

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

The below character descriptions are given as a suggested jumping off point, to help you work on your audition. We are looking for you to bring your own take on the role.

All characters except Miranda, Ferdinand and Caliban could be played by a person of any gender. Age ranges are given as a guide only. Where no age range is given then age is not a factor.

Roles are listed in order of the number of words spoken.

PROSPERO (page 3)

Over 40. Intelligent, introspective, eccentric, capable of great rage and great sympathy.

Prospero was the ruler of Milan but was usurped by their sibling and marooned on a desert island. They have significant magical powers and can control the elements. They arrived on the island 14 years ago, since when they have been plotting revenge on those who exiled them.

CALIBAN (page 4)

A "monster" (male). Physically strong, mentally limited, has no status and so looks up to / fears authority figures.

Once the sole inhabitant of the island, Caliban was enslaved by Prospero through magic. He sees himself as the rightful king of the island and strives to free himself.

STEPHANO (page 5)

Ambitious, they have delusions and grandeur and resent their low status.

A low ranking servant to Alonso, Stephano copes with the shipwreck by getting drunk, and jumps at the chance to rule the island with Caliban's help.

MIRANDA (page 6)

Under 30 Female. Inexperienced, trusting, full of sympathy.

Miranda is Prospero's daughter and was a baby when they arrived on the island. She has grown up isolated from the outside world so has difficulty socialising.

ARIEL (page 7)

A magical spirit. Alien, not part of the real world and definitely not human. At times child-like and at other times terrifying.

Ariel is enslaved by Prospero, who uses them to enact their revenge. Ariel has great power but no freedom.

Dance / physical theatre experience or training would be an advantage

Must have a strong singing voice (any range)

FERDINAND (page 8)

Under 30 Male. Passionate, confident, boyishly charming

Ferdinand is the son of Alonso and is separated from the rest of the group. He falls in love with Miranda and will do anything to impress her.

GONZALO (page 9)

Over 50. Optimistic, compassionate, loyal.

Gonzalo is an advisor to Alonso and a friend to Prospero. They have faith that all will be well and they try to lift the spirits of their companions.

TRINCULO (PAGE 10)

Not very bright, easily lead, afraid of everything.

Trinculo is a sailor who copes with the trauma of the shipwreck by getting drunk. They are devoted to Stephano and resent Caliban's influence over them.

ALONSO (page 11)

Over 40. Lost and grieving, unable to cope with their situation.

Alonso is ruler of Naples and was instrumental in the overthrow of Prospero. They despair of ever getting back home and they feel powerless.

ANTONIO (page 12)

A shrewd politician, cynical and ruthlessly ambitious.

Antonio is Prospero's younger sibling. They engineered Prospero's overthrow and replaced them as ruler of Milan. Subservient to Alonso but still a powerful leader, they use the shipwreck as an opportunity to plot against Alonso.

SEBASTIAN (page 13)

Ambitious, unprincipled, opportunistic.

Sebastian is Alonso's younger sibling. Resentful of their situation, they plot with Antonio to kill Alonso in order to become ruler of Naples.

BOATSWAIN (page 14)

Straightforward, no nonsense professional.

The Boatswain is in charge of the Neapolitan ship and tries (unsuccessfully) to prevent the shipwreck.

ISLAND SPIRITS (page 15)

Alien, unreal.

These spirits are part of the island and are bound by Prospero's magic. They assist Ariel in performing Prospero's bidding. Sometimes they take the form of animals or magical creatures.

Dance / physical theatre experience or training would be an advantage. Most spirits will have no lines (but plenty of stage time)

All those auditioning as Spirits will be given improvisation exercises as their audition.

Three of the spirits must have good singing voices as they will perform as Iris, Ceres and Juno in the "wedding masque".

PROSPERO

Prospero has conjured spirits to entertain Miranda and Ferdinand, when they suddenly become distressed, ending the performance and making the spirits vanish.

Prospero

Our revels now are ended: These our actors,
(As I foretold you) were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air,
And like the baseless fabric of this vision
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And like this insubstantial pageant faded
Leave not a rack behind: we are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep:

Those who plotted against Prospero have been stranded on the island in a shipwreck. Prospero has put them into a trance in order to enact revenge on them.

