

# South Coast Repertory

## PLAYGOER'S GUIDE



Prepared by Assistant Literary Director Andy Knight

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William Hogarth's 18th century painting, in which Ferdinand courts Miranda while Prospero, Ariel and Caliban look on.

## Part I: THE PLAY

### Characters

Prospero, the right Duke of Milan

Miranda, daughter to Prospero

Ariel, an airy spirit

Caliban, a savage

Alonso, King of Naples

Ferdinand, son to the King of Naples

Gonzala, an honest old counselor

Antonio, Prospero's brother and the usurping Duke of Milan

Sebastian, brother to Alonso

Stephano, a drunken butler

Trinculo, a jester

Master

Mariner

Boatswain

Minions, singers and musicians

# Synopsis

This imaginative adaptation of Shakespeare's classic sets the play in a world evocative of a traveling tent show of the 1930s—and comes to life with the magic of Teller—well-known as the silent partner in the Penn & Teller duo—the haunting ballads of Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan and the singular choreography of the Pilobolus dance company.

*The Tempest* begins with a raging storm that capsizes the ship of Alonso, King of Naples, on the royal party's return from the marriage of Alonso's daughter to the King of Tunis. The storm separates the ship's passengers and they wash up on the shore of a mysterious island, confused yet unharmed.

This tempest is not a mere act of nature, but instead a bit of sorcery at the hand of Prospero, who lives on the island with his young daughter, Miranda. Horrified by the wreckage, Miranda asks her father why he would cast such a spell and Prospero tells her the story of betrayal that brought father and daughter to the deserted island. Prospero was once Duke of Milan, but his brother, Antonio, grew jealous of Prospero's power and teamed up with Alonso to overthrow him. Not wanting to murder Prospero, Antonio and Alonso threw the duke and the infant Miranda into a rundown boat and pushed them out to sea. Luck, along with some supplies given to them by a kind noblewoman named Gonzala, sustained father and daughter until they washed up on the island. Now, after 12 long years, fate has given Prospero the perfect opportunity to seek his revenge: the ship carrying all of his enemies—including the treacherous Antonio, now Duke of Milan.

Ariel is an island spirit indebted to Prospero and helped capsize the ship. Prospero asks Ariel to next use his powers of invisibility in order to manipulate the ship's stranded passengers. In exchange for Ariel's service, Prospero promises to set the spirit free after the revenge plot is complete. Ariel's first task is to lure Ferdinand, Alonso's son, to Miranda. Ariel does this and Miranda and Ferdinand fall in love at first sight.

On another part of the island, Alonso, Antonio, Gonzala and Alonso's brother, Sebastian, search for the missing Ferdinand. Alonso is distraught over losing his son, but Sebastian and Antonio see Ferdinand's absence as an opportunity to gain power. If Ferdinand is dead,

Alonso's throne would likely fall to Sebastian, since the king's daughter is so far away. Sebastian and Antonio make a plan to murder Alonso.

On yet another part of the island, another murder plot takes shape. Caliban, Prospero's slave, enlists Stephano and Trinculo—both passengers from the capsized ship—to help him murder Prospero in exchange for rule of the island. But the conniving threesome is never quite sober enough to put the plot into action and proves easy prey to Prospero and Ariel's tricks.

After Ferdinand proves his loyalty to Miranda through hard labor, Prospero allows the lovers to marry.



Nate Dendy (Ariel), Tom Nelis (Prospero), Charlotte Graham (Miranda). Photo: The Smith Center/Geri Kodey.

The wedding ends abruptly, however, when Prospero decides to deal with Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo once and for all. In a final trick, Prospero has Ariel tempt the drunkards with fine clothes and then conjure up wolves to chase them away.

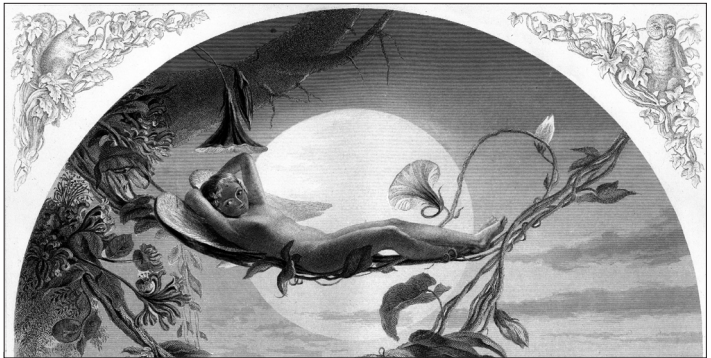
Prospero finally decides to make amends with those who betrayed him after realizing the depth of Alonso's despair over the loss of his son. He reunites Alonso (who begs for Prospero's forgiveness for his corrupt deeds) with Ferdinand, thanks Gonzala for her kindness and even forgives Caliban—but remains cold to Sebastian and Antonio, who show little repentance. Prospero then agrees to retire to Milan, where he can see his daughter officially married to Ferdinand and lead a peaceful life with no more magic. Prospero keeps his promise and frees Ariel and then, in an epilogue, appeals to the audience to forgive his own trickery by applauding.

# The Tempest's Origins and Lasting Popularity

Many scholars consider *The Tempest* to be the last full-length play that Shakespeare wrote alone. It debuted in 1611 and was first printed in 1623's First Folio, which is the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays. *The Tempest's* inspiration—unlike many of Shakespeare's other plays, with origins in history or well-known folklore—is unknown. Some speculate that Shakespeare, who wrote the play just before he left the bustle of London for a quieter life in Stratford, was reflecting on his own life as an artist: Prospero retires from magic at the play's conclusion, just as Shakespeare planned to write only occasionally after moving to the countryside. Others cite the play's genesis in ancient tales with similar plot elements, but there's simply not enough proof to point to one definitive source.

Another theory—and, due to the changing Western world of the early 17th century, perhaps a more verifiable one—proffers that the New World inspired *The Tempest* or, more specifically, its setting. The English Colony of Virginia was still very new, and in 1609 Sir George Somers' ill-fated mission to bring supplies to the colonists in Jamestown ended in a shipwreck on what's now Bermuda—which ultimately led to the islands' colonization. It's likely that Shakespeare would have heard wild tales of both the wreck and the enchanted island while writing *The Tempest*.

No matter where Shakespeare found the play's inspiration—and perhaps the mystery makes it all the more



An illustration of Ariel from an 1873 edition of *The Works of Shakespeare*.

alluring—*The Tempest's* setting is a bewitching, unpredictable world for the playwright to thrust together his cast of humans and island spirits. The enigmatic location also heightens the play's menacing tone. While *The Tempest* is filled with humor, forgiveness and even a love story, the need for revenge permeates much of the play. Prospero's need for revenge incites the tempest itself, but Caliban's revenge plot against Prospero is also significant. Caliban believes that he is the rightful owner of the island; after all, his mother, the witch Sycorax, was banished to the island long before Prospero arrived. Many modern productions portray Caliban's plight through a more sympathetic lens—sometimes evoking colonialism, with Prospero, while oppressed himself, acting like a tyrant. It shows that the island of *The Tempest*, like the rest of the world, is a complex place and not merely an exotic setting.

