

When the Lovers Meet Prospero. Jeremy Sams's *The Enchanted Island*, a Shakespearean Pastiche*

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Abstract

The Tempest, which has been appropriated and rewritten in different ways since the Restoration, was used and re-used in music and operatic form, i.e., in William Davenant and John Dryden's *The Tempest; or, the Enchanted Island* (1667), and its revision by Thomas Shadwell (1774). Jeremy Sams's *The Enchanted Island* (2011), a Shakespearean pastiche in opera form, with music by Handel, Vivaldi, Purcell, and libretto by Jeremy Sams, re-writes the plot of *The Tempest*, mixing it with that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, imagining a post-play honeymoon cruise for the four lovers of *The Dream*, caught up in Ariel's tempest, whose spell has been corrupted by Sycorax. This operatic version of the two plays engenders a new, hybridised text, that maintains the lightness of the lovers' story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the magic, often disturbing, of *The Tempest*.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, adaptation, opera, Sams, *The Enchanted Island*.

1. Introduction

The plays of Shakespeare have undergone radical transformations in the ways they have been produced and perceived over the centuries. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, they have been adapted, localised, appropriated, reimagined, ignored or altered, and subsequently even canonised in adaptations in other

* I would like to thank New York photographer Ken Howard for permission to reproduce his photos of the performance. Thanks also to Veronika Arkhangel (MET Rehearsal Department Director), Megan Boyle (MET Communications Assistant), Jonathan Tilcher (MET Photo Editor), Paul Cremo (MET Dramaturg/Director of Opera Commissioning Program) for providing me with information, press kit, and the unpublished revised libretto of *The Enchanted Island*.

media, television, comic books, cinema, music, ballet, and opera. *The Tempest*, which has been appropriated and rewritten in different ways since the Restoration, was both used and re-used in different media: it was the first of Shakespeare's plays to be staged in operatic form, adapted by William Davenant in collaboration with John Dryden (*The Tempest; or, the Enchanted Island*, 1667). The adaptation was revised seven years later, and this version was the most familiar to audiences until William Macready restored Shakespeare's play in 1838. The essay will start from the operatic versions of *The Tempest*, which represent a theatrical heritage for the 2011 *Enchanted Island*.

2. Operatic Shakespeare: *The Tempest* from Dryden to Reynolds

William Davenant and John Dryden's *The Tempest; or the Enchanted Island* was first performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields on 7 November 1667. The adaptation retains a third of the original, and introduces new characters. Davenant and Dryden reshaped the original by changing the nature of the usurpers, by providing two new innocents, a sister for Miranda (Dorinda), and the heir of the Dukedom of Mantua (Hippolito), and by inventing a monster sister for Caliban, with the same name as their mother. So, in the adaptation, Sycorax is not Caliban's mother, but his sister. This change expressed an attempt to establish couples among the main characters: two eligible males (Ferdinand and Hippolito, the latter played by an actress in breeches), two eligible females, but also sisters (Miranda and Dorinda), two eligible spirits (Ariel and Milcha). All these characters will be subsequently paired into couples, all mirroring the Prospero/Antonio couple reconciled at the end of the play. Hippolito, who had been raised by Prospero in the other part of the island, has never seen a woman, and finally he meets Dorinda and falls in love with her. New music and dance were introduced, and Samuel Pepys, who saw the play eight times between 1667 and 1669, was impressed by them:

7 November 1667

at noon resolved with Sir W. Pen to go see "The Tempest", an old play of Shakespeare's, acted, I hear, the first day; and so my wife, and girl, and W. Hewer by themselves, and Sir W. Pen and I afterwards by ourselves;

and forced to sit in the side balcone over against the musique-room at the Duke's house, close by my Lady Dorset and a great many great ones. The house mighty full; the King and Court there and the most innocent play that ever I saw; and a curious piece of musique in an echo of half sentences, the echo repeating the former half, while the man goes on to the latter; which is mighty pretty. The play [has] no great wit, but yet good, above ordinary plays. Thence home with [Sir] W. Pen, and there all mightily pleased with the play (Pepys 1974: 521-22).

3 February 1668

At noon home to dinner, and thence after dinner to the Duke of York's house, to the play, "The Tempest", which we have often seen, but yet I was pleased again, and shall be again to see it, it is so full of variety, and particularly this day I took pleasure to learn the tune of the seaman's dance, which I have much desired to be perfect in, and have made myself so (Pepys 1976: 48).

