



Questors, Ealing's Theatre

# The Taming of the Shrew

By William Shakespeare

The Studio

20 – 28 November 2009

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## The Play

*The Taming of the Shrew* is one of Shakespeare's earliest comedies, probably written in 1591 or 1592. The Petruchio/Kate plot is based on folklore, the Lucentio/Bianca plot on an Italian play by Ariosto, *Suppositi* (1509). It is the only play by Shakespeare to begin with a framing-device – the Induction, in which a drunken tinker is made to believe that he is actually a nobleman, for whom a troupe of players performs the main story as a play-within-a-play. This Induction is often cut, and, despite the excellent case that can be made for its retention, it will be cut in our production too.

## The Controversy

This is undoubtedly Shakespeare's most politically incorrect play, frequently described as sexist, patriarchal and misogynistic. According to The Guardian's Michael Billington, we shouldn't be performing it at all, for he famously described it as a 'barbaric' and 'disgusting' work that should be 'put back firmly and squarely on the shelf'. This is usually assumed to be a modern, post-feminist reaction, but there is actually strong evidence that the controversy dates back to Shakespeare's own lifetime, for in 1610 John Fletcher was sufficiently shocked to write a sequel called *The Tamer Tamed* in which Petruchio gets his comeuppance.

## Sexist but not Misogynistic

It seems clear to me that Shakespeare knew very well that the story was controversial, and took full account of this in his approach, retaining the inevitably sexist power-relations of the brutal original, but eliminating its misogyny.

Firstly, he added the Induction, so that the whole play can be seen as 'just a story', pandering to the tastes of a drunken and uneducated boor. This is often advanced as a reason for retaining it in production, since it means that we don't have to take the story's implications for real-life sexual politics seriously – which is precisely the reason I decided to leave it out.

Secondly, in an era in which beating one's wife was seen not only as a husband's right, but almost a duty, Shakespeare makes it very clear that while Kate lashes out at all and sundry, Petruchio never lays a finger on her (though he once threatens to) – making this version of the story virtually unique in that respect, even when one includes 20<sup>th</sup> century adaptations, (you will recall the most famous scene in *Kiss Me Kate*).

And thirdly, and most radically, he has Kate and Petruchio fall in love. Petruchio, who begins the play as an unscrupulous and self-confessed fortune hunter, starts to fall under the spell of Kate's spirit and energy even before he

meets her, when he hears how she treats the unfortunate Hortensio. Both of them obviously thoroughly relish their wit combats, which clearly have a strong sub-text of mutual sexual attraction. And for Kate, trapped as she is in a miserable spinsterhood, Petruchio offers the possibility not only of escape, but also of fulfilment.

Which is not to say that there are not some uncomfortable, even jaw-dropping, moments – this is not a story for those of a sentimental or delicate disposition, but then they've got the Lucentio/Bianca plot to keep them happy.

## An Unequal World

The society depicted in the play is extremely unequal – and not only with regard to sexual relations. As in every other play by Shakespeare, the characters are strictly divided into masters and servants, and their possibilities in life are entirely defined by which they happen to be. For some reason – perhaps because we are so used to it – this does not seem to cause the same offence to modern sensibilities as the play's gender inequalities do, (which is probably just as well or Michael Billington would want to ban the entire canon). But it is not only Kate who has to accept the necessity of submitting to society's norms. Tranio is clearly more intelligent than his master Lucentio, and by impersonating him demonstrates that he is perfectly capable of fulfilling the role of nobleman, but in the end he, no less than Kate, has to accept the role society has given him.

## Kate's Last Speech

The editor of the Penguin edition of the play states that 'the question of what to do with this speech has become a major theatrical issue'. Apparently there are three possible approaches.

You can play it 'straight', implying that Kate sincerely accepts Petruchio as her 'Lord, King, and Governor'. This tends to get some people's backs up.

You can play it 'ironically' – this is supposedly the 'modern' approach, though it is hardly new: Mary Pickford in the 1929 film followed a 'long-standing stage tradition' by winking broadly at the camera. The trouble with this is that it rather trivialises it, and demeans both Kate and Petruchio.

Or you can play it 'cowed', as in the famous Charles Marowitz version where she delivered it like a brain-washed zombie, or a Turkish production in which she slit her wrists at the beginning of the speech and collapsed into a pool of blood at the end – an approach which surely missed out on a lot of the laughs.

