

# NEWS TIMES

## Take that, Shakespeare

*Hillsboro troupe pairs 'Shrew' with John Fletcher's rebuttal creation*

*The Forest Grove News-Times, Feb 10, 2010*

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### **Ashland is not the only place in Oregon where Shakespeare thrives.**

Each year, Bag&Baggage Theatre Company in Hillsboro produces several of William Shakespeare's better-known plays. Last season the company performed "A Comedy of Errors," and summer of 2009 saw the debut of outdoor Shakespeare with "Romeo and Juliet" at the Tom Hughes Civic Center Plaza in Hillsboro.

This month, Bag&Baggage will again present one of the great Shakespeare plays, but in an entirely new and unusual way.

Artistic director and Washington County native Scott Palmer has created a world premiere adaptation of Shakespeare's battle-of-the-sexes tale, "The Taming of the Shrew." Palmer has distilled "Shrew" into a single act and paired it with "The Woman's Prize," an Elizabethan-era sequel to Shrew written by Shakespeare's rival, contemporary and collaborator, John Fletcher.

According to Palmer, "The Woman's Prize" was just as popular as "Taming of the Shrew." In fact, it was probably better known, but, over time, Shakespeare's play has become much more famous, while Fletcher's very funny sequel has fallen off the map.

Palmer has taken the two plays, each condensed to about an hour's playing time, and uses the same actors and acting style to create an entirely new performance.

"The Taming of the Shrew" has always been controversial, as it depicts a husband abusing his wife physically and psychologically to break her spirit. Audiences in Shakespeare's own time had mixed reactions to it, and Fletcher, who was even more popular than the Bard during their lifetimes, wrote his play as a response to Shakespeare's.

Fletcher's story uses many of the same characters from Shakespeare's tale, but Fletcher turns the tables and gives the women a chance to get revenge on the men.

"In our version, both sides of the story are told and audiences get to see what revenge would be like for a woman in Shakespeare's time," Palmer said. It's thought that Fletcher took the idea for his play from Aristophanes' "Lysistrata," written and performed in Athens, Greece in 411 B.C.

The production features an Elizabethan style set, including a "groundlings" section where audience members can sit on benches near the stage, very close to the action, just as audience members would have done at The Globe in London. The costumes are also Elizabethan in character, as is the performance style.

A number of Washington County actors are performing in the show, including Maggie Chapin, a professional actor living in Hillsboro, who plays Kate and Maria in the production.

For Chapin, the production is a creative challenge.

"Shakespeare has been reinvented so many times and reinterpreted so often in a modern context," she said. "He may not have liked the fact that we are pairing 'Shrew' with 'The Woman's Prize,' but the two together make for an incredible and unique experience for modern audiences."

"The Taming of the Shrew/The Woman's Prize," or "The Tamer Tamed," opens Feb. 12 at 7:30 p.m., and runs Thursdays through Sundays through Feb. 28.

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