Within seven years the Dryden-Davenant's adaptation was remodelled in operatic form¹. John Downes in *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), attributed the alteration to Thomas Shadwell:

The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island, made into an Opera by Mr. Shadwell, having all New in it; as Scenes, Machines; particularly, one Scene Painted with Myriads of Ariel Spirits; and another flying away, with a Table Furnisht out with Fruits, Sweetmeats and all sorts of Viands; just when Duke Trinculo and his Companions, were going to Dinner; all things perform'd in it so Admirably well, that not any succeeding Opera got more Money (Dowes 1708: 34-35).

For nearly a century its authorship has been discussed². The attribution to Thomas Shadwell of all the changes made in the 1674 text is considered unlikely by Robert Guffey, who dismisses the single authorship of the operatic version, arguing that it "probably was the creation of a number of hands" (1969: ix), which added music, dances, lines, and scenes. The adaptation, first performed at Dorset Garden on 30 April 1674, opens with a setting similar to the masques at court: "a spectacular piece of baroque painting creating

¹ *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island. A comedy. As it is now Acted at His Highness the Duke of York's Theatre*, London, 1574, reprinted in Spenser 1965: 109-99.

² See Lawrence (1904), Squire (1921), Thorn-Drury (1927), Hooker (1942-43), Ward (1946), Milton (1947), McManaway (1953: 78-79).

on its flat surface a sense of airy spaces by the movements of the cupids and angels” (Powell 1984: 63):

The Front of the Stage is open'd, and the Band of twenty-four Violins, with the harpiscals and Theorbo's which accompany the Voices, are plac'd between the Pit and the Stage. While the Overture is playing, the Curtain rises, and discovers a new Frontispiece, joyn'd to the great Pylasters, on each side of the Stage. This Frontispiece is a noble Arch, supported by large wreathed Columns of the Corinthian Order; the wreathings of the columns are beautiful'd with Roses wound round them, and several Cupids flying about them. On the Cornice, just over the Capitals, sits on either side a Figure, with a Trumpet in one hand, and a Palm in the other, representing Fame. A little farther on the same Cornice, on each side of a Compass-pediment, lie a Lion and a Unicorn, the Supporters of the Royal Arms of England.

In the middle of the Arch are several Angels, holding the King Arms, as if they were placing them in the midst of that Compass-pediment. Behind this is the Scene, which represents a thick Cloudy Sky, a very Rocky Coast, and a Tempestuous Sea in perpetual Agitation. This Tempest (suppos'd to be rais'd by Magick) has many dreadful Objects in it, as several Spirits in horrid shapes flying down amongst the Sailers, then rising and crossing in the Air. And when the Ship is sinking, the whole House is darken'd, and a shower of Fire falls upon 'em. This is accompanied with Lightning, and several Claps of Thunder, to the end of the Storm (*The Tempest* 1674 in Spencer 1965: 117).

The operatic *Tempest* retained Bannister's music and songs from Davenant-Dryden's version, with a number of additions: the incidental music written for the occasion by Matthew Locke, new dances by Giovanni Battista Draghi, master of the Queen's music, Pelham Humphrey's new elaborated masques, and further additional music by Pietro Reggi³. Additions to the plot and characters include

³ The Folger Shakespeare Library houses two copies of *Songs and Masques in The Tempest* (entry S2943a and S2843b) – which McManaway considers “perhaps the earliest English libretto” (1953: 71) – containing the texts of the Masque in Act 2, three songs in Act 3, one song in act 4, the Masque in act 5, and the final song in act 5. McManaway (1953) gives the sources of the words and music of the adaptation (p. 87). The music of Humphrey's masque, available in MS in the Library of the Paris Conservatoire, was reprinted by Squire (1921: 573-78), who also surveys the music of the whole adaptation. In 1695 a revival of the operatic *Tempest* was performed with additional music by Henry Purcell. For

enlargements of the masque of Furies (II.iii), the speaking parts in the Masque of Neptune, and more lines to Milcha, who sings a few songs with Ariel. The operatic *Tempest* was one of the most popular plays of the Restoration and of the eighteenth century. Hogan (1952: I.460) lists one-hundred and sixty-eight performances between 1701 and 1750, making it the seventh most popular of Shakespeare's plays performed on the London stages, second only to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* among the comedies and romances (1952: II.716-17).

