



GUTHRIE
THEATER

Play Guide

2021-2022 SEASON

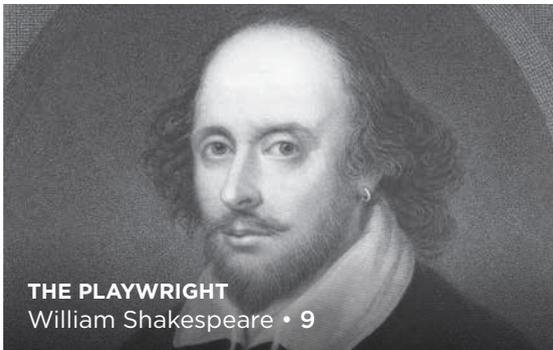


THE TEMPEST

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The Tempest

by **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

directed by **JOE DOWLING**

February 26 – April 16, 2022

Wurtele Thrust Stage

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The Guthrie creates transformative theater experiences that ignite the imagination, stir the heart, open the mind and build community through the illumination of our common humanity.

Guthrie Theater Play Guide

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The Guthrie Theater receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts. This activity is made possible in part by the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature. The Minnesota State Arts Board received additional funds to support this activity from the National Endowment for the Arts.



“The rarer action
is in virtue than
in vengeance.”

- Prospera in *The Tempest* (Act Five, Scene One)

About This Guide

This play guide is designed to fuel your curiosity and deepen your understanding of a show's history, meaning and cultural relevance so you can make the most of your theatergoing experience. You might be reading this because you fell in love with a show you saw at the Guthrie. Maybe you want to read up on a play before you see it onstage. Or perhaps you're a fellow theater company doing research for an upcoming production. We're glad you found your way here, and we encourage you to dig in and mine the depths of this extraordinary story.

NOTE: Sections of this play guide may evolve throughout the run of the show, so check back often for additional content.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Thanks for your interest in *The Tempest*. Please direct literary inquiries to Resident Dramaturg Carla Steen at carlas@guthrietheater.org.

Synopsis

Twelve years before the play's start, Prospera is usurped of her dukedom of Milan by her brother, Antonio — with the aid of Alonso, the king of Naples, and his brother, Sebastian — and banished to this island with her then-3-year-old daughter, Miranda. Prospera has engaged in an intense study of secret arts, which allows her to thrive on the island, whose only other inhabitants are the elemental spirit Ariel and a witch's son Caliban, both of whom now serve Prospera.

The action of the play begins with Alonso, Antonio and others, including Alonso's son, Ferdinand, and an old councilor Gonzala, sailing near the island. Prospera uses her art to conjure a tempest that strands her enemies on her island. Under Ariel's management, the perfectly unharmed castaways are separated into three groups: Alonso, Antonio and the rest of the royal court; Ferdinand, alone; and the butler Stephano and jester Trinculo. The mariners remain onboard asleep.

Although Prospera wants revenge for being usurped, her main goal is to bring together Ferdinand and Miranda in the hope they will fall in love. Ferdinand, who thinks his father has died, does indeed fall in love with Miranda and is immediately put through his paces by Prospera in order to earn her as his wife, thus securing Miranda's future.

Likewise, Alonso believes his son is dead, and Antonio suggests to Sebastian, the king's brother, that he should kill Alonso and take his now heirless throne. The attempt is thwarted, but Prospera charges Ariel to torment them for their past misdeeds. Elsewhere on the island, Stephano and Trinculo have drunken interactions with Caliban, who happily pledges allegiance to Stephano if the butler will kill Prospera.

Prospera devises to bring all the parties together at her cell, reuniting Ferdinand and Alonso, confirming the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, privately calling out Sebastian and Antonio, getting her dukedom back, sidestepping Caliban's murder plot and granting Ariel's long-promised freedom. After a night of rest, everyone plans to leave the island for Naples. Prospera promises to break her staff and drown her spell book, renouncing magic altogether.

In an epilogue, Prospera addresses the audience, asking for their applause to release her from the island. [G](#)



PHOTO: REGINA MARIE WILLIAMS AND TYLER MICHAELS KING (DAN NORMAN)

SETTING

On a yacht, then an uninhabited island in the Mediterranean Sea.

CHARACTERS

Prospera, rightful duke of Milan

Miranda, her daughter

Ariel, an airy spirit

Caliban, an enslaved man

Ceres, a goddess

Juno, a goddess

Iris, a goddess

Spirits and Hounds

Ariel's Musician

Alonso, king of Naples

Ferdinand, his son

Sebastian, Alonso's brother

Antonio, Prospera's brother

Gonzala, a councilor

Adrian, a courtier

Francisca, a courtier

Stephano, Alonso's butler

Trinculo, Alonso's jester

Captain

Boatswain

Mariners

Spirits, Hounds



IMAGE: SET DESIGN BY ALEXANDER DODGE

Scene by Scene

ACT ONE

Scene One

On a ship, the Captain and Boatswain try to get a ship (carrying Alonso, the king of Naples, and his royal court) under control in the midst of a raging storm.

Scene Two

On a nearby island, Miranda frets over the ship, but her mother, Prospera, reassures her that no one was injured and tells her the story of their exile to this island. Prospera was deposed by her brother, Antonio, when Miranda was a small child. The sprite Ariel relates to Prospera how the storm played out and where everyone on the ship is now. They note the time and that Ariel's freedom is soon to come. Ariel has served Prospera since she freed him from a tree in which the witch Sycorax had imprisoned him. Sycorax was the mother of the only other inhabitant of the island, Caliban. Alonso's son, Ferdinand, is led in by Ariel and mourns his drowned father. Miranda and Ferdinand are smitten with each other. To test his devotion, Prospera charms Ferdinand and leads him off to imprison him.

ACT TWO

Scene One

As councilor Gonzala tries to keep Alonso's spirits up (because he fears Ferdinand has drowned), Antonio and Alonso's brother, Sebastian, mock her. Gonzala notes it's odd that their clothes are as fresh as when they left Tunis. Ariel puts everyone to sleep with music except Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio, who encourage the king to sleep while they keep watch. As Alonso sleeps, they plot his assassination so Sebastian can take the crown. Just as they plan to strike, Ariel wakes the sleepers up, so the conspirators feign hearing an animal. They all leave to keep looking for Ferdinand.

Scene Two

Caliban gathers wood for Prospera when he hides, mistaking Trinculo (Alonso's jester) for a spirit. Trinculo wonders at Caliban but takes refuge from the storm under Caliban's cloak. Alonso's butler Stephano comes in singing and sees a four-legged creature (Trinculo and Caliban under the same cloak). Stephano shares his wine with Caliban and is reunited with Trinculo. Caliban is impressed by Stephano — and the alcohol — and takes him for a god and promises to serve him.

