What could be seen was a score of young teenagers having damn good fun productively, being encouraged to put their talents to good use.

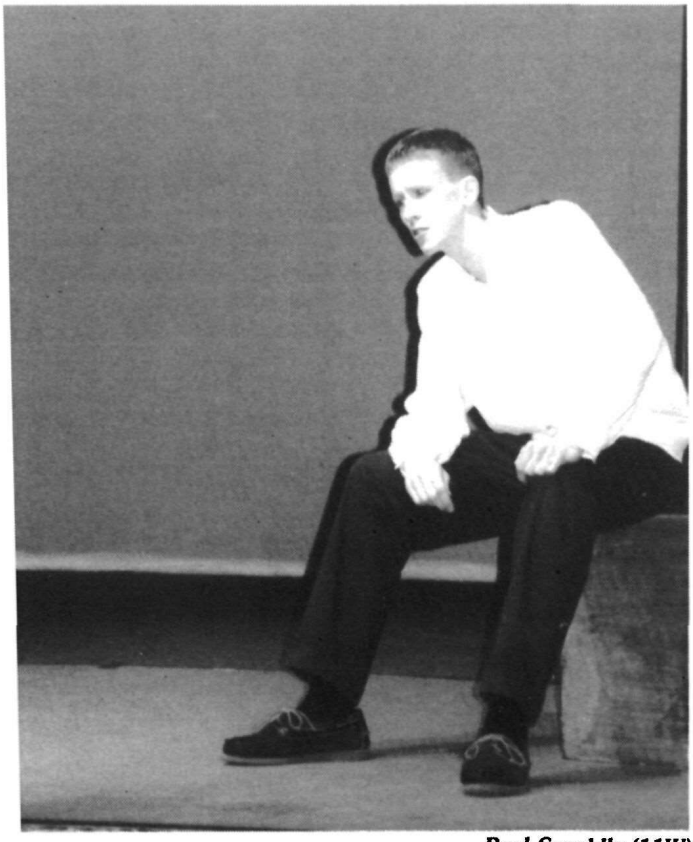
Matthew Armstrong (U6DW)

'THE TEMPEST'

'The Tempest' is a romantic drama by William Shakespeare. The plot, in brief, is that Prospero, usurped as Duke of Milan by his brother Antonio, lives on a remote island with his daughter Miranda and Caliban, a deformed creature. Prospero uses magic to shipwreck Antonio and his party on the island and, with the help of the spirit Ariel, regains his dukedom.

One of the greatest strengths of 'The Tempest' is that it reflects Shakespeare's poetic genius and powers of imagination at the height of his maturity; hence the play and its poetry comes through much more highly concentrated. Mr Armstrong, ably assisted by Mr Thomas, skilfully directed a fine cast, presenting one of the best RGS productions that I have seen: demonstrated by the fact that the theatre was full every night.

John Harte's Prospero was a traditionally played, imposing figure to look at and listen to, if a tad on the genial side early on for his gradual character transformation to work to full effect. John appeared comfortable with his lines and conveyed them with a level of confidence rarely seen in an amateur. Alex Robson played the sprightly captive Ariel. Alex's energy and enchanting line readings, with the addition of a couple of well-rendered songs (which brought a tear to some older members of the audience), and a novel appearance on roller-blades, made for an exceptional performance.



Paul Swaddle (11W)

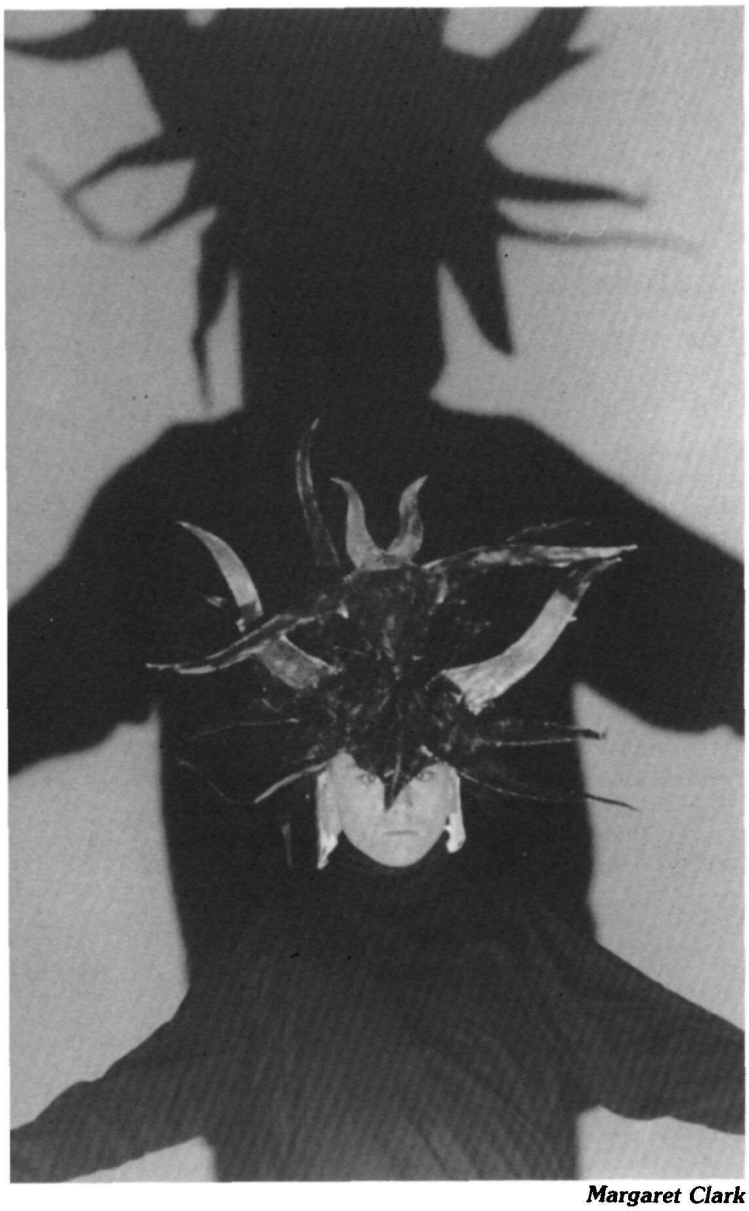


Paul Swaddle (11W)

