

THE TEMPEST





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Introduction

This pack is designed to be a useful aid for Key Stage 3 & 4 English Literature, Drama, Performing Arts, Art and Design, and Citizenship. It is part of Northern Broadsides Spring 2007 Education programme and accompanies the workshop and worksheets. This educational resource aims to give a detailed insight into the Spring 2007 touring production of *The Tempest* directed by Barrie Rutter, composed by Conrad Nelson, designed by Lis Evans and in partnership with The New Vic Theatre, Newcastle Under Lyme. The education programme is designed to offer useful and interesting viewpoints into the text, production and Northern Broadsides. It is not designed to answer exam questions but offers useful hints and tools to make the text and production more accessible.

The Tempest

This is a strange maze as e'er men trod... *Alonso 5.1 242*

The Tempest or sea storm is the key focus of the play. The piece starts with a storm at sea and leads all the characters into the protagonist's world of revenge, magic, intrigue, love, wonder and forgiveness whilst they are shipwrecked on a strange island.

The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's last plays and is usually defined as tragicomedy. Tragicomedy means that there are elements of tragedy and comedy within the action of the play. Shakespeare's plays *Cymbeline* and *A Winters' Tale* are also defined as tragicomedy.

The play is quite unusual for Shakespeare for many reasons and has sparked a lot of study and discussion. Firstly, the play is not inspired by a particular book or source and is arguably Shakespeare's only original play. The setting of the play is ambiguous; it is an unknown island despite the references to Bermuda and Tunis. The structure of the play follows real time of four hours, which reflects the real time of a Shakespearean performance. The plot development revolves around a single event that occurs in the first scene rather than a slow build up to a dramatic climax later in the play. Stylistically, the play depends on a lot of audio and visual effects, with storms, songs and instrumentals, harpies, sea nymphs and masques, which would have been very demanding on the theatres of the period.

The questionable and fantastical nature of the play has inspired a vast range of speculation and interpretations both in the study and production of the piece. The readings of the play have changed from Dryden's seventeenth century stage musical extravaganzas to the twentieth century's academic explorations into the psychology of Prospero and postcolonial readings of Caliban.

Synopsis

The *Tempest* begins with a storm at sea. King Alonso, his son Ferdinand, his brother Sebastian, his counsellor Gonzalo and Antonio (Duke of Milan) are shipwrecked on an island where Prospero (Antonio's brother and rightful Duke of Milan) lives with his daughter, Miranda. There he is served by the spirit Ariel and Caliban. Now, for the first time, he tells his daughter Miranda the full story of their journey to this island.



Twelve years earlier, Prospero was Duke of Milan. His brother Antonio joined forces with King Alonso of Naples in deposing him and banishing him at sea with the infant Miranda. Presumed shipwrecked, they miraculously survived by landing on this enchanted island. When fortune revealed that a ship carrying his old enemies was sailing near the island, Prospero summons a storm to wreck it. He assures Miranda however that his plans for revenge will bring no real harm to the survivors.

Prospero makes Miranda sleep whilst he calls on the spirit Ariel and learns that his enemies are safe and well on the island. Among them is Ferdinand, son of Alonso. Ferdinand is lured to Prospero's cave by Ariel. There he meets Miranda and they immediately fall in love. Whilst secretly approving, Prospero pretends to be gruff and sets Ferdinand a number of tasks to test him.

In another part of the island, the King of Naples searches for his son, fearing him dead. Antonio convinces Sebastian to kill Alonso and seize the crown. And elsewhere, Caliban takes up with the clown Trinculo and drunkard Stephano, persuading them to kill Prospero so they can rule the island. Overheard by Ariel, he sends them on a wild goose chase and warns Prospero.

Meanwhile, the court of King Alonso finds a magical banquet table which they try to eat from. Ariel appears as a harpy and tells Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian that they will suffer for what they did to Prospero. Ariel and the table then vanish and Alonso is distraught.

Back at Prospero's cave, Miranda and Ferdinand vow to marry. Prospero presents them with a magical performance of spirits. As the performance ends, Prospero suddenly remembers that he must deal with Caliban's plot to murder him. With Ariel's help, he lures the three conspirators into a magical trap which results in them being chased by snarling hounds.

In the final act, Prospero brings his enemies to his cave and reveals himself to them. After confronting his enemies, he forgives and renounces his magic. Prospero tells Alonso that Ferdinand is not only alive and well, but engaged to Miranda. In their betrothal, the rift between the two families is healed. Alonso restores Prospero's Dukedom and Prospero grants Ariel his freedom and promises to return them all safely home.

Background of *The Tempest*

...We are such stuff
as dreams are made on, and our little lives
rounded with a sleep...*Prospero 4.1 157*

The Tempest is an interesting and popular play because it is surrounded by uncertainty. It is the only play that is attributed as “an original” Shakespeare with no borrowed story from one recognisable source. The subject matter is full of the mysterious and miraculous: a magical island with strange spirits where a revengeful wizard conjures a mighty storm and rules the various inhabitants. It asks many questions: Where is this island? Who or what is Caliban? What is Ariel? What is Prospero’s Art? Is Prospero benevolent or malevolent? And despite many theories and ideas there are no definitive answers to these questions, only the play text remains, inspiring generations of artists, musicians and writers to ask more questions. The mystery provides some of the allure to why the play continues to be popular even four hundred years later.

In a number of ways it can be said that *The Tempest* was a product of its time. Written roughly around 1610 it marked a period in England history where people were venturing into the unfamiliar both scientifically and geographically. In London at the turn of the 17th century reports were arriving of odd creatures, strange peoples, of bountiful paradises, of religious heresies, new ideas on the earth and the stars, theories on cures and diseases of the body. There was an increasing amount of trade being transported around the world carrying not only foreign goods but also stories and inspirational ideas. Ships were sailing in unfamiliar waters with cargoes of rich metals, spices, cloths and human slaves. New territories and alliances were being claimed by some of the largest European countries. The stuff of people’s imagination, their fantasies and nightmares were becoming increasingly real. This era of discovery raised philosophical issues on the ideas of civilisation, religion, knowledge and power.

