

Class 9 - 10:30  
Rehearsal 10:30 - 11:30  
Solo

# The Taming of the Shrew

Foot  
notes

## Welcome

*Footnotes* is a performance guide published by the Community Outreach and Education (C.O.R.E.) Department of Ballet Austin. We hope this *Footnotes* helps you further enjoy our performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

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The first battement  
more croise'. Follow  
through with southern ledon

BALLET  
Austin

# The Taming of the Shrew



Costume drawing of Kate by Tommy Bourgeois

It takes many more people than you may think to create a ballet. Here are a couple of people whose artistic decisions were critical to bringing us this version of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

## The Set & Costume Designer — Tommy Bourgeois

For *The Taming of the Shrew*, Tommy Bourgeois has chosen very simple, basic, and straightforward designs. The **commedia dell'arte**, Italian comedy, dancers wear masks. Their beige colored costumes serve as a base for putting on additional costume pieces and portraying other characters.

Tommy describes the set as a colorful "jewelry box" where the costumes "pop out" in the white setting. He further explains, "The set gives the impression of a pop-up book, at times it enhances, surrounds or engulfs." Tommy begins his creative process by setting up an "artistic space or rhythm" to work in. For this set design, he listened to Italian Baroque music while cutting pieces of green and white paper into specific shapes.

It takes only a very few basic shapes to give the feel of the whole environment, three arches can become a church, a corner, or doors. However, each piece is critical, taking one out throws off the whole design.

This is not the first time we have seen Tommy's talents.

He designed the costumes for Ballet Austin's productions of *The Nutcracker* and *Romeo & Juliet*. He has worked with the Dallas Opera for 18 years as prop designer and visual consultant. He has also designed costumes for various Broadway productions which have toured the U.S. and abroad.



Costume drawing of Bianca by Tommy Bourgeois

From the Desk of  
**BALLET Austin** the Artistic Director  
Tommy —  
The designs look great! Let's talk about the colors —  
Stephan.

Cover Photo:  
Dancers Allisyn Paino  
and Jim Stein

Photography by  
Andrew Yates



Hannah Neal



Hannah Neal

## The Production Director — Bill Sheffield

As Production Director, Bill Sheffield assists the artistic process. He ensures that the lights, costumes, and scenery

Once Stephen Mills, Ballet Austin's Artistic Director, explains his vision for a production, Bill creates a

somehow, with a lot of hard work we are always ready for the curtain to rise on opening night."

**"We want the audience to feel a sense of magic, not be impressed with the technical intricacy of a work."**

"enhance the artistic vision, not become it." The production staff and crew strive to be invisible during a show. Bill explains, "We want the audience to feel a sense of magic, not be impressed with the technical intricacy of a work."

timeline and schedule. He focuses on how the set and costumes will be built and brought to the stage. Bill sends the approved set design and drawings to the **set builders** and negotiates a price within the budget.

Once the set is under construction, the process is repeated for the costume designs. Bill accepts bids from **stitchers**, the people who actually sew the costumes. Sometimes Bill rents the sets and costumes from other Ballet companies.

It typically takes two full days to place the sets and lights. The team rehearses with the crew alone and with the dancers. Bill describes these rehearsals as often posing many challenges, "A sense that we'll never make it by opening can often occur. But

This is Bill Sheffield's 2nd season as Ballet Austin's Production Director and his 11th year with Ballet Austin. He worked as Stage Manager for 27 years.

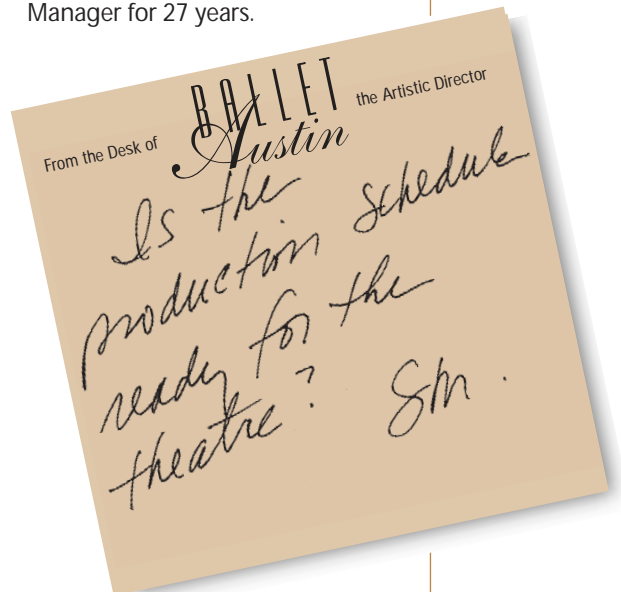
The cover of a European garden book inspired Stephen's set design for the garden scenes. It showed a cemetery with no gravestones, white rock paths, and green carved hedges.

