TAMING OF THE SHREW

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTED BY DAMIEN RYAN



EDUCATION RESOURCES

QUEENSLAND THEATRE



Queensland Theatre acknowledges the Jagera and Turrbal people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, and their unique relationship with the lands, seas and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Barbara Lowing

INFORMATION

Classic
Comedy
It's Complicated

PLAY BRIEFING
Tuesday 4 May, 6.00pm

DURATION
2 hours and 50 minutes, including 20 minute interval

CURRICULUM LINKS
Suitable for Years 9–12

WARNINGS
This play contains theatrical haze, strobe lighting and loud, sudden noises. The use of photographic or recording equipment is not permitted inside the theatre.



John McNeill, Patrick Jhanur

SYLLABUS LINKS

Drama General Senior Syllabus 2019	ACARA, Year 10 Drama
Unit 4: Transform How can *Taming of the Shrew* be reimagined to highlight misogyny and the gender inequalities still existing in society?	Manipulate combinations of the elements of drama to develop and convey the physical and psychological aspects of roles and characters consistent with intentions in dramatic forms and performance styles. Structure drama to engage an audience through manipulation of dramatic action, forms and performance styles and by using design elements. Evaluate how the elements of drama, forms and performance styles in devised and scripted drama convey meaning and aesthetic effect.

Purpose	Context	Themes	21st century skills
• Challenge or provoke • Empower	• Sociological • Personal • Historical	• Gender • Inequality • Love • Status • Power • Misogyny • Relationships • Marriage • Family • Disguise	• Critical Thinking • Creative Thinking • Communication • Collaboration and teamwork

FORM AND STYLE	KEY CONVENTIONS
• Elizabethan Theatre • Contemporary Theatre	• Direct address • Soliloquy • Iambic pentameter • Intertextuality • Use of media

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

CREATIVES
Writer William Shakespeare
Director Damien Ryan
Design Realisation Adam Gardnir
Lighting Designer Jason Glenwright
Sound Designer Tony Brumpton
Stage Manager Kat O'Halloran
Assistant Stage Manager Nicole Neil

CAST
Tania Ellen Bailey
Petruchio Nicholas Brown
Biondello/Tailor/Player Leon Cain
Lucentio Patrick Jhanur
Vincentia/Haberdasher
Barbara Lowing
Katharina Anna McGahan
Baptista John McNeill
Rosa/Curtis/Ensemble Wendy Mocke
Gremio/Grumio Bryan Probets
Hortensio David Soncin
Bianca Claudia Ware

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
Fight Coordinator Samuel Valentine
Movement Coordinator Ellen Bailey
Videographer David Soncin
Flamenco Teacher Simone Pope

CREATIVES



Damien Ryan
Director



Adam Gardnir
Design Realisation



Jason Glenwright
Lighting Designer



Tony Brumpton
Sound Designer



Kat O'Halloran
Stage Manager



Nicole Neil
Assistant Stage Manager

CAST



Ellen Bailey
Tania



Nicholas Brown
Petruchio



Leon Cain
Biondello/Tailor/Player



Patrick Jhanur
Lucentio



Barbara Lowing
Vincentia/Haberdasher



Anna McGahan
Katharina



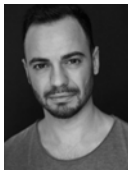
John McNeill
Baptista



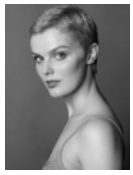
Wendy Mocke
Rosa/Curtis/Ensemble



Bryan Probets
Gremio/Grumio



David Soncin
Hortensio



Claudia Ware
Bianca

ABOUT



SUMMARY

Two sisters. One wants to marry, one doesn't. What could possibly go wrong?

It's *Lights! Camera! Action!* on an Italian silent film set in a bygone era. The suitors are lining up to woo movie mogul Baptista's enchanting film star daughter, Bianca. But there's a catch:
Bianca can't marry until her elder sister is wed.

Enter Kate — bold, free and fierce, the last thing she wants or needs is a husband. Men conspire to marry this wild woman off to any man who will have her.

Enter Petruchio — Navy captain, in need of a wife. The stage is set for one of the most powerful clashes of wills in history.

With a sprinkle of old-time movie magic, director Damien Ryan rescues this classic love story from the clutches of controversy, by transporting it to a time when Kate is less of a problem and more of a promise of great women to come. This may not be the *Shrew* you were expecting, but it will be an irresistible night in the theatre filled with glamour, romance, song and laughter. And a plane.

For a more detailed scene by scene summary of the original play click here:

SCENE-BY-SCENE

LINK

https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/the-taming-of-the-shrew/story/scene-by-scene

'Over the course of his career, Shakespeare used the shrew more and more openly, radically and forcefully as the guardian of justice, the voice of reason and the keeper of a kind of active, positive female virtue far distant in character from the obedient, chaste, silent version. Our attitudes to the wielding of power, verbal or otherwise, by women should have changed since the time these characters were created, but has it?'

— Anna Kamaralli, *Shakespeare and the Shrew*

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

WATCH



SOURCE

Damian Ryan on why you need to see *Taming of the Shrew*

LINK https://queenslandtheatre.com.au/plays/taming-of-the-shrew



SOURCE

***Taming of the Shrew* Play Briefing**

LINK https://queenslandtheatre.com.au/plays/taming-of-the-shrew


Leon Cain

READ - DAMIEN RYAN'S DIRECTOR'S NOTES, 2021

Shakespeare's plays are about family. Every one of his stories extends outward and inward from that most basic human nucleus. We are all experts on family dysfunction and he traded on that, using it to x-ray the fractures and fissures that human beings have always caused each other in living and loving together.

Shakespeare places these studies of family – in this play the Minola family of Padua, the Vincentia family of Pisa, and the Petruchio family of Verona – in the context of a broader community. Padua, "nursery of arts", is Shakespeare's satirical target in *Shrew* and he doesn't miss. His Padua is a merciless, self-interested, socially combative, narcissistic town, driven by mercantile superficiality and a culture bred on gossip, on the fame of one's name, public profile or personal wealth. A town where the most meaningful contracts in life – love, marriage, friendship, education – are traded for profit. Such a society can only be fuelled by deep anxieties. Every scene in this play is a contest, grasping and desperate, with each character, at some point in the story, gambling with everything they have. It is a world both casually and aggressively misogynistic and one that inevitably provokes a subversive recalcitrant like Katharina Minola into being.

