



Students perform a practice run of the play "The Tempest" on Nov. 7, 2016 at the Wharton Center.

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Eleven months ago, assistant theatre professor Deric McNish started working on an idea that would help bring William Shakespeare's work to life.

This week, that idea will be realized the opening day of "The Tempest" on Nov. 10. The Shakespeare play will be put on in the Pasant Theatre at the Wharton Center and will be different from previous productions McNish, the director of the show, said.

"Very often projections are used as a kind of afterthought just to add a mood or information, and we wanted it to be more essential," McNish said. "We wanted characters to interact with media."

"The Tempest" has had a team of designers working on projections for the show. Sometimes characters will appear as flesh and blood and other times they will appear in media form, McNish said.

Along with innovative media use, the production is different in other ways. The setting for the play is usually a tropical island, but this show will be featured on an iceberg.

"It creates a different kind of atmosphere," McNish said. "It also provides a perfect projection surface. But it's more harsh, it's more deadly."

"The Tempest" was the play McNish chose to bring to life because its script is full of magic, monsters and spirits, McNish said. Roles are filled with a cast of undergraduates, graduate students and faculty at MSU.

The character roles are another different element of this production of "The Tempest." The character Prospero, the protagonist, is played by associate theatre professor Christina Traister. As a result, the character is now dubbed Prospera, McNish said.

Having a member of faculty has affected the cast, McNish said.

"Everyone has been remarkably professional and focused, which is a necessity because of the tech challenges associated with this kind of show," he said.

The stage manager for the production, theatre senior Samira Mashni, said "The Tempest" has been her favorite cast she has ever worked with.

“Their acting is great, phenomenal,” she said. “I think that it definitely adds to the production because it’s Shakespeare, you know? Not a lot of people understand Shakespeare or enjoy Shakespeare, but I think that they kind of present it in a fun way.”

One of the actors is theatre senior Lee Cleaveland, who plays the character Sebastian in the play. Cleaveland said it’s challenging having the role, as he’s not used to playing a bad guy. However, when he heard he got the role he knew it would be enjoyable as well.

“I thought it was going to be fun because he kind of, on top of just being a bad guy, he kind of just stands upstage and makes fun of people and then doesn’t really learn a lesson at the end,” he said. “A lot of the characters grow, have consequences for their actions, but I just kind of go back to living my life at the end of the show.”

A lot of work has gone into the production, between working with the large set and the interactions the cast has with the media and projections. Cleaveland said “The Tempest” is his favorite Shakespeare play.

“The Tempest” was Shakespeare’s final play solely written by him. By the time he wrote the play, Shakespeare was a fully realized playwright who employed all of his tricks and devices into the show, Cleaveland said.

Mashni said the script is essentially the same, but McNish adapted it to better fit the audience at the Wharton Center.

Because of the versatile nature of the show, it can be viewed as a comedy, tragedy, romance or any number of things. Although he didn’t want to say what he wanted the audience to feel after the performance, McNish said it’s a redemption story that also contains hope and opportunity.

McNish said he’s most excited to bring Shakespeare to life for the audience, as he said Shakespeare is generally misrepresented to people.

“People in our country grow up reading Shakespeare as a chore in high school, and it wasn’t written to be read,” he said. “It was written to be seen.”

Presented through the MSU Department of Theatre, the show will run until Nov. 20.

General admission tickets are \$17 and senior and faculty tickets are \$15. Student tickets are \$12 plus a \$3 Wharton facility fee.

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