

Taming Romeo

*A comedy by
Tracey Evans*

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STORY OF THE PLAY

When resident stage manager Kate Ellinger discovers that one-time soap actor Brayden Cole has agreed to play the lead in their production of "Romeo and Juliet," she finds she has her hands full, not only dealing with a TV star's ego, but also with the easy-to-panic director and zany locals who make up the rest of the cast. Brayden misses the first rehearsal, and later admits he's in way over his head. He went from waiting tables to a modeling career to soap opera uber-star with no actor training. But the other actors are more than willing to help him. Duncan, an older man with affectations of greatness, works with Brayden on the Bard's language; Lonnie, the local high school coach, gets Brayden on an intense physical regiment; and the ladies, all grown-up groupies, continue their adoration of him. But progress stops when Jason, who wanted the part of Romeo, gets too violent rehearsing their tai chi fight (no swords in this production!) and is kicked out. How will they do a show without a Mercutio? Only Kate can fill in at this late date...except Kate is now a quivering ball of nerves before curtain. Brayden comes to the rescue as does the rest of the theatre family. A charming and humorous look into the world of community theatre.

PREMIER PRODUCTION

The show premiered in 2004 at the West Coast Ensemble in Los Angeles. It was directed by Dan Rosenblatt, with production stage managers Taryn Shubert and Romina Franco, fight choreography by Cindy Marinangel and sound design by Marty Barsnack, Produced by Carla Barnett, under the artistic direction of Les Hanson, it was presented with the following cast:

KATE ELLINGER: CB Spencer
BRAYDEN COLE: Brent McEwan
SIDNEY NELSON REILLY: Larry Lederman
DUNCAN FINE: Steven Connor
CAROL TATE: Cindy Marinangel
LONNIE McPHERSON: Marty Barsnack
AUDREY RUSSELL: Tracey Evans
JASON WYLIE: Martin Nathan
WAYNE VANDERVENTER: Ryan Swafford
AVALON DUPREE: Corrina Lyons
RUDY PARR: JT Derwart
VI BUTTERFIELD: Vonna Bowen
(VOICE OF) BERNIE KLING: Marty Barsnack
The roles of Pamela, Gigi, Lloyd and The Mechanicals were not in the original production.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7-8 m, 7 w, 1 flexible, plus 3 optional roles)

- KATE ELLINGER:** *(Stage Manager)* Overly serious; strong, determined and seemingly unflappable. Female, 20s.
- BRAYDEN COLE:** *(Romeo)* The one-time featured soap opera actor; handsome and a little conceited; his self-importance hides his insecurities. Male, 20s.
- SIDNEY NELSON REILLY:** *(Director)* Dramatic and prissy; prone to nervous breakdowns. Flexible, 30s - 50s.
- DUNCAN FINE:** *(Lord Capulet)* A charmer with the ladies; at least he is in his own mind. Male, 40s - 50s.
- CAROL TATE:** *(Lady Capulet)* Self-appointed grande dame of community theatre. Female, 30s - 40s.
- LONNIE McPHERSON:** *(Lord Montague)* Local high school football coach; kind of a "blue-collar" type. Male, 40s - 50s.
- AUDREY RUSSELL:** *(Lady Montague)* Kate's good friend; girlish and a little clumsy; good sport. Female, 20s.
- JASON WYLIE:** *(Mercutio)* Impatient, angry and vocal; feels he should be playing Romeo Male, 20s.
- WAYNE VANDERVENTER:** *(Tybalt)* Jason's buddy and yes-man; a "dude." Male, 20s.
- AVALON DUPREE:** *(Juliet)* She is Juliet. Not delusional, just dedicated to her role. Female, 20s.
- RUDY PARR:** *(Servants et al)* Enthusiastic and puppy-doggish; has a crush on Kate. Male, 20s.
- VI BUTTERFIELD:** *(Nurse)* Sweet; everyone loves her. But she's just so confused, isn't she? Female, 60s +.
- PAMELA FONT:** *(Producer)* Straight-forward and dry; lightly humorless; takes things at face value. Female, 40s to 60s.
- GIGI GARDNER:** *(Costumer)* Pointedly aggressive and a bit avante-garde. Female, age open.
- LLOYD:** *(Usher)* Frazzled and a little nerdy. Male, 20s - 30s.
- BERNIE KLING:** *(Actor)* Very unlikely candidate auditioning for the lead. Small role. Male, 40+.
- THE MECHANICALS:** *(Optional)* Three actors to announce quoted scene titles.

CASTING NOTES

THE MECHANICALS are an optional addition to the cast, should the producing company wish to offer more opportunities to their acting pool. Lines begin with Act I, Scene 1, "The Audition," and end with Act II, Scene 6, "Opening Night." "Circle" should not be announced. THE MECHANICALS should be open to interpretations and fun. Potential trios could be Three Noble Shakespearean Actors holding scrolls, Three "Mid-Summer Night's Dream"-type mechanicals using kazoos, or, perhaps, a hip, contemporary back-up group singing their lines in a choreographed routine. The writer leaves these choices to the discretion of the producing company.

