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From the Education Manager

Dear Students and Educators,

Like many people, my first encounter with *The Taming of the Shrew* wasn't through Shakespeare's text, but through its beloved 1999 reimagining, *10 Things I Hate About You*. That film helped draw me into the world of Shakespeare, full of sharp humor and vivid characters. I was captivated by how ideas that felt so alive in a 1999 high school classroom could also resonate with audiences from Shakespeare's own time. However, it also piqued my curiosity about the story beneath the surface and the uncomfortable questions that still linger more than four hundred years later.

The Taming of the Shrew is sometimes called one of Shakespeare's "problem plays," and with good reason. Its portrayal of gender roles and the so-called "taming" of a strong-willed woman challenges modern audiences to grapple with what it means to engage with a story built on control and submission. In Elizabethan England, women who spoke their minds risked being labeled "shrews" or "scolds" and facing public punishment for defying social norms. Within that context, the play mirrors the anxieties of its era — but that doesn't make its ideas any easier to digest today.

Every new production or adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* carries both risk and opportunity. How do we confront the play's troubling premise without ignoring it? Modern revisions like *10 Things I Hate About You* have found creative ways to reinterpret the story. But by returning to Shakespeare's original text, this production takes that challenge headon, exploring the play's deeper questions about love, agency, and transformation.

Our production, intentionally shortened to simply *Shrew*, steps boldly into that centuries-old conversation. It doesn't try to disguise the discomfort at its core; the elephant in the room is seen for exactly what it is. An elephant.

I hope this performance sparks conversations about how we change and how we tell difficult stories in our own time. We come to the theatre to look critically, think deeply, and keep the dialogue alive, because that, too, is part of what keeps Shakespeare's work enduring.

Warmly,

Anna Klein, Education Manager

Notes from *Shrew* Director **Bobbin Ramsey**

"Better a shrew than a sheep"

To women living in early modern England, this would be a familiar phrase, if not a statement they themselves would proudly make. In a time when "shrew" was one of the worst insults that could be wielded, many still opted to be identified as such, rather than the demure, obedient and docile characterization of sheep.

Even in the early 1590s, when *The Taming of the Shrew* was written, it caused contention. Dividing contemporaneous audiences and inspiring a rebuttal play titled *The Tamer Tamed*, Shakespeare's story was never universally accepted as an appropriate blueprint for societal gender dynamics. In both whispered conversations and proud proclamations, women during the years that Shakespeare was writing proclaimed that they would rather be loud, opinionated, and disliked than demure, obedient, and one of the herd.



So, when Elisabeth asked me to direct *Shrew* at Union Arts Center, I was a little nervous. What would it mean to take on one of history's most infamous and problematic plays in our contemporary moment? But as I researched and considered, it occurred to me that I would be tackling a play that has always been the object of questions, critique, and conversation. I realized that this history of controversy - part of the play since its inception - was key to interpreting it, and that the commentary on gender scaffolding the play isn't outdated or antiquated at all. "What if," I wondered, "everything we need to tell a contemporary story can be mined from Shakespeare's text?"

"...at its core, The Taming of the Shrew argues that the socially-constructed expectations of how men and women both violate our humanity and render us violent."

The answer to my question (spoiler alert): yes...mostly. Let me explain the yes: the more time I spend with *Shrew*, the more I discern that while it is exploring the patriarchal oppression of its time, it is by no means condoning that dynamic. The script gives us tools to look at the problematic elements from a dramatic distance, see how clownishly the characters behave, and clearly understand the reasons why Kate rebels in the way she does.

Now, let me explain the mostly. The US in 2025 is a scary and painful place, especially in regards to gender equality. After decades of women, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and trans people advancing their right to equality, protective policies, and societal respect, we are now watching as these milestones are rolled back, upended, and undermined. Gender essentialism and strict adherence to the gender binary are championed by our

Notes from *Shrew* Director **Bobbin Ramsey** continued

government, and our media (social and otherwise) brims with alpha males and trad wives. We are in a moment of frightening regression, and as artists, it was essential to us that we bring our experiences and perspectives into the creation of this play: to walk alongside the characters holding both the truth of their time and of our time.

I believe that at its core, *The Taming of the Shrew* argues that the socially-constructed expectations of how men and women both violate our humanity and render us violent. Katherina's violence stems from a desperate attempt to break free of the bounds placed on her by the men who rule her life (especially her father). Petruchio's violence, meanwhile, roots itself in his understanding of masculinity: of what type of man he should be, and what should make him happy.

