

REVIEWSGATE

Tours: THE TEMPEST: Shakespeare: Platform 4 on tour till 17th March 2010 Posted by : Mark-Courtice on Oct 30, 2009 - 08:33 AM Tours

Tour

The Tempest by William Shakespeare, Platform 4 Theatre.

Running Time 1hour 30 minutes. No Interval

Review Mark Courtice; Lighthouse Poole, 27th October 2009

Shakespearean miniature

Platform 4 have adapted Shakespeare's Tempest for just three actors and in so doing sharpen the focus on a tender and true relationship between Prospero and Miranda. Doubling Miranda and Ariel and Ferdinand and Caliban reflects the duality of these characters; and the challenge of miniaturising brings out exquisite ingenuity from designer, sound and lighting.

Less successful is the story telling; for an audience who don't know Shakespeare's original it's unlikely that an understandable story emerges. This is about psychological coherence as much as who does what to whom.

There are some good performances, which do reveal truths in the play with sometimes surprising clarity. Ralf Higgins gives Prospero real dignity, and he's clever in the way he moves from control to desolation as he gives up that control.

The young lovers are sweet enough, and their alter egos give them, satisfactorily, another dimension. She is earthbound and ethereal; he's princely and animal. Both actors use the text with skill, and observation helps them to differentiate their two halves.

However, when chess pieces stand for other characters, or Caliban declares his treasonable allegiance to his own image in a mirror rather than Stefano and Trinculo it is almost impossible to work out what is going on.

Those figures on the chessboard are intriguing, but very hard to see. The design as a whole is clever as Prospero's cell emerges from a large panelled box, and the island unfolds as shutters are opened up. The problem is sightlines, as people move to the back of the stage, or behind the constraining walls.

Other technical aspects are particularly good. The sound is rich with music, sea sounds, the tolling bells of buoys, and a truly alarming storm. Lighting is both subtle, creative and adds mystery and clarity at just the right moments.

There are ideas aplenty here; there are intelligence, rigour and elegant answers to the questions that Shakespeare's late play throws up. There's not much fun (the jolly characters are all cut), and it's sometimes difficult to make out, but overall it's a very stimulating experience in the theatre.

Prospero Ralf Higgins
Caliban/Ferdinand Richard Nutter
Miranda/Ariel Laura Carmichael

Director/Designer Simon Plumridge
Co-Director/Producer Catherine Church
Composer/Sound Designer Jules Bushell
Lighting Designer Helen Morley

Tour includes: Nov 3rd-4th South Street, Reading. 0118 9606060;
Nov 6th Bedford School Theatre, Beds. 01234 362269; Nov 9th-11th Tower Arts, Winchester. 08700 600100;
21-23rd Jan Leicester Curve, 0116 242 3595; 29th Jan The Pound Corsham, 01249 701628; 11-13th Mar
Ustinov Bath Theatre Royal, 01225 448844; 16-17 Mar Unity Theatre, Liverpool, 0151 709 4988.