The Classic Theatre of San Antonio

Presents

William Shakespeare’s

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

Directed by Diane Malone

A STUDY GUIDE

Prepared by
The Classic Theatre of San Antonio
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Cover Photo: Roy B. Bumgarner II and Morgan Clyde as Petruchio and Kate
FORWARD
by Diane Malone, Director/Designer

As one of the founders and artistic directors of The Classic Theatre of San Antonio, I read playscripts for consideration each season. As a director/designer, I think visually. When I read a script and can SEE it unfolding in my mind’s eye, I am usually captivated and essentially have designed it. If I can’t see it as I read, it usually means that script is not for me.

I had studied Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* often in college and grad school but was never involved in a production of it. When I read it as a possibility for this Classic season, I saw the sunny colors of the Italian countryside, enjoyed a comic sensibility that hearkens back to the Italian Commedia dell’Arte, and envisioned a cast of joyful people, both young and old, involved in three weddings. That initial vision essentially became the concept for this production.

The colors of Italy are the inspiration for the design palette of this production, which is set in Padua and Verona. Even the names of the natural colors conjure up visions of the Italian countryside: Siena, Umber, Ochre, Terra Cotta, Tuscany, Florentine Gold, Venetian Red, Verona Brown. *Shrew* is an earthy, physical comedy that will be well served by these warm earth tones in both set and costumes.

Shrew is clearly based on earlier Commedia dell’Arte, which Shakespeare may have experienced by way of traveling troupes presenting this improvisational Italian comedy. He refers to Gremio as “an old Pantalone,” a Commedia character who is traditionally a foolish old man in red robes. The servant Tranio, a name also found in Italian comedy, is a sort of Arlecchino character, a servant who takes the place of his master and sets in motion the play’s complicated schemes involving mistaken identity and disguises. There are three pairs of lovers in Shrew: Lucentio and Bianca play the roles of traditional *inamorati*, but Petruchio comes striding in like Il Capitano, a character seen again as Miles Gloriosus in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, a modern musical based on ancient Roman comedy of Plautus. The plot complications, the character types and the physical humor of *The Taming of the Shrew* all bear the influence of comedy forms from Plautus to Commedia.

Ultimately, *The Taming of the Shrew* is an enduring romantic comedy because it is about young love, courtship and marriage. There are no kings or emperors, no armies or
courts, no characters of history or legend. There is just the demonstration of human experience, which does not seem to change over the ages. The comedy resonates for today’s audiences just as much as it did in Shakespeare’s time because, while his characters are as old as ancient Rome, they are as modern as today’s young lovers.

THE DRAMATURGICAL RESEARCH PROCESS

by Timothy Retzloff, Dramaturg

The popular maxim “it’s a dirty job, but somebody’s got to do it” often comes to my mind when someone mentions the field of dramaturgy in conversation. You may be asking, What is dramaturgy...? What is a dramaturg...? How do you pronounce it...? These are just a few questions people ask me when I explain to them what I do. So, for you inquiring minds out there, a dramaturg is usually the one who (in collaboration with the director) compiles all the research for a theatrical production; however, the role of the dramaturg varies from one theatrical company to another.

The research gathered in the preliminary stages of the production is dictated by the play itself. First and foremost (it may seem silly to say), you must always read the play before researching it, not just once or twice, but at least four or five times. Only after reading the play should you begin to gather research for the production. For the Classic Theatre of San Antonio’s production of The Taming of the Shrew, research began several months before the actors were even cast in their roles.

After reading the script a sufficient number of times, you should ask some basic questions: (1) Where is the play set? (2) When is the play set? (3) What is the genre of the play? (4) What was the style in which the play was written? After answering these questions, you should be generally headed in the right direction.

For this play, we know the following: (1) The play is set in Padua and Verona, two cities in northern Italy, and on the road between them. We know this because the text mentions those cities and other Italian cities. (2) The play is set in the Renaissance. We know this because Shakespeare usually (but not always) set his plays in his own historical time,
which would make it the 1500s. (3) The genre is comedy. We know this not only because Shakespearean scholars classify it as a comedy but also because of the nature of the play. (4) The style mirrors that of Commedia dell’arte, a form prevalent in northern Italy during this time period: we can see numerous similarities between the characters in *The Taming of the Shrew* and the classic stock-characters found in Commedia dell’arte.

