

mirror each other, and by the way the past mirrors the present.

To reinforce his rumination on old worlds and new, Shakespeare reaches as far into the past as the Aeneid, Virgil's epic poem from the first century BC. Aeneas was the Trojan prince who, like Odysseus, wandered the Mediterranean after the fall of Troy and went on to found a new world in Italy. References to the Aeneid pepper *The Tempest*, and Alonso and his court duplicate part of Aeneas's journey as they return to Italy from his daughter's wedding in Africa, just before the play begins.

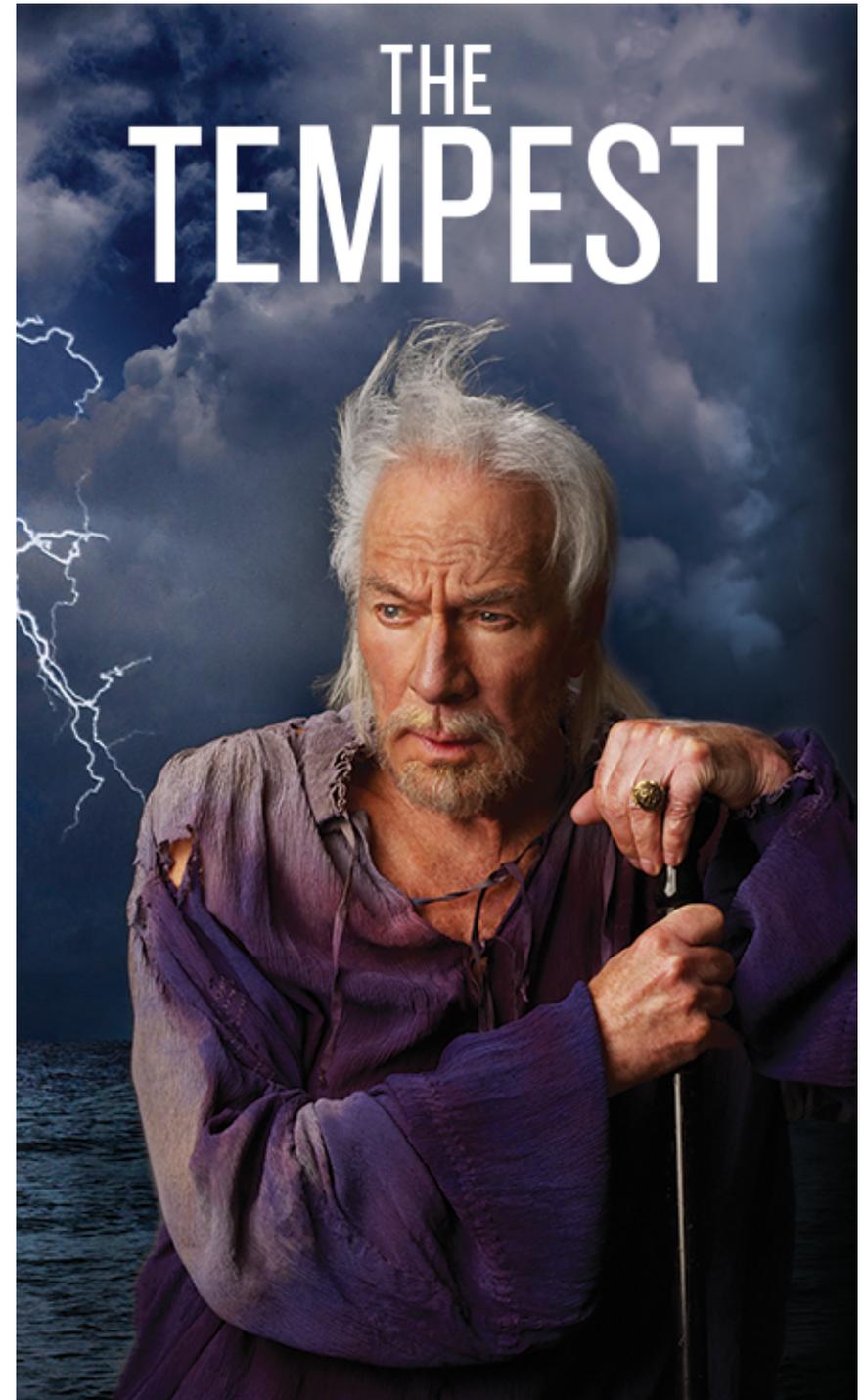
Where is Prospero's island? Neither Shakespeare's Forest of Arden in *As You Like It* nor Prospero's island can be pinned down to one location. Jan Kott writes that it "is simultaneously a Mediterranean island . . . and a plantation on the coast of America," and he quotes Melville: " 'It is not on any map,' wrote Melville about an island in *Moby Dick*; 'true places never are.' " What is important is that in both ancient and Renaissance myths, "The new world represents renewal."

