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Abstract

The Taming of the Shrew is one of William Shakespeare's most challenging plays. While all of his plays present their own complexities, the gender dynamics and politics of the main plot of this comedy make it particularly difficult for modern scholars and thespians alike. And yet, *The Taming of the Shrew* has remained popular among audiences for well over 400 years.

Written early in Shakespeare's career, *The Taming of the Shrew* tells the story of an obstinate woman, Kate, who is forced into a marriage with Petruchio so that her younger, more desirable sister may be courted by her several eager suitors. From the very beginning of their relationship, Kate and Petruchio show no love or respect towards each other. They spar with each other as Petruchio tries to force Kate into submission and she resists him. But by withholding various things—food, sleep, new clothing—from Kate, Petruchio gradually trains her to be an obedient wife. This tale is performed as a means of educating a drunken tinker named Christopher Sly, thus creating an overall play-within-a-play format.

This project looks at the various ways in which directors and actors have interpreted *The Taming of the Shrew* for the theater. Using video recordings, photographs, reviews, and scholarly works, I will examine several recent stage productions from the last 35 years. The performances were done by prominent companies in England and the United States, and cover a variety of styles and interpretations. Additionally, I will review a production that I have personally seen. This work will culminate in a discussion of the range of theatrical interpretations of the play. I will particularly look at how the companies handle the more difficult aspects of the play, such as the play-within-a-play format, the gender dynamics, and the evolution of Kate and Petruchio's relationship.

The Interpretation of the Shrew

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Introduction

A Brief History of *The Taming of the Shrew*

The Taming of the Shrew is a difficult play. All of William Shakespeare's plays have their own challenges, but *Shrew* is particularly difficult for modern scholars and thespians alike. The gender dynamics and politics of the main plot have made the play a controversial one. And yet, *The Taming of the Shrew* has remained popular among audiences for well over 400 years.

Identifying *Shrew*'s origins is only one of many challenges in the study of the play. Scholars consistently agree that it was one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, but the exact year in which he penned it is unknown. Based on the history of the London theaters in the early 1590s and a comparison of *Shrew* with Shakespeare's other early plays, it is highly likely that *The Taming of the Shrew* originated some time between 1589 and 1592. *Shrew* is usually dated around 1590-1. However, it is uncertain what the exact texts of Shakespeare's first versions of the play were. The version of the play which we today think of as *the* version of *The Taming of the Shrew* is based on the texts printed in the 1623 Folio and the 1631 First Quarto editions. But there was an earlier, anonymous script published in 1594 titled *The Taming of a Shrew*. The texts of *A Shrew* and *The Shrew* are similar, but include stark contrasts. Most notable of these differences are *A Shrew*'s being set in Athens, rather than *The Shrew*'s Verona, and the larger roles of Christopher Sly

and Grumio and an Epilogue which completes the framework started by the Sly Induction.¹

The beginning of the performance history of *The Taming of the Shrew* is similarly uncertain. The first known production of some version of *Shrew* was recorded in the diary of Philip Henslowe. He stated that the Chamberlain's Men performed "the Tamyng of a Shrowe" at Newington Butts in Southwark, London during the same June 1594 season in which early versions of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet* were also performed.² Other earlier performances of *Shrew* likely occurred.

Regardless of the uncertainty surrounding the play's theatrical and published origins, it was a popular production. *The Taming of a Shrew* was republished multiple times, in 1596 and 1607, showing the general demand for the play. Several performances of *The Shrew* are known to have taken place at the Globe, Blackfriars, and Charles I's court at St. James's Palace.³ Additionally, John Fletcher wrote a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew* called *The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*, in which Kate is deceased and Petruchio is tamed by his second wife, Maria.⁴

During the Restoration, *The Taming of the Shrew* remained popular, though not in Shakespeare's original incarnation of it. With the possible exception of a

¹ Haring-Smith, Tori. *From Farce to Metadrama: A Stage History of The Taming of the Shrew, 1594-1983*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985. Print. 7-8. Also, Brown, Rebecca. "The Taming of the Shrew: Dating the Play." Royal Shakespeare Company, 2011. Web. 16 Jan 2012. <http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/the-taming-of-the-shrew/dating-the-play.aspx>.

² Haring-Smith, 7. Also, "Newington Butts." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., 01 Dec 2011. Web. 04 Feb 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newington_Butts.

³ Haring-Smith, 8.

⁴ Haring-Smith, 8. Also, Swan, George. "The Woman's Prize: A Sequel to The Taming of the Shrew," *The Oxfordian*, 10 (2007): 121-141. Print.

performance during the early 1660s soon after the reopening of the theaters, the play that Shakespeare wrote was not presented on the stage during this era. Rather, various rewritings of the story were created and performed. The more significant of these adaptations included *Sauny the Scot, or The Taming of the Shrew*, John Lacy's 1667 play which moves the story to England, changes the names of the characters, and places more emphasis on the figure of Grumio, here called Sauny⁵; *The Cobler of Preston*, a 1716 two-act farce in which Charles Johnson increased the length and emphasis of the Christopher Sly Induction⁶; and James Worsdale's *A Cure for a Scold*, a ballad-farce which, written in 1735, adapted not Shakespeare's *Shrew*, but rather *Sauny the Scot*.⁷ The most successful of the *Shrew* adaptations was David Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio*.⁸ From its first performance in 1754 until 1844, this play was the most commonly staged version of the *Shrew* story. Garrick shortened the play into an afterpiece by omitting the Sly Induction and the subplot involving Bianca and her suitors. All that remains is a slapstick comedy involving Petruchio's taming of Katherina, who here becomes Catharine, that fairly closely follows the corresponding plot of Shakespeare's *Shrew*. The shorter, more farcical treatment of the single plot and some slight modifications to the characters' motives and personalities helped to minimize some of the moral issues of the story, but in doing so, also eliminated

⁵ Haring-Smith, 10-12. Also, Brown, Rebecca. "The Taming of the Shrew: Stage History." Royal Shakespeare Company, 2011. Web. 16 Jan 2012. <http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/the-taming-of-the-shrew/stage-history.aspx>.

⁶ Haring-Smith, 12-14. Also, Brown, "Stage History."

⁷ Haring-Smith, 14-15. Also, Brown, "Stage History."

⁸ Haring-Smith, 15-41. Also, Brown, "Stage History."

the controversial issues and larger questions that make *The Taming of the Shrew* so rich and interesting.

Catharine and Petruchio, the title of which eventually modified slightly to *Katharine and Petruchio*⁹, evolved over the Victorian era, becoming gradually more farcical. It continued to be offered fairly frequently on both British and American stages until the very end of the 19th century. By then, its popularity had been replaced by a desire to see and perform Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.

For the most part, *Catharine and Petruchio* was the only stage version of *Shrew* offered in either England or North America until the 1840s.¹⁰ But beginning with Benjamin Webster's 1844 production of Shakespeare's original play at the Haymarket Theatre in London, *The Taming of the Shrew* gradually regained its popularity. It was only staged a few times in England between 1844 and 1888, but ever since then, it has been offered to audiences at least every few years, and sometimes even more often. North American audiences were not introduced to *Shrew* until 1887 (*Catharine and Petruchio*, on the other hand, was a common choice for artistic directors), but it quickly became a frequently produced play. *The Taming of the Shrew* has continued to be a common presence on both British and American stages since the late-19th century. As new entertainment technologies were introduced into the 20th century, a number of

⁹ In *From Farce to Metadrama*, Tori Haring-Smith distinguishes *Katharine and Petruchio* as "various adaptations of Garrick[']s *Catharine and Petruchio*]" (173). I will not make any separation between the two plays, but will simply use the name *Catharine and Petruchio* to refer to both.

¹⁰ See Haring-Smith, Appendix B: "Chronological Handlists of Performances in England and North America," 173-210 for lists of performances of *The Taming of the Shrew* and its adaptations in England and North America from 1594 to 1983.

adaptations of *Shrew* were made for radio, film, and television.¹¹ Additionally, it still inspires writers to develop their own versions of the story. Some later adaptations¹² include an opera by Hermann Goetz (1874); Cole Porter's musical, *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948), which tells the story of actors who are putting on a musical version of *Shrew*; and *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999)¹³, Gil Junger's film that transcribes the story to an American high school. The frequency of *Shrew* offerings and its use as inspiration for other productions testify to the popularity of Shakespeare's work.

Things to Consider when Staging a Production of *The Taming of the Shrew*

When staging a production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, as with all theatrical performances, certain considerations must be made: the venue, the audience, costumes, props, lighting, actors' body language and spoken language, and a plethora of other details. When tackling a Shakespearean play, directors have even more questions to answer. Which scenes or lines should or should not be cut? In which time period should this particular production take place? What does the Early Modern language really mean and how can that be portrayed on stage?

Modern directors and actors have the added difficulty of the inevitable comparisons that critics will make between their productions and the most successful or well-known productions of the past. They must consider how their

¹¹ Haring-Smith, 209-210. Also, Brown, "Stage History."

¹² Haring-Smith, 169-171. Also, Brown, "Stage History."

¹³ Leggatt, Alexander. "Teen Shakespeare: *10 Things I Hate About You* and *O*." Ed. Paul Nelsen and June Schlueter. *Acts of Criticism: Performance Matters in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Honor of James P. Lusardi*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2006. Print. 245-258.

interpretation of the play will respond to past interpretations. Will the various readings complement each other? Contradict each other? While putting a production together, the company must ask themselves, “What new element can we bring to our performance in order to both entertain our modern audience and convey a new understanding of the text?” Furthermore, they must do this while staying true to the heart of Shakespeare’s work.

