

Theatre Reviews

***Macbeth*. Dir. Thomas Moschopoulos. Onassis Cultural Centre, Main Stage, Athens, Greece.**

Reviewed by *Xenia Georgopoulou**

An uneasy *Macbeth* at the Onassis Cultural Centre

The Athenian 2011-2012 theatre season included, as usual, quite a few Shakespearean productions. Among them Yannis Chouvardas's staging of *Pericles* at the National Theatre (to be performed at the Globe in April 2012); Raia Mouzenidou's humorous adaptation of *Measure for Measure* under the title *With Shakespeare's Measure* in her own *mise en scène* at Dipylon Theatre; a production based on *Richard III*, with numerous allusions to modern politics, entitled *Richard III – Nothing but the Outward Fame*,¹ directed by Fotis Makris, at Studio Mavromichali; and last, but not least, a new staging of *Macbeth* by Thomas Moschopoulos for the Onassis Cultural Centre, which will be dealt with in this review.

Moschopoulos's new production of 'the Scottish play' was not his first attempt with Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre; his previous work includes *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Measure for Measure* and *Twelfth Night*, all of them productions with extremely interesting particularities, which not only added to the Shakespearean *mise en scène*, but also offered the audience an enjoyable experience.

Moschopoulos's *Macbeth* was, once more, full of ingenious ideas, such as the military hospital in which the production started, with the wounded messengers jumping from their beds to report events from the battlefield. The way the director used to portray the three witches was also particularly inventive; the weird sisters alluded to the three major stages in a woman's life: childhood, motherhood and old age. The director elaborated on this motif, as the pregnant witch literally gave birth to the prophetic visions revealed to Macbeth before his fall. The use of shadows also worked effectively at

* Xenia Georgopoulou is a Lecturer at the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Athens, Greece.

¹ The title was based on Brackenbury's words in 1.4.79: "There's nothing differs but the outward fame" (the quotation from the original follows the compact edition of the Oxford Complete Works).

various parts of the production, as in the dinner scene after Banquo's murder, where the shadow of his ghost appeared on a white cloth right behind Macbeth's seat at the table.

The production included more imaginative devices; however, regarding the whole of the *mise en scène*, the director, as he stated in his note in the programme, left the interpretation to the judgment of the audience, with the promise that he and his actors would do their best to unfold Macbeth's story onstage. Nevertheless, Moschopoulos's brilliant staging of *Macbeth* seemed to have lost some of its spark due to the performances of his actors. With the exception of Argyris Xafis, who kept the title role at the right level of intensity, without going to extremes, and excluding also some individual acting 'outbursts' by several actors, the performances remained mostly slack or dispatching. Anna Mascha, whose acting aptitude is undisputable, proved rather weak as Lady Macbeth, and Kostas Berikopoulos was unfair to himself in the Porter scene, which lacked his characteristic expressiveness. (On the contrary, this slackness was not an issue in the case of Xenia Kalogeropoulou, being consistent with the wisdom of the oldest witch and the old age of the attendant that she played.)

However, considering the previous work of most of the actors, I would not blame them for their performance in this season's *Macbeth*, nor, I dare say, would I blame the director himself (also keeping in mind his own previous work); I would rather put the blame (at least to a considerable extent) on the translator. The translation by Dimitris Dimitriadis (which in certain parts, as in Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene, was indeed not only accurate but also easy to utter and theatrically effective) was, on the whole, stiff, and hence dysfunctional: in several cases the actors seemed anxious to deliver a text that often sounded as if it was not made for the stage.

On the contrary, the production's set was mostly both inventive and effective. Elli Papageorgakopoulou created individual spaces on the stage by isolating the hospital beds with transparent cloth constructions that descended from the stage roof and alluded to the four walls of a room. In this way she formed the rooms in Macbeth's castle, each one of them with its own bed and lightbulb, whereas the narrow corridors formed between them gave a claustrophobic impression absolutely compatible with the play. However, the elevation of the whole construction with the simultaneous addition of an external staircase for the scene of Duncan's murder was rather superfluous, especially considering the annoying sound that came with the return of the set to its original position, while the actors had already started with the next scene.

On the whole, Moschopoulos's production emitted a certain uneasiness. However, considering that any new production is rather 'stiff' on its first night (and it was on such a night that this review was based), I left the theatre hoping that this *Macbeth* would also find its pace.



The revelation of Duncan's murder. Photograph by Stavros Petropoulos.