This last assumption - that one can find fulfillment in violent oppression - is where our *Shrew* intervenes. I don't think that serving as an instrument of subjugation makes Petruchio happy. In fact, I don't think it makes any of the men in the play happy. In taming Katherina, Petruchio thinks he's building his dream life - but our *Shrew* is interested in exposing the ways in which this construction of male supremacy through the destruction of female autonomy is a little suffocating, a little sterilized, and a little nightmarish...for both parties. And in the aftermath of this dramatic revelation, we're left asking: What now? How do we hold each other's humanity? How do we move forward, together?

Like I said at the beginning of this note, I was a little nervous about directing this play. But honestly, I didn't hesitate when Elisabeth first approached me. I knew that Union Arts Center, ACT, Seattle Shakespeare, and their adventurous, curious, and thoughtful audiences would be excited to see something a little weird, a little deconstructed, a little untamed. So, thank you for coming on this ride with us. To the shrews!

Bobbin Ramsey Director



Show Synopsis

In Padua, the wealthy merchant Baptista has two daughters: the younger, Bianca, is gentle, well-mannered, and admired by many suitors; and the elder, Katherina, is sharp-tongued, independent, and quick-tempered. Baptista declares that Bianca cannot marry until Katherina has a husband. This obstacle frustrates Bianca's hopeful suitors—Lucentio, Hortensio, and Gremio—who must somehow arrange a match for the seemingly unmatchable Katherina.

Petruchio, a bold gentleman from Verona, arrives in Padua in search of a wealthy wife. Hearing of Katherina's reputation and Baptista's riches, he seizes the chance to prove himself by winning her. To the surprise of many, Petruchio does not shrink from her wit or fury; instead, he matches her blow for blow, turning insults into banter and refusing to back down. Their "courtship" becomes a contest of two sharp minds locked in battle. Baptista agrees to their marriage, despite the complicated feelings expressed by Katherina.

Meanwhile, Bianca's suitors find creative avenues to reach her, since Baptista keeps her closely guarded. Lucentio disguises himself as a Latin tutor named Cambio to get close to Bianca, while his servant Tranio impersonates Lucentio to negotiate with Baptista about Bianca's dowry. Hortensio, another suitor who is eager to compete, also disguises himself as the music tutor Litio, though Bianca shows clear favor toward Lucentio.

Katherina and Petruchio marry in a deliberately chaotic ceremony. To upend expectations and assert control, Petruchio arrives scandalously late, dressed in tattered clothes, and behaves rudely throughout the service. He then whisks Katherina away before the wedding feast, where, at his country home, he begins a campaign of contradictions: denying her food, rest, and clothing under the claim that nothing is ever good enough for her. Their relationship becomes a battle of endurance and wit, each testing the other in a high-stakes game.

Back in Padua, Lucentio reveals his true identity to Bianca, and with the help of his servants, they secretly elope and marry. When the truth comes out, Baptista is initially outraged but accepts the match once assured of Lucentio's honorable intentions and wealth.

At the final banquet, the newlywed men wager on whose wife is the most obedient. To everyone's astonishment, it is Katherina who comes immediately when called and delivers a long speech urging wives to submit to their husbands. Her words shock everyone present.

The play ends with celebration and lingering ambiguity. Is Shrew a farce about gender roles, a satire of marriage customs, a battle of wills that ends in partnership, or a cautionary tale about power and control? Shakespeare leaves us to decide.



Pictured: Jocelyn Maher as Katherina and Rachel Guyer-Mafune as Bianca. Photo by Giao Nguyen.

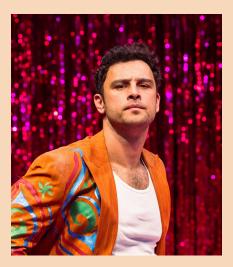
Characters



Katherina – Jocelyn Maher
The intemperate, outspoken
elder daughter of Baptista.
Known for being sharp-tongued
and fiercely independent, she
refuses to conform to societal
expectations of feminine
docility.



Bianca – Rachel Guyer-Mafune
The gentle, graceful younger
daughter. Polite, admired, and
clever, she draws the attention
of several suitors—and catalyzes
schemes created by men trying to
win her hand. Her quiet confidence
and ability to navigate her suitors'
games give her a unique power
that contrasts with her sister's.