Directors’ approaches towards *The Taming of the Shrew* have varied drastically and have changed over time. While all of Shakespeare’s plays are challenging, this is arguably one of the more difficult ones. The plot itself is fairly straightforward. Even with the Christopher Sly Induction and the sub-plot involving Bianca’s suitors, the act of simply telling the story is not all that different than in any other play. The difficulty lies in the social implications of a man taming his reluctant wife, especially in the manner in which Petruchio tames Kate.

As is characteristic of Shakespeare’s comedies, *The Taming of the Shrew* revolves around marriage. But *Shrew* is different in that Kate and Petruchio’s marriage occurs fairly early in the play. Whether they fall in love, however, is debatable. Paul Barry is of the opinion that their love occurs almost instantaneously upon their meeting. He says, “All four lovers [that is, Kate and Petruchio, and Bianca and Lucentio] fall in love at first sight, and the rest of the play is a classic ‘boys meet girls, boys lose girls, boys get girls back,’ leading eventually to marriage.”¹⁴ In discussing the first scene in which Kate and

¹⁴ Barry, Paul. *A Lifetime with Shakespeare: Notes from an American Director of all 38 Plays*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010. Print. 18.

Petruchio meet, Barry emphasizes that despite the productions he has seen which add violence to the scene in various ways, “it’s a wooing scene, for God’s sake, a battle of wits between lovers, and all of the physical contact is precisely defined by the Playwright.”¹⁵ He even considers the physical contact between the two characters to be more sexual than violent: “Petruchio’s object is sexual conquest, not bodily injury. He’s not a sadist or a rapist: he’s an eligible bachelor wooing a spirited young woman, and they have a few kinks to work out, but they are a perfect match.”¹⁶ Director Lucy Bailey adheres to a similar opinion as Barry, stating that the majority of the taming plot is “all foreplay to one event, which is to get these two people into bed.”¹⁷

The other general interpretation of Kate and Petruchio’s relationship focuses on violence and feminism, as exemplified by Edward Hall’s 2007 all-male production. Hall is quoted to have called *Shrew* “theatre of cruelty,” and believing that Shakespeare wrote the play as a critique of society, he said, “He’s challenging an audience’s expectations of how a woman is supposed to behave. What if, as a human being, she doesn’t want to roll over, as was expected in Shakespeare’s day? I actually think he’s championing the woman’s rights.”¹⁸

The stark differences between these two approaches are, in part, what make *The Taming of the Shrew* so difficult to perform. It is impossible to know which one Shakespeare originally intended. To further complicate matters, subtle

¹⁵ Barry, 19.

¹⁶ Barry, 20.

¹⁷ Lucy Bailey is quoted in Costa, Maddy. “The Taming of the Shrew: ‘This is not a woman being crushed.’” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media Limited, 17 Jan 2012. Web. 13 Feb 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/jan/17/taming-of-the-shrew-rsc>.

¹⁸ Edward Hall is quoted in Maddy Costa’s article.

nuances can be added to either interpretation of Kate and Petruchio's relationship: one or both of the lovers can be portrayed as mad outcasts; Petruchio could be grieving over his recently deceased father; Kate may be like a falcon that Petruchio is training.¹⁹ Regardless of how effective these portrayals are, they can do much to shape Kate and Petruchio's characters, both as individuals and in relation to each other.

While the nature of Kate and Petruchio's relationship is primarily constructed from the performances given by the two actors portraying them, it is also heavily influenced by the production as a whole. First is the comedic aspect of the performance. *The Taming of the Shrew* is, of course, a comedy, so an audience expects to laugh. But the director must decide what kind of comedy he will present. Will the jokes be based on slapstick physicality? Will the humor be more sarcastic? The play could be "a fun-filled, physically exuberant romp" like the 1930s production starring Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontanne.²⁰ Or a director can focus on the verbal descriptions of funny situations rather than using physical props, such as the Original Shakespeare Company did at the World Stage Festival in Toronto in April 1996. In Act 2, Scene 1, they chose to forgo the tradition of bringing Hortensio onto the stage wearing a broken lute on his head and simply allowed him to describe how Kate had hit him on the head with the said lute.²¹ These various approaches change the tone of the entire play. A more physical

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of these interpretations, see Maddy Costa's article.

²⁰ Brown, "Stage History."

²¹ See Tucker, Patrick. *Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print. 115-116.

comedy would emphasize Petruchio's physical prowess over Kate, whereas a more sarcastic, verbal approach would turn the taming plot into a battle of wits.

Kate and Petruchio's story is also affected by the very beginning of the play, before either of them enters the stage. *The Taming of the Shrew* opens with an Induction which sets up a play-within-a-play format. The opening sequence introduces Christopher Sly, a drunken tinker, and establishes all that follows as an educational tool for Sly, as a messenger tells him,

Your honour's players, hearing your amendment,
 Are come to play a pleasant comedy;
 For so your doctors hold it very meet,
 Seeing too much sadness hath congealed your blood
 And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy —
 Therefore they thought it good you hear a play
 And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
 Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.
(I.i.124-131)²²

Making the taming plot a method of teaching and entertaining Sly diminishes the potentially unbearable brutality between Kate and Petruchio. If these characters are shown to be nothing more than players putting on a performance for Sly, the story gets removed one step further from reality and any violence and cruelty becomes less “real” within the world of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

While the play-within-a-play format may initially appear to lessen some of the difficulties of *Shrew*, it actually adds to them. We have no substantial evidence for how Shakespeare intended for the Induction to be treated. He may have even originally written a bigger part for Sly (as would be suggested by *The Taming of a Shrew*) by having a longer Induction or possibly an Epilogue. Modern directors

²² All *Shrew* quotes are taken from Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. Ann Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

can only base their presentation of the play on the surviving text and the models of past performances.

Once the Induction gives way to the taming plot and sub-plot, Christopher Sly is not heard from again. It is easy for audiences to completely forget that Sly was ever introduced to them, thus erasing the play-within-a-play format by the time when the curtain call happens. This requires directors to carefully consider how they will treat the Induction, and they have a variety of alternatives. Many choose to simply eliminate the Induction altogether and only focus on the plots involving Kate and Petruchio and Bianca and her suitors. Others keep the Induction, or part of it, as a sort of introduction that does not have much impact on the main plot. Finally, some directors decide to emphasize the Induction and the play-within-a-play format. This is usually done in one of two ways. Sly can be kept on stage for the entirety of the production, as in a 1928 production directed by Sir Barry Jackson, so that the audience does not forget that the main action is really a play being performed for Sly. Alternatively, a director can add to the Induction. Martin Harvey did just this in 1913 by taking scenes from *The Taming of a Shrew* and incorporating them into *The Taming of the Shrew*.²³ Regardless of how a director chooses to treat the Induction, he must be aware of and consider how it will affect his overall interpretation of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

²³ Both Sir Barry Jackson's and Martin Harvey's productions are briefly described in Brown, "Stage History."

Chapter 1

American Conservatory Theater, directed by William Ball

In 1976, the American Conservatory Theater (ACT) staged a production of *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Geary Theatre in San Francisco, California under the direction of William Ball. It was also telecast on PBS on November 10, 1976, and was directed for television by Kirk Browning²⁴. The performance starred Fredi Olster as Katherine and Marc Singer as Petruchio.

William Ball founded ACT in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1965, and moved it to San Francisco in 1967. ACT consists of a teaching conservatory that works with the theater. He acted as its artistic director until 1986. Besides acting and directing for various theaters, he also did some work in television, film, and opera. Ball died in 1991 at the age of 60.²⁵

The Commedia dell'Arte Style

The ACT production of *The Taming of the Shrew* was presented in the style of commedia dell'arte, which translates from the Italian as “comedy of the profession.” This form of theater originated in Italy and spread throughout Europe from the 16th to 18th centuries. Although the commedia dell'arte tradition declined at the end of the 1700s, it influenced a number of other forms of entertainment

²⁴ The discussion of the ACT production in this chapter is primarily based on my own viewing of the film recording, available on DVD from Broadway Theatre Archive.

²⁵ Blau, Eleanor. “William Ball, Director, 60, Dies; Founded a Conservatory Theater.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times Company, 2 Aug 1991. Web. 24 Apr 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/08/02/obituaries/william-ball-director-60-dies-founded-a-conservatory-theater.html?src=pm>.

throughout Europe, including national comedic drama in Germany, eastern Europe, and Spain; European puppet shows; the English harlequinade; and French pantomime. Certain individual playwrights and entertainers drew on commedia dell'arte in their own work, such as Ben Jonson, Molière, Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Keaton. Even Shakespeare himself was familiar with the commedia dell'arte style and likely drew on it when he wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*. As William Ball said in an interview with Harold Clurman, “Actually, Shakespeare wrote this play [*Shrew*] borrowing from the style. Many of the names, the Italian names — Baptista, as a matter of fact, is one of the character names of a commedia character.”²⁶

When asked to describe what commedia dell'arte is, Ball explained, “It wasn't a formal style. There were travelling companies that made up their own scripts, and one actor would develop one type of personality, and he would also develop a certain lazzi, or a shtick, certain business. And actually, it's the father of all comedy.”²⁷ Commedia dell'arte is a lost art form, but it likely had an almost circus-like quality, since the travelling companies often included “unorganized strolling players, acrobats, street entertainers, and a few better-educated adventurers, and they experimented with forms suited to popular taste: vernacular dialects, ... plenty of comic action, and recognizable characters derived from the exaggeration or parody of regional or stock fictional types.”²⁸ Masks were a

²⁶ Clurman, Harold. A Conversation with William Ball. *The Taming of the Shrew*. KULTUR, 1976. DVD.

²⁷ Clurman, Harold. A Conversation with William Ball.

