

Review: The Tempest at the Print Room

THE PRINT ROOM ♦ 21ST NOVEMBER - 17TH DECEMBER 2016

From Middle-earth to a new beginning: B. L. Sherrington reviews Simon Usher's version of The Tempest.

[B. L. SHERRINGTON](#)



The Tempest at the Print Room. Photo: Marc Brenner.

Simon Usher's version of *The Tempest* makes the most of jumping straight into the meaty action of the narrative with the arrival of the shipwreck. Much of the strength of this production lies in the visuals. Lee Newby's set design is reminiscent of Middle-earth, from the gravelled floor up to the coarsely-coloured backdrop of a maddening thunderstorm. Paul Bull's sound design combines with this to fully envelope the audience in the wind-swept setting, whilst Sarah Mill's costumes also echo the minimalism of the environment. Interestingly, the temperature of the Print Room was held at sub zero level during the performance. Whether or not this was intentional on the part of Usher, it was a certainty a clever technique to give the audience even more of the physical experience of a shipwreck.

The cast are passionate but also restrained. This is particularly the case with Kristin Winters' Ariel. At first glance the spirit appears emotionless, almost robotic, when approached by her master, but later morphs to become fearful, childlike and vulnerable. In contrast, Caliban (Billy Seymour) evokes empathy through his portrayal of a timid, docile slave. The feeling that his strength has been beaten out of him by the devil is particularly palpable.

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Throughout this production we never forget that the king and his men have suffered horribly thanks to Prospero's storm. The men successfully suggest the sorrow of nearly being drowned, however the king's regret at his son's possible death is slightly underplayed. That being said, the highlight of Usher's

production is the optimism we witness upon meeting Charlotte Brimble's Miranda. When interacting with her father she embodies true vulnerability. Yet when she meets Ferdinand (Hugh John) she changes to represent the innocence of youth. Her deep infatuation with Ferdinand adds a heartfelt moment to an already endearing play and also provides a softer side to counteract the themes of uncompromising greed and the thirst for

power. The depiction of Alonso (Paul Hamilton) as somewhat effeminate is also a smart choice and one that makes this version of *The Tempest* feel modern in its understanding of masculinity.

The ending of the play gives hope for new beginnings in Ferdinand and Miranda's ethereal wedding and the reconciliations between Ferdinand and Gonzalo, and Gonzalo and Prospero. Coupled with the impressive visuals, this *Tempest* at times feels like a feast for heart, body and soul.

The Tempest is on until 17th December 2016 at the Print Room. Click [here](#) for more details.

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B. L. SHERRINGTON is a contributor to Exeunt Magazine

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Show Info

DIRECTED BY Simon Usher

WRITTEN BY William Shakespeare

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