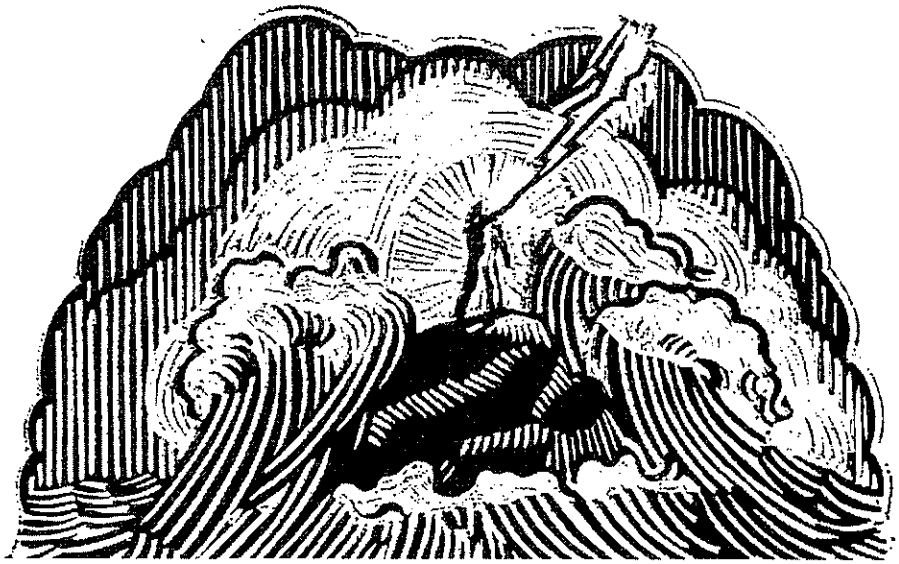
PLAY GUIDE



# THE TEMPEST

APRIL 9 • MAY 11 • 1996

## Shakespeare's Farewell

Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest* in 1611; it was to be his final solo-written play. After a career in London as a leading actor and playwright, he had returned to Stratford to live out his life in peace. While very little is actually known about Shakespeare's life, we can speculate about some things: *The Tempest* was probably written in Stratford—a playwright isolated in a small farming community, far from his colleagues and the life he knew—not unlike Prospero on his island. Did Shakespeare know this would be his last play? Does it constitute his purposeful farewell to the stage? While we can never know for sure, he does seem to express in the play an understanding that life was ending (he died five years later) and that the art of the poet-playwright was a fleeting thing. When Prospero breaks his staff and drowns his book, it is easy to imagine Shakespeare breaking his quill pens and putting his plays and poetry away forever.

Shakespeare frequently based the stories of his plays on borrowed sources: English history, mythic stories derived from classical writings, or rewrites of Roman comedies. But *The Tempest* doesn't use any of these sources. Instead, Shakespeare seems to have gotten the idea from a news story of the day. In 1609 a fleet of ships bound for the colony of Virginia encountered a tremendous storm. The flagship was driven onto the rocks in Bermuda, while the rest of the fleet sailed on, sending news back to London that the flagship was lost. England mourned this loss for almost a year when news arrived that the colonists had survived and discovered Bermuda to be a hospitable and fertile place, offering them fresh water and plentiful food. Soon, however, mutiny broke out, and after much difficulty, the survivors set sail for Virginia; two mutineers decided to remain in Bermuda.