²⁸ “commedia dell'arte.” *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 20 Feb. 2012.
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/127742/commedia-dellarte>>.

common element in commedia dell'arte performances, and were especially worn by stock characters, such as Capitano, a caricature of a Spanish soldier, and Columbina, a maidservant. There were also a variety of zanni, or “tumbler,” who were clownish characters known for their acrobatic feats.

In the direction of his production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Ball fully embraced the commedia dell'arte style. He thought, “The vitality of the commedia dell'arte style would lend itself well to *The Taming of the Shrew*.”²⁹ He gave his production a lively, carnivalesque feel which was well-suited to the comedy of the play. The production was heavily laden with physical humor. The actors rarely stood still, and they tended to punctuate their words with rhythmic, exaggerated movements of their bodies. Whether they were shaking hands or tripping each other, the actors filled the production with slapstick comedy. Even old Gremio, who walked with a cane, was engaged in the physical humor. As befits the commedia dell'arte style, the production was full of acrobatics, as actors would tumble across the stage and Petruchio would climb up the scaffold-like set. Bodily movements were also used to embellish spoken words and phrases. Every time one of the actors mentioned a certain thing, he, and often the other actors on stage, would move in a specific way that would quickly become associated with that turn-of-phrase. For example, each time that Petruchio or another character would mention his recently deceased father, the players would pay tribute to the departed by removing their caps and placing them against their chests for a moment while simultaneously lifting their leg up. This had the double effect of adding humor to a line that would not be funny otherwise and creating a gag that

²⁹ Clurman, Harold. A Conversation with William Ball.

could be played and varied throughout the evening. The first time that Baptista saw this physical acknowledgement of Petruchio's father, he could not understand the joke but quickly tried to play along anyway. In doing so, he unwittingly provided one more joke to amuse the audience.

The slapstick comedy of the production could have easily become too sloppy and exaggerated to tell the story effectively. However, the rhythmic precision and unity of the entire company worked well in the performance. Ball relied on comic tradition and incorporated gags—tripping, bad breath, black-rimmed glasses with large, fake noses—that were almost guaranteed laughs. This resulted in the creation of a production that played like a live-action cartoon reminiscent of the traditional Looney Tunes, Merrie Melodies, and Silly Symphonies animated shorts. At one point, Kate kicked Gremio's cane out from under him just as Bugs Bunny would have knocked away Elmer Fudd's rifle as he leaned on it. A hook even pulled the merchant from Mantua, who pretended to be Vincentio, off-stage when he suddenly found himself in the wrong play and started quoting the “winter of our discontent” speech from *Richard III*. The cartoon-like quality was enhanced by sound effects provided by an on-stage troupe of percussionists. The sounds of bells, whistles, and drums were matched with various motions to provide both an aural and visual element of each joke.

The cartoon effect of the production is, in part, what made the taming plot easier for the audience to view. The entire production was very physical, but the actors' interactions were more acrobatic rather than violent. This, combined with their exaggerated facial expressions and precise flexibility of their bodies, almost

gave the impression that the actors were not real people. The Italy of *Shrew* was not the real Italy, but rather a world where everyone was a circus-performer, where grown women could be thrown around as if they were rag dolls, where a man could have a broken lute hanging around his neck without feeling any real pain. Just as an audience never fears for Wile E. Coyote's life when he flies off a cliff, ACT's audience felt no anxiety that Petruchio would ever do any real harm to Kate.

The Play-within-a-Play Format

William Ball chose to cut out the Christopher Sly Induction from his production entirely. However, he still somewhat maintained the play-within-a-play idea by bringing extra members of the company onto the stage to watch and respond to the performance.

The play opened with a single figure approaching from upstage. He lifted a wooden slat in the railings around the stage and walked onto the stage, closely followed by a number of similar individuals. The actors entered somewhat tentatively at first, as if they were not sure if they were in the right place or supposed to be on-stage. But as more cast members joined them, the atmosphere shifted and became much more festive. People were now dancing and prancing onto the stage, cheering as joyous music played in the background. As the principle cast came on for their initial bows, the extras moved to the rear and sides of the stage and promptly took their places on the set, ready to view the evening's entertainment.

The extras were dressed as Italian clowns, wearing costumes featuring masks, tall hats, ruffled collars, and large buttons. This established the commedia dell'arte style of the production before the story even started. This introduction also created a carnivalesque atmosphere. The Venetian masks of the on-stage "audience" created the impression that the real setting of the production was the Carnival of Venice, and the play which Shakespeare wrote was nothing more than an entertainment for the carnival-goers. And thus, the play-within-a-play format was maintained.

This format likely helped make the physicality of the taming plot easier for the audience to bear, since the *Shrew* story is removed one step further from reality. The format of the ACT production may even work better than the traditional Sly Induction. In many productions that include all or part of the Induction, Sly is removed from the stage and never heard from again after his short part is over. This makes it very easy for the audience to forget that there even was an Induction, and the play-within-a-play format essentially disappears. Ball's production, on the other hand, maintained the structure introduced by the clowns that initially came onto the stage by keeping them on-stage and engaged for the whole performance. At the play's conclusion, the clowns were the last ones to leave the stage after the curtain call, signaling that both Shakespeare's play and the Carnival of Venice were now over.

The masked clowns also served the additional role as a sort of "applause sign" for the actual audience. While the clowns were only extras on the stage and not part of the *Shrew* story, they still responded to certain things done by the principle

company. For example, whenever the name Padua was said, the clowns would cheer—clearly these were Paduan clowns—and they would make an “Awww” sound when Bianca was told by her father to go inside where she would only have her books and lute for company. In doing so, the clowns guided the audience members’ responses to the performance so that they would laugh when appropriate and feel sympathetic towards certain characters.

Kate and Petruchio – Two Tamers Tamed

Like the rest of the production, Kate and Petruchio adhered to the *commedia dell’arte* style. They, too, filled their performances with slapstick comedy. Petruchio was especially acrobatic, and Kate often displayed exaggerated facial expressions, particularly with her eyes. They were both very physical with everyone around them and especially with each other. And yet, the way their story was portrayed in this production brought a certain amount of humanity to it. What was at first a mutual agreement to never succumb to the will of the other eventually became a loving relationship between two equals.

When Kate and Petruchio first met in Act 2, Scene 1, there was an instant, physical attraction between them. As they came face to face, expecting to find the other completely loathsome, they instead found two very good-looking people standing before each other. They were each so taken aback that they could not move for a moment. Then, as Petruchio remained in his frozen position, Kate slowly walked around him, fully taking in the man who her father has decided will marry her. Standing behind Petruchio, Kate flashed a quick smile to the

audience, telling them that she liked what she saw. But she would not tell Petruchio this. Instead, she regained her hard countenance and confirmed to him that she was a shrew.

When they finally began to talk to one another, Petruchio acted the part of a gentleman wooing her. The audience knew that this behavior was not genuine, but perhaps he hoped that Kate would be fooled by the illusion. She was not. She quickly made it clear that she was not one to be wooed, and he quickly changed his tactic. They began to verbally spar, throwing at each other the insults that Shakespeare so cleverly wrought. But as the emotions intensified and Kate continued to be obstinate, the contest became increasingly physical. They cuffed each other. They tumbled over each other. They pinned each other down on the floor. While Kate was a match for Petruchio, he eventually proved to be the stronger of the two. This was surely no surprise to the audience, as Petruchio exuded virile masculinity from the moment he first stepped onto the stage. Dressed in only a vest (which he took off before Kate appeared), tight leggings with a codpiece, a hat, a choker, and cuffs, Petruchio's physical prowess was evident to anyone who glanced at him. He confirmed his overbearing strength when he proceeded to lift Kate above his head and twirl her around his body. Try as she might, it was impossible for Kate to withstand him, and when Petruchio announced to her father that the wedding would be on Sunday, she could do no more than give a dissatisfied grunt and stamp away.

Petruchio continued this act of unrelenting cruelty as he married Kate and whisked her away to Verona. His taming of Kate was a gradual process as he

withheld various things from her—food, sleep, new clothes—and still physically overpowered her. When she arrived in Verona, Kate looked truly tired and worn out. Her wedding dress was shredded and torn. She was dirty. She looked as if she could fall asleep at any moment, even with Petruchio yelling at the servants around her. Kate had clearly had a difficult journey, presumably by Petruchio's hand (both he and Grumio were as lively as ever, so they seemed to have had an easy enough trip). At the moment, Kate lacked the energy to stand up to Petruchio. But this did not last long. A short while later, she once again tried to resist his requests of her. He, of course, refused to give in to her shrewishness, and she quickly realized that she would, to an extent at least, have to succumb to him if she were to get what she wanted, whether that be a plate of food or a trip home to Padua.

And yet, Kate was not completely reformed. She may have started to obey Petruchio, but she did so with a hint of sarcasm. Her eyes were the best indicator of this. Fredi Olster was very expressive with her body language, and her eyes in particular often showed how her character was feeling at any given moment. Prior to the wedding, when Kate's shrewish behavior was at its height, Olster's eyes were wide and unblinking, as if they themselves were refusing to appear pretty and feminine. And thus when Kate began to submit to Petruchio, her large eyes still upheld her independent spirit. But as the taming progressed, Kate seemed to actually fall in love with Petruchio. Her eyes remained fairly large and open, but they became softer. Eventually, they no longer looked as if they are trying to resist everyone and everything around her. Rather, they would work with

Petruchio so that when she fetched Bianca and the Widow, she did so not only because Petruchio asked her, but also because she herself wanted to do it. Kate was still a strong woman, and her eyes showed it, but now she was a strong woman in love.