There are 29 costumes in *The Taming of the Shrew*. It takes one person about a week to make a single costume.

At times, The Production Team may begin their work on a piece up to 2 years in advance!



Hannah Neal



# The Taming of the Shrew is about...



**tame:** (tām), *v.*

to change from a wild state,  
to make gentle, docile



The shrew was a standard character in comedy used during Shakespeare's days. Can you think of a few shrew characters used in modern comedy?



**shrew** (shrōō), *n.*

a woman with a violent scolding or nagging temperament;



## *The Taming of the Shrew* Characters

**Baptista Minola**- wealthy merchant from Padua, father of Kate and Bianca.

**Katherina (Kate)**- eldest daughter of Baptista, rude, foul mouthed, and often violent.

**Bianca**- youngest daughter of Baptista, mild mannered, sweet, and kind.

**Lucentio**- university student from Pisa, falls in love with Bianca at first sight.



Engraving J. P. Simon, 1795, "The Taming of the Shrew", The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

**L**ucentio sees Baptista and his two daughters, Bianca and Kate, and instantly falls in love with Bianca.

However, she already has two suitors, Gremio and Hortensio. Baptista insists that Kate, as the elder sister, be married first. Unfortunately, Kate's behavior is so awful that no one wants to marry her. She has had many suitors, yet she drives them away with her bad temper and behavior. On the contrary, Bianca displays all of the kind and gentle qualities that Kate does not.

The ballet begins with Bianca's three suitors serenading her. Kate rudely interrupts the love songs and awakened neighbors chase away the lovers.

Meanwhile in a nearby tavern, Hortensio's friend, Petruchio, is robbed. When he hears about Kate and her wealth, Petruchio decides to marry her sight unseen. He meets Baptista and asks for permission to marry Kate. When Kate and Petruchio meet, she insults him, yet he claims that he finds her gentle and courteous. Determined Petruchio sets the wedding, freeing Bianca to marry.



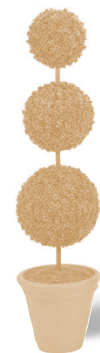
## *The Taming of the Shrew* Characters

**Hortensio**- gentleman of Padua and Bianca's suitor.

**Petruchio**- gentleman of Verona and Hortensio's friend, wants to marry Kate.

**Gremio**- gentleman of Padua and Bianca's suitor.

**Commedia Players**- provide comic relief.



During the time of Shakespeare, the Elizabethans believed in a divine order of things where everyone had their place. Servants were subjects of their masters and wives were controlled by their husbands. The husband and father had absolute authority in his family just as a king ruled his people.

Petruchio begins "taming" Kate by showing up late to their wedding. After more embarrassing behavior during the ceremony, Petruchio refuses to stay for the wedding feast. He then whisks Kate off to his country home. Petruchio behaves worse than Kate ever did. He shouts insults at the servants, complains the food is overcooked and refuses to eat it. Kate defends the servants and asks Petruchio to show patience. However, he does not give in, even pretending that he loves her so much he cannot allow her to eat burned food or sleep in a poorly made bed. During a dream

scene, we see how Petruchio and Kate work out their differences.

Meanwhile, two strangers approach Hortensio and Gremio, Bianca's suitors, at a carnival. They each believe the woman they see to be Bianca and each get married. Of course, Lucentio planned all this.

At Bianca and Lucentio's wedding celebration, Petruchio and Kate show their love for each other. To the surprise of every guest, Kate seems to be the most kind and loving wife.



# Understanding Commedia dell'Arte



The Captain

Lazzi comes from the Tuscan word *lacci*, which means "knots", "turn", "trick" or "Italian business."



In England, the character of "Punchinella" became "Punch" of the puppet team of the puppet team "Punch and Judy."

