



in collaboration with

**What if Works Inc.**

presents

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

# **TAMING OF THE SHREW**

Adapted & Directed by Phillip M Church

## **STUDY GUIDE**

**Miami Dade County School District Tour**

**2017**



# TAMING OF THE SHREW



## Cast

<b>Zack Myers</b>	<b>Petruchio</b>
<b>Juanita Olivo</b>	<b>Katherine</b>
<b>Karen Figueredo</b>	<b>Bianca</b>
<b>Paul Steinsland</b>	<b>Baptista</b>
<b>Charles Sothers</b>	<b>Lucentio / Tailor</b>
<b>Evelyn Perez</b>	<b>Tranio / Grumio / Widow</b>
<b>Erik Rodriguez</b>	<b>Hortensio</b>

## Production

<b>Phillip M Church</b>	<b>Director</b>
<b>Ileana Mateo</b>	<b>Costume Design</b>
<b>Paul Steinsland</b>	<b>Company Manager/Sound</b>
<b>Stephanie Palomino</b>	<b>Masks</b>

*All actors & crew are FIU theatre alumni*



**Evelyn Perez**



**Zack Myers**



**Juanita Olivo**



**Charles Sothers**



**Karen Figueredo**



**Erik Rodriguez**



**Paul Steinsland**

## SHAKESPEARE AND HIS THEATRE

More has been written about Shakespeare than any other playwright in history and his works remain consistently on the best seller lists in many countries yet Shakespeare remains something of an enigma. No autobiography or letters exist nor any biography that has not relied heavily on conjecture. Shakespeare was actually not a playwright. The term “playwright” was not coined until the late 18th century, in fact, his contemporary, Ben Jonson used it as a pejorative when he called Shakespeare “a playwright” as if he were a lowly craftsman of plays. He was, like his contemporaries, a poet leaving us a large amount of poetry but unlike his contemporaries he also left us a prolific



thirty-seven plays! Born in Stratford-Upon-Avon April 23, 1564 he received his education at Edward IV Grammar School. His father was a tradesman in gloves and for some years Major of Stratford. At 18 yrs. William married the 26 year-old Anne Hathaway. Together they had three children, Susanna born six months after they married, and the twins, Hamnet and Judith born in 1685. Hamnet died at age eleven in 1685 in pursuit of a career in theatre. At this time there were twelve theatres operating outside the city limits on the South Bank of the River Thames in what might be referred to as the “red-light district” of its time. The mix of educated and uneducated was a constant challenge for all playwrights at the time. Shakespeare eventually became an actor and a share holder in the Globe Theatre making enough money to return to Stratford and purchase a lavish house in the center of the town. He died on April 26 1616, ironically the same date as that of Spanish playwright Miguel Cervantes.

### PLOT & SOURCES



Like most of Shakespeare’s comedies, “*The Taming of the Shrew*” (1594) has both a main plot and a sub-plot. The play’s central action involves Petruchio—a strong-willed, young bachelor—who attempts to “tame” Katherine—the beautiful, wealthy and notably shrewish daughter of Baptista Minola. Though Shakespeare seems to have had no single source for the Kate-Petruchio plot, he was certainly influenced by renaissance anti-feminist literature which routinely depicted uncooperative wives and their husbands who brutally dominated them.

Carefully integrated with this first story is a sub-plot in which Bianca, the younger, more docile daughter of Baptista, is courted by a number of stereotypical suitors: Hortensio (friend of Petruchio who ends up marrying a wealthy widow), Gremio, (a feeble old man), Tranio (servant in disguise of his master) and Lucentio (a wealthy young man who eventually marries the girl).

Shakespeare was indebted here to a play entitled “*Supposes*” by George Gascoigne, (1566), which descended from Aristotle’s “*I Suppositi* (1509) and ultimately, from Latin comedies by Plautus and Terence. Gascoigne’s plot chronicles a number of “supposes” or “character poses” in a farcical romantic situation.

“*The Taming of the Shrew*” also includes a prologue or “induction” in which Christopher Sly, a drunken tinker, is convinced through an elaborate practical joke that he is actually a wealthy lord. Many productions omit this scene due to lack of development throughout the play, yet its appearance in the text undoubtedly sheds light on Shakespeare’s preoccupation with the whole question of poses and role playing and their relationship to one another’s true personality.