Petruchio also seemed to truly fall in love with Kate. Like her eyes, his body language and behavior also softened over time. As she began to obey him more and more, he no longer needed to lift her up and toss her over his shoulders in order to dominate her. He still maintained his strength through his firm posture, but now it was not necessary for him to emphasize his physical masculinity. When they returned to Padua, Petruchio wore clothing that completely covered his body (even his hands were wearing gloves), creating a stark contrast with his relative nakedness during the wooing and wedding scenes.

Even though Petruchio devised his plan to tame Kate, it is clear in the performance that he was not entirely sure that it would work, or at least not work so quickly. Whenever Kate willingly obeyed him, Petruchio expressed surprise. A different woman suddenly stood before him. Rather than the shrewish Kate he carried to the altar, Petruchio was now married to “my wife, this gentlewoman” (IV.v.62)³⁰, a phrase which Marc Singer said with a tenderness that surprised even himself. Petruchio was shocked that Kate could be a real partner for him and that he could come to have true feelings for her.

By the time the final scene took place following Bianca and Lucentio’s marriage, Kate and Petruchio seemed to be utterly in love. They did, to an extent,

³⁰ Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. Ann Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

maintain their strong-willed, pre-marriage behavior toward others (Kate fought with the Widow. Petruchio acted like the alpha-male.), but when interacting with each other, they were now sweet and kind. They were still physical with each other, but it was in a loving manner rather than an adversarial one. Kate rested her hands on Petruchio's shoulders and stroked his hair. He took her hand and gently held it. They looked into each other's eyes and kissed each other. Petruchio was still surprised by certain instances in which Kate so readily obeyed him, particularly when she placed her hand under his foot at the end of her final speech. He, in turn, picked her hand up gently and kissed it, and then raised her up so that they were now on equal levels. Petruchio had tamed the shrew.

William Ball's interpretation of the ending was complicated slightly by a wink that Kate gave to the audience after kissing Petruchio. This occurred immediately after he had raised her up from beneath his foot. Kate turned to the audience and gave a sly wink to them. In doing so, she seemed to indicate that she was not the only one who was tamed. By submitting to Petruchio, Kate compelled him to give her what she wanted. He became a kinder, less forceful man. He still wanted his wife to obey him, but did not require for her to go so far as to place herself under his foot. Kate and Petruchio both shaped each other into the kind of people that they could love, and thus created an equal partnership.

Just as the commedia dell-arte style and the play-within-a-play format made *The Taming of the Shrew* easier for the audience to watch, the progression of Kate and Petruchio's relationship also probably did so. Rather than telling a story about a man who forces his wife into complete submission, William Ball directed a play

about two people who affected and changed each other but were still equals who eventually fell in love. There was a natural arc to the story and the metamorphosis of each character was gradual and genuine so that it would be possible for an audience to believe that such changes could occur. Shakespeare's play, as Ball presented it, was not a criticism of marriage or a morality play, but was rather a love story about two people who were perfect for each other.

Chapter 2

Royal Shakespeare Company, directed by Di Trevis

Di Trevis directed the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) touring company's 1985 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. It featured Sian Thomas as Katherine and Alfred Molina as Petruchio.

Trevis has worked as both a performer for Glasgow Citizens and as a director for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre. Besides *The Taming of the Shrew*, she has worked with RSC on other productions, including *The Revenger's Tragedy* on the Swan stage and *Much Ado About Nothing* on the main stage in Stratford-upon-Avon.³¹ She has also worked on a variety of plays by Shakespeare and other authors in the United States. Additionally, she has taught both actors and directors in the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, Austria, and Cuba.³²

The Play-within-a-Play Format

For her production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Trevis opted to not only include the Induction scenes, but to expand them. She emphasized the part of Christopher Sly, played by Michael Troughton, by extending his role past the Induction, keeping him on stage for the entirety of the play. This emphasized structure allowed Trevis to explore various themes in *Shrew*.

³¹ Schafer, Elizabeth. *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Print. 28.

³² "About Di." *Di Trevis*. Web. 24 Apr. 2012. <<http://ditrevis.moonfruit.com/#/about-di/4557717070>.

Geraldine Cousin described the audience's first encounter with Sly:

“Christopher Sly and the Hostess erupted noisily into the performance-area through one of the central aisles. This was a distinctly ‘realistic’ Sly. He urinated and vomited on stage, and finally, when the Hostess had left, threw down a small scrap of cloth on to the vomit and fell asleep.”³³ Sly was a revolting specimen of a human being who clearly needed to be taught how to behave properly.

Sly's presence on stage for the whole performance served as a constant reminder for the audience of what the purpose of the play-within-the-play really was: the education of Sly. Rather than allowing them to forget about Sly once the Induction ended and the taming plot began, Trevis ensured that the audience would fully understand that the players had been hired to teach Sly.

The players also, at times, acknowledged their purpose by interacting directly with Sly. One such instance occurred when Petruchio gave his “Thus have I politicly begun my reign” speech (IV.i.159)³⁴. As Elizabeth Schafer described it, “the actor Alfred Molina first poured out two glasses of wine, gave one to Sly, and then sipped the other himself as he delivered Petruchio's speech directly to Sly.”³⁵ By explicitly acknowledging Sly, the player portraying Petruchio showed that he recognized who his audience really was, especially at the moment when he revealed his plot for taming Kate. It was almost as if the player was telling Sly, “Now listen up, this is where the lesson really begins.” And by giving the glass of wine, the player created the impression that he was taking Sly into his confidence,

³³ Cousin, Geraldine. “The Touring of the Shrew.” Ed. Clive Barker and Simon Trussler. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 2.7 (Aug. 1986): 278. Print.

³⁴ Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. Ann Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

³⁵ Schafer. 60.

that he was sharing a secret only with him. Rather than tell the real audience his intentions, Molina's player reminded everyone that the taming plot was supposed to educate Sly. Just as Petruchio is trying to teach his new wife how to behave, the players are also trying to teach the same lesson to Sly, albeit in a very different manner.

The play-within-a-play format served the additional purpose of distancing the audience from the taming plot, allowing them to consider the story more objectively without becoming too empathetic with the characters. Nicholas Shrimpton wrote, "Trevis used [the Sly scenes], with exceptional cunning, to keep our dispassionate judgment of the play alive at those moments when the emotional potency of the plot most tempts us to drift into uncritically realist assumptions."³⁶ There were various times in the production when the action of the taming plot was interrupted by Sly or when the players appeared on stage while not in character for the inner play. One such instance was when, as Cousin described it,

Sly heard the call for an officer to be summoned, and intervened decisively. 'No,' he said, 'no prison.' The players tried to remonstrate with him, reminding him that it was a play he was watching, not reality, but he was adamant. Clearly he had had experience of prison, and refused to countenance its introduction into the play. The actors looked helplessly at each other, wondering how to continue. Then the comic policeman who had

³⁶ Shrimpton, Nicholas. "Shakespeare Performances in London, Manchester and Stratford-upon-Avon 1985-6." Ed. Stanley Wells. *Shakespeare Survey*, 40 (1987): 171. Print.

entered was persuaded to leave. Biondello, Lucentio, and Bianca entered, and the action continued.³⁷

This added material was comical, but also brought Sly, as well as the real audience, out of the play for a moment.

Other reminders of the play-within-a-play format were much more subtle and did not actually interrupt the story. At the end of Act 3,

Tranio and Bianca led the company in a triumphant country dance.

What we were watching, however, was not real events in a real Padua, but their enaction at an English country fair. Katharina, off stage for the dance scene, crept back on to watch it, nursing a baby.

Sian Thomas was playing a Regency actress (with a young family)

who was, in turn, playing the just married Katharina Minola.³⁸

Quietly bringing this player back onto the stage, even though she was not really a part of the scene, reminded the audience that they were watching actors portraying players who were portraying characters. But it also added depth to the anonymous players who were performing for Sly. This woman had a baby to raise, and she could not ignore her child's hunger. These players had lives outside of their work.

Even though the education of Sly was the outer part of Trevis's production, the majority of the action still consisted of the taming plot. The audience still had to respond in some way to Kate and Petruchio's story. Sly himself was nothing more than a character in Shakespeare's play, but by watching the players, he also,

³⁷ Cousin, 281.

³⁸ Shrimpton, 171.

at times, became a part of the audience. He became “a kind of barometer by which the actual audience could test their responses to the action.”³⁹ If he laughed, it meant that something funny had just happened. And as the play drew to an end, he showed the audience what they should take away from the story. Kate and Petruchio eventually learned to love each other, and this seemed to have deeply affected Sly: “Gradually... as he watched the slow growth of tenderness between Kate and Petruchio, his own feelings changed and he timidly and gently held his ‘lady’s’ hand. For Sly, the fictitious events he was watching were real, and he was persuaded by what he saw to respond more caringly.”⁴⁰ These changes in Sly revealed to the audience the deeper meaning and purpose of the play, or at least of Trevis’s interpretation of the play.

Working Class Women

The players that performed for Sly were “Victorian strolling players... a rags-and-tatters group, inured to privation.”⁴¹ While performing, the players were forced to pull from their meager supply of costumes to dress their characters: Petruchio “was dressed in a dirty white suit and down-at-heel black boots,”⁴² and “Kate and Bianca were reduced to performing in uncovered underskirts and bodices.”⁴³ Cousin felt that “the tattiness was deliberately contrived, the subdued colours very beautiful.”⁴⁴ These players had to work hard to make a living,

³⁹ Cousin, 278.

⁴⁰ Cousin, 280.

⁴¹ Thomson, Peter. “Shakespeare and the Public Purse.” Ed. Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson. *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. Print. 166-167.

⁴² Cousin, 279.

⁴³ Thomson, 167.