This underlying complexity, woven into the play's bold theatrical cloth full of fantasy and suspense, is perhaps the key to its enduring popularity. Although *The Tempest* was published in the First Folio as one of Shakespeare's comedies, scholars now identify it as a romance, a term coined in the late 18th century for a genre that involves epic journeys that mix together comedy and tragedy. *The Tempest*, which is set over the course of a mere day and is one of Shakespeare's shorter plays at 2,275 lines in its original form, provides an action-packed, bittersweet and timeless story that is ripe for reinterpretation by theatre artists and audiences alike.



John William Waterhouse's 1916 painting of Miranda watching Alonso's ship capsize.

# Other Adaptations of *The Tempest*

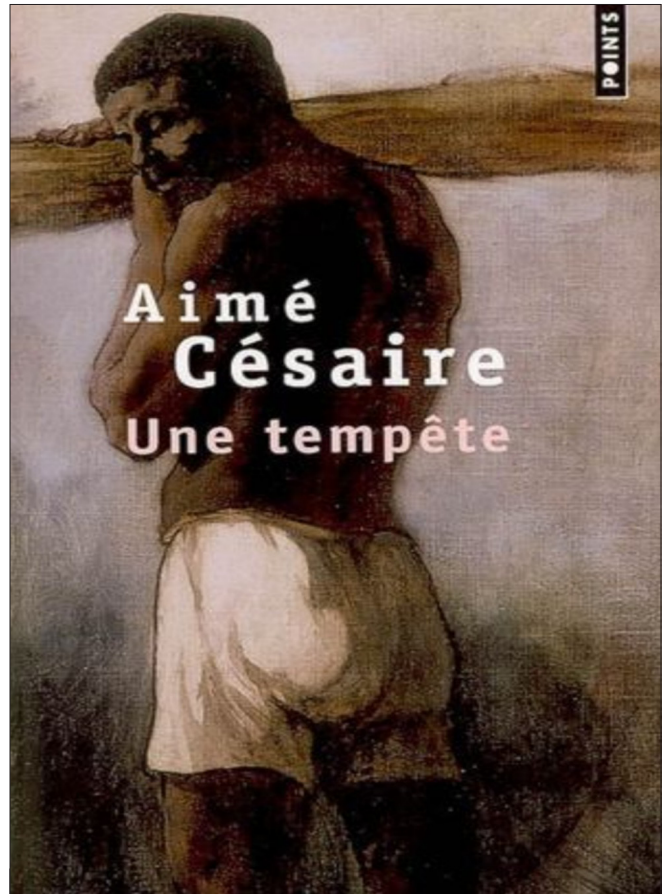
Adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* popped up as early as the mid-17th century. In fact, John Dryden and William Davenant's *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island* became the favored version of the play (over Shakespeare's) for most of the Restoration era. But Shakespeare's original text gained popularity again in the 18th century; and since then artists have turned to the play for inspiration. Today, stage revivals range from traditional to experimental, and artists across mediums have translated *The Tempest*'s story into film, dance, opera and even circus.

## Some Notable Productions and Adaptations of *The Tempest*

- *Forbidden Planet*, a 1956 science fiction film, puts a futuristic and psychological spin on Shakespeare's classic. It tells the story of Professor Morbius and his



*Forbidden Planet*'s theatrical poster.



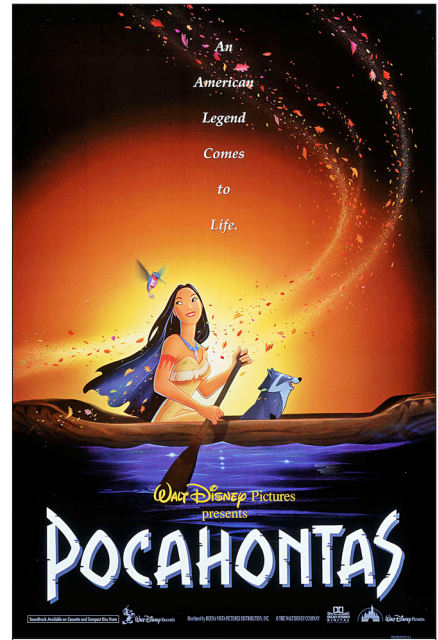
A published version of Césaire's play.

young daughter, Altaira, both stranded on the imaginary planet of Altair IV. But when Altaira falls in love with a space captain from Earth, the lovers find themselves up against a mysterious creature set on keeping them apart.

- Aimé Césaire's 1969 play, *Une Tempête*, tells *The Tempest*'s story from a postcolonial viewpoint. While much of the plot is the same, the play casts Prospero as a white slave owner and Caliban and Ariel as black and biracial slaves, respectively. Caliban, who ruled the island before Prospero's arrival, retaliates against his enslavement; Ariel takes a more passive, nonviolent approach. In the end, Prospero frees Ariel, but Caliban remains a slave.
- In 1979, filmmaker Derek Jarman released his take on *The Tempest*. The film, which drastically cut the original text, features Jarman's quirky and often provocative visual aesthetic and starred Heathcote Williams as Prospero. Christopher Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* (1991), which starred John Gielgud, also focused on



A scene from Derek Jarman's film.



Pocahontas theatrical poster.

stimulating its audience visually, using dance, animation, opera and a large cast.

- Director Yukio Ninagawa directed a 1988 production of *The Tempest* and introduced a non-Western theatrical sensibility. In the production Prospero played the role of director of a Japanese Noh play.
- Disney's 1995 animated film, *Pocahontas*, has plot points evocative of Shakespeare's play, including a great storm and a love story on a distant land.
- An opera adaptation, with music by English composer Thomas Adès and a libretto by playwright Meredith Oakes, debuted at London's Royal Opera House in 2004.
- Julie Taymor, known for helping ambitious stage and film productions (including the Broadway production of Disney's *The Lion King*), cast Helen Mirren in the lead role (changing Prospero to Prospera) for her 2010 film adaptation. This, however,

is not the first time a woman has stepped in to play the role: In 2000, Vanessa Redgrave played the role of Prospero at Shakespeare's Globe.

- The Cirque du Soleil touring show, *Amaluna*, is loosely based on Shakespeare's play and is set on an island where a goddess, Prospera, rules.



Helen Mirren as Prospera in a scene from Julie Taymor's 2010 film.