ACT THREE

Scene One

Ferdinand hauls wood until Miranda takes over for him so he can rest. They talk, reveal they're in love with each other and agree to marry. Prospera, observing from afar, is satisfied.

Scene Two

Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are drunk. Ariel enters and mimics Trinculo's voice, making the others mad at him for contradicting them. Caliban pleads his case to Stephano, saying that Prospera's nap is a good time to kill her, take over the island and claim Miranda as queen. Ariel plays music and they follow it.

Scene Three

The king's group is still wandering the island, with Sebastian and Antonio planning to strike that night when everyone is exhausted. Shapes bring in a banquet, and they debate whether it's safe to eat. Ariel, disguised as a Harpy, takes it away just as they decide to eat and accuses the three of wronging Prospera. Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian run away aghast.

ACT FOUR

Scene One

Ferdinand and Miranda are betrothed, but they must wait until a full ceremony to act on their passion, upon pain of a curse. Ariel reports on the others, and Prospera tells him to bring them all to her. Meanwhile, Prospera blesses Miranda and Ferdinand with an entertainment by Iris, Juno and Ceres, plus nymphs and reapers. The shapes disappear when Prospera remembers Caliban's conspiracy and tells Ariel to get clothes to attract the three others to her cell — a plan that succeeds, and Trinculo and Stephano put on the clothes. Caliban frets that they are missing their window to act against Prospera. Spirits as hounds chase them off while Prospera attends to other business.



Ceres, Iris and Juno



Miranda and Prospera

IMAGES: COSTUME DESIGN BY ANN HOULD-WARD

ACT FIVE

Scene One

The time has come for Prospera's plan to be fulfilled. Ariel says he has sympathy for the king and the rest of his party, and Prospera says perhaps she should, too, and gives up her quest for revenge. Prospera draws a circle, renounces magic and Ariel brings in Alonso and his party, still foggy from the charms. Prospera changes into her ducal robes, sends Ariel to fetch the Captain and Boatswain and then presents herself to Alonso's group, who finally recognize her and have many questions about how she arrived on the island. Alonso restores her dukedom, and Prospera tells Sebastian and Antonio she knows they're traitors but will keep the secret for now. She sympathizes with Alonso's loss of a child before revealing Ferdinand and Miranda playing chess. There is much happiness in the reunion, and Miranda is overawed at so many people. Their marriage is revealed and approved by Alonso. The Captain and Boatswain report that the ship is undamaged and are amazed that everyone is alive. Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano come in drunk and stinky. Caliban is sent to Prospera's house to prepare it for guests while Prospera promises to tell her full story and provide calm seas so the king's ship can catch up with the rest of the fleet. She intends to return to Milan. Ariel is free.

Epilogue

Prospera asks the audience to help return her to Naples and release her from the island — and theater — via their applause. 

Responses to *The Tempest*

EDITOR'S NOTE: The comments below refer to Prospero (he/him), as the character was written by Shakespeare to be male. This Guthrie production has changed the genders of Prospero, Gonzalo and Francisco to be female characters named Prospera, Gonzala and Francisca.

[T]he nature of the magic in *The Tempest* has received a good deal of critical attention and persuasive explication.

Critics have frequently identified Prospero's art as theurgy [control over supernatural power] and often related it to neoplatonic theories of magic. The intellectual quality of his magic, his command over Ariel (who is clearly daemon, not demon), his concern for astrological guidance, and his use of music in his magic have all been cited to prove his theurgistic and neoplatonic associations. ...

The magical contest between Prospero and Sycorax is presented with great care, even though it is narrated by Prospero and Ariel and not witnessed by the audience. ... In *The Tempest*, as in most plays involving magical competition, the triumph of a given side proves its moral superiority to the magic of the loser, thereby justifying the winner's magic. After all, only Prospero's more powerful "good" magic can counteract the "bad" magic of Sycorax. Shakespeare clearly included this account of Prospero's indirect competition with Sycorax to strengthen Prospero's credentials as a "good" magician. ...

Shakespeare carefully depicted the relationship between Ariel and Prospero. Prospero never conjures or ritually summons Ariel onstage; all his bonds of control over the spirit were forged before the play began; onstage a simple command brings Ariel to serve his magician (occasionally with some protest). ... A beautifully particularized representative of a long line of spirits who serve magicians, Ariel provides spectacle, proof of Prospero's power, and helps explain how the play's magic is performed. Prospero alone is not capable, if he is human, of raising a tempest or of making unearthly music. Only by gaining control of the spirits who manage the functioning of the natural world can a man accomplish what Prospero does; Ariel is a necessary intermediary. As such, he leaves Prospero's humanity intact.

Barbara Howard Traister

"Prospero: Master of Self-Knowledge," *Heavenly Necromancers: The Magician in English Renaissance Drama*, 1984

The Tempest is a mirror in which, if we hold it very still, we can gaze backward at all of [Shakespeare's] recent plays; and behind them will be glimpses of a past as old as the tragedies, the middle comedies and even *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. ... The play seems to order itself in terms of its meanings; things in it stand for other things, so that we are tempted to search its dark backward for a single meaning, quite final for Shakespeare and quite abstract. The trouble is that the meanings are not self-evident. One interpretation of *The Tempest* does not agree with another. And there is deeper trouble in the truth that any interpretation, even the wildest, is more or less plausible. This deep trouble, and this deep truth, should warn us that *The Tempest* is a composition about which we had better not be too knowing.

Mark Van Doren

Shakespeare, 1939

Shakespeare's plays are still worth our attention because they body forth so brilliantly the virulent and interesting disease called Western culture. Racism, imperial domination, anti-Semitism, sexist craziness and the phallic code of war are not incidental to that culture. They have been intrinsic parts of it, and Shakespeare gives us a wonderful map of the metaphorical system by which that culture enforces itself. ...

I don't mean to argue for a Shakespeare who was a feminist, or a Marxist. Shakespeare was obviously interested in order, hierarchy and patriarchy. But he was also a connoisseur of disorder, civil war, family strife, madness and rebellion. The spark of dramatic interest always lies in his perception of flaws, tensions and anomalies in the dominant ideology. He exploits these cracks, expressing problems covered over by the apparent social consensus.

Charles Sugnet

"Shakespeare Without Guts," *In Our Times*, December 23, 1981 - January 12, 1982

The Tempest, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which was written for a command performance, are the only plays of Shakespeare with an original plot. *The Tempest* is also his only play observing the unities of time, place, and action — which accounts for Prospero's long, expository narrative at the beginning of the play instead of action. ...