Shakespeare’s use of these two particular plots is thematically instructive. The intricate maneuvering of the sub-plot, with its poses, supposes, disguises and manifold character types, encourages us to ask somewhat sophisticated questions of the Kate-Petruchio relationship. To what extent, for example, is Kate’s shrewish behavior a pose forced upon her by an insensitive father, a simpering sister and a collection of boorish suitors? What is the physical chemistry which attracts two proud, independent people like Kate and Petruchio toward each other? Most intriguing is the possibility that Shakespeare intended the “taming process as a metaphor for love. Isn’t love, after all a state in which both partners have “tamed” each other? At the end of the play, Kate and Petruchio treat each other with mutual respect and admiration, while the other suitors, Lucentio and Hortensio have only achieved superficial, disappointing relationships with their wives. The change in Kate’s behavior is only one of the comedy’s important themes. Game playing is a recurrent motif, and one may argue that Kate derives some satisfaction in learning how to play the game according to Petruchio’s rules. And, of course, a final metaphor in the play typical during the Renaissance deals with the ever-changing distinction between illusion and reality.

**Dr. Michel Flachmann, Professor Literature, California State College, Bakersfield.**

# THE ITALIAN COMEDY

Why present an Elizabethan play by William Shakespeare in the style of Comedia dell'arte? The central action takes place in Padua, "nursery of the arts", a city which attracted artists and writers from all over Europe. Padua gave birth to the earliest itinerant commedia troupes, and Shakespeare wrote this play at a time when this theatrical style was at its peak in central Europe. Shakespeare himself undoubtedly witnessed touring companies in England featuring plots similar in theme and structure to the one used in "*The Taming of the Shrew*"



Although Commedia dell'Arte relied on the performance techniques of masked mime and improvisation the stock ingredients of the commedia scenario remains closely identifiable to those used in Shakespeare play. These included the use of disguised identities, deceptive intrigues, tyrannical parental rule, love-sick And penniless sons, scheming servants, courtesans, vainglorious suitors, pedantic and illiterate doctors and arranged marriages. The Commedia dell'arte existed in this way for over two-hundred years, preserved by actors who would retain a stock character, passing the mask down through the family from one generation to the next. The Italian Commedia formed its roots from the Mime drama of Roman theatre, and has sustained its form into the present day. The circus clown, Charlie Chaplin and the French mime Marcel Marceau are all descendants of Commedia. Dell'Arte . Naturally as each stock character was handed on from one generation to another, characteristics would be modified as social, political and moral conditions in society underwent change. Plots were simple, situations complicated, and the action as well as the allegorical characters was calculated to expose and satirize middle-class values.



For the modern day actor the problems of performing in commedia style are manifold. The actor's imagination and powers of physical and vocal invention are called upon in unprecedented fashion. Above all. Truth and honesty must remain part of the actor's intent, even within the madcap, farcical style demanded by its conventions. Actors must work closely together as an ensemble, finding a common level of magnification and energy, so that the world of the play remains consistent and true to the audience. The key elements for any successful commedia production, or any form of comedy for that matter, are verbal and physical agility, economy, timing and concentration. The rhythm and execution of action and of "gags" are of the utmost importance, seeming to create total chaos while being in complete control. All this is a far cry from the psychological demands of naturalism and realism of the twenty-first century!

Once each actor finds his/her character's reality within the often illogical and zany world of the play, the style of commedia dell'arte unifies itself and the audience begins to marvel at the existence of a credible, extraordinary world on stage. Perhaps a major challenge in attempting this style of comedy lies in the fact that we no longer have professional companies keeping these traditions alive by including such classical productions in seasonal repertoires. As the Greek philosopher Aristotle reminds us in his "Poetics" theatrical style and tradition can only be sustained through the art of imitation, and it is only to our benefit to have the opportunity to observe and practice the art of commedia, for this sixteenth century style still remains the corner stone to all our high-octane farces and sit-coms today.



