

Shakespeare in the Restoration Theater

Paper #1: Casting Call “Memo”

For this paper, please select one character from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and imagine you are a dramaturge (real word -- look it up) writing to the producer of a new film version of the play. The document you submit will be used by the producer in casting the part, so a lot hangs on what you have to say. The producer will, of course, have read the script, but s/he will not have understood it as well as you have, so you can assume familiarity with plot but will have to spell out meaning.

In your memo (you can play with format as you please) you should:

- describe the character's personality traits, attributes, etc, documenting where in the text you are drawing your information (is the person young? old?) and why it matters that the actor selected matches this description (what would be compromised in terms of meaning if Miranda were in her 30's instead of her teens?)
- suggest how the character should be played (again, based heavily in the text, since you may be having to argue against the director here). Is the character passionate? reserved? Characterized by physical or cerebral activities?
- explain which other characters will interact most significantly with the one you are writing about and how those dynamics have to work (this would affect other casting decisions)
- outline the importance of the character to the play -- to what extent does this character affect the meaning of the overall work? Give specific examples of this from the text, including quoting dialogue to help the producer visualize the scenes to which you refer.
- provide a few examples of who would be good for the role (or terrible choices), paying no attention to chronology (ie, a young Katherine Hepburn is fair game) or budget. If you have the knowledge to address other versions of the play, by all means bring that in (for example, you could compare Sir John Gielgud's performance in *Prospero's Books* to how you're arguing the character should be played)

To reiterate, for all of your assertions above, you need to back your claims up with specific references to the text, since you will be arguing against the director (who no doubt has his/her own poorly informed “vision” of the project), the producer (who probably wants to cast his/her young girlfriend/boyfriend in the lead role), and other players in the decision making process. As dramaturge, the integrity of this production is in your hands. Don't let Shakespeare down!

You have only 3 pages to make your case, so choose your examples and your arguments carefully – you won't be able to argue for every picayune detail about the character, just the ones that are really crucial to your understanding of the play.