

Shrewd casting in the Questors' "Tempest"

SHAKESPEARE'S last play was "The Tempest," and just the right way for a great writer to end: he goes out singing, with a contented philosophy and an undimmed romanticism, affectionate, humorous and rich in fairy-tale.

On their tempest-tossed isle, the wronged Duke Prospero and his innocent daughter Miranda, Puck's cousin Ariel and the poetical monster Caliban, the group of castaway courtiers and the flitting forms of spirits, the wand and the book and the full fathom five all help weave the spell.

And at Mattock Lane, Questors' director, Jeffrey Smith, costumier Colin Garland and company for the most part preserve it. The production's leading roles have been shrewdly cast.

No-one better than Kenneth Conington to remind us that Prospero is an exiled ruler, not a cranky old conjuror. No-one better than Ned Gethings to point the child-like naïveté and lyricism in Caliban's brutish ruminations.

The wig worn by Michael Green as Stephano resembles nothing so much as a scarlet floor mop, yet this only adds to the fun of a characteristically witty cameo, evoking in accent and attitude T. H. White's egregious Sir Pellinor, which—helped by Ted Scrivener's button-faced droll Trinculo—brings the first half of the evening to an exuberant close.

A beautiful Miranda

I wish I could be so enthusiastic over Mr. Conington's "magic garment," which appeared to my disenchanted eye fashioned largely of seaweed. But the rest of the accoutrement (notably the alabaster gown and filmy rose cloak of Meg Wynn Owen, a beautiful, warm-smiling Miranda with long, softly auburn tresses) brooks little criticism. Miss Owen has opposite her an ideal Ferdinand in Alan Drake.

Dorothy Boyd-Taylor does Ariel awfully well too, providing a courageously abandoned exhibition of supernatural calisthenics.

Off-stage music

Mr. Smith starts the night by blowing up a storm in more senses than one, then keeps it contrastingly cool with ethereal-choral off-stage music throughout the remainder. In the main we're soundly sent.

It merely requires me to emphasise that these particular Questor revels are by no means concluded, but continue until next Saturday.

DOUGLAS McVAY.

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