Exploration

O brave new world
That has such people in't. *Miranda* 5.1 184

Exploration by sea had been on the rise since the fourteenth century due to the development of navigation and cartography. America and its neighbouring islands were discovered a century before Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*. The pursuit of new territory and unfound wealth inspired England to mount its own expeditions and voyages. Sir Francis Drake, in the Golden Hind, was the first person to sail around the world and survive. New places had been discovered and new trade routes created. Sir Walter Raleigh had set up expeditions to bring back the riches of America. Some expeditions returned with new products such as potatoes, cacao, coffee, and tobacco.

Various accounts of dangerous voyages, odd climates, wildlife and the strange inhabitants were filtering back to Europe. Reports of peculiar animals and foreign peoples including native Indians, Aztecs and Cannibal cultures were arriving. In some instances these strange foreigners returned with the explorers.

Colonisation

This island's mine by Sycorax, my mother, *Caliban* 1.2 333

Exploration was not the only aim for the many expeditions from Europe. The various kingdoms such as Spain and Portugal, were interested in amassing wealth, trade and establishing ownership. The establishment of colonies and new forms of retinue were also on the minds of other North European countries. Sir Francis Drake claimed California for Elizabeth 1 in 1579 and Sir Walter Raleigh established the Virginia Colony in 1585 in spite of the local inhabitants.

Colonies were not just for new settlers but also for new workers, which would increase the amount for trade and wealth for Europe. Most often African slaves were captured and used to work on new plantations and colonies. John Hawkins established the beginnings of the English slave trade in 1569.

Discovery

- 1492 Columbus sails to America
- 1562 Sir John Hawkins begins the Slave Trade of Africa.
- 1579 Sir Francis Drake circumnavigates the globe
- 1582 Sir Walter Raleigh starts planning and implementing his many expeditions to the Americas,
- 1600 British East India Trading Company
- 1600 November Leo the African published his book *Geographical history of Africa*
- 1607 Performance of Hamlet on 5th September, on the Dragon of the coast of Sierra Leone for African dignitaries.
- 1617 The Native American Indian Pocohontas attends King James 1's court.
- 1620 The Voyage of the Mayflower Americas Founding Fathers

Modern discovery

Nowadays people are interested in ideas of discovery and exploration of outer space. You can now even book holidays to outer space (www.virgingalactic.com) There have been countless film and TV programmes made in the last fifty years about space and time travel. Think about the films like *War of the Worlds* (2005), *Close Encounters of a Third Kind* (1977), *Planet of the Apes* (1968,2001), *Men In Black* (1997), *Independence Day* (1996) or TV programmes like *Star Trek* (1966 – present), *Stargate* (1998 – present) and *Farscape* (1999-2003). These all involve fantastical ideas of aliens and new worlds of discovery. The same ideas and questions may have been occurring when it came to creating *The Tempest*. One sci-fi film was even based *The Tempest* called *The Forbidden Planet* (1956) where Prospero was a scientist, Ariel a robot and Caliban was an evil spirit force.

Chat/Action Point

Think about what all these films have in common, they all involve different reactions to “the others” or aliens, people are scared, hostile, interested, abusive. Now think about The Tempest. What are the different characters reactions to the island? Imagine you have just landed in a strange place what sort of feelings or emotions would you have?

Occult/Magic

I say, by sorcery he got this isle. *Caliban 3.2 50*

These strange revelations from far off lands were also inspiring the imaginations and practices of scientists and astrologers. New discoveries were being made scientifically which were often dubbed as magical acts of heresy. Heretics and witches were often persecuted for going against religion. However some occult practices were endorsed like Dr John Dee Elizabeth I’s astrologer and theurgist, who became famous for cursing the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Magic and the occult were also themes that were occurring in plays by Christopher Marlowe (*Dr Faustus*) and Ben Jonson (*The Alchemist*). Shakespeare had already played with witches and fairies in *Macbeth* and *A Midsummers Night Dream*.

There were also issues of black and white magic. Black magic was generally seen as the pursuit of unnatural powers like raising the dead and had links with the devil, whilst white magic was based on the pursuit of knowledge and the wonders of the natural world.

Modern magic

Today science and magic are based on scientific study and though not punishable by the state, issues are still raised about the moral ramifications. Think about the recent experiments in cloning and the issues of cloning human beings or what about the use of animals to grow new ears for humans. What are the moral issues of scientist's magic and power?

Magic and illusion are also present today. Compare the illusionists/magicians Derren Brown or David Blaine. What do you think of their "magic" or is it a publicity stunt and mind control?

Shakespeare and sources

I long
To hear the story of your life, which must
Take the ear strangely. *Alonso 5.1 313*

There is no one main resource for the story of *The Tempest*. However there are traces from William Strachey's *True Reportry of the wracke, and redemption of Thomas Gates, Knight; upon and from the Ilands of the Bermudas; his coming to Virginia, and the estate of that Colonie then and after*, a pamphlet that was being circulated 1610 about a terrible storm that had wrecked the ship *Sea Venture* and marooned the travellers in Bermuda, were they survived for nearly a year before travelling onto Virginia. There are links to Michael Montaigne essay *Of the Cannibals*, which was published in 1605 to Shakespeare creation of the role Caliban. The essay recounts Montaigne's observations of the native Brazillians and their noble and savage qualities. Some of Shakespeare's poetry like "ye elves, brooks... speech in Act Five point to similar speeches in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* .

Characters/Roles

Prospero

Behold, sir King,
The wronged Duke of Milan, Prospero... *Prospero 5.1 107*

Played by Barrie Rutter, Prospero is the wronged duke of Milan. He shipwrecks the nobles onto the island by conjuring the Tempest. His purpose is to have revenge on Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian for supplanting him twelve years earlier. He has studied magic and has a magical garment, staff and book, which help him to control the natural elements and the inhabitants Ariel and Caliban. Whilst on the island he has tutored his daughter, Miranda who knows nothing of the treachery that displaced them. Nor that it was his own brother, Antonio, who with the help of Alonso took his dukedom from him.