Prospero

There stand
For you are spell-stopped. The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason. O good Gonzalo
My true preserver, and a loyal sir,
To him thou follow'st; I will pay thy graces
Home both in word, and deed: Most cruelly
Did thou Alonso, use me, and my daughter:
Thy brother was a furtherer in the act,
Thou art pinched for't now Sebastian. Flesh, and blood,
You, brother mine, that entertain ambition,
Expelled remorse, and nature, whom, with Sebastian
Would here have kil'ed your King: I do forgive thee,
Unnatural though thou art: not one of them
That yet looks on me, or would know me:

CALIBAN

Caliban has just been repeatedly insulted and abused by Prospero and Miranda

Caliban

This Island's mine by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak'st from me: when thou cam'st first
Thou stroakst me, and made much of me: wouldst give me
Water with berries in't: and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less
That burn by day, and night: and then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o'th' Isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits; barren place and fertile,
Cursed be I that did so: All the charms
Of Sycorax: toads, beetles, bats light on you:
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own King: and here you sty-me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o'th' Island.

Caliban has been drinking with his new friends Stephano and Trinculo, when magical music fills the air.

Caliban

Be not afeard, the Isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet ayres, that give delight and hurt not:
Sometimes a thousand twangling Instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

STEPHANO

Stephano has survived the shipwreck and has found (and drunk) a barrel of sack. They are very drunk when they discover a "monster" on the beach

NB: The quality of the singing is not important.

Stephano

(singing) I shall no more to sea, to sea, here shall I die ashore.

(spoken) This is a very scurvy tune to sing at a man's funeral: well, here's my comfort.

(drinks)

(singing) The master, the swabber, the boatswain and I;

The gunner, and his mate

Loved Mall, Meg, and Marrian, and Margerie,

But none of us cared for Kate.

For she had a tongue with a tang,

Would cry to a sailor go hang:

She loved not the savour of tar nor of pitch,

Yet a tailor might scratch her where e're she did itch.

Then to sea boys, and let her go hang.

(spoken) This is a scurvy tune too: But here's my comfort. *(drinks)*

(Caliban

Do not torment me: oh.)

Stephano

What's the matter? Have we devils here? Do you put tricks upon's? ha? I have not scaped drowning, to be afeard now of your four legs: This is some monster of the Isle, who hath got, as I take it, an ague: where the devil should he learn our language? I will give him some relief if it be but for that: if I can recover him, and keep him tame, and get to Naples with him, he's a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat's leather.

MIRANDA

Miranda has just seen a shipwreck caused by Prospero's magic.

Miranda

If by your Art (my dearest father) you have
Put the wild waters in this roar; allay them:
The sky it seems would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to th'welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out. O! I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: A brave vessel
(Who had no doubt some noble creature in her)
Dashed all to pieces: O the cry did knock
Against my very heart

*Miranda has fallen in love with Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, whom she has just met.
Prospero has used magic to enslave Ferdinand and makes him work by carrying logs.*

Miranda

Alas, now pray you
Work not so hard: I would the lightning had
Burnt up those logs that you are enjoined to pile:
Pray set it down, and rest you: my Father
Is hard at study; pray now rest your self,
He's safe for these three hours.
I do not know
One of my sex; no woman's face remember,
Save from my glass, mine own: Nor have I seen
More that I may call men, than you good friend,
And my dear Father: how features are abroad
I am skillless of; but I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you:
Nor can imagination form a shape
Besides yourself, to like of: but I prattle
Something too wildly, and my Father's precepts
I therein do forget.

ARIEL

You should prepare any short song (just 1 verse or chorus) that shows off your voice.

Ariel, at Prospero's command, has created a storm which has caused a shipwreck.

Ariel

I boarded the King's ship: now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flamed amazement, sometime I'd divide
And burn in many places; on the top-mast,
The yards and bore-sprit, would I flame distinctly.
Not a soul
But felt a fever of the mad, all but mariners
Plunged in the foaming brine, and quit the vessel;
Then all a fire with me the King's son Ferdinand
Was the first man that leapt; cried hell is empty,
And all the devils are here.

Ariel has transformed into a harpy (half human, half bird) in order to terrorise Prospero's enemies.

