Dear Educators,

Welcome back to Seattle Shakespeare Company’s 2019-2020 season! Our first production, *The Tempest*, is one of Shakespeare’s last plays, and provides a story of family rivalry and forgiveness, told on the backdrop of a magical, otherworldly location.

One of the things that attracts me most to this play is something that I love most about all of Shakespeare’s romances - the “passing the torch” to the next generation that happens over the course of the play. Early on in the play, Prospero tells Miranda the story of how they ended up on their island, which is a story of family betrayed and trust broken. All is not well between the siblings of the older generation. And yet, by the end of the play, the love between Ferdinand and Miranda has begun to mend the rifts that were present, and the new generation provides hope for the future in their optimism, willingness to make peace, and their lack of pre-existing prejudices.

I see this hope for the future in our students, especially those who are working to make the world a better place. I see it in Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg, and countless other young people who imagine that the world can be better, and take it upon themselves to do it. I am sure that you also see this in your students, and help to foster that hope and imagination.

Thank you for all that you do for our students, and we hope you’ll join us for more classic plays this season.

Best,
Michelle Burce
Education Director

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**The Tempest Student Matinees**

- Tues, Oct. 22
- Thurs, Oct. 24
- Thurs, Oct 31
- Tues, Nov. 5
- Thurs, Nov. 7

Student matinees start at 10:30am.
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Plot Synopsis

The play begins on the deck of a ship during a furious storm that appears to wreck the vessel and drown its fleeing crew. A teenage girl, Miranda, watched the ship consumed by the squall from the shore of a nearby island and despairs for the lost souls.

Her father, Prospero, calms her fears and explains that both the boat and its men are safely ashore. In truth, Prospero conjured the storm using magic to purposely wash its passengers on to the island because his deceitful brother, Antonio, was on board.

Prospero used to be the Duke of Milan before Antonio usurped his title and, with the help of Alonso the King of Naples, cast Prospero and the toddler Miranda adrift at sea. The pair ran aground on the mysterious island and have been living there for the past twelve years. The island is inhabited with mystical spirits including Ariel, who Prospero enslaved. Caliban is another inhabitant and the son of the witch, Sycorax, who used to rule over the island before she died. He resents Prospero for ruling the island and enslaving him. Prospero has longed to confront his brother and reclaim his title. Now with Antonio, Alonso, and his attendants ashore, Prospero has his chance for revenge.

Prospero uses his magic to manipulate the groups of displaced travelers. First he separates Alonso’s son, Ferdinand, from his father so that he may meet Miranda. The two youths fall in love immediately. Prospero forces Ferdinand to perform manual labor across the island to prove his honor and earnestness.

Although he wants to see his daughter find love, Prospero would also benefit from their marriage since it would strengthen his position back in Milan.

Meanwhile, Caliban meets two foolish servants of Alonso, Trinculo and Stephano. Caliban enjoys the company of the two men (not to mention the alcohol they have) and suggests they kill Prospero to take control of the island. The equally intoxicated Trinculo and Stephano agree to the plan with dreams of overseeing a utopia, and the three set off to find Prospero.

On yet another part of the island, Antonio and Alonso’s brother, Sebastian, plot to kill Alonso and his councilor, Gonzalo, so that Sebastian may claim the throne. Ariel, sent by Prospero, thwarts the men’s plans, scolds them for betraying Prospero, and drives them closer to Prospero’s location on the island.

The story concludes when the three groups reunite in the presence of Prospero. Ferdinand and Miranda, with Prospero’s blessing, make plans to marry. Alonso arrives on the scene and, having believed his son had drowned, is overjoyed to see Ferdinand. He welcomes Miranda and apologizes to Prospero who in turn forgives the past wrongdoings. Prospero then turns to Antonio and Sebastian to forgive them as well, but also reprimands them for their recent plans of betrayal and murder. Finally, he pardons the drunken Caliban and his conspirators for their bumbling plot. Prospero releases Ariel and Caliban from his authority and entreats the audience to release him from theirs.
Sources

*The Tempest* is one of Shakespeare's few plays without a definite source on which he based his plot. Instead, many of the elements in the play seem to be inspired partly by the accounts of the Virginia Company's ship, the Sea Adventure, and shipwreck by a storm in Bermuda on the way to Jamestown. The ship was feared lost, and the survivors were marooned on Bermuda. Pamphlets and letters were later circulated to members of the Virginia Company, detailing their ordeal and describing the island. These letters contain descriptions and situations that are very similar to those that are used to describe Prospero's island in *The Tempest*. While the letters were not published until after Shakespeare had written his play, he knew members of the Virginia Company, and very likely saw draft versions that inspired the descriptions in his play.