Chat Action Point

*Can you find examples in the text that describe Prospero as a good father, a learned man, an angry wizard, a forgiving man, an evil oppressor?
Which do you think describes him best?*

Miranda

Admired Miranda!
Indeed the top of admiration, worth
What's dearest to the world! ... *Ferdinand 3.1 39*

Played by Sarah Cattle, Miranda is the daughter of Prospero. She has spent the last twelve years on the island with her Dad and Caliban. She has helped to teach Caliban until he tried to rape her. She is moved by the awesome spectacle of the storm and is then finally told the story that marooned her and Prospero on the Island. When Ferdinand is revealed she is awe struck and falls in love with him at first sight.

Alonso

...The King of Naples, being an enemy
To me inveterate.... *Prospero 2.1 121*

Played by Simeon Truby, Alonso is the King of Naples. He is also the benefactor of a large monetary tribute from Antonio, the false duke of Milan. Alonso has one brother, Sebastian, a son, Ferdinand and a daughter Claribel. At the start of the play he is journeying back to Naples after marrying his daughter to the King of Tunis. After the ship wreck he searches for Ferdinand whom he believes is dead.

Ferdinand

...This gallant which thou seest
was in the wreck, but he's something stained
With grief (that's beauty's canker) thou might'st call him
A goodly person *Prospero 1.2 414*

Played by Matt Connor, Ferdinand is Alonso's son. During the Tempest he is separated from the rest of the nobles. He believes that his father has died during the storm, which means he is now the King of Naples. He is drawn by Ariel's music to Prospero's cell. As soon as he sees Miranda he falls in love with her. Whereupon Prospero enslaves him with his magic to test his love for her.

Gonzalo

...O good Gonzalo,
My true preserver and a loyal sir... *Prospero 5.1 68*

Played by Tim Barker, Gonzalo is an old wise courtier and one of Alonso's nobles. In the plot that supplanted Prospero he gave Prospero the necessary equipment for him and his daughter to survive. After the shipwreck he is optimistic and encourages the nobles to look at the wonders of the island and be thankful for their survival. He muses about civilisation and what he would do if he had ownership of the island.

Ariel

All hail, great master grave sir, hail! I come
To answer thy best pleasure, be't to fly
To swim, to dive in the fire, to ride
On the curled clouds. To thy strong bidding, task
Ariel and all her quality *Ariel 1.2 189*

Played by Belinda Everett, Nicola Gardner and Simone Saunders, Ariel is an airy spirit capable of being invisible, and transforming into sea nymphs and harpies. Ariel is generally invisible unless Prospero wills others to see her in different guises. Originally enslaved by Sycorax, Caliban's mother, Ariel was imprisoned in a tree for twelve years. Prospero on arriving on the island released Ariel under the proviso that she serves him for a period of time and then he will release her.



Stephano

Is not this Stephano, my drunken butler? *Alonso 5.1 277*

Played by Simon Holland Roberts, Stephano is one of the King's butlers or manservants. After the shipwreck he comes ashore and finds himself alone with the whole alcohol supply of the ship. He starts drinking and finds Trinculo, his fellow manservant and friend and Caliban, an islander. He believes that they are the only ones who have survived and therefore he can claim sovereignty of the island. He is entreated by Caliban to take ownership of the Island from Prospero.

Trinculo

Swum ashore, man, like a duck. I can swim like a duck, I'll be sworn *Trinculo 2.2 125*

Played by Conrad Nelson. Trinculo is another of the Kings manservants. He comes ashore and discovers Caliban. He muses that he could make Caliban into a tourist attraction and make quite a lot of money. He is frightened by the lightning and decides to hide under Caliban's gabardine for shelter when Stephano discovers him. After rejoining Stephano, he rebukes Caliban and his stupidity and naivety but goes along with the plot to kill Prospero.

Caliban

...We'll visit Caliban my slave, who never
Yield us kind answer. *Prospero 1.2 308*

Played by Michael Hugo, Caliban is one of the islanders. His mother Sycorax was marooned on the island where she gave birth to Caliban and afterwards died. Caliban ruled the island until the arrival of Prospero. Prospero taught Caliban language and in return Caliban revealed to Prospero all the beauties and creatures of the island. He lived with Prospero and Miranda until he decided to populate the island and rape Miranda. Prospero then enslaved Caliban and punished him by plaguing him with spirits and cramps. After meeting some of the new arrivals on the island and drinking their alcohol, Caliban decides to change masters. He persuades Stephano, whom he believes is a God to kill Prospero and marry Miranda.



Chat Action Point

*Can you find examples of Caliban as a victim or a monster? What do think of the various characters treatment of Caliban? Is Caliban a savage?
Imagine you are an actor about to play Caliban, how would you show his nature verbally, physically and his relationship to the other characters?*

Sebastian

My lord Sebastian

The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness, ... *Gonzalo 2.1 137*

Played by Phil Corbitt. Sebastian is Alonso's brother. After the ship wreck he searches with the rest of the nobles for Ferdinand whom everyone believes is dead. Whilst the nobles sleep Antonio suggests that Sebastian should kill Alonso and become the King of Naples. Sebastian agrees and they plot to kill the remaining nobles and then return home.

Antonio

My brother and thy uncle, called Antonio -

I pray thee mark me, that a brother should

Be so perfidious... *Prospero 1.2 66*



Played by Mark Stratton. Antonio is Prospero's brother and the current Duke of Milan. He decided to unseat

his brother after he was given the responsibility of looking after Prospero's estate whilst Prospero studied in his library. He made an arrangement with the King of Naples, with promises of monetary donations to usurp Prospero. After the shipwreck he plots with Sebastian to supplant Alonso in exchange for being released from his monetary tribute.