Many of the basic conditions of Shakespeare's play are contained in the pamphlets (the precursors of the national newspaper) that circulated in 1610-11 which described the misadventures of the would-be colonists. The miraculous tale of loss and rediscovery, the mutinous actions, the benevolence of nature, even the idea of an airy spirit ("an apparition of a little round light") are discussed in the pamphlet. But Shakespeare's creative genius took this story and extended it far beyond its factual basis into a Renaissance tale of family betray-

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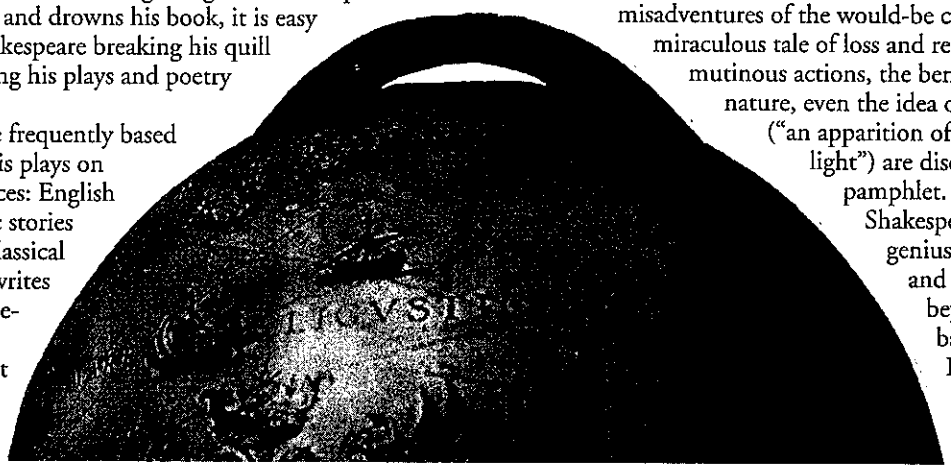

INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE
140 WEST WASHINGTON STREET • INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204 • LIBBY APPEL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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al and magical spirits and powers, set on a mystical island, where two young people fall in love and unite rival kingdoms. Shakespeare also creates in his story a portrait of a man nearing the end of his life, facing his own mortality and the limitations of his creative powers. Is the play a romance, a comedy, a history, or a eulogy? It is all of these in Shakespeare's masterful hands.

The play begins on a boat with a tempestuous storm raging: the captain and the sailors battle to retain control of their ship but are unable to master the seas. The boat seems to split apart and everyone is thought lost. In Scene 2 we are on the island where a teenage girl, Miranda, has observed the storm and is despairing over the fate of the ship's inhabitants. Her father, Prospero, a man of considerable intellect and magical powers, tells her the occupants of the ship are safe, and that he has raised this storm himself for a particular purpose. He then unfolds an amazing tale to her of how they came to this deserted island 12 years earlier from Milan, where they had been the subjects of a dreadful treachery.

Prospero had been the duke of Milan, but, preferring his books and library over the governance of his people, had given his authority to his brother, Antonio. Antonio misused this power and plotted with the King of Naples, Alonso, to permanently usurp the dukedom and exile Prospero and his baby daughter. Prospero and Miranda were put out to sea in a boat with no rigging, presumably to die. A kind general of the Naples army, Gonzalo, had taken pity on the exiled two and put books, clothes, and food into the boat, in hopes that they might survive. Survive they did, and their boat washed up onto a remote but fertile island. There they discovered two spirit creatures, Ariel and Caliban, whom Prospero enslaved to serve himself and his young daughter.

Twelve years later, Prospero and Miranda are still marooned on this island. When a fleet bearing Alonso, his young son Ferdinand, Antonio, and others of the Milan and Naples courts passed near Prospero's island, he was able (through the help of Ariel) to raise a storm which ensnared the flagship while the rest of the fleet sailed on. Prospero now has in his grasp the objects of his revenge.

Shakespeare's masterful final play takes place over the course of three hours in which the shipwrecked men are washed ashore, set to trials by Prospero, and finally united and pardoned. A whole lifetime of revenge is worked out in an afternoon. ★

*Leonardo da Vinci's self-portrait shows a great artist near the end of his life.*

The IRT's production of Shakespeare's final masterpiece represents an artful collaboration between many different artists: director, designers, dramaturg, composer, choreographer, actors, and artisans. As is the case with all Shakespeare productions, many decisions must be made before going into rehearsal: What historical period will the production suggest? How literal will the scenery be? Will it suggest a particular geographic location? How will the spirits be presented in the play? How many actors will be required to tell the story? How will the "masque" scene be handled? Will the play be edited? *The Tempest* presents some particularly thorny production concerns for the modern production team because of the way in which Prospero uses his magic and his spirits to influence the action of others in the play.