Whether Prospero, his island and Shakespeare's play offer renewal must be judged individually by you, the members of our audience. *The Tempest* is full of ironies and, as it draws to a close, a series of dizzying contradictions. Miranda and Ferdinand represent something positive in this bleak world, but in their last dialogue together Miranda catches him cheating in a game of chess. She is dazzled by Alonso and his court in the play's most famous line: "O brave new world / That has such people in't." But it is said to a group of would-be murderers and thieves. That is why Prospero replies, "'Tis new to thee." He knows what the King and his court represent. Alonso has been changed by the events of the play, but Antonio and Sebastian have not. Yet Prospero decides to return to their world. And Shakespeare leaves it to us to decide why.

Kott sums up the play in this way: "In none of the other Shakespearean masterpieces – except *Hamlet* – has the divergence between the greatness of the human mind on the one hand, and the ruthlessness of history and frailty of the moral order on the other, been shown with as much passion. . . . Like all great Shakespearean dramas, it is a passionate reckoning with the real world . . . a drama of lost illusions, bitter wisdom, and of fragile – though stubborn – hope."

In *The Tempest* Shakespeare shows us that the brave new world exists in us, in the potential of the human mind and heart, but sadly its frontiers are constantly shifting.

Robert Blacker is Dramaturge for As You Like It and The Tempest and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. The Oxford edition of The Tempest, edited by Stephen Orgel, that was used for this production is on sale at both branches of the Festival's Theatre Store, as is Jan Kott's Shakespeare Our Contemporary, one of his books quoted above.



The Tempest

by William Shakespeare

Directed for the stage by Des McAnuff

Produced by Barry Avrich

Executive Producers
Christopher Plummer
Barry Avrich
Michael A. Levine
Patrice Theroux

STARRING

Christopher Plummer - Prospero
Trish Lindström - Miranda
Julyana Soelistyo - Ariel
Dion Johnstone – Caliban

Running time: 120 minutes

Searching for a Hero, Creating a Queen

by Robert Blacker

An English fleet set sail for Virginia in 1609, but the flagship carrying the new governor of the colony was wrecked in a violent storm off the Bermudas. The survivors were stranded for ten months on an uninhabited island, where they built a new ship and set sail again for their destination. The news of the storm and their sudden reappearance in Virginia caused a sensation in England and found its way into *The Tempest* in Ariel's reference to the "still-vexed Bermoothes." Reports of the shipwreck may have inspired the tempest that opens Shakespeare's play.

The Tempest is infused throughout with references to the New World and dreams of its possibilities and meaning. In 1578, Montaigne argued in his essay "Of the Cannibals" that the native tribes he read about in Brazil might, in their uncivilized innocence, provide a better model for society than the old corrupt civilization of Europe. Given his treatment back in Italy, Prospero might agree. Montaigne's words literally find their way into Gonzalo's mouth when we meet that character: "Had I plantation of this isle," he says, he would allow no "riches, poverty / And use of [servants], none." Montaigne's and Gonzalo's socialist utopias level the classes.

By contrast, the conflict between master and servant resounds throughout Shakespeare's play. We hear it right from the opening scenes. The Boatswain orders Alonso and his court to get out of his way: "What cares these roarers [the crashing waves] for the name of King?" Prospero himself sets up a hierarchy on his island, and both of his servants bristle. Even Ariel complains.

It is Caliban of course who rebels. Caliban's name is a near anagram for cannibal, an accusation that was made against native Americans. Shakespeare refers to them explicitly in Trinculo's remark that the English "will not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar [but are willing to] lay out ten to see a dead Indian." He reminds us of the then current practice of exhibiting aboriginal Americans, dead or alive, in Europe. An Inuit, one of four forcibly brought to England from Canada in 1576, died soon after his arrival. His image was preserved in paintings and in a wax cast made of his head.

In recent decades, *The Tempest* has often been used to illustrate the evils of such colonialism, with Caliban as the chief victim. That view, however, diminishes the complexity of one of Shakespeare's most memorable creations. We feel sympathy for Caliban, but Shakespeare describes a creature who is eager to trade one master for another. The uncomfortable sight of him eagerly licking Stephano's foot is a reminder of the complicity frequently contained in master/servant relationships.

For his part Stephano is delighted to become king of the island and to have both Trinculo and Caliban as his servants. They plot to kill Prospero. In a parallel scene that borrows imagery from *Macbeth*, Antonio persuades Sebastian to murder his brother in order to become King of Naples. The brilliant concision of *The Tempest* is achieved by the way its multiple plots