Petruchio – Arjun Pande
A daring gentleman from Verona,
intent on "wiving it wealthily." Bold,
eccentric, and determined, he
takes on the challenge of courting
Katherina and turns the battle of
wit and will.



Lucentio – Ayo Tushinde
A young scholar who falls
instantly for Bianca. Bold and
clever, he switches identities
with his servant Tranio to woo
her without interference.



Tranio – Pilar O'Connell
Lucentio's cunning servant.
Resourceful and quick-thinking,
he orchestrates much of the clever
deception in the play—outsmarting
nobles and suitors alike.



One of Bianca's suitors. Persistent and inventive, he disguises himself as a music tutor in an attempt to get closer to her.



Baptista – Jasmine Joshua
The wealthy and statusconscious father of Katherina
and Bianca. He loves his
daughters but insists that the
younger cannot marry until the
elder is wed.



Grumio – Jasmine Joshua
Petruchio's loyal but hilariously
beleaguered servant. Quick with
a joke or a complaint, he provides
some of the play's funniest
moments.



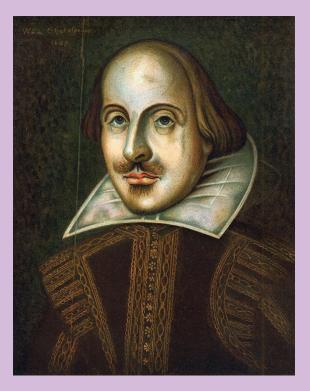
Gremio – Melanie Godsey
An aging, wealthy, comically
pompous suitor to Bianca. Though
well-meaning, his rivalry with
Lucentio and Hortensio brings out
his stubbornness, jealousy, and
pride.







Who Was William Shakespeare?



William Shakespeare, widely regarded as the greatest dramatist in the English language, was born in April 1564 to John Shakespeare, a city councilman and glove maker, and Mary Arden. He was the eldest son in a family of eight.

Not much is known about William's childhood or education, but it's likely he attended the local school in Stratford, where he would have studied classical Latin authors, as was typical in Elizabethan education.

In 1582, at eighteen, William married Anne Hathaway (not the actress from The Princess Diaries). Their marriage appeared hasty, as Anne gave birth to a daughter, Susanna, six months later. Two years after that, the couple had twins, Hamnet and Judith. After the birth of the twins, records of William's life disappear for several years—these "lost years" have sparked much speculation among historians. Some believe he began

his theatrical career tending horses at the theater, though no one knows for sure. What is clear is that during this time, William must have been honing his skills as a writer.

By 1592, records show that Shakespeare's plays were being performed in London. He joined an acting company called Lord Chamberlain's Men, which he co-owned with several other actors. The company became a favorite of Queen Elizabeth I and later, James I. During this time, William often acted in his own plays, typically in minor roles, and also appeared in other productions. His early works were mostly comedies and histories.

Tragedy struck in 1596 when Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, died of an unknown illness. Just three years later, in 1599, Lord Chamberlain's Men were successful enough to build their own venue—the Globe Theatre. As Shakespeare's career advanced, so did the popularity of the company, and his writing deepened with his great tragedies.

In 1603, after the death of Elizabeth I, James I became the new monarch and the official patron of Lord Chamberlain's Men, which then changed its name to the King's Men. In 1608, they expanded by purchasing the indoor Blackfriars Theatre. Shakespeare became quite wealthy from his career and made several property investments, including the purchase of New Place, the second-largest house in his hometown of Stratford. He eventually retired to Stratford, where he spent his final years. Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, though the cause of his death remains unknown.

Shakespeare's Genres

While occasionally divided into further subcategories, Shakespeare's plays are typically classified into three main genres: Tragedy, Comedy, and History.

Tragedy

Shakespearean tragedies, though they may contain moments of levity, are defined by their intense, high-stakes storylines, typically leading to the death of key characters. Common features of a tragedy are:

- Characters deeply affected by personal or societal turmoil
- Themes of inescapable doom and fate
- A noble but flawed protagonist who suffers a downfall due to their tragic flaw or circumstances
- A final act that ends in death or catastrophe

Comedy

A Shakespearean comedy doesn't always align with modern expectations of humor. Although there may be laugh-out-loud moments, the most recognizable traits of a Shakespearean comedy include:

- Young lovers struggling to overcome obstacles, often posed by strict or disapproving elders
- Mistaken identities, frequently involving disguises
- Complex, interwoven plotlines
- A frequent use of puns and wordplay
- A happy ending, often culminating in a wedding or reunion