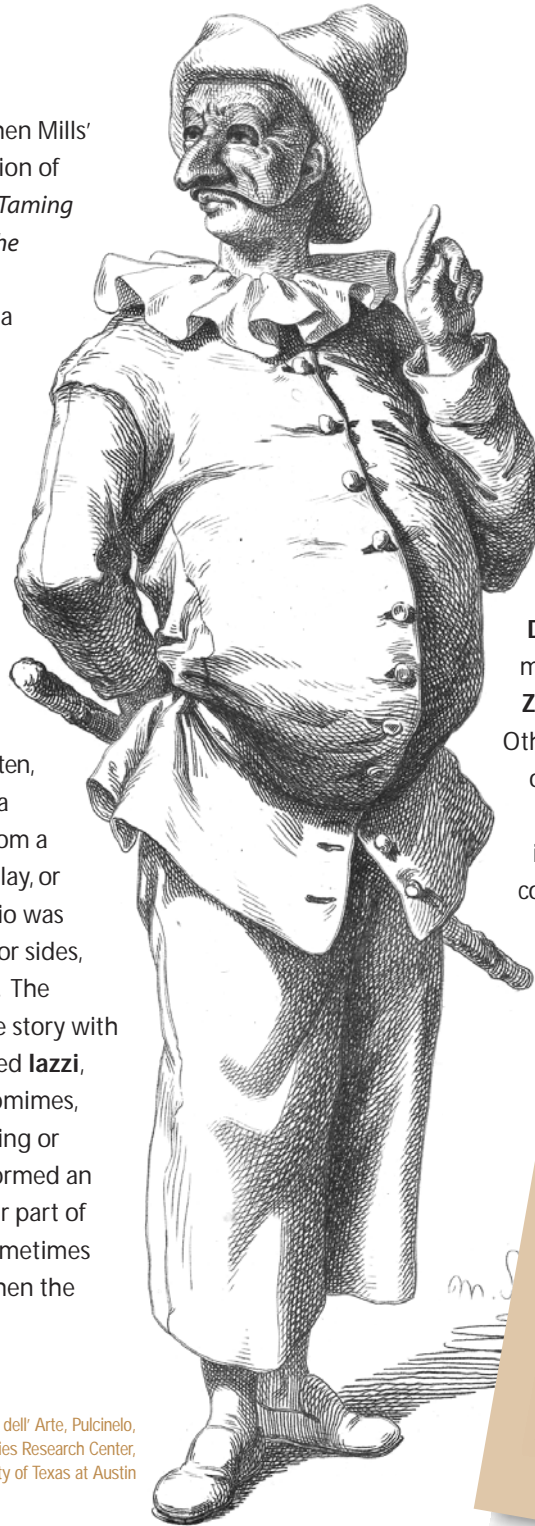


Pierrot was the original sad clown that inspired the characters portrayed by Charlie Chaplin.



Harlequin

Stephen Mills' version of *The Taming of the Shrew* pulls from the traditions of commedia dell'arte, the Italian comedy. This style was popular for about 400 years, from the 14th – 18th century, and was performed by groups of actors traveling throughout Europe. These actors performed **improvised**, or unwritten, drama. The commedia players improvised from a general outline of a play, or **scenario**. The scenario was posted in the **wings**, or sides, of the portable stage. The actors interrupted the story with irrelevant pranks, called **lazzi**, often involving pantomimes, acrobatic tricks, juggling or wrestling. The **lazzi** formed an important and regular part of the entertainment sometimes used by the actors when the action was lagging.

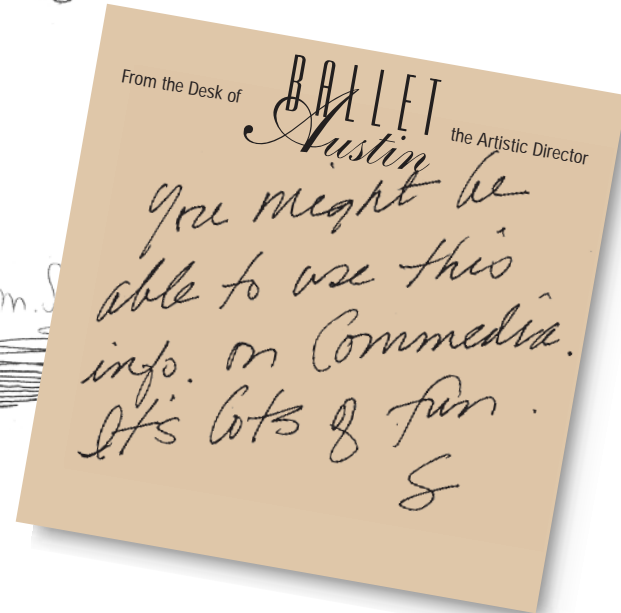


M. Sand, 1700, Commedia dell'Arte, Pulcinello, The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin



Ballet Austin Rehearsal

The commedia dell'arte developed into stock characters divided into masters and servants. The standard roles included **Pantalone** and the **Doctor**, two old men; the **Captain**, a young man of adventure; the valet, usually called **Zanni**; and the hunchback, **Punchinella**. Other characters included a pair of lovers and other male and female servants. An actor most always played the same character immediately recognizable by his mask, costume, mannerisms and phrases. **Harlequin** and **Pierrot** are commedia characters still familiar today.



