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Family Plays

SHAKESPEARE UNBOUND

A One-act comedy by
CLAUDIA HAAS



SHAKESPEARE UNBOUND

“This is definitely a play that could get young people interested in Shakespeare and to introduce them to some of his interesting characters.” (BYU Book and Play Review)

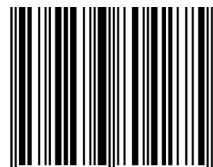
Comedy. By Claudia Haas. Cast: 3 to 4m., 6w. Aliesha, a disgruntled student, is trying to carry a huge book of Shakespeare’s plays, but it’s too heavy for her. So she tears out some pages and throws them in a trash can. The characters on those pages materialize, crawl out of the trash can, and raise havoc on the campus. It’s funny for the audience but frightening for Aliesha. “There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy.” Shakespeare’s said it, and Claudia Haas brings it to pass in this enchanting comedy. Macbeth’s witches, Puck, Juliet, Katherine and Petruchio from *The Taming of the Shrew* materialize from a trash barrel where Aliesha threw pages from a book of Shakespeare’s play. They tear up the gym and frighten the teachers in a comedy of errors that will delight audiences of all ages, even those who are only vaguely aware of Shakespeare’s plays. “The purpose of the play is to expose audiences to the timelessness of Shakespeare without preaching or intimidation of the language,” the author said. After the premiere production, she commented: “It was a lot of fun to perform, and it did send some of the actors and audience to the bookstore (and video store) to get more exposure to Shakespeare.” Shakespeare would love it. *Set: front of a high school. Time: today. Approximate running time: 35 minutes. Code: SX9.*

Family Plays

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(SHAKESPEARE UNBOUND)

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SHAKESPEARE UNBOUND

CHARACTERS

ALIESHA. A fifteen-year-old high school student

JOSHUA. Aliesha's seventeen-year-old brother

KATHERINE. (From *The Taming of the Shrew*)

PETRUCHIO. (From *The Taming of the Shrew*)

1ST WITCH. (From *Macbeth*)

2ND WITCH. (From *Macbeth*)

3RD WITCH. (From *Macbeth*)

JULIET. (From *Romeo and Juliet*)

PUCK. (From *A Midsummer Night's Dream*)

***PROSPERO.** (From *The Tempest*)

*Prospero does not have to appear. Enough liberties have been taken with Shakespeare's text that Puck could easily deliver the closing monologue.

Time: The Present

Place: The front of a high school

First presented by the Lakeshore Players Advanced Teen Acting Workshop, White Bear Lake, Minn., with the following cast:

Aliesha	Carrie Riggs
Joshua	Noah Spannbauer
Katherine	Rachel Wandrei
Petruchio	Matt Riggs
First Witch	Melissa Moris
Second Witch	Heather Oaks
Third Witch	Julie Thompson
Juliet	Sara Marshall
Puck	Laura Warnest
Prospero	Josh Campbell

ABOUT THE PLAY

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy. Shakespeare's said it, and Claudia Haas brings it to pass in this enchanting comedy.

Macbeth's witches, Puck, Juliet, Katherine and Petruchio from *The Taming of the Shrew* materialize from a trash barrel where a disgruntled high school student threw pages from a book of Shakespeare's play. They tear up the gym and frighten the teachers in a comedy of errors that will delight audiences of all ages, even those who are only vaguely aware of Shakespeare's plays. Perhaps they will also entice members of the audience to find a book of the plays and browse through—even read some of them.

“The purpose of the play is to expose audiences to the timelessness of Shakespeare without preaching or intimidation of the language,” the author said. After the premiere production, she commented: “It was a lot of fun to perform, and it did send some of the actors and audience to the bookstore (and video store) to get more exposure to Shakespeare.”

Shakespeare would love it.



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Claudia Haas is an actress as well as a playwright. A member of Actors Equity and the Screen Actors Guild, she performed in New York and elsewhere. “Over the years my interest in acting was replaced by directing, teaching, and writing,” she said. “I am proudest of the Lakeshore Summer Youth Project which I created with a co-worker. It is a total hands-on production workshop in which the students (60 of them, ages 6-16) do every phase of theatre.”

