

Shobana  
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Dance

# WE CALIBAN

*An inventive, sideways look at Shakespeare's The Tempest*

A Visual Story





**We Caliban** is a dance piece by **Shobana Jeyasingh Dance (SJD)**.

SJD is named after **Shobana Jeyasingh**. She is the **Artistic Director** of the company.

Shobana creates **powerful and beautiful dance pieces** that have something to say about our society and the world we live in.



*We Caliban* is inspired by a play by **William Shakespeare (1564–1616)**, called **The Tempest**.

The period from around 1418 to 1620 is called the **Age of Discovery**. It is the beginning of modern European **colonialism**. During this time, European nations began to explore, conquer and colonise regions across the world, for example the Americas and the Caribbean. Colonialism created rich and powerful **empires**. They had a huge impact on the language and the culture of the people that were colonised.



The Europeans learned about these discoveries through travel journals like the diary of **Christopher Columbus (1451-1506)**, or through paintings.

Some of these inspired Shakespeare to write *The Tempest*.



## PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

*We Caliban* is **60 minutes** long.

There is **no interval**, so we can't let you in when you're arriving late.

Age guidance: 12+

**Eight dancers** perform *We Caliban*.



The soundtrack is a **combination of music, nature sounds and spoken words**.

The music is **sometimes loud**.



Sometimes, there are some **bright lights** and **haze** on stage.

Behind the dancers there are **colourful video projections**.

They give **background information to the story** that is mainly told through dance.



## ABOUT WE CALIBAN

*We Caliban* is **contemporary dance**.

This type of dance does not have a specific style or set of rules, unlike, for example, ballet.



*We Caliban* was created by choreographer **Shobana Jeyasingh** and a **creative team of seven people**.

The team includes a composer, set & costume, lighting, sound and video designers.



*We Caliban* is inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, but it tells the story **from a different point of view**.

In *The Tempest*, **Prospero, the Duke of Milan**, is the hero. He is betrayed by **his brother Antonio**, who takes his crown and sends Prospero and **his daughter Miranda** away on a boat. They get stranded on an island.

One of the natives – **Caliban** – becomes Prospero's slave. It is a punishment because Prospero believes that Caliban has attacked Miranda. But we never see what really happened between them.

**Prospero creates a magic storm** to bring a ship with Antonio and other nobles on board to the island. He wants to confront his enemies to win back his crown and be duke again. He also arranges that Miranda falls in love with **Ferdinand, the Prince of Naples**.

At the end Prospero forgives his enemies. He gives up his magic and prepares to leave the island.





## SCENE BY SCENE BREAKDOWN

*We Caliban* tells the story from **Caliban's point of view**.

It includes elements that are not shown in *The Tempest*. This is what we mean by 'an inventive, sideways look at *The Tempest*'.



*We Caliban* has **three parts**.

**PART 1: On the island**, we see **Caliban and his community**.

They have their own culture and language. Life appears to be coherent and communal.



**PART 2** begins **at the court of Milan**.

We see how **Antonio fights Prospero for the crown**.

He and the other courtiers overwhelm Prospero and Miranda. They get thrown into the sea and wash up on the island.



Their first meeting with the islanders is **peaceful**. Both sides are **friendly and curious** about each other.

Caliban and Miranda form a connection.

But soon the situation changes.



**Miranda teaches Caliban her language.** She believes that she is educating and civilising him. She is unaware that he has his own language.

Their encounters bring them physically closer to one another.

**Prospero disapproves** of this possible intimacy. This could be because of long held prejudices and cultural differences or misunderstandings.



**Prospero's anger at Caliban and the storm he creates** to get his crown back are seen together.

After Antonio's ship has reached the island, Prospero arranges the **meeting between Miranda and Ferdinand**, the Prince of Naples.

He retakes his crown, and the Europeans leave the island together.



**PART 3:** The islanders' world has changed forever.

They are finding a new way to live and to move forward.



### Photo credits

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**Christopher Columbus:** Theodore de Bry, Christopher Columbus arrives in America, 1594, engraving, 18.6 x 19.6 cm, from *Collected travels in the east Indies and west Indies (Collectiones peregrinationum in Indiam occidentalem)*, vol. 4: Girolamo Benzoni, *Americae pars quarta. Sive, Insignis & admiranda historia de primera occidentali India à Christophoro Columbo* (Frankfurt am Main: T. de Bry, 1594) ([Rijksmuseum](https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/SK-A-149))