Adrian

Which, of he or Adrian, for a good wager, first begins to crow? *Antonio 2.1 30*

Played by Peter Toon. Adrian is another noble in the King's party. He provides much needed consolation for Alonso. He discusses the recent wedding they attended in Tunis and the beauty of Claribel. He encourages the king to think positively that his son may live.

Themes

Revenge/forgiveness

By accident most strange, bountiful fortune
Now my dear lady hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star *Prospero 1. 2 178*



Revenge is one of the key issues in *The Tempest*; the whole plot revolves around

Prospero's intent to have retribution on those who stole his dukedom twelve years before. The storm, the isolation and confusion of the Nobles, Alonso's loss of his son, and the encounter with the harpy are all elements of Prospero's revenge.

However, in Act Five the action of play changes from ideas of revenge to forgiveness. Ultimately, Prospero forgives the penitent and the unrepentant equally, even his usurping brother Antonio and his mutinous slave Caliban.

...Your charm so strongly works 'em
That, if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender...
...Mine would sir, were I human. *Ariel 5. 1 17*

Prospero decides to forgive after Ariel's assertion in Act V Scene 1 that she would forgive if she were human. The idea that a spirit, inhuman can forgive provides a catalyst for Prospero to forgive his enemies, renounce his magic powers and return to civilisation.

There are other contributing factors, which lead him to forgive: Gonzalo's emotional response and Miranda and Ferdinand's true love.

Chat Action Point

Do you think Prospero should forgive?

What happens to the dynamic of the play when Prospero decides to forgive?

What do you think would have happened if Prospero decided not to forgive?

Power / Responsibility

...And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies... *Prospero 1.2 72*

The play asks questions about the pursuit of power and its usage. Prospero because he was seeking power and knowledge in his library neglected the responsibility of his dukedom and was supplanted by his brother. Through his magic and his spirits he learns to forgive and renounce his powers to realise his responsibilities. In Act Five he compares the power of his art to the responsibility of the world and resolves to return to Milan.

Wonder and Revelation

O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beautous mankind is! ... *Miranda 5.1 182*

The play revolves around the ideas of wonder and revelation. Throughout the play there are various spectacles: the storm, the wedding masque and the harpy. There are new discoveries and marvels: Ferdinand and Miranda discover each other and Caliban discovers alcohol. There are also personal revelations that inspire different behaviour, for example Alonso's repentance after the confrontation with the Harpy.

The last act of the play is full of amazement and awe, the different groups that were lost reassemble and rediscover their lost ship that has been restored to better than new. Even Prospero's change from revenge to forgiveness is a revelation.

Chat Action Point

Pick a scene and decide how you would stage it to maximise the elements of surprise and wonder. Think about where you would set the scene? Would you use the set to surprise the audience or would you concentrate on surprising the characters onstage? Where you would place actors on stage? Would you use any additional lighting or special effects? Would you use music or sound effects?

Colonial

If I had plantation of this isle my lord ...
And were the king on't, what would I do? *Gonzalo, 2.1 144*

The play is riddled with ideas about colonisation and government, which relates to the ideas of power and responsibility. All the shipwrecked characters of the island talk about taking control of the island or exploiting its properties or inhabitants. Stephano employs Caliban to be his servant and decides to kill Prospero and become ruler of the Island. Even Prospero who has taken over the island, twelve years earlier, raises issues about ownership, in particular with his two slaves/servants Ariel and Caliban. Ariel, he liberated but still keeps in service. Caliban and Prospero have a different relationship. Prospero adopted Caliban and taught him language. However Prospero enslaved him when he tried to rape Miranda and punished him. The relationship changes when Prospero acknowledges Caliban as his responsibility.

Chat Action Point

Who do you think should own the island? Caliban, Ariel, Prospero or Stephano? Can you imagine what would happen if Stephano ruled the island? Stage a short improvisation where the Stephano plot succeeded and see what happens?

Civilisation /nature

If in Naples
I should report this now, would they believe me?
If I should say I saw such islanders...
Who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet note
Their manners are more gentle, kind, than of
Our human generation you shall find
Many – nay, almost any. *Gonzalo 3.3 27*

Questions about civilisation and nature are raised in *The Tempest*. Initially there is an island inhabited by spirits and strange creatures. Then Prospero arrives from the civilised but cruel world of Milan. He manages to tame Caliban, the supposed ruler, and educate him in behaviour from the civilised world. However the teaching cannot alter him and he reverts to his savage tendencies.

After the Tempest more civilised people arrive from Milan. Alonso, the King of Naples, his son Ferdinand, his lords, Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, his butlers Stephano and Trinculo and the boatswain and mariners.

The play demonstrates the different dynamic between the “civilised” and the “natural” world. The diverse attitudes and behaviour of the inhabitants and the visitors raises issues of what is civilised and what is savage. The islanders adore their island and seek for ways to free themselves from their servitude, whereas the visitors find themselves at odds with the island and its spirits. The visitors are shown continually in pursuit of power and ownership. This is shown in the plots of both Antonio and Sebastian and the plot of Stephano and Trinculo. Throughout the play characters make suggestions of taking advantage of the island and islanders to make a profit.

The “civilised” characters are shown to be treacherous and revengeful whereas the islanders advocate ideas of redemption and forgiveness.

Chat Action Point

Who do you think is more civilised: the islanders, Ariel and Caliban or the nobles, Alonso and Gonzalo. If you had to write an order of civilised to savage, who would be at the top, the islanders or the nobles? Where would Prospero and Miranda fit in? Where would Stephano and Trinculo?

Marriage

Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,
Long continuance and increasing, ...*Juno 4.1 106*

There are a number of references to marriage throughout the play. The first reference is of Alonso's daughter, Claribel's, marriage in Tunis. The marriage is an example of the political one. A political marriage is when the marriage is arranged to unite two families or in this case two kingdoms. The next example is the marriage of Miranda to Ferdinand. Marriage in the play is focused on innocence and true love. Miranda and Ferdinand's love is based on innocence and chastity rather than physical expression. Prospero entreats Ferdinand when he give Miranda to him to celebrate their betrothal in a holy fashion rather than lustfully.