PRODUCTION NOTES*Properties*

- A BIG book, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, with heavy pages, some of which are easily and quickly removed and restored
- A large trash can, just inside the school door
- A golf ball for the Witches
- A pop can top for the Witches
- A french fried potato for the Witches
- A flower for Puck

Costumes

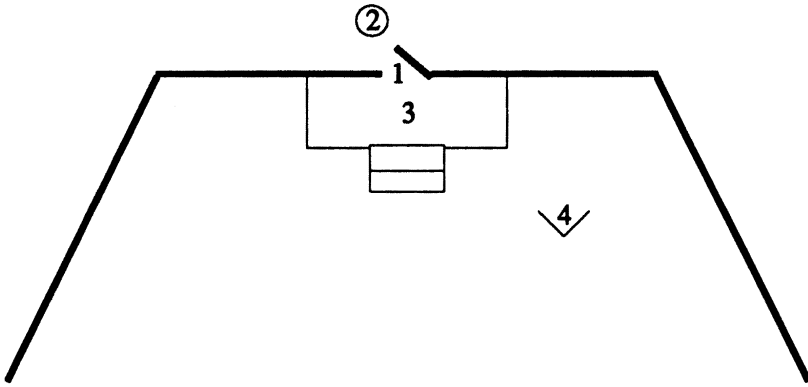
- Aliesha and Joshua**—school clothes
- Katherine**—long dress evocative of the Elizabethan era
- Petruchio**—outlandish, colorful costume suggesting the Elizabethan time period. He must have a hat.
- Witches**—traditional witch garb (or anything goes)
- Juliet**—long gown of Elizabethan period
- Puck**—anything goes, but he needs a pocket
- Prospero**—Wizard-like costume

Sound and Special Effects

Thunder and lightning or flashing lights are called for. So are police sirens.

The Set

The stage represents the front entrance to a high school. It may be as elaborate as a building facade (perhaps with the name of a high school in your city appearing above the door). Or it may be as simple as a platform and step unit leading up to a door in the stage curtains. See next page.

Floor plan

The set represents the front entrance to a high school.

- 1-a door
- 2-a large trash can
- 3-a platform with steps
- 4-the BIG book

The trash can may be completely or partially hidden from the audience. If the audience can see the can, they will also be able to see the characters emerge from the can. This can be accomplished by having a false (or open) back on the can outside the view of the audience.

Perhaps Aliesha may be concealed behind the book when the play begins. It will be a surprise to the audience when she steps out from behind it.

Add other set decorations (trees, shrubs, "No Parking" signs, etc.) if desired.

SHAKESPEARE UNBOUND

Scene 1

[AT RISE: We are in front of a high school. ALIESHA, a 15-year-old student, is struggling with an enormous BOOK. It should be taller than she is]

ALIESHA. *[Muttering to herself]* I can't believe I won this. I've never won a thing in my life and when I finally win something, it's nothing but a biiiiiig book! *[Her brother JOSHUA enters. He is seventeen]*

JOSHUA. Aliesha! Whatever are you doing?

ALIESHA. Oh, Josh! Sweet, wonderful, ever-helpful Josh! You have come to my rescue! I always knew having a brother would come in handy.

JOSHUA. Hardly. I'm on my way to practice. And I'm late.

ALIESHA. Come on, Josh...I really need you!

JOSHUA. And I need to attend practice if I want to be in the game Saturday. See ya! *[He starts off]*

ALIESHA. Wait! Please! The custodian says I have to get this "thing" off the school property *now*. They have no place to store it.

JOSHUA. What is it anyway?

ALIESHA. *[Glumly]* My prize.

JOSHUA. Your what?

ALIESHA. My prize. I won it at the school carnival. It was in this enormous box and I thought it was something cool, like Super-Nintendo or a TV or a computer. I never would have bought so many raffle tickets if I knew what it was.

JOSHUA. And what is it?

ALIESHA. A book. An ENORMOUS book.

JOSHUA. I can see that. Is it an encyclopedia or something?

ALIESHA. It's worse than that. It's the complete works of Shakespeare. In large print. This is our teacher's idea of a grand prize.

JOSHUA. Aliesha, when are you going to learn that "good things come in SMALL packages"?

ALIESHA. That lesson has just been rammed home to me. Can you help me get this thing off the campus?

JOSHUA. Shakespeare, huh?

