

Did The Tempest Conjure Up the Latest Storm at Brand Library Park

Leigh Kennicott [Reviews](#) - [Theater](#)



Snowden-Iffy, Stier. Photo by Maggie Jorgensen.

It was biting cold when I came to Brand Park to catch *The Tempest*, my favorite Shakespeare comedy. But that has been the least of the beleaguered production's worries. Last weekend saw at least one rained-out performance, and everyone hopes Sunday's winds will die down for their last three shows this weekend.

In *The Tempest* Shakespeare reputedly ripped his story from the headlines about a ship-wreck of an English mercantile ship in or near Barbados. His story is fanciful. Having been deposed in a coup, Prospero, the rightful Duke (played by Jennipher Lewis), was exiled with an infant daughter. Now a budding teen, Miranda (Caitlin Stoodley), has never seen a "comely" man until Prince Ferdinand (Nick Gallagher) washes ashore, along with an assortment of comic crew members. The only other inhabitants – Caliban (also Nick Gallagher), a grotesque monster enslaved by Prospero, and Ariel (played variously by the cast) – make up the rest of the characters. Susannah Snowden-Ifft and Julia Stier have giddy fun and the clowns Stephano and Trinculo. Prospero's magic and several kegs of grog play havoc until at last, all is sorted out.

In keeping with Shakespeare's conception providing vignettes that we imagine take place at various parts of the island, director Rebecca Lynne has demarked her stage against a tree down the slope from Brand Library; their only props consist of a piece of sail and a trunk. Generally, Dean Productions performances at Brand have devised makeshift stages for their casts of skilled actors. These performers are every bit as engaging, but a series of unfortunate casting decisions mar Shakespeare's traditional rom-com, said to be the last of his completed works.

The Dean Production Company's trademark interactive fun really needs an active and engaged audience to work. Their important mission helping kids with cancer also depends on the support of their community. However, the timing of performing this balmy play outside in October is unfortunate. The adjacent library, housing a perfectly suitable auditorium and stage, demands financing for after-hours security. Too bad Glendale is too chintzy to allow for this service.

The Tempest plays at 7:30 pm through this weekend at Brand Park, 1601 W. Mountain Ave., Glendale, CA 91201. The event is free. Go to www.deanproductionstheatre.com for reservations, but walk-ins are welcome.