Banquo's ghost appears behind Macbeth's seat at the dinner table. Photograph by Stavros Petropoulos.



Macduff (Yorgos Chrysostomou), in his sterilized uniform, about to clear Scotland from the miasma of Macbeth. Behind them a battlefield made of overturned hospital beds, and the white Christmas trees of the 'walking' Birnam Wood. Photograph by Stavros Petropoulos.

***The Merchant of Venice*. Dir. Rupert Goold. The Royal Shakespeare Company, The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon.**

Reviewed by *Coen Heijes**

The mystery of ‘the Other’ in *The Merchant of Venice*

“Ruthless”, “competitive”, “racist”, “Jewish”, “secular”, “semi-assimilated”, “charming”, “sadistic”, “hateful”, “terrifying”, “worldly”, “calculating”, “suave”, “barbaric”, “dignified”, “broken”, “vengeful”, “demented”, “sombre”, “frail”, “impressive”, “cool”, “proud”, “nuanced”, “isolated”, “passionate”, “slyly humorous”, “grave”, “foxy”, “gentle”, “restrained”, “lawyer-like”, “introspective”, “cold-blooded”, “fragile”, “humane”, “broken”, “lost”, “narrow-minded”, “boiling”, “grey”, “serious”, “seething”: This huge collection of adjectives were all used in reviews to describe one and the same character –the Jew Shylock– in the most recent *Merchant of Venice* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The wide-ranging diversity –which no Shylock before has ever had– shows that reviewers had difficulty coming to grip with this Shylock, veering off in all kinds of different directions in an effort to describe him. In this review of the production I will demonstrate how this recent *Merchant* –by Royal Shakespeare Company director Rupert Goold– deviated from the traditional approach to the play, in particular because it introduced a Shylock who was –in the end– more than ‘the Other’; he was ‘the Other’ who was and would ever be totally unintelligible, set apart both by his Jewish religion –presented as highly different from that of his Christian surroundings– and by his character –which his surroundings would never be able to come to grips with.

The Merchant of Venice is not only one of Shakespeare’s most controversial plays – because of its alleged anti-Semitism; it is also one Shakespeare’s most popular plays. Only *Hamlet* is performed more often on stage. In it ‘the Other’ plays an important role as personified by the Moor, the prince of Morocco, and Shylock. All three are examples of ‘the Other’ in the play, and their interaction with Christian Europeans is governed by evocations of physical, cultural, and racial differences which not only were prevalent in the Elizabethan climate of early modern England, but also continue to inform the play to this day. After World War II and the Shoah¹ the play has remained unfailingly popular in theatres around the world, and even in countries that were highly affected by the Shoah of World War Two, such as Germany and the Netherlands, *The Merchant of Venice* is staged on a frequent basis. However, whereas productions in these countries tended to have a generally apologetic tone –to expiate for the complicity in the Shoah– and presented a generally dignified Shylock, productions in the United Kingdom showed a far greater variety in their presentation of Shylock.

Before World War II productions of *The Merchant of Venice* in the United Kingdom were influenced by Henry Irving and Charles Macklin’s portrayals of Shylock. Irving (1879) portrayed Shylock as a dignified man, driven to revenge by his

* Coen Heijes works at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands.

¹ The Holocaust (editor’s note).

environment, whereas Macklin (1749) highlighted Shylock's unpleasantness and viciousness. On the whole, however, prewar productions tended to adopt Macklin's interpretation. In 1919 the Yiddish actor Maurice Moscovitch's Shylock brought a grotesque realism to the role and abandoned the dignity of Irving's. The 1932 Stratford production by director Theodore Komisarjevsky chose an unconventional, surrealistic *décor*, and presented a villainous Shylock, deriding those who preferred to present Shylock as a dignified and wronged Jew. In 1938 actor and director John Gielgud portrayed a Shylock who was an ugly outsider rather than a dignified and powerful human being, leading many reviewers to object to the suitability of staging the play given the news of the persecution of Jews elsewhere in Europe. Only a few months after the opening night of the play, the Night of Broken Glass took place: throughout Nazi Germany Jewish homes and shops as well as synagogues were destroyed or set on fire, and 30,000 Jews were taken to concentration camps.