Finally, perhaps the most daunting element of this play is the language. An early form of modern English, Shakespeare’s language is considered by some audience members and even actors to be a major stumbling block in understanding the text. Shakespeare is constantly painting pictures with his words, and when you do not fully understand them, you miss out both figuratively and literally on the big picture.

**Some More Questions to Ponder**

When viewing this production or reading it and conducting your own research, take the following additional questions into consideration:

1) What is the time frame of the play? (*I.e.*, how long does the action of the play take?)
2) Is there a clearly defined protagonist of the play? If so, who?
3) Is there a clearly defined antagonist of the play? If so, who?
4) Is the play a comedy, tragedy, or history play (or something else)?
5) Which character, if any, changes the most in the play?
6) What does the overall action of the play seem to say about people or life in general? Do you agree? Why (not)?
Arguably the most produced playwright in the history of the theatre, actor, poet and playwright William Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564, in the city of Stratford-upon-Avon in England. It was there that he spent the majority of his childhood, and at the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway. Together Shakespeare and Hathaway had three children: Susanna, their oldest; and twins, Judith and their only son, Hamnet, who passed when he was only eleven years old.

There is a gap in the records of Shakespeare’s life, often referred to as the “lost years,” from 1585 until 1592, when Shakespeare’s name reappeared in a London pamphlet suggesting he had by then made his way to London without his family and was working in a theatre. According to the Folger Library, Shakespeare’s working life was spent, not in Stratford, but in the theater world of London, where he established himself professionally by the early 1590s. He enjoyed success not only as a playwright, but as an actor and shareholder in an acting company. Sometime between 1610 and 1613, Shakespeare is thought to have retired from the stage and returned home to Stratford, where he died in 1616.

Some of Shakespeare’s most notable works are: *Hamlet, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, King Lear, Richard III*, and a plethora of others.
PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

Baptista Minola, a rich merchant of Padua and father of both...

   Bianca (younger daughter) and

   Katharina (older daughter), also called Katharine or Kate.

Gremio, a rich old man and suitor to Bianca.

Hortensio, a gentleman of Padua, friend of Petruchio, and another suitor to Bianca; disguises himself as a music master (“Licio”) and eventually marries the Widow

Lucentio, a scholar from Pisa, in love with Bianca; disguises himself as a tutor (“Cambio”) to get close to her and eventually marries her.

Tranio, servant to Lucentio who disguises himself as his master and poses as another suitor to Bianca.

Biondello, another servant to Lucentio.

Vincentio, a gentleman of Pisa and the father of Lucentio.

Pedant, a traveling teacher from Mantua who pretends to be Vincentio.

Petruchio, a gentleman from Verona and friend of Hortensio who marries Kate.

Grumio, a servant to Petruchio.

Widow who marries Hortensio.
SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

As the play opens, we quickly learn that Baptista, a rich gentleman of Padua, has two marriageable daughters: Katharina, the shrew of the title, and her younger sister, Bianca. Two of Baptista’s neighbors are suitors to Bianca: Hortensio and the elderly but wealthy Gremio, “an old Pantaloon” as Shakespeare describes him. Alas, Bianca may not marry until Baptista finds a husband for her older sister Kate.

Lucentio and his trusty servant Tranio arrive in Padua in order that Lucentio attend the renowned university there. He sees Bianca and instantly falls in love. Lucentio and Tranio overhear Baptista explaining his dilemma with the waspish, shrewish Kate and his decision to hire tutors for Bianca. Lucentio and Tranio devise a plan for Lucentio to disguise himself as a scholar (“Cambio”) in order to gain access to Bianca personally, while Tranio takes his master’s place in town as the wealthy young student Lucentio, who will also add himself to the list of Bianca’s wealthy wooers. Hortensio also decides to disguise himself as a music tutor, “Licio.”