In the eighteenth century another attempt to set *The Tempest* as an opera is David Garrick's *The Tempest, an Opera*, performed at Drury Lane in 1756. Garrick altered the play, with drastic reductions of Shakespeare's original, inserting lines from Dryden and Davenant. As he had done with *The Fairies*⁴ the previous year, Garrick set the dialogues almost wholly from Shakespeare, interpolated by a song every few minutes. He inserted thirty-two songs and duets by Shakespeare, Dryden, and Shadwell, with music by John Christopher Smith. According to Richard Cross, the prompter of Drury Lane, the introductory dialogue explained the reason why the adaptation was "much hiss'd and dislik'd"⁵ the first night. Theophilus Cibber dismissed Garrick's adaptation as a "*Tempest* castrated into an Opera" and wondered: "Were Shakespeare's ghost to rise, would he not frown with indignation on this pilfering pedlar of poetry, who thus shamefully mangles, mutilates, and emasculates his plays?" (Cibber 1756: 36); Tate Wilkinson criticised the main singer: "Signora Curioni, an Italian singer performed in it, but she was dreadfully heavy" (Wilkinson 1790: 213). Garrick's attempt at an opera version of *The Tempest* was a failure⁶ as its only six

Purcell's tercentenary, the adaptation was revived at The Old Vic in London in 1959 (Lewis: 1959).

⁴ *The Fairies*, an operatic version in three acts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with music by John Christopher Smith and twenty-eight songs with lyrics by Shakespeare, Dryden, Lansdowne, and Waller, was performed eleven times in February, March, October, and November 1755. The playbills announced it as "A New English Opera" (Hogan 1952: I.468-69).

⁵ Cross (1756), entry 117, Feb. Wed. 11.

⁶ See F.A. Hedgcock's ungenerous comment on Garrick's approach to *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "The truth is that Garrick was not capable of appreciating Shakespeare as a poet; fanciful pieces like the *Dream* or the *Tempest* were to him formless and barbaric compositions" (quoted in Stone 1956: 5). See also Summers (1922: lv).

performances and the estimates of the box office indicate⁷. In 1757, the actor manager decided to go back to Shakespeare's original, which was highly successful with its one-hundred and fourteen performances between 1757 and 1787.

The very last operatic *Tempest* was Frederick Reynolds' production performed at Covent Garden fifteen times in 1821. The playbill of the first performance (15 May 1821) announces the play "as altered and adapted by Dryden and Davenant/ With additional Musick, new Scenery, Machinery, Dresses, and Decoration/ The Overture composed by Mr. Davy/ The Original Musick by Purcell – The Additional Musick by Haydn, Mozart, Dr. Arne, Linley, Braham, Mayer, Martini, Pucitta, Rossini, etc./ Selected, adapted, and arranged by Mr. Bishop"⁸. This was Reynolds' third attempt to turn Shakespeare's comedies into operatic versions⁹. He was convinced that his versions were an "embellishment" rather than a "mutilation" of the original. In his autobiography, regarding his *Tempest*, he writes: "we have reason to presume, that, since I did not mar the regular disposition of his fable, Shakspeare would have regarded this musical arrangement, this restoration of his sonnets, rather as an *embellishment* to, than, as a *mutilation* of, his pieces" (Reynolds 1816: II.410). Reynolds' operatic versions were successful in terms of audience response, but were harshly criticised by reviewers. Even William Charles Macready, who played Prospero in Reynolds' operatic versions, rejected the adaptation:

In a *mélange* that was called Shakespeare's *Tempest*, with songs interpolated by Reynolds among the mutilations and barbarous ingraftings of Dryden and Davenport [Davenant], and sung by Miss Stephens and Miss M. Tree, I had to act, May 15th, 1821, the remnant that was left of the character of Prospero, but not for many nights (Macready 1875: 171).

⁷ The receipts decreased constantly from the first performance (£ 180) to the last (£ 130). See Cross (1756), entry 117, 119, 123, 125, 130, 142.

⁸ Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. A collection of playbills from Covent Garden Theatre, 1821-1822. TS British Playbills, 1754-1882: British Playbills, 1754-1882. British Library. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*, tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/4DmkE6 (last accessed September 11, 2017).

⁹ Reynolds arranged six operatic versions: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1816), *The Comedy of Errors* (1819), *Twelfth Night* (1820), *The Tempest* (1821), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1821) and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1824).

An anonymous reviewer in *John Bull* wrote that “The Tempest [...] revived at Covent Garden with equivocal success, at which we are not surprised; the system of making Tragedies Operas, and singers actresses, is an absurd one [...]. *The Tempest*, even with additional airs, has failed ‘to Raise the Wind’” (1821: 189). What annoyed nineteenth-century reviewers and critics was the mix-up of lyrics and music coming from different sources, belonging to different styles and tastes. Such a mix-up, or *pasticcio*, had characterised the operatic versions of *The Tempest* and other Shakespearean plays a century earlier, and would become the engine of the success of the 2011 *Enchanted Island*.