So, like all of Shakespeare's comedies, and *Shrew* is among the funniest, this is a very serious play. It offers a unique and incredibly detailed psychological study of a relationship between a man and a woman, and between that woman and her family, who would prefer to trade her off to a stranger than to confront the problem she presents them with. And that problem is that she will not acquiesce to the feminine model of *silence*. Simply by speaking, by answering back, speaking her mind, the behaviour that defines a 'shrew' – making unwanted noise – she raises the temperature and anxiety of the men around her, revealing the fragility of their misogynistic power structures – structures they must therefore protect by pouring their derision upon her. And where her tongue fails, her fists speak volumes, perhaps protecting the woman inside her, the one she keeps hidden and sacred, the one that no one can get to know until Petruchio wears away at the mask, as she does his, until both of these misfits are, by some strange alchemy, reborn.

As Australia, to its shame, can testify, contemporary societies still struggle with outspoken women who challenge the status quo – in politics, in business, in education, in social circles, on social media. The revelation that our parliamentary culture has been routinely defiled by sexual hazing, abuse and territorialism has been exposed graphically in recent weeks. How commonly are the old words fished out to describe a woman who expresses her opinion or demonstrates leadership – a bitch, nag, hag, harpy, 'ditch the witch' etc. The play remains sickeningly prescient.

Shakespeare cleverly characterises the entire play within an almost pre-Brechtian convention of role-playing that reinforces the façade that is Padua – an endlessly self-reflexive theatrical game in which almost every character is playing a role, with the plot largely dictated by the best of the play's 'actors' (Tranio, in this production, Tania), the cunning and brilliant sister to Lucentio who writes much of the play from within, until she confronts her mother and her own history of anger, pain, and sense of stifled agency – Tania is another powerful *shrew* in the making. And Bianca, like her sister Kate, has subsumed her true self too, within a performative costume of submissive, dutiful obeisance, perhaps only fully recognising that her methods of coping with the world

are insufficient as the play closes, and yet another *shrew* is born from the ashes of her sister's rage. Kate's exit leaves behind new troublemakers and bringers of change. It is revealing that the line which introduces the Minola family to us in Act 1 is Tania's – "*some show to welcome us to town*". The 'unreality' of this place, a city obsessed with its own vain self-image, built on entirely artificial ideas of romance, false constructions of gender through cross-dressing and performance, shallow ideals of love, beauty and happiness, where the family home has all the reality of a flimsy on-location film façade, provides a means to explore what is so very funny and so very ugly about this play.

Shakespeare was a shrew-balladeer. He writes a plethora of female characters who routinely transgress and speak out, but in *Shrew* the consequences are made most palpable and the discussion of how and why women are silenced actually takes place live on stage in front of us. We can never fully read Shakespeare's personal politics and we can never really know if he was plainly misogynistic, but he plainly reveals the world as such a place and leaves the audience's hearts and sympathies firmly in the hands of his female characters. It is easy to forget too that *Shrew* is a play-within-a-play, not a reality, but part of a wish-fulfilment dream, performed to a drunken tinker by a series of players, but unfortunately that story has come down to us unfinished and is thus seldom performed.

The central metaphor in Shakespeare's play is that of flight and freedom – specifically the training of a wild falcon, the fastest creature on earth. The task of falconry is a brutal business, so it is a brutal metaphor and there beats the play's sexist heart. The falconer would starve the bird, watch the bird, not let it sleep, try to look it in its resistant eyes until a trust developed, always tender but ruthlessly committed to the process, before finally releasing it to fly, in the hope that it would return to the arm. It may not, and that's the moment the falconer fears and cherishes. Kate is of course the bird of Shakespeare's metaphor – an aviatrix in this production – striving for freedom, an image of self-dependence, hungry for excitement and rush, a death-wish perhaps, a desire for escape at least. Meanwhile, in Petruchio's language, Shakespeare relentlessly conjures images of the sea, the indefinable mystery of the ocean, its implacability, its overwhelming force. Petruchio's language is riven with loneliness and placeless drifting. So in Shakespeare's tapestry of linguistic images, he is the ocean and she is the air – meaning neither of them are much good at standing on solid earth, perhaps until they do it together. So at the play's climax, Petruchio asks Kate to speak, knowing the 'falcon' may well fly away from him with a savage rebuke. She speaks, relentlessly. Ignoring the content of her words for a moment, (only as a technical exercise!) her speech is as balanced, as clear, as soaringly beautiful a piece of poetry as he ever wrote, so easy to say on a verse level, to know when to breathe, to hold and release, to rise and fall – it takes off in flight, it glides, it's almost effortless and flows like no other speech in the play. Now return to its content and, let's face it, it makes us feel sick, it is disturbing, so difficult for the modern actor to say, so hard for us to hear. A beautiful noise that hurts to listen to – perhaps like Wagner – 'much better than it sounds'. Kate was an outlier at the play's opening, and is even more so at its closing, devastating the other women on stage with sentiments they did not expect, nor can respect, before dropping the mic and leaving, going her own way... again.

But why? Well that is the question. Does Petruchio earn such faith and selflessness? Is it... love? Or, as Anna and Nicholas have explored in this rehearsal period, a secret unknowable contract of allegiance and even game-playing that Kate is acknowledging by her own choice and agency – a first wild thrashing of wings in a new direction, but ever upward, into an unknown sky where both she and he will at least breathe rarer air than the sorry pack of Paduans they leave beneath them, until they find a place to land or burn up in the sunset. In films, things end happily, in life... who knows?

Damien

READ - DAMIEN RYAN'S DIRECTOR'S NOTES (2016)

SPORT FOR JOVE, MAY 5, 2016 TO MAY 28, 2016



Damien Ryan
Director

Shakespeare's plays are about family above all else. Every one of his stories extends outward and inward from that most basic human nucleus. We are all experts on family dysfunction, then as now, and he traded on that. He would typically explore two or three distinct families in each of his plays, setting them against one another, drawing parallels and stark differences, using them to x-ray the fractures and fissures that human beings have always caused each other in living together.

