the impending ship wreck. Standing serenely amidst the chaos is the lovely vision of the spirit Ariel.

From the fury of the opening scene the action moved to the relative calmness of 'The Enchanted Island' (as the play was known for many years) and the introduction of the main character Prospero. Jason Marchant gave a very thoughtful and balanced delivery of his lines which ensured that the audience could follow the plot with its history. I thought that Jason did a splendid job of conveying the power yet humanity that defined his character. The recipient of Prospero's opening narrative is his daughter Miranda. The part was played with a beautiful simplicity by Catherine Fox-Kirk. Catherine easily conveyed the passivity of her character and her dutiful obedience to her father.

The role that permeates the play almost to the same extent as Prospero is that of Ariel. The spirit is inexorably linked to Prospero and demonstrates the control that he has over the forces of nature. There has been much made over the years as to whether Ariel is male or female, through out the text Ariel unambiguously refers to himself as male yet the disguises that he adopts are mainly female. Conventionally a female Ariel is dressed in gauze and wings corresponding to the traditional concept of a fairy. Melissa Williams was as lovely and a conventional female Ariel as an audience could wish. She seemed to float on and of the stage and to carry out the wishes of her master without a hint of difficulty. Melissa was smilingly subservient to all Prospero's orders which underlined the concept of her being the embodiment of his command of the elements. In her performance she gave a real antithesis to the other dominant character of the play Caliban.

Caliban occupies that rare position that lies between human and brute. No other role in the play has been more discussed analysed or pronounced upon. Whether Caliban is an embodiment of all that is pre-human yearning for humanity or a representation of any degraded human suffering from oppression. Eamonn O'Reilly gave a very earthy and brutalised characterisation that exacerbated the contrast with the lovely Ariel. Eamonn worked really hard at maintaining the characterisations in terms of gait and delivery of his lines.

The first of the shipwreck outsiders to join the inhabitants of the island is Ferdinand son of Alonso the king of Naples. Ferdinand is a character often described as a weak character dominated by Prospero. Peter Nower gave, I thought, a perfect representation of the down trodden and distraught orphan. His downbeat manner was held right up to the moment when his father was revealed as being alive and well.

The roles of Stephano and Trinculo are often described as Butler and Jester. The parts played respectively by Jake Flint and Emma Stallard were robust and boisterous in their delivery. Jake concentrated his performance as a comic drunk whereas Emma was delightfully delicate in her hesitant commitment to the conspiracy with Caliban.

The Lords Alonso (Stephen Childs), Gonzalo (Paul Checkley), Antonio (Giles Checkley) and Sebastian (Richard Frampton) were all played rather handsomely with good attention to detail and convincing business particularly between Antonio and Sebastian when contriving and almost executing their plot against Alonso.

The supporting nymphs Juno (Clare Pepperell), Ceres (Niki Bencic) and Iris (Becca Stafford) were delights and sang well.

Excellent use was made of the acting space particularly the range of entrances from the auditorium. The back curtain was used to good effect.

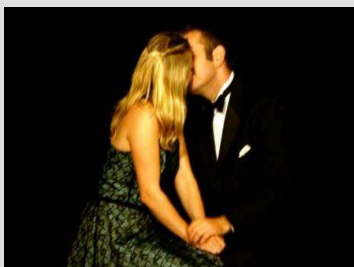
The lighting and sound plots were both of a high standard and complemented the minimalist set in the telling of the story. The music in particular suited each occasion clearly a lot of effort had been made in choosing such original pieces.

The only element of the production that I thought lacked some coherence was the costume plot. Prospero was clothed in simple attire albeit with the regal cloak symbolic of his 'art'. Miranda in early productions used to be dressed so as to convey her as a conventional romantic female but since the late 50's she has generally been dressed in a way that reflects that she has spent the last twelve years on a harsh island. The ships passengers were all dressed in a variety of different Suits or Dinner Jackets with different styles of shirt. The nymph's dresses perhaps could have been more similar although the belts that reflected the role of each were a nice touch. Caliban was dressed in a rather pedestrian fashion which I felt was not consistent with his characterisation or role.

The Front of House team were as always attentive and well presented. The catering team never fails in its range of offerings or its warm welcome. I thought that your handbill and programme were once again striking. The programme was neatly done and informative.

A good evening's entertainment delivered by the sound production team of Julia Coleman and Ian Pring and hard work by the club, thank you.

Production Photos (Click to enlarge)



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