

SHOW -- AND TELL

By FRANCES MARION BROWN

(One Woman's Opinion About the Arts in Oswego)

A most exciting and exhausting experience in Theatre was given the audience at the Waterman Theatre on the SUCO Campus on Tuesday evening when the Blackfriars' production of Taming of the Shrew opened for a five night run. Directed by David Burr, the Commedia Dell' Arte production was quite different from the usual offering of the Immortal Bard's familiar comedy. In this presentation, the Shakespearean plot becomes a play within a play in the framework and style of the Italian Art Form.

Commedia Dell' Arte is the name given to the medieval Italian comedy, in which the plot was written, but the dialogue and action was improvised by the actors. This type of drama, born in the middle of the 16th century in Italy became popular throughout Europe in the 17th century, and is the basis for the slap-stick and prat falls of our Keystone Cops of early movie days and the rough and tumble comedians of today. Purists of the Shakespearian fold may resent this type of performance — but certainly, even the Shakespearean scholar must admit that many of the lines and situations of any of W. Shakespeare's comedies lend themselves to this type of production. The press within the last week carried an article declaring that the works of Shakespeare might well be rated "X" in many instances — so the robust, bawdy style of the SUCO presentation is quite in keeping with tradition as well as current thinking.

The conventional masks as well as the clown make-up of the dancers and if, at times the improvisations arising from the actor whims in their extraneous antics as "off stage" actors viewing the "inner" play were a bit distracting (rather like watching a three ring cir-

cus at times) — and although a few of the characters were a bit overly anxious to play the role their costumes demanded (especially those with cod-pieces) exuberance of the entire cast was not overdone. The brawling and rough-and tumble calls for an agile and physically fit group of actors—and keeping up the pace shown Tuesday evening for 4 more performances is exhausting even to think about. Their excellent training certainly was evident, otherwise the entire cast would be full of broken bones and cracked heads.

Individual cast credits are too numerous to mention. With 47 members all worthy of praise, it becomes impossible. Terry Fisher, Karin "Pinky" Franklin and Tom Slack must be mentioned for outstanding leading performances as Christopher Sly, Katherine and Petruchio—but even the smallest vignette roles such as those played by Mark Cole as the Tailor and Bob Nesbitt as the Haberdasher showed a remarkable grasp of character, acting ability and empathy to the production.

The Dancers and Musicians provided not only delightful interludes between sections of the play, but at intermission performed far and with the audience in the lobby.

The stage set, designed by John Mincher, the costumes by Tom Slack and dances choreographed by Tim Baker all added to a most interesting evening's entertainment. The director, cast and crew and all who worked on the production are to be highly commended.

The production will be presented nightly through Saturday at 8:15. Tickets may be reserved by calling 341-2141, and any one interested in good theatre and certainly out of the ordinary theatre, well done, is urged to attend.