The Tempest: Island Design Concepts

DURATION: 60 mins

OBJECTIVE: To have created a design concept for the island in The Tempest.

KEY LEARNING POINTS:
- Designers undertake research and then present their ideas in a visual way.
- Designers need to be able to articulate their ideas and justify their choices.
- There are always constraints to consider when designing a production.

YOU WILL NEED:
- Participants to have an understanding of the plot of The Tempest (you could look at the The Tempest: Story Whoosh! or the The Tempest: Plot Points exercise for this).
- The Design of the Trilogy video
- Travel magazines, images, coloured paper, wrapping paper
- Access to the internet and a printer
- Whiteboard and flipchart
- Marker pens
- A3 card, one piece per participant
- Glue, scissors, paints and coloured pens and crayons

IT’S NICE TO HAVE:
- Some images of Caribbean, Mediterranean, Pacific, Arctic, Scottish and Irish islands to show the variation in landscapes
- Assorted craft materials – different papers, fabrics, ribbons, string etc

ACTIVITY:
- This would follow on well from The Tempest: Descriptive Language or The Tempest: Message in Bottle exercises.
- Watch the Designing the Trilogy video and ask participants for feedback about things that they discovered or that surprised them.
- Explain to participants that you are going to ask them to create a design concept for an island in The Tempest. They don’t have to design the whole set, rather this is something they might take to the Director in an early meeting to communicate the big ideas – themes, colours, period, stage shape etc.
- Ask the participants to suggest different locations for islands, for
example Caribbean, Mediterranean, Pacific, Arctic, Scottish, Irish and list these on the whiteboard or flipchart.

- This production of *The Tempest* was set in a women’s prison. In what way is that setting like an island? Now ask the participants to think of other similar settings that might have the same qualities, for example a sea-fort, a space ship, an immigration detention centre or a boarding school, and list these on the whiteboard or flipchart.

- Finally ask participants to list the different types of staging that there are: **in-the-round, proscenium arch, traverse, thrust, promenade** or **site specific**. Lead a short discussion about the design challenges of each form.
  - *in-the-round* – can’t have large pieces of set as they could become a sightline issue, audience feel involved in the action
  - *proscenium arch* – lots of space for set, audience watching as if through a picture frame
  - *traverse* – can’t have large pieces of set as they could become a sightline issue, audience feel involved in the action
  - *thrust* – can’t have large pieces of set on the thrust as they could become a sightline issue, can use the back wall of the set for bigger structural pieces, audience on three sides
  - *promenade* – physically transporting the audience to different locations through the drama, might not be able to afford sets in each, can’t always do elaborate things
  - *site specific* – using the existing architecture of the space or using the landscape

- Ask each participant to select a theatrical style, an island and/or an island location, and a staging style (or you could allocate these so they are designing to a brief). You could set a homework research task to enrich the participants’ understanding, and split the exercise so that you create the **mood board** in the next session.

- The participants will create a mood board for their design concept. At the end they will present this back, and talk about their key ideas and why they made their choices. They should suggest colours, textures and items of costume or props. You could encourage participants to focus on *The Wedding Masque* scene or keep it more general about creating the island. You could also use words or lines of text from the play on the concept mood board.

- Ask participants to present their concepts back to the group, explaining why they have made their choices. Encourage the participants to ask questions and give constructive feedback to each other.

- Ask participants to reflect on how they found the exercise. What restrictions do designers have to consider? (Director’s vision, staging, budget, size of cast, accessibility and safety for cast and audience.)

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY:**

- You could develop this exercise by asking participants to create a **model box** for their concept and/or doing the *The Tempest: Designing Costumes* exercise.

**KEY WORDS:**

- **In-the-round** - a performance where the audience are placed all around the
action.

**Proscenium arch** – a performance where the audience are facing the action, which is usually framed by an arch behind which most of the performance happens.

**Traverse** - a performance where the audience are on two sides facing each other and the action happens between them.

**Thrust** – a performance where the audience are on three sides, with the action happening between them and at the back of the stage.

**Promenade** – a performance where the audience moves around to follow the action.

**Site specific** – a performance where the action takes place in a specific location that in some way helps tell the story of the action. The performance might be promenade, in-the-round, proscenium arch, traverse or thrust (or a combination of these) within that space.

**Mood Board** - a collection of images, materials, pieces of text etc. that suggest an idea, style or character.

**Model Box** - a scale model (usually 1:25) of how the finished set will look, complete with colours, textures, props and furniture.