Ariel

You are three men of sin,
Whom destiny the never surfeited Sea,
Hath caused to belch up you; you 'mongst men,
Being most unfit to live: I have made you mad;
And even with such like valour, men hang, and drown
Their proper selves: You three
From Milan did supplant good Prospero,
Exposed unto the Sea (which hath requit it)
Him, and his innocent child: for which foul deed,
The Powers, delaying (not forgetting) have
Incensed the seas, and shores; yea, all the creatures
Against your peace: Thee of thy son, Alonso
They have bereft; and do pronounce by me
Lingering perdition shall step, by step attend
You, and your ways.

FERDINAND

Ferdinand has woken up on the shore to the sound of strange music. He follows the music and it leads him to Miranda.

Ferdinand

Where should this music be? I'th air, or th'earth?

It sounds no more: and sure it waits upon

Some God 'oth' Island, sitting on a bank,

Weeping again the king my father's wrack.

This music crept by me upon the waters,

Allaying both their fury, and my passion

With its sweet ayre: thence I have followed it

Or it hath drawn me rather: but 'tis gone.

No, it begins again.

(He sees Miranda) Most sure the Goddess

On whom these ayres attend: Vouchsafe my prayer

May know if you remain upon this island,

And that you will some good instruction give

How I may bear me here: my prime request,

Which I do last pronounce, is, O you wonder,

If you be maid, or no?

Ferdinand has been enslaved by Prospero and forced to carry logs. He has fallen in love with Miranda.

Ferdinand

Admired Miranda,

Indeed the top of admiration, worth

What's dearest to the world: O you,

So perfect, and so peerless, are created

Of every creature's best. I am, in my condition

A prince, Miranda. I do think a king

(I would not so): hear my soul speak.

The very instant that I saw you, did

My heart fly to your service, there resides

To make me slave to it, and for your sake

Am I this patient log-man.

GONZALO

Having survived the shipwreck, they attempt to lift the spirits of their companions.

Gonzalo

Though this island seems to be desert, uninhabitable, and almost inaccessible. Yet it must needs be of subtle, tender, and delicate temperance.

The air breathes upon us here most sweetly. Here is every thing advantageous to life.

How lush and lusty the grass looks? How green? And our garments being (as they were) drenched in the sea, hold notwithstanding their freshness and glosses, being rather new dyed than stained with salt water.

Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first in Affrick, at the marriage of the king's fair daughter Claribel to the king of Tunis.

Is not Sir my doublet as fresh as the first day I wore it at your daughter's marriage?

Gonzalo muses on how they would rule the island if it were their own kingdom.

Gonzalo

Had I plantation of this isle my Lord.

And were the king on't, what would I do?

I'th'Commonwealth I would (by contraries)

Execute all things: For no kind of traffic

Would I admit: No name of magistrate:

Letters should not be known: Riches, poverty,

And use of service, none: contract, succession,

Borne, bound of land, tilth, vineyard none:

No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil:

No occupation, all men idle, all:

And women too, but innocent and pure:

All things in common nature should produce

Without sweat or endeavour: Treason, felony,

Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine

Would I not have: but nature should bring forth

Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance

To feed my innocent people.

TRINCULO

Trinculo has swum ashore and is looking for somewhere to shelter from the continuing storm, when he discovers what he believes to be a dead monster on the beach.

Trinculo

Here's neither bush, nor shrub to bear off any weather at all: and another storm brewing, I hear it sing l'th' wind: yond same black cloud, yond huge one, looks like a foul bombard that would shed his liquor: if it should thunder, as it did before, I know not where to hide my head: *(sees Caliban)* What have we here, a man, or a fish? dead or alive? A fish, he smells like a fish: a very ancient and fish-like smell: a kind of, not of the newest Poor-John: a strange fish: were I in England now (as once I was) and had but this fish painted; not a holiday-fool there but would give a piece of silver: there, would this monster, make a man: any strange beast there, makes a man: legged like a man; and his fins like arms: warm o' my troth: I do now let loose my opinion; hold it no longer; this is no fish, but an islander, that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt: Alas, the storm is come again: my best way is to creep under his gaberdine: there is no other shelter here about: Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows:

ALONSO

Alonso is wandering the island seeking for their son Ferdinand. Their companions try to cheer them up, but they are inconsolable.

Alonso

Prithee peace.