The Tempest ends, like the other plays in Shakespeare's last period, in reconciliation and forgiveness. But the ending in *The Tempest* is grimmer, and the sky is darker than in *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*. Everybody in the earlier plays asks forgiveness and gets it, but Prospero, Miranda, Ferdinand, Gonzalo and Alonso are the only ones really in the magic circle of *The Tempest*. Alonso is forgiven because he asks to be. He is the least guilty, and he suffers most. ... Neither Antonio nor Sebastian say a word to Prospero — their only words after the reconciliation are mockery at Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban. They're spared punishment, but they can't be said to be forgiven because they don't want to be, and Prospero's forgiveness of them means only that he does not take revenge upon them. Caliban is pardoned conditionally, and he, Stephano and Trinculo can't be said to be repentant. They realize only that they're on the wrong side, and admit they are fools, not that they are wrong.

W. H. Auden

Lectures on Shakespeare, 2000

Shakespeare's powerful late romance *The Tempest* has been addressed by modern critics from two important perspectives: as a fable of art and creation, and as a colonialist allegory.

These readings very much depend on one's conception of European man's place in the universe, and on whether a figure like Prospero stands for all mankind or for one side of a conflict.

The first interpretation, following upon the ideas of Renaissance humanism and the place of the artist/playwright/magician, offers a story of mankind at the center of the universe, of "man" as creator and authority. ... Prospero has often been seen as a figure for the artist as creator — as Shakespeare's stand-in, so to speak, or Shakespeare's self-conception, an artist figure unifying the world around him by his "so potent art." ... Prospero's magic books enable him as well to thwart the incipient revolts of both high and low conspirators, and to exact a species of revenge against those who usurped his dukedom and set him adrift on the sea — for *The Tempest* is one of Shakespeare's most compelling "revenge tragedies," turned, at the last moment, toward forgiveness. ...

The second kind of interpretation, the colonial or postcolonial narrative, follows upon early modern voyages of exploration and discovery, "first contact," and the encounters with, and exploitation of, indigenous peoples in the New World. In this interpretive context *The Tempest* is not idealizing, aesthetic, and "timeless," but rather topical, contextual, "political," and in dialogue with the times. Yet manifestly this dichotomy will break down, both in literary analysis and in performance. It is perfectly possible for a play about a mage, artist, and father to be, at the same time, a play about a colonial governor, since Prospero himself is, or was, the Duke of Milan. 

Marjorie Garber

Shakespeare After All, 2008

William Shakespeare

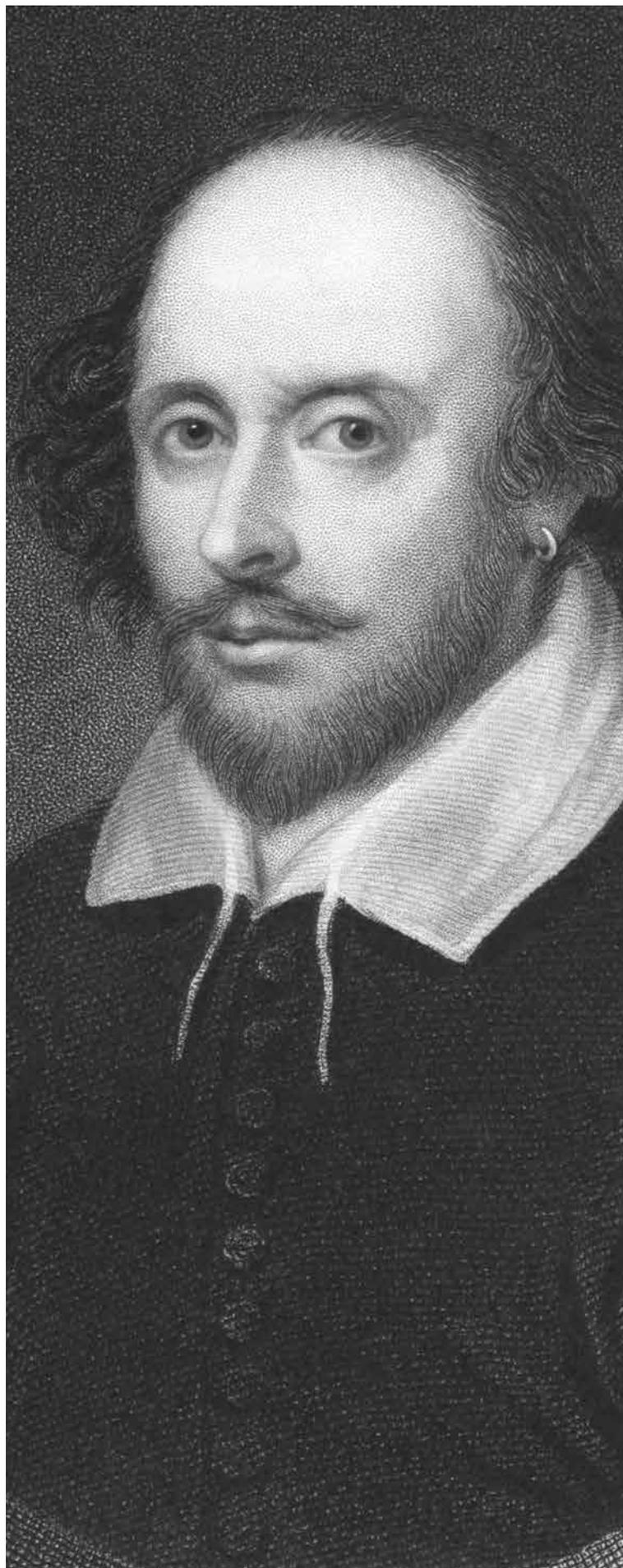
William Shakespeare was born in 1564 to John and Mary Arden Shakespeare and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in England's West Country.

Much of the information about him comes from official documents such as wills, legal documents and court records. There are also contemporary references to him and his writing. While much of the biographical information is sketchy and incomplete, for a person of his class and as the son of a town alderman, quite a lot of information is available.

Young Shakespeare would have attended the Stratford grammar school, where he would have learned to read and write not only English, but also Latin and some Greek. In 1582, at age 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, and the couple had three children: Susanna in 1583 and twins Hamnet and Judith in 1585.

After an eight-year gap where Shakespeare's activity is not known, he appeared in London by 1592 and quickly began to make a name for himself as a prolific playwright. He stayed in London for about 20 years, becoming increasingly successful in his work as an actor, writer and shareholder in his acting company. Retirement took him back to Stratford to lead the life of a country gentleman. His son Hamnet died at age 11, but both daughters were married: Susanna to Dr. John Hall and Judith to Thomas Quiney.

Shakespeare died in Stratford in 1616 on April 23, which is thought to be his birthday. He is buried in the parish church, where his grave can be seen to this day. His known body of work includes at least 37 plays, two long poems and 154 sonnets. 