Petruchio arrives in Padua from Verona to look up Baptista with the two marriageable daughters, for he has come “to wive it wealthily in Padua.” When Petruchio and Kate meet, there are instant sparks of recognition of kindred spirits in their confrontation. Petruchio declares in their first scene:

Thou must be married to no man but me;  
For I am he am born to tame you, Kate.

Petruchio quickly agrees on the financial terms with Baptista and leaves to make arrangements for the wedding on Sunday. All of Bianca’s suitors chip in to fund Petruchio’s wooing and wedding, for with Kate married, the field is clear for their pursuit of Bianca.

When Sunday comes, Kate is attired in wedding finery, but Petruchio arrives in outlandish garb. Petruchio refuses to change into something more suitable for the wedding and acts more shrewish than Kate herself. He will not stay for the reception but whisks Kate
off to his home in Verona, where he does not feed her or let her rest, confiding to the audience his plan to tame her, as the falconer tames his bird, with starvation.

The action then returns to the Bianca plot, with all suitors vying for precedence. Lucentio as Cambio and Hortensio as music tutor Licio give Bianca lessons in which Cambio confides to her that he is really Lucentio come to woo her. Tranio, disguised as Lucentio, out-bids Gremio for Bianca’s hand. Baptista agrees “Lucentio” shall be the husband if his father Vincentio guarantees the sums Tranio (in the name of Lucentio) has bid for her. Tranio finds a traveling pedant willing to assume the role of Lucentio’s father to assure Baptista of the great wealth Lucentio will bestow on Bianca if she marries him. When the pedant, disguised as Vincentio, makes these assurances to Baptista, the wedding is on between Lucentio and Bianca.

In Verona, Petruchio and Kate prepare to come back to Padua for the wedding, but Petruchio finds fault with the dress and hat he has ordered from the tailor and haberdasher. He still will not let her eat but instead rushes her off to her father’s house clothed as she is. On the way to Padua, Kate finally catches on to Petruchio’s taming techniques and she enters into his games. They are well matched and recognize the love they share. They meet a fellow traveler, old Vincentio, the real father of Lucentio, also traveling to Padua to see his son. They all arrive together, only to discover the pedant as fake Vincentio has taken up residence in Lucentio’s house, while Tranio appears in Lucentio’s clothes. Tranio and the pedant run away “as fast as may be” from the officer who has been called in to settle this case of stolen identity, and father and son are re-united when Lucentio and Bianca return from the church where they have been married in secret. Hortensio has turned his affections to a wealthy widow and has married her. Only neighbor Gremio has not found a bride.

“All’s well that ends well” in the final scene at the dessert banquet at Lucentio’s house to celebrate the wedding. While the women retire to see about Bianca, who has drunk too much, the men make bets on whose wife is more obedient. Bianca and the widow both refuse to come to their husbands when they are summoned, but Kate responds immediately and proceeds to tell the other two brides that they too should honor their duty to their husbands. Petruchio has won the bet and tamed the shrew!
CAST
(In order of appearance)

LUCENTIO..................................................................................................................... James Welch
TRANIO .......................................................................................................................... Joseph Urick
BAPTISTA ..................................................................................................................... Robert Moritz
GREMIO ....................................................................................................................... Richard Solis
KATHARINA ................................................................................................................... Morgan Clyde
HORTENSIO ................................................................................................................... Torence Brandon White
BIANCA .......................................................................................................................... Christie Beckham
BIONDELLO .................................................................................................................... Maggie Tonra
PETRUCHIO .................................................................................................................... Roy B. Bumgarner II
GRUMIO .......................................................................................................................... John Stillwagon
SERVANTS .................................................................................................................... Molly Martinez-Collins*, Christelle Miller*, Summer Vidal*
CARLA ............................................................................................................................... Allie Perez
PEDANT/HABERDASHER ............................................................................................... Joe De Mott
TAILOR/OFFICER ........................................................................................................... Richard Anthony
VINCENTIO ...................................................................................................................... Mike Duggan
WIDOW ............................................................................................................................. Allie Perez