Casting

When you think of *The Tempest*, do you imagine a world full of powerful men – Prospero, Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, Ferdinand, etc. - and one lone woman - Miranda? For our production – think again! Director Annie Lareau cast Seattle great Mari Nelson as Prospero, and is focusing on the mother-daughter relationship between Prospero and Miranda. Beyond that, Alonso King of Naples and Prospero's sibling Antonio are both cast as women in this version, played by Eleanor Moseley and Betsy Schwartz, respectively. And the clown Trinculo will be performed by the wonderful comedic actress Amy Escobar.

Why is Shakespeare's play full of men, and ours is not? This goes back to the history of performance in the Renaissance, when it was illegal for women to be actors. Shakespeare had an acting troupe made up of men, and any romantic young female characters would be played by younger boy (teenage) actors who did not have beards and could speak in less-deep voices. It was less likely for Shakespeare to write other characters as female, simply because it was less believable to have men playing serious female characters.

Today, since we do have access to lots of great actors and actresses, the director has the opportunity to examine the relationships that Shakespeare wrote, and to decide what actor can most effectively play that character and their relationships. And so, in our production, a father-son relationship turns into a mother-daughter relationship. Brothers become sisters. And a clownish fool, well, they stay a clownish fool (who just happens to be a woman)!

Amy Escobar plays Trinculo

Eleanor Moseley plays Alonso

Mari Nelson plays Prospero

Betsy Schwartz plays Antonio

The cast of Seattle Shakespeare's 2013 Wooden O production of *The Tempest*
Shakespeare’s Romances

When we think about Shakespeare’s plays, we usually classify them as either comedies or tragedies. These genres of play can be simplified to happy endings for comedies (everyone gets married) or sad endings for tragedies (everybody dies). Shakespeare’s later comedies (Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale, The Tempest, and The Two Noble Kinsmen) are often categorized as romances. Romances can be defined as more complex stories with tragic and comedic themes that generally have the happy ending. They often are stories of wondering, loss, and separation, with a joyful reunion at the end.

Another common distinction between Shakespeare’s genres can be drawn between the people or relationships that the play focuses on. Comedies are the story of a group or society, focusing on a larger cast of characters and the interplay of group dynamics. There are usually several “main” characters in a comedy. Tragedies focus on one or two people, and their relationship to the rest of the world. Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, Juliet, and Macbeth are all main characters that drive their own stories, and the tragedy focuses mainly on them. Romances, by contrast, tend to focus on the relationship between parents and children, and their family dynamics. It is common for the sins of the parents to be healed by the virtues of their children.

In The Tempest, Prospero is the central figure, and we learn early on that his Dukedom of Milan was usurped by his brother Antonio, with help from King Alonso of Naples. Without understanding their parents’ history, Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love and are married. This marriage heals the rift between their parents’ kingdoms, and gives us the wedding and happy ending we are accustomed to in a comedy. Similarly, in The Winter’s Tale, Leontes, Hermione, and Polixenes are central figures in the first half of the play, but their children are the focus of the second half, where they fall in love and heal the long-standing rift between their parents.

One other distinction of a romance is an element of travel, whether in space or time or both. In The Winter’s Tale, the two halves of the play take place sixteen years apart, and in two different kingdoms. Pericles is all about traveling the seas over a long period of time. However, this is one element of a romance that is missing from The Tempest. Instead, all of the passage of time and all of the traveling takes place before the play begins, and Prospero tells Miranda the story of how they ended up fleeing their home and living on an island for many years. The journey of the rest of the characters to Prospero’s island takes place immediately before the play begins. In fact, The Tempest is one of Shakespeare’s only plays to follow the three unities of time, place, and action. The story happens in real time, all in one afternoon, in the same place, so that these characters have the ability to interact with each other, and the action always contributes directly to the plot. The Tempest does have fantastical elements, including the spirit, Ariel and all the magical elements of the play.

Sources:


https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/SLT/plays/the%20tempest/tempestunities.html

https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare/The-romances
Family, Forgiveness, and Magic

Director Annie Lareau has a vision for The Tempest that may not be what you typically think of. While many people think of this play as being about revenge, power, and politics – and to some extent it is! – this is also a play about family, forgiveness, and magic. These are the qualities that Lareau is looking to lean into, as it is something that she feels the world is lacking in. While every day we are bombarded with stories about power, about revenge, and about politics, we could use more forgiveness and magic to inspire us.

To that end, she is setting this play in a theatre in the Edwardian period. She explains,

“I believe the Center Theatre holds the magic of everyone that’s ever worked there, that’s ever designed there, that’s ever performed there, and that’s ever sung there. I believe that magic exists, and so I wanted to place this world where we could access what we know to be magic and share that with our audiences.