History

Shakespeare's history plays focus on English monarchs and the political and social conflicts of their reigns. These plays often served as a vehicle for Elizabethan propaganda, shaping public perceptions of the royal family. Although historians have noted various inaccuracies, Shakespeare's histories have had a lasting impact on how we perceive these historical figures. Key elements include:

- A focus on English royalty and battles for power
- Themes of leadership, loyalty, and legitimacy
- Historical events intertwined with dramatic embellishment

Bonus: The "Problem Plays"

In addition to the three major genres, Shakespeare wrote a handful of works that are harder to categorize, often called "problem plays." These plays mix elements of comedy and tragedy and tend to challenge traditional storytelling structures. They frequently explore darker themes and complex moral dilemmas, making them difficult to classify as purely comedic or tragic. Some characteristics of Shakespeare's problem plays include:

- Shifts in tone, often moving from light-hearted scenes to serious or unsettling ones
- Ambiguous endings that don't provide clear resolutions or typical comedic or tragic conclusions
- Characters dealing with ethical or social complexities that challenge the audience's sense of justice

The Problem in the Play: Adapting Shrew

by dramaturg & co-adaptor Gabrielle Hoyt

In the 1929 essay *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf includes a section called "Shakespeare's Sister." She imagines a young woman—Judith Shakespeare (thus the fantastical namesake of the playwright's second daughter with Anne Hathaway)—with "the quickest fancy, a gift, like her brother's, for the tune of words." Woolf's Elizabethan world annihilates this nascent genius, subjecting her to beatings from her father and husband, the scorn of male theatergoers, and eventual murder by the man who's impregnated her.

Woolf's purpose in constructing this doleful fable has little to do with the historical life of Shakespeare, but much to do with the historical meaning of Shakespeare: the pinnacle of individuated genius, the all-encompassing "Soul of the Age." In the character of Judith, Woolf personifies the portrait of a woman thwarted and abjected—a distorted mirror of that enlightened "soul." The author's ultimate, radical point: "that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would have certainly gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at."

No play appears more consonant with this thesis than *The Taming of the Shrew*. At its opening, unruly, "crazed" Katherina Minola has already become a figure of fear and mockery. Men shun her, gorgeous younger sister Bianca flees her, and father Baptista Minola yearns to jettison her. Katherina's only saving grace, from a societal perspective, is the fortune Baptista will bestow on any man who will have her. Into this role steps Petruchio, a fortune hunter implored by Bianca's bevy of suitors—themselves incentivized by Baptista, who will only allow his younger daughter to marry once her older sister is wed—to woo the shrew. Petruchio does so with brutish aplomb, marrying Katherina and then employing tactics associated with the Elizabethan art of falconry (among them starvation and sleep deprivation) to tame his wayward wife. By Act V, these methods have prevailed. Kate has become not just obedient, but the most obedient, schooling her fellow women by speechifying on the joys of submission. Exeunt. End of play.

But Shakespeare is, as always, ambivalent. Contemporary efforts to ascribe fixed views on controversial topics (antisemitism in *The Merchant of Venice*, racism in *Othello*, misogyny in *Shrew*) fall flat thanks to the plays' kaleidoscopic, even contradictory, facets of meaning. Katherina is "tamed" by Petruchio, one could argue. But what about their electric sexual chemistry when they first meet, the physical trials that Petruchio puts himself through to win her, or the rhetorical (perhaps even ironical) zest with which Katherina infuses her final monologue? Then there's the play's infamous Induction, which depicts a foolish drunkard, Christopher Sly, being hoodwinked by a lord and his henchmen into believing himself nobility and a blushing pageboy his bride. Technically, the tale of Katherina and Petruchio is a play within a play put on for Sly's benefit. Might not this framing, then, further destabilize *The Taming of the Shrew*'s brutal ending?

Many modern productions underline this take through casting. By doubling the actor playing Petruchio as Christopher Sly, they imply that the preening alpha male, like the credulous lush, has been taken in by an intellect—Katherina's—that far exceeds his own. Others split the difference: in these conceptions of *The Taming of the Shrew*, neither Katherina nor Petruchio triumphs over the other. Rather, through their mutually assured antagonism, the two reach a loving détente. In such interpretations, Katherina performs her final paean to tradwifery as an affirmation of uxorial devotion and a parody of her self-hating peers. These visions of comic unity, however, require some dramaturgical zhuzhing. To invest in them, audiences and artists must forgive, stomach, swallow, or otherwise elide Petruchio's successive (and successful) attempts to dominate his wife. In so doing, there's a danger that this famously thorny narrative might get a little...well...tame.

