

# TheatreStorm

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WRITTEN BY CHRISTINE OKON NOVEMBER 9, 2016 NOVEMBER 18, 2016

## Review: 'The Winter's Tale' by William Shakespeare at Ragged Wing in Oakland (\*\*\*)

by [Christine Okon](https://theatrestorm.com/reviewers/christine-okon/) (<https://theatrestorm.com/reviewers/christine-okon/>)



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This reviewer is a voting member of the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle (SFBATCC)

“The Winter’s Tale” is a story of broken trust, broken love, broken minds, and broken lives. At the Flight Deck in Oakland, Ragged Wing Ensemble uses the tiny space, sparse cast, and limited resources to deliver a powerful experience of the primal and tribal nature of this play.

The audience walks in to fill the space around a cold floor strewn with broken pillars, rocks, and debris — rubble after a disaster. A forlorn puppet sits alone, propped against a rock, as children start skipping in, innocently laughing and playing. We see the forging of a childhood bond that may not withstand the pain and pressure of adulthood. The set design by Jaula Dell is deliberate, versatile and symbolic as those broken slabs are arranged and rearranged to convey different scenes and moods.

The play begins on the royal stage of Sicily, ruled by Leontes and his queen Hermione. They are reveling and enjoying their guest Polixenes, Leone’s childhood bud who starts hankering to return to his kingdom in Bohemia. Leontes begs him to stay and is unsuccessful until he asks his wife, the lovely and gracious queen Hermione, to work her charm. She is successful, and Polixenes extends his stay for several months. When Hermione becomes pregnant, something snaps in Leontes as he is gripped with the belief that the child is not his, but rather Polixenes’s. His psyche torched by this imagined cuckolding, he

becomes a monster. Sexual jealousy blinds Leontes who spins Hermione’s simple affection for Polixenes into something tawdry and vile. He punishes Hermione and banishes the child.

The monster turns this world upside down, throwing minor characters into a vortex as they try to reclaim footing and restore some sense of order. Ragged Wing’s actors take on several roles, which can be confusing to anyone unfamiliar with the play, but the actors pull this off very well. As the goofy shepherd who happens upon the abandoned baby, David O. Stein creates a welcome comic relief as he picks up the baby, and cuddles it and coos, showing genuine love. He is also delighted by the fardel of riches that will set him for life.

Fast forward 16 years and we see a lovely and mischievous shepherd girl (sweetly played by Margherita Ventura) in a loving banter with the dad, and we sense a gradual pulling together of pieces. Shane Fahy brings us a sad Leontes, tortured with remorse as he tries to rectify his actions. As the shepherd girl/unwitting princess falls in love with Polixenes’s son Florizel (a very versatile Ryan Takemiya, who, despite being in a wheelchair due to an accident, created a wide array of characters), we are moving toward a happy ending of healing, rebuilding and joy.

Other characters add color, energy and perspective that lead to the last scene, where the dead Hermione, so touchingly played by Akaina Ghosh, is honored for her memory and is presented in the form of a sculpture done by “Romano” who brings comic relief. Lo and behold, the sculpture comes to life as Hermione brings an even more heightened grace and wisdom to the situation.

The play moves forward like a sailboat tacking toward shore. The storm is over, and in the rubble of devastation we find restoration, forgiveness, and new love. Broken trusts, hearts and minds are healed, but changed.

The play ends in a spirit of cohesive jubilation, and again there is dancing and joy, and as the characters exit the stage, the lone puppet remains, propped in the center, musing on the events it has witnessed.

Ragged Wing is brave to present this play in such a small space under the superb direction of Keith Davis and the versatility of the actors.

Ragged Wing is a holistic collaborative effort of theater, dance, visual art, music. All of those elements are used in this production. There's still time to experience this very innovative presentation of one of Shakespeare's unusual plays.

**"The Winter's Tale" continues at The Flight Deck through November 12, 2016. For further information, click [here](http://www.raggedwing.org/shows/201617-season-concrete-dreaming/the-winters-tale/). (<http://www.raggedwing.org/shows/201617-season-concrete-dreaming/the-winters-tale/>)**

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Rating: \*\*\*

(For an explanation of TheatreStorm's rating scale, click [here](#)

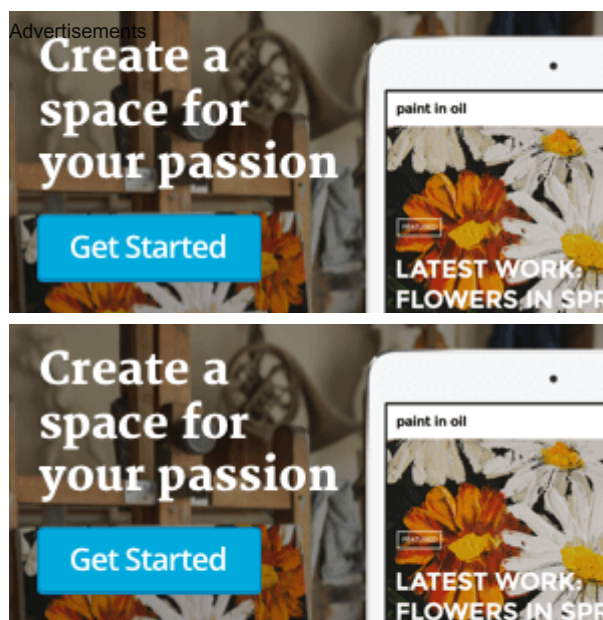
(<https://theatrestorm.com/2012/03/01/reviews-with-ratings-an-ambivalent-acquiescence/>)

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*"The Winter's Tale" by William Shakespeare, as edited by Bill Peters, produced by Ragged Wing Ensemble. Director: Keith Davis. Art Director: Amy Sass. Scenic Designer: Jalua Dell. Lighting Designer: Alawna Sullivan. Sound Designer: Ella Cooley. Costume Designer: Helen Slomowitz. Properties Designer: Derek Moore. Puppet Designer: Scout Tran-Caffee.*

Cast:

*Camillo/Paulina: Rachel Brown. Leontes/Mariner: Shane Fahy. Hermione/Clown: Akaina Ghosh. Polixenes/Shephard: David O Stein. Maximillus/Florizel/Clown/Officer: Ryan Takemiya. Antigonus/Perdita/Julio Romano: Margherita Ventura.*



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