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>Talent drenches 'The Tempest' at Blackfriars>

The News Leader - Staunton, Va.
Author: Culbertson, Charles
Date: Jun 29, 2006
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Document Text

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There are five stages in an actor's life: 1. Who is David Loar?

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2. Get me David Loar.

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3. Get me a David Loar type.

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4. Get me a young David Loar

>>

5. Who is David Loar?

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Fortunately, the David Loar in question -- whose latest incarnation at the Blackfriars Playhouse is as Prospero in "The Tempest" -- seems to permanently inhabit stage No. 2. When I heard that the American Shakespeare Center was going to produce Shakespeare's tale of revenge and forgiveness, Loar immediately came to mind as just the right actor to fill the robes of the exiled sorcerer.

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Loar's physical presence and intensity always make for a great theater-going experience, and in "The Tempest" he imbues Prospero with a warmth and authoritativeness that will captivate and enchant audiences.

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Unlike many of Shakespeare's works, the action of the play is fairly straightforward. Prospero, who was once the duke of Milan, neglected his duties and was usurped by his brother, Antonio. Prospero and his young daughter, Miranda, fled to a remote island where he cobbled together a dukedom made up of himself, Miranda and two slaves -- Ariel, a sprite, and Caliban, a half-man, half-monster.

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A dozen years later, Miranda is a beautiful, innocent young woman who has never seen a man other than her father. Prospero conjures up a storm to shipwreck his duplicitous brother and, in the bargain, the young and handsome Ferdinand. Of course, Ferdinand and Miranda fall madly in love, while Prospero works his magic to extract contrition from his untrustworthy brother.

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But David Loar doesn't walk off with this play. Not by a long shot. There are some veteran scene stealers and comedians on the loose here, including Paul Fidalgo as the jester, Trinculo, and James Keegan as the drunken butler, Stephano. These two provide some of the liveliest moments of the entire play, as does Jake Hart as Caliban.

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Of course, most of the cast assumes double or triple duty in other roles, but since there are fewer characters in "The Tempest" than in many of Shakespeare's plays, the doubling and tripling is fairly easy to keep straight. And because the narrative line is clear from beginning to end, the audience can drink in the boldness of the Bard's imagination without struggling to keep track of who is playing who.

>>

Other high-powered talent pounding the Blackfriars boards this time around are Susan Heyward as Miranda, John Harrell as Ariel, Alvaro Mendoza as the King of Naples, Matthew Sincell as Ferdinand, Rene Thornton Jr. as Sebastian, Sarah Fallon as Antonio and Celia Madeoy as Gonzalo.

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Jenny McNee's eye-popping costumes are by themselves worth the price of admission, and original music is provided courtesy of John Harrell, Paul Fidalgo and James Keegan.

> >

Commanding the ship's wheel for "The Tempest" is internationally renowned director Giles Brock. Jeremy Fiebig served as assistant director.

If You Go!

* what:

"The Tempest"

* where:

Blackfriars Playhouse

* when:

Intermittently until December. Call for info.

* tickets and more info:

851-1733 or 35 S. New St. (ground floor of parking garage)

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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