# An Introduction to Shakespeare's Text

Shakespeare wrote most his plays using a mixture of verse and prose and *The Tempest* is no exception, with approximately 80% verse and 20% prose. Only four plays—*Henry VI, Part I*; *Henry VI, Part III*; *Richard II*; and *King John*—are written completely in verse. Unlike prose, verse follows a metrical structure, which provides the speaker with the line's emphasis and drive. Shakespeare favored blank verse in his dramatic literature (save for the rhyming couplets found frequently in earlier works like *Love's Labour's Lost*), which means there's no strict rhyming pattern. Without the rhyme, the writing feels freer and allows the performer to explore tonal shifts and emotional depth.

The look of the text offers clear visual cues as to what's written in verse and what's written in prose. A verse line is broken up by meter, and so the lines often look shorter; prose spans the length of the page. The first word in a verse line, whether or not it follows a punctuation mark that necessitates it, is always capitalized; prose is only capitalized when necessary.

Some claim that Shakespeare used verse for noble characters and prose for commoners. This, however, is an oversimplification. In *The Tempest*, for example, Caliban speaks in verse at times. Alonso's party, while certainly nobility, quarrels using prose during part of act II, scene 1.

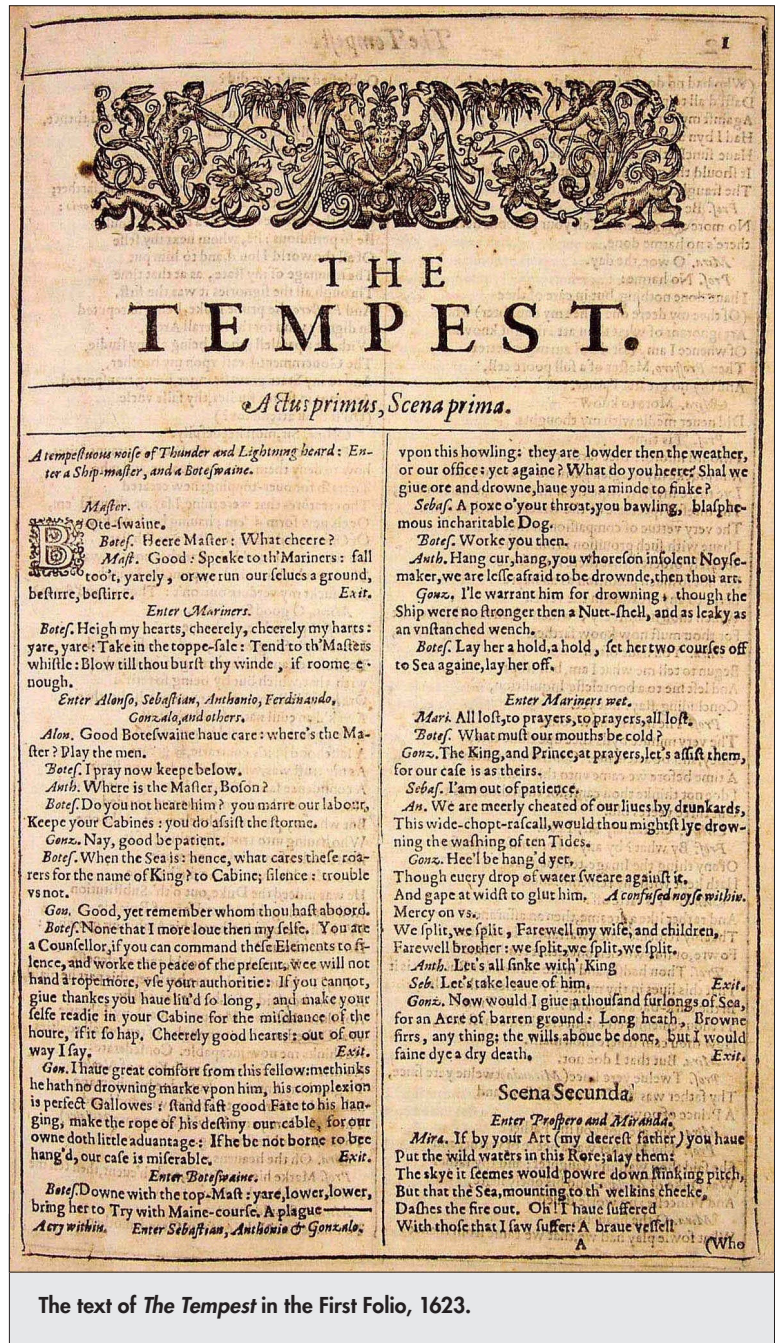
## Iambic Pentameter

Shakespeare's preferred metrical structure in his verse was **iambic pentameter**. An **iamb** is a unit of rhythm consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. A complete beat in verse, in this case a complete iamb, is usually called a "foot." Many words are already iambs: **pretend**, **fulfill** and **regard**, to name a few. **Pentameter** ("penta" being the Latin prefix for five) means there are five complete iambs (or 10 syllables) in an average line. Although people don't speak in verse in everyday life, iambic pentameter is a close mimic. Here's a line of simple iambic pentameter found in *The Tempest*:

ARIEL: Your **swords** are **now** too **massy** **for** your **strengths** (Act III, Scene 3)

## Other Feet

Shakespeare used other types of feet to create variety in his verse. After all, the fluidity of the poetry can be stilted by forcing all the lines to become straight iambs. Here are some other feet Shakespeare used in his plays:



The text of *The Tempest* in the First Folio, 1623.



**Trochee:** Stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable (the word **Never** is a natural trochee)

**Spondee:** Two stressed syllables in a row

**Pyrrhic:** Two unstressed syllables in a row

Spondees and pyrrhics are often found in the same line; they complement each other nicely. Here's an example of a line in *The Tempest* in which using a trochee, a spondee and a pyrrhic colors the text differently:

**ARIEL: Wound the loud winds, or with bemocked-at stabs**

Kill the still-closing waters... (Act III, Scene 3)

The five feet that make up that first line are: **trochee, spondee, pyrrhic, iamb, iamb.**