Phillip M Church

## MARRIAGE AND TAMING AS PARADOX

The marriage ceremony in "*Taming of the Shrew*" is a central unifying factor which gives license for the taming process to take place. Given our sensitivity toward social injustice the very idea of "taming" a wife is, to say the least, a compromising concept to wrap our heads around today. Yet, as with other works by Shakespeare which might well have been censored on the grounds of political incorrectness, we either find ways to approach the play so it can be understood in context of our own life and times or we abandon it altogether with the thousands of other works through history that have born worse indiscretions. This is a question to debate in discussion. However, it is important to remember to bear in mind that in the 16th century schools for taming wives actually existed and Shakespeare was basing his play not on an imaginary world but on what really took place around him at that time. When it comes to reviving classical literature historical context is everything. What may help in this case is to consider marriage as a paradox. Before the marriage between two people can take place a more necessary marriage must happen; the marriage of the self to the true self. And it is toward this self-knowledge that Petruchio leads Kate, for without that knowledge Petruchio will never concede to a happy and sustained marriage.

The taming process of Kate has also an inverted effect upon Petruchio for, by the end of the play, we see Petruchio abjuring the symbols of wealth and materialism, a prized status readily acknowledged at the beginning of the play. As he states himself he has come to “wive it wealthily in Padua”, in other words to seek out a wife who is also wealthy. He has trained and tamed wives for other husbands and now has come to seek a wife for himself. The marriage of true minds takes flight as Petruchio and Katherine recognize a mutual identification within their own paradoxical reality. That is what many wives and husbands end up discovering which is what makes marriage so deep and sometimes ambiguous to others. Around Kate and Petruchio a whirly-gig revolves full of intrigue, deception, false identity and prejudicial values, out of which much shrewishness takes place, in other characters!

If we question the title of the play, we ask ourselves “who actually is the shrew”? Animal association is but a superficial consideration. Kate is the only character in the play that resists the opportunity to play the shrewd games to gain her own objectives. She is totally transparent and upfront with people. She plays the games that everyone else insists that she plays. In this respect, Kate is the voice of the new woman, a product of the 17th century age of enlightenment and learning. Equal rights for women began at this point in Europe and the banner has been flying ever since! With the ascendancy of Elizabeth I, herself a stirring force behind equality, it became accepted in society that young ladies should be educated and learn the sciences, once a prerogative of the male. Kate’s role as outspoken critic of male chauvinism was acknowledged by Shakespeare’s audience, but the step toward emancipation was hard to swallow. Baptista, father to Kate and Bianca more through a social obligation than any altruistic sentiment, attempts to accept the idea of the new female liberation but it is trapped in the old order of parental orthodoxy. Marriages were contracted solely through parental dictum, as evidenced in a more serious light in *Romeo and Juliet*, and as both plays set forth, were opportunities to increase family wealth and status. A daughter was a commodity, divorced from feeling or personal opinion; the suitor therefore recognized economic possibilities, and thus, as with many of Shakespeare’s plays, love becomes an object to be sold or bartered for in public.

Lucentio, seemingly in love at first sight with Bianca, “sees” nothing more than the commodity of misrepresented beauty, blinded by the sly, contradictory nature of Bianca’s outward image. He is duped as are all the other characters who remain bound by the conventions of a materialistic world. The one true marriage that takes place is of course that of Kate and Petruchio. Ultimately, they both come to an understanding of each other through a common language which remains foreign and perplexing to those around them. As any successful marriage will attest that it is the existence of two totally individual beings bound within an intimate and secret world of symbols and gestures that ultimately leads to a sustained and shared oneness which is the aim of all wedded couples. Lucentio and Bianca, Hortensio and the Widow will sadly continue to live out their dissatisfied lives, laying intrigues and pursuing clandestine involvements as an escape from their own fate. The taming process has only been one of many metaphoric gesturers as a signal of love. The true marriage has allowed the individual to remain firm.

## COMMEDIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

So, after four hundred years since the art form was first developed what companies exist today that still continue the traditions of commedia dell arte? Well, there are in fact many theatre companies throughout America and Europe that continue on the traditions of this slapstick farce. Here in the United States we have the **Faction of Fools** an in-residence, company at Gallaudet University in Washington DC. and there is **Theatre de la Jeune Lune** in Minneapolis, possibly America’s greatest commedia company today. even also solo artist Dr. Corrinna di Niro based in Australia who develops curricula across the world in the practice of commedia while in London the **Ophaboom Theatre** continues to present traditional commedia serving England with many hilarious comedies both relevant and reflective of today’s society. And not to be forgotten is SNL—**Saturday Night Live**. Yes—even our most venerated TV show continues the legacy of commedia dell Arte as actors and writers lampoon and parody the foibles and travails of our celebrated leaders!





## MASK MAKING

Samantha Palomino

### Materials

*Newspaper or paper towel, plaster of Paris, White Glue, Water, Vinegar, Paint Brush, Face form, Molding Clay, Acrylic Gloss, Felt and Mod Podge*

**Step 1** Prepare a face mold to build upon as the inside of your mold. First apply Vaseline or any other kind of nontoxic lubricant to the face, especially over any facial hair. Cover your face in wet plaster strips from rolled plaster and wait until warm and dry. To remove, scrunch and open your face to loosen the plaster face mold and gently pull off. Apply Vaseline to the inside of the mask as well. Use a quick drying kind of cement like mixture and fill. Let sit till completely dry (24 hours) and remove.

**Step 2** Use this face mold to apply large cheeks and pronounced eyebrows very broad features. This will be the foundation of the mask and make it specific to the commedia del arte style.

**Step 3** Now for your paper mache mix. Start with 2 oz. of the white Elmers glue, 1 Tbsp. of water, 1 teaspoon of vinegar, and mix. Then add ¼ cup of Plaster of Paris and mix. The vinegar keeps the mix from setting so quickly. Add one coat of this mix to the face without paper. Then add small to medium strips of paper and add another coat of plaster. Add paper, then another layer of plaster and one more layer of paper and last coat of plaster paste.

**Step 4** Cleanup time, sand down any wrinkles of paper and use one coat of Acrylic gloss. This will smooth out any mistakes, and give a smooth finish.

**Step 5** Now cut away any excess paper mache for the desired shape. Clean and even up the edges with sandpaper.

**Step 6** Now add a layer of Mod Podge to clean up the rough outside. Let dry and wait till dry. Now the surface is smooth enough to paint, and seal with acrylic gloss. Now that the outside is decorated, you can add felt to the inside for comfort and foam to fill in any spaces. Add either ribbon or thread into small holes to hold onto the face.



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### Special Thanks

**Florida International University**

**Brian Schriener, Dean,**

**College of Communication, Architecture + the Arts**

**Joel Murray, Chair Department of FIU Theatre**

**Marina Pareja, Head of Costume FIU**

**Keena Brown, FIU Costume Shop Manager**

**Tony Galaska, Head of Production, FIU**

**Chris Goslin, Technical Director, FIU**

## DISCUSSION & WRITING TOPICS

- 1: Should a play like *“Taming of the Shrew”* not be studied or enjoyed because of its misogynistic content or should we see it as a moral lesson that might benefit us today? How should we move with the times? Abandon or learn from history?
- 2: Who in your own mind is the shrew? There are several “shrews” in *“Taming of the Shrew”*. Can you identify another character that could be described as “shrewish”?
- 3: Do you really think Petruchio “tames” Kate? If so, how does he do it? If not is anyone in this play actually tamed?
- 4: Do you know someone in life who “poses” or wears a “mask”? Do you wear a mask? How differently do you act when you are in class in contrast to when you are with friends at a café? How much of your own personality is a “pose” or a mask?
- 5: What other elements of the production interest you? What comments can you make about the costumes, staging, use of props, music and vocal accents that contribute to the total statement of the play?
- 6: Choose a character from the play. Write a letter from this character to another in the play. Write it as the character might write it. Find an urgent need for the character to write to the other.
- 7: If you were the director of this play which scenes would you most like to direct, and how would you stage them? How would you direct any of the selected scenes in this school's tour presentation? Would you direct them differently? Set them in a different period of history. How would the play “speak” to us if it were set in the 21st century?