- Top Left Photo: 1. Petruccio is attempting to impress Kate; 2. Petruccio is standing in 1st position; 3. Kate is rude to Petruccio and insults him.
- Top Right Photo: 1. Bianca is begging Kate to marry Petruccio; 2. Kate is wearing a romantic tutu; 3. Kate doesn't want to get married.
- Bottom Left Photo: 1. Kate and Petruccio are getting to know each other; 2. The ballet term for a dance of two is pas de deux; 3. Kate and Petruccio will get along better.
- Bottom Right Photo: 1. Kate now treats Petruccio with kindness and love; 2. The ballet term for Kate's dance position is arabesque; 3. Put your own answer here!

Answer to questions on page 8.

# Spotlight: The Creative Process



Lisa Washburn & Stephen Mills



Heather Thomas & Stephen Mills



**H**ow does one build, or create, a new ballet? We talked with Stephen Mills to learn about his artistic process. Stephen always has many ideas or points of interest in his mind, such as favorite music or dance steps. These points are sort of “hanging out there all the time.” He describes it as a little “seed” that brings these ideas together and grows into a life of its own.

For *The Taming of the Shrew*, the “seed” began in a conversation with Derek Gordon, Vice President of Education for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. The Kennedy Center **commissioned**, or hired, Stephen to create his version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Stephen took this opportunity to incorporate the Italian Comedy style, *commedia dell’arte*, and another of his loves, Italian Baroque music.

After selecting the music and having an idea of how the scenes lay out, Stephen selects a costume and scenic designer. Because they worked together well in the past, Stephen decided to talk to Tommy Bourgeois, set and costume designer from Dallas, about the

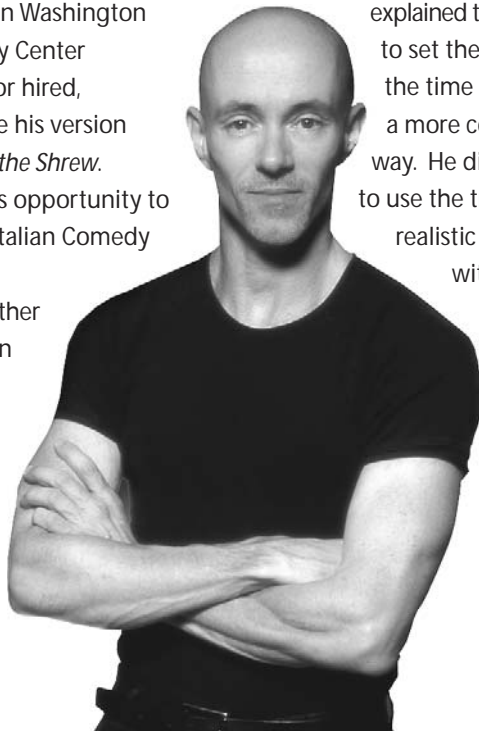


scope of this project. Stephen explained that he wanted to set the characters in the time period but in a more contemporary way. He did not want to use the traditional, realistic costumes with flowing capes, but wanted to portray more of an “idea” of that era.

With the costume and stage design underway, Stephen focuses on his specific goals for this ballet. He wants to take the ideas of the play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and bring it into the world in which we live today. He wants to portray not so much the male domination over female but more about two people who do not see eye-to-eye. The ballet shows

how Kate and Petruchio come together and realize the good qualities in each other.

The actual choreography of the steps begins at this point. The dancers and Stephen work and create together; performing the specific movements that Stephen has in mind. Through this process, and with the help of a lot more people, it evolves into the ballet we see on stage.



The musical, *Kiss Me Kate*, is a version of *The Taming of the Shrew* with words and music by Cole Porter. Join us at the Paramount to see the screen version of *Kiss Me Kate*, Friday, September 26th, 2003. See Ballet Austin website for more details.

Michael Barnes, art editor for the *Austin American Statesman*, describes Stephen’s style as the “Millsian Style.” It “follows the path that the body wishes to go.”

