



Present
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

“Battle of the Sexes” as popular Players take to the road on 26th UK tour

~Shakespeare’s feisty “Shrew” will be played by a man ~

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UK tour: May 28-August 27 2011



Wooing and wedding, music and masquerading will abound when Gloucestershire’s acclaimed **Festival Players** take to the UK’s roads this summer with their 26th touring Shakespeare production – the Bard’s brilliant comedy, *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The inimitable company, who aim to make Shakespeare accessible to all, will transport nearly 60 audiences in England, Scotland, Wales – and Berlin – to the colourful Italian world of sunny Padua with a fun-packed, energetic, and brilliantly inventive production centred on Shakespeare's feisty female creation, Katharina – with her scolding tongue and fiery temper! (a role played by the late Elizabeth Taylor in the 1965 Franco Zeffirelli film) and the inspiration for Cole Porter's famous musical *Kiss Me Kate*.

But this will be a shrew with a difference – for “Kate” will be played by a man! London-based actor **Scott Smith** will take on the challenge of the wilful, headstrong Kate while Bristol-born **Paul Hampton** will be her mad-cap suitor, Petruchio, a gentleman of Verona.

Initially, Kate is an unwilling participant in the relationship, but Petruchio takes on the challenge of “taming” her and making her an obedient bride. Meanwhile, the sub-plot features a competition between the suitors of Kate's more amiable sister, Bianca (played by Cornwall-born, Hertfordshire-based actor **Adam Trembath**.)

They will lead the action in this great comedy of farcical impediments, impersonation, and impassioned love – a lively “Battle of the Sexes” to be played out by just seven actors in this **all-male company**, including the innovative and inspired director Michael Dyer who himself plays the rich nobleman Vincentio.

The Festival Players have proven themselves to be one of the finest and most enduring touring Shakespeare groups in the UK and this year will perform some 54 mostly alfresco shows from May through to August.

The shows will be played out at an increasingly varied number of locations from Scottish castles to English village greens, famous Welsh gardens to London squares, Peckham cafes to Roman amphitheatres. New venues will include **Fife's glorious Kellie Castle & Gardens**, the **Bishops Wood Centre in Stourport** (part of **Worcestershire Literary Festival**), **Tetbury** recreation ground in **Gloucestershire**, the gardens at **Coombe Trenchard in Devon**, and **Penlee Park Theatre in Penzance, Cornwall**.

But just how will a play that includes a long speech advocating the loyalty of wives to their husbands resonate with a modern day audience?

Michael Dyer, former director of Cornwall's Minack Open Air Theatre, says: “Over the past few decades some of the attitudes of men towards women, exhibited in this early Shakespeare, have not played easily in our more liberated society - but *The Taming of the Shrew* has an amazing comic plot and a wealth of colourful characters and we're confident we can engage our audiences. With five new cast members and the welcome return of Festival Players stalwart Martin Tomms, we aim to deliver an energetic production of this quirky and spirited comedy with all its wooing and wedding!”

Michael teaches Shakespeare performance at **Trinity University College, Carmarthen** and last year staged an acclaimed all-female version of *The Taming of the Shrew* with his student cast so is seemingly making a speciality of single sex productions of the play.



With most of the actors playing multiple roles, there will be some quick costume changes required! Players' stalwart **Martin Tomms (left)** will return to play Kate's wealthy father Baptista and two other roles while Andrew Bowen Jones plays Tranio and Hortensio and Californian Jeffrey Han takes on three roles.

It will be **Worcestershire**-based Dyer's seventh all-male production in a row for the Players. "In 2005 there were some raised eyebrows when we performed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* without actresses. Since then we have had all-male productions of *Hamlet*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Tempest* and audience feedback has proved that most people see it as an intriguing diversion from the norm. And of course it is totally authentic – we are following in the footsteps of Shakespeare's own Globe Theatre when all roles were taken by men."



Scenery and costumes for the production will be undertaken by the Design and Production department of **Trinity University College, Carmarthen**, part of the University of Wales (**Beth Tearle**, set design and **Vanessa Bolton**, costumes) while music will be specially written for the production by folk star **Johnny Coppin** (front man of the cult Seventies folk-rock group Decameron).

Gloucestershire-based **Coppin** (left), who regularly tours the folk and acoustic circuit both solo and with fellow singer songwriter Mike Silver, adds a special ingredient with his original songs and instrumentals involving all the cast.

Some of the performances will be as part of festivals including the **Worcester Festival** and **Carleton Arts Festival** – and many of the shows will raise funds for local, national and international charities from Help for Heroes to the African "Roundabout" water pump scheme, Combat Stress and Hope and Homes for Children, to name but a few.

More information can be found at www.thefestivalplayers.org.uk