⁴⁴ Cousin, 279.

especially the women, who both pulled their wagon of supplies across the stage and carried and cared for their babies before, during, and after their performance.

In one interview, Trevis said, “This play is about power, not gender.”⁴⁵ But there is no denying that she carefully considered the role of women in the play and used certain aspects of the production to comment about that role. At another time, Trevis said, “I felt with the structure of a play within a play, I could make all the comments I wanted about the role of the women and this became intensely interesting to me. With that very sadistic trick played on the poor man, Sly, I realised that I could draw a parallel between the powerlessness of the women in the play and the powerlessness of that beggar.”⁴⁶ By having the female players do so much of the physical labor associated with their profession, Trevis seems to have wanted to show the difficult, perhaps even subservient, position of women in the world of this production. As Trevis once said, “The point was that the women did all the work.”⁴⁷

Placing women in such a position may have made them generally more sympathetic than their male counterparts. Seeing even just a hint of what the women had to endure could have elicited feelings of compassion from the audience. This may have even affected the audience’s reactions toward the taming plot. Even though Kate was a shrew, women had already been established as a generally unhappy group of people. Kate’s being forced into marriage and a dreadful living situation would have only emphasized this point. Kate and Petruchio’s relationship did eventually become much more loving, but the ragged

⁴⁵ Schafer, 61. The quote is from *Time Out*, September 12, 1985.

⁴⁶ Schafer, 58-59.

⁴⁷ Schafer, 59.

costumes and the occasional appearance of the women as players and not as the characters of the inner play would have served as constant reminders of the originally established struggles of women. Sly, at least, seemed to have been moved by what he saw. At the end of the play, he reached out to the player who portrayed Kate, having recognized that she, like himself, was leading a poor, difficult life. Michael D. Friedman wrote, “Sly’s gesture of fellow-feeling toward the humble actress elicits sympathy for her plight, as a feminist production might be expected to do.”⁴⁸ Just as Sly helped to guide the audience’s laughter throughout the performance, this final response would have indicated to the audience that they should leave the theater feeling empathetic towards women and especially towards those women who lead difficult lives.

While Trevis did not shy away from showing the hardships of female life, she ensured that her women were also strong and loving characters. Sian Thomas’s player portrayed Kate “with unusual single-mindedness, as a rejected child, fiercely distressed by the experience of being locked out of the familial conspiracy of mutual love and humour. Offered an alternative conspiracy by Petruchio, she grasped it hungrily just as soon as she realized what it was.”⁴⁹ Kate was unloved and angry, but she was also strong and intelligent. As the story progressed, Kate became seemingly more submissive to her husband. But she did not have the aura of a broken mustang. Rather, she seemed to have outwitted Petruchio. As Cousin described the change, “Kate appeared to have accepted the

⁴⁸ Friedman, Michael D. “‘I’m not a feminist director, but...’: Recent Feminist Productions of *The Taming of the Shrew*.” Ed. Paul Nelsen and June Schlueter. *Acts of Criticism: Performance Matters in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: Essays in Honor of James P. Lusardi*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2006. Print. 167.

⁴⁹ Shrimpton, 171.

subservient position demanded of her, but she had the wit and skill to reveal to Petruchio the tactics he had used to beat her. Now, he looked embarrassed and at a loss as to how to proceed. The possibility of a different kind of relationship was created.”⁵⁰ Indeed, by the play’s end, Kate and Petruchio’s relationship had developed into one that was tender and affectionate. Even though this Kate had never been loved by her father and sister, she was, in fact, capable of compassion. When she gave her final speech in Act 5, it “was partly tongue-in-cheek, but it also clearly showed Kate’s new-found love for her husband.”⁵¹ She had not been reduced to a subservient housewife. Instead, Kate was a strong woman who was capable of recognizing the “absurdity”⁵² of gender norms, but who had also opened herself up to love now that she had found someone who would love her in return.

The Final Scene

Trevis did not end her production with Kate’s final speech, but rather extended it to complete and conclude the Sly framework. After the players bowed and left the stage, Sly, inspired by Kate and Petruchio’s newly-found love, tried to embrace his “wife.” Sly had changed. He had become “gentle and loving. He believed in his role, and he had seen that respect and affection between men and women was possible.”⁵³ Unfortunately for Sly, the page-boy suddenly revealed

⁵⁰ Cousin, 280.

⁵¹ Cousin, 281.

⁵² Cousin, 281.

⁵³ Cousin, 281.

his true identity and, laughing, ran off the stage. Sly had learned the lesson of the taming plot, but now he had no one with whom he could share it.

The Lord's joke had been revealed. Sly barely had time to realize that he was not actually married before the cruelty of the trick was increased further, as the Lord tossed a few coins to Sly and left the stage, basking in the hilarity of his scheme. Apparently, the Lord did not care about educating Sly for Sly's own sake, although this was the end result of the inner play. Instead, the education of Sly was merely a source of entertainment for a rich man, much as if Sly was unknowingly putting on a play for the Lord.

This final humiliation connected Sly to the players; they were all just poor people controlled by those with money. As Thomson put it, "The neediness of the players underlay the neediness of the characters in the play. They, like Sly, were playthings for the idle rich, and acting was both their fantasy and their bread and butter."⁵⁴ Ending on such an impression made a strong statement on the politics of social and economic class, which indeed was one of Trevis's primary goals. She said that the play-within-a-play format allowed her to "make a theatrical comment about the position of the actress playing Katherine in the inner play – she and the beggar were finally left alone on the stage together and one saw that they were fellows. I was very, very excited about doing that."⁵⁵ In another interview, Trevis stated that she believed that *Shrew* "isn't just about gender and teaching a girl how to behave, but is actually about class and economics."⁵⁶ Even more than she aimed to remark on the plight of women, she strove to draw attention to the

⁵⁴ Thomson, 167-168.

⁵⁵ Schafer, 59.

⁵⁶ Schafer, 61. The quote is from *City Limits*, August 23, 1985.

hardships of the lower class in general. Discussing this aspect of the production, Friedman wrote, “Trevis highlights the distress of all people, male or female, whose poverty disempowers them.”⁵⁷ Trevis’s interpretation of the play had more than a solely feminist angle. She exposed the cruelty that the upper class sometimes has at the expense of those who are less fortunate.

Christopher Sly was very much the main character of Trevis’s production of *Shrew*. His experiences taught him two important lessons. The story that the players acted out for him showed him the importance of affection between men and women. And the revelation that he was nothing more than the punch line of the Lord’s cruel joke taught him that all people, regardless of their gender, class, or wealth, should respect one another. Sly was no longer the drunk and foolish man he was at the beginning of the play. He was wiser, but he was also sadder. Without a wife, without any friends, he was alone in the world. And so he reached out to someone who would understand his grief. He reached out to the player who played Kate.

⁵⁷ Friedman, 167.

Chapter 3

Royal Shakespeare Company, directed by Gale Edwards

In 1995, Gale Edwards directed the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) main stage production of *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Josie Lawrence played Mrs. Sly⁵⁸ and Katherine, and Michael Siberry played Christopher Sly and Petruchio.

Gale Edwards is a freelance theater director. Originally from Australia, she started a youth theatre company called Energy Connection in Adelaide. She has done extensive work in both Australia and England, directing Shakespeare as well as a variety of other plays and musicals. She directed several productions of musicals by Andrew Lloyd Webber, including revivals of *Aspects of Love* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* and the British premiere of *Whistle Down the Wind*.⁵⁹ Edwards's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* was the first one directed by a woman on the RSC's main stage.⁶⁰

Reworking the Induction – Sly's Dream

Gale Edwards's production of *Shrew* was fairly radical in the sense that she completely reworked the Christopher Sly Induction scenes, changing the framework of the overall play. Edwards maintained the play-within-a-play

⁵⁸ Christopher Sly's wife was a character that was not included in Shakespeare's text, but was featured in the reworked Induction of this production, as will be discussed.

⁵⁹ Schafer, Elizabeth. *Ms-Directing Shakespeare: Women Direct Shakespeare*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Print. 47-48.

⁶⁰ Schafer, 71.

structure, but the context in which Sly saw the taming plot unfold was very different.

From the very beginning, Sly was still presented as a drunk. This much remained the same between Shakespeare's text and Edwards's production. But this is where the similarities ended. Edwards created a new character, Sly's wife. It seems that a quarrel with this wife was what led Sly into his drunken state. The Lord and his servants were still present in this Induction, but their role was reduced to stage hands who enabled the dream that Sly would have, rather than tricking him into believing lies. As Peter Holland described the play's opening:

The production began... with an aggressively drunken Sly arguing with one of those intriguing unseen figures in Shakespeare, Mrs Sly. The Lord and the huntsmen, the whole plot of the Induction, became part of the dream itself with the Lord as a dream-master, summoning up the figures of the dream-world, as with a grand gesture he caused a little proscenium arch to rise up out of the stage floor through which came the troupe of players.⁶¹

Sly still very much needed to learn how to behave properly, and the Lord supplied the means for that education. But the context in which it was presented was different. Rather than subjecting Sly to the cruel trickeries of the Lord, Edwards presented Sly's lesson as a dream.

This departure from Shakespeare's text was an idea that developed as the company's rehearsals progressed. Edwards originally thought to keep the whole

⁶¹ Holland, Peter. "Shakespeare Performances in England, 1994-1995." Ed. Stanelly Wells. *Shakespeare Survey*, 49 (1996): 255. Print.