ALIESHA. *[Very gloomy]* The COMPLETE Works. *[And gloomier]* In BIG PRINT. Apparently someone thinks that if you write the words bigger, you can understand Shakespeare better.

JOSHUA. Well, I'd love to give you a hand, but I know how independent you are. You certainly don't need a male to help you out. You always tell me that what you lack in brawn, you more than make up for in brains. So, little sister, put your brain to work. I'm late as it is. *[He runs off]*

ALIESHA. JOSH! Oh, never mind. I can do this without any help...I think...maybe. *[She tries lifting the book and drops it]* Then again maybe not. *[The book is now lying on the ground. Aliasha opens it and turns the pages]* These pages are heavy. No wonder I can't lift the book. If I tore out some of these pages... *[She takes some pages out of the book]* Where's a trash can when you really need one? Aha! Inside the school! *[She runs inside the school door and deposits the papers in a trash can. She tries to lift the book again. She still can't]* Don't worry, Will, this won't hurt a bit. *[She tears out some more papers with a vengeance]* Adios, Romeo and Juliet. *[She throws some more papers in the trash can, returns and props up the book]* Much better. Okay, Will, we're going home.

[Aliasha starts dragging the book offstage when there is a large NOISE and stamping about coming from inside the school. ALIESHA turns and an angry, disheveled young WOMAN dressed in clothes from the 16th century is standing on the school steps]

KATHERINE. Who dareth throw me into a large barrel? *[She points at Aliasha]* You! *[ALIESHA tries to hide behind her book]* Come here, wench! *[She approaches Aliasha]* How wouldst thou like to be cast into a barrel?

ALIESHA. Please! It wasn't me! I couldn't lift you! I can barely lift this book!

KATHERINE. Thou art a scrawny little beggar, art thou not? What do they call thee?

ALIESHA. Call me...call me. Oh! You mean my name! I'm Aliasha. And you are...

KATHERINE. Katherine.

ALIESHA. Pleased to meet you, Kathy.

KATHERINE. They call me Katherine that do speak of me.

ALIESHA. Okay...Katherine. Are you new here? And why are you dressed like that?

KATHERINE. I am dressed as befits my status as a woman of noble breeding. I can see thou hast not such breeding.

ALIESHA. Whatever. Listen, it was nice meeting you and all of that. I have to go. Let me give you a little advice, since you're new here and all. You gotta learn to speak English a little better, because you know, you're like, pretty hard to understand. You'll never fit in if you keep speaking like that.

[As ALIESHA starts off, again dragging the book, a voice is heard from the school entryway. It is PETRUCHIO]

PETRUCHIO. Katherine! Katherine! Sweet wife! Where hast thou gone? *[He emerges]* Katherine! Why didst thou leave me so unhappily like that? I was crammed into a large barrel. *[PETRUCHIO enters, dressed in outlandish Shakespearean fashion. He is wearing a crazy hat]*

KATHERINE. Thou didst nothing to help me. I left thee up to thine own devices.

PETRUCHIO. KATE! Thou shouldst not treat a husband thusly! *[He takes off his silly hat and plops it on Katherine's head]* Ahh, my bonny Kate! Seeing thou in such radiant beauty moves me!

KATHERINE. Moves you? Let me move you again. *[She stamps on his foot and HE yells out a scream of pain and starts hopping around]* I knew you were a movable.

ALIESHA. *[Still hiding behind book]* Guys! Hey, you two! You know, you two could benefit from a class in conflict resolution.

PETRUCHIO. Conflict resolution?

KATHERINE. Speakest thou in English, I beg you.

ALIESHA. I am speaking in English. What are you guys speaking?

PETRUCHIO. The Queen's English.

KATHERINE. I speak the Queen's English. You crow too like a craven.

PETRUCHIO. Come, come, you wasp. I'faith, you are too angry.

KATHERINE. If I be waspish, best beware my sting. *[With those words, KATHERINE lifts her hands out like claws and makes a beeline for PETRUCHIO. He steps aside and KATHERINE falls to the ground]*

PETRUCHIO. *[Offering his hand to Katherine]* Come again, good Kate, I am a gentleman.