3. The Enchanted Island: a Shakespearean Pastiche

The Enchanted Island, a Shakespearean pastiche in opera form, with music from operas, oratorios and cantatas by Handel, Vivaldi, Rameau, Purcell, and others, with a new libretto by Jeremy Sams, was, as its deviser writes, “inspired by the 18th-century tradition of the pastiche” (Sams 2011). Pastiche (or *pasticcio*) was a popular genre in baroque music. It combined existing music by one or several composers with a new text and storyline: “Arias were selected mainly by the singers in a given production, the recitatives and ensembles being supplied by the house composer, music director or even the theatre manager”¹⁰. The music is mainly a pastiche of Handel oratorios and cantatas, with passages from Vivaldi and Rameau:

TABLE 1

<i>Compositor</i>	<i>Arias, cantatas, etc.</i>
Handel	30
Vivaldi	8
Rameau	6
Campra	2
Ferrandini	1
Purcell	1
Rebel	1

¹⁰ *The Oxford Music on line*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000021051>, last accessed September 10, 2018.

The Enchanted Island premiered at the Metropolitan Theatre in New York at a New Year's Eve Gala on 31 December 2011¹¹. This baroque pastiche, as the author calls it, re-writes the plots of *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, mixing the two stories, imagining a post-play honeymoon cruise for the four lovers of *The Dream*, caught up in Ariel's tempest, whose spell has been corrupted by Sycorax, who asks Caliban to substitute "blood of a lizard" for "blood of a dragon" as the magic ingredient. The opera, both in choice of music and libretto is an extreme pastiche, baroque but also postmodern in its construction. It looks back to the baroque masques in setting, and mythological innuendo through introduction of the character of Neptune (who was also introduced by Thomas Shadwell's 1664 operatic adaptation of the Davenant/Dryden play), but it is a postmodern pastiche with the use, re-use, and rearrangement of both music and lyrics from different sources. This operatic version engenders a new hybridised text that maintains the lightness of the lover's story in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the magic, often disturbing, of *The Tempest*. The music assembles baroque music from different countries and composers in an attempt to recreate a unique performative text where music and lyrics come together, without any hierarchy between music and libretto. As Jeremy Sams argues, "the music should seem more a symptom of the story rather than a cause" (Sams 2011). The idea of mixing up the two plays came naturally to Sams:

My thinking was, simply put, that a new take on old music needs a new take on an old story. It's hard (at least for me) to think of stories without thinking of Shakespeare – and it was listening to Purcell that first brought *The Tempest* to mind. Dryden's version, with music by Purcell, was indeed called *The Enchanted Island*, a title too good to miss. Dryden, though, had spotted that a desert island is going, by definition,

¹¹ The opera was written by Jeremy Sams, conducted by William Christie; with David Daniels (Prospero), Joyce Didonato (Sycorax), Plácido Domingo (Neptune), Danielle De Niese (Ariel), Luca Pisaroni (Caliban), Anthony Roth Costanzo (Ferdinand), Lisette Oropesa (Miranda), Layla Claire (Helena), Paul Appleby (Demetrius), Elliot Madore (Lysander), and Elizabeth DeShong (Hermia). It was first performed at The Metropolitan Opera House at Lincoln Center in New York, 31 December 2011 and is now available on DVD (*The Enchanted Island* 2012).

to be slightly devoid of love interest, and love is what fuels the aria-making machine that is Baroque opera. [...] Dryden's addition of a boy-mad sister to Miranda wasn't too inspiring. But his fleshing out of the sorceress Sycorax – Caliban's mother and Ariel's former mistress – was too good not to steal. It wasn't too much of a stretch to imagine her seduced, spurned, and then banished by Prospero to the dark side of the island. He steals her land, her son, her servant, her heart – all useful motives for revenge (Sams 2011).