Shakespeare places these studies of family - in this play the Minola family from Padua, the Lucentio family from Pisa, and the Petruchio family from Verona – in the context of a broader community. This community, be it a city or a nation or a village, becomes a central character in the frame, and a wonderful starting point when working on the plays. What sort of world constructs these characters? In this case, how is a 'shrew' made, what forces around her have provoked her particular response to the world, and how will those forces respond in turn to her provocations? Is the wandering, fatherless Petruchio as much as 'shrew' as Kate?

The community is a particularly powerful force in the comedies. In his Histories, Shakespeare studies the machinations of the people who lead a community, how they rise, govern and fall; while the Tragedies document the impulses, often internal, that destroy that community and the families within it. In his comedies though, he passionately examines the things that bind that group of people together. Shakespeare's Padua in The *Taming of the Shrew* holds the key to why the playwright tells a story of the subjugation of a woman. 'Padua' is an ugly place – and to what extent do we all live in Padua, even today?

Shakespeare's Padua is a competitive, socially combative, cynical, narcissistic community driven by mercantile superficiality and a culture bred on gossip, on the fame of one's family name, public profile or personal wealth, where the most meaningful contracts in life – love, marriage, friendship, education – are traded for profit and prominence. Such a society can only be fuelled by deep anxieties. Every scene is a contest, grasping and desperate, with each character gambling with everything they have at some point in the story. It is a world in which Kate really does have something to be 'shrewish' about should anyone care to listen.

Our setting, in the burgeoning silent film era, speaks of a moment when women's politics and independence were surging into an all-too-brief prominence - on screen through a series of remarkable actresses, in the streets through the courageous suffrage movement, and in the air with the unusual global phenomenon of the solo aviatrix, female pilots who were perhaps the most famous and inspiring people on earth for a time, symbols of freedom and astonishing self-reliance. A remarkable revolution seemed possible for women's political voice in the world, but it proved an illusion, true freedom would be successfully suppressed or tamed for decades to come. In line with Shakespeare's vision of renaissance Padua - a famed seat of learning and conspicuous wealth - the advent of cinema in our world in the early 20th Century brought individuals immense fame, wealth and recognition, ushering in a cult of celebrity we remain thoroughly addicted to a century later.

Shakespeare cleverly characterizes the entire play within an almost pre-Brechtian convention of role-playing that reinforces the façade that is Padua, distancing us via an endlessly self-reflexive theatrical game in which almost every character is hiding behind a mask or playing a role – Lucentio, Hortensio, Tranio (Tania in this production), Biondello, the Pedant or traveller are all literally disguising themselves and playing roles for personal gain, while even Petruchio is adopting a new personality, including ridiculous wedding costume, as part of his mirroring back to Kate of her own subversive behaviour. Kate herself has long since adopted a mask that she no longer knows how to remove, the unavailable woman, angry and off the

shelf, flailing violently against her enemies. Bianca likewise only shows her true self as the play closes, after years of manipulating her father through a careful performance as the dutiful daughter. Baptista is endlessly duped at every turn in this story and it is quite deliberate that the line that introduces the Minola family to us in the first scene is Tranio's - "some show to welcome us to town". The 'unreality' of this place, a city obsessed with its own vain self-image, built on entirely artificial ideas of romance, humanity, and love, where the family home has all the reality of a flimsy on-location film façade, provides a means to explore what is so very funny about this play, but also what is so ugly.

Like all of Shakespeare's comedies, this is a very serious play. It offers a unique and incredibly detailed psychological study of a relationship between a man and a woman, between that woman and her family, and the vain and superficial town that has raised and come to condemn her, trading her off to a stranger rather than confront the problem she presents them with. And that problem is that she will not acquiesce to the feminine model of silence. By speaking, answering back, saying her mind – the behaviour that defines a 'shrew', making unwanted noise - she raises the temperature and anxiety of the men around her, revealing the fragility of their misogynistic power structures, structures they must therefore protect by pouring their derision upon her. To this day, as we have seen in this country, societies struggle with powerful women, outspoken women who challenge the status quo, in politics, in business, in education, in social circles, even on social media. How commonly are the old words fished out to describe such a woman – a bitch, nag, hag, witch, harpy - as Australian writer and broadcaster Anna Kamaralli points out in her exceptional book on Shakespeare's women, Shakespeare and the *Shrew*, one of the most insightful and revelatory critiques of Shakespeare's plays I have ever read. She not only documents the plays but their power in our contemporary practice, revealing how, both in these old works and in our modern lives, a woman expressing an idea will face analysis of the idea itself, but also of the fact that she is a woman expressing it.

"...the concept remains unchanged since Shakespeare first created his remarkable range of vocal women," writes Kamarilli, "women who continue to speak their truth about the world, no matter what means others employ to silence them. It has never been a particular virtue for a man to be silent, though one who chose to might be admired as saintly or remarkable... Shakespeare's shrews repeatedly frustrate tradition by making obvious the harmfulness of the double standard that applies when judging men by what they say, women for the fact that they speak at all."

But does Shakespeare let us down at the end of this play? We all love an underdog, and the angry, subversive, violent Kate who puts these men in their place is a perfect example of one, genuinely inspiring at times – when she exclaims,

"I see a woman may be made a fool,

If she had not the spirit to resist"

or cries out,

"My tongue will tell the anger of my heart,

Or else my heart concealing it will break,

And rather than it shall I will be free,

Even to the uttermost, as I please, in words." (she even extends this last line beyond the 10 syllable rhythm of the preceding lines, already expressing her freedom just that little bit)

How can we possibly watch this magnificent underdog lose? And to a group of men who placed a bet on her losing! Why would Shakespeare do that to us? Is it just an ugly play, driven by conventional gender prejudice from a playwright who unfortunately shared an unevolved vision of a woman's place in the world? ie. as director Jonathan Miller famously excused it - "the past is another country, they do things differently there".

Or is it a very domestic and strangely realist look at a horrible system that is not changing, not in his time, and unfortunately not even in ours as so many modern women's experiences of entrenched sexism suggest. Shakespeare, who wrote dozens of women who fight the power structures, break the rules, defy their fathers, speak the truth, and educate the men in their worlds, gives us here the opposite - a portrait of a female underdog that loses and has been losing for centuries and makes us watch closely the machinations of how she loses. Is he applauding her loss or is he revealing that those machinations should revile us, and as long as the world remains one in which women are cultured toward submissive silence, is it a story we should be reminded of?