KATHERINE. That I'll try. *[She takes his hand and pulls him down. She gets up and glares down at him]*

PETRUCHIO. Nay, come, Kate, you must not look so sour. *[PETRUCHIO starts to get up. He is on all fours]*

KATHERINE. It is my fashion when I see a crab.

PETRUCHIO. *[Stands up]* Why, here's no crab and therefore look not sour. I am withered from care of you.

KATHERINE. I care not. *[She goes towards Aliasha]*

PETRUCHIO. *[Grabbing hold of her around the waist]* Nay, Kate, in sooth you 'scape not so.

KATHERINE. Let me go!

ALIESHA. Hey! You heard her! Let her go! Where did you guys come from? Your behavior is a bit much!

PETRUCHIO. *[Still holding on to Katherine]* We're Italian. We come from Padua. Ah Padua, where I met my pleasant... *[KATHERINE struggles] ...gamesome... [KATHERINE struggles more] ...passing courteous... [he covers her mouth] ...but slow in speech...yet sweet as springtime flower—WIFE! [He lets her go]*

ALIESHA. You don't sound Italian. You just sound weird.

PETRUCHIO. Our revered Bard wrote us in English, but do not mistake...we are Italian.

ALIESHA. What do you mean? Revered Bard? Wrote you in English? Don't you speak Italian?

PETRUCHIO. Thou art slow of study, but still thou pleasest me. *[He walks toward Aliasha]*

ALIESHA. Don't you come near me...I don't put up with that nonsense like your friend here.

KATHERINE. Friend! What sayest "friend"? Indeed, I am his wife.

ALIESHA. Wife? Now let me get this straight. You're both from Italy, but don't speak Italian, and come to think of it, your English isn't so hot either. You both behave very badly toward one another AND you say you're married! Anything else?

PETRUCHIO. We are characters.

ALIESHA. You certainly are.

PETRUCHIO. Permit me to introduce myself. I am Petruchio. Written to tame the Shrew!

KATHERINE. Where did you study all this goodly speech? You are a half-lunatic. Now, I see by this light...what my father has wed me to. It pleaseth me not. I shall take my leave and quickly, too. *[She runs off]*

ALIESHA. *[Looks at the book and mutters to herself]* Katherine...Petruchio...Shrew? *[She shakes her head]* Nah...not possible. Still, there's that weird language to consider...

[As ALIESHA is talking to herself, two WITCHES stalk on from the school door. ALIESHA looks up and spies the witches]

ALIESHA. Oh no! It can't be. *[She frantically leafs through the book]* What pages did I tear out? Okay...okay...here are some missing pages...from *The Taming of the Shrew*...set in Italy, characters are Bianca, Gremio, Tranio, **HERE THEY ARE!** Katherine and Petruchio! I've let Katherine and Petruchio loose upon our town! I must do something! What? What? Save Katherine and Petruchio from the evils of the 20th century—or save the 20th century from the politically incorrect Katherine and Petruchio?

[Meanwhile, a THIRD WITCH has appeared outside the school]

FIRST WITCH. Where hast thou been, sister?

THIRD WITCH. At the bottom of a deep dark cauldron.

SECOND WITCH. Ay, I fear there is a spell upon us.

FIRST WITCH. By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes. *[She points to Aliesha]*

ALIESHA. Ohhhh...I wish I'd paid more attention in English class. Who are these Halloween clowns? *[The WITCHES approach and surround Aliesha. They move in a circle holding hands around her]*

WITCHES. Double, double, toil and trouble...fire burn and cauldron bubble.

ALIESHA. *[She is frightened out of her wits and goes through the book faster than ever]* What other pages did I tear out? What play are they from? **WHAT PLAY ARE THEY FROM?**

FIRST WITCH. When shall we three meet again, in thunder, lightning, or in rain?

SECOND WITCH. When the hurly-burly's done, when the battle's lost and won.

ALIESHA. Battle? What battle? **WHERE ARE YOU FROM?**

THIRD WITCH. A heath in Scotland from which we come.

ALIESHA. Scotland...Scotland...**MACBETH!** Macbeth is a Scottish name. I have let loose the witches from Macbeth!

FIRST WITCH. Art thou Macbeth? Thou hast changed.

SECOND WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

ALIESHA. No! No! You have it all wrong. Do I look like Macbeth? You're all deranged!