

# The Tempest

Written by William Shakespeare  
Directed by James Vesce

Cast:

Chad Armour	Ferdinand
Ken Burrows	Prospero
Bob Glahn	Caliban
Mary Lou Herndon	Miranda
Debbie Hubbard	Alonso
Mary Lopez	Gonzala
Natasha Moulds	Adriana
Luke Pizzato	Ariel
Maralie Schofield	Antonia
James Shafer	Sebastian

Rarely are playwrights aware they've written their last play. But most playwrights aren't Shakespeare, either—the Bard's last solo effort, *The Tempest*, was an intentional goodbye. You can catch this literary farewell April 19-23, when UNC Charlotte's Dance and Theatre Dept. stages this work—part tragedy, part romantic comedy—of raging storms, magic and monsters at Robinson Hall for the Performing Arts' Anne R. Belk Theatre.

*The Tempest*—the fourth, final and finest of Shakespeare's great Elizabethan romances, along with *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*—originally opened in 1612. Inherently theatrical, the play was composed by Shakespeare as a multi-sensory experience, with sound and music complementing the lyrical text. How then does one stage this spectacle for a modern audience? "I want to avoid the literal reproduction of an island common to most productions," says director James Vesce, "as well as paint a contemporary portrait of the lead character, Prospero. So we have conceived of him as a graphic illustrator, a Disney animator who brings the play to life through the power of his computer-generated art. His island is his workshop."

Thus, Vesce has adopted some very un-17th-century approaches. "There is a significant amount of video illustration in the production to underscore Prospero's craft," he reveals. "And his island foe, Caliban, for instance, I'm presenting as a technological victim—a kind of American youth preoccupied by overexposure



Photo by Wade Kraton

UNCC enters a Tempest

to multimedia: television, video, Internet."

With such innovation, Vesce is confident this four-century-old play will appeal to contemporary playgoers. "Shakespeare has an appeal in our schools and on our stages," he says. "His genius has served to tell stories, capture emotions, express truths, and portray the causes and consequences of human thought and action in all of its manifestations: in love and war, in death, and all else in between."

But to that most fickle of audience member, the college student, doesn't Shakespeare seem as germane as algebra? "Remember that Hamlet was a college student," offers Vesce. "And if I remember anything about my college years, I remember that I was very much like Hamlet—confused, often brooding, self-righteous. I'm not sure much has changed for the modern-day college student, which is to say that Shakespeare's stories are often incredibly relevant and immediate."

And only textually irksome when not done correctly. Vesce's mostly college-student-led cast spent about three weeks working through the language with UNCC Shakespeare professor Andrew Hartley and voice-and-movement specialist Kelly Mizell "because the performance of [Shakespeare's] plays requires a mastery of language." Such dedication to iambic pentameter, Vesce notes, is essential. "I think people these days do not want to extend the kind of effort they think it requires to attend a Shakespearean play. But when performed well, it is compelling and inspiring." —Lon Bumgarner

UNCC, Anne R. Belk Theatre, Robinson Hall  
Apr. 19-22 at 8pm; Apr. 23 at 2pm.  
Tickets: \$12, \$10 faculty/staff, \$5 students/seniors.  
704.687.2599.