RSC and English Shakespeare Company Director Michael Bogdanov has long argued that Shakespeare was such a feminist, "Shakespeare shows women totally abused – like animals – bartered to the highest bidder. There is no question of it, his sympathy is with the women, and his purpose, to expose the cruelty of a society that allows these things to happen". He believes *Shrew* is such a story, others powerfully disagree.

Kamarilli is less than convinced by *Shrew's* credentials as a feminist work, even going as far as saying, "Katherine is not really much of a shrew...she speaks a paltry 8 per cent of her play's lines." She

references actress Fiona Shaw's famous comments – "Supposing we said 'shrew' equals 'noisy one'. Along comes a man to tame the noisy one. And for almost five acts we never hear her speak." As Danielle King has found, playing 'the shrew' means navigating the silence. Kate is quite unlike the more intellectually demonstrative Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Kate's pain is deeper and her world sadder, sometimes she does not use words to express that pain, sometimes she simply smashes guitars over people's heads or merely finds the strength to scream "Ha!". We have explored several moments where she makes her own symphony of sound, representative of the heaviness of her pain. Sometimes words don't help and that is true for all of us.

But why does he house Kate's subjugation within a comedy? Is it just a commedia-based romp, dated and embarrassingly naive in the bright glare of ideological progress? If, in our idolatry of Shakespeare, we are to believe he was not a sexist artist and was doing something more sophisticated in this play than putting women in their place, then why make us laugh along with it? Why not write a hard-hitting drama, as Charles Marowitz and others have done since with their versions of *The Shrew* – brutalising, raping and physically subduing Kate until she is a broken Stepford wife to ensure that her final submission is purely that of a victim we should pity? When she says she will place her,

"...hand below her husband's foot,

In token of which duty, if he please,

My hand is ready, may it do him ease..."

- should she hold out that hand to show this room full of men a slit wrist, a document of her horrific pain and turmoil at her captivity, humiliating them in the process? We speculated on such horrors in rehearsal. Or should her final speech just be a game played to win a bet - take the money and run - not meaning a word of it, a nod and wink to the audience? All of these choices exist for the modern acting company trying to 'tame' the play, protecting oneself from labels of sexism and misogyny by 'commenting' on the ending, rather than playing it as he wrote it. The fact is, he offers us the terrible challenge of a woman who explains her point with great eloquence and means every word of it. And at the end of a very funny comedy, it's tough to watch.

The play is a satire, a blackly comic story in which our laughter only reinforces the extent to which the suppression of the female voice has become normal, recognisable, even accepted in human culture, certainly then and often now. As Germaine Greer says of *The Comedy of Errors*, and as can be applied to so many of his comedies, "it wears its profundity lightly" – in other words, Shakespeare tackles profoundly serious themes through comedy, just as he expresses great levity in his tragedies. Even his silliest works explore war, loss, death, exile, displacement, poverty, disease, natural catastrophe – and make us laugh while moving us deeply, but always delivering a bitter pill in the process - in Malvolio's torture, Caliban's double slavery and humiliation, Shylock's conversion, Titania's taming, Isabella's forced marriage and silence, Hermoine's dead child, Constance's grief dismissed as madness, and in Kate's submission, to name a few.

As these examples remind us, *Shrew* bears the bulk of Shakespearean criticism for its misogyny yet we tend to forget the fact that so many of the plays reveal a fundamentally patriarchal norm and mysoginistic worldview that remains the status quo when the plays come to an end. People laugh along and happily accept Titania being drugged and forced into a sexual relationship with an animal by her violently jealous ex-partner Oberon, before being re-drugged and saved by him, brought back to reality, robbed of her adopted child and restored to his bed. We comfortably ignore the truth of it and no-one seeks to ban *Dream* from our performance canon. Women transgress and speak up and break the rules routinely in Shakespeare but they are generally brought back to the fold by the end, married and becalmed. In *Shrew* it is made most palpable is all, and the discussion of how and why actually takes place live on stage in front of us, which makes it perhaps the most interesting example, it quite literally provokes discussion of the subject among an audience because the characters discuss it on stage. We just fail to see it in the other plays or will ourselves to ignore it in the happy comedies. When *Hamlet's* brutality and slut-shaming is made clear in production, it shocks people, displeases them, proving it is hard to accept that the great intellectual hero has a real problem with women. We are offended by *Shrew* but we cry tears of happiness in The Winter's Tale when Hermoine gracefully forgives the husband who destroyed her life, murdered her child and convicted her of whoredom for no reason whatsoever.

I am always bemused when the 'ban the *Shrew*' argument is rolled out. While these other stories are cherished and ignored, *Shrew* names its debate out loud and makes us examine every detail. We can never fully read Shakespeare's personal politics and we can never really know if he was mysoginistic, but he reveals the world as such a place, or responds to it as such a place. *Shrew*'s painful closing sentiments and the vice that grips Kate in Act 4 force us to confront a situation and a series of questions that remain all too prevalent - what freedom do women have to speak without

their gender being made the subject of their speech? What economic, civil and marital power do women have in society, in the home, the bed? What entrenched and sometimes very subtle methods do we use to train 'uncontrollable' women and maintain the status quo in which they are denied the opportunities and freedoms enjoyed by men in this world?

Kamaralli says, "The shrew...is constructed to alleviate male anxieties through ridicule but, like so many objects of comedy or derision, she is full of power because of her very ability to generate those anxieties. She is a marginalised figure but, like others who hold a similar place (the clown, the lunatic), her exclusion from the centre gives her the power to speak the truth about it. Over the course of his career, Shakespeare used the shrew more and more openly, radically and forcefully as the guardian of justice, the voice of reason and the keeper of a kind of active, positive female virtue far distant in character from the obedient, chaste, silent version. Our attitudes to the wielding of power, verbal or otherwise, by women should have changed since the time these characters were created, but has it?"