The wedding masque blesses the restrained and pious aspects of love. Their final entrance is playing chess that hints at a restrained relationship rather than a physically amorous one.



Shakespeare and Prospero

Be cheerful, sir.
Our revels now are ended. *Prospero 4.1 146*

There are assertions that The Tempest is biographical and that the character of Prospero is Shakespeare. The epilogue at the end of the play is often argued as Shakespeare saying goodbye to his art and his theatre. In many ways there are allusions to ideas of the stage and stage illusion. In his speech to the lovers he also alludes to the "Great Globe" itself, which is generally assumed to be the Globe Theatre in London. In many ways Prospero is also the director of the other characters and the action of the play. In that argument Ariel could be seen as Prospero's stage manager who manipulates all the characters into place.

Interview with Barrie Rutter

Barrie Rutter is the artistic director of Northern Broadsides and is playing Prospero. Prior to rehearsals I was able to talk to him about directing, acting and his ideas on the Tempest.

On the design

I just fancy it [the island] as this sort of yellow wash. The first song in it [the play] is, "Come unto these yellow sands," which immediately says, ok if we [the island inhabitants] are burnt yellow earth colours, what are the courtiers? What colour are they to stand out, to be different? If we're all in yellow [the whole company] it's too yellow, so they're [the courtiers] going to be in burgundy or a green or a bright blue. Except blue sort of belongs to the sea, so you keep the blue and the ultra marine for the nymphs. It's a palette as well as anything else. But it is definitely not Bermuda. It's definitely not a known island. I'm just going to just have a circle and there's going to be a circle around that, and then maybe another circle around that. So that you have a non-real path that you can put a chess match in for instance

On the ideas behind the play

The whole thing is a sense of wonder, which is why I want to show them [the courtiers] singing a shanty at the beginning. They're coming back after the wedding feast and they can be like open collared [relaxed]. Yet when we see them on the island all their clothes are described as being better than ever so they can be formally done up. Those little clues like that and everything's a sense of wonder. Miranda's never seen anything so gorgeous as Ferdinand. The only man she's ever seen is Caliban therefore she thinks all men are like Caliban or like her Dad.

On the role of Prospero

He's revengeful, he's angry, really angry and it [the play] really turns on that. There is a delight obviously in seeing his daughter fall in love but he doesn't let it go too fast [the trials that he enforces on Ferdinand]. But then it's Ariel, the spirit, the non-human that says, "I would if I were you." [Act Five] I think it smacks him across the face. He says "yeah, you're right" and from then on he forgives. He throws away his magic book after that. That's the crucial bit.

On the music

The blues is an absolute Black American African creation, which then went into jazz, which came from West Africa. It's just a political nod really; I don't want it to be heavy. Also I like the blues I got a load of blues. I just like to see what we can do with it.

Performing the Tempest

The Design

Lis Evans' design creates the world of the Tempest using a colour scheme, which has been inspired by the text "Come Unto these Yellow Sands". The design has to consider a number of elements that will create the magical island and the raging tempest.

The set has several features that can serve multiple functions; part of the rostra extends and pulls out to be a bowsprit, the mast is used to signify the ship, and to provide different levels that can be used during the action by the actors.



The design also incorporates light and sound into the set. Lighting boxes have been integrated into the rostra so that light will come out of the stage at certain points of the action. Metal sections have also been added onto the surface of the rostra that are used by the actors to add to the music of the production.

The set has been designed to work in a number of different venues throughout the tour and can work in part or in total. There is the rostrum, hanging pieces, a floor cloth and pieces of island.

The Music

The Tempest is one of Shakespeare's most musical productions. Music is so integral to the action and the portrayal of magic.. Throughout rehearsals composer/actor/director Conrad Nelson worked with the actors to create a score that brings this magical world alive.

The music of the island reflects the world of the islanders and Conrad has composed a score that pays homage to the music of blues, soul, jazz and blue grass.

Music features heavily in the storm sequence of the play. Conrad wanted to incorporate the music and the storm into the dialogue of the scene instead of having the actors shout against sound effects. The scene has been carefully rehearsed to have a number of different elements such as Ariel's magic, the mariners' song, the nobles' sea shanty and Prospero's control of the storm.

Different types of instruments and styles of music have been used to symbolise the magic in the play. Music is used to create magical effects like putting certain characters to sleep or to symbolise Ariel's and Prospero's power.



Interview with Lis Evans

The process

The way I work I'm always on the next production while the other departments are working on the current one. For example I'm working on *The Jamaican Inn* whilst they are working on *The Tempest*. I always need to be one step ahead of the team. I've been working like this for so long. I rarely change the design during the process unless things change through rehearsals. I keep in close contact with the director in the rehearsal room. There are slight alterations like originally for the harpy was designed with

the idea with the girls to carry one of them on their shoulders but that's not going to work practically. So the design will work with the girls' just on one level and two wearing one wing and one wearing two wings.

On working on the *Tempest*

The design is inspired by the colours and textures of the island, which come from the text "come unto these yellow sands". So the rostra is going to be that very sandy worn and distressed look, the islanders like Ariel will work with layering on a base of natural earth colours which then we add blue layered garments for the sea nymphs. For the wedding masque we're moving away from the idea of harvest festival idea and towards a more exotic or voodoo quality in the costume.

Working on tour

As the production is touring to several different configurations of theatre, the design was quite a challenge. It will be performed in the round, in traverse and in proscenium. The whole part of the design is creating a kit that can be used in the different spaces. Here we can have everything, the floor cloth, the rostra and the hanging materials but the hanging pieces won't be as prominent here but in proscenium venues they will visually frame the back. The different parts of the sets can be used in different venues like the floor cloth was designed to most venues but in Richmond it might just be the rostra. I'm sure that the different elements will be used in different spaces rather than ending up in the back of the van.

