

The Taming of the Shrew

by William Shakespeare

There is likely to be some double casting for roles as well as mixing of genders. ie some male roles can be played by females.

Character List

Katherine - The “shrew” of the play’s title, Katherine, or Kate, is the daughter of Baptista Minola, with whom she lives in Padua. She is sharp-tongued, quick-tempered, and prone to violence, particularly against anyone who tries to marry her. Her hostility toward suitors particularly distresses her father. But her anger and rudeness disguise her deep-seated sense of insecurity and her jealousy toward her sister, Bianca. She does not resist her suitor Petruchio forever, though, and she eventually subjugates herself to him, despite her previous repudiation of marriage.

Petruchio - Petruchio is a gentleman from Verona. Loud, boisterous, eccentric, quick-witted, and frequently drunk, he has come to Padua “to wive and thrive.” He wishes for nothing more than a woman with an enormous dowry, and he finds Kate to be the perfect fit. Disregarding everyone who warns him of her shrewishness, he eventually succeeds not only in wooing Katherine, but in silencing her tongue and temper with his own.

Bianca - The younger daughter of Baptista. The lovely Bianca proves herself the opposite of her sister, Kate, at the beginning of the play: she is soft-spoken, sweet, and unassuming. Thus, she operates as Kate’s principal female foil. Because of her large dowry and her mild behavior, several men vie for her hand. Baptista, however, will not let her marry until Kate is wed.

Baptista - Minola Baptista is one of the wealthiest men in Padua, and his daughters become the prey of many suitors due to the substantial dowries he can offer. He is good-natured, if a bit superficial. His absentmindedness increases when Kate shows her obstinate nature. Thus, at the opening of the play, he is already desperate to find her a suitor, having decided that she must marry before Bianca does.

Lucentio - A young student from Pisa, the good-natured and intrepid Lucentio comes to Padua to study at the city’s renowned university, but he is immediately sidetracked when he falls in love with Bianca at first sight. By disguising himself as a classics instructor named Cambio, he convinces Gremio to offer him to Baptista as a tutor for Bianca. He wins her love, but his impersonation gets him into trouble when his father, Vincentio, visits Padua.

Tranio - Lucentio's servant. Tranio accompanies Lucentio from Pisa. Wry and comical, he plays an important part in his master's charade—he assumes Lucentio's identity and bargains with Baptista for Bianca's hand.

Gremio and Hortensio - Two gentlemen of Padua. Gremio and Hortensio are Bianca's suitors at the beginning of the play. Though they are rivals, these older men also become friends during their mutual frustration with and rejection by Bianca. Hortensio directs Petruchio to Kate and then dresses up as a music instructor to court Bianca. He and Gremio are both thwarted in their efforts by Lucentio. Hortensio ends up marrying a widow.

Grumio - Petruchio's servant and the fool of the play—a source of much comic relief.

Biondello - Lucentio's second servant, who assists his master and Tranio in carrying out their plot.

Vincentio

Lucentio's wealthy father.

Biondello

Another servant of Lucentio's.

A Widow

Hastily courted and wed by Hortensio, the widow is rich, and therefore does not remain unmarried for long.

Curtis

Another of Petruchio's servants.

A Pedant

From Mantua. When Petruchio tricks him into believing that all Mantuans are condemned to die, he disguises himself as Vincentio, Lucentio's father.

A Tailor

Makes Katherine's dress that is torn apart. Insulted by Petruchio.

A Haberdasher

Makes Katherine's hat that is torn apart. Insulted by Petruchio.

Nathaniel, Philip, Joseph, Nicholas, Peter

Servants at Petruchio's house, likewise insulted by Petruchio.

Assorted Lords and Ladies

Part of the wedding party, feast and other scenes.

The play opens as the student Lucentio arrives in Padua. He hears that the merchant Baptista has two daughters, but the younger, prettier daughter, Bianca, cannot be married before her strong-willed sister, Katherine. On seeing Bianca Lucentio falls in love with her and changes identities with his servant Tranio. Bianca already has two suitors, but doesn't like either. The

elderly Gremio hires Lucentio, disguised as a Latin tutor, to woo Bianca on his behalf, while Hortensio disguises himself as a musician to get access to her. Meanwhile Petruchio, a young adventurer from Verona, arrives to visit his friend Hortensio. He learns about Katherine and decides to woo her, aided by both Gremio and Hortensio.

Baptista is enthusiastic about Petruchio's suit because the feisty Katherine is a burden to him and is continually quarrelling with her sister and with him. Petruchio will not be put off as he woos Kate and he fixes their wedding day. At the church, where Kate unwillingly awaits him, Petruchio arrives in an absurd outfit and after the ceremony he leaves for Verona immediately, with his new wife. On reaching there Kate is mistreated by Petruchio and his servants, and is denied food and sleep. To teach her to obey him Petruchio does not allow her new clothes or a hat. Eventually, worn down by her husband's relentless eccentricity, Kate submits and accepts all his eccentricities. They set off to visit her father in Padua.

On the journey the couple meet Vincentio, Lucentio's wealthy father, who is subjected to a strange conversation as Petruchio tests Kate's obedience. The three reach Padua where Hortensio, rejected by Bianca, has married a widow and Baptista has been tricked into believing a passing stranger is Tranio's rich father. While Vincentio attempts to unravel the complexities of the situation his son Lucentio returns from a secret wedding with Bianca.