A Legacy That Continues To Inspire

If one takes those thirty-seven plays with all the radar lines of the different viewpoints of the different characters, one comes out with a field of incredible density and complexity; and eventually one goes a step further, and one finds that what happened, what passed through this man called Shakespeare and came into existence on sheets of paper, is something quite different from any other author's work. It's not Shakespeare's view of the world, it's something which actually resembles reality. A sign of this is that any single word, line, character or event has not only a large number of interpretations, but an unlimited number. Which is the characteristic of reality. ... An artist may try to capture and reflect your action, but actually he interprets it — so that a naturalistic painting, a Picasso painting, a photograph, are all interpretations. But in itself, the action of one man touching his head is open to unlimited understanding and interpretation. In reality, that is. What Shakespeare wrote carries that characteristic. What he wrote is not interpretations: it is the thing itself.

Peter Brook

"What is Shakespeare?" (1947), in *The Shifting Point*, Harper & Row, 1987



The Poetry of Shakespeare was Inspiration indeed: he is not so much an Imitator as an Instrument of Nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him.

Alexander Pope

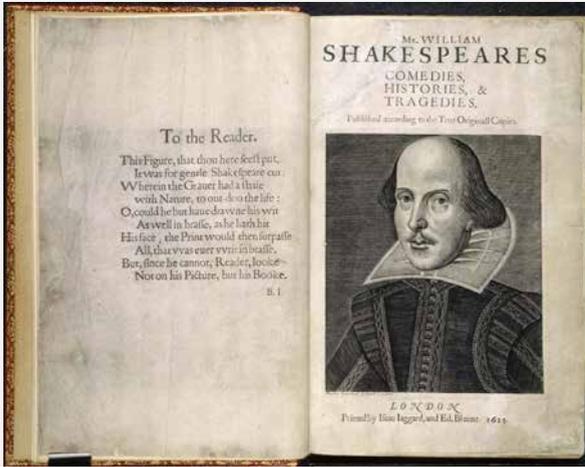
Preface to *The Works of Shakespeare*, 1725



We do not understand Shakespeare from a single reading, and certainly not from a single play. There is a relation between the various plays of Shakespeare, taken in order; and it is work of years to venture even one individual interpretation of the pattern in Shakespeare's carpet.

T.S. Eliot

"Dante," *Selected Essays*, Faber & Faber, 1929



[A]lthough each play is a separate and individual work of art, they all generally illuminate one another, and taken together they form an impressive achievement in which each individual play acquires more weight and dignity when placed against the background of the whole corpus. Each play is more or less a landmark in the road along which Shakespeare the artist traveled, or, to change the metaphor, each play is a variation on a number of themes that recur in the poet's work.

M.M. Badawn

Background to Shakespeare, Macmillian India Limited, 1981

Every age creates its own Shakespeare. ... Like a portrait whose eyes seem to follow you around the room, engaging your glance from every angle, [his] plays and their characters seem always to be “modern,” always to be “us.”

Marjorie Garber

Shakespeare After All, Anchor Books, 2004



Shakespeare's mind is the type of the androgynous, of the man-woman mind. ... It is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly.

Virginia Woolf

A Room of One's Own, 1929



His characters are intimately bound up with the audience. That is why his plays are the greatest example there is of a people's theater; in this theater the public found and still finds its own problems and re-experiences them. ☑

Jean-Paul Sartre

On Theater, 1959

Shakespeare's Plays

EARLY PERIOD

- ca. 1587–92 *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- ca. 1589–90 *Titus Andronicus*
- ca. 1590 *Henry IV, Part II*
- ca. 1590–91 *Henry IV, Part III*
- ca. 1591 *The Taming of the Shrew*
- ca. 1592 *Henry IV, Part I; Richard III*
- ca. 1594 *The Comedy of Errors; Love's Labour's Lost*

MIDDLE PERIOD

- ca. 1595 *Richard II; Romeo and Juliet*
- ca. 1596 *A Midsummer Night's Dream; King John; The Merchant of Venice*
- ca. 1598 *Henry IV, Part I; Henry IV, Part II; Much Ado About Nothing*
- ca. 1599 *Henry V; Julius Caesar*
- ca. 1600 *As You Like It; The Merry Wives of Windsor*
- ca. 1601 *Twelfth Night*
- ca. 1602 *Troilus and Cressida*
- ca. 1602–04 *Hamlet*
- ca. 1604 *Othello; Measure for Measure*
- ca. 1605–06 *All's Well That Ends Well; King Lear; Macbeth*

LATE PERIOD

- ca. 1606 *Timon of Athens; Antony and Cleopatra*
- ca. 1608 *Pericles; Coriolanus*
- ca. 1609–11 *The Winter's Tale*
- ca. 1610 *Cymbeline*
- ca. 1611 *The Tempest***
- ca. 1613 *Henry VIII*
- ca. 1613–14 *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

Authorship and dating of Shakespeare's plays is a subject of much academic debate. These dates are speculative, but are the "most probable" dating from *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*.

THE TEMPEST

The Tempest was written around 1611 and may have premiered by the end of that year at the Palace of Whitehall before James I. Public performances were given at the indoor Blackfriars Theatre. Along with *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*, it is one of Shakespeare's late plays, sometimes called romances, which mix elements of tragedy and comedy. While *The Tempest* isn't his absolutely final play, it's late enough in his body of work that many people have often considered it to be Shakespeare's farewell to the stage.

The Tempest stands out in the Shakespeare canon for a number of reasons. Its action occurs over the course of a few hours and in one location, making it one of the few plays by Shakespeare that align with the classical unities of time, place and action. The plot is mostly original to Shakespeare and may have been inspired by contemporary shipwrecks among early colonial expeditions to the Americas and Africa. Prospera — a puppet master extraordinaire — is one of the great roles in all of the Bard's plays, while Ariel and Caliban provide depth and richness in their loyalty and resentment toward Prospera. 

THE GUTHRIE HAS PREVIOUSLY PRODUCED *THE TEMPEST* THREE TIMES:



PHOTO: PAUL BALLANTYNE AND CHARLES KEATING (FILE PHOTO)

