

Theatre arts review

Swept away by *Tempest* production

IN THE delightful surroundings of Guildford's Castle Grounds, on a rare dry and balmy English summer evening, amateur theatre group The Herald Players performed their production of one of Shakespeare's best known plays, *The Tempest*.

The play follows Prospero, the usurped Duke of Milan, who was shipwrecked on a mysterious island by his

treacherous brother and members of the Italian King's court.

Some 12 years later, when the same party are on a ship nearby, he summons a storm to bring them to the island and, with the help of his loyal spirit Ariel, wreaks a mischievous, but powerful revenge upon them where ultimately love and reconciliation conquer all.

As a cast of 17 took to the stage, the audience was struck

by the fabulous visuals provided by the surroundings and the character costumes.

Performed next to the bandstand, the setting was perfectly suited to a play that places so much importance on nature and mystery and the costumes perfectly complimented this – especially Ariel's who seemed to disappear into the bushes in her leafy camouflage.

Nigel Dams's portrayal of

Prospero was of an imposing and commanding, yet fair, leader whose softer side was exposed during the scenes with his daughter. These scenes were some of the most touching, and Dams did well to maintain a realistic balance between Prospero's powerful and gentle sides.

Alongside Prospero was his loyal spirit Ariel, played by Jane Bryant, who delivered an ener-

getic and mischievous performance with a wonderful singing voice and a touching side when requesting her freedom from service.

Miranda and Ferdinand, played by Amy Yorston and Oliver Cookson, provided the love story that united the previously discordant families.

They delivered sincere emotional performances with Yorston in particular demon-

strating excellent acting and expressive gesture and voice.

Stephen Rowland's depiction of Caliban was one of the outstanding performances, convincing in the role of the savage slave of Prospero, sinister and tragic-comic down to his primitive appearance.

Along with two members of the King's court, Trinculo the jester and Stephano the drunken butler, Caliban provides the

comic relief when he mistakes Stephano for his new 'master'. Trinculo and Stephano, played by Peter Dawson and Dan Maher, made an amusing and amiable comic duo.

The members of the king's court were also pleasingly comical. Ross Welland and Jeremy Cogman, King Alonso and Prospero's conspiring brothers, displayed wit and enthusiasm in their cynical

and manipulative guises.

The Tempest was an enjoyable and lively production complemented by the surroundings and fine weather. Although, given the title, perhaps a little British rain wouldn't spoil the atmosphere!

The Tempest continues until Saturday, July 21. Tickets on the door or at the Tourist Information Centre.

Caroline Steer