Sams, even though he writes that Dryden's "fleshing out of [...] Sycorax was too good not to steal" (2011), departs completely from the Sycorax of the Restoration's *Enchanted Island*, where she is not the protagonist. Indeed she has a minor part in the plot, is mentioned just twice by Ariel and speaks only twenty-two lines (eight in III.iv and fourteen in IV.ii). Sams gives Sycorax, who in Shakespeare's *Tempest* is mentioned only seven times (three by Prospero and four by Caliban), a real life in his story, making her the main protagonist of the opera and the real engine of the plot. Sycorax, who lives in the other part of the island¹², reveals her plan for vengeance on Prospero while speaking of an old affair with him:

SYCORAX

I'll take my vengeance,
Be revenged on him at last
How I long to take my vengeance
For the wrongs of the past. [...]
First he loved me, then he left me
And, abandoned and forsaken,
Yes abandoned and forsaken
Here I lie and here I languish
Ah my pain, my anguish
How I ache and how I burn. [...]
I have suffered
I have suffered
I have suffered
He must suffer in return
In return¹³.

¹² In Dryden and Davenant's adaptation, the other part of the island was inhabited by Hippolito.

¹³ The libretto and the music of the Opera have never been published. The first

Moreover, Sycorax is the character with the highest number of words in the libretto, followed by Prospero, Ariel and Caliban. As is clear from the chart, Sams has distributed the lines among the characters, according to their importance in the opera.

TABLE 2

<i>Characters</i>	<i>Words</i>
Sycorax	1079
Prospero	1024
Ariel	949
Caliban	845
Miranda	591
Neptune	546
Hermia	540
Demetrius	497
Helena	469
Lysander	334
Ferdinand	314
Chorus	260
Quartet	52
Ensemble	48

Unlike *The Tempest*, Sams's opera starts with Prospero who, after promising Ariel his freedom ("Ah, if you would earn your freedom/ Then do as I command you"), asks him to set up a tempest in order to bring Ferdinand to the island – an event we find in Shakespeare at I.ii.189-238¹⁴, when Prospero asks Ariel if he has fulfilled his orders.

(used for the 2011 performances) is available at <http://the-enchanted-island-libretto.blogspot.com/2012/10/the-enchanted-island-libretto.html> (last accessed, September 10, 2018); the second, on demand, at <https://issuu.com/scoresondemand/stacks/c9f4da0efb7146af8935d26556e7c10a> (last accessed September 10, 2018). For the 2014 revival, a revised script was produced. I thank Paul Cremona, Dramaturg/ Director of the Met's Opera Commissioning Program for providing a copy of it. All the references to the libretto are from this version.

¹⁴ All references to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are to the Arden third edition (Shakespeare: 1999).

FIGURE 1

David Daniels as Prospero and Danielle de Niese as Ariel © Ken Howard/MET



ARIEL

recitativo

My master, generous master,
I'll do whatever, whatever you may ask.
However outlandish or onerous the task. [...]

PROSPERO

Then what I desire should be simple.

ARIEL

Name it...

PROSPERO

A storm.

ARIEL

What kind? Snow, sand, hail?

PROSPERO

A simple storm!

(showing his books)

I have the spell here, for you to perform.

Unlike Shakespeare's play, where the tempest is presented at its very height, with terrified sailors running across the stage, in the

opera it is set up later – forty minutes after the beginning of the performance. Ariel casts Prospero's spell on a model boat, unaware that Caliban has replaced it with one by Sycorax. The spell on the model boat (see picture) is reminiscent of the opening scene of Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*, where John Gielgud as Prospero plays with a model boat, engendering a tempest.

