



# Cast of 'Shrew' right match

The last time I went on a date with someone other than my wife, the first George Bush had just been elected president. I don't remember exactly what I wore on that last date, but I am reasonably sure that it mimicked the wardrobe in "Miami Vice."

I don't miss the complications of dating for a second. The uncertainties. The nervousness. The awkward small talk. And of course, wondering if my lady would be wooed by my attempts to pass myself off as a poor teacher while my servant pretended to be me.

OK, I never wrestled with the last dilemma, but that situation—and several others—are among the problems of the heart faced by the suitors in William Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew." This classic yet convoluted tale of love and marriage is filled to the brim with wit, fire and passion.

Some might find the play's theories of a woman's duty to her husband a bit outdated, but I suspect in today's climate of traditional moral values, such outrage would be limited to those pesky, politically correct blue states.

"The Taming of the Shrew" is brought to life in the Salisbury Theatre by an outstanding cast of young Theatre UAF thespians. Doing Shakespeare in Fairbanks is no easy task, because Fairbanks Shakespeare Theatre has raised the bar, presenting the bard's plays over the years creatively and ingeniously, as well as being spot on in dialect. The kids on the hill have responded to the challenge, and what they manage to do with this play easily compares to the work by Fairbanks Shakespeare—and in some cases, surpasses it.

It helps that one of the leads is



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Fairbanks Shakespeare actor Andrew Cassel, who delivers an excellent performance as Petruchio. Petruchio is the "shrew tamer" of the play, and because his sole intention is to break in his new bride, he really shouldn't be very likable. But it is hard to not like his energy and the flamboyant humor Cassel brings to the table.

Petruchio's verbal exchanges with Katharine, played by Jenny Schlotfeldt, are among the best moments in the play. Schlotfeldt matches Cassel line for line and steely-eyed glance for steely-eyed glance, making them the ideal pairing for such hot-blooded roles.

Especially impressive is the way the two work together to convey that their relationship is more than "Me Tarzan, You Jane."

As director Anatoly Antohin mentions in his director's notes, their relationship is a "mutual taming," to change each other for the better.

Excellent acting is equally shared among the cast. But I did find myself clapping the loudest for Joe Alloway, who serves double duty as Shakespeare and Grumio. Alloway is a joy to watch, a comedic acrobat, verbally and physically, who can provoke laughter by simply raising an eyebrow. Other standouts include Jon-Kiefer Bowne as Gremio, Carey Seward as Bianca, and Charlie

Pierce as Trainio.

Tying all of this together is the superb directing of Antohin. I will admit that I approached this play with some trepidation since it was being marketed as a "modern remake," and with Antohin that can sometimes be problematic. Not so with this production. This was one of the finest shows I have seen this Theatre UAF veteran direct.

The "modernizations," with the exception of the spectacular costumes designed by Tara Maginnis, are subtle at best. There is the pre-performance multi-media display of how the characters in the show would write a singles ad, as well as slides that are projected on the back of the stage throughout the show.

And Antohin does delineate from the original version by taking out the "play within the play" concept, replacing it with appearances by Shakespeare himself that turn out to be uproarious.

These minor tinkering take nothing away from Shakespeare's classic; they add to it, making the play a most enjoyable time to spend an evening.

A lot of the people involved with "The Taming of the Shrew," both on and behind the stage, will soon be graduating. Let's hope they stick around Fairbanks for awhile. There's enough talent in that group to keep Interior Alaska theater-goers satisfied for years to come.

"The Taming of the Shrew" runs through this weekend, at 8:15 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday. Call 474-7751 for information.

Scott McCrea is a local freelance writer who has reviewed local theater for several years.