PRODUCTION STAFF
Director......................................................................................................................... Diane Malone
Technical Director...................................................................................................... Rick Clyde
Stage Manager............................................................................................................ Angie Hernandez
Assistant Director/Production Manager ...................................................................... Linda Ford
Dramaturg.................................................................................................................... Timothy J. Retzloff
Scenic and Costume Designer ..................................................................................... Diane Malone
Lighting Designer......................................................................................................... Billy Muñoz
Sound Designer............................................................................................................ Rick Malone
Properties Master....................................................................................................... Richard Solis
Assistant Stage Manager............................................................................................ Christelle Miller*
Scenic Artist.................................................................................................................. Karen Arredondo
Wardrobe Mistress...................................................................................................... Kitty Williams
Fight Choreographer.................................................................................................... Joseph Urick
Intern Liaison................................................................................................................ Joseph Urick
Board Operator............................................................................................................ Cheryl Wright
Graphics Design........................................................................................................... Joseph Urick
Photography.................................................................................................................. Dwayne Green

THEATRE STAFF
Co-Artistic Directors ..................................................................................................... Diane Malone, Allan S. Ross
Director of Operations................................................................................................. Rick Clyde
Director of Education.................................................................................................... Christie Beckham
Publicity.......................................................................................................................... Joseph Urick
Box Office Manager..................................................................................................... Florence Bunten
House Manager & Bookkeeper..................................................................................... Linda Ford

* A.I.M. High Interns
CHRISTIE BECKHAM, PLAYING BIANCA

• Education: Bachelor of Fine Arts: Theater Performance / Texas Christian University, National Theater Institute, Moscow Art Theater

• Years of Theatre Experience: 21 years

• As an artist, how is approaching and working on a classic piece of text like Shakespeare different from approaching something modern (musical, play, opera, etc)?

  Because of the history involved with the play, it is necessary to research the play from a historical perspective and to use all the resources at our disposal (Onions, the Folios, the internet) to learn about the time period and the definitions of words or turns of phrase we may no longer use. It’s very important to understand what the world was like when a play was written in order to truly convey the play’s message and tone. Of course, once you know all this stuff, you can always turn it on its ear and do something different! But first, you have to do your homework!

• Were you familiar with The Taming of the Shrew before you began work on this production? If so, what was the most appealing factor for you to want to participate?

  Yes. In my career, I’ve mostly done contemporary pieces, lots of deconstructionist theater. Lately, I’ve been interested in the classics and, through my performance, presenting them in a unique way.

• As an artist, how did you specifically approach your role in this production? What was the most challenging aspect to tackle before rehearsals? And what has proven to be the most challenging once rehearsals began?

  I haven’t really started rehearsals yet. But my prep has been to re-read the show a few times, to pay attention to what other folks are doing at the table-read and to come up with a background for Bianca and a sly motivation that fits who I am and what I bring as a performer. And bleaching my hair. Again.

• This play’s ending is controversial with modern feminists and some scholars due to Kate’s “taming.” What is your opinion? Is this play anti-woman? What do you think the play says about relationships in general?

  I think, considering the time period, that this is an incredibly feminist play. The father does not simply marry his daughters off to whomever he chooses; the girls seem to have a choice. Kate is not tamed; she is finally happy and ready to share her life with her husband. There is mutual respect.

• What would you like to share with all the students and theatre patrons who come to see this production? What would you like them to consider? Walk away with? Hopefully think differently about in the future?

  Shakespeare can be fun! And easy to understand if done well.
MORGAN CLYDE, PLAYING KATHARINA

• **Education:** BA in Communications and Theatre / Harding University

• **Years of Theatre Experience:** 23 years

• **As an artist, how is approaching and working on a classic piece of text like Shakespeare different from approaching something modern (musical, play, opera, etc)?**

  There’s a certain rhythm and composition of Shakespeare’s words that one has to be familiar with before going into a production, as the arrangement of the words often reveals or affects the meaning. As with any verbal art form, one has to understand what one is saying to do the job correctly. That becomes both more difficult and more imperative when working with Shakespeare, or any work beyond the artist’s own cultural experience.