Director Libby Appel frequently uses artwork to inspire her work on a production: for this production she studied Renaissance painters Fra Angelico, Titian, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Breughel. From these artists she picked up ideas which influenced the color used in the set, Ariel's "wings," some basic ideas for the costumes, and the visual ideas which would appear in the video used in the production. Appel chose principally the Italian Renaissance because the

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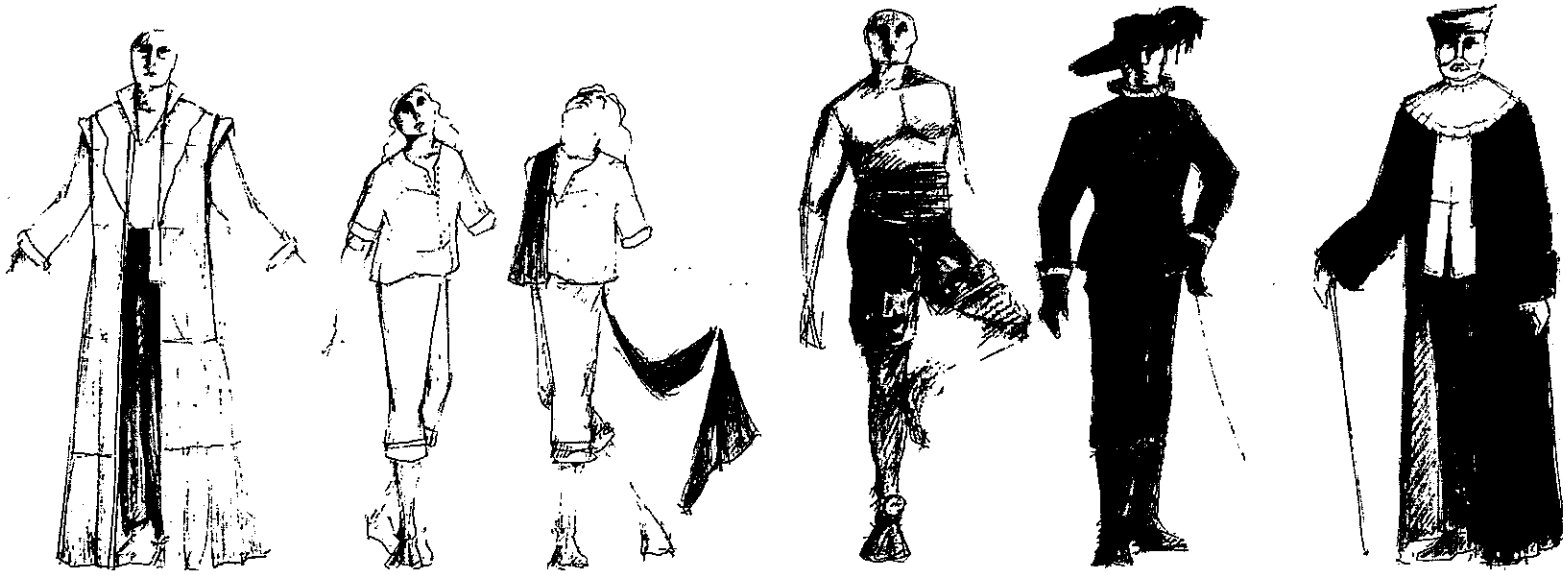
*(below) Costume sketches by Tom Broecker. Paired characters are played by the same actor.*

PROSPERO
THE RIGHTFUL DUKE OF MILAN

MIRANDA • ARIEL
PROSPERO'S DAUGHTER • AN AIRY SPIRIT

CALIBAN • ANTONIO
PROSPERO'S SLAVE • PROSPERO'S BROTHER, THE USURPING DUKE

GONZALO
AN HONEST OLD COUNCILL



characters are Italian and because the play captures a sense of the explosion of thought and invention (principally about astronomy and art) that was going on at that time.