FIGURE 2

Danielle de Niese as Ariel © Ken Howard/MET

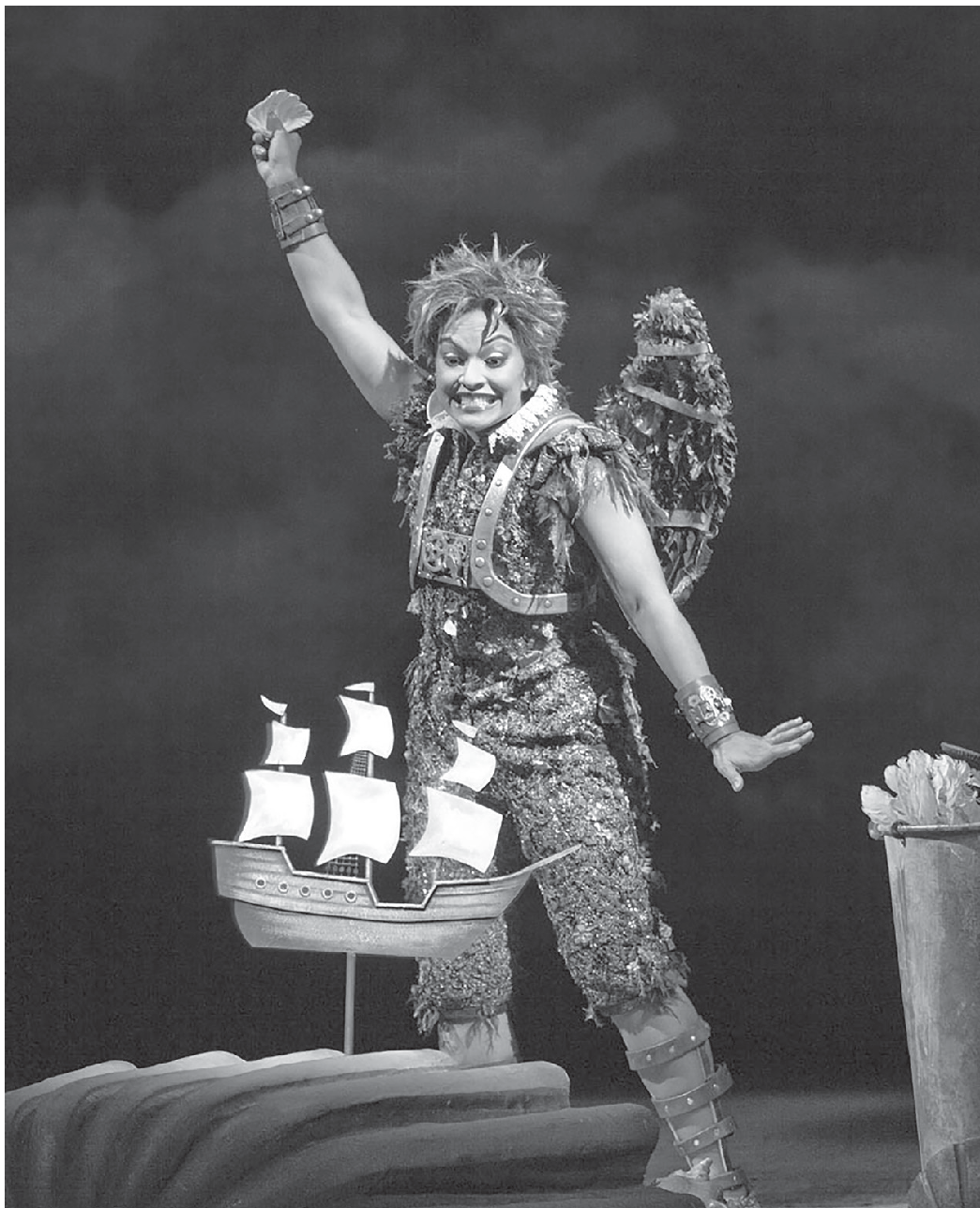


FIGURE 3

Luca Pisaroni as Caliban and Joyce DeDonato as Sycorax © Ken Howard/MET



Sams seems to follow Davenant and Dryden's example, which opened with Ventoso and Mustacho discussing the weather ("Ventoso: What, a Sea comes in? Mustacho: Hoaming! we shall have foul weather", Dryden 1970: 9). In the opera, the four lovers from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are happily singing an aria from Handel ("Endless pleasure, endless love"):

At sea

8. *Quartet: "Days of pleasure, nights of love"* (Helena, Hermia, Demetrius, Lysander)

Handel: Semele, HWV 58, Act I, Scene 4

HELENA, HERMIA, DEMETRIUS & LYSANDER¹⁵

Days of pleasure, nights of love

Days of pleasure, days of pleasure,

Days of pleasure, nights of love

Sea below and sky above...

Sea below, sky above

Days of plea – sure, nights of love.

Sea below and sky above.

Days of pleasure, nights of love.

Suddenly the storm starts¹⁶, announced by the chorus:

9. *The Storm (chorus)*

André Campra: Idoménée, Act II, Scene 1, "O Dieux! O justes Dieux!"

CHORUS

Ye gods, ye gods above,

see the tempest arise!

The waves, the seas

leap up and admonish the skies!

Ye gods, ye gods above,

see the tempest arise!

The waves, the seas

leap up and admonish the skies!

¹⁵ The libretto gives a description of the "Lovers' Quartet" ("DEMETRIUS Tenor [...] Dreamy Romantic, Quixotic. HELENA Dramatic Soprano [...] haughty, fair, intellectual. Keen botanist. LYSANDER Baritone [...] Heroic, sporty. HERMIA Mezzo [...] Full of spirit. Hoydenish, spits venom").