To me, and to director and co-adaptor Bobbin Ramsey, adapting *The Taming of the Shrew* means accepting that its contradictions are as irreconcilable as its author's motivations are unknowable. Instead, we have tried to meld what we love most about the play—its relentless repartee, its gleeful embrace of disguise, its commentary on romance and commerce—with a bleeding-edge inquiry into gender relations. Shakespeare didn't write everything you'll see onstage. However, every word we've added (or subtracted), gesture we've constructed, and aesthetic decision we've made has been inspired by our ongoing conversation with this confounding, controversial, and captivating work. As we thought, struggled, and collaborated, we drew on our own experiences with gender, love, siblinghood, money, misogyny, and more. We hope you'll consider similar themes in your own life, and in the world, as you engage with our show.

So, welcome to Shrew. We couldn't tame it, and we didn't try.

First Tries: Shakespeare's Early Career Comedies

Written around 1592–1594, *The Taming of the Shrew* is one of Shakespeare's earliest comedies — and one of his most debated. While it features many of the hallmarks we know and love in his work, it also raises challenging questions about power and submission. The play offers a fascinating glimpse into Shakespeare's early development as a playwright, as he experiments with ideas he would continue to explore and refine throughout his career.

In *Shrew*, Shakespeare investigates themes that reappear in his later comedies: disguise and deception (*As You Like It* (1599–1600)), the battle of the sexes (*Much Ado About Nothing* (1598–1599)), and love as both chaos and transformation (*Twelfth Night* (1601–1602)). We also see the early forms of characters that would later become Shakespearean staples — the sharp-tongued heroine, the lovestruck fool, and the overconfident suitor — all of whom would grow in complexity as his writing matured.

Stylistically, *Shrew* offers an early glimpse of Shakespeare's evolving comedic structure. The subplot involving Bianca and her many suitors, the use of disguise and mistaken identity, and the framing device of The Induction (a "play within a play") all showcase his inventive storytelling and motifs that would echo throughout his later comedies and even into his tragedies.

At the center of *The Taming of the Shrew* are Katherina and Petruchio, two strong-willed characters locked in a battle of wit and will. Katherina's "taming" has long sparked debate: is the play reinforcing strict Elizabethan gender norms, satirizing them, or suggesting something more complex? Modern productions often reinterpret this dynamic, using tone, staging, and casting to question the assumptions of Shakespeare's world rather than to endorse them. This ongoing dialogue is part of what makes Shrew both compelling and controversial centuries later.

Though *The Taming of the Shrew* can feel unsettling to modern audiences, it remains a vital window into the social values and theatrical experimentation of Shakespeare's time. Its complexity invites

us to reflect on how far we've come while also confronting the ways we still wrestle with the same questions of love, identity, and power.

As you explore this production, we invite you to consider: What does "taming" mean today? How can performance reshape a story that sits at the intersection of comedy and discomfort? And what might Shakespeare have wanted us to see when he first brought these fiery characters to life?



Themes

Despite *Shrew's* problematic premise, the enduring themes of love, power, identity, and transformation continue to draw audiences back to the story time and again.

Power and Control

The dynamic between Petruchio and Katherina centers on control, submission, and resistance. The play asks: what does it mean to hold power over someone else, and how do characters navigate authority, pride, and compromise in their relationships?

Identity and Agency

Katherina and other characters struggle with self-expression versus societal expectations. The play explores the tension between who we are and who others want us to be, asking viewers to consider how personal agency is shaped by social norms, family, and cultural pressures.

Love and Transformation

Beneath the conflict and comedy, the play examines how love can inspire change, both sincere and performative. Consider whether you believe this transformation comes from choice, persuasion, or societal expectation.

Gender Roles and Societal Expectations

Shrew explores how society defines what it means to "correctly" be a man or a woman. Masculinity is often equated with dominance, femininity with subservience. Characters who align with these rigid expectations are rewarded, while those who challenge or fail to perform their expected roles are humiliated or punished.

The Individual vs. Society

Many characters struggle between following their own desires and conforming to societal pressures. Petruchio and Katherina's interactions highlight the tension between personal choice and the rules imposed by family, culture, and tradition.