One of the first decisions that Appel made was a significant conceptual decision which established the focus of the entire production. She decided to create a company of seven actors to take on all the roles in the play. The story of the play would unfold from the interactions of this small group of actors, like storytellers. This meant that most of the actors would play more than one role, and that these role "doublings" could add a layer of meaning to the production. The actress playing Miranda, Prospero's daughter, is also playing Ariel, Prospero's spirit-servant; the actor playing Gonzalo, the wise yet foolish counselor, also plays Stephano, the drunken butler; the actor playing Caliban, Prospero's slave, also plays Antonio, Prospero's evil brother; the actor playing Sebastian, Alonzo's conniving brother, also plays Trinculo, Alonzo's drunken jester (and just to stir things up a bit, these two roles are played by a woman!). In some way, the actors who are doubling play roles that are similar to each other.

Another concern that is addressed early in the course of planning for a Shakespeare play is the editing of the script. Many of Shakespeare's plays are quite long and contain topical references and archaic terms which we no longer understand. While *The Tempest* isn't long (it's the second shortest of Shakespeare's plays) and doesn't have too many references that are specifically Elizabethan, we did need to edit the script to accomodate playing it with seven actors. We also chose to vastly simplify the first scene (the storm at sea), and to eliminate entirely Shakespeare's "masque pageant" in Act IV, Scene 1. In its place we substitute a pre-nuptial entertainment composed of love sonnets of Shakespeare's, including sonnet 116 ("Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments"), sonnet 73, and bits from other famous sonnets. The masque—a pageant featuring the mythological goddesses Ceres, Juno, and Iris, which Prospero uses to instruct Miranda and Ferdinand about love and marriage—is a concept that hasn't transferred well from 1611. The substitution of the sonnets gets this idea across for a modern audience with much greater ease and clarity.

Costumes are of prime importance in this production. Not only must they identify character, but they must be easily added to and removed since many times actors must change from one character to another without leaving the stage. The costume designer has decided to make the changes more emblematic than realistic: when the actor playing Miranda becomes Ariel, she simply puts on a long scarf which she holds or puts around her neck like wings. When the actor playing Antonio must transform into Caliban he does so by simply taking off a doublet and substituting ankle bands for his spurred boots. The basic costume worn by all the actors is actually quite contemporary in appearance: simple shirts and pants. What the characters put over this basic costume suggests the Renaissance era and the specific needs of characters.

We decided to set the play in a non-realistic environment, rather than try to suggest a specific location for Prospero's enchanted island (like the Caribbean or an island in the Mediterranean). The scenery designer has created a simple, open set. The floor of the stage is painted with a large wave to evoke the storm and the sense of water surrounding the action. Two playground-like swings allow Ariel to become airborn, and two holes in the stage floor allow actors to enter from below the ground (who might those characters be?). Translucent screens surrounding the playing space will function as projection surfaces and also as places for actors to disappear. Video will be used to suggest the mirage feast that

