

By Kathleen F. Conlin

The Tempest is a lovingly cherished play for our audiences. Its magic, mystery, and majesty have captivated audiences here for decades. How fitting that the Festival producers have selected this title as the centerpiece of the celebratory fortieth anniversary of the Utah Shakespearean Festival!

In preparation for rehearsal, I encountered the myriad interpretations it has enjoyed. Because of its rich imaginative potential and its fairy-tale-like world, The Tempest has twisted and turned itself like a chameleon to contain just about every conceivable concept from polarized emblems of colonial repression to autobiographical renderings of Shakespeare's own farewell to the theatre.

Scholar Christine Dymkowski pinpoints the delicious dilemma of producing the play in the twenty-first century. She writes eloquently:

“The Tempest is a wonderfully rich play. Although most of Shakespeare's works can take on unexpected and yet convincing shapes in the theatre, his last play seems unusually elastic, its almost miraculous flexibility allowing it to embody radically different interpretations, characterizations and emphases. Prospero and Caliban can not only exchange places as hero and villain, but also vie with each other to occupy both places at once. Ariel can be female or male, a willing or an unwilling servant. Miranda can seem an innocent maiden, a hoydenish tomboy or a rebellious teenager. Antonio can seek forgiveness from his brother or remain sinister until the end. Stephano and Trinculo can present themselves as harmless buffoons or dangerous louts. The island can appear a lush paradise or a barren desert or both at once. The narrative can speak for or against racism or turn in to a psychological thriller. The play's final effect can be one of decay and despair or of renewal and hope.”

Our production provides an opportunity to explore the play as psychological thriller where the deep humanity and the intense personal and interpersonal struggles with bondage and freedom, entrapment and release, revenge and forgiveness dominate the emotional landscape. Our production scheme invites you into a world of contemporary stage magic that places the play deeply into the audience's heart and soul. The

emotionally charged poetic circumstances of *The Tempest* transport us into an examination of the human psyche—by which we are humbled and inspired.