A final idea in Shakespeare's play is that of flight and freedom – specifically the training of a falcon, the fastest creature on earth, an emblem of nature's magnificence, and the central metaphor for the story. It is a brutal business and when we realise the woman represents the wild bird in need of training, we get to the centre of the plays moral disturbance – that the woman will only reach her potential under the man's tutelage. There beats the play's sexist heart. The falconer would starve the bird, watch the bird, not let it sleep, try to look it in its resistant eyes until a trust developed, always tender but ruthlessly committed to the process, before finally releasing it to fly, in the hope that it would return to the arm. It may not, and that's the moment the falconer fears and cherishes. Kate is the bird, striving for freedom – an aviatrix in this production - an image of self-dependence, with a need for excitement and rush, a death-wish perhaps, a desire for escape at least. While in Petruchio's language, Shakespeare conjures images of the sea, the indefinable mystery of the ocean, its implacability, its overwhelming force, its tradition of male dominion in storytelling, (a myth that Australia's young Jessica Watson shattered), an eternal placeless drifter, an image of loneliness, brought up again and again by Shakespeare through the metaphor of being at sea, aboard a ship. At the play's climax, Petruchio asks Kate to speak, knowing his 'falcon' may well fly away from him with a savage rebuke. Ignoring the content of her words for a moment, (only as a technical exercise!) her speech is as balanced, as clear, as soaringly beautiful a piece of poetry as he ever wrote, so easy to say on a verse level, to know when to breathe, to hold and release, to rise and fall – it takes off in flight, it glides, it's almost effortless and flows like no other speech in the play. Now return to its content and, let's face it, it makes us feel sick, so difficult for the modern actress to say, so hard for us to hear. A beautiful noise that hurts to listen to – perhaps like Wagner – 'much better than it sounds'.

It's a remarkable juxtaposition for a playwright to put on the stage. We feel carried and dropped at the same time. How are we supposed to react? However you like.

To continue reading Ryan's notes click here:

- Marriage – the play's sustaining ritual
- The first folio - an unfinished play...
- Context - The Shrew Ballad
- The critical war of opinion...

LINK
sportforjove.com.au/productionarchive/the-taming-of-the-shrew-(2016)

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES


Bryan Probets

DISCUSS

Discuss the title *Taming of the Shrew*

- Define what the term 'shrew' means — encourage students to research this term further
- What images come to mind when you hear the word 'taming'?

Engage students in a discussion of the different ways society expects you to behave.

Do you ever feel obligated to act a particular way?

Should a person be tamed or have aspects of their personality tamed?

RESEARCH

Research the sources Shakespeare used for *Taming of the Shrew*

Compare his work with these different versions.

***Taming of the Shrew* was first presented during the time of Elizabeth I.**

In what ways might have Shakespeare have drawn upon her life to show both the limitations and power of women during this time?

RESEARCH

The Roaring 20s

The show sits across a few eras, one being the early Hollywood silent film era. Part of this time was during the 1920s.

Research the Roaring 20s. Below are some websites to get you started. Pay attention to the changing role of women during this era. Share your findings as a multimodal presentation:

READ

The Roaring Twenties - HISTORY.COM

The Roaring Twenties was a period in history of dramatic social and political change.

LINK history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/roaring-twenties-history

The 1920s Roaring into modern Australia - Jacaranda

With the agony of the great War at an end, the new decade began with hope.

LINK https://web2.hunterspt-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentshared/HSIE/Mrs%20Griffin/Year%2010%20History/RetroActive%202%20(3rd%20ed)/Chapter%203.pdf

Australia in the Roaring 20's - Trove

Articles found in this list show contrasting opinions around the 'Roaring Twenties' period and Jazz scene in Australia.

LINK https://trove.nla.gov.au/list/77715

Elinor Smith 1920s-1930s - The Pop History Dig

It was the fall of 1928, a very heady time in America when all kinds of boundaries were being challenged and broken.

LINK https://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/elinor-smith-1920s-1930s/

Movies, radio, and sports in the 1920s - Khan Academy

In the 1920s, radio and cinema contributed to the development of a national media culture in the United States.

LINK https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/rise-to-world-power/1920s-america/a/movies-cinema-sports-1920s

DISCUSS

Which aspects of this era might you expect to see in a set design?

Silent film

The Silent Era: Crash Course Film History #9

The Silent Era of Hollywood set a lot of things into motion in terms of how movies were made and sold. Big stars were one of the main ways studios tried to make their movies stand apart from one another and get the public to make choices at the cinema. But, this also gave a lot of power to those stars to command a lot of money. In this episode of Crash Course Film History, we take a look at the Silent Era of Hollywood and people like Charlie Chaplin.



WATCH

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROOV9tucra0

Brainstorm the features of a silent film.
These could include:

- **no dialogue is spoken**
- **using music to create mood**
- **the acting can be very over-the-top**
- **the story is simple and straightforward**
- **silent films can have "title cards" to help tell the story.**

Task: Using some of these features, create and film a narrative that uses at least one of these conventions or features.


Patrick Jhanur, Ellen Bailey

Voice of women

Kate is presented as a strong-willed and outspoken character. She is viewed by the other characters in the play as someone who needs to be 'tamed'.

Society today continues to struggle with powerful women, with outspoken women who challenge the status quo in politics, in business, education, in social circles, in social media, in all spheres of life.

Using some of the names below explore the ways in which society have sought to bring these women 'into line':

- **Helen Reddy**
- **Ruth Bader-Ginsburg**
- **Greta Thunberg**
- **Malala Yousafzai**
- **Julia Gillard**

1. **How did these women use their voice?**
2. **What was their message?**
3. **How was their message received by society?**

The Aviatrix

Even before women had the right to vote, female aviators were proving that they had the intelligence, strength, and courage to conquer the sky. Damian Ryan has drawn upon some of these symbols of freedom in his interpretation of Kate.

Explore the below pioneers. You might like to create a dramatic concept or a dramatic treatment for a show that explores their lives.

- **Amelia Earhart**
- **Aida de Acosta**
- **Margaret Adams**
- **Ann Baumgartner**


Claudia Ware, Anna McGahan

LISTEN

Conversations — Australia's fearless women pilots

Kathy Mexted with true stories of extraordinary Australian women compelled to take to the skies in Spitfires, Tiger Moths, Cessnas and fighter jets.