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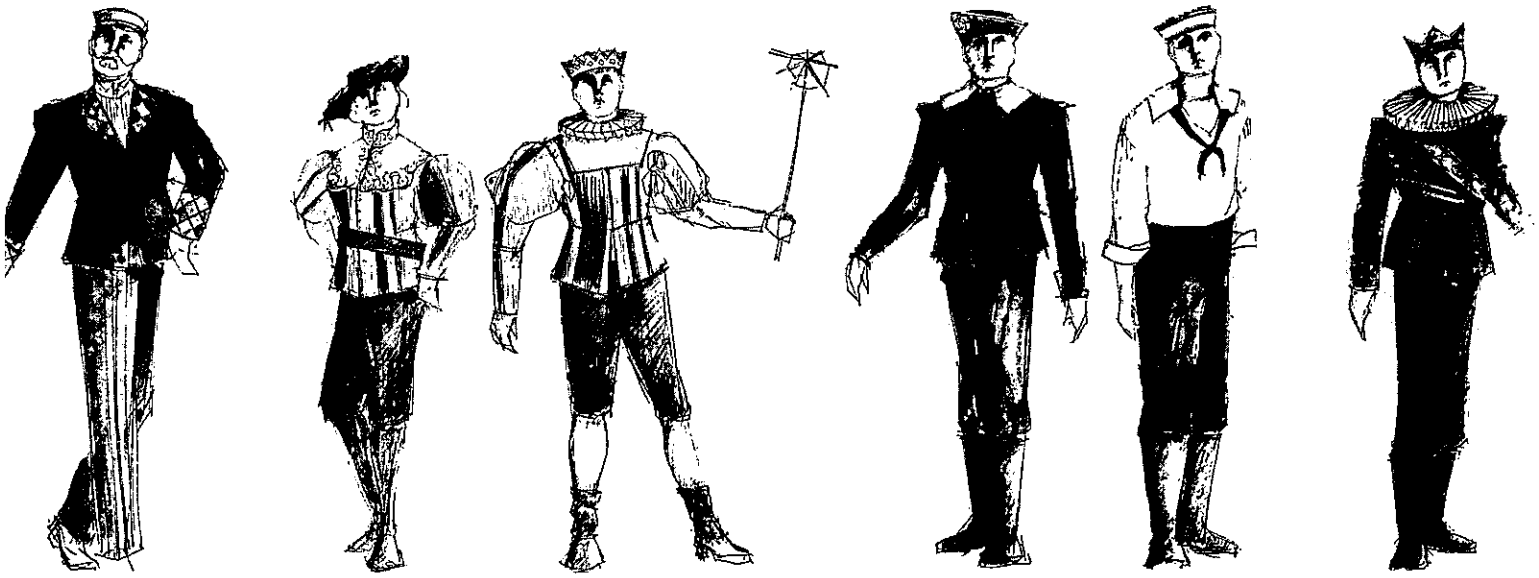
# TEMPEST on Stage

STEPHANO
ALONSO'S BUTLER

SEBASTIAN • TRINCULO
ALONSO'S BROTHER — ALONSO'S JESTER

FERDINAND • BOATSWAIN
ALONSO'S SON — FROM THE SHIP'S CREW

ALONSO
KING OF NAPLES



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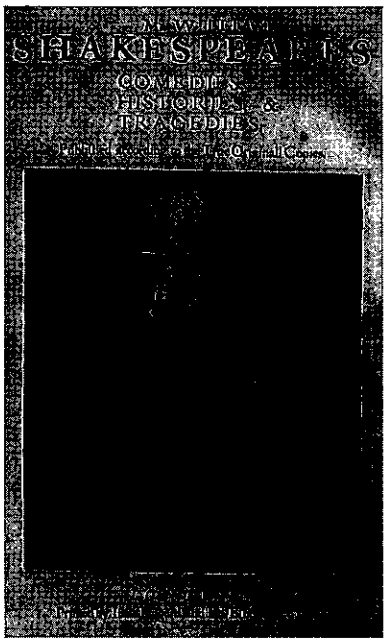
the Harpy (Ariel) creates to tempt Alonso and his court. *The Tempest* is a play that is frequently overpowered with special effects; instead, we have chosen to present it without stage tricks so that the magic is transmitted primarily through Shakespeare's magnificent language.

Lights and sound play a large role in our production. *The Tempest* contains the most songs of any of Shakespeare's plays, so our composer must create those tunes sung by the actors in addition to summoning up the tempest itself and filling the island with the unique and peculiar noises upon which the characters remark. Sound figures signficantly in the play; listen for the number of references you hear to different kinds of sounds. Lighting will be the most effective tool in giving the audience a sense of mood and in helping us create the many enchanted moments in the play. Color, direction, intensity, and pattern of light will all be manipulated by the lighting designer to create specific effects.