On working on Vacuum and the Tempest [*Lis had designed a new writing piece called Vacuum for Northern Broadsides in Autumn 2006*]

It was very different working on Vacuum because it was an entirely different piece of writing. The design was all about creating Mr Ashburner's world and I had worked very closely with both Debbie and Conrad early on the ideas of this world and all the things in it. It was a very cluttered and specific world filled with things.

On working from The Viaduct and The New Vic [The Viaduct is Northern Broadside home theatre and where Vacuum was produced]

Working at the Viaduct was quite a shock because I haven't worked like that in years. I'm used to going to rehearsal with a list of things, taking notes during the rehearsal and then going to the different departments like props and costumes with the notes. But on Vacuum I went to rehearsal with the list and notes but there was no one to hand notes to so we all had to muck in. I still enjoy scene painting and prop making, so this was not a problem.

On getting into designing

I studied art and literature at school and have always enjoyed the theatre. Whilst at my foundation course in Cardiff Art College, I enjoyed so many different aspects of art and design. I chose to do a degree in theatre design at what was then Trent Polytechnic in Nottingham as it incorporated so many different areas. Theatre design involves a number of different elements such as literature, research, graphic design and illustration, painting and 3D design as well as working closely with a team of people. I really enjoyed the way that the course worked from project to project. It's like that working in theatre you work on a project and then the next one. I also really liked the social aspect of working with different people. I couldn't be one of those people who sit alone in a garret looking for inspiration and then painting for hours on end.

Advice on designing

I'm very lucky; I think I'm the only resident designer [at the New Vic Theatre up Newcastle Under Lyme] left in the country, which means I get to have both a home life and a working life. I design a number of productions every year, but being based in one theatre, I am able to plan in advance and juggle different aspects of my life. Other designers nowadays have to work freelance, which means you're up and down the country. I also teach locally and that's one of the elements I really like. A lot of designers end up teaching or lecturing to subsidise their income.

Interview with Conrad Nelson

Conrad has composed original music for every Northern Broadsides production to date. Prior to rehearsals I was able to talk to him about composing and the *Tempest*.

On composing for theatre

Well music's got to fit the dramatic brief. It has to move the nature of the story line along. Hopefully it will be able to stand up on its own as a song or a piece of music but ultimately its got to have its life most importantly within the confines of the theatre, that's where it lives. It's a bonus if it can stand up on its own then it does two jobs then it becomes memorable in its own right and memorable in the context of the play. You need to read to the play and check out what you think the song is doing in the play.

On composing Shakespeare

The same thing. I mean you come to a song in a piece of Shakespeare and you think Aw God it's a song. But it is exactly the same thing. There's nothing wrong with the song being just entertainment, it can just be a time out, why not? Again have a look at the script it's the same thing. Obviously a lot of the music are song lyrics and they're written in verse, they are poetry in themselves. You just have to check out what you think the song is serving within the context of the play. Contemporary or Shakespeare it's all the same it just happens to be written in a funny way.

On The Tempest

In terms of *The Tempest*, there are quite a few songs and lots of incidentals, it is trying to find a world for this music. Barrie and I have been talking about that contemporary Blues nature that "Black thing". I've written a couple of the songs the "Come unto these yellow Sands" one and one after that "Full Fathom Five". Often you can hear those songs being quite atonal or mysterious. But I've tried to make them into songs so they have a life of their own.



On using the Blues and Jazz

Well the yellow sand one is based a bit on *Strange Fruit* by Billie Holiday, the essence of it is that sort of jazz, and a little bit of blues. I quite like the lyrics for that song [Come unto these yellow sands]. The song after it is the reflection of Ferdinand about his drowned father, that's going to be a gospel spiritual. I'm trying to keep that sort of motif throughout.

Often when you've written a few songs it gets sort of a thematic style and suddenly, you think to yourself, that works with that. Once you're thinking about the play you get happy accidents because you're thinking that way. Suddenly you can put two tunes together and they'll work together without planning. It's great when that happens. And that's often a very strange the mix of instruments,[in Northern Broadsides the actors play the instruments] the mix of what you've got. What gives it that sense of place? So it will have that essence of spiritual or gospel to give it something that's atonal and mysterious because what is otherworldly? If you get a song then at least you have something to grab onto and there might be something comic in that and there might be something funny. But at least it will have an identity in itself and those points will be useful to the shaping of the play. Often what [the productions] we do the style, the place, is made by the sounds and not by the dialogue. In *Comedy of Errors* until we started to put a little bit of music at the beginning, it didn't have anything. You give it an identity. I have a sort of free reign on that sort of thing and because I come at it from the point of view as an actor who writes the music for a play as opposed to somebody who has no connection to the play apart from writing some songs.

On Northern Broadsides acoustic style

With the acoustic you only need to look at a company called like Knee High you have musicians who can play stuff but they're all mic ed up. So anything you want to get from an instrument, a strange sound, put a mic on it and do some harmonics on it into the auditorium and you're on to a winner, on your own. You can't do that acoustically it is a much more difficult job. When you're not given that and you change from venue to venue, something could sound really good in a back room and then it goes out [on tour to different spaces] and it's like rubbish it's got no depth. I mean somehow we find our way around it but it doesn't half constrain it.

We always have to see what we get on the first day. Everyone has a voice, so if all else fails we can cut to a vocal. I did want to get away from people just playing instruments, people coming on playing and going off. It's not very interesting it is lovely but not very interesting. I've talked to Lis about it and sort of helped with the design.

Rehearsing the Tempest

Extracts from rehearsal diary.

Day 1 Barrie assembles the cast

Barrie Rutter with the aid of Katie, the DSM, gets everyone into the Stephen Joseph Studio, which will be where the actors will rehearse for the next three weeks. The room is large, spacious with the New Vic stage area marked on the floor in black floor cloth. Someone has already marked the different levels of the rostra in different coloured tape on the floor. Everyone assembles in a large square so that everyone can see and hear each other through the read through and meeting. Lis, the designer enters and brings the model box into the centre of the space so that everyone can see the lay out of the design. The model box resembles the New Vic theatre and has the rostra and some models of the actors in their costume.....

