

“WE ARE SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS ARE MADE ON”

**THE TEMPEST BY EMB SAY C OF E (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL,
AT FELLS THEATRE ON THURSDAY 13TH JULY
APPRAISED BY ROWENA ENGLISH**

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Embsay CofE Primary School for your marvellous interpretation of The Tempest as part of the Off-Grid Shakespeare programme. It was a great night at the theatre, and I'd like to take this time here to mention a few things that I really loved!

In the introduction to your show, you shared with the audience your aspiration to create a “truly personal and unique” production of The Tempest, something which you undeniably achieved. From your exploration of Polynesian culture in the beautiful props and costumes - which felt as though they had washed up on the island - to the culmination of the story with Caliban embracing their freedom, your creative choices were confident and considered.

This was a production packed with incredible visual treats performed with confidence and flair by your committed and capable Company. The “Full fathom five” scene was beautifully staged with Ariel's ethereal movements and chilling lament inviting the audience into Ferdinand's state of confusion and despair. Similarly, the trance sequence where Prospero brought everyone back together, was a poignant piece of staging. The slow, circling procession, whispering voices and flickering candles creating an otherworldly quality which is essential to the play.

These ensemble moments showcased the Company's strong physicality without ever overshadowing the emotional undercurrents of the scenes. The shifting moods of the play were supported throughout by thoughtful and thought-provoking musical choices which were woven seamlessly into the scenes. I must commend the skill with which your Company balanced these darker elements of the play, with the comic antics of Trinculo and Stephano, and the romance between Miranda and Ferdinand.

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Casting multiple actors to perform Trinculo and Caliban together created exciting comic opportunities and made use of your Company’s many skilled performers. I loved the transitions between the multiple actors playing Prospero’s through the passing of the ‘magic garment’, and the moment they came together to deliver the line “We are such stuff as dreams are made of”.

As a Company, I was impressed by your focus and maturity throughout the process, as well as your preparedness for the technical and dress rehearsals which you approached with positivity and professionalism. Your production was made possible by your hard work and team spirit, and made exceptional by your commitment and sense of pride in telling your story, your way.

This was a powerful and poignant production of The Tempest from a talented and professional Company.