I chose the Edwardian period because it was one of the highest heights of theatre-as-theatre. Everyone went to the theatre. It was a huge part of life during that time period. It was called the new drama period because George Bernard Shaw was shaking things up, and Ibsen was causing all this controversy in their plays. Things were being celebrated, people were coming regularly to the theatre, and music halls were performing nightly at the same time as theatres. And all of these powerful, palpable artists were pouring their hearts out on these stages.

So I wanted to capture that moment in time because I felt that we could find something really unique and different than just an island.”

In our version, Prospero and Miranda are holed up in their broken down theater, a building that is represented through the set design of Julia Hayes Welch. There will be a proscenium arch that has been broken and is falling apart, set at an angle. There will be magnificent chandeliers hung about the space, which only light up as part of Prospero’s “stage magic” that she uses.

The costumes, designed by Kelly McDonald, will be largely set in the Edwardian period, with all of the members of the court wearing fashions of that era. There will be several actors playing incarnations of Ariel, and they will be ghost-like spirits of performers who had performed in that theater. They will resemble dancers, famous singers like Lottie Collins, and actors such as Sarah Bernhardt. Finally, the Caliban character will be presented as a gargoyle from the theater that has been brought to life and put to work by Prospero.
Pre-Show Reflection

These questions will help students to think about some of the big ideas behind the play before watching it.

Where do we find magic in our world today? What feels magical, mysterious, or logic-defying to you?

How does holding a grudge affect you? How does it feel to forgive someone?

How are you different from your parents? Do you feel like you have a different outlook on the world? Are you more or less optimistic about the future than they are? Do you want the same types of things?

How do you think your outlook on the world might change as you grow up?

Post-Show Discussion

The following questions are to help lead a discussion with your class after seeing the play. For all of these, there are many possible answers and student responses will vary. Some possible responses are provided.

How is ambition portrayed in this play? Is it a force for good, or for bad? Who is ambitious?

• Antonio and Sebastian are both ambitious, and it is a force for bad. Both of them are willing to betray their siblings to gain more power.

• Caliban and Stephano are ambitious, and want to rule the island and get rid of Prospero. They are willing to do bad things to get what they want.

• Prospero was not ambitious in terms of ruling, but instead focused on his learning and magic. That also did not go well, because he spent too little time focusing on his power as the duke.

What is the role of Stephano and Trinculo in this play?

• They provide comic relief in the play, and give the audience a chance to laugh.

• They act as foils to Antonio and Sebastian. Whereas Antonio and Sebastian plot to kill their brothers and take over Naples and Milan, Trinculo and Stephano plot to take over a small island. Their drunken boasting, modest ambition, and petty greed look ridiculous, and it reflects the greed of Antonio and Sebastian.

Describe the family relationships present in this play. Is Shakespeare trying to say anything about these different family relationships?

• There are two sets of siblings in the play - Prospero and Antonio, and Alonso and Sebastian. In both cases, the younger sibling is jealous and power-hungry, and is willing to ruin their sibling to gain power.

• Shakespeare seems to be saying that siblings can be a destructive relationship, especially if there is a power imbalance between them.

• There are two parent/child relationships in the play - Alonso and Ferdinand, and Prospero and Miranda. In both cases, the children are coming of age and beginning to distance themselves from their parents, making different decisions and sometimes going against what their parents want. When Ferdinand and Miranda are married, they begin to heal the rift between their parents.

• Shakespeare seems to be saying that children are not their parents, and can even fix the sins that their parents committed.
PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY
CROSS THE LINE

Instructions

1. Push all the desks to the periphery of the room. Have students create two rows facing one another, with 7–10 feet between them. Point out that there is an imaginary line in the middle, between the two rows. Tell the students that this is a game to be played without talking.

2. Tell the students that you are going to be saying a series of scenarios that start with the instruction phrase, “Cross the line if . . .” If that scenario applies to the student, they should walk to the other side of the room. Note: students will not be asked for personal information about their experience unless they volunteer that information.

3. Ask for observations. What did the students find surprising?

Cross the line if . . .

. . . if you have ever fought with a sibling
. . . if you have felt different because of a skill you have
. . . if you have ever had to escape a bad situation
. . . if you have felt controlled by a parent
. . . if you have ever realized you treated someone badly
. . . if you have ever had to ask someone’s forgiveness

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY
THEATER MAGIC

The Tempest is full of magical elements, from characters who aren’t human to actual magic spells cast by Prospero. However, all of these tricks have to be shown live onstage, in a way that works with the production design. Instead of real magic, the production designers and director have to come up with theater magic for each instance!