Directed by Philip Minor



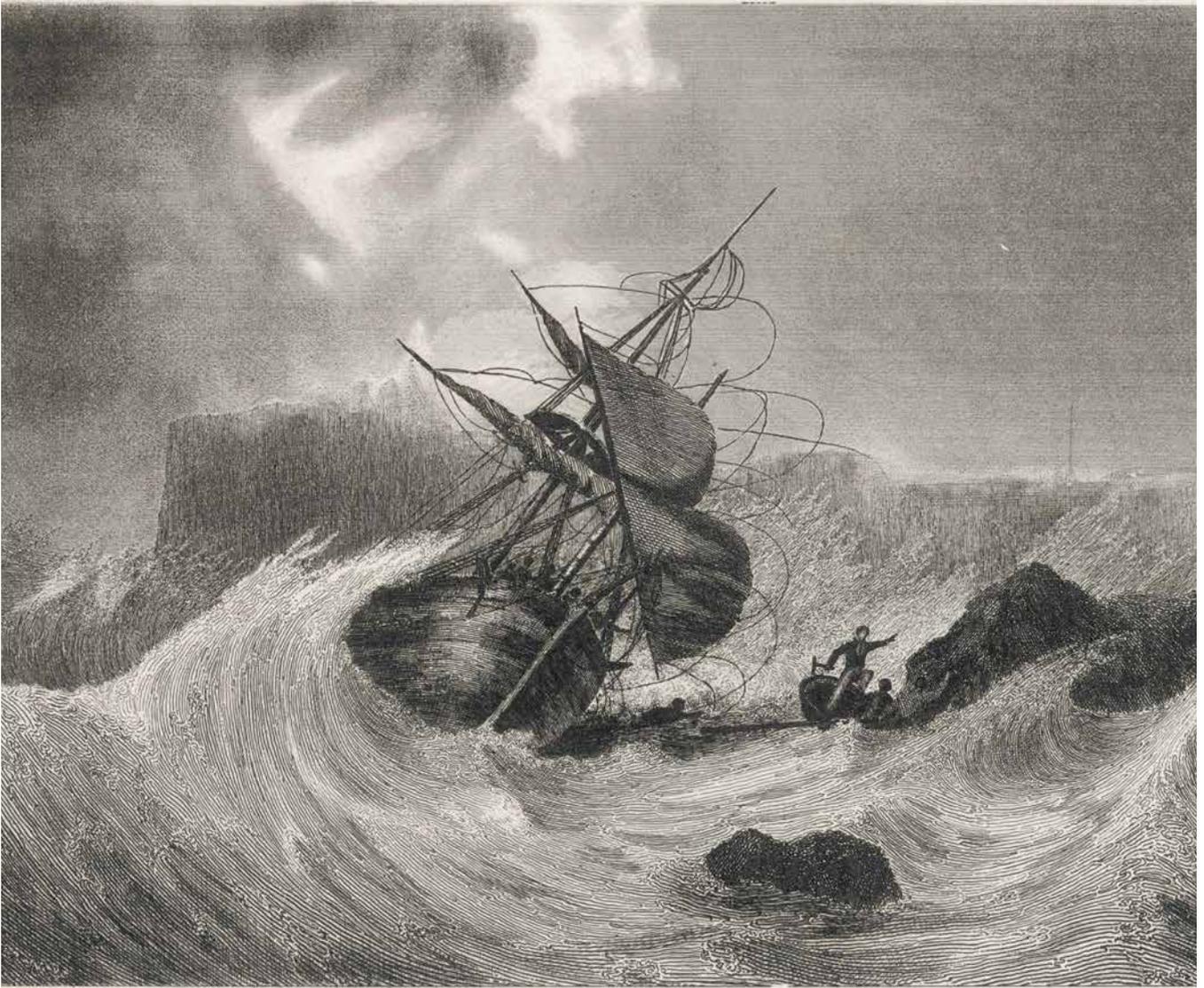
PHOTO: BRUCE GOLDSTEIN

Directed by Liviu Ciulei



PHOTO: RICHARD S. IGLEWSKI (MICHAEL DANIEL)

Directed by Jennifer Tipton



A Play With Manifold Sources

While the plot of *The Tempest* is mostly original to Shakespeare, he drew on several influences both old and contemporary to create his tale. There were scenarios circulating in Italian *commedia dell'arte* with storylines very much like that of *The Tempest*, and European exploration of the Americas led to inevitable notable shipwrecks.

In 1609, nine ships headed to Jamestown, Virginia, were caught in a storm near Bermuda, during which the flagship got separated and was assumed lost. But the people on board made it ashore in the Bermudas, built two small boats and showed up in Jamestown a year later. Among the other ideas that fueled the creation of *The Tempest* were a speech in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, an essay by Montaigne and courtly entertainments called masques.

OID'S METAMORPHOSES

Prospera's Act Five speech, in which she renounces magic, is often considered an almost direct borrowing by Shakespeare from a speech delivered by Medea in Ovid's story about her marriage to the hero Jason in a 1567 translation by Arthur Golding. For comparison, we placed the speeches side by side and noted the similarities.

NOTE: Before this speech, Jason has arrived in Medea's homeland of Colchis to collect the Golden Fleece. Medea's father, the king, sets up feats for Jason to accomplish and, with her magic, Medea — passionately in love with Jason — helps Jason successfully complete them and get the Fleece. When they return to Jason's land of Iolchus, he asks Medea to take years from his life and give them to his aged father, Aeson. Medea says she can't do that, but she'll ask Hecate for aid in extending Aeson's life.

METAMORPHOSES

MEDEA

Upon the bare, hard ground she said, "O trusty time of night
Most faithful unto privities, O golden stars whose light
Doth jointly with the moon succeed the beams that blaze
by day,
And thou three-headed Hecate, who knowest best the way
To compass this our great attempt and art our chiefest stay;
Ye Charms and Witchcrafts, and thou Earth, which both with
herb and weed
Of mighty working furnishest the Wizards at their need;
Ye Airs and winds; ye **Elves of Hills, of Brooks, of Woods alone,
Of standing Lakes, and of the Night, approach ye every one,
Through help of whom (the crooked banks much wond'ring
at the thing)**
I have compelled streams to run clean backward to their
spring.
By charms I make the calm seas rough and make the rough
seas plain,
And cover all the sky with clouds and chase them thence
again.
By charms I raise and lay the winds and burst the Viper's jaw,
And from the bowels of the earth both stones and trees do
draw.
Whole woods and Forests I remove; I make the Mountains
shake,
And even the Earth itself to groan and fearfully to quake.
I call up dead men from their graves; and thee, O lightsome
Moon,
I darken oft, though beaten brass abate thy peril soon;
Our Sorcery dims the Morning fair and darks the Sun at Noon.
...
Now have I need of herbs that can by virtue of their juice
To flowering prime of lusty youth old withered age reduce.
I am assured ye will it grant; for not in vain have shone
These twinkling stars, ne yet in vain this chariot all alone
By draught of dragons hither comes." With that was from
the sky
A chariot softly glanced down, and stayed hard thereby.

THE TEMPEST

PROSPERA

You elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes,
and groves,
And you that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back; you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets
make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose
pastime
Is to make midnight mushrumps, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,
Weak masters though you be, I have
bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous
winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt; the strong-based
promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked
up
The pine and cedar; graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em
forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure, and when I have required
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE'S "OF CANNIBALS" ESSAY

In her Act Two speech, Gonzala describes an image of a Golden Age, often thought in classical mythology as the first age of the world and in biblical terms as a Garden of Eden. The Golden Age was followed by "progressively degenerate" ages of Silver, Bronze and Lead. The idea of (or returning to) a Golden Age captured minds in different periods, and at the time of Shakespeare's writing, Native Americans were often seen by Europeans as innocents of a Golden Age. Gonzala's ideas align with parts of Montaigne's "Of Cannibals," an essay available to Shakespeare via John Florio's 1603 translation. For comparison, we placed the texts side by side and noted the similarities.