After World War II productions of *The Merchant of Venice* in the United Kingdom did not react to the Holocaust as productions in the Netherlands and Germany did. Unlike the Netherlands, the United Kingdom was not occupied by Germany, and even though it did little to stop the Holocaust, it was never forced into an active collaboration. The pattern of guilt and shame as consequence of the war is therefore much less visible in British productions after World War II. The 1948 opening production of the Stratford-upon-Avon season featured the Australian dancer-actor Robert Helpmann as a Shylock whose mannerisms and vocal make-up on stage reflected the anti-Semitic stereotypes in the 1948 movie *Oliver Twist* by director David Lean. Productions in 1953, with Michael Redgrave playing Shylock, and 1956, with Emyln Williams, continued this tradition of a seedy, leering and repulsive Shylock.

From the 1960s productions in the United Kingdom took a variety of approaches to *The Merchant of Venice*. Peter O'Toole's Shylock in the 1960 RSC *Merchant of Venice*, directed by Michael Langham, was a handsome, well-dressed man who elicited sympathy from the audience. Even closer to the tradition of Irving's Shylock, and perhaps even the climax of this tradition, was Laurence Olivier's portrayal of Shylock in the 1970 production by director Jonathan Miller. The play was broadcast by the BBC in 1973 and Laurence Olivier portrayed Shylock as a proper, clean-shaven, Victorian banker, who wanted to assimilate into an environment that would clearly never accept him. His drive for revenge was utterly understandable in this production, and after making a dignified exit from the stage after his humiliation, his howl of anguish and rage could be heard offstage.

Miller also produced the 1980 BBC *Merchant of Venice*, directed by Jack Gold, but this time he took a different approach. Rather than blaming the Christians for anti-Semitism, Miller argued that he now saw both parties as equally prejudiced and culpable, and presented Shylock as neither villain nor victim. John Barton directed two versions of *The Merchant of Venice* within three years: in 1978, with Patrick Stewart as Shylock, and in 1981 with David Suchet. While both productions focused on the issues of the Other, greed, and materialism, Stewart's Shylock was a cold-blooded and unpleasant outsider, whereas Suchet's was more dignified and humorous.

Three years later, Ian McDiarmid played Shylock in the RSC *Merchant of Venice* directed by John Caird. McDiarmid did not see the play as anti-Semitic and did not see Shylock as either a hero or a villain, but as a character that evoked conflicting emotions. Later productions of *The Merchant of Venice* in the United Kingdom were staged in a variety of ways. Bill Alexander's 1987 production had Anthony Sher play a Shylock who

was on the one hand repulsive and villainous, on the other hand a focus of sympathy in an environment that was more blatantly cruel than shown in any previous Stratford production. The 1993 production by David Thacker was set in the financial world and presented Shylock, played by David Calder, as a modern businessman, assimilated to his environment, even more so than in Olivier's portrayal, and hardly distinguishable from his colleagues, until Jessica left him and he began dressing like a Jew –wearing, for example, a yarmulke².

Trevor Nunn's production in 1999, which won a Laurence Olivier Award and was made a TV movie in 2001, portrayed a Shylock who was a domestic and manipulative tyrant who clearly enjoyed his cat-and-mouse game with Antonio. This most recent landmark –with Goodman's award-winning Shylock– at the National Theatre showed a very human character, capable of tenderness, without diminishing the ugliness of his behaviour, which was shown to have a logical basis both in the way he was treated and in his own inner flaws. Although productions present a huge variety in the United Kingdom, the reactions to Shylock in these productions show a fundamental clarity: there is no argument about what kind of Shylock is being presented on stage. Although the Shylocks may –and do– differ from production to production, they are understood by their audiences within the context of the specific production. And this is where the latest Shylock –in the 2011 *Merchant* by Rupert Goold– differs from previous ones, because it puts the outsider in a new –and incomprehensible– light, not only because of his religion –which is fundamentally different– but also because of his character, which is unintelligible to the world around him –not so much because the world stereotypes him, but because his actions are unintelligible. This Shylock is not understandable; this Shylock remains a mystery; this is a Shylock that all the adjectives in the world do not seem to be able to grasp.

In this production Shylock was played by Patrick Stewart, who told me –in a personal interview– it was the fifth time he actually played the role –the first time being as a twelve-year old. This time Stewart wanted to move away from previous interpretations and present a more complex and diverse character. In the production this diversity was all the more pronounced in the contrast with Shylock's surroundings, which were set in a one-dimensional reality-TV and Las Vegas setting. Shylock would move from playfully toying with words to a violent rejection of Christians; from a deep appreciation of Leah and Jessica to a rigid and angry denunciation of the latter; from minimal facial expression –subtly using only the slightest movements of eyebrows or lips to indicate his mood– to an explosion of violent body-movement. Stewart argued that he found in the play that “Shakespeare wanted to create a stereotype, but discovered he could not. [Shylock] is one of the most complex characters. He is only there five times, but every time he is completely different.”

