

Summer Theatre on Winnepesaukee



Don Quixote Charms Meredith

By Jane Bergeron

My first memory of the character, Don Quixote, was from reading the book when it wasn't my first choice, and being embarrassed in class when questioned about the storyline that I barely skimmed. After the play was written and the movie appeared a scant decade later, I went back for a delicious re-read. This could be your first or 20th opportunity to be exposed to MAN OF LA MANCHA, don't make my mistake. If you want to be lifted out of your seat on the wings of hope and 'impossible dreams', pick up the phone right now and call the Interlakes Summer Theatre at 1-888-245-6374.

The tale of Cervantes and his devoted squire, Sancho, takes him on a delusional quest through the countryside during the infamous Inquisition. The slightly mad and dreamy eyed Cervantes claims to be Don Quixote, a Man of La Mancha, whose mission it is to right wrongs, champion fair maidens, and to live as an example of honesty. He is arrested by soldiers and thrown in a dungeon with other rabble rousers, and defends his worldly goods from being stolen from his fellow prisoners by acting out the adventures that he and Sancho have already undertaken.

They tell their story against the backdrop of a gloomy, expansive cell, a brilliant set designed by Michael Ganio. It is a tale of tilting at windmills, slaying dragons, being smitten by a fair lady who Don Quixote insists on championing, until the most blessed moment of his life when he is dubbed the Knight of the Woeful Countenance. Don Quixote is a true hero, mostly in his own mind, with his steadfast conviction that it matters not whether he win or lose....only that he follow the quest and chase his star. This role was immortalized on screen by Peter O'Toole, and now in Meredith by Scott Sowinski whose poignant facial expressions team with a glorious baritone that absolutely owns all my favorites: "Man of La Mancha" "Dulcinea", and "The Impossible Dream".

Quixote's maiden fair, the unkempt barmaid whose token he carries, is a combination nasty spitfire and a pitiable wench, played by Sheira Feuerstein, who you might remember as last year's 'Mama' in CHICAGO. A mistress at combining hard edged toughness with a heart touching vulnerability, Sheira has conquered both roles. And then there's the devoted Sancho, all cute and cuddly and naïve and singing "I Really Like Him", when his loyalty to Don Quixote is questioned. Well, Cody Strand, I really, really like you, too.

Combine the tragedy of the Inquisition, with Don Quixote's unconquerable dreams, and some of the best music ever written for the stage, and you have MAN OF LA MANCHA, playing through July 17th - just a few more days - at the Interlakes Summer Theatre in Meredith. Call 1-888-245-6374 or visit www.interlakestheatre.com for more information.

And The Tempest Takes Winni

By Jane Bergeron

First, and most importantly, WELCOME BACK, ADAM KEE - we are tickled to death that you enjoy visiting Weirs Beach as much as we enjoy having you here. After six years of watching you take the stage at the Winnepesaukee Playhouse, we have seen you thrill us with DIAL M FOR MURDER, touch our hearts in STONES IN HIS POCKETS, bring us into your GLASS MENAGERIE, and laugh ourselves silly in AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS. It seems a natural progression that you would also headline in the Winni P's first Shakespearean production, THE TEMPEST, now playing through July 16th.

This is Shakespeare's last work, and believing that to be true, he threw everything he had, including the kitchen sink, into its creation. Taking all his successful elements from prior creations, he created a hodgepodge of plot lines and characters that probably would never have endured these 400 years without the magic of Ariel. An airy sprite inhabiting a mystical island, Ariel is under the spell of the shipwrecked magician Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan. Adam Kee's character was stranded with his daughter 12 years earlier when a true "tempest" at sea cast them on this lonely spit of land, inhabited only by Caliban, a deformed slave and son of a long-gone witch.

This sad quartet co-exist in a scenario they have implemented over the years where Prospero rules, Miranda is the dutiful virgin daughter, and Caliban is both servant and target of persecution and ridicule. Since Ariel is held under the spell of Prospero, her role is to drift hither and thither and spy on the comings and goings of everyone else, with the promise that she will be set free once all her tasks are performed and Prospero and his daughter are rescued and returned to their rightful positions.

It is Ariel who reports the landing of the royal family of Naples and their accoutrement of servants - some of whom might appear a little familiar. Just as Shakespeare used male actors for both male and female roles, and sometimes both, this production of THE TEMPEST utilizes a stellar cast of only six actresses and actors to play all 14 parts.

It is Prospero's mission upon learning of the arrival of these noble Italians that he wreak revenge for what he believes to be an intentional exile, torment his possibly innocent victims, and most unlikely of all, marry off the apple of his eye. Winni P fans will be charmed by the set and the resurrection of the revolving circular stage that along with billows of gossamer allows our islanders to travel through 'desert, grasslands, deciduous forest, moorland, bogs and dense rainforest within the space of a few hundred yards'. Not only has Shakespeare created a magical place, but Set Designer David Towlun has brought it to Weirs Beach.

Attempting any Shakespearean work is a challenge - it not only requires great acting chops - but also excellent diction so as not to lose today's theater-goers. THE TEMPEST delivers, and you will be thrilled that you didn't miss this whimsical, humorous piece. For tickets or more information, call 366-7377, or visit www.winniplayhouse.org.

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