

deus ex machina can save the day.

Through all of this, Cleante continues to plead for “moderation,” bemoaning Orgon’s flying “back and forth between extremes.” This respect for perspective, for a middle way, would be the predominating factor in the following century and a half-long Age of Reason (and is beautifully represented in Richard Hay’s lush, vanishing point perspective set). Vile figures like Tartuffe, who attempt to distort truth for personal gain, would be the enemy in times like those, yet fools like Orgon existed, and will continue to exist, even in times like these. Fine ensemble work from the cast and deliciously delivered Molière couplets will leave you in stitches and pleading for some “moderation” in your own life. — CA

The Tempest

(Elizabethan Stage, through Oct. 6)

The Tempest, the last play Shakespeare wrote by himself, contains the famous valedictory speech beginning “Our revels now are ended.” Because Libby Appel is retiring as artistic director of the OSF after 12 seasons (though she is directing a play next year), she chose this tale of revenge, magic and forgiveness as her farewell play (as she also did years ago at the Indiana Repertory Theatre when she left for the OSF). That’s a timeworn tradition for Shakespearean directors, and one

expects a marvelous, inventive production to cap off a splendid career.

This is not that production. Some parts stand out: The humorous bits of *The Tempest* — where Caliban (Dan Donohue) believes that the drunken Trinculo (Christopher DuVal) and Stefano (Michael J. Hume) will free him from his servitude to Prospero (Derrick Lee Weeden) — come off beautifully, with energy and synergy lacking in the more serious scenes.

Why did Appel cast Weeden as her stand-in, the magician who calls off his magic and breaks his staff? He may have the deep voice she thinks necessary for Prospero, but he can’t carry off the role; he’s much too aware of himself as a *serious ac-TOR*. And if the Prospero isn’t good, it matters little if Ariel (Nancy Rodriguez) flits around with joyful wit or if her cloud-clad sprites speak lines from various sonnets to mark the love of Miranda (Nell Geisslinger) and Ferdinand (John Tufts).

Though the script’s exploration of slavery is cursory, some productions manage to investigate it much further, given all that happened between the time the play was written and today. This one balances an African American Prospero with a white, and white-painted, Caliban, but that is as far as the investigation goes. And scenes where Ariel seems to flirt with Prospero detract from an understanding of Ariel’s own subjugation. I hear that Appel’s



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Dan Donohue, famous as Scar in touring productions of *The Lion King*, plays a white Caliban to Derrick Lee Weeden’s African American Prospero

Cherry Orchard was excellent; unfortunately, it closed in July, and so we’re left with this smooth but less than stellar production. — SS

Tracy’s Tiger

(New Theatre, through Oct. 28)

What to say about *Tiger*? It’s fun and funny, with some depth — but one can tell the musical isn’t quite finished. This is its first season: OSFers Linda Alper, Douglas Langworthy and Penny Metropoulos worked with playwright Sterling Tinsley to bring a novella by William Saroyan (author of *The Human Comedy*) to the stage. There’s a live band, which means that even in tiny New Theatre, performers must wear microphones (a bizarre sight at the OSF). The songs sound like the smoothest combination of Serious Broadway and commercial pop, and the setting — San Francisco, with songs like “Daly City” — is clearly meant to appeal to the festival’s huge Cali audience. But the storyline is muddled, which detracts from the several moments of deeper connection.

Thomas Tracy (Jeremy Peter Johnson)

grows up with a sort of soul-embodying tiger (a slinkily excellent Beat-inflected René Millan). When he meets Laura Luthy (Laura Morache), he falls for her because, well, she has a tiger (Nell Geisslinger) too. Laura Luthy otherwise has little to do and presents no kind of real love interest (nor does the bland Tracy, for that matter).

But there’s a scene with Laura’s mother (Miriam Laube) that hurts Tracy’s chances with Laura, and he keeps ignoring his tiger, and ... he is put in jail, where the best scene takes place. Officer Earl Huzinga (David Kelly) sings of a childhood experience with a tiger-tamer (Linda Alper); somehow the one song suspends time and takes the audience into a land of tenuous connections, strong emotions and the desires of youth. Some of the extraneous stuff needs to go — and the actors say they’ve been working with changes all season, so perhaps *Tiger* will become tighter and more meaningful. For now, it gestures at Big Ideas and Big Thoughts but doesn’t quite reach them. Still, it’s courageous and worth some investment from audience and performers alike. — SS **EW**



The glorious combative wordplay between Petruchio (Michael Elich) and Kate (Vilma Silva) makes the early scenes engaging

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