## Feminine Endings and Alexandrine Lines

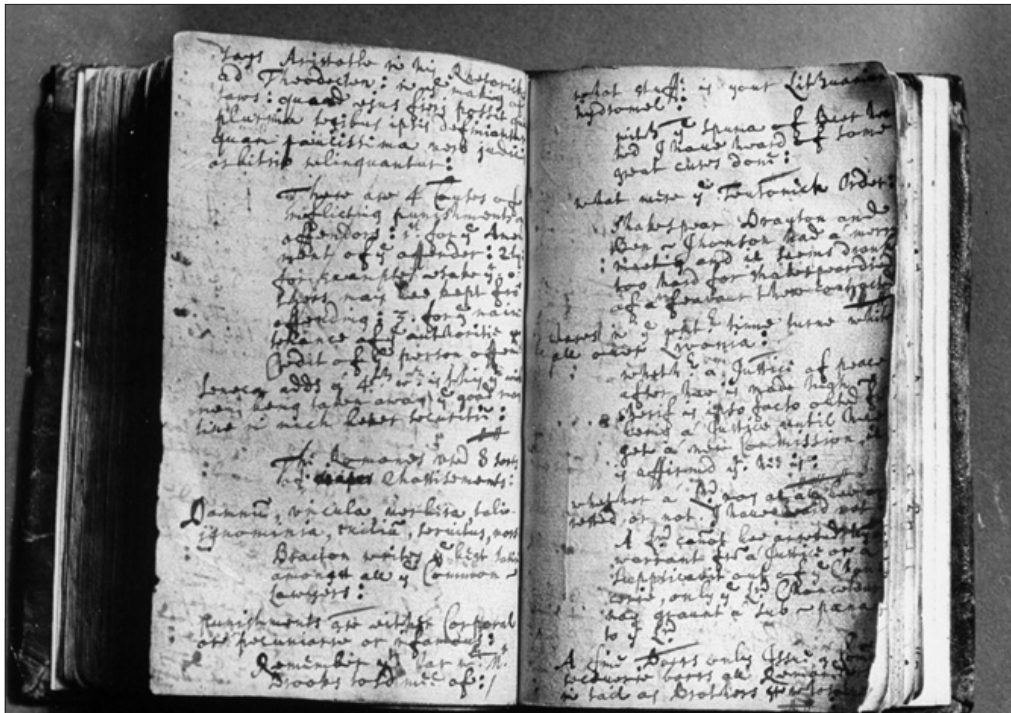
Some lines in Shakespeare's plays have more than 10 syllables. A line with a feminine ending has an extra, unstressed syllable at the end. For example, the first line of Hamlet's famous third-act speech has a feminine ending: "To be or not to be—that is the question."

If the 11th syllable is strong, a word might need to be elided, or there might be a three-syllable foot. Elision joins together or omits sounds and Shakespeare would sometimes remove letters in the text to indicate a necessary elision ("over" might become "o'er" to make it one syllable, for example). But the "extra" syllable might also come from a three-syllable foot somewhere in the verse line. The three-syllable feet found in Shakespeare are:

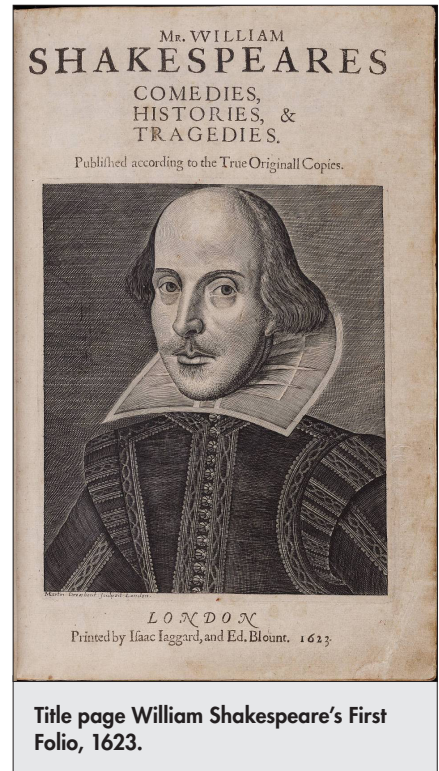
**Anapest:** Two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable

**Dactyl:** One stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables

**Amphibrach:** Unstressed syllable, stressed syllable, unstressed syllable



An original Shakespeare manuscript, held by the Folger Shakespeare Library.



Title page William Shakespeare's First Folio, 1623.

Shakespeare also used Alexandrine lines on occasion. Alexandrine lines have six feet (12 syllables) and end with a stressed syllable.

*The Tempest* is a complex text in terms of its verse structure, with a number of deviations from the five straight iambs of iambic pentameter. These deviations add texture to the audience's aural experience of the play. The intricacies of the text also serve as a sort of map for the actor, and a deeper analysis can unlock aspects of a character's emotional experience that perhaps may not be noticed at first glance.

## Part II: THE PRODUCTION

# The Perfect Storm: Revisiting Shakespeare's Tale of Shipwrecks and Sorcery

By Morgan C. Goldstein

The world of *The Tempest* has always been fantastical. Shakespeare set the play on an island inhabited by spirits and witches and ruled over by the exiled magician Prospero. This new production, originally created for the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, Mass., was led by Aaron Posner in partnership with world-famous magician Teller. The team created this enchanted world through a fusion of diverse artistic collaborators. With a traveling tent show-inspired set, songs by legendary singer-songwriter Tom Waits and his wife and partner, Kathleen Brennan, movement by modern dance company Pilobolus, and magic by Teller, this production of *The Tempest* is a vibrant take on one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. "We hope to integrate these elements," Posner explains,



Aaron Posner

"into what feels like a world unlike anyone has ever seen."

*The Tempest* tells the story of Prospero, an exiled duke and magician, who, after years of living with his daughter on a magical island, must unexpectedly confront the people who wronged him in the past. This production of *The Tempest* involves a setting within a setting: though the play itself takes place on an island, Posner and Teller have layered this world with another, equally mysterious one. "The production takes place in a Dust Bowl, traveling tent show, magician world à la carnival circus," Posner shares. This Dust Bowl setting was especially inspired by Willard the Wizard, a traveling magician from the early-20th

century who was assisted by his young daughter, Frances. And Willard the Wizard's connection to this production extends beyond the set—*The Tempest* contains its own father-daughter duo, Prospero and Miranda. Posner says that in addition to the world of early 20th-century traveling magicians, "the phrase 'shipwrecked magic show' has guided us in the design." With wooden planks, multiple levels, and strings of lights, the set calls to mind both the quick construction of a traveling production and the decay of a ship destroyed by a storm.

Performed by a live band, Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan's songs evoke both the Dust Bowl era and the other worldly island. Their extensive catalogue conjures the weariness of travel, the ethereal nature of the island, and the blues of a father watching his daughter grow up. Posner also points out that there are thematic connections between Waits and Shakespeare: "Tom Waits is able to live on all the planes that Shakespeare lives on: the rough groundlings, the middle class and the aristocracy. His music cuts across all of those boundaries—from working class, feet-in-the-dirt sensibilities to spectacularly lifted, esoteric poetry."

Movement by Pilobolus brings the island, and specifically the character of Caliban, to life. The child of the witch Sycorax and also a bondsman to Prospero, Caliban has been interpreted as a monster, an animal and a mistreated and misunderstood man over the past four centuries. Inspired by the tent show setting, this Caliban will be what Posner describes as a pair of "esoterically conjoined twins." Posner notes that with two actors working as one unit, Caliban suggests "the conjoined twins of the sideshow and the energy of vaudeville duo acts," while simultaneously capturing the dual nature of this tragic and comic being.