Shakespeare's Audiences: Then and Now

Audiences in Shakespeare's time behaved differently from what we think of today when we go to the theatre. In general, audiences were much more rowdy and directly involved in the show than modern audiences.

Shakespeare is often associated with the Globe Theatre in London, a wooden stage constructed in 1599 that hosted many of Shakespeare's world premieres, including As You Like It, Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth. On June 29th, 1613, the Globe Theatre went up in flames during a performance of Henry VIII. A modern reconstruction of the theatre, named "Shakespeare's Globe", opened in 1997 and is located approximately 750 feet from the site of the original theatre.

London theatres, such as the Globe, could accommodate up to 3,000 people watching popular plays. With theatres running most afternoons, that could mean as many as 10,000–20,000 people could see a play every week! Shakespeare's audiences included the very rich, the upper-middle class, and the lower-middle class. People sought entertainment just as we do today, and could afford to spend money going to the theatre. To get into the Globe Theatre cost a penny. In Elizabethan England, one penny would buy a loaf of bread, a pint of ale, or a ticket to the theatre. Those who paid just one penny were known as "groundlings," because they stood on the ground in what was known as "the yard," which is the area closest to the stage. For another penny, they could sit on a bench just behind the yard. For a penny more, they could sit more comfortably on a cushion. The cost to access the upper galleries, which were covered and had seating, would start at 6 pence.

Since there was no electricity, both performances took place in broad daylight, allowing actors and audience members to see and interact with one another. Shakespeare's soliloquies would be spoken directly to the audience, who could potentially respond in turn. The audience would clap for the hero, boo the villain, and cheer for the special effects. They might even dance at the end of a comedy along with the characters onstage. However, in the case where an audience didn't like a play, they caused a ruckus and had been known to throw furniture and damage the theatre.

Shakespeare employed several techniques to capture and maintain his audience's attention. His plays rarely begin with the main characters onstage; instead, a minor character typically begins the first scene. Without lights to dim at the beginning of a play, the performance simply started when actors walked onstage and started to speak, usually over the noise made by the audience. Because of this, the first scene would usually set the mood of the play, but the opening dialogue wasn't vital because it might not be heard.

Another trick that Shakespeare used was to interject comedy into the main action of the play. In most of his plays, there is comic relief in the form of "clown" or "fool" characters sprinkled throughout the show, making jokes or clowning around onstage. This ensured that even during a 3-hour history play, there would be something that appealed to everyone.

Audiences today can learn from Elizabethan audiences about how to watch a Shakespeare play. Here are some tips:

- Remind yourself that the first scene mostly sets the mood of the play and rarely has vital dialogue, so if you miss some of the words at the beginning, that is okay. It can take a couple of minutes to adjust to Shakespeare's unusual language. It's a little bit like listening to someone with a heavy accent; at first, it can be difficult to understand, but after a minute or two, it becomes easier. Don't be discouraged if it doesn't make sense right away. Our actors are professionally trained to make sure that you understand the words, so you'll catch on!
- Enjoy the play and feel free to express your enjoyment. Laugh at the clowns, clap for the heroes, gasp at important revelations, and applaud for the actors at the end to thank them for their work.
 This will keep you engaged in the show and help let the actors know that the audience is paying attention and enjoying the play.
- During the play, remember that, unlike in a movie, the actors can see and hear you too! Even with
 more sophisticated theatre lighting that keeps the stage lit and the audience dim, the actors are
 often very close to the first few rows, and they can definitely hear the audience. That means please
 refrain from talking to your neighbor during the show, and keep your phones silent and out of sight
 for the duration of the performance (it lights up your face!) these can all be very distracting to
 the performers and your fellow audience members.
- And finally, remember that the theatre exists for everyone. Theatre is not meant to be exclusive to the upper class, college graduates, and older audiences. In Shakespeare's day, theatre was an affordable form of entertainment that any person could enjoy. Shakespeare's plays have something for you, whether you have seen one hundred plays or no plays at all, if you're rich, poor, young, old, or if you enjoy jokes, speeches, banter, or battles. Shakespeare wrote his plays with a diverse audience in mind, which is part of the reason they remain significant today.



How to Watch a Play

ENGAGE, RESPECT, ENJOY, WELCOME BACK TO THE THEATRE

Welcome! Union Arts Center is thrilled to perform for you! Here are some helpful tips to get you acquainted with live theatre and make the most of your experience.