"OF CANNIBALS"

MONTAIGNE

These nations then seem to me to be so far barbarous, as having received but very little form and fashion from art and human invention, and consequently to be not much remote from their original simplicity. The laws of nature, however, govern them still, not as yet much vitiated with any mixture of ours: but 'tis in such purity, that I am sometimes troubled we were not sooner acquainted with these people, and that they were not discovered in those better times, when there were men much more able to judge of them than we are. I am sorry that Lycurgus and Plato had no knowledge of them; for to my apprehension, what we now see in those nations, does not only surpass all the pictures with which the poets have adorned the golden age, and all their inventions in feigning a happy state of man, but, moreover, the fancy and even the wish and desire of philosophy itself; so native and so pure a simplicity, as we by experience see to be in them, could never enter into their imagination, nor could they ever believe that human society could have been maintained with so little artifice and human patchwork. **I should tell Plato that it is a nation wherein there is no manner of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no science of numbers, no name of magistrate or political superiority; no use of service, riches or poverty, no contracts, no successions, no dividends, no properties, no employments, but those of leisure, no respect of kindred, but common, no clothing, no agriculture, no metal, no use of corn or wine; the very words that signify lying, treachery, dissimulation, avarice, envy, detraction, pardon, never heard of.**

THE TEMPEST

GONZALA

Had I plantation of this isle, my lord —
— And were the king on't, what would I do?
I'th'commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things, **for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
No occupation; all men idle, all,
And women too, but innocent and pure;
No sovereignty —**
All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavor. **Treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine
Would I not have;** but nature should bring forth
Of its own kind all foison, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.
I would with such perfection govern, sir,
T'excel the Golden Age.

COURT MASQUES

A specific entertainment that hit its zenith in England during the Stuart monarchies, the court masque is the basis for the "vanity of mine art" that Prospera creates to celebrate the engagement of Miranda to Ferdinand in Act Four. Prospera instructs Ariel to bring other spirits, who then take the form of the goddesses Iris, Juno and Ceres to bless the couple. The spectacle ends in a lively dance complete with nymphs and reapers. (*The Tempest* was performed at court to honor the marriage of James I's daughter Elizabeth during the winter of 1611–1612.)

The masque could encompass many forms — theater, pageants or processions. No matter the form or style, what bound them together was the celebration and glorification of the monarch or a member of the nobility. The Tudors (James I and Charles I) tended to favor theatrical masques, which could include music and three dances, with the dancers often being members of the court. Professional musicians and actors also performed in masques, which led to the introduction of masque-like elements into theater troupes' non-court work. Featuring mythological, classical or even allegorical characters, masques almost always put spectacle at the center, resulting in enormously expensive productions with elaborate scenic elements. In 1618, James I spent more on one masque than he had spent collectively on all professional theater troupes' plays during the whole of his reign. 

A Farewell to Arts

By Carla Steen
Resident Dramaturg

William Shakespeare is generally thought to have written his plays between 1589 and 1613. In those 24 years, he created nearly 40 plays, a few in collaboration. *The Tempest* is usually dated to 1611, so it is not only a mature work, it is a very late play and likely the last play he wrote alone.

Four of his last plays — *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* — are often grouped under an umbrella genre called romance or tragi-comedy. As the latter label suggests, the plays contain features of tragedy (mistakes, crimes, disasters) and comedy (abundance of humor, marriage, happy endings). The label romance, however, better hints at the adventure these plays offer: shipwrecks, faked deaths, time jumps, magic, long-lost children, deity cameos and more.

Shakespeare didn't invent the romance; it was merely a new fashion in the theater built on an old story form that he adopted and, as with much that he touched, improved on. Perhaps he was bored playing by the rules of history,

comedy and tragedy and leaped at the chance to mix it up and take on a new challenge. In discussing *The Winter's Tale*, actor-director-critic Harley Granville-Barker called it “essentially the product of middle age. ... The technique of it is mature, that of a man who knows he can do what he will.”

One of the most compelling features of Shakespeare's romances is a restored sense of balance and harmony at the play's end in the form of forgiveness and reconciliation. (One could argue that tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* end in balance restored, but the cost is high and usually quite bloody.) In a romance, a character who makes a major mistake early in the play — or before the play begins, in

the case of *The Tempest* — suffers through trials but receives at least partial reparation for their troubles and usually emerges the wiser.

Literary critic Northrop Frye notes that the romances operate on a smaller scale; the characters and ideas may be kindred with earlier tragedies, but the scope is different. The grandness and complexity of characters such as Hamlet or Lear aren't found in these plays, and while the plots may contain jealousy or ambition, it's not *Othello*-level jealousy or *Macbeth*-level ambition. Perhaps it's their scale that enables their reconciliations.

While Shakespeare's four romances have much in common, they aren't cookie-cutter stories, and *The*

Scenes From Shakespeare's Romance Plays

Pericles



Jennie Greenberry as Marina and Wayne T. Carr as Pericles in the Guthrie's 2016 production

PHOTO: JENNY GRAHAM

Scenes From Shakespeare's Romance Plays



The Winter's Tale

Bill McCallum as Polixenes, Michelle O'Neill as Hermione and Michael Hayden as Leontes in the Guthrie's 2011 production

PHOTO: T CHARLES ERICKSON

Tempest has some singular features. For the first time since his early play *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare constructs a play that adheres to the unities of time, place and action. The whole of the play unfolds over just a few afternoon hours and takes place almost exclusively on Prospera's island. And the action drives toward characters being reunited and just deserts being delivered. Where other romances feature long-lost daughters (Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, Marina in *Pericles*), Miranda is never lost nor unknown to her parent; rather,

Prospera herself has been thought lost and is reunited, if ambivalently, with her brother, Antonio.

Also distinctive about *The Tempest* when compared to the body of Shakespeare's work — not just the romances — is that it has an original plot, joining a small subgroup of plays that includes only *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *The Tempest* may have been inspired by then-contemporary shipwrecks among early European colonial expeditions to the

Americas and Africa. Especially in recent generations, the themes of colonialism and the treatment of Indigenous cultures central to the play have been brought to the fore in the design of many productions.

But perhaps the characteristic of *The Tempest* that most often captures the imaginations of interpreters and audiences alike is its place so late in Shakespeare's career. Did he know this would be his last solo work for the stage? It's almost impossible to resist imagining that he did; in its construction can be found a play-length metaphor for playwriting (or indeed for any artmaking).

Prospera spends years studying, developing and then perfecting her craft of magical arts, which allows her to become the ruling power of her island. Having achieved her goal, she eventually gives up her art when her own native dukedom is restored to her. It's not a stretch to see in this character a shadow of Shakespeare himself: He spent years in his craft, developing and perfecting his dramatic art and reaching the pinnacle of theater on his island. Eventually, having achieved what he could, he gave up the theater and returned to his own native Stratford.