Read through of the play

....After some announcements and house keeping notices the read through of the play begins. This is the first time everyone has read through the play together. Barrie gives some instruction for actors who are playing more than one role. Half way through the play there is a short interval where everyone has the chance to get a cup of tea, which is shortly followed by the rest of the play. The first read through is roughly over two hours. After the read through there is a birthday surprise. Tony, the tech manager is surprised to have the entire cast sing happy birthday to him and present him with a card....

Day 2 Music and Morning Rehearsals

....The call usually starts at 10am but Katie, the DSM, will start earlier to set up the space for rehearsals. The rehearsals start with Conrad working with some of the cast on the music whilst Barrie rehearses in another space with Ariel on the allotment of the lines. During the music rehearsals Conrad works on "There were three drunken maidens" the sea shanty that the nobles will sing before the storm. Afterwards they revisit the sailors' work song. He also works with the various actor musicians on the accompanying music. The music rehearsal progresses quickly and then moves on to different songs and instrumental accompaniments. Meanwhile Barrie finishes with the girls and starts working on his first scene with Sarah Cattle, who is playing Miranda, his daughter in the play. The girls playing Ariel go over their allotted lines....

Rehearsal Photos

...During the morning, Nobby Clark, the photographer arrives to take the “team smudge” picture and some rehearsal photos. Nobby Clark has taken all the production shots of Northern Broadsides work for the last fifteen years. During rehearsals he visits the company twice, once to take rehearsal shots and the “team smudge” shot and second to take production pictures of the company in action. The “team smudge” picture appears in the Northern Broadsides programme. Barrie prefers to have an up to date photo of the company rather than out of date headshots. The rehearsal photos will also appear in the programme...

Day 3 Insights from Barrie

...Barrie works through his first scene with Ariel. He gives notes about performances and offers insights to the clues in the text, about speaking the speech with “**piston energy**.” When Shakespearean speeches carry speed, anger or the height of emotion the words become monosyllabic. These insights both come from an actor and a director who has been performing Shakespeare for over forty years. After roughly blocking the scene he goes through the scene with the actors sat down working on the “**textual dexterity**”. These sessions do not revolve around idea of discussion but focus solely on what’s in the text, the delivery of the verse and the clarity of the story....

Day 4 New Instruments

... Ariel joins Conrad to work on another song using different instruments. Ariel roughly has eight different songs throughout the play and numerous musical accompaniments. This song occurs in Act Two and wakes Gonzalo from his magical sleep. Initially he introduces all three actresses to the hang drum, which literally means hand drum. This instrument resembles two kitchen woks soldered together with symmetrical dents. Firstly he explains that the instruments are rarely made nowadays and that they are self-tuning. He shows them how to play it, by using their thumbs and letting the strike resonate. The sound is similar to Jamaican steel drums. He then shows them the tune, which all three try out. He then introduces them to the Vibes or Vibraphone. This instrument resembles a glockenspiel only is much larger. He shows Nicola a simple tune, which she plays. He then asks Belinda to continue on the hang drum whilst Simone sings the song. This song again has a completely different style to the four previous that he has introduced. They practice the songs and play with different octaves and rhythms until the song and the accompaniment work. Conrad steadily teaches all the cast different elements of the music and songs, which enable them to learn bit by bit. During the work on Come Unto These Yellow Sands, Phil, Simeon, Simon and Peter join with their instruments on the accompaniment.

Day 5 Whole company on stage

...The rest of the company are walked through the scene and try out Barrie's suggestions of cramped physical states whilst under Prospero's magic. He constantly reminds them to "move in oil" rather than act naturalistically. He also gives them notes to beware tendency to "**fall down stairs**" with their emphasis on the verse. The stairs note is to beware of bringing the phrase down at the end. He and Conrad look at the stage managerial issues of how to get the nobles, whom will be playing instrumental accompaniment to the next song, to their instruments. Other stage managerial and practical issues are raised, for example there is a costume change mentioned in the dialogue but it detracts from the narrative and the dynamic of the story. They discuss the problems and suggest possible solutions that involve additional members of crew, holding instruments under costumes and repositioning the actors. However there are no easy or quick solutions. They work through to the end of the scene and the play where Prospero asks his release of the islanders.

2nd week Open Rehearsal – Friends

...The Friends of Northern Broadsides, the Friends of the New Vic Theatre and the adult education group, Revolve, join the cast of *The Tempest* in the New Vic Theatre. The Friends of Northern Broadsides are invited to open rehearsals for every production. Barrie welcomes them to the rehearsal and explains that they are still at a fairly early stage of rehearsal but they will work through the opening of the play to the end of Act One. He introduces his ideas of the play, that it is a magical island not based on a specific place. He introduces the ideas that the opening will start before the storm with an air of celebration. The company assemble on stage and try out the staging and the blocking of the scene and work out what musical requirements there are. The rehearsals progress to examine Act One, Scene Two, the introduction of Miranda, Ariel and Caliban. Throughout, Barrie give notes on blocking and performance. They work through the scene including Ariel's songs with the cast who are accompanying either on instruments or vocally. Having the friends watch an open rehearsal often gives the company clues about how certain parts of the performance will be received. After working through the scene Barrie thanks the Friends for coming and excuses himself and the company. After the open rehearsal, other rehearsals resume, the company splits and works on various elements of the production separately, whether it is running lines, running scenes, rehearsing the music or practicing on the instruments...



Insights from the cast

Tim Barker on approaching characters

Well, the way Northern Broadsides and Barrie tend to work is from the verse and see how the verse informs the character rather than imposing an idea or a concept on to the character. That's why when people come to see Broadsides work, they tell you that it is the first Shakespeare play they have seen that they've understood clearly...

