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Weather can't dampen SLSF

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-It wasn't an easy decision, but sure as heck proved the right one.

Last Saturday evening, I had the pleasure of attending the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival's opening gala of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Prescott. For those of you familiar with the outdoor amphitheatre, someone really had their noggin' on right when it came to that design.

Apparently so did Sarah Cutfield, the show's stage manager.

With one nasty front out of the way, and beautiful sunshine all around, Sarah and Ian Farthing, the company's AD, decided to move the opening inside of the Presbyterian Church.

Thunder, lightning and pelting rain arrived just before intermission.

I hear Sarah was jumping up and down with glee, going "Yes, yes!!" when vindication was hers for the venue shift.

Better a sore backside for 2.5 hours on church pews, than a soggy audience, cast and set, methinks.

That being said, it was a magnificent performance. Cornwall native Janet Irwin truly outdid herself with her directorial guidance for this production when she set it in 1950s maschismo Padua, Italy.

It worked stunningly. Great music, great costumes and, despite the 11th-hour change in venue, the cast demonstrated exemplary skill in rejigging the blocking.

Alix Sideris stars as Kate the Great in *Shrew*, and she is wonderful indeed. She brings all of this misunderstood character's feistiness, intelligence and vulnerability to light in her portrayal, a very physical one, at that. A few years ago, Alix performed in an Upper Canada Playhouse production, and she's also a beloved friend of Doug Tangney, a Morrisburg veteran, so that tells you something right there.

As well, there are a few more Playhouse connections to the *Shrew*.

Doreen Taylor-Claxton performs in it and some of you will remember her from last year's production of *A Seaway Story* (also directed by Janet). Doreen gives a very hot rendition of *Fever in the Shrew*: yes, we're still talking Shakespeare here!

It's very difficult to pick and choose, but other stand-outs for me included the golden-voiced Kris Joseph (also of *A Seaway Story* fame), Perry Mucci (who costarred in *Romeo and Juliet* two years at SLSF), and the lovely Emma Hunter who took on a number of characters, making each of them unique and marvelous. Greg Kramer (who wowed audiences last year as Prospero in Repercussion Theatre's production of *The Tempest*) also turns in a very debonair performance.

Holidays are looming for me and as I write this ahead, I can't wait for the opening of *Measure for Measure* on July 15, also at SLSF. The Dora Award-nominated Emma is guaranteed to shine in that production when she performs the female lead, Isabella.

Staytuned for Shakespeare: Part Deux next Saturday.