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NU DRAMA DEPARTMENT PRESENTS "THE TEMPEST"



By Charlette Tapsoba

Fall is here with rain and storms, and the NU drama department is once again busy this season preparing and rehearsing for another production, Shakespeare's "The Tempest." The show was chosen by student director Brittany Villars, a senior at NU. Villars is working closely with faculty advisor and directing coach Chrystal Helmcke.

"The Tempest" is a play about a group of shipwrecked people who land on a mysterious island inhabited by mystical creatures," said Helmcke. "It's a story of brokenness and restoration, power plays and pure love."

Villars is majoring in Communications with a minor in Film Studies. She stage managed the fall 2016 production of the "Diary of Anne Frank," and also played the role of tragedian in the spring 2016 play "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead."

Villars said, "I wanted to direct a show at NU for many reasons, one of them being this is my last semester at Northwest. The middle of last year I asked myself what I wanted to do for my last semester... and directing a show was the first thing that came to mind. I love art and I love theatre and I love our program. I have never directed a full stage production, and I wanted to give it a try.

"After talking to Chrystal Helmcke about what it would take... I had to decide what play I would propose to do. I am a Shakespeare coach, actor, and teacher. I am a part of a program in Seattle called the Young Shakespeare Workshop. Shakespeare's work is what I know how to work with best. I chose 'The Tempest' specifically because of the different elements in the play. It is such a fascinating play to read. The mix of reality and the fantastical are what drew me. The theme of love was so honest that I wanted others to experience that," said Villars.

The character of Prospero, a wizard and the wronged Duke of Milan, is played by NU senior Katrina Bowen. She expressed her joy to be part of a play like "The Tempest."

"Because the play is in Shakespearean, a style of English that most 21st century young people aren't familiar with, at first the meaning... [was] hard for me to understand," said Bowen. "However, even after my first read-through, I could feel the raw emotion and compelling message that Shakespeare was revealing to his audience through 'The Tempest.' Overall, it is an incredible story of trust, betrayal, love, and forgiveness that has been both beautiful and impacting to delve deeper into."

With thirteen actors and a technical team under her wings, the journey is full of obstacles and rewards for Villars.

"Being a student director brings very different challenges, because in an everyday setting, I am one of the cast members' friends or peers," she said. "Accepting a level of authority was awkward because in order to move the show forward I had to make decisions guide the actors and maintain a standard necessary for the show to succeed.

"Also, while directing, I was learning new skills because some aspects of putting a production together were new to me... A way to overcome the challenge was to trust in my production team. They all have skills and assets that are allowing this show to come alive. Each of them are absolutely amazing, and I could never do it without them. I had to ask for help when I didn't have the answers and I had to trust myself that I had the ability to guide the cast in the direction they needed to go."

For Helmcke, the challenges are reflected in actors overcoming fears and "gain fluidity" with the Shakespearean language.

"Shakespeare's crafting of words is clever, rhythmic, poetic, dynamic – and sometimes pretty hard to understand! But the beauty emerges when the actor's gain confidence in speaking the words, and with those words fully embody the characters. That's when the

magic of the story really comes to life. It's a challenging and exhilarating process," she said.

"The Tempest" will open on November 3, at 7:30 p.m, and tickets can be bought [in advance](#). Villars encourages the community to let this show take them on an adventure for a night.

"The coming together of this show has been a journey of its own, but I have never been so excited to open it to community," said Villars. "It's a funny play, a deep play, a play that allows you to fall in love... Shakespeare is a genius and this play is exciting. Live Long and Shakespeare!"

Hemcke echoed that sentiment, adding that the play fits the fall mood quite well.

"The Tempest' is a favorite among many Shakespeare fans, and our production will not disappoint! Come celebrate the fall – season of storms – by watching something beautiful emerge from this one."

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