## THE “FIRST FOLIO”

*“Taming of the Shrew”* first arrived in reading form as part of the celebrated “First Folio” published in 1623. A rare copy of this collection was exhibited at the FIU Philip and Patricia Frost Art in February of 2016. It contains 36 plays comprising Tragedies, Comedies and Histories and was dedicated to William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke and his brother Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery. Publishers Heminges and Condell emphasized that their First Folio replaced earlier publications, which they characterized as *“stol'n and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by frauds and stealths of injurious impostors”, asserting that Shakespeare's true words “are now offer'd to your view cured, and perfect of their limbes; and all the rest, absolute in their numbers as he conceived them.”* We are relieved to know that *“Taming of the Shrew”* has been “cured” so, sit back and enjoy one of the best beloved

## SPECIAL THANKS

GableStage Staff & Board of Directors  
Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs  
Miami-Dade County Public School's Cultural Passport Program  
Foundation for New Education Initiatives  
John S. & James L. Knight Foundation



**Mission:** to provide the South Florida community with classical, contemporary and new theatrical productions of artistic excellence. We challenge our multicultural audience with innovative productions that entertain as well as confront today's issues and ideas. By emphasizing nontraditional casting and employing the best of our local creative force, GableStage endeavors to meet the needs of our diverse community. GableStage is committed to the enrichment of the local actor, director, designer and technician by providing the opportunity to achieve artistic acclaim in this region.

GableStage believes the future of theatre can be assured only by the development of young audiences. Therefore, our in-house mainstage and in-school touring Educational Programs are major components of our theatre. GableStage is pleased to present this educational production in association with What if Works Inc. a company dedicated to offering performing arts graduates a chance to find visibility in the community. Also, while anticipating its future move to a new home in Coconut Grove GableStage is pleased to be partnered with the Department of Theatre at Florida International University when it will implement its theatre MFA offering a much-sought after graduate program to many deserving students both in and out of the state of Florida. We are happy to bring Dade County Public Schools a truly collaborative theatre endeavor.

**For more information visit [www.gablestage.org](http://www.gablestage.org)**



**Mission:** to offer post-graduates in theatre, film and music a creative bridge by which to transition from an academic environment to the professional world while championing the arts to bring about social change. Established in 2010 WIW has presented numerous opportunities for graduates to become socially-engaged artists. WIW has toured projects to England with “*The Right to Remain...Tupac Shakur*” by Meshawn Lebron, “*Body & Sold*” by Deborah Fortson a play about Human Trafficking and “*Holocaust: a Living Journey-Book*” and “*The Cherry Orchard* in support of historic preservation, WIW has appeared at the International Youth Festival in Kingston, London, the Washington DC Fringe Festival and the Kennedy Center. WIW is a committed advocate of Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS Its most recent production was “*Flying Solo*” a series of short plays written and performed by the actors exploring the lives of Katiushka Mendoza, Frieda Kahlo, Celia Cruz, Brian Wilson, Eartha Kit and Geli Raubel. WIW is also preparing “*The Dressmaker*” a full-length solo bio-drama based on Elizabeth Keckley, dressmaker and confidant to Mary Todd Lincoln, wife of President Abraham Lincoln.

**Coming soon! *The R+J Effect***

What if works Inc. is currently in rehearsal for a stunning new adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Under the mentorship of four FIU theatre alumni a cast of ten actors from Booker T Washington HS, Miami Senior HS, Coral Reef HS, Charles Flannegan HS and Coral Park HS are developing a ninety-minute project that explores gun violence in our community. Stylized movement replaces daggers with guns yet no physical weapon appears on stage. Four times the action on stage will freeze while brief discussions will take place with an audience comprising youth, general public and law enforcement. Contributing issues that often lead to violent outcomes will be debated at the very moment of the action. Rap and hip hop will advance the story between scenes and the audience will hear “parabethan” an accessible, hybrid language composed of paraphrased and Elizabethan verse. “The R+J Effect” aims to affect minds and hearts with the purpose of keeping the conversation about reducing gun violence alive at school and at home. We hope you and your family will wish to support this initiative.

**For more information call 305-271-1073 or email [church@whatifworks.com](mailto:church@whatifworks.com).**