

This play is a tempest in a teapot

The Tempest
Citadel Theatre
til February 16

review by James MacDonald

Anyone who knows the works of William Shakespeare even moderately well will be familiar with their paradoxical nature. Typically elements of comedy are mixed with romance or romance is mixed with tragedy. *The Tempest* is a play that contains all these elements. Though it is basically a romance, its romantic elements lead from and are overshadowed by a mysticism which is represented by the magician, Prospero, and his airy servant, Ariel.

The Citadel has attempted to communicate this mysticism by combining Shakespeare with Japanese Kabuki theatre. This theatre is rich in magic and concentrates on the netherworld. Thus, it should work well with Shakespeare.

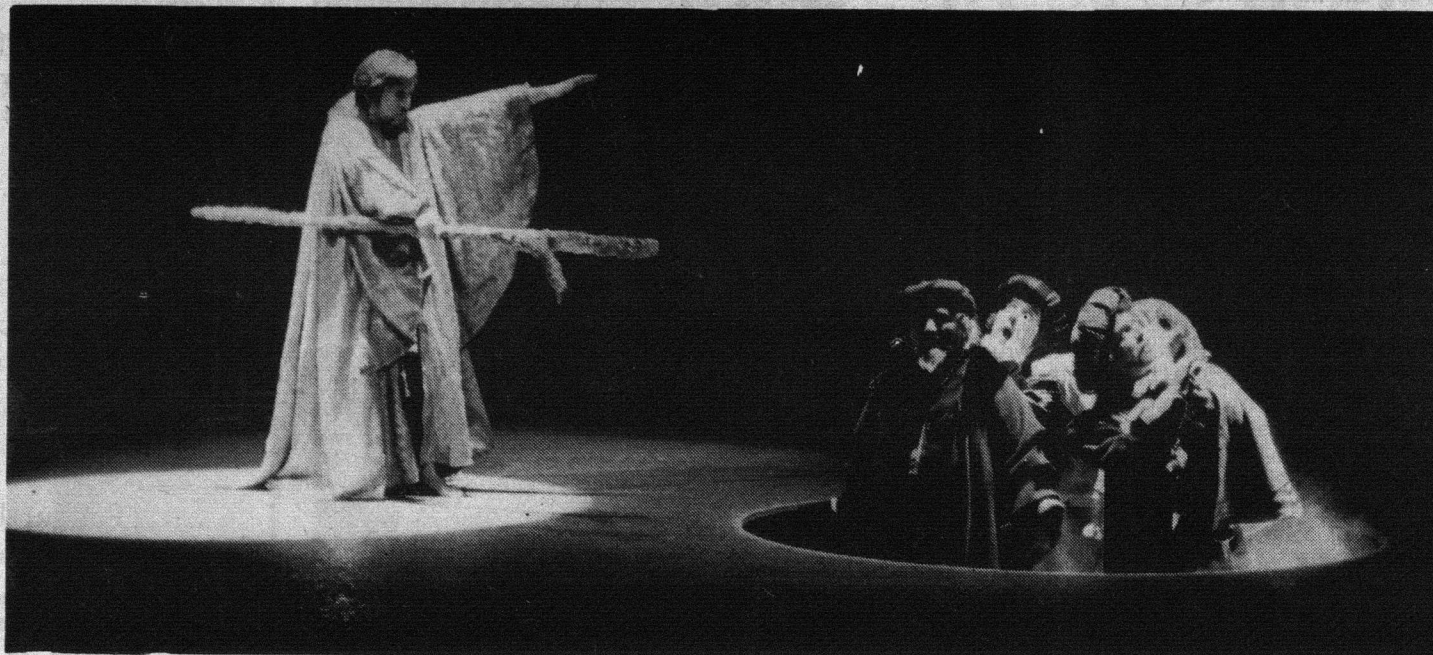
Unfortunately, the attempt fails. The reason it fails is that in trying to combine these two elements much of the wholeness of Shakespeare's original work is lost. This problem may have been solved if the production had concentrated on the Kabuki elements only, rather than attempting to create a hybrid. The result is that each detracts from the other, rather than complementing one another.

Another problem with the production is generally lifeless acting by most of the cast. Notable exceptions are Brian Bedford as Prospero and Graeme Campbell, who as Caliban epitomizes decrepitness and moral depravity. A real problem lies in the casting of Ian Deakin as Ariel. Deakin is a capable actor, but as Prospero's ethereal servant he is much too heavy on his feet. Ariel, as his name implies, is supposed to be little more than air itself; Deakin is all too mortal.