Listen on Apple Podcasts:

https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/conversations/id94688506?i=1000500431090

Padua

Below are some words to describe Padua in Damien Ryan's version of *Taming of the Shrew*.

If you were to design a set based on the following, what would it look like?

- **Early silent film**
- **Primitive Hollywood**
- **Italian Hollywood**
- **Nothing is real**
- **Artificial**
- **Glamourous**
- **Fame**
- **Truman Show**



Wendy Mocke


Ellen Bailey

Status

Status and power are key themes found within *Taming of the Shrew*. To allow students to start thinking about these concepts you might like to explore different ways status and power can be manifested. You could begin by engaging students in the below activity.

Status A/B Walk

Students walk around the space neutrally. Tell them that they are As, they own everything in the space, that they are surrounded by people who also own everything, and that they should greet everyone with high status indicators (maintaining eye contact with those they pass, little or no blinking, direct, confident strides, etc.).

After a minute or so, stop them. Tell them that now they don't own as much, that they still should walk around and greet each other, but this time, they should acknowledge each other using low-status indicators (head lowered, rapid, darting eye movement, taking up as little space as possible, touching of the face, etc.).

Once they have explored this, split the class in half, with equal numbers of As and Bs. Tell each side to mingle, but only acknowledge other people from their group. Let them do that for a few minutes.

DISCUSS

- **How did you physically show your status?**
- **How did it feel to be a high-status character?**
- **How did it feel to be a low-status character?**

Revisit this activity after you have seen the show. How was status used by the characters?



Anna McGahan, Nicholas Brown, Wendy Mocke

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

- How did the women of Padua show opposition against the misogynistic men of Padua?
- Is it believable that Kate's character changes so quickly and dramatically? Do you believe that she 'failed' the other women?
- Why do you think the use of disguises play such a prominent role in Shakespeare's works? What aspects of disguise did you see in *Taming of the Shrew*?
- How was power used, abused or subverted by the different characters in the play?
- Do you think Shakespeare's original intention was to empower women or encourage their submission? Was Shakespeare a misogynist or was he questioning the values of society?
- Why do you think Damian Ryan chose to change the gender of Tranio to Tania?
- Kate's final speech is perhaps the most contentious speech of the play. Why do you think Damian Ryan chose Anna McGahan to deliver this speech so honestly, with no winks or knowing glances to the audience, delivered as if she truly was tamed?
- In a post '#MeToo' world, why does a play such as *Taming of the Shew* continue to remain relevant?



Nicholas Brown

Pivotal plot moments

In groups, students are to reflect on the performance and discuss what they believe to be the most pivotal moments from the narrative.

- **Why were these moments pivotal?**
- **How did they contribute to the narrative?**
- **What tension was evident within the scene?**
- **What aspects of the human condition/ human context were foregrounded?**

Task: Ask students to choose four moments and present these as freeze frames or capture through photographs on a storyboard (to build on this activity, students could be asked to annotate the images with reference to the dramatic languages and performance technologies used).

Key themes

The performance explored several key themes and concepts. Engage students in a discussion about which themes were most apparent and what their interpretation of them was (dramatic meaning).

Task: Ask students to complete the table at Appendix 1 to identify and analyse specific key themes from the performance. Encourage students to provide detailed information about the narrative, roles and relationships, set design, costume and performance technologies.



Bryan Probets, Barbara Lowing

Character matrix analysis

Use the matrix in Appendix 2 to complete a character analysis of some of the major players in the performance. This matrix can be useful when constructing a response or critique as it requires students to consider the relationships, personality, status and role in the narrative of each of the lead characters.

Reimagining Shakespeare

Explore other versions of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and compare this re-imaginings with the original. You might like to present these similarities and differences as a Venn diagram.

What scenes or lines relate to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*? Are any of Shakespeare's actual lines used?

- ***10 Things I Hate About You***
- ***Kiss Me Kate*** (watch or listen to soundtrack on Spotify)
- ***BBC Shakespeare Re-Told The Taming of the Shrew***
- ***Moonlighting S03E07 'Atomic Shakespeare'***

Character arc

Out of all the characters, Kate underwent the most change. Use Appendix 3 to analyse Kate's character arc from the beginning to the end of the play.

- **What were the important narrative plot points that were catalysts for change?**
- **In what way did the character change (perspective on life, her relationships, status, etc)?**

Secondary characters

Choose a secondary character from the show (eg. Tania or Lucentio) to study. Follow the narrative of the play from their perspective and present as a storyboard or other graphic organiser.

- **What was the character doing when not in the scene?**
- **What gaps and silences emerged?**
- **What new insights into the narrative were gained?**

Symbol of the falcon

Explore the sport or practice of falconry. What parallels or metaphors are found in the play? Present your findings as an extended paragraph.

Gaps and silences

No text is complete. In a similar way to jigsaw puzzles, texts can sometimes have 'missing pieces'. These missing pieces are called gaps.

Gaps are parts of a text that are missing or incomplete, or left unsaid, which a writer, artist or film-maker, for example, expects you to fill in order to make sense of that text. To do this, you need to rely on common sense, your understanding of the world within the play or cultural experiences and understandings.



Task: Write a scene between Kate and Bianca that explores how and why Kate was 'tamed'. You might like to include some of the following details in the scene:

- **Kate's first impressions of Petruchio**
- **Kate's initial reaction to her marriage**
- **Kate's feelings and thoughts regarding Petruchio's treatment of her**
- **moment that changed/tamed Kate**
- **how she now feels about her marriage**
- **Bianca's concerns or questions.**

Monologue

Engage students in a discussion as to what they think might have happened a year after the play ends.

- Did any of the relationships changed?
- Have their perspectives on their lives/roles/status changed?
- What new insights have they gained over the past year? What changes over the course of time and what stays the same?

Invite students to write a monologue from Kate, Petruchio, Bianca, Lucentio or Tania's perspective.

Consider:

- accurate scriptwriting conventions
- development of character and role
- links to key themes as well as the inclusion of a socio-political comment
- development and management of tension.

This activity could also be explored through a 'flash forward' scene — ask students to work in pairs devising a short scene that reveals what has happened to the couples.



