

Fanciful 'Tempest' whirls into Howell Friday

by Carolyn Hull

*Prospero: Sir I invite your Highness and your train
To my poor cell, where you shall take your rest
For this one night; which, part of it, I'll waste
With such discourse as, I doubt not shall make it.
Go away quick.*

With these lines spoken to Naples' King Alonso, an invitation is given to an evening of interesting discourse that will make the time pass quickly.

Such an invitation will again be in order when William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* opens Friday at UNL's Howell Theatre.

This semester's final mainstage production, set on an island, weaves a tale of events concerning Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan and his daughter, Miranda. The two were cast out of Milan by Prospero's brother, who had usurped the title.

Prospero, always a scholar more inclined to study than action, uses his white magic to raise a tempest which brings the ship carrying his brother, the Prince of Naples, Ferdinand and companions to an island. Protected by Ariel, a lively mischievous sprite who is Prospero's servant, they all arrive safely.

As fate (and Prospero) would have it, Ferdinand and Miranda meet and fall in love. After bringing his brother to the island to get revenge, Prospero relents and gives his forgiveness instead. The group then departs to Naples to see the young lovers wed.

The show's director, Tice Miller, associate professor of dramatic arts, says *The Tempest* is a show he has studied at length and always wanted to produce.

"This play came at the end of Shakespeare's career, written sometime after 1611. It deals with a lot of questions he had about being human. Ideas from his major plays, love, revenge and civilized man, come together in *Tempest*, Miller said.

"Shakespeare puts these ideas across well. I feel my job as director, then, is to make the piece theatrically exciting to the audience. The show is not designed to be talky or of interest to intellectuals only, but I've attempted to give it a lot of movement and life," Miller said.

The stage is set with a large rock that is occasionally shifted to indicate a change of locale in the action. Props are used to give suggestions of detail to the setting.

"The lighting and sound effects set both the locale and mood of the scene," said Daniel Stratman, stage manager. Approximately 16 areas have to be specifically lit on stage, not only so the actors can be seen but also to effect moods such as day and evening.

Properties were designed from prints by Aubrey Beardsley, 19th century nouveau artiste.

"They are done in simple, but bright, flamboyant colors, in keeping with the style of the show," said Robert Stelmach, property designer for the show.

"Shakespeare is very fluid, scenes flow from one another," Miller said. Often, one group of actors enters, beginning a scene as the previous one ends. With light and sound cues integrated into the action the pace rarely slows.

The *dramatis personae* are interpreting the same liveness and excitement into their characters.

"As in any show, I hope to contact the audience, excite them about my character and sweep them up in the action. The worst thing to happen to a show is when the audience is indifferent. The emotional exchange between an actor and the audience is what theater is all about," said Mitch Tebo, who plays Ariel, a sprite and servant to Prospero.

"Ariel is quick, fun-loving, teasing... he loves to

do the things Prospero asks of him. He serves out of loyalty and gratitude to Prospero who released him from a spell which had him imprisoned in a tree," Tebo said.

Playing a super-natural being who is not human created a special problem in the characterization of Ariel.

"I'm trying for the feeling that he is not human and focusing on exactly what about him makes him a spirit through his emotions and movement," Tebo said. "It's very important to realize that he is a fully developed consciousness even though he is not human. The three dimensionality in his character must be brought out.

"There is a danger of the 19th century stereotype of a beautiful creature who floats around the stage but actually has no character."

Dana Mills, doctoral candidate in theater, is cast as Prospero, the master of the island and rightful Duke of Milan. He spoke about producing a Shakesperian play.

"This should not come off as 'we're doing Shakespeare because it's a cultured thing to do' but because it is an interesting play that has meaning to it. It is theatrically enjoyable, not a heavy piece that has to be suffered through. In the play Shakespeare tries to bring together some of the major themes of the earlier part of his career. It also shows how he reconciled himself to the world and accepts the effect he has on it.

"This is that he feels man ultimately has no effect on the world but while he is here he can choose to make his time on it constructive and full of life or destructive and full of death. Yet the whole western culture has been affected by this man," Mills said.

In *Tempest* Shakespeare speaks through Prospero.

*The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded
Leave not a rock behind. We are such stuff
as dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.*

The "stuff of dreams" he believed would melt away has lived over 360 years and will live again on the Howell Theatre stage May 5-13. A night of fantasy, magic, dance and life.



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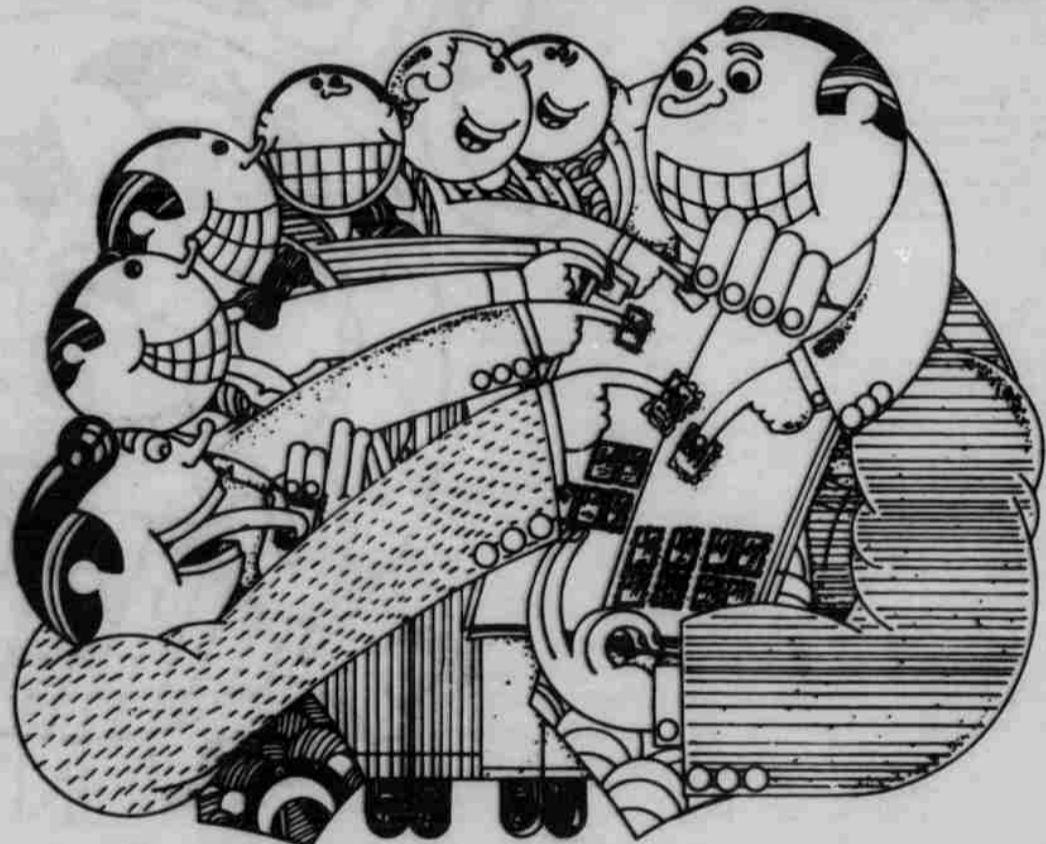
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