You cram these words into mine ears, against
The stomach of my sense: would I had never
Married my daughter there: For coming thence
My son is lost, and (in my rate) she too,
Who is so far from Italy removed,
I ne'er again shall see her: O thou mine heir
Of Naples and of Milan, what strange fish
Hath made his meal on thee?
Lead off this ground & let's make further search
For my poor son.

Having been put into a magical trance, Alonso awakes and is greeted by Prospero, the ruler of Milan whose downfall Alonso was complicit in.

Alonso

Whe'er thou be'st he or no,
Or some enchanted trifle to abuse me
(As late I have been) I not know. Thy pulse
Beats as of flesh and blood; and since I saw thee,
Th'affliction of my mind amends, with which
I fear a madness held me. This must crave,
An if this be at all, a most strange story.
Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat
Thou pardon me my wrongs. But how should Prospero
Be living and be here? If thou be'st Prospero
Give us particulars of thy preservation,
How thou hast met us here, whom three hours since
Were wracked upon this shore? where I have lost
My dear son Ferdinand.
Irreparable is the loss, and patience
Says, it is past her cure.

ANTONIO

Alonso and Gonzalo have fallen asleep, and Antonio encourages Sebastian to murder them and take the crown of Naples.

Antonio

Although this lord of weak remembrance hath here
Almost persuaded the King his son's alive,
'Tis as impossible that he's undrowned,
As he that sleeps here, swims. I have no hope
That he's undrowned. O, out of that no hope,
What great hope have you? Will you grant with me
That Ferdinand is drown'd. He's gone.
Then tell me, who's the next heir of Naples?
Claribell.
She that is Queen of Tunis: she that dwells
Ten leagues beyond man's life: She that from whom
We all were sea-swallowed, O, that you bore
The mind that I do; what a sleep were this
For your advancement? Do you understand me?
Here lies your brother,
No better than the earth he lies upon,
If he were that which now he's like (that's dead)
Whom I with this obedient steel (three inches of it)
Can lay to bed for ever: whiles you doing thus,
To the perpetual wink for aye might put
This ancient morsel:

SEBASTIAN

Alonso and Gonzalo have fallen asleep, and Sebastian's friend Antonio suggests murdering them so that Sebastian can rule Naples.

Sebastian

'Pre-thee say on,
The setting of thine eye, and cheek proclaim
A matter from thee; and a birth, indeed,
Which throes thee much to yield. What stuff is this?
'Tis true my brother's daughter's Queen of Tunis,
So is she heir of Naples, 'twixt which regions
There is some space. I remember
You did supplant your brother Prospero.
Thy case, dear Friend
Shall be my precedent: As thou got'st Milan,
I'll come by Naples: Draw thy sword, one stroke
Shall free thee from the tribute which thou payest,
And I the king shall love thee.

BOATSWAIN

After the storm, the boatswain has woken from a strange sleep to find that their ship is intact.

Boatswain

The best news is, that we have safely found
Our king, and company: The next: our ship,
Which but three glasses since, we gave out split,
Is tight, and yare; and bravely rigged, as when
We first put out to sea.

(Alonso

Say, how came you hither?)

Boatswain

If I did think, Sir, I were well awake,
I'd strive to tell you: we were dead of sleep,
And (how we know not) all clapt under hatches,
Where, even now, with strange, and several noises
We were awaked: and straight way beheld
Our royal, gallant ship: and e'en in a dream,
Were we brought hither.

ISLAND SPIRITS

All those auditioning as Spirits will be given improvisation exercises as their audition.

If auditioning for one of the three spirits who perform as Iris, Ceres or Juno you should prepare any short song (just 1 verse or chorus) that shows off your voice. You will also be asked to perform the following (same piece for all three):

Iris, Ceres or Juno

Ceres, most bounteous lady, thy rich leas
Of wheat, rye, barley, fetches, oats and peas;
Thy turfy-mountains, where live nibling sheep,
And flat meads thatched with stover, them to keep:
Where thou thy self do'st air, the queen o'the sky,
Whose watery arch, and messenger, am I,
Bids thee leave these, and with her sovereign grace,
Here on this grass-plot, in this very place
To come, and sport: here peacocks fly amain:
Approach, rich Ceres, her to entertain.