WATCH



SOURCE

Making the world of *Taming of the Shrew*

youtube.com/watch?v=qS2QfQ2r0rk

Task: Annotate the below scenic design (by Adam Gardnir) with reference to how it was used in the show.

- How was the essence of 'Padua' captured in the set design?
- Make specific mention of the dramatic elements, performance technologies used and key narrative plot points – eg. What aspects of symbol were found in the set design? How was the set used to drive the narrative?
- How did the actors interact with the set?
- How was this set design realised? Has anything changed since this original design was created?



ELEMENTS OF DRAMA QUESTIONS

Element of Drama	Questions
Role/Character and Relationships	• How would you describe some of the key characters? (purpose, attitude and status) • How did the actors show their characters through voice and movement? • How did costume help to define character? • What key relationships were present? How would you describe them? Was their relationship impacted by gender?
Situation/ Narrative	• Why do you think the play was written in 5 acts? • What aspects between the intersection of power and love did you note? • How was the set used to drive the narrative? • Why do you think this play is considered polarising? • Why do you think Damien Ryan chose to keep the traditional ending? • What impact did the digital projections have on the narrative?
Place and Space (+ Focus)	• Where did the play take place? List the locations/settings. • How era shown? • How did the actors use space and set to convey shifts in character and drive narrative and tension?
Time	• How was the passing of time shown? • What set items and costume elements denoted time? • How did the director ensure this play continues to remain relevant for a 2021 audience? • The set sits across three worlds — the Bille Brown Theatre, the film set and the narrative. Can you recall how this was shown?
Contrast	• What evidence of contrast did you see in each of the characters? What impact did this have on the narrative and/or tension? • What other elements of contrast did you see throughout the production?
Tension	• Where were the moments of highest tension? • What types of tension were manipulated the most? • How was this tension developed? (acting, lighting, sound, etc) • Was this tension resolved?
Language	• How was language used to shape character and/or create meaning? • What impact did using the Elizabethan language and iambic pentameter and verse have on the text?
Mood	• What different moods were evident and how were they developed? • What performance techniques did the actors utilise to create mood? • How was sound used? What impact did it have?
Symbol	• How was making Kate an aviatrix symbolic? • How was the metaphor of falconry explored? • What other elements of symbol were found in the production?

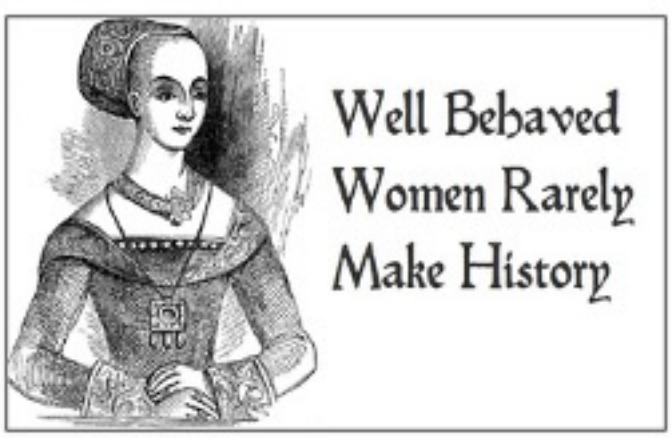
POSSIBLE ASSESSMENT TASKS

RESPONDING

1. Analyse and evaluate how the dramatic languages (elements of drama, performance technologies and skills of performance) were used to explore and highlight the misogyny and gender inequalities that still exist in society.

   Note: any theme from the play could be used as the focus of an essay.

2. How do key moments from *Taming of the Shrew* support the meaning found in the below image? Argue a position about the manipulation of two key elements of drama and one key convention.



3. Evaluate the accuracy this statement by analysing the dramatic action and how the dramatic languages were used to create dramatic meaning. Support your statements with evidence from key moments in the performance. Use appropriate drama terminology throughout your essay.

   "I think as much as we don't want it to happen, Kate and Petruchio perhaps leave this story at the end of the play, exit the stage, deeply happy, leaving behind a very unhappy place while they explore a genuine love affair with a profound commitment to each other, while we sit in the audience furious and shocked at how that came about. The play is almost like the opposite of a miracle and yet somehow it works." (Damian Ryan, 2020)

DRAMATIC CONCEPT

Task: Working as a theatre-maker you will view *Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare and directed by Damien Ryan. Using this as stimulus, you must identify one key convention of contemporary theatre used in this production and devise an original dramatic concept that challenges the way we view gender.

- Your dramatic concept must organise information under the following headings:

Analysis and evaluation (400 words)

- How was the convention manipulated to contribute to the communication of the shared human experience?

My concept (800 words, 10–12 images)

- Identify a chosen purpose and context
- Make specific reference to the original chosen convention
- Argue how the dramatic languages have been used to communicate dramatic action and meaning
- Develop a storyboard with explanatory paragraphs and annotations that document your dramatic ideas.

MONOLOGUE

Task: Working as an actor, using the skills of acting and manipulating the dramatic conventions of your chosen form/style, select an appropriate monologue or soliloquy from Shakespeare's The *Taming of the Shrew* and create a polished performance.

Steps for success:

1. Select monologue. Read through it carefully and seek clarification on any parts of the speech you do not understand.
2. Undertake a detailed character analysis activity — explore your character's background, personality, attitudes and beliefs, role in the narrative, etc.
3. Design a costume for your character
4. Plan and rehearse your monologue — consider body language and movement, space, vocal choices, props, etc.
5. Perform your monologue.