LISTEN

Pay attention to the talented actors sharing their story with you today—they're excited for you to hear it! Additionally, please follow the instructions provided by our staff. We're here to ensure everyone has a great experience, and sometimes we'll guide you on seating or movement to help things run smoothly.

PARTICIPATE

You're part of the experience! Laugh, applaud, and listen closely to make the show even better for everyone. Remember, respect is key. As playwright Dominique Morrisseau reminds us: "This is live theater, and the actors need you to engage with them, not distract or thwart their performance."

PHONES

Keep them in your backpack or pocket, preferably on airplane mode. Share your experience after the show, and enjoy the performance distraction-free.

CARE

The actors can see and hear you, so be the kind of audience member you'd enjoy sitting next to. Before you leave, check around to make sure you haven't left anything behind.

THANK YOU

Thank you for being here with us! Enjoy the show!

Pre- and Post-Show Discussion Questions

The following questions are designed to guide your thinking before and after experiencing Shrew. Some invite you to reflect on your own experiences and values, while others ask you to analyze the characters, relationships, and themes in the play. There are no right or wrong answers—these prompts are meant to spark conversation, encourage critical thinking, and help you make personal connections to the story.

These questions prompt students to consider themes, context, and personal values before attending the production.

- Have you ever been in a situation where someone tried to control or dominate your choices? How did you respond?
- What does it mean to "stand your ground" in a relationship or friendship? Are there limits to compromise?
- How do societal expectations shape the way people behave, dress, speak, or act?
- Why might people act differently in public than in private? How can social pressure influence behavior?
- Think of a time when humor, teasing, or sarcasm was used to challenge someone's authority. How effective was it?

These questions encourage reflection on the story, characters, and themes.

- How do you interpret Katherina's final speech? Does it reflect genuine transformation, survival strategy, or satire?
- How does Petruchio's approach to "taming" Katherina affect your understanding of power in relationships?
- How are gender roles and societal expectations depicted in the play? Are any characters able to resist or subvert them?
- Bianca, Lucentio, and the other suitors have very different experiences with love and social rules. How do these experiences compare to Katherina and Petruchio's?
- How do humor, exaggeration, and wordplay affect your perception of the play's conflicts? Do they make the power dynamics easier or harder to accept?
- If Shrew were set today, what changes might make the story resonate for modern audiences?
- How do you see the tension between personal agency and societal expectation play out in your own life?

ACTIVITY: Adapt it Yourself!

In this activity, students will reflect on the themes and plot of *Shrew* and explore how the story can be adapted into a new setting and context.

Objectives:

- To learn about how to take a play and reframe it in a new context
- To get a grasp of how Shakespearean stories have been adapted

Materials:

- Poster board for students to make a poster for their concept
- Markers and pencils
- A basic plot summary.
- 1. Students should split into small groups. Use the plot summary (page 6) and themes (page 13) to select a major theme you would like to focus on.
- 2. Students should then come up with a setting that supports your theme. Possible settings include (but are not limited to):
- A theme park
- A prison
- Outer space
- A dog shelter
- 3. Next, students should pick each character's role in this world. You do not need to choose a role for every character, but pick five that you could determine contemporaries for within the world you've chosen. Here is an example from a different play:

LOCATION	CHARACTER	EQUIVALENT ROLE
A high school	Romeo Juliet Friar Laurence Nurse Benvolio Mercutio	Captain of the basketball team Head of the mathletes Their drama teacher Juliet's best friend Team manager and Romeo's cousin Point guard of the basketball team

Consider how their relationships, status, and motivations might change in this new context. How does your setting influence who they are and what they do?

4. After completing the initial brainstorming, each group should decide on the following:

Genre

• What style or tone best fits your adaptation? (e.g., comedy, sci-fi, drama, action)

Title

• What is the name of your production?

Pitch

• How would you summarize your adaptation in a few compelling sentences to get others interested?

Key Scene Adaptation

How would you adapt key scenes or sequences to draw engaging parallels and enhance the story?

For example:

LOCATION	CHARACTER	EQUIVALENT ROLE
A high school	Romeo and Juliet first meet	They randomly get paired up during karaoke while both their families are on vacation at the same resort.

5. Design a poster for your production (feel free to label elements as needed), and prepare a short pitch to present your vision to the class. If desired, the class can "vote" on the production concept they would most like to "produce."



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