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Big-budget film to shoot on Big Island and Lanai

The movie will shoot on the Big Island and Lanai with a \$20 million budget

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A big-screen adaptation of William Shakespeare's "The Tempest" begins filming on Lanai and the Big Island next month with Academy Award winners Helen Mirren, Jeremy Irons and director Julie Taymor.

They will work with locally based TalkStory Productions, Chartoff Productions and Artemis Films to bring the comedy/romance/ fantasy to life.

Mirren takes on the lead role of Prospero, though the character is female and renamed Prospera. If actor Geoffrey Rush - who remains in negotiations for a role - joins the team, the estimated \$20 million production will boast four Oscar winners.

Shakespearean scholars need not fret. Aside from Prospero's gender change, Taymor, best known for her Broadway adaptation of "The Lion King" and for directing "Frida," has no plans to alter the original masterpiece.

[By Katherine Nichols](#)

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Three Academy Award winners on one tiny island? It's happening next month when actors Helen Mirren and Jeremy Irons and writer/director Julie Taymor set up shop on Lanai to film William Shakespeare's "The Tempest" for the big screen.

The cast and locally hired crew will spend about three weeks on Lanai, followed by two weeks on the Big Island to shoot what is estimated to be a \$20 million production.

"We've never had this caliber of talent in one project," said Maui County Film Commissioner Benita Brazier, who has worked with producers for more than a year to secure the project. Location manager Val Kim is currently scouting areas "that don't have any cultural impact." Though "everything is a go" at this point, Brazier said she is keeping her "fingers crossed" that nothing interferes.

When Taymor vacationed on Lanai several years ago, the Pineapple Isle inspired her to use the setting as an additional character in a production. "The Tempest," a comedy infused with romance and magic which takes place primarily outdoors following a shipwreck, seemed perfect.

On the Big Island, "she wants the lava and the very stark background," said Brazier. "She's blending it all in."

Other actors taking part include Djimon Hounsou, Russell Brand, Alfred Molina, Ben Wishaw and Felicity Jones. Academy Award winner Geoffrey Rush is in negotiations for a role.

"For us to have a production of such quality as this and a filmmaker of such high caliber is really a credit to Hawaii," said state Film Commissioner Donne Dawson. "It's a combination of the right locations and the necessary funding support, which is where TalkStory Productions comes in."


The locally based TalkStory is working with Chartoff Productions and Artemis Films to produce the film. Miramax will distribute.

Best known for her wildly creative work on Broadway with "The Lion King," Taymor also directed "Frida," which won an Oscar, as well as "Across the Universe," inspired by Beatles songs. Following "The Tempest," she'll adapt "Spider-Man" for Broadway, developing the music with Bono and The Edge.

Shakespearean scholars can take comfort in the knowledge that Taymor plans no unusual modernization of Shakespeare's fantasy/comedy. "It's Shakespeare's language," Brazier assured, "and Julie is just adapting it."

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