However, the production was not only about the man, but also about the Jew Shylock. One of the strongest elements to set Shylock apart from his Christian surroundings was the strong attention this production paid to the importance of the Jewish belief in oaths –a relatively little explored issue in *The Merchant of Venice*. Stewart argued that “Shakespeare did not just put in all these lines with oath, bond, swearing. The oaths keep coming back, and they are important.” Stewart's stress on the importance of oaths coincides with Jewish religion, where oaths take up an important role: In Numbers the importance of an oath is unambiguously stressed: “When a man

² The skullcap worn by Jewish men (editor's note).

voweth a vow or sweareth an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word.” Once a man has given his word to God, he must not break it. That this may have terrible consequences is revealed in the story of the Israeli chieftain Jephthah –of the book of Judges. He swore an oath to God to sacrifice the first thing to come out of his house, if God would give him victory over the Ammonites. When it turns out to be his daughter, a desperate Jephthah allows his daughter two months in the desert to regret that she will never marry. After these two months his daughter returns, and Jephthah carries out his vow and sacrifices her –he cannot go back on his sworn oath to God. From this comes the Israelite tradition that each year young women of Israel go out for four days to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah. However, not all oaths are carried out to their extremity. Saul –in I Samuel– swore an oath that no one in his army would eat until victory against the Philistines was achieved. When it was found that Jonathan –his own son, who did not know of the prohibition to eat– had eaten some honey, Saul had no choice but to carry out his sworn oath and kill his own son. In this case, however, Saul’s people withheld him from killing his own son, arguing that Jonathan was their hero of the day and that the Lord was clearly with him. Human sacrifice is forbidden; both Jephthah’s and Saul’s oaths were rash, and none of them ever expected them to have the dire consequences which they did; but both were nevertheless prepared to stick to their sworn oaths, although in the latter case human sacrifice was averted.

In this production the oaths and the importance of swearing an oath were continuously stressed and Stewart pointed out that in Israel he was told that an oath was binding if it was sworn with witnesses. In the *Merchant* the presence of witnesses is stressed by Shylock’s urging Tubal to come to the synagogue; this way the oath would be binding: “Go, go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue; / Go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal” (Act 3.1). Likewise, Shylock repeats several times the importance of the oaths in the text, as, for example, in “An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven: / Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?” (Act 4.1). Shylock found himself caught between the prohibition on human sacrifice, the demands of the oaths –sworn in a synagogue with witnesses–, and his own dislike of Antonio, in a scene in which he desperately tried to keep his conflicting emotions under control –by seeming to read his text from a prepared letter. The importance of the oaths to Shylock presented a stark contrast with the game-playing on the rings and oaths in Act 5.1 and with the general superficiality of Shylock’s Christian surroundings in this production. The deep contrast between Shylock and his surroundings was perhaps best illustrated in a scene immediately before the interval. It was a little Jewish dance performed by Shylock –which had no source at all in the text–, which Gould inserted right before the interval, thereby giving it a prominent position. Stewart said that the dance was meant to express “the anger, the determination, trying to hide the sadness by stamping it away, the potential for violence, the Jewishness, being human with all of these contradictory human emotions. It was a dance of death, a dance of life, a dance of love, a dance of being haunted, and, above all, the dance was meant to tie together –for the first time in my Shylocks– the oaths that were sworn through the production. For any audience it would be impossible to understand all the different and conflicting nuances that Stewart wanted to lay in his role, but the Jewish dance was a perfect example of the deep, mystifying, and –ultimately– inscrutable secrets surrounding this Shylock. It was a mystery which resulted in reviewers being unable to come to grips with this Shylock –this ‘Other’–, using so many different and contrasting adjectives to try and describe a character that –in the end– would not and could not be caught by its audience. This Shylock would always remain an enigma.



Patrick Stewart as Shylock in Act 1.3, arguing with Antonio whilst playing golf with his walking-stick. Photograph by Ellie Kurtz.



Patrick Stewart as Shylock in Act 4.1, preparing to cut the pound of flesh. Photograph by Ellie Kurtz.