¹⁶ Similarly, Trevor Nunn's movie adaptation of *Twelfth Night* starts with Viola and Sebastian happily singing in the saloon of a steamer, when suddenly "The steamer plunges almost perpendicularly down a massive wave and smashes through the next one almost disappearing under the spray and wash" (Nunn 1996: 5). Nunn, like Sams, starts before the shipwreck, showing the twins (like the lovers) happy and inseparable.

FIGURE 4

The Lovers' Shipwreck © Ken Howard/MET



FIGURE 5

Paul Appelby as Demetrius, Layla Claire as Helena, Elliot Madore as Lysander, and Elisabeth DeShong as Hermia © Ken Howard/MET



Figure 5 shows the *Midsummer* female lovers, with a blonde Hermia and a red-haired Helena. What is surprising is that some of the physical features of the lovers have been transferred to their voices: Hermia, who is described as “dwarfish” by Lysander (“Get you gone, you dwarf”, III.ii.328)¹⁷ is a mezzosoprano, a lower voice than Helena’s, which is soprano. The switch between a blonde Helena and a dark-haired Hermia can often be found in performances of *The Dream*, depending on the choice of the actress (Helen Mirren, for example, was a blonde Hermia in Peter Hall’s 1970 RSC production). The male lovers, as in Shakespeare, have a supporting role: Demetrius, and then Lysander, are, by a spell, in love with Miranda. The lovers’ subplot is intertwined with the plot of the other lovers, Miranda and Ferdinand. Everything is complicated by Ariel’s mistake. At this point of the opera, Ariel, ordered by Prospero to bring Ferdinand to the island, casts the wrong spell over the sea, and when he sees Demetrius he believes him to be Ferdinand and by another spell makes him fall in love with Miranda. Here Ariel takes the role of Puck in *The Dream*. Like Robin Goodfellow, he makes a second mistake, casting another spell on Lysander, believed to be Ferdinand. Unlike Puck, Ariel cannot count on an Oberon settling everything with “Dian’s bud” to be crushed “into Lysander’s eye” (III.ii.366). The tone of Prospero’s reaction to Ariel’s mistakes is reminiscent of Oberon’s:

The Enchanted Island

PROSPERO, *to Ariel*
 All I’ve done is try to help you
 and protect you!
 [...] You go back and do as
 I told you,
 yes, do as I told you.
 Go straight back and do as
 I told you,
 yes, do as I told you.
 Why did I decide to care for you
 at all?

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

OBERON
 This is thy negligence: still thou
 mistakest,
 Or else committest thy knaveries
 wilfully.
 (III.ii.345-346)

¹⁷ All the references to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are to the Arden Third Series edition (Shakespeare 2017).

The only way to settle everything is, in the best tradition both of baroque pastiche and of baroque spectacles, the intercession of divinity:

ARIEL

Arise! Arise, great Neptune, hear my prayer!
 Arise, arise from slumber, or whate'er
 might ail you. Hear a spirit's request
 And scour your boundless, heaving breast
 By which I mean, the sea...
 for Ferdinand. That's "Fer-di-nand!"
 So this captive spirit can be free!
 Love, Ariel...

Ariel asks Neptune to set up another storm to bring Ferdinand to Prospero's island. The decision to use the mythological character of Neptune was probably inspired by Shadwell's 1674 *Tempest*. In his operatic version, a masque with Neptune, Amphitrites, Ocean, Thetis, together with tritons and nereides, was inserted into an entertainment with dance and music, to celebrate the new couples. Unlike Shadwell, where Neptune is the powerful god of the sea, in Sams – after the tradition of opera buffa – he is, at least at the beginning, overacting and, above all, presented as the shadow of himself; he seems to have lost "his" sea, which has been corrupted by the humans, provoking, on purpose, the hilarity of the audience:

NEPTUNE

Go swimming with my dolphins?
 If you can find them,
 then you're welcome!
 My ocean
 My deep blue heaven,
 my realm apart,
 when I think of it now,
 it breaks my heart.
 Gone forever,
 My perfect sea.
 My oceans,
 Once upon a time,
 how sublime they used to be.
 This my gift, from god to mortal, every droplet, every wave.

But like spoiled, ungrateful children, they destroyed the gift I gave.
They destroyed the gift I gave.
They destroyed the gift I gave.
Gone forever,
My perfect sea.
My oceans...
Once upon a time,
How sublime they used to be.

While this moment has a comic effect, the scene begins with the arrival of Neptune in a magnificent entrance with nereids and mermaids and in a sumptuous setting devised by Phelim McDermott and Julian Crouch (Fig. 6).

