



N.P.S. photograph

THE PLAYERS TAME "THE SHREW"

“**F**IDDLER forbear! You grow too forward, sir/ Have you so soon forgot the entertainment/Her sister Katharina welcom'd you withal?”

“Just a minute, Michael. Can you take your voice up on ‘Fiddler forbear!’? Then say ‘You grow too forward, sir,’ rather out of the side of your mouth, as it's intended for Hortensio only. Eleanor, will you move up to the mike a little more? That's right. . .”

Quietly, without fuss, Richard Campion, the New Zealand Players' producer, was starting his cast on a morning's rehearsal for their recording of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. The radio production was recently done for the NZBS in its Wellington Production Studios, the play being adapted for broadcasting by Richard Campion. For this NZBS production the Company's two guest stars from the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon repeated their roles from last season's production there. Barbara Jefford played the Shrew, Katharina; and Keith Michell the turbulent, swaggering Petruchio.

At 9 o'clock Eleanor Elliot, Brian Bell and Michael Cotterill began to run through their lines for their first “cut,” as the sections of a recording are called. Picture a large, high-ceilinged room, maroon-carpeted in the centre, fawn-linoleumed on the outside, such as you might see in the lounge of any hotel; chairs, couches, ash-trays around the walls, a piano, a series of etchings on the wall—the main studio of the NZBS Productions Department in Wellington. The only strange things are the complete lack of windows, the rough, buff texture of the insulated walls, and at the centre of all activities a silver microphone dangling on a cord. At one end of the room there is another smaller studio and the control room. The players look wan in the white light from the fluorescents, and the chatter and greetings of people waiting for their various calls is subdued. A photographer

waits to take his pictures. Somebody tells us that the two leads are not on call till ten o'clock, after all.

In the control-room the technician sets the two large tape-recording machines going. Pleasant Elizabethan music issues from one, played, no doubt, by a consort of viols. “Oh, no,” we are assured. “Some local people recorded it at the Waring-Taylor Street studios yesterday. Brian Bell, out in the studio—he's Hortensio—wrote it.” Now they are ready to record the first “cut.” It is the scene where the tutor reveals himself as Lucentio in disguise to Bianca. Hortensio is the unwelcome third party. The three players go through the scene without a “fluff.”

By the end of it, Barbara Jefford has slipped in, looking like some near relation to a water-nymph in a hazy green skirt, dark jumper, lime-green shoes and dark-green and gold sun-glasses, which obscure much of her fine-boned, tanned face. She smokes a cigarette. During the break the recorded portion is played back. There is a cup of tea for Campion but nobody else has any. It is interesting to notice how the pre-recorded “effects” are woven in around and beneath the actors' voices by the control technician. What has previously seemed two-dimensional now, in the play-back, took place in a bright new world of the imagination, busy with comings and goings, murmuring crowds and intensified emotions.

After the break there is more business with effects for the next cut. The door-cupboard is trundled in. It is a large contraption like a coffin, with different kinds of doors, bolts and catches. “We need a horse, too,” Campion says, so out come the coconuts from the top of the cupboard and an effects-man practises with them solemnly. “What did we use for harness yesterday?” A tambourine is produced from the same source.

Keith Michell comes in. The photographer gets ready hopefully. No luck. Barbara Jefford has gone back to the theatre to pick up her specially-marked copy of the script. Keith Michell looks

pleasantly relaxed in dark sports trousers and blazer. His discreetly checked shirt is done up at the neck without a tie. He sits at the piano nonchalantly eating an apple and reminds you of a cat, seemingly oblivious to what is going on one moment and springing into the middle of things, all attention, the next.

Barbara Jefford returns. The photographs are taken as rehearsals begin for the big scene where Petruchio comes to claim his bride. In no time Keith Michell's shirt is open at the neck, then

his sweeping gestures are hindered by the blazer, and off it comes. It was in this scene that you longed to see the play done by these two on the stage—the tearful fulminations of Katharina, the thigh-slapping, swashbuckling of Petruchio, the stamping (on a specially-placed piece of wood on the carpet), the whirl of Barbara Jefford away from the microphone at the point when Petruchio is supposed to pick Kate up and carry her off, the softer moments when Petruchio's arm creeps round Kate's shoulder in mock tenderness. Richard Campion ran over and over the business of drawing an antique sword out of its rusty scabbard (real) and the swishing of a rapier when the couple make their mock escape from the crowd so that it was perfect. After much rehearsing the scene was finally cut.

Next came the wedding feast scene in Petruchio's house.

LEFT: The Players at the microphone (left to right): KEITH MICHELL, RICHARD CAMPION (producer), BARBARA JEFFORD, MICHAEL COTTERILL and ELEANOR ELLIOT

“This is going to be very tricky. You've got to be right on your toes,” Campion said.

It was and they were. First there were elaborate rehearsals of doors opening and closing. In the small studio three people juggled china, basins of water, tin plates and trays which were to be dropped, sloshed about and thrown. Petruchio's servants got into position at various distances from the microphone, for in recording a foot from the microphone equals five yards actual distance. Then they practised running up and down the linoleum answering Petruchio's commands. Michael Cotterill, as a servant, cheerfully slapped his own face. Geoffrey Wren did a creditable imitation of two different sizes of dogs, from which Richard Campion selected the more appropriate voice for Triolus, the spaniel. Petruchio, having sent Kate supperless to bed, has to walk back into the scene. Keith Michell rehearsed walking heavily to the microphone from the small studio and accidentally kicking a tin plate.

“That's it! Kick some of those dishes and bits of china out of your way as you come in,” Richard Campion commanded—and from that accidental movement, a whole scene came alive.

So by a quarter past one the morning's work was done. In reply to Petruchio's final words of the morning, “He that knows better how to tame a shrew,” Now let him speak, 'tis charity to show.” *The Listener* felt that, i' faith, it knew none better.

“*The Taming of the Shrew*” will be broadcast from all YC stations at 9.30 p.m. on Shakespeare's birthday, Saturday, April 23.)



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KISS ME, KATE

Barbara Jefford and Keith Michell recreate for radio the roles they played in “*The Taming of the Shrew*” at last year's Stratford Festival