Induction, and, according to Michael Siberry, who played both Sly and Petruchio, their first rehearsals included work on the Induction as Shakespeare wrote it, “not least because it was the intention of the production to offer Sly’s world as the overall context within which the play was to be set.”⁶² But as time went on, Edwards and her company found that the Induction was not working in the way they would have liked. Siberry said,

The problem... is that it goes on for about thirty minutes and the play that follows it, particularly in the style we wanted to do it, requires such a change of direction – in atmosphere, in playing style, and in energy level – that the clash seemed impossible.... It was a problem we just couldn’t solve, so we had to strip it down to the bare bones and make Sly’s seduction by the Lord and his servants more or less instantaneous, which, if he’s rather hung over, may make sense: they can say anything to him and he’ll believe it. And, anyway, he’s dreaming.⁶³

Contextualizing the taming plot within Sly’s dream allowed the company to present Kate and Petruchio’s relationship, which formed the bulk of the play anyway, in whatever manner they wished. Since the worlds of dreams can, by nature, be surreal or unrealistic, it did not matter as much if Edwards incorporated strange elements into the play or asked the audience to believe something absurd.

⁶² Siberry, Michael. “Petruccio in *The Taming of the Shrew*.” Ed. Robert Smallwood. *Players of Shakespeare 4: Further Essays in Shakespearian performance by players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print. 47.

⁶³ Siberry, 47.

In this production, there was a stark contrast between the “real” world inhabited by Sly and his wife and the dream-world of Sly’s imagination. Russell Jackson wrote of the differences, “Edwards, having established Sly’s Warwickshire as something of a blasted heath with thunder and lightning, made Padua a gaudy, sunny, stagy world populated by *commedia dell’arte* figures in violently clashing colors.”⁶⁴ Holland called Sly’s dreamt Padua “a farce world of brash and garish devices.”⁶⁵ Acting on a set consisting of “a cluster of mobile two-tier towers in heliotrope and purple,”⁶⁶ the characters were dressed in extravagant costumes that would not be found in the wardrobes of ordinary people. For example, Jackson remarked that Tranio, one of Bianca’s suitors, “transformed himself into a flamboyantly camp facsimile of The Artist Formerly Known as Prince with a touch of Elvis for good measure, in an outfit identified in the dialogue as an Armani suit and winkle-picker shoes”⁶⁷ and that when Petruchio arrived at his wedding, “in a miniscule bright red Fiat he drove onto the stage got up as a combination of Inca prince and Rocky and attended by the crapulous and piratical Grumio in a shabby tutu.”⁶⁸ Edwards created an absurd, imaginative world suited to a drunken man’s dreams.

The nonsensical qualities of the dream-world distanced the audience from Padua and its inhabitants, including Petruchio’s cruel treatment of Kate. However, the fact that the abuse existed within Sly’s mind may have raised some questions

⁶⁴ Jackson, Russell. “Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1995-96.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47.3 (Autumn, 1996): 325. Print.

⁶⁵ Holland, 255.

⁶⁶ De Jongh, Nicholas. “Review of Gale Edwards’s *Taming of the Shrew*, Royal Shakespeare Company, *Evening Standard*, April 24, 1995.” Ed. Dana E. Aspinall. *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*. New York: Routledge, 2002. 331. Print.

⁶⁷ Jackson, 325.

⁶⁸ Jackson, 325.

about the kind of man that Sly was. Edwards's Induction had established Sly as an aggressive man. This, combined with his angry feelings caused by the quarrel with his wife, presumably led Sly to yearn for a world where he could rule his kingdom, or at least his house, and acquire an obedient wife. Holland saw Sly's imaginings as "the dream of male power that Sly clearly wants,"⁶⁹ and De Jongh went so far as to call them "Sly's dream of revenge against womankind."⁷⁰ Siberry had a less pessimistic take on the dream. He wrote, "Also there from the beginning was the idea of Sly's putting himself into his own fantasy as his own hero."⁷¹ When Sly first conjured up the world of his dream, it was a place where he could create the life he had always desired. But as the taming plot unfolded, it became less about what Sly wanted and more about what he needed and who he needed to be.

Kate and Petruchio

In the dream, Sly filled the role of Petruchio and Mrs. Sly became Kate. Accordingly, Kate and Petruchio's story and characterizations were somewhat influenced by the Slys' relationship and personalities. De Jongh described Petruchio as "swaggeringly narcissistic."⁷² This is not very surprising, since Sly would have been most interested in the role he was portraying. His self-indulgence naturally would have made him think very highly of himself, and therefore of Petruchio, at least at the beginning of the dream. Kate's role in the

⁶⁹ Holland, 255.

⁷⁰ De Jongh, 331.

⁷¹ Siberry, 46.

⁷² De Jongh, 331.

dream was also influenced by the fact that she was portrayed by Mrs. Sly. Holland wrote,

Josie Lawrence's Kate looked and sounded as though she was in a different play or rather as if Mrs Sly were an unwilling participant in Sly's dream. Her voice deep and portentous as if she was uncomfortable playing Shakespeare comedy and was in training for tragedy, Lawrence played Kate as a woman playing out a role someone else has defined, a male fantasy of the kind of woman who deserves dominating.⁷³

Kate/Mrs. Sly was clearly unhappy about being forced into this story where her husband had all the power. The lack of love and the abuse to which she was subjected certainly would have made the plot seem more tragic than comic. For Mrs. Sly, her husband's fantasy was her nightmare.

Although Kate and Petruchio were, in part, created out of the Slys, they were still their own characters whose actions were driven by their own motives. De Jongh said that Lawrence's "imposing Katherina is the unloved daughter, furious that life has left her on the shelf."⁷⁴ Not only was Kate, as Mrs. Sly, upset at being forced to join this story, but she was also rejected by her fictitious family. She was a shrew because she had no one with whom she wanted to be affectionate or kind. Despite this loneliness, or perhaps because of it, Kate was a strong woman. Jackson wrote, "Josie Lawrence... stood out as what can only be described as a fine figure of a woman. With a crimson dress, a mane of dark hair, and a

⁷³ Holland, 255.

⁷⁴ De Jongh, 332.

threateningly deep voice, this Katherina, constantly striding about in hands-on-hips defiance of the world, was more than a cut above her friends and relations.”⁷⁵

Kate was an attractive woman, who also happened to come from a wealthy family. But that family did not care about her, and so she matured into an obstinate woman who resisted everyone around her.

Petruchio’s character was primarily defined by his adventurous spirit and desire for wealth. Siberry gave an extensive explanation for how he interpreted Petruchio and his arrival in Padua:

Petruccio, in our production, was travelling the world when he arrived in Padua. The city is a step up from Verona, and Petruccio is free... to take the world by storm. That, I thought, was what he had in mind and he’s outrageous and transparently obvious to people. I think Petruccio comes into the play simply ‘flying’: he’s happy to be in Padua, anticipates great times ahead, and is in search of wealth, power and adventure.... I wanted the audience to like Petruccio, but to see through him too. Nor do I think he himself wants to be taken too seriously to begin with. He knows he’s a windbag and a boaster, but he’s there to enjoy it, to have a laugh with it, to send himself up....⁷⁶

Petruchio was a likably selfish person. His main goal was to enjoy life and acquire the resources that would allow him to maintain that lifestyle. When he arrived in Padua and met with the possibility of marrying a girl with a handsome

⁷⁵ Jackson, 325.

⁷⁶ Siberry 47-48.

dowry, he jumped at the opportunity like he would have with any potentially advantageous business venture. As Siberry put it, “His goal is a match that brings as much wealth, and power, as possible; feelings don’t come into it.”⁷⁷ Petruchio did not care if his wife was nice, or funny, or even pretty. All that he cared about was the economic benefit of marriage.

Like in other productions of *Shrew*, Kate and Petruchio were immediately attracted to each other, but they were unable to form a satisfactory relationship until much later. Kate of course resisted Petruchio and refused to obey him, and Petruchio in turn exercised his dominance over her and abused her in an effort to tame her. However, in this production, Petruchio (who we must remember is really Sly) could not maintain his larger-than-life prowess for the entire play. While he tried to continue the taming, time and love revealed another, less commandeering side to his nature. Jackson described Petruchio as “powerful, curiously elegant in speech, and able to seem insecure.... For all his swaggering, brutality did not come easily to him, and there was a distinct possibility that he would be bested by the snarling, stamping object of his wooing.”⁷⁸ And De Jongh wrote, “Siberry’s utterly compelling Petruchio, oscillates between shows of sympathy and eruptions of violence.”⁷⁹ In the midst of his abuse, Petruchio gradually realized that the game he was playing was not working the way he had imagined it, but it was too late for him to stop it. He had to see it through to the

⁷⁷ Siberry 48.

⁷⁸ Jackson, 325.

⁷⁹ De Jongh, 332.

end.⁸⁰ He and Kate eventually came to a mutual understanding during the “sun and moon” scene. They reached a new, loving level in their relationship, which, in this production, was signaled by a kiss. Siberry remarked that this was a particularly romantic kiss, the purpose of which was “to mark it as the moment when they are together as a couple. There is a bond between them now.... The kiss is the consummation of the ideal, recording the fact that these two wonderful people, these two larger-than-life, grand, heroic people, have come together. It’s wild and it’s powerful and it’s fabulous and it’s good.”⁸¹ Kate and Petruchio had finally learned to love each other. If Sly had woken up at this point in the dream, he surely would have felt that his fantasy had had a happy ending.

But the dream continued. While at the wedding banquet in the final scene, Petruchio, Hortensio, and Lucentio placed a bet on their wives’ obedience. Just as he was when he first came to Padua and engaged in a marriage deal, Petruchio was again lured by the prospect of money. And he once again did not consider how the transaction might affect his or anyone else’s emotions. As Siberry put it, “Once more he is playing one of his games, and he does so without any thought of how Kate will feel or what it will mean to her.”⁸² Kate learned about the bet in this production, and she was understandably hurt by it. She realized that her husband had not truly changed for the better as she thought he did. He was once again using her as a way of acquiring wealth, and he did not even pause to consult with her or at least inform her of what he was doing. According to Siberry,

⁸⁰ See Siberry, 50-54, for a lengthy, detailed discussion of this “game” and the changes in Petruchio.