So we've opted for none of the above, and gone for an interpretation that we hope suggests that women have their own, more subtle, ways of taming men, and that it's not always easy to know who is in charge in the infinitely and wonderfully varied war – and peace – between the sexes.

## Plot Synopsis

Baptista, a wealthy merchant of Padua, is mother to Katherina and Bianca. Because of Katherina's shrewish disposition, her mother has declared that no one shall wed Bianca until such time as Katherina has been married. Lucentio of Pisa, one of many suitors to the younger and kinder Bianca, devises a scheme in which he and Tranio (his servant) will switch clothes and, thus disguised, Lucentio will offer his services as a tutor for Bianca in order to get closer to her. At his point enter Petruchio of Verona, in Padua to visit his friend Hortensio (another suitor to Bianca). Attracted by Katherina's large dowry, Petruchio resolves to woo her.

To the surprise of everyone, Petruchio claims that he finds Katherina charming and pleasant. A marriage is arranged and Petruchio immediately sets out to tame Katherina through a series of increasingly worse tricks. This involves everything from showing up late to his own wedding to constant contradictions to whatever she says, even to the point of claiming that the sun is in fact the moon. After many trying days and nights, an exhausted Katherina is indeed "tamed" into docility.

By the end of the play, Lucentio has won Bianca's heart and Hortensio settles for a rich widow in Padua. During an evening feast for Bianca and Lucentio, Petruchio makes and wins a wager in which he proposes that he has the most obedient wife of all the men there, at which point Katherina gives Bianca a lecture on how to be a good and loving wife herself.

## Rehearsal Photographs

by Peter Gould



Clockwise from top left: Juliet Vaughan Turner, Julian Casey, David Hovatter, Robert Gordon Clark, John Barron, Robert Kirby, Sarah Morrison, Lisa Day, Cathie Wallace, Lucy Waring, Kathryn Redwood

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# THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

By William Shakespeare

*First performance of this production at The Questors: 20 November 2009*

## CAST

in order of speaking

Lucentio	Robert Kirby
Tranio	John Barron
Baptista	Sarah Morrison
Gremio	Robert Gordon Clark
Katerina	Kathryn Redwood
Hortensio	David Hovatter
Bianca	Lucy Waring
Biondella	Lisa Day
Petruchio	Julian Casey
Grumio	Juliet Vaughan Turner
Curtis	Cathie Wallace
Pedant	John Davey
Tailor	Sarah Morrison
Vincentia	Cathie Wallace
Widow	Lisa Day

There will be one interval of 15 minutes.

Please turn off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms.  
The use of cameras, video cameras and recording  
equipment is strictly prohibited.  
Thank you.

## PRODUCTION

Director	Steve Fitzpatrick
Designer	Victoria Butler, Ben Sandford
Lighting Designer	Matthew Addison
Sound Designer	Martin Choules
Assistant Director	Sara Reimers
Stage Manager	Richard Halberstadt
Deputy Stage Managers	Stephanie Moore, Kate Townsend
Assistant Stage Managers	Paul Garbutt, Danielle Hurley, Emily Thomas
Wardrobe	Jennie Yates
Properties	John Gray, Kevin Sebastianpillai
Lighting Operator	Sara Reimers
Sound Operator	Paul Robinson
Makeup and Hair	Amy Gray
Photographs by	Peter Gould
<i>'Wrong Notes on a Lute'</i> played by	Don Kincaid
Thanks to	Julie Cruttenden, Arthur England, Ruth Parry, Harriet Parsonage, Neil Strangward, Bridgett Strevens, John Wilson, Matthew Wilson, Jon Webster and the Studio House Services Team



## The Taming of the Shrew at The Questors

In May 1935, *The Taming of the Shrew* became the first full Shakesperian production for The Questors and marked the Silver Jubilee of King George V. (We had already produced an extract from *The Merchant of Venice* at our Annual Drama



Festival in March 1935 and The Junior Questors followed with *Macbeth* in the July.) It was directed and designed by Alfred Emmet, the theatre's founder, and our archives still hold a complete collection of his production notes and



scripts. The production ran for two nights in our original Tin Hut theatre and then travelled to the grounds of Swakeleys House in Ickenham (top price tickets 10p in today's currency), where these photos were taken. Note that Alfred can be seen in the dark robe and cap in the interior



settings. Needless to say the magnificent marble archway belongs to Swakeleys House and is not a reflection of the quality of our set construction in the Tin Hut days. It's difficult to know what to make of the exterior shots – let's just hope they were intended to be funny.