FIGURE 6

Plácido Domingo as Neptune © Ken Howard/MET



Once Ariel has recalled how great Neptune is, the God decides to intervene and causes another storm that brings Ferdinand onto the island (Fig. 7).

NEPTUNE

I'd forgotten that I was the lord of the ocean
Ev'ry tempest is in my power
Ev'ry shipwreck is in my sway
I am your master, yet your servant
Therefore I will do as you say
Ev'ry tempest is in my power
Ev'ry shipwreck is in my sway
I am your master, yet your servant
Therefore I will do as you say
Therefore I will do as you say

In my anguish, in my distraction
I neglected your humble plea
But I will search, and I will find him
If I have to scour the sea
If I have to scour the sea

FIGURE 7

Anthony Roth Costanzo as Ferdinand © Ken Howard/MET



The opera ends with another intervention by Neptune who, a real *deus ex-machina*, ends the war between Prospero and Sycorax,

reminding him how badly he had behaved with her and her son. Prospero admits his guilt and, kneeling, asks to be forgiven.

PROSPERO

Forgive me, please forgive me
Pardon the wrongs I've done
Forgive me, please forgive me
Pardon what I have done
Pardon what I have done
Yes I was cruel, was heartless
Pardon the wrongs I've done...

I brought despair and heartache
On you and everyone.
Broken, contrite
If only I could right
All the wrongs I've done [...]

SYCORAX

Now your voice has spoken,
Spoken with mercy.
I forgive you.
Prospero bows to Sycorax.

FIGURE 8

Plácido Domingo as Neptune, David Daniels as Prospero, Luca Pisaroni as Caliban, and Joyce DiDonato as Sycorax © Ken Howard/MET



Then Prospero speaks the epilogue, on the one hand following Prospero's in *The Tempest*, on the other taking the same tone as Puck's epilogue in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

PROSPERO

Our revels now are ended.
 These our actors, were all spirits
 and have melted into air, into thin air.
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 the cloud-capp'd towers,
 the gorgeous palaces,
 the solemn temples,
 the great globe itself,
 shall dissolve,
 and like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 leave not a rack behind.

Finally, Prospero breaks his wand in two, and as he does so, the very last aria is sung by the entire company, in an ensemble, the Hallelujah from Handel's oratorio *Judas Maccabaeus*: "Now a bright new day is dawning".

ENSEMBLE

Now a bright new day is dawning; let the people rejoice!
 The darkness has passed.
 Rejoice!
 The day of gladness is here at last.
 The seraphim are singing with united voice.
 Now a bright now day is dawning.
 Let the people rejoice!
 Rejoice!
 May all the world rejoice!

The finale reverses completely the melancholic atmosphere of *The Tempest*, and, with its joyful celebration of life, recalls the happy endings of the Romantic comedies¹⁸.

¹⁸ See, for instance, the ending of Puck's epilogue: "So, goodnight unto you all./ Give me your hands, if we be friends,/ And Robin shall restore amends" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V.i.421-23); and Feste's final song in *Twelfth Night*: "A great while ago the world begun,/ With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,/"

Even though Sams's *The Enchanted Island* is a brand-new twenty-first century pastiche, nonetheless it develops the dramatic possibilities of music present in Shakespeare's original and exploited by the Restoration adapters of the play. *The Tempest*, as Daniel Albright writes (2007: 10), is a "virtual opera" with its cues for dances and soft music. It reflects the qualities of the Jonsonian masque (Orgel 1987: 45), alluding to it both in the masque itself and in the opening storm, which can be considered a sort of Jonson-like antimasque. It is due to the operatic potentials of the play that *The Tempest* has been, since its first performance at court, adapted in musical form for Restoration, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theatres. Sams's *The Enchanted Island*, with storms at sea, deserted beaches, and enchanted forests recalls the elaborate baroque stage sets; at the same time with its mash-up or remix of *The Tempest* and of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it may remind us of the Renaissance practices of combining texts. It is this *contaminatio* that engenders the *pasticcio* – combining the languages of baroque theatre and drama, and baroque music – and that successfully¹⁹ keeps up the tradition of composing opera in the language of Shakespeare.

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But that's all one, our play is done,/And we'll strive to please you every day" (V.i.398-401).

¹⁹ Among the most positive reviews to the 2011 first performance and the 2012 revival see Bernheimer (2011), Rosenberg (2011), Silverman (2011), Isaacs (2012), Machart (2012), Moomjy (2012), Mejias (2012). See also Amy Scott-Douglass' essay on the opera "as a revision of *The Tempest* that subverts the gender politics of Shakespeare's play" (2013: 1).

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