⁸¹ Siberry, 56.

⁸² Siberry, 57.

“Petruccio has pushed Kate too far; he has abused her trust.”⁸³ As someone who had been rejected by her family for her entire life, Kate must have surely felt disappointed in the first person whom she had ever believed could love her and whom she had ever allowed herself to love.

In this interpretation of the taming plot, Kate and Petruchio did not live happily ever after. Kate was hurt by the only person she had ever cared about. Petruchio, and therefore Sly, realized his mistake too late to fix it. Kate still placed her hand beneath his foot, but she did not do so as a wife willing to do anything for her husband. She did so to draw his attention to his error. She made him realize something that no one had ever managed to get across to him before. She taught him that greed would not make people love him. She showed him that the love and respect of a wife was the most valuable thing he could ever possess.

Reworking the Ending – Sly’s Nightmare

Just as Edwards reworked the Induction of her *Shrew*, she also drastically changed the ending. She had to somehow wake Sly up from his dream and show that he had changed from the experience. Sly awoke immediately after Kate completed her final speech. Jackson described the way in which she did this:

Siberry edged off the main acting area, which was framed metatheatrically by a false proscenium, onto the edge of the apron, from which he staggered back to collapse centerstage. Then, omitting both the jubilation of “Why, there’s a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate,” and the concluding lines of Lucentio,

⁸³ Siberry, 57.

Vincentio, and Hortensio, Edwards moved to a transformation scene in which the stage darkened, Padua disappeared, and we were back on the heath. Sly was helped to his feet by the great-coated, headscarved figure we recognized as his wife, and the play ended with him supported in her arms.⁸⁴

Rather than allowing the taming plot to conclude according to Shakespeare's text, Edwards emphasized the fatal mistake that Petruchio had made in placing a wager on Kate, thereby diminishing any hope that they might kiss and make up. Instead, Edwards chose to wake Sly up at the moment when Petruchio's shame and humiliation was greatest. She turned Sly's dream into a nightmare.

Even though the context in which the taming plot was presented to Sly was very different from Shakespeare's text, it still served the purpose of educating Sly. Eliminating the fact that the Lord was entertaining himself by playing a cruel trick on Sly may have even brought greater emphasis to the lesson that Sly learned. Elizabeth Schafer described "Edwards' construction of *The Taming of the Shrew* as Sly's dream of remodelling his wife into a fantasy woman."⁸⁵ Sly's dream began as a drunken man's desire to be a hero who could acquire wealth and power and could train his wife to be an obedient woman. But his wife did not become submissive. Instead, Sly discovered that it was possible to form a loving relationship between a man and a woman based on respect. Such a relationship could make both him and his wife very happy. But working to reach that level was not enough. He must continue to maintain the trust he has earned by avoiding

⁸⁴ Jackson, 326.

⁸⁵ Schafer, 70.

previously bad behavior, whether that involved greed for money or for alcohol. Reverting back to his old ways could potentially destroy any relationship that he had worked so hard to build.

Even though Edwards completed the Sly framework and showed that he had grasped an important lesson, the ending of her production was still somewhat ambiguous. The last image on the stage was of Sly shamefully embracing his wife, as if he were asking her for forgiveness. But there was no telling what would happen in the Slys' future. Sly had understood why Kate and Petruchio's relationship fell apart, but did he truly learn his lesson? Would he make an effort to be a better husband and avoid returning to a drunk and aggressive state? It was impossible to know. It was also unclear whether or not Mrs. Sly forgave him. Sly had envisioned his wife as Kate, but the real Mrs. Sly did not experience the dream. She had no way of knowing what Sly had imagined or why he woke up crying. It seems that this ambivalence was purposefully intended. Siberry commented on the end of Sly's experience,

I simply don't know if what [Sly] has dreamed is going to affect him in the future. For me his final thought was something to the effect 'Well, this is our relationship, it's full of ups and downs and I expect it always will be, but I'm thankful for it.' For some people watching the production it was a final image of hope, for others of inevitable suffering for her. There is no saying who is right....

These two people mean something to each other; the meaning for those watching the play will always be subjective.⁸⁶

The future of Mr. and Mrs. Sly was left to the imaginations of the audience. The production ended so that the audience would have to interpret Edwards's interpretation of *Shrew*. Edwards presented *Shrew* as a man's dream turned into a nightmare. But she left one very big question unanswered: did the taming plot truly teach Sly that, by being a loving husband, he could turn the rest of his life into the dream he always wanted, or would his life continue to be the nightmare it was before?

⁸⁶ Siberry, 59.

Chapter 4

Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, directed by Kurt Rhoads

Kurt Rhoads directed the 2010 production of *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival (HVSF) at Boscobel in Garrison, New York.⁸⁷ Gabra Zackman played the Hostess and Kate, and Richard Ercole played Christopher Sly and Petruchio. This production was performed outdoors under a tent and in a small field leading into the playing area of the tent.

Kurt Rhoads is an actor and director who has worked at HVSF for 15 seasons as of 2010. He has worked on a variety of plays by Shakespeare and by other writers, including *Julius Caesar* on Broadway. He has worked at a variety of theaters besides HVSF, including Colorado's Arvada Center for the Arts, Arena Stage, Shakespeare Theatre, Old Globe Theatre, Denver Center Theatre, and Chautauqua Theatre Co.⁸⁸

The Induction

In his production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kurt Rhoads kept the Christopher Sly Induction. However, he changed it slightly so that it became less of an initial framework for the play and more of an introduction.

⁸⁷ The discussion of the HVSF production in this chapter is based on my own attendance at a performance of the play.

⁸⁸ "Who's Who: Kurt Rhoads." 2010 Program for Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival Performing at Boscobel, Garrison, New York.

When the play was about to start, a woman wearing an HVSF polo shirt and carrying a clip board walked out to the center of the playing area of the tent. She was clearly the stage manager or another HVSF employee coming out to give the pre-show spiel, as is customary in many regional theaters. Sure enough, she began to thank the audience for coming to the show, pointed out the exits, and asked everyone to turn off their cell phones. But she was suddenly interrupted by a loud, unruly man staggering into the front of the tent. This was Christopher Sly. But he was not a drunken tinker. He was a drunken audience member who had seemingly escaped from his seat only to return with a red Solo cup filled with an unknown beverage. Sly was everything an audience member should not be. He was drunk. He was loud. He refused to be respectful and acknowledge that the play was about to start. He even talked on his cell phone and relieved himself on stage.

Just as they did in Shakespeare's text, Sly and the Hostess spent some time arguing on stage. The Hostess made every effort to usher Sly off the stage so that the play could begin. Try as she might, Sly proved resilient, and the Hostess eventually called in some help. It would have been at this point that Sly would have fallen asleep and the Lord would have entered with his hunting party to play his trick on Sly. But in this Induction, Sly remained bright-eyed, and the Lord and his servants were replaced by a group of HVSF employees. Shocked by Sly's behavior, the employees were nevertheless forced to carry Sly out of the tent. And Sly was no longer a nuisance.

Besides showing the audience how they should not behave at the theater, Sly functioned as an opening act that would establish the tone of the play that would

follow. Sly and the Hostess were each representative of the different moods of this production of *Shrew*. Sly was boisterous and a bit absurd. The Hostess was more serious and focused. Rhoads brought these two personalities together to create a humorous play that dealt with serious issues. Filled with a variety of jokes and running gags, the whole production was colorful and light-hearted, but the company did not shy away from tackling the less playful events, characterizations, and themes of the play. For example, both Kate and Petruchio were physically and verbally abusive towards each other and their acquaintances (at one point, Kate even electrocuted Bianca), and the production fully explored the development of Kate and Petruchio's love.

As the audience would later learn, the Hostess and Sly were played by the same actors who would play Kate and Petruchio, respectively. This helped to establish certain basic traits of both Kate and Petruchio based on their pre-show counterparts. Like the Hostess, Kate was a more serious character who did not appreciate the interference of foolish people. Although Petruchio was never drunk, he was like Sly in that he sometimes behaved inappropriately (he wore seat-less pants to his wedding), but was still a likable sort of every-man. He was also resistant to anyone who tried to prohibit his actions. The Hostess/Kate and Sly/Petruchio were recognizable types of people since nearly everyone has encountered the unruly drunk and the person who has to deal with him.

As the Induction ended, some of the other actors walked into the tent from the adjacent field, accompanied by music. Their Sixties-style costumes indicated that the real show was beginning. Even though the Induction did not create a

framework that set the play up as the education of Sly, it provided the audience with a transition into the fantasy world of the Sixties in which the story would take place. The entire theater was transported from the real world of HVSF employees and rude audience members to Kate and Petruchio's fictional Padua.

The Sixties

Rhoads's production of *Shrew* took place in the 1960s. The setting was primarily established by the costumes that the characters wore. The actors were dressed in either Mod or biker style clothing. The colorful costumes created a sense of surrealism, since the actors' outfits and hairstyles were so different from those of the audience.

The costumes also helped to distinguish family units. Each household's clothing followed a specific and unique color scheme. These groupings were subtly done, but they were helpful in showing the audience how the characters formed subsets of the larger society of Padua and, including Petruchio's Verona and Lucentio's Pisa, of Italy. Baptista, Bianca, and Kate wore shades of red and pink. Lucentio and his two servants wore light purple and turquoise. Other characters who did not have any family, such as Hortensio and Gremio, wore colors that did not correspond to anyone else. Petruchio, Grumio, and his other servants contrasted with everyone else by wearing blue denim and black leather.