November 1979 saw a Studio production of *The Shrew*, freely adapted from the original by Charles Marowitz and directed by David Fletcher. Charles Marowitz had been a member back in the early sixties and had directed our first full length Arthur Miller play, *Death of a Salesman*, in 1962. He went on to collaborate with Peter Brook at the RSC, founded The Open Space Theatre and became a renowned New York theatre critic. No photographs are known to exist of this production.



*The Taming of the Shrew* next appeared at The Questors with Pat Gowman's Playhouse production of June 1990. Michael Langridge and Gillian Kerswell took the leading roles of Petruchio and Katerina, with Piers Whibley and Caroline Bleakley as Lucentio and Bianca. Michael will be familiar from his recent appearance in Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass*.



John Dobson  
The Questors Archivist

## Biographies

### John Barron – *Tranio*

John's roles at The Questors have included The Dentist in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Mesrin in *The Dispute*, Michael in *Festen* and Yasha in *The Cherry Orchard*. His most recent role was as Neil in *Dogs Barking* and as a writer/performer in *The Errors of Comedy* sketch show in the Studio.

### Julian Casey – *Petruchio*

Julian joined The Questors in 2006 and has appeared as Ged Murray in *Comedians* and Borachio in *Much Ado about Nothing*. In 2008 he performed in *Two* playing seven separate characters. He would like to point out that no shrews were harmed in the making of this production!

### John Davey – *Pedant*

It's a few years since John has trod a board at The Questors, but he's been a member since 1971 and has acted in and directed a large number of plays. He also served 25 years on the Committee of Management, with five years as Artistic Director and eight as Chair of the Theatre – so he feels fully qualified to play the part of the Pedant...

### Lisa Day – *Biondella and Widow*

Lisa joined as a newly-wed in 1985 and is happy to be sharing the stage with her 'old man' once more. After Student Group 41, first role was Isabella in *Measure for Measure*. Characters ranged from The Snow Queen to Mrs Twit, from Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2004) to Wynne in *Dinner* (2008). Also active in the reminiscence theatre group, PlayBack.

### Robert Gordon Clark – *Gremio*

25 years as an acting and active member. Recently in *Great Expectations* and as Haig in *Oh! What a Lovely War*. First show was improvisation classic *Long Way Away* (1984). Here on stage with Lisa Day, his wife, having last acted together in *The Hired Man* (1989) and *Measure for Measure* (1988). Regular Front of House Manager.

### David Hovatter – *Hortensia*

David joined The Questors in the mid 1980s. He was most recently seen in *Madame Bovary*. He directed *The Marvellous Land of Oz* this year and last year directed Ionesco's *The Chairs* and *The Lesson*. This is his third Shakespeare directed by Steve Fitzpatrick, following *Julius Caesar* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.

### Robert Kirby – *Lucentio*

This is Robert's first production with The Questors. Plays whilst working towards his recently completed drama A-level include *Antigone*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and musical theatre including *Oh! What a Lovely War* and *Little Women*. He has worked also with and is a member of the National Youth Theatre.

### Sarah Morrison – *Baptista and Tailor*

Sarah has been an acting member of The Questors since 1980 and has appeared in over 50 productions, most recently in the parts of Mistress Tribulation Wholesome (*The Alchemist*), Donna Lucia D'Alvadorez (*Charley's Aunt*) and Domina (*A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*). Other shows directed by Steve Fitzpatrick, in which Sarah has acted, include Ursula (*Much Ado about Nothing*), Truvy (*Steel Magnolias*) and Sylvia Mitchell (*Spellbound*) way back in 1988!

### Kathryn Redwood – *Katerina*

Kathryn is delighted to be playing the feisty Shrew and returning to The Questors Studio theatre after a three year gap (her last performance here was as Cornelia in *Mouth to Mouth* in 2006). Since then she has performed various fringe productions around London, last seen playing Jaques in an all female *As You Like It*. She also has several short film credits, one feature and a Special K commercial to add to her list of credits (on your box again this Christmas, but don't blink or you'll miss her!).