Posner explains that in many productions of *The Tempest*, "Prospero's magic is dealt with in purely metaphorical, theatrical ways." However, the magic in this production is tangible. Teller's tricks are performed throughout the show, bringing to life not only the illusions mentioned in the text, but also other, unexpected ones. The audience has the opportunity both to witness and to experience the characters' shock and awe at Prospero's magic, or, as the character himself puts it, his "art."

*This article originally appeared in the American Repertory Theater's Guide magazine for The Tempest.*

# In Front of the Illusions

A.R.T. Institute dramaturgy student Morgan C. Goldstein interviews magician Teller

**MORGAN C. GOLDSTEIN:** When I was researching your work, I came across your production of *Macbeth*, which was pretty bloody. There are definitely sinister elements in *The Tempest* as well. Is this going to be a bloody, violent *Tempest*?

**TELLER:** Not bloody, but thrilling and unnerving. After all, *The Tempest* is a story about a magician using his power to create nightmares, from the terrifying sea-storm that opens the show to a demonic banquet to phantom hounds. Prospero can't forget that his brother and co-conspirators ousted him and abandoned him with his infant daughter on the high seas. So he uses his magic to create shows to terrify and punish those who wronged him.

**MCG:** But there is still a possibility that the audience—although they're not the target of Prospero's magic—could be frightened. Is that your intention? Do you want to scare them?

**T:** The emotions that interest me most in the theater are fear and laughter. Thrilling and scary and funny are my specialties. So that certainly will be reflected in this production.

**MCG:** What about those emotions do you find so appealing?

**T:** I think I'm still a 15-year-old boy at heart. Part of my objective in Shakespeare is to make sure that if you put a 15-year-old high school student in the room with anything that I do, they will think it's surprising and startling and worthy of respect. So you'll find that this *Tempest* is going to be much funnier than most productions of the play; *The Tempest* has a lot of humor in it, but it's often presented with a dusty, museum-like distance, as though it was

funny 500 years ago. But there's also a whole level in this show that isn't about laughter or fear or pure amazement. And the thing that I find most appealing about *The Tempest* is that it's a play about a magician doing the toughest thing a magician could ever do, which is to give up magic.

**MCG:** You are, like Prospero, a magician. Besides this shared vocation, do you find that you feel a kinship to that character?

**T:** Prospero controls the world and affects other people by means of shows. The other characters see illusions that affect them deeply, even though they are just visions. That's pretty much my job description as a magician... I make illusions that upset the way you see the world. Also, Prospero is about my age, and during the course of the story, he does the hardest thing I can contemplate doing: he's giving up magic.

**MCG:** But for now, you're still doing the magic for this production. What will that be like?

**T:** We're incorporating magic in every place that magic is normally depicted by theatrical convention. For example, the banquet: the existing stage directions say the banquet vanishes "with a quaint device." That's been a point of argument among scholars for many centuries: what is this "quaint device"? Our plan for a "quaint device"? A table will be brought out and Ariel will whip a tablecloth over it and, Bang! The table will now be filled with the feast. And each of the dishes is something that—as the bad guys go to have a nice snack—will turn into something hideous and horrible. So a lovely glass of wine will turn into dry red sand. What looks like a nice roast bird will turn

into live—well, I don't want to give all of these away, now do I? We're delivering Shakespeare's content, but with some terrific magic tricks he didn't have access to.



**MCG:** How do you design an illusion like that?

**T:** If you're asking me how I get ideas, I'll tell you that they usually happen in conversation. In this case, the conversation is with Aaron Posner, with me, and with our magic consultant, Johnny Thompson. But basically what you do is to sit and think. There's no formula—you don't put it in a meat grinder and it comes out done. You sit and you think and you collaborate and you come up with good ideas.

*Morgan C. Goldstein is a second-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./Moscow Art Theater School Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University.*

*This article originally appeared in the American Repertory Theater's Guide magazine for The Tempest.*

# Dust Bowl Ballads

## The Soundtrack of *The Tempest*

By Julia Bumke

With his growling, gravelly voice and a musical style that evokes jazz, blues, vaudeville, and rock, Tom Waits has inherited the spirit of Americana balladeers like Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan, infused with a heady dose of theatricality from cabaret composers like Kurt Weill. Waits and his longtime songwriting collaborator, his wife Kathleen Brennan, are both devotees of Jack Kerouac and Charles Bukowski, and they specialize in vivid storytelling. As Jon Pareles described in *The New York Times*, Waits and Brennan's songs "can be smart and primal, raucous and meticulous, ethereal and earthy, bleak and comical ... [singing] about drunks, tramps, carnies and killers, spinning tall tales and reeling off free associations that somehow add up." In recent years, their focus on narrative has led them to explore

the theatricality of vaudeville, Vegas nightclub performances, and Weill's music for dramatist Bertolt Brecht. They have also collaborated with director Robert Wilson on his productions of *Woyzeck* and *Alice*, and have now given use of their catalogue for this production of *The Tempest*.

Early in his four-decade career, Waits explained that the goal of the music was to "scoop up a few diamonds of the magic" that Kerouac had "relentlessly chased from one end of this country to the other." This drive to tell vibrantly evocative American stories has fueled his oeuvre. With album titles like *Nighthawks at the Diner*, which grins slyly at Edward Hopper's iconic 1942 painting *Nighthawks*, Waits and Brennan's music has captured the loneliness of dusk, giving voice to bygone ghosts of Americana. Their songs' beautifully rendered images—like "the dark, warm, nar-

cotic American night" in his 1975 song "Putnam County"—have run the gamut from haunting to uplifting, and the songs consistently stick with audiences long after they are heard. Although Waits was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2011, his music has defied categorization: "I always imagine you sit at a piano with an open window, and whatever is out there will come in, pass through you and then turn into a song," he told the *Times*. This infusion of the outside world in his work with Brennan has kept it fresh and ever-changing. Waits and Brennan also draw inspiration from Mississippi Delta Blues and Dust Bowl ballads of the 1920s and 30s, particularly their evocations of poverty, mortality and the shiftlessness of Depression-era vagabonds. As Waits explained in the introduction to *People Take Warning: Murder Ballads and Disaster Songs, 1913-1938*, the Great Depression "was a time when songs were tools for living: a whole community would turn out to mourn the loss of a member, and to sow their songs like seeds."

Waits and Brennan's interpretations of these Dust Bowl tropes, their theatrical storytelling, and their evocations of vaudeville and cabaret performance infuse their songs with period atmosphere. At the same time, the music is singularly modern: it draws audiences into a world that is equal parts historical, radically new, and theatrically innovative.