SYLLABUS REFERENCE LIST

SYLLABUS REFERENCE LIST

Drama 2019 v1.1 General Senior Syllabus:
https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/downloads/senior-qce/syllabuses/snr_drama_19_syll.pdf

Australian Curriculum:
https://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum



Nicholas Brown, Anna McGahan



David Soncin

APPENDICES

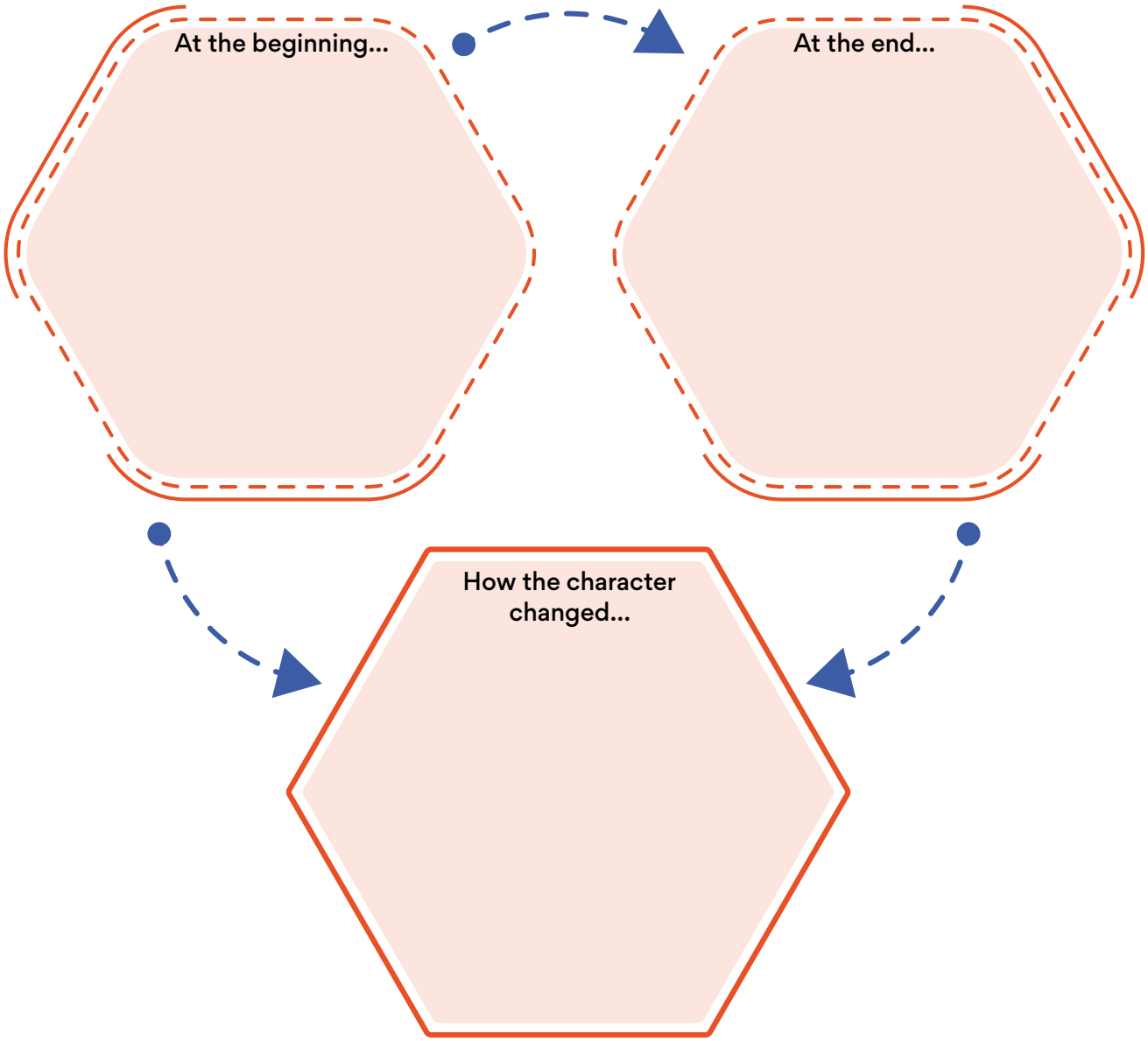
APPENDIX 1:

Theme	Evidence from the play

APPENDIX 2:

Name	Relationships	Status	How is this demonstrated?	Other notes...
Katharina				
Petruchio				
Bianca				
Baptista				
Lucentio				
Tania				
Gremio/ Grumio				
Hortensio				
Vincentia				

APPENDIX 3:



Why the character changed...

OUR TEAM



STEVE PIRIE

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Steve Pirie is a writer, theatre maker and youth arts worker based in Meanjin/Brisbane. He is currently an Artistic Associate with Queensland Theatre, contributing to The Scene Project's statewide implementation. A graduate of the University of Southern Queensland, Steve is also the co-Artistic Director of Toowoomba's Mixtape Theatre Collective. His first play, *Escape From the Breakup Forest*, toured the state and has since been published by Playlab.

A prolific playwright, Steve received the Queensland Premier's Drama Award 2020–21 for one of three entries, *Return to the Dirt* which is currently in development ahead of its October world premiere at Queensland Theatre.

Steve's production credits include various creative positions with The Good Room, the Australian Theatre for Young People, Imaginary Theatre Co, Brisbane Powerhouse, Artsworx, La Boite Theatre, The Young Company, Vena Cava Productions and the Festival of Australian Student Theatre.



LAUREL COLLINS

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Laurel first worked for Queensland Theatre in 2003 as a full time actor in the Emerging Artist Ensemble. Since that time, Laurel has had extensive experience as an actor, workshop facilitator and drama teacher. Laurel has completed a Bachelor of Arts (Drama) and a Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary Drama Teaching) as well as various international theatre intensives and stage training courses. Laurel has taught in educational settings around Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.



EMMA FUNNELL

EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Emma is an experienced Performing Arts teacher having taken up several key positions in different schools across Brisbane as well as London. Prior to starting with Queensland Theatre, she was a Drama and History teacher at Brigidine College, Indooroopilly. Throughout Emma's teaching career she has facilitated Drama Clubs, coached Theatre Sports teams, directed numerous College musicals and been a panellist for QCAA in Drama. She is passionate about Arts education, specifically Drama, and has been on the Drama Queensland committee since 2015 and voted in as Vice President in 2017. One of her major responsibilities in this role is the coordination of all professional development offerings, including the annual State Conference.



ALANA DUNN

PROJECT OFFICER

Alana is currently the Project Officer for Education, Youth and Regional Engagement at Queensland Theatre. In 2018 she completed a Bachelor of Creative Industries in Entertainment Industries and Management at Queensland University of Technology. That same year, Alana travelled to France to work at MIPCOM, an international film and television conference. Having had a production background, Alana has worked as a Stage Manager and Assistant Stage Manager on various productions across Backyard Theatre Collective, QUT and Queensland Theatre's Young Artists' Ensemble productions.

EDUCATION RESOURCES



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