The colors of the costumes highlighted the various ways in which characters related and interacted with each other, including within a single family. Even though Kate and Bianca were both Baptista's daughters, they had very different

personalities. Kate's fierce and rebellious nature was indicated by the red she wore, a strong color that can arguably also be called an angry color. Bianca, on the other hand, behaved in a sweeter, more feminine manner, and so she appropriately wore pink. Both colors are found within the same family, but the starkness of Kate's red as compared to the softness of Bianca's pink reflected that the two women were not equally desirable.

The costumes also mirrored the relations between the groups of people who were and were not from Padua. Petruchio and Lucentio, along with their respective households, were both from elsewhere in Italy, but their receptions in Padua differed greatly. The Paduans were slightly wary of Petruchio's rough forwardness and absurdities, such as when he arrived at his wedding in a very inappropriate outfit (though this was presumably the beginning of his scheme for taming Kate). Baptista did not want Petruchio to marry Kate because he would be a good addition to the family. Rather, Petruchio seemed to be a strong enough man in body and mind to be able to relieve Baptista of Kate. However, Lucentio, or rather Tranio pretending to be Lucentio, was welcomed by Baptista with open arms. He was admittedly attractive in part due to the wealth and resources he had at his disposal, but he was also courteous and unthreatening. These contrasts also appeared in the costumes. Lucentio and his servants' clean-cut outfits fit in fairly well with the overall style of the Paduans. Petruchio and Grumio's biker-style clothing was the complete opposite, and showed how different they really were.

All of the characters except for Kate remained fairly consistent in the clothing and colors they wore. Kate's costumes, however, changed to reflect her

metamorphosis. At the beginning of the play, she was very much a rebellious, unhappy daughter. Besides a red shirt, she wore black-and-white, vertically-striped pants. The whole outfit emphasized the angles of her body and, therefore, of her personality. When she got married and moved to Verona, Kate wore a white wedding dress, which got gradually dirtier as the taming progressed. But for the last few scenes back in Padua, Kate wore a long, loosely-fitted dress with a blue and white paisley print, belted and with a denim vest over it. This showed her transformation into a kinder woman who had become fully integrated into Petruchio's household. By the time she gave her final speech, Kate was a happy and loving wife.

Rhoads' commented in his directors' notes about why he chose to set his production in the Sixties. He wrote, "I had picked the '60's as a period for the play because of an image I had of Kate burning her bra—a feminist voice stamping her feet and shouting for change."⁸⁹ Like many modern productions, Rhoads' interpretation of *Shrew* was influenced by the feminism of the last few decades. But the feminism in this production seemed to be closely incorporated into the characterization of Kate.

Kate's desire for change seemed to stem from her position as an outcast in Padua. She was more strong-willed and had a more fiery spirit than the other people in the city. She did not fit in with them or even with the members of her own family. She hated men. At the beginning of the play, she growled at the men and made faces at them. She even chased one man with a chainsaw. Men turned

⁸⁹ Rhoads, Kurt. "Director's Notes—*The Taming of the Shrew*." 2010 Program for Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival Performing at Boscobel, Garrison, New York.

their noses up at her, so Kate hated them (although it is impossible to know where or when the mutual dislike started). Kate also did not like Bianca. With her high, girly voice and her perky personality, Bianca was probably sickeningly sweet and annoying in Kate's eyes. Kate did not want to be like her sister, and so she did not want to be a feminine woman. She rejected certain things that women are supposed to do, like wear a bra. She publicly burned her bra in an effort to show her refusal to adhere to gender norms. Additionally, seeing her sister being courted by several men probably fuelled Kate's feeling of rejection. Until Petruchio arrived, there was not a single man in Padua who even considered marrying her, and so Kate may have felt angry that her younger sister received so much attention. Bianca was the epitome of a desirable woman, but Kate did not want to be that and rebelled against it. She could not get attention by being desirable, so she got it by being undesirable.

Femininity was not in Kate's nature, and she did not want or need a man who sought that in a woman. She needed someone who was rougher, who was just as strong as she was. She found this in Petruchio. She rejected him at first, and understandably so, considering that he was determined to tame her by abusing her. But Verona, or at least Petruchio's house, was filled with people like Kate. True, they could sometimes be abusive, but so could she. Petruchio was the change that Kate wanted, even if she did not realize it at first. And finding him enabled her to change herself, although she may not have done this consciously. She was able to finally be desirable because she had found a man who was like her. And their love is why she was willing to be obedient and give her submission

speech at the end of the play. Rhoads wrote, “Kate, like all of us, like this show, even, is a work in progress. The speech is a reflection of where she is right now. A month of marriage may change her tune, but for today this is where she’s at.”⁹⁰ Kate was a pliable character who may have been headstrong, but would also change in response to her environment and the people around her. When the play ended, she was happy. Kate had fallen in love with Petruchio, and had found a home in Verona.

My Review of the Production

Rhoads’ production of *The Taming of the Shrew* was extremely enjoyable. It was just a very fun show to watch. Rhoads expertly combined light, silly humor with the seriousness of feminism, abuse, and love.

The Sixties, as it was portrayed in this production, worked well as a setting, regardless of how accurate or inaccurate it may have been. There was a light-hearted whimsy that both complemented the humor in Shakespeare’s text and balanced the darker, abusive elements. The setting was different enough from the modern-day environment of Upstate New York to give the play a fantastical feeling, but it was still recognizable enough for the audience to relate to the story and characters.

The acting in this production was very well done. Gabra Zackman and Richard Ercole led the cast well as Kate and Petruchio. They created characters that the audience wanted to root for, despite their abusive and violent tendencies.

⁹⁰ Rhoads, Kurt. “Director’s Notes—*The Taming of the Shrew*.” 2010 Program for Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival Performing at Boscobel, Garrison, New York.

All of the other characters were also likable. Some of them could be slightly absurd or silly at times, but this fit in with the overall atmosphere of the production. The actors played types of characters that many people could likely relate to, either because they shared some of the same qualities or because they were like people they knew. Whether it was Bianca's girlish giggling or Tranio's swagger as he pretended to be his master, the various quirks that the actors displayed helped to create rich, entertaining characters.

Rhoads also incorporated quite a bit of music into his production. The music covered a variety of styles. Klezmer music was played at the wedding (even though the characters were not Jewish). There was some folk music. Dar Williams, a local singer-songwriter, even penned a song specifically for this production to bring a new approach to Kate's submission speech. The play concluded with the entire cast performing a karaoke-like cover of Sonny and Cher's "I Got You Babe." This helped the play end on a high note, as it not only fit in well with the fun of the Sixties that partially defined this production, but also spoke to the loving feelings with which Kate and Petruchio's story ended.

The evolution of Kate and Petruchio's relationship was a pleasure to watch. They were two separate individuals from different worlds who eventually discovered that they were perfectly made for each other. They both had hard, violent exteriors, but time eventually revealed that they both had gentler sides that were well-suited to each other. Rhoads commented at the beginning of his director's notes about why he thought *Shrew* is such a popular play: "Is it the sexist torture that we secretly love? Rather, I think, it's the love story of these two

passionate, wild-eyed adults, Kate and Petruccio.”⁹¹ Rhoads thought that the way in which Kate and Petruchio found each other and came to care about each other was the most important part of the play, and he clearly made an effort to show this. The work paid off, and the production was a delight to experience.

⁹¹ Rhoads, Kurt. “Director’s Notes—*The Taming of the Shrew*.” 2010 Program for Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival Performing at Boscobel, Garrison, New York.

Conclusion

The productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* that were directed by William Ball, Di Trevis, Gale Edwards, and Kurt Rhoads were all very different from each other. They were in assorted styles. There was a range of emphasis placed on the play-within-a-play format. The characters were interpreted and portrayed in various ways. But all four productions can arguably be considered adaptations of *Shrew*. They were all presentations of Shakespeare's play, but they all strayed from the text in some way or another. The most obvious departures are the ways the directors handled the Sly framework and the settings they used. None of the productions used the Induction exactly as it is written in *The Taming of the Shrew*. And Shakespeare certainly would not have set his play in either the Victorian era or in the 1960's.

The fact that these four productions were adaptations raises the question of whether it is even possible to do an "original" performance of Shakespeare today. Since it is impossible to know how Shakespeare and his associates staged *The Taming of the Shrew*, or any of his other plays, it is highly unlikely that any modern director will ever be able to present a production that can be considered "original." Besides our general lack of conclusive evidence about the technical aspects of Shakespeare's theater, modern mindsets and sensibilities would likely interfere with any efforts to stage an "original" production. History has naturally changed the way people think, and the overall psychology of today is different than it was in Shakespeare's time. The feminism associated with *The Taming of the Shrew* is only one example of this. It is impossible to know how Shakespeare

felt about the role of women or Petruchio's abuse of Kate. The only conclusions that can be drawn are those based on the text of *Shrew*, and even those are very open to interpretation. As shown by the productions of Trevis, Edwards, and Rhoads, modern productions tend to have feminist leanings. It would be extremely difficult for a company in this day and age to ignore all of the effects of the women's rights movement and other such calls for gender equality. It would be even more unwarranted to ask an entire audience of dozens or hundreds of people to ignore these social changes.

It is fairly safe to assume that whenever a new production of *The Taming of the Shrew* is announced, it will be an adaptation of some sort. The world of theater, as well as the world at large, has changed too much for a production to not differ from the way in which Shakespeare intended it, whatever that may have been. Directors and actors just have to rely on the text and the traditions of the past to stage a performance that stays as true to the heart of Shakespeare's work as possible.

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