*Julia Bumke is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./Moscow Art Theater School Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University.*

*This article originally appeared in the American Repertory Theater's Guide magazine for The Tempest.*



Tom Waits

# Pilobolus: A Symbiotic Dance Company

By Brenna Nicely

Sometimes inspiration comes from the loftiest of places, and sometimes it grows on cow dung. Pilobolus Dance Theater got its name from a dung-growing fungus known for its extraordinary and unique ability to propel itself with incredible speed, power, and accuracy toward a source of light. For more than 40 years, Pilobolus has remained true to its fungal namesake through its dedication to collective creativity and imaginative work, always striving toward innovation.

In 1971, a group of dance students at Dartmouth College formed the Pilobolus Dance Theater with the hopes of creating an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to making art. Seven dancers—Martha Clarke, Robby Barnett, Moses Pendleton, Lee Harris, Michael Tracy, Alison Becker Chase and Jonathan Wolken—experimented with an approach to choreography based on sharing weight between two partners. This highly collaborative technique can still be seen in the ever-growing repertoire of over one hundred dances collected by the group over the years.

In the true spirit of collaboration, Pilobolus sought from their origins to integrate different art forms, philosophies and techniques into their work, always using the human body as a medium. Some of the group's collaborators include graphic novelist Art Spiegelman, the MIT Distributed Robotics Laboratory, the alternative rock band OK Go and the American Repertory Theater. Over the years, Pilobolus's dedication to creating and fostering community has expanded on the artistic philosophy of their touring company by adding branches to their creative team. One of these branches, the Pilobolus Institute, teaches the group's always-evolving collaborative techniques to performers and non-performers alike.

Every year, the dancers and choreographers of Pilobolus add new pieces to their repertoire to perform all over the world. Their innovative style has brought them everywhere from the biggest concert halls in Europe to



Pilobolus Dance

“Sesame Street” and the 2007 Academy Awards. For a TED Talk in 2005, two dancers performed “Symbiosis,” a mesmerizing dance piece that highlights Pilobolus's innovative partnering and gracefully athletic movement style to tell a beautiful story about human relationships and coexistence.

Pilobolus's performance style is known for exaggerating and contorting the human body in innovative ways, often blurring the lines between individual performers. Andrew Boynton of *The New Yorker* notes, “You forget what you're looking at; the dancers move so skillfully, so symbiotically, that they cease to resemble people at all.” In the world of *The Tempest*, the super human aesthetic of Pilobolus transforms actors into conjurers, movement into sorcery, and the A.R.T. stage into Prospero's magical island.

*Brenna Nicely is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./Moscow Art Theater School Institute for Advanced Theater Training at Harvard University.*

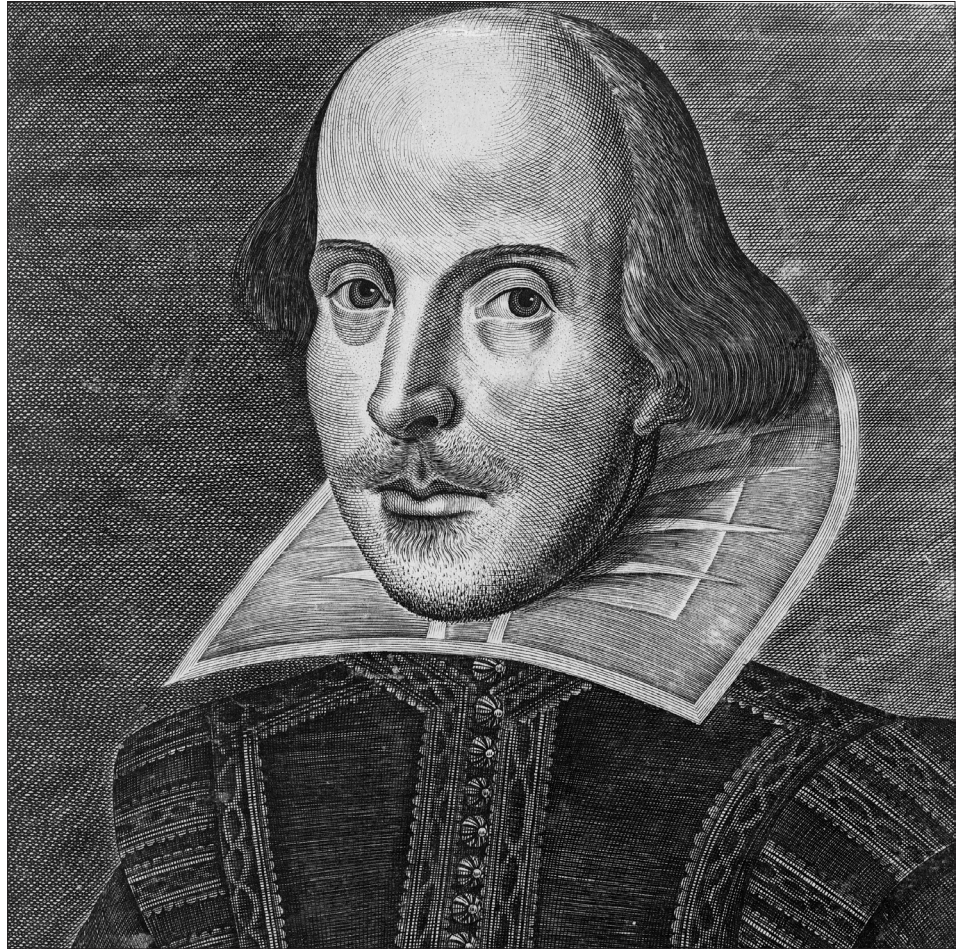
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# Part III: THE AUTHOR

## Biography

**W**illiam Shakespeare was born and educated at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, the eldest son of a prosperous maker of gloves, who had married into the local gentry. Little is known—though much is conjectured—about Shakespeare’s early life. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway and possibly supported her and their children, Susanna (born 1583), and twins, Hamnet and Judith (born 1585), by working as a schoolmaster. At some unknown date, possibly in the late 1580s, Shakespeare moved to London. The narrative poems with erotic themes, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), with dedications to Lord Southampton, were Shakespeare’s first published works, but he already had several plays produced (the three parts of *Henry VI*, *Richard III* and the Plautine *Comedy of Errors*). He was also probably writing sonnets, about which speculation has continued to rage since their publication in 1609. From 1594, Shakespeare’s theatrical company was the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, for whom, over the next five years, he wrote the plays of his early maturity, among them *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice* and the history plays *Richard II*, *Henry IV* (parts I and II) and *Henry V*. In 1596, his father acquired a grant of arms, a mark of higher social standing. The following year, Shakespeare purchased New Place house at Stratford, both evidence of the family’s standing and prosperity.

