

SCENE *theatre*

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Shakespeare in the 70s

The Not-So-Royal Shakespeare Company updates 'Taming of the Shrew'

By KC KENNEY
Scene Writer

When a classic Shakespearean masterpiece opens with "Play That Funky Music White Boy," you know you're in for a comedy of special degree. With the stage littered with all sorts of 70s nostalgic contraband, director Sean Nelson has done very well by putting a contemporary spin on an old favorite. Leisure suits, bowling shoes, short skirts (and I mean short) and even a huge Afro donned by one of the leads mark this show, making it familiar and laughable at the same time. Nelson has worked hard to make this a

"Shakespeare for a new audience" and it shows itself on stage, making the Bard's work accessible to all levels of appreciation.

The stage of the Hesburgh Center is translated into the town of Padua where a rich young man named Lucentio (JJ Marler) arrives with his servants Trania (Monica Kershner) and Biondella (Alex Callan) to attend the local university but he quickly becomes distracted when he sees the beautiful Bianca (Kate Dolack) and instantly falls in love. Problems arise when Lucentio must contend with her two suitors, Gremio (TJ McNally) and Hortensio (Jeff

Eyerman), and Bianca's father (Dan Hoople) who has declared that no one may court Bianca until her older sister is married first. This seems easy enough until the arrival of the eternally ill-tempered Katherine (Elizabeth Grams), making it quickly clear why no one has made a move. Lucentio inserts himself into Bianca's life by trading places with his servant, Trania, and posing as a tutor, while Trania poses as her master, cleverly disguising herself by putting up her hair and employing the use of a sock. The problem of the shrew is solved for Bianca's suitors

when Hortensio's friend Petruccio (Mike Rampolla) arrives. He is a brash young man from Verona who intends to marry a rich woman, regardless of her disposition. Tempers and insults fly as Petruccio works to

tame Katherine and win her over, ultimately marrying her and carrying her off to his home where he plans to continue his "taming." Trouble continues for Lucentio as his deception meets difficulty when Bianca's father wants to meet Lucentio's father. Of course, this could be difficult since the "Lucentio" that Bianca's father knows is Trania. Thus, continuing the deception, they bring in a school master (Mark Ross) to

"Taming of the Shrew"



The Not-So-Royal Shakespeare

Director: Sean Nelson
Playwright: William Shakespeare
Stage Manager: AnaMarie Ortiz
Starring: Dan Hoople, Steve Hoeplinger, TJ McNally, JJ Marler, Jeff Eyerman, Mike Rampolla, Mark Ross, Monica Hershner, Alex Callan, David Tull, Laura Kable

Friday, Saturday nights at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday afternoon at 2:30 p.m. in the Hesburgh Center. \$5 General admssion.



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Hortensio, played by senior Jeff Eyerman, and Gremio, sophomore TJ McNally, conspire to win over the hand of the fair Bianca for themselves.

play the role of the father. All is well and good until Lucentio's real father shows up. This is a comedy in the truest sense of the word, with characters getting into absurd situations, trying to get themselves out again and still achieve their wishes.

This show is a lot of fun to watch and easy to get into, regardless of Shakespeare's classic style of speech. In this, Nelson's directorial debut, the production really illustrates his enthusiasm and love of the theater. Nelson's attention to detail and situational comedy is really a treat. He uses very clever methods of getting around otherwise difficult staging. Little things like integrating a cricket chirping is almost out of a Looney Toons cartoon, but it makes the comedy of the show come out in more than simply the words. Music also becomes a major element in the show, bringing in 70s classics like "Low Rider" between and even in scenes a bit to lend to the retro theme and make it more familiar to the audience. Truly, the audience won't be able to help singing along and getting into it.

Despite the strength of the show as a whole, there are also many specific elements, mainly in the different actors delivery of their parts, which really add to the overall quality. Marler and Kershner as Lucentio and Trania are a very engaging duo, contrasting Marler's clown-like efforts to get to Bianca and Kershner's cool, conniving manner. Rounding out the group is Callan's Biondella, giving new meaning and new appreciation to the word "fool." Though always a little spacey and in her own world, her ease with difficult speeches show off her strength as an actor. McNally and Eyerman do quite well as the two old suitors after Bianca. As Gremio, McNally's gravelly voice and well-developed character are reasons to miss him when he all but disappears in the second act. Eyerman starts out slow as Hortensio, but really comes into

his element when his character is disguised as a "Soul man" music teacher, where he really comes out and gives a solid performance. Dolack's Bianca is cute and lovable, showing great disparity between Grams' Katherine. Gram starts the show as mad as Ophelia, but the chemistry between her and Rampolla is really amusing. She seems to really come into her own when trading insults with him. Rampolla as Petruchio illustrates a classic confidence we see in Zack Morris or James Dean. Wait until the second act when his outbursts give a great display of his versatility with serene and more ill tempered than the shrew herself. One of the true highlights is Tull, with his comedic timing and willingness to be flung about makes a great toady out of Grumio. He never seems to run low on energy or his efforts to get a laugh out of the audience.

This show has often been criticized for its portrayal of women as needing to be "tamed," a concept not well received by women of today. This, in fact, was one of Nelson's motivations for using the time period he did, marking one of the culminations of the women's liberation movement and showing it in a very comedic portrayal. However, the stress on comedy and the love story really downplay the social commentary. Truly, this show is a well-done comedy, bringing laughter from the audience as the cast does a great job of bringing this great work of Shakespeare to life.

Not-So-Royal is proud to present "The Taming of the Shrew." The show is directed by Sean Nelson and will be running: Friday, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, at 2:30 p.m. General Admission: \$5. Tickets can be purchased at the LaFortune Box Office at 631-8128 or at the door.



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Lucentio, played by senior JJ Marler, and Trania, senior Monica Kershner, hide in order to spy on the beautiful Bianca, played by Junior Kate Dolack.

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