Sarah Cattle Shakespeare in a Northern Accent

When I sat down and started to read the lines in my own accent I struggled to do it, my brain just automatically switches onto a different kind of voice. So actually getting myself to do it in my own accent I don't know how to describe it, it felt quite funny, it kept making me laugh how it sounded. Because you've got a concept in your head of what Shakespeare should sound like and it completely breaks through that. I find that it's very easy to connect with the language, it's much more alive for me when I'm saying it in my own accent, which is a surprise, it's quite nice to realise that it doesn't need to be different

Phil Corbitt on working with Barrie Rutter

All directors have different methods they will use to get different things out of actors. They employ little tricks to try to get people to do stuff. One thing I like about Barrie is, he is who he is and he doesn't bother with tricks and he just says what he thinks. Sometimes he's very abrupt and people can say "what is he on about" but he knows what he wants. If he feels as if he is in the wrong and if you challenge him and say "well no I don't think that's the case" he will if he thinks you've got a point, he'll take that point on board. It's his company and over the last fifteen or sixteen years and he's developed a style.

Matt Connor on working for Northern Broadsides

Well it's quite unlike any company I've ever worked for before. I mean in terms of some of the other actors in *The Tempest* I haven't really had that much experience. So I'm quite pleased I'm having this experience quite early on. They're a great company and Barrie always tends to have good people around him. When you're having fun in rehearsals and when you enjoy working with people around you it shows on stage and from what I've heard of Northern Broadsides and by what I've seen from working with them there always seems to be quite a lot of fun going on and everybody enjoys everyone else's company. It shows in the final product.

Michael Hugo on the music

To have a good feel of what he [Conrad] wants the background sound to be like, pushes right inside that world of what the island is like and the people who are native to it compared to the new people and the music that they bring to it. It's great working out those two different worlds and where they both meet for the magic and the mystique of it all.

Simeon Truby on advice for young actors

Enjoy it. With the kids with the school [Simeon and his wife, Helen Kay, run a theatre school called Urban Stage], the main thing we do is all about confidence, all about self-confidence and being aware of listening and talking and being creative. I think it's great if you can do Youth Theatre. Get the experience of performing. Personally I don't believe you learn anything unless you're on your feet doing it, performing basically and putting in practice what you're learning. So practicing and performing. Just doing it and enjoying it.

Shakespearean Language

Blank verse is simply verse that doesn't necessarily rhyme. Iambic pentameter is a form of verse that was instantly recognisable to the Elizabethans and used by most dramatists of the day.

Iambic - from iambus: a rhythmic foot of stressed and unstressed syllables, de-dum.

Pentameter - from the Greek for five (Pentagon, pentangle) tells us how many feet are in each line.

De-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-dum. Each line consists of ten syllables, alternatively stressed and unstressed.

“If **by** your **art** my **noble father** you **have**
put **the wild waters** in **this** roar, **allay them.**”

Shakespeare used iambic pentameter and blank verse to convey characters. Noble characters and romantic characters use the flowing rhythms of iambic pentameter whereas commoners blank verse. The closest thing we have to iambic pentameter today are limericks.

For example

There was a young man named Paul
Whom went to a fancy dressed ball
He thought that he'd risk it
And go as a biscuit
But got ate by a dog in the hall.

Northern Broadside speakers speak with northern accents. The hard granite consonants and short vowels of the northern voice are perfect for the rhythm and pulses of iambic pentameter. They also focus on the nouns rather than the verbs or adjectives, the words that tell the story rather than describe it.

... What have we here? a man or a fish? dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell; a kind of not of the newest Poor-John. A strange fish! Were I in England now, as once I was, and had but this fish painted, not a holiday fool there but would give a piece of silver: there would this monster make a man; any strange beast there makes a man: when they will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, they will lazy out ten to see a dead Indian. Legged like a man and his fins like arms! Warm o' my troth! I do now let loose my opinion; hold it no longer: this is no fish, but an islander, that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt... *Trinculo* 2.2 24

and

Where should this music be? i' the air or the earth?

It sounds no more: and sure, it waits upon
Some god o' the island. Sitting on a bank,
Weeping again the king my father's wreck,
This music crept by me upon the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion
With its sweet air: thence I have follow'd it,
Or it hath drawn me rather. But 'tis gone.
No, it begins again. *Ferdinand* 1.2 388

Speaking Shakespeare

Chat/Action Point

Try reading each speech out loud.

Do you prefer one or the other, now try reading out the speeches fast and slow, loud and soft and with and without accent.

Which combination works better for each speech? Are the words monosyllabic? Examine how the language effects how the speeches are spoken.

Now try speaking the speeches fast and quiet, fast and loud, slow and quiet or slow and loud. Which do you think suits the dialogue better?

Terminology

Iambic Pentameter The overwhelming majority of Shakespeare's verse is in so-called blank verse or "iambic pentameter." In this metrical scheme, each line breaks down into five pairs of syllables, with the stress on the second (de dum, de dum, de dum, de dum, de dum). The blank refers to the fact that lines are not rhymed. Shakespeare often experimented with the rules see Hamlet's "To be or not to be that is the question"

Folio A large-format book, usually prestigious and expensive, for which each sheet of printer's paper was folded in half to make two leaves (folium is Latin for "leaf"), or four pages.

Quarto a medium-sized book format, half the size of a Folio, in which each sheet of paper was folded twice to make four leaves (hence the name) or eight pages. When Shakespeare's works were printed during his lifetime, the portable quarto format was nearly always the one chosen.

Simile While resembling metaphor in its transfer of the meaning of one word to another, simile keeps the distinction between them at greater distance, often with the formula "like" or "as", which can then be followed by "so".

Metaphor Literally "transference" in Greek, a metaphor is a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another, usually by way of comparison.

Tragicomedy A drama that combines elements of tragedy and comedy.

Theurgist – noun. Wonder worker or magician

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Further Reading

There are various resources available on *The Tempest*. There have a number of films produced with various interpretations such as Derek Jarman *Tempest* 1979 or Peter Greenways *Prospero's Books* 1991. There have been numerous criticisms and discussions of the play by Samuel Coleridge, Robert, W.H Auden and Jan Kott.

Credits

Designs by Lis Evans

Photos by Nobby Clark

Synopsis and Northern Broadsides biography by Lisa Baxter

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