As Prospero's daughter, Sophie Scott, recently of 'Forty Years On' fame, conjured up a delectable delight of a performance as one of Shakespeare's most forgettable leading ladies. Played with sensitivity and emotion, and the appropriate touch of humour, Sophie's performance was inspiring: certainly a name to watch out for in the future! David Carpenter, who turned in a solid performance, played her love interest Ferdinand: David acted with a high degree of competence, very much from the John Harte school of acting.

The Act Four masque was as bright and colourful as one could possibly hope for, featuring Katharine Radice, Sarah Europe-Finner and Georgiana Brown of Central High in a delightful musical dance show (choreographed by Sarah), all of which contributed to the splendour and the spectacle of the scene before Prospero brought it crashing down.

However, it was the bumbling, boozing servants Trinculo (Luke Roberts) and Stephano (Philip Dowson) that woke this production from its more somnolent tendencies. Both these actors were eminently capable of making their Elizabethan lines leap across nearly four centuries of time and land on



Margaret Clark

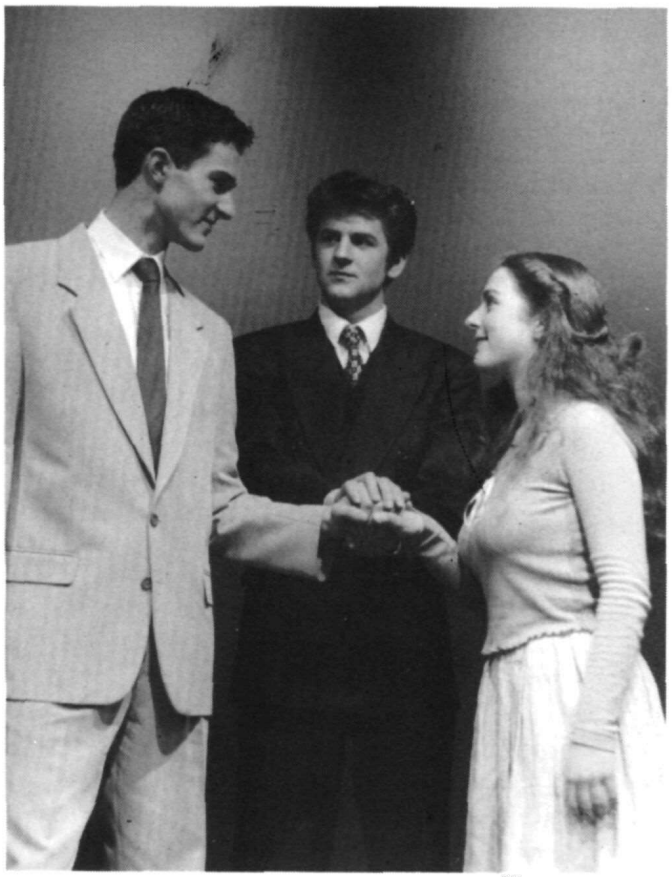
our 1998 ears with all the freshness of an episode of 'The Simpsons'. The scenes between these two and Caliban (an enthusiastic John Ross), who finally concludes the error of his ways in selecting these clowns to help further his quest, were among the production's finest moments. Both Luke and Philip deserve praise for their performances; both have evolved into actors of the highest order. Edward Aldcroft's performance as Gonzalo also merits applause: his lines were delivered with an engaging professional clarity; the same is also true of Thomas Nicholson, who played Alonso. The multi-talented Keir Shiels showed once again that he is convincing in any role. Keir played Sebastian, the brother of Alonso, and it was his exchanges with Antonio (Prospero's brother, played by Duncan Harte) that particularly caught my attention: both Keir and Duncan acted with a high degree of competence.

This rendition of 'The Tempest' was every bit as gimmicky as the Bard's magical script invites it to be, and sometimes to the point of over-indulgence: the 'rap' performed by Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano, although amusing, smacked of a director attempting to be 'hip'. However, the rap and the roller-blades were another example of Mr Armstrong's refreshingly unconventional approach, last seen in 'The Comedy of Errors'. Yet the special effects, in combination with the raucousness of the comic passages and Mrs Brunton's upbeat costumery, all added a needed antidote to Prosperto's more sombre theatrics.

One feature of the play that I particularly enjoyed was the live music. Performed intermittently throughout the play, the music helped to create an atmosphere that, at times, really drew the audience in. Thanks for this must go to the musicians Richard Maloney, Christopher Otley, Sean Sarma, Ben Scholl and Miss Parsonage, who also composed the music for the production.

The stage crew operated a psychedelic lighting system, which added most excellently to the more surreal moments in the play. Therefore praise must also go to Mr Loxley, Robert Loxley and Edmund Forster of the stage staff, and to Matthew Armstrong and Kristian Haagensen for providing the props. Altogether this was an excellent piece of theatre: furthering the tradition of excellence that is inherent in RGS drama.

Kevin McKeever (L6L)



Margaret Clark