Instructions

1. After watching the production, break the class into small groups. Each small group should choose one or two magical elements of The Tempest that they want to work on. Some suggestions of magical elements include: the magical shipwreck, Ariel flying places or doing things without being seen, Caliban’s body shape and overall look, the arrival and disappearance of the banquet, the magic circle in which Prospero’s enemies are held, the masque performed for Ferdinand and Miranda, and the sounds and smells that happen around the island.

2. First note how the Seattle Shakespeare Company production used theater magic to create the magical element. If you don’t know how it was done, take a guess!

3. Then have each group describe how they might deal with that magical element in a live performance. How important is it to get it just right? What level of theater magic is enough?

After completing the activity, discuss the following questions together:

1. What level of theater magic did each group suggest using? For example, having Ariel be light on his feet is a different level than rigging wires to have him actually fly.

2. How important is it to have your choice feel magical? How much is it okay to rely on the audience’s willing suspension of disbelief?

3. How does the presence of magic contribute to the overall themes in The Tempest?

4. How did Seattle Shakespeare Company deal with magic throughout the show? Did their solutions work for you, as an audience member? Why or why not?
POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

This play clearly portrays Prospero, Alonso, Ariel, Ferdinand, Mirando, and Gonzalo as "good people," while it shows Sebastian, Antonio, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo as "bad people." In the end, many of the bad people are redeemed and see the error of their ways, but throughout the play there is a clear sense of who is in the right, and who is wrong. However, most "bad" people see a clear justification for their actions, and think that what they are doing is, in fact, the right thing to do... from a certain point of view. In this activity, students will attempt to see the events of The Tempest from another point of view.

Instructions

1. Have each student choose a character from The Tempest who might have a very different opinion on the events of the story. Do not choose Prospero for this activity.

2. Think of a time during the play when that character looked like they were doing something bad or wrong. Is there another way to see that event? What was the character's justification for doing it? Is there a way that they could see themselves as the “good guy” in that situation?

3. Write a short monologue for that character explaining what they were thinking, and why they thought they were in the right. Feel free to expand on information given in the play to explain why they thought, for example, that Prospero shouldn't be in charge of anything, or Miranda started the feud.

4. [Optional - for more of a challenge] Have students write their monologue using either a rhyme scheme or iambic pentameter (or both!).
Mission Statement

With the plays of William Shakespeare at our core, Seattle Shakespeare Company engages our audiences, our artists and our community in the universal human experience inherent in classic drama through the vitality, immediacy and intimacy of live performance and dynamic outreach programs.

ABOUT US

Seattle Shakespeare Company is the Puget Sound region’s year-round, professional, classical theatre. The company’s growing success stems from a deep belief in the power and vibrancy of the time-tested words and ideas of Shakespeare and other classical playwrights along with a commitment to artistic excellence on stage. The results have been provocative performances that both challenge and delight audiences while fostering an appreciation for great stage works.

Our combined programs — which include indoor performances, free outdoor productions, regional tours, educator and youth programs — reach across barriers of income, geography, and education to bring classical theatre to Washington State.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In-School Residencies, Matinees, and Workshops

• In-School Residencies bring active, customized curriculum into schools across Washington State. Professional teaching artists plan with teachers to tailor each residency to fit the needs and objectives of the classroom. Seattle Shakespeare Company residencies inject vibrant, active exercises into lessons that unlock the text, themes, and actions of a Shakespeare play.

• Student Matinees bring over 3,000 students annually to our mainstage productions in the Seattle Center. Teachers are provided free study guides, and student groups are invited to stay after the show for a free Q&A session with the cast.

• Pre-show and post-show workshops can be booked to accompany mainstage matinees. These workshops include an introduction to the play itself, student activities, and insights into direction and design choices of our specific production.

Touring Productions

• Fresh and accessible 90-minute productions tour across Washington State each Spring, reaching more than 14,000 students and adults. These nimble productions perform as easily in school gymnasiums as professional theatre facilities. Teachers are provided free study guides and students enjoy free post-show Q&A sessions with the cast.

• Schools have the opportunity to book accompanying in-school residencies with touring productions, led by members of the touring cast and additional teaching artists.

Camps and Classes

• Our summer “Camp Bill” series in Seattle and Edmonds offers young actors a variety of camps to choose from or combine. Camps range from a One-Week Introduction to a Three-Week Production Intensive, with many options in between.

• In our Fall and Spring after-school “Short Shakes” programs, young actors develop their skills and gain hands-on performance and production experience.

• Seattle Shakespeare Company occasionally offers adult classes and workshops to our community featuring guest artists who work on our stage.

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