***La Tempesta. Pre-testi.* Dir. Yana Balkan and Isabella Caserta, Teatro Scientifico Company, Camploy Theatre, Verona.**

Reviewed by *Eleonora Oggiano**

“Into something rich and strange”: Performing *The Tempest* and Its Pre-texts

Looking at Shakespeare’s theatre, one of the plays that have most raised, among both scholars and theatre practitioners, a special interest in its staging potentials is certainly *The Tempest*. Such a question also became prominent for the directors Yana Balkan and Isabella Caserta, whose production, *La Tempesta. Pre-testi*, focused on some of Shakespeare’s sources of *The Tempest*. The directors’ intention, in particular, was to explore the play’s relation with the *commedia dell’arte*, by taking into account its appropriation of some *topoi*, plot modules, character types, that is, the repertoire of “theatregrams”¹ typical of the sixteenth-century Italian improvised theatre.

Staged on the 16th of December 2011 at the Camploy Theatre by the Teatro Scientifico Company,² this fascinating performance drew together, on the same stage, diverse theatrical forms deriving from both the Italian and English Renaissance dramatic tradition. As a matter of fact, the play-text arranged for Balkan and Caserta’s production comprised not only an Italian translation³ of some selected scenes from *The Tempest* but also a few excerpts taken from three scenarios of the *commedia dell’arte*, namely, Flamineo Scala’s *L’Arbore Incantato (The Enchanted Tree)* and two scenarios edited by Ferdinando Neri: *Li Tre Satiri, (The Three Satyrs)* and *Arcadia Incantata (Enchanted Arcadia)*. The choice of staging these particular “pieces”, of course, was not accidental, as each of them featured a magician (“Mago”) who held sway over spirits, savages and other inhabitants of a remote island (“Arcadia”).

By intertwining scenes from *The Tempest* and both Scala and Neri’s scenarios, the directors brought onstage “a spectacle of strangeness” which challenged the play’s performability by visually emphasising the intertextual bond with what could be labelled as its “Italian pre-texts”. Such a reading underscored the fact that this performance concentrated on a lively dialogue between *The Tempest* and some popular forms of spectacle which have possibly shaped the play’s thematic modules and structure. Indeed, the *mise en scène* was characterized by the staging of different “episodic micro-dramas” which alternately involved *The Tempest*’s characters and various stock types of the *commedia dell’arte*, where the former also played the latter.

For *La Tempesta. Pre-testi*, Balkan and Caserta followed a playscript provided by Silvia Bigliuzzi and Lisanna Calvi, who selected the Italian scenarios and produced a

* Eleonora Oggiano is a doctoral student at the University of Verona.

¹ See Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare’s Time* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

² *La Tempesta. Pre-testi* was staged on occasion of the international conference *The Tempest at 400. Performing (pre-)texts* held at the University of Verona (15-17 December 2011) in cooperation with The Shakespeare Institute (University of Birmingham).

³ By Silvia Bigliuzzi and Lisanna Calvi.

translation *for* the theatre of the scenes taken from the Shakespearean text. This collaborative activity allowed them to give a coherent structure to this unconventional production, which effectively displayed a mixing of various theatrical genres and spectacular contexts, including supernatural and rural settings, tragic and comic scenes, “outdoor” and “indoor” forms of spectacle, elaborate costume changing, and so on.

As a result, the dramatic action appeared to be repeatedly framed by the interchanging of characters/plots/costumes/stages which challenged visual and gestural performance in a continuous transition from Shakespeare to the Italian *canovacci*, and back. This was also stressed by the directors’ choice to use a “dual stage”. For most of the production, in fact, the action took place in two separate and opposite levels of theatrical playing: scenes from *The Tempest* were played on the stage, while those from Neri and Scala’s scenarios were acted on the same level with the stalls. However, the link between the two was strategically, and visually, mirrored right at the very beginning of the performance, as both stages were simultaneously occupied by the actors for the representation of the eponymous tempest that opens the play. On the stage there was a child standing and holding a miniature of a wooden ship, reminiscent of the “filmic” one employed by Greenaway’s Prospero. Once he left, the sailors, who were placed offstage, vigorously flapped a huge sheet upon the audience. By following such a pattern of reiteration, a shadow of the child cradling the wooden ship was later projected on the backdrop marking the ending of the performance.