### Juliet Vaughan Turner – *Grumio*

Juliet has been at The Questors for nearly 30 years. She took part in the Student Group ten years ago before going to Drama School. Her most recent Questors shows are Peggy in *The London Cuckolds*, Anna in *Time & Time Again* and most recently Gwendolen in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

### Cathie Wallace – *Curtis and Vincentia*

Cathie has been a member of The Questors for over 30 years. She has appeared in a number of productions, most recently in *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Trojan Women* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

### Lucy Waring – *Bianca*

This is Lucy's first production since graduating from The Questors Student Group 62 this summer. As part of the Student Group, she played Liddy in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Lady Grey and Rutland in *Henry VI*. She is delighted to be continuing her involvement with The Questors.

### Steve Fitzpatrick – *Director*

Recent productions include *The Alchemist* (Jonson) 2009, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Sondheim) 2007, *Much Ado about Nothing* (Shakespeare) 2007, *Dance of Death* (Strindberg) 2006, *The Dispute* (Marivaux) 2005, *Steel Magnolias* (Harling) 2003. Recent performances as an actor include Lars in *Dinner* (Buffini) 2008, Lucky in *Waiting for Godot* (Beckett) 2007 and Jaques in *As You Like It* (Shakespeare) 2006.

### Sara Reimers – *Assistant Director*

Sara has an MA in Shakespearean Studies from King's College London and The Globe. Last term she took an Acting Shakespeare course at Central School of Speech and Drama. Previous AD credits include *Putting it Together* (C too, Edinburgh Fringe). She is delighted to be involved at The Questors for the first time.

#### **Matthew Addison – Lighting Designer**

"Shrew" is Matthew's second Questors show, but he has been lighting stages from Bristol to Edinburgh (and a significant number of stops in between) for the past nine years. Matthew is also an experienced production carpenter and photographer. He has just finished a Godber season, with productions of *Bouncers*, *Teachers* and *Shakers* recently closing in Manchester and London.

#### **Victoria Butler – Designer**

Victoria helped design sets for *The Marvellous Land of Oz* at The Questors and *The Woodsman* at the Old Red Lion, Islington. She has recently appeared onstage as Glinda in *The Marvellous Land of Oz* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

#### **Martin Choules – Sound Designer**

Martin has recently been unseen (backstage) on *The Marvellous Land of Oz*, *Stiff* and *Brave New World*. He has also worked with Steve on *The Madness of George III*, *The Learned Ladies*, *The Dispute* and *The Alchemist*. He was duped into helping on this show by not saying 'No' fast enough.

#### **Ben Sandford – Designer**

Ben's previous credits at The Questors include Lighting and Set Design for *The Marvellous Land of Oz* and *The Lesson / The Chairs* and Lighting Design for *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Dinner* and *After Magritte / Black Comedy*.



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- ✓ Children FREE tickets\*\*
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- ✓ Exclusive or discounted training courses
- ✓ Colour magazine 3 times a year
- ✓ Regular Members' Newsletter
- ✓ Regular programme card
- ✓ Vote at general meetings
- ✓ Membership of Grapevine Bar

\*Reduced prices exclude certain events. \*\*Under 15. (Excludes certain events. Minimum 2 per event; must be collected at the performance and be accompanied by member.)

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## Getting the most from your membership

Volunteer help is always needed Front-of-House. No previous experience is needed for selling programmes and stewarding, and training is provided if you'd like to work in Box Office with our computerised system. To meet members in a social setting, volunteer to help behind the Grapevine bar. Backstage staff, including stage-managers, prop makers, set builders, sound and light designers and operators, painters, wardrobe and costume and set designers are always welcomed: whatever your skills we'll find a place for you. We also have courses for those wishing to direct.

The Questors has a high standard of acting and to maintain this, everyone wanting to act must first take an audition. These are held every month, call the Theatre Office for details of forthcoming auditions.

## QYT Youth Theatre

Our Youth Theatre – QYT – runs weekly drama classes for all ages from 6 to 16 years old. Younger groups meet on Saturday mornings and older ages meet on weekday teatime. There's often a waiting list for membership, so put your name down now! Details are online at [questors.org.uk/qyt](http://questors.org.uk/qyt)

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