Especially in *The Tempest's* Epilogue, in which Prospera (or the actor playing her) addresses the audience directly, does this playwright's farewell seem evident. "But release me from my bands/ With the help of your good hands" puts the power firmly in the applause of the audience to free Prospera from her island and the actor from the theater.

It also provides a final ovation for a playwright leaving his profession. 



The whole of the play unfolds over just a few afternoon hours and takes place almost exclusively on Prospera's island.

Selected Glossary of Terms



ague — Fever, sickness

art — Magic, both the learning and practice of; also, the trickery and artifice associated with magic

blue-eyed — At a time when grey or black eyes were the standard in beauty, blue eyes or blue eyelids were associated with witches

boatswain — A ship's officer in charge of the crew's work and the ship's equipment, such as sails, rigging and ropes

brave — Excellent, splendid, fine, handsome

butt — Barrel, as in a wine cask

Ceres — In Roman mythology, the goddess of the earth and agriculture (associated with Demeter in Greek mythology) and the mother of Persephone; a Mother Earth figure

charm — Verbal magic; sometimes a thing imbued with magic. In Shakespeare, charms are often connected with music and work with a natural inclination, such as sleepiness or remorse.

chess — A board game of strategy that originated in sixth-century India, moved to the Middle East and then to Europe. Because of its popularity among the nobility, it became known as the "royal game" or "the game of kings." (The English word chess derives from the Persian word *shah*, which means "king.") Naples was a center for playing chess.

dolor — Grief, suffering

entertainment — Hospitality, treatment

fathom — Approximately 6 feet; "full fathom five" is 30 feet

flamed amazement — A terrifying flash of light. In *The Tempest*, Ariel is likely recreating the weather phenomenon of St. Elmo's fire, where static electricity can appear during certain conditions. It creates a faint light or glow on the points of certain objects, such as a ship's mast during a storm.

Hagseed — A child (seed) of a witch (hag)

Iris — In Greek mythology, the goddess (or personification) of the rainbow. She was a messenger of the gods, especially connected to Juno, and she used the rainbow as her route of transportation.

Jove — Another name for Jupiter; in Roman mythology, the chief god, husband-brother of Juno and equivalent of Zeus in Greek mythology. As the lord of heaven and bringer of light, he was known for his lightning bolts.

Juno — In Roman mythology, the queen of the gods (associated with Hera in Greek mythology), Ceres' sister and Jupiter's wife. She is associated with marriage and motherhood.

league — Approximately 3 miles

liberal arts — The seven subjects of study during the rise of the medieval university system: the Trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music/harmonics and astronomy)

man i'th'moon — Tradition has it that the man in the moon has a dog and carries a bundle of sticks picked up on a Sunday.

mooncalf — Calves born with deformities were believed to be under the moon's malign influence. The term was also used to describe mentally or physically disabled people who were thought to have experienced adverse lunar influence while in the womb.

Neptune — In Roman mythology, the god of the sea and Jupiter's brother (known as Poseidon in Greek mythology); sometimes his name was used for the sea itself. He was frequently depicted with his three-pointed trident.

perfidious — Treacherous, disloyal

prince — A sovereign ruler, sometimes used specifically for a ruler of a small state, which is then subject to a king

signories — Territories, specifically Italian city-states

supplant — Uproot, remove, usurp

trumpery — Fancy garments, or perhaps worthless finery 

Sources include notes to The New Cambridge Shakespeare and The Arden Shakespeare editions of the play; *Shakespeare's Words* by David Crystal and Ben Crystal; *Encyclopedia Britannica*; *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*; *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*; *Shakespeare's Demonology: A Dictionary*; and *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Discussion Questions and Activities

THE ROLE OF GENDER IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

It is common knowledge that during William Shakespeare's life, his plays were performed by a cast of entirely male actors. Even female roles were depicted by cisgender men.

“In 16th- and early 17th-century Europe, the prohibition of public acting by women and the convention of all-male casting were peculiar to England. Though easily accepted by audiences, the playing of female roles by boys led writers to emphasize the femininity of women in their plays to an extent that the use of female performers would have rendered unnecessary.”

*From *The Arden Shakespeare* edited by Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson and David Scott. Kastan, 1998. Reprinted, 2000.*

In contemporary theater, female roles are generally played by women. In recent years, many female actors have taken on significant male roles, thus subverting tradition and lending new perspectives to the role of gender in Shakespeare's plays.

Discussion Questions

The lead character in *The Tempest* — Prospero — was written as a man, a father and former duke of Milan. In this Guthrie production, the role has been changed to Prospera and is played by local actor Regina Marie Williams. The characters of Gonzalo and Francisco are also played as women (Gonzala and Francisca), while the character of Trinculo is played as a man by a cisgendered woman.

- What did you notice about the role of gender in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*?
- How would you describe the character of Prospero/Prospera? What about this character stands out as being particularly masculine or feminine?
- Which character in the play did you find most interesting or most complex — and why?
- Do you think Shakespeare's female characters reflect the same amount of depth or complexity as his male characters? Do you believe Shakespeare would have written more complex female characters into his plays if he had been able to cast female or nonbinary actors?

Online Activity: A Letter From the Director

Imagine it is early 17th-century England, and you are the director of *The Tempest*.

- **OPTION ONE:** Write a letter to the boy who will be playing Miranda.
- **OPTION TWO:** Write a letter to the woman who will be playing Prospero, a male character.

Explain what they will need to know in order to portray this character as believably as possible. Feel free to include any special instructions or advice in your letter.

Classroom Activity: Stepping Into the Role

Besides gender, there are other ways an actor may personally differ from the character they portray onstage. At times, an actor may be cast as a character whose experiences are rather dissimilar from their own. In such cases, the actor may need to do a significant amount of research to connect with their character and better understand their point of view before stepping into the role. The actor may seek out a real-life person who shares some of the character's particular life experiences. The actor will listen and ask questions in an effort to see the world through that person's eyes.

For this activity, place students in groups of two (or three, if needed). For ease of explanation, the following instructions refer to Student A and Student B within each group. **NOTE:** If in a group of three, repeat the instructions below with Students B and C.

Student A: Think of a specific memory from your life when you were in a natural environment (at a lake, at the beach, in the woods, at a park). Describe this one experience to Student B in as much detail as possible for 5–7 minutes. It can be any memory you are willing to share and that you can recall in vivid detail.

Student B: Listen for details and take time to write a few notes for yourself to help you remember key aspects of the story. Ask Student A questions about the environment, people or animals involved or any specifics about the action. Then put your notes down. As you are able, get on your feet and act out this memory as if you are reliving it as Student A. Go through the actions, see the sights, hear the sounds and recall the thoughts and emotions that Student A described in their story. Bring them to life as if they were your own.

