

Spring Play Has Unconventional Theme

The set included Mars-like rocks, images from NASA to give the stage an otherworldly feel, “alien” makeup, and flowing blue, green and purple costumes.

Every year the Miramonte theater department performs a spring play, but this year’s spring play was the first time in recent years that the cast has put such an unconventional twist on a classic. The Miramonte Players performed Shakespeare’s “The Tempest” at Miramonte from May 19-21. Instead of the classic island setting of “The Tempest,” the play was set in outer space, which, according to senior Eleanor Roeder, fits the original script in an almost uncanny way.

“The script surprisingly adapted very well to the space theme. The ‘ship’ ended up becoming a spaceship, so the only serious inconsistency that Ms. Cousins had to be sure of cutting were the references to water and the ocean,” Roeder, who played Ariel in the production, said. “Our costumes, makeup and set crew have found very unique, abstract pieces for the show, and their interpretation is really creating a beautiful show.”

The original Shakespearean script was cut down to make the performance a more reasonable length. However, no word changes to the actual script were made, staying true to the words of Shakespeare. The changes made to the props, stage setting and costumes this year was hefty.

“It’s all still Shakespeare’s words. We’ve cut a little bit of the text out, but we haven’t changed any of the words. Because of the set and the costumes, the props and the sound effects it’s pretty clear what’s going on,” director of the play and Drama teacher Heather Cousins said.

Many different directors of plays and movies have performed

and adapted Shakespeare's works in less conventional ways. A better-known adaptation is Baz Luhrmann's "Romeo + Juliet" (1996), which tells the classic tale of Romeo and Juliet set in Verona Beach with guns and the mafia instead of fair Verona with swords and rival houses. In Andy Fickman's film "She's the Man" (2006) Shakespeare's case of mistaken identities in "Twelfth Night" is set at a present-day boarding school. These are just two of many adaptations of Shakespeare's works.

"What I love about Shakespeare the most is that it's so bendable. And even though obviously Shakespeare wasn't thinking about "The Tempest" in space, once you have this idea the text just fits," Cousins said.

Originally, senior Max Hunt approached Cousins about performing "The Tempest" as a David Bowie tribute. However, after examining Bowie's albums such as "Space Oddity," a new idea evolved. Instead of using David Bowie music, the play would be performed in space, with aliens and scientists.

"The set was prominently constructed and designed by Kyle McKeen. At first, the class as a whole wasn't completely onboard with the idea of putting a traditional piece, that being any Shakespeare play, into an unconventional setting," senior Jesse Epstein, who played Alonso, said. "However, as the rehearsal process went on and the the visual aspects of the production came to life, more began to latch on to the idea."

The play commenced with a video of a spaceship taking off, and cast members yelling and creating engine-like sound effects to emulate a spaceship crash. The native creatures of the island were replaced by aliens, and the magical acts done by Prospero in the play were a result of his scientific genius instead of some unknown sorcery.

"I think that initially, it was very exciting but intimidating to a lot of the class to go in such a different direction with

The Tempest,” Roeder said. “Getting this completely new interpretation of the setting was shocking to a lot of us. Now, however, we have all become very comfortable with and excited about this adaptation.”