The Globe Theatre at Bankside, south of the Thames in London, opened in 1599 and for it, Shakespeare wrote his seven great tragedies,—*Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. Apart from *Twelfth Night*, his comedies of the period 1599-1608 (*Measure for Measure*,



Martin Droeshout’s famous engraving of Shakespeare, which appeared on the cover of 1623’s First Folio, is one of a small number of verifiable portraits of the playwright.

*All’s Well that Ends Well* and *Troilus and Cressida*) are more somber and ambiguous than those of the 1590s. In 1608, Shakespeare’s company, known since 1603 as the King’s Men, took over the indoor Blackfriars Theatre, for which Shakespeare wrote the romantic comedies *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*; the last, probably written in 1611, is generally read as the playwright’s farewell to the stage. Shakespeare retired to Stratford, where he died in 1616. In 1623, his old friends and colleagues in the theatre, John Heminge and Henry Condell, published the first collected edition of Shakespeare’s works, known as the First Folio; it contained 36 plays, of which only nineteen had been printed during the playwright’s lifetime.

# The Stage and the Elizabethan Age:

An Excerpt from *Shakespeare: Court, Crowd, and Playhouse* by François Laroque

## London in the 16th Century

When Shakespeare moved to London, it was in the throes of expansion. Artisans and shopkeepers were still quite strictly regulated and looked after their employees, who often lived on the premises with them. Work was grueling, with long hours and few distractions—at any rate within the City walls, as the City Fathers maintained a close watch over public morals. Theatres and other places of entertainment were kept outside the precincts, relegated to Shoreditch or Bankside, or to liberties (areas of land outside the City jurisdiction), such as Blackfriars, which before the Reformation had belonged to religious orders. The City nonetheless did have inns and taverns in which plays were performed: the Bull, the Bell, The Cross Keys, identified by their brightly painted signs.

## The World of the Theatre

Thanks to a wide range of prices offered by the “box offices” of the time, theatres were places of popular entertainment. Entrance to the pit—

standing room round the stage—cost only a penny; prices rose to sixpence for seated places in the covered galleries. The first were within reach of all pockets, representing scarcely one-twelfth of a London worker’s weekly salary. The second were the preserve of rich city merchants and nobility. (Sixpence also happened to be the price of a quarto edition of a play.)

Audiences were highly diverse. The Puritans railed at the rogues, pick pockets and prostitutes to be found in their midst, and regarded the theatres as a place of ill-repute, no better than the neighboring brothels. The motley and bustling crowd of spectators ate and drank during the performance and gave free rein to their emotions, roaring with laughter, dissolving into tears. They had a relish for language and were much stirred by the long speeches delivered in verse by such actors as Alleyn or Burbage, stars of the Rose and the Globe.

## The Actors

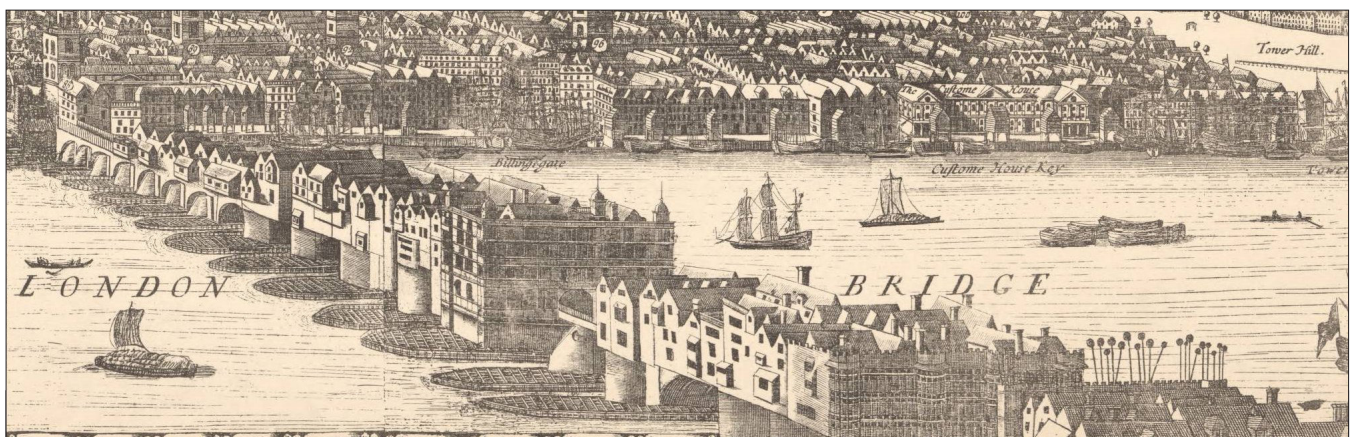
Professional actors were a novelty in late 16th century England, and often much admired. Until then players had been amateurs, members of



A portrait of English actor Richard Burbage, who appeared in a number of Shakespeare’s plays.

guilds who acted in Morality Plays and Mysteries on the feast of Corpus Christi, supplemented by the traveling jugglers and mime artists who performed at fairs and on village greens.

The situation changed when the government began to take measures to control vagrancy and delinquency. An order was passed in 1572 that made an actor into a potential suspect, liable to be thrown into prison and branded with a hot iron if he were caught. This made it essential



London in the late 16th century.

for a player to join the company of a prominent figure and bear his livery and arms.

## Female Roles

The theatrical companies included five or six boys or adolescents trained to play female roles until such time as their voices broke. They learnt their trade from the practiced actors and were well paid as long as the theatres flourished. But their prospects were uncertain; at puberty when they could no longer wear wigs and dresses, they often had no future other than as humble company employees.

These youths were nonetheless true professionals, who from a very young age learnt singing, dancing, music, diction and feminine gestures and intonation. Contemporary audiences found them wholly convincing. Their parts were difficult, however, as well as specialized. It is therefore

no surprise that, given the preponderance of adults in the companies, Shakespeare's plays had fewer females than male characters.



English actor William Kempe (right) acted in Shakespeare's early plays. Kempe died in 1603.



A portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, who ruled England and Ireland from 1558-1603. Some believe the strong female roles found in Shakespeare's plays at the end of the 17th century to be a tribute to her. She was succeeded by James I.

## The Actor's Art

Actors were required a combination of talent and dedication to their craft, for the theatres were commercial enterprises dependent on the success of the plays they performed. And competition was fierce. In season—in other words outside Lent, when theatres were closed—actors performed every afternoon except Sunday. They also had regularly to vary their repertoire, and generally no more than two weeks in which to prepare a new play. And they often found themselves playing several roles, particularly when on tour, with the troupe reduced to a minimum. This demanded quick work and excellent memory.

Those who frequented the theatre, and in particular the pit—which meant standing throughout the 'two hours traffic' of performance, as the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* calls it—were eager for sensation and overwhelming emotion. They loved impassioned grandiloquence, metaphor and extremes. It was impossible to mumble words to jostling and undisciplined spectators; their attention had to be captured.