Student A: Sit quietly and observe like an audience. This is Student B's interpretation of your story, and it's okay if some aspects are reimagined!

Student B: Try another version of the storytelling where you recreate the experience just physically in space without using words.

Students A and B: Come together and discuss.

- For Student B: Were any of the thoughts, emotions or experiences familiar to you? Did acting it out make it feel more familiar than when you were just listening to the story?
- For Student A: What was it like to have a segment of your life played out in front of you?

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- Is it important for you to see someone onstage who reminds you of yourself?
- What does it mean for someone with a very different life experience to portray your story?



PHOTO: LAAKAN MCHARDY, JOHN KROFT AND REGINA MARIE WILLIAMS (DAN NORMAN)



PHOTO: HARRY SMITH (DAN NORMAN)

“Only by gaining control of the spirits who manage the functioning of the natural world can a man accomplish what Prospero does; Ariel is a necessary intermediary. As such, he leaves Prospero’s humanity intact.”

From “Prospero: Master of Self-Knowledge” by Barbara Howard Traister. *Heavenly Necromancers: The Magician in English Renaissance Drama*, 1984.

Discussion Questions

- How would you describe the role of Ariel in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*? What kind of parallels could be made between Ariel’s magic and the magic of theater?
- How does Prospera embrace her human abilities and limitations? What does she desire most at the beginning of the play, and how do her priorities change by the end of the play? Would you describe her journey as transformative?
- How much of Caliban’s behavior stems from his resentment toward having been forced into servitude? Where might you find humanity in the character of Caliban?
- Which character in the play did you care about the most? What made you sympathize with them? At what point in the play did you feel most concerned about their situation or about what was going to happen next?

Online Activity: Heroes and Villains

The Tempest falls in the genre of romance/tragi-comedy where typical expectations of heroes and villains might be subverted. For example, if *The Tempest* played out as the revenge drama it initially appears to be, would Prospera be a villain? Since she doesn’t take revenge and the play turns toward a happy ending, is Prospera a hero? Given the events that occurred in Milan 12 years ago, is Antonio a villain? Is there a point of view that is more sympathetic to him? Is the same true of Sebastian as he plots to murder Alonso on the island? Or are there degrees of villainy and heroism?

Ask students to write freely for 15 minutes based on these prompts: What makes a character a hero? What makes a character a villain? Does it depend on the point of view from which the story is told? Choose two characters from the play and write about why you believe each to be a hero or a villain. If there were one action that each character could take (or do differently) that would cause you to categorize them as the opposite, what would that action be? If it is possible for a villain to become a hero, what circumstances are necessary for that chance to take place?

Classroom Activity: Poetry in Shakespeare

Have you ever tried to explain how you were feeling to someone and struggled to find the words? Symbolism, simile and metaphor can help communicate those big thoughts and feelings! Shakespeare uses poetic language when everyday language does not suffice to convey a particular idea or emotion. For the following activity, students may work individually and then share their ideas with the class.

The Tempest begins with a pivotal “natural” event — a storm. Shakespeare uses the symbolism of this force of nature to turn the world upside down for most characters in the play. Invite students to think of a change in their life that felt significant, and have them draw a picture or write a poem (in any form) that illustrates their experience of that event using only language that has to do with nature or natural occurrences (thunderstorms, lightning, blossoming flowers, falling leaves, crashing waves). Students may also choose one emotion (joy, sorrow, frustration) and draw or write about it using images found in nature.

The play itself is an extended metaphor for an artist’s work. As an expansion of this exercise, ask students to search the text for expressions of poetry or imagery that point back to the theatrical metaphor.

Discuss the following questions as a group:

- What does it feel like to use poetic language and symbolism from the natural world to describe your circumstances or experiences?
- What were your impressions of your classmates’ pictures and poems?
- Did you relate to any of their experiences as described? If so, how? 

For Further Reading and Understanding

EDITIONS OF *THE TEMPEST*

The Tempest edited by David Lindley. The New Cambridge Shakespeare.

The Tempest edited by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan. The Arden Shakespeare.

FILMS

Tempest, adapted by Paul Mazursky and Leon Capetanos, directed by John Cassavetes. Starring Cassavetes as Phillip, Gena Rowlands as Antonia, Susan Sarandon as Aretha, Raul Julia as Kalibanos and Molly Ringwald as Miranda. 1982.

Prospero's Books, adapted and directed by Peter Greenaway. Starring John Gielgud as Prospero, Isabelle Pasco as Miranda, Tom Bell as Antonio and Mark Rylance as Ferdinand. 1991.

The Tempest, directed by Julie Taymor. Starring Helen Mirren as Prospera, Felicity Jones as Miranda, Djimon Hounsou as Caliban, Ben Whishaw as Ariel and Chris Cooper as Antonio. 2010.

BOOKS (General Shakespeare Studies)

Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare (two volumes) by Issac Asimov. Avenel Books, 1970.

Lectures on Shakespeare by W. H. Auden. Princeton University Press, 2000.

Shakespeare's Great Stage of Fools by Robert H. Bell. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Pronouncing Shakespeare's Words: A Guide From A to Zounds by Dale F. Coye. Greenwood Press, 1998.

Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion by David and Ben Crystal. Penguin Books, 2002.

Shakespeare's Songbook by Ross W. Duffin. W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Shakespeare After All by Marjorie Garber. Pantheon, 2004.

Prefaces to Shakespeare by Harley Granville-Barker. Princeton University Press, 1947.

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare by Stephen Greenblatt. W. W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Shakespeare's Motley by Leslie Hotson. Haskell House Publishers, 1971.

Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare? by James Shapiro. Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race and Contemporary America by Ayanna Thompson. Oxford University Press, 2011.

WEBSITES

Folger Shakespeare Library. A wealth of resources, including lesson plans, study guides and interactive activities.
www.folger.edu

Shakespeare Unlimited. A biweekly podcast produced by the Folger Shakespeare Library that features interviews with Shakespeare experts on topics ranging from adapting Shakespeare to what Elizabethans ate to discussions about current productions.
www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited

Internet Shakespeare Editions. A collection of materials on Shakespeare and his plays, an extensive archive of productions and production materials.
<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/index.html>

Shakespeare Uncovered. A series that goes in-depth into one play per episode. A host with a personal tie to the play investigates the text and its interpretations and visits companies in rehearsal and in performance. Episodes may be available online. *The Tempest* was included in the first season hosted by theater director Trevor Nunn.
www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered

MIT Shakespeare: The Complete Works Online
<http://shakespeare.mit.edu>

PlayShakespeare.com: The Ultimate Free Shakespeare Resource. After registration, receive access to the full texts of the plays, synopses, the First Folio and study aids. An accompanying smartphone app features full texts of the plays.
www.playshakespeare.com



PHOTO: STEPHEN YOAKAM WITH BILL McCALLUM (DAN NORMAN)