Despite these problems, the play works well in bits and pieces. Two of the scenes of spiritual activity a la Kabuki are so strong it made me wonder why the whole production wasn't straight Kabuki, rather than just influenced by it. It is unfortunate that the power and mystique of this theatre style is reduced to what amounts to little more than token usage, given the possibilities of it.

What practically made the play for me was the set, based on Kabuki and designed by Mitsuru Ishii. It is not spectacular or elaborate, yet it is marvelous in its subtlety. It also conveys very clearly the Spartan yet magical atmosphere of Prospero's island: passive but explosive.

Another enjoyable part of the production are the effects inherent in the Kabuki style. Though the first scene (the tempest itself) is obscured by loud drum-bashing and cymbal rattling, it's all uphill from there. Ariel flies high above the stage, Juno swoops down



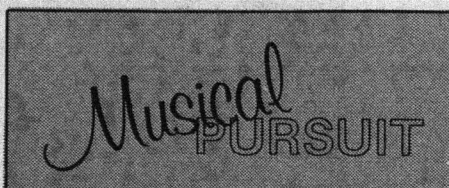
Prospero (Brian Bedford) working his magic.

from the ceiling to perform the rites of betrothal, and tiny spirit voices assist them both in their tasks. Again, however, many of these effects are not used to their full potential, and often seem out of place in what becomes a restricted production.

While, as I stated, much of the play is lost in the production, it contains an interesting array of human characteristics and complexities. Though it lacks any overall intensity or mystique, the play is never outright boring, with every scene having some interesting aspect about it. Bedford makes a dependable, if not original, Prospero, effectively serving as a centre-piece and teller of the story. All the characters, though often obscured by the unimaginative acting, are different enough to provide entertainment on many levels. *The Tempest* was Shakespeare's second-last play, and is hailed by many as his crowning achievement, the culmination of all the best factors of the previous thirty-five plays. While this production will probably not lead anyone to adopt this particular view, the original play occasionally shines through the gloss, making some moments quite enjoyable.

It is too bad that the Citadel didn't get both its feet wet in attempting the Kabuki style. The result of going only halfway is that the play itself is never given a chance to get off the ground. The only enchantment is provided by the Kabuki indulgences, while the play itself remains on dry land. Nevertheless, the written work itself is pleasing enough when unobscured, and the effects of the Kabuki theatre, often spectacular, remain a wonder to behold.

Attn: Young lovers



by Don Teplyske

Does anyone care about Neil Young? I'm counting on someone being interested in Canada's most famous son of the sixties because he is this week's feature artist. Along with four Neil Young questions, other stumblers involve The Everlys, Bob Dylan and Rod Stewart.

Entries can be dropped at Room 282, SUB until Saturday. The person with the most correct answers will receive a highly demanded Auracle Records token worth five dollars.

Kim Baker can pick his prize up at the Gateway as he was last column's winner.

1. Neil Young is the son of what noted Canadian sports writer?
2. Which Neil Young composition begins: "Tin soldiers and Nixon's coming/We're finally on our own/This summer I here the drumming/Four dead in ___"?

3. From 1969 until the early 'eighties, Young was usually backed by what band?

4. What European band released Neil's "Heart of Gold" on their 1978 Canadian breakthrough album?

5. Moving away from Neil Young: Armed with only a guitar and amplifier, this British socialist has recorded "The Milkman of Human Kindness" and "Between the Wars".

6. Where was Bob Dylan stuck when he had the Memphis blues, again?

7. What gospel hymn did Rod Stewart record on his album *Every Picture Tell A Story*.

8. Who wrote the Everly Brothers' 1984 hit "On the Wings of a Nightingale"?

9. What current single is having its proceeds donated to AIDS research?

Last weeks answers

1. He is Stephen Morrissey 2. Sandy Shaw recorded "Hand In Glove" 3. The Smiths record for Rough Trade and Sire 4. Morrissey wears his collars turned inside out 5. B.B. King did the *Into The Night* soundtrack 6. The Knitters 7. Aztec Camera recorded "Jump" 8. Sloopy was a girl 9. k.d. lang first released "Friday Dance Promade"/"Damned Old Dog".

Meeting:

Entertainment writers: There will be a meeting Friday, Jan. 25th at 2 p.m. R.S.V.P.

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