# A Timeline of Shakespeare's Plays

Although scholars have a general idea of Shakespeare's canon's chronology, sources rarely agree on the exact year. The following timeline estimates when Shakespeare's plays were first performed.

1589-90	<i>Henry VI, Part I</i>
1590-91	<i>Henry VI, Part II</i>
1590-91	<i>Henry VI, Part III</i>
1592-93	<i>Richard III</i>
1592-93	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
1593-94	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
1593-94	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
1594-95	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>
1594-95	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>
1595-96	<i>Richard II</i>
1595-96	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
1595-96	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
1596-97	<i>King John</i>
1596-97	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
1597-98	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
1597-98	<i>Henry IV, Part I</i>
1597-98	<i>Henry IV, Part II</i>
1598-99	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
1598-99	<i>Henry V</i>
1599-1600	<i>As You Like It</i>
1599-1600	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
1600-01	<i>Hamlet</i>
1601-02	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
1602-03	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
1602-03	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
1603-04	<i>Othello</i>
1603-04	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
1605-06	<i>King Lear</i>
1605-06	<i>Macbeth</i>
1606-07	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
1607-08	<i>Coriolanus</i>
1607-08	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
1608-09	<i>Pericles</i>
1609-10	<i>Cymbeline</i>
1610-11	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
1611-12	<i>The Tempest</i>
1612-13	<i>Henry VIII</i> (likely a collaboration)
1613-14	<i>Two Noble Kinsmen</i> (likely a collaboration)



The Chandos portrait of William Shakespeare, named for its long-time owners the Dukes of Chandos. The artist and authenticity are unconfirmed. National Portrait Gallery, London.

# Part IV: QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

## Before the Show

1. Consider what you know about *The Tempest's* characters and imagine how they'll come alive on stage. Will Prospero be a domineering and formidable magician, or will he be crafty and subtle? Write down a few words to describe the characters, and then, after the show, think about whether your description matched the characters you saw on stage.
2. *The Tempest* is full of theatrical moments, including a shipwreck at the start of the play. How would you go about staging it? Think about some of the other exciting or supernatural scenes in the play and discuss how you might realize them on stage.
3. Have you seen other adaptations of Shakespeare's plays? Whether they were faithful stage productions or liberal adaptations of his stories on screen, what did you like about them? What makes Shakespeare's canon so timeless?
4. *The Tempest* is considered by some to be an allegory of Shakespeare's life in the theatre, with the character of Prospero representing Shakespeare. What other works of literature do you know in which the writer puts him or herself at the center of the story?
4. What were the power dynamics within the play? Who was the most powerful? Who was the weakest? How did the characters assert power over one another in different ways?
5. Discuss the similarities and differences between Prospero and Sycorax. Sycorax never appears on stage, but the characters describe her as a witch who used her power to rule the island. Does Prospero do things differently?
6. Although a horrible injustice brought Prospero to the island, were there any benefits to his life there? Is there anything he was able to learn or experience that he otherwise wouldn't have?
7. Why does Prospero treat Caliban so poorly? Is Prospero's treatment of Caliban justified?
8. Why does Prospero suddenly want to forgive Alonso and the other nobles? What prompted his sudden change of heart?
9. Although the play resolves with much forgiveness, the future is still uncertain. Discuss what might happen to the characters after the play. Without his magic, will Prospero be vulnerable again? What will happen to Caliban once Prospero and Miranda are no longer on the island? What happens to Ariel when he finally gets his freedom?

## After the Show

1. This production of *The Tempest* sets the play in a world evocative of a traveling tent show and Shakespeare's island has been re-imagined in many productions and adaptations. If you were directing a production of the play, what would the setting be like?
2. Discuss the use of magic in the play. How did watching live magic performed by the actors—as opposed to special effects or the power of suggestion—change the experience?
3. Discuss the use of movement in the play. How did the use of Pilobolus' acrobatic movement enhance the experience of the play? How did it change the storytelling?



Set rendering by Daniel Conway.



SHAKESPEARE.  
*Tempest*  
ACT I. SCENE I.  
The enchanted Island: before the Cell of Prospero. — Prospero's Son, Miranda.  
1797. — Engraved by B. Smith.

Benjamin Smith's 1797 engraving of a painting by George Romney depicting the first scene of *The Tempest*.

## Part V: RESOURCES

Full text of *The Tempest* online: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/index.html>

The complete works of William Shakespeare online: <http://shakespeare.mit.edu/tempest/index.html>

### Other Study Guides for *The Tempest*

From the Utah Shakespearean Festival:

<http://www.bard.org/images/eduimages/pdfs/TempestGuide.pdf>

From California Shakespeare Theater:

[http://www.calshakes.org/v4/media/teachers\\_guides/Tempest\\_Teachers\\_Guide\\_web.pdf](http://www.calshakes.org/v4/media/teachers_guides/Tempest_Teachers_Guide_web.pdf)

From Actors Theatre of Louisville:

<http://actorstheatre.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Tempeststudyguide.pdf>

From Hartford Stage:

[http://issuu.com/hartfordstage/docs/studyguide\\_tempest/1](http://issuu.com/hartfordstage/docs/studyguide_tempest/1)

From Chicago Shakespeare Theatre:

[http://www.chicagoshakes.com/res/teacherhandbooks/TH\\_TEMP\\_11-12.pdf](http://www.chicagoshakes.com/res/teacherhandbooks/TH_TEMP_11-12.pdf)

“You Can Go Home Again, Can’t You? An Introduction to The Tempest” by Ian Johnston, formerly of Vancouver Island University, British Columbia:

<http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/eng366/lectures/tempest.htm>

## More on Shakespeare and His Theatre

Shakespeare Resource Center: <http://bardweb.net/globe.html>

The Folger Shakespeare Library: <http://www.folger.edu/index.cfm>

The British Library website about Shakespeare and his quartos:

<http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html>

PBS’ Frontline series investigates “The Shakespeare Mystery,” the ongoing debate surrounding Shakespeare’s authorship: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/>

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>

The Elizabethan Theatre, a lecture by Hilda D. Spear:

<http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html>

## More on the Creators

Penn & Teller’s official website: <http://pennandteller.net/>

“Teller Reveals his Secrets” from *Smithsonian Magazine*:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/teller-reveals-his-secrets-100744801?no-ist>

Pilobolus’ official website: <https://www.pilobolus.org/home.jsp>

An article about director Aaron Posner featured in *The Washingtonian*:

<http://www.washingtonian.com/articles/arts-events/aaron-posner-as-he-likes-it/>

Tom Waits’ official website: <http://www.officialtomwaits.com/>

## Other Interesting Links

Shakespeare Illustrated (Emory University):

[http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html](http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html)

Tudor England: Images (portraits of the rulers): <http://www.marileecody.com/images.html>