Throughout this production the directors’ intention was to equate the characters of Mago/Prospero, Salvatico/Caliban, Miranda/Ninfa, Trinculo/Zanni, Stephano/Pantalone, thereby alluding to the play’s staging of different disguises and bodily “shapes”, the latter represented, for instance, by Ferdinand’s “brave *form*” (I.2.410; my emphasis)⁴ and Caliban’s grotesque deformities –according to Prospero, Caliban is “disproportioned in his manners / As in his *shape*” (V.1.291; my emphasis). Yet, this coupling appeared to be particularly effective for the characters of Trinculo and Stephano, whose roles notoriously lay in the kind of stage action associated with some comic scenes and the *lazzi* of the *commedia dell’arte*. The representation of the first ‘piece’ from *Li Tre Satiri* was a case in point. Here the audience was confronted with Pantalone, who lamented the loss of his companions after a shipwreck: once he was reunited to his friend Zanni, they both had fun together (“fanno allegrezze”)⁵ in a similar fashion to Trinculo and Stephano.

Whilst this production heavily drew on the repertory of the *comici dell’arte* and both their comic forms and farce, it also succeeded in stressing *The Tempest*’s illusory and magical quality, especially with reference to Ariel’s characterization. Prospero’s spirit, in fact, was represented through a green light laser projected on the backdrop, a strategy which highlighted Ariel’s ability to create wonder through vocal strength. Thanks to Isabella Caserta’s enchanting voice over, this Ariel concurred in restoring the “rough magic” (V.1.50) of the play by evoking the “Marvellous sweet music” (IV.1.19) of Shakespeare’s dream-like island. Yet, such a choice marked a lack of emphasis in exploring Ariel’s relationship with his master, Prospero (Roberto Vandelli), whose display of magical powers appeared ultimately to be undermined. Nonetheless, in line with the overall thematic structure of the production, Prospero’s association with his

⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by David Lindley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). All quotations are taken from this edition.

⁵ This quotation from *Li Tre Satiri* is taken from the playscript of *La Tempesta. Pre-testi*. I owe special thanks to Silvia Bigliuzzi and Lisanna Calvi who kindly allowed me to consult the playscript.

“comedian counterpart”, the Mago, appeared to be successfully explored. Towards the very end of the performance, Prospero’s role was visually framed: he delivered his lines by putting on a blue gown and a mask, the same that the actor put on when he played the ‘magician’ of the Italian *canovacci*.

Looking at other characters in *The Tempest*, Caliban’s representation seemed to blur the nature-nurture, savage-civilized tension inscribed in the play, thereby generating a sort of visual ambiguity. Caliban (Francesco Laruffa), in fact, was an eerily striking figure, not at all deformed, but muscular, naked except for his short-pants and entirely covered with white mud, top to toe. Quite far from the “beast” and “misshapen knave” (IV.1.140; V.1.267) described by Prospero, this Caliban showed his “nurture” (IV.1.190) only with his voice and by adopting cumbersome postures. His intense physical presence positively maintained a dignity even in the most anarchic of his scenes with Stephano and Trinculo. By contrast, Elisa Bertato’s Miranda shared significant features with Prospero’s daughter: draped in a flowing, long, white dress, she had an appealingly fresh and innocent aspect which could be easily paralleled to Miranda’s.

Taken as a whole, *La Tempesta. Pre-testi* achieved its main purpose to re-read the play’s pervasive concern with theatricality, which was specifically investigated in conjunction with some stock situations of the Italian improvised comedy. In particular, it may be argued that this *mise en scène* functioned on two levels, which involved both metadramatic and intercultural references. The use of two “stages” heightened the metatheatrical framework of *The Tempest* itself, while concurrently allowing to show a spectacle which mingled together global/local dramatic traditions. By immersing the audience “Into something rich and strange” (I, 2, l. 401), Balkan and Caserta’s performance successfully combined theatrical invention with theatrical convention by questioning the play’s performability and its relation with different stage practices.



Prospero/Mago (Roberto Vandelli). Photograph by Maurizio Brenzoni.



Zanni (Andrea de Manincor) and Pantalone (Maurizio Perugini) (*Li Tre Satiri*). Photograph by Maurizio Brenzoni.



Caliban (Francesco Laruffa) and Trinculo (Andrea de Manincor).
Photograph by Maurizio Brenzoni.



Shepherds (*Li Tre Satiri*). Photograph by Maurizio Brenzoni.