*Karen TenEyck uses such images as this photo of a wave (above) and an antique globe (front cover) in her scenic design for* The Tempest.

Production decisions are unique each time a play is produced; no two productions of a play will be exactly alike since productions are wholly influenced by the decisions of the individual team of artists working on it. It is always a good exercise to imagine how else the play might be produced and then compare it to the decisions the production team made. What things thoroughly convinced you? What decisions left you asking questions? A play as great as Shakespeare's *The Tempest* can support many different interpretations. We hope you will have a chance to see many productions of this play in your lifetime, but we also hope you'll remember and cherish images and ideas from this production at the IRT. ★

***—Janet Allen, Dramaturg***

# The Autobiography of William Shakespeare*

*A somewhat fanciful biography as he might have told it today, with certain suppositions based upon what is known of the time in which he lived to fill in the gaps between the few facts we know about his life.

The main objection I have to being dead for nearly 400 years is that it gives people such an opportunity to talk. You'd think from the way they talk about me that I did nothing in the old days but sit and write. If you listened only to your teachers, you'd think I had been a saint. But I was none of those things: I was just a boy and then a man trying to do what I enjoyed in the world.

For the sake of your history test, I was born in 1564. My father was one of the most influential men in Stratford-on-Avon, where I grew up. I did my share of acting up in school and got beaten on the knuckles by the schoolmaster more than once when I failed to learn my Latin lessons. When I was ten, Queen Elizabeth came to visit a nearby nobleman. During that week were the most exciting doings I had ever seen. I'll never forget the plays I saw acted by the nobleman's players. I told my father I would never be satisfied until I myself was dressed in those rich costumes and stood on the stage in front of the Queen.

But when I was seventeen I met Anne Hathaway. We got married a year later and had three children within a short time. Still, I had a kind of wildness in my blood. Not far from our house was an estate where my friends liked to hunt. The estate was owned by an unpleasant man who didn't like us poaching on his land. One night we were caught and arrested. I had to leave Stratford to escape jail. Running away to London to join the players seemed the best way out.

My first job in the theatre was not as an actor. What I did was hold the horses for the rich patrons of James Burbage's theatre while they dismounted. I never made enough money to stay at an inn, so I used to sleep backstage. Eventually, Mr. Burbage gave me a job carrying a spear. Despite the fact that it was a non-speaking role, even today the excitement comes back to me of that moment when, dressed as a Roman warrior, I stepped out on the stage.

I have lived through many triumphs since then. When I heard the mob applaud the opening night of *Romeo and Juliet*, when I became the first actor to receive a coat of arms, when Ben Jonson slapped me on the shoulder and acknowledged me as a fellow playwright, when I became a co-owner of the Globe Theatre, when I bought the biggest house in Stratford and moved my family there, when our company was named the King's Men in the reign of King James. I lived in some magnificent times.

After many years as a merry young blade in London, writing and acting in some of the most praised plays of the era, I returned to Stratford in 1611 to retire. The great works—*Hamlet, Othello, King Lear*—were behind me. I lived comfortably with my family until 1616 when I left my body and began my wanderings as a legend. And don't think I haven't acquired memories since. The thrill, for instance, when all 36 of my plays were printed for the first time in the Folio edition of 1623. It was so exciting to see that I, just a writer for the mob, was to be so honored.

My memories become a series of flashes: the thrill of seeing the first woman play Juliet; before that, all my women had been played by boys. The fun of reading the world's great critics praise me as a poet. The joy of seeing my plays converted into ballets, symphonies, operas, paintings, and sculptures. And finally, the strange pleasure of watching my plays made into flickering images called films. And what will happen in the next 400 years? My plays performed on the moon? Impossible! ★

***—Wm. Shakespeare***