

# Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company Performance of 'The Tempest'

[Max Lander](#) | Thursday, April 19, 2018

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This Thursday, Friday and Saturday actors from Notre Dame's own Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company will be storming the local stage and bringing the classic Shakespeare play "The Tempest" to life.

Part of the play's popularity stems from the variability with which it can be performed, and the Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company's production promises to put a unique spin on an old classic focusing on making the show accessible to a modern viewer, Caitlin Crosby, senior and director of the production, said.

"It's a company that's been around for close to two decades now, and in the past few years we've been working really hard to make Shakespeare more accessible," Crosby said. "A lot of people's only experience with Shakespeare is the kind of stiff English accent, ruffled neck, Elizabethan clothing. And with our mantra of 'not-so-royal' comes that dedication to exploring Shakespeare's plays in ways that people might not have seen or expected."

This will be Crosby's first experience directing a production solo with the company. She said she sees her job as the director as less the role of a boss and more the role of a collaborator with the actors and crew.

"It's a really collaborative experience, everyone is there because they want to be, everyone's there because they have an enthusiasm for Shakespeare," she said. "Rather than telling people how to make that happen its working with people to make that happen."

Another unique aspect of this production is the location, sophomore Mary Elsa Henrichs, who is playing Ariel said. While in the past the Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company has performed in venues like Washington Hall's main stage, this time they are performing in a much smaller space on the third floor of Washington Hall called the Lab Theater. The Lab is a black box theater with a maximum seating capacity of 100 people, so the play is taking place in a much more intimate space. The actors see the smaller setting as both a benefit to the performance.

"I really enjoy the intimacy we have up in the black box," Henrichs said.

The actor playing Prospero, Michael Vaclav, said he also feels the location of the performance adds to it. Vaclav is a second-year graduate student who has been with the company since 2013.

“For the Lab, it’s really fun because you can just sort of have a conversation with someone on stage and not have to worry about doing a 3/4 turn and projecting to the back of the house,” he said. “Unless you really whisper, people are going to hear what you’re saying. It’s a very real space.”

For Vaclav in particular, this performance is more than just an extracurricular. It being his final performance with the Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company, the role of Prospero gains a deeper meaning.

“Prospero is kind of seen as Shakespeare’s farewell to the stage, especially his epilogue,” Vaclav said. “So for me being able to give the epilogue and also have that be my send-off is a really special moment.”

While Not-So-Royal Shakespeare has performed other Shakespeare classics like “Hamlet,” “The Merchant of Venice” and “Macbeth” over the past couple of years, “The Tempest” is sure to stand out in part because of the themes and ideas it contains that makes it unlike Shakespeare’s other work in terms of the themes and ideas it deals with, Henrichs said.

“I think it’s so unlike any other Shakespeare play, in that we’re all on this island stripped of any of the trappings of society or civilization,” Henrichs said. “It’s this sort of examination of what humanity is when were removed from society.”

This examination of humanity is a theme central to the production, Vaclav said.

“For a modern audience, it’s interesting to see what the characters do when society is stripped away,” Vaclav said. “It’s also interesting to see characters, like Prospero, grapple with what’s human and what’s not.”

The performances will take place in the Washington Hall Lab Theater at 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and 4 p.m. Saturday. Tickets will be sold at the door but are also available for purchase at the LaFortune Box Office.

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