• **Were you familiar with The Taming of the Shrew before you began work on this production? If so, what was the most appealing factor for you to want to participate?**

  I was very familiar, having studied the play in high school and college. Kate has always been a role that I’ve wanted to play, so it was an easy decision to audition. I’m also consistently impressed with the quality of work that the Classic Theatre produces, and I wanted to try my hand at contributing to that.
• As an artist, how did you specifically approach your role in this production? What was the most challenging aspect to tackle before rehearsals? And what has proven to be the most challenging once rehearsals began?

My most challenging task during this process has been shifting my focus from Kate’s verbally and physically violent characteristics to her vulnerability. She is generally viewed both by the other characters and the audience as being very headstrong, outspoken, and largely immovable, and that’s certainly a large part of her. My approach has been finding the human behind The Shrew. When I listen to how the other characters speak of and to her, I see very quickly that she has reason to be so harsh. After all, why be kind to those around you when there is no kindness shown? When Petruchio begins to court her and she hears kind words for the first time, this catches her off guard, and becomes her character arc. For me, the play is about Kate learning how to love and be loved.

• This play’s ending is controversial with modern feminists and some scholars due to Kate’s “taming.” What is your opinion? Is this play anti-woman? What do you think the play says about relationships in general?

I do not consider the play as anti-woman. I think placing modern interpretations on the ending is a mistake. It must be approached in the context of the culture for which it was written. In that context, Kate and Petruchio are forming a functional relationship, rather than Kate taking what would today be condemned as a subservient role. As mentioned above, I think it’s important to consider what love means to Kate. If she decides that to love someone means not being obstinate and insulting to them, how is this anti-woman? This is simply a person expressing her fondness and loyalty, which are far more virtuous than just being outspoken for the sake of being outspoken. In my opinion, she’s much stronger at the end of the play.

We must also not fail to notice the many faults with the men in the play. For example, Baptista shows blatant favoritism, Lucentio is deceitful and love-blinded, and Petruchio himself is described as more shrew-like than Kate. The controversial newlyweds are, in fact, the only characters who show growth throughout the play, and I don’t think it’s a coincidence that they are the only ones who end up happy. That said, this is a comedy. Let it be funny.

• What would you like to share with all the students and theatre patrons who come to see this production? What would you like them to consider? Walk away with? Hopefully think differently about in the future?

To be perfectly honest, I would just like for students to have a good time, and to share the joy I feel from inhabiting this character. I’m not setting out to teach with this role, but to entertain.
Joseph Urick, Playing Tranio:

- **Education:**
  
  MFA Acting (University of Florida)
  BA Acting/Directing (Texas A&M Corpus Christi)
  AA Fine Arts (San Antonio College)

- **Years of Theatre Experience:** 8 years

- **As an artist, how is approaching and working on a classic piece of text like Shakespeare different from approaching something modern (musical, play, opera, etc)?**

  I have been fortunate enough to have been given several attempts to approach the canon of Shakespeare, and for as much as it is different with regards to the poetry, the language, the period style and the movement, we never quite escape from that human element. Shakespeare didn’t write cartoons, he wrote real people with real problems, and as long as you can appreciate and maintain that level of integrity, than you can approach any heightened text with that sense of verisimilitude we look for when we go to see a play. Once you understand that, however, then it does take a great deal of patience, work, and understanding.

- **Were you familiar with The Taming of the Shrew before you began work on this production? If so, what was the most appealing factor for you to want to participate?**

  Yes. I have been fortunate to have done this show twice before this production, and both productions were within the past year! I’ve acted in all three, but I served as the director also in one, which gave me an even greater appreciation of this material. The most appealing...
aspect of this show is the sheer lunacy of it. This is a show that is so riddled with plots, lies, disguises, witty banter and discovery that everyone is simply exhausted by the end, and if it is done correctly, the audience loves you for the evening’s entertainment.

- **As an artist, how did you specifically approach your role in this production? What was the most challenging aspect to tackle before rehearsals? And what has proven to be the most challenging once rehearsals began?**

  Even though this is the third time I’ve done *Shrew*, I always start off my process by reading the script again, especially since I’m playing a totally different role. (1st time I was the Haberdasher, 2nd time was Petruchio, and now, Tranio!) It’s a very important part of acting Shakespeare that the actors do their own homework. The director has over a dozen people to work with, and a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so it is vital that everyone pull their own weight. Since I am also the Fight Choreographer for this production, it was very important that the Director and I meet several times to discuss what she wanted, what I thought would be appropriate for the production, where our ideas conflicted, as how we could resolve those conflicts. Fortunately, Diane and I have an amazing working relationship and we are on the same page 90% of the time.

- **This play’s ending is controversial with modern feminists and some scholars due to Kate’s “taming.” What is your opinion? Is this play anti-woman? What do you think the play says about relationships in general?**

  Shakespeare was an actor. He was not looking to pen the next Pulitzer Prize-winning piece, nor was he even trying to garner a title like Poet Laureate (that went to Ben Jonson). No, he was just trying to pen a story that would sell, and a battle of the sexes is about as universal as you can get, and everyone, rich or poor, would understand. Now, Shakespeare was living in a time where women were subjects, property rather, but he lived under the reign of a woman, so, the question needs to be asked, is he chauvinist? I say, emphatically, no. Here’s why:

  When you actually read the text, the lines have a flow, called scansion, where Shakespeare tells us what words are important, and which are not. In Kate’s speech, she has words like “honest will,” “loving lord,” and “cares for thee” emphasized, while the words “obedient,” “serve,” and “obey” are not given such stress either at the beginning or end of their phrasing. The whole play is not about men versus women; rather, it is about how one woman (Kate) and one man (Petruchio), for all their panache and bravado, soon realize that they complete each other, and that is all you need to be happy.

- **What would you like to share with all the students and theatre patrons who come to see this production? What would you like them to consider? Walk away with? Hopefully think differently about in the future?**

  I want everyone who comes to this show to realize that Shakespeare is just as relevant now as it was then, and the words, actions, and thoughts of these characters are just as real as their own. This is also a comedy, so I want them to forget about highbrow, lofty, antiquated Shakespeare, and get ready to laugh, because this is a hysterical comedy.
REFLECTIONS ON THE PLAY AND PERFORMANCE

The following are some questions that you might want to consider and reflect on after viewing this performance:

1) Are there any major themes in the play? Any recurring types of images? If so, what are they?

2) Which character, if any, do you feel changes the most in the play?

3) Do you think that Kate’s behavior as a “shrew” is justified by her family’s actions toward her?

4) Which character in the play do you like the most and why?

5) Which of the two sisters do you feel the most empathy for? Do you think Shakespeare intended this response?

6) Do you feel the ending of the play is controversial? If so, why?

7) Do you think Shakespeare was challenging the norms of marriage in his time period? Why (not)?

8) Did the language in the play help or hinder your understanding of the play? If it helped, how did it, and what did you like about the language? If it didn’t, what do you think might better help you in the future when viewing a Shakespearian play?

9) In which scene do you feel the climax of the play happens? Can you explain why you believe this was a turning point in the play?

10) Do you feel that Shakespeare is trying to convey a message in this play? If so, what is the message?

11) If you read the play before seeing it performed, did your opinion of the play change after seeing the performance? If so, how?

12) Did your opinion or understanding of any of the characters change after you saw the play performed? If so, which characters, and how did your perception change? How did the actors’ portrayals differ from what you had imagined their characters to be?
REHEARSAL PHOTOGRAPHS
WORKS CITED


PICTORIAL CREDITS
Map of Italy: http://www.ilibrarian.net/history/italian_city_states_1494_lg.jpg

Shakespeare Portrait: http://bigbackground.com/figure/william-shakespeare.html

Production Photography: Dwayne Green

SOURCES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

“Teach and Learn Shakespeare”
http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=2594&CFID=53378177&CFTOKEN=93817120

“Teacher Resources”
http://www.folger.edu/Content/Teach-and-Learn/Teaching-Resources/

“Shakespeare Birthplace Trust”
http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/home.html

“The Shakespeare Paper Trail: The Early Years”
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/shakespeare_early_01.shtml

“Folger Shakespeare Library Curriculum Guide”