The role of SID can be cast either male (SID) or female (SYD) with necessary pronoun changes made to the script.

The role of Bernie can be doubled with any other male role except for Sid, Lloyd and Brayden.

THE SETTING

The somewhat empty rehearsal space/backstage area of the Hazelton Playhouse Theatre, aka the Hazelton Town Hall. The stage is clear with the exception of a stage manager's workstation; a small desk, a phone and a several folding chairs. The time is the present.

ACT I

Scene 1 – MECHANICALS: “The Audition”

(AT RISE: The voices of several ACTORS can be heard off-stage reciting lines from Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet.” Mostly inaudible, but the line “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo” can clearly be heard over the din. A frazzled man, LLOYD, is frantically trying to answer the constantly RINGING PHONE.)

LLOYD: *(Answering.)* Hazleton Playhouse... Yes, what the paper said was correct. Brayden Cole has agreed to play the part of Romeo... No, I haven’t met... Do I think he’s a hottie? How would I know!? *(Slams phone.)*

(SFX: PHONE RINGS.)

LLOYD: *(Answering.)* Hazleton Playhouse... Yes, auditions are going on right now. If you’re interested, I suggest you ... Well, we have an awful lot of Juliets already, so you might wanna... Yes, Juliet does get to kiss Romeo... Quite a few times, yes... No, Mr. Cole won’t be at the audition. The director of the production will be reading with you... *(Click.)*...Hello? Hello?

(KATE ELLINGER, the theatre’s resident and overly serious stage manager, enters, checking names off her clipboard.)

KATE: All right, so we’ve seen Kim as Juliet and Lisa as Juliet, Vera, Susan, Tami, Juliet, Juliet, Juliet... okay. *(She calls out off stage.)* Bernie Kling. Bernie?

BERNIE: *(Entering.)* Yeah.

KATE: Bernie, you’re next but I can’t read your writing. What part are you reading for?

BERNIE: Juliet.

KATE: *(Takes a beat – thinks to herself.)* It’ll be tough. But I think I can make it work.

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(SHE walks BERNIE offstage to audition. SFX: PHONE RINGS.)

LLOYD: *(Answering.)* Hazleton Playhouse... Yes, that's right. Brayden Cole will be appearing as Romeo...

(KATE re-enters with clipboard just as PAMELA FONT, Hazelton's cultural liaison and producer of the show, comes on to greet her.)

PAMELA: Miss Ellinger...things seem to be going swimmingly, what what?

KATE: Oh, yes, swimmingly, Pamela. Swimmingly.

LLOYD: *(On the phone.)* I don't know if we'll be doing it in traditional Shakespearean costumes but I can assure you everyone will be dressed... What you mean "even Brayden"?...Ugh!!! *(LLOYD slams down the phone.)* I can't take this. I'm just supposed to be the usher!!

(HE runs out. SFX: The PHONE RINGS again. KATE calmly grabs the phone wire and rips it from the wall.)

PAMELA: Problem?

KATE: Hmm...let's see, the phone's ringing off the hook, I've got a lobby full of pushy, angry Juliets, and Sid's having his tenth nervous breakdown, even as we speak. So, nope. No problems here.

PAMELA: Well, good news that. I don't think Hazelton's ever seen such excitement. It does appear to be thrilling, doesn't it? A real celebrity in our own hometown. *(KATE stares blankly at HER.)* Mr. Cole. *(No response.)* He was on television, yes?

KATE: *(Slightly annoyed.)* Oh, right. On a soap opera. *(Pause.)* For eight months.

PAMELA: Yes! That's right! It's all here in the paper. *(Reading.)* "Mr. Cole, having left the daytime drama *The Flame Within* late last year, had the desire to return to the roots of artistic integrity by joining our local theatre's production of *Romeo and Juliet* 'I see no better way to

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PAMELA: *(Cont'd.)* share my talents than with the people of my own hometown,' he was quoted as saying."

KATE: Hometown?

PAMELA: *(Indicating the article.)* Yes! Hmmmmm. *(Studying the paper, to herself.)* No mention of me, though. That's curious.

(SFX: There is a DISGRUNTLED NOISE from the crowd outside as someone pushes their way through. Enter AUDREY RUSSELL, Kate's long-time friend, holding a cup of take-out coffee and another copy of the paper.)

AUDREY: Hey, Katie! Double shot. Extra caffeine.

KATE: Audrey! You are a mind reader!

(KATE takes a big gulp of coffee as BERNIE re-enters from his audition clearly miffed.)

BERNIE: *(Muttering to himself as he crosses.)* I can't be an ingénue? What does he mean I can't be an ingénue! I'll show him ingénue! These people wouldn't know talent if it hit 'em in the head. *(Exits off stage.)*

PAMELA: Yes, well, looks like you've got everything under control, here, Ms. Ellinger. I'll leave you to run a tight ship then. Tah! *(PAMELA exits.)*

AUDREY: So, this is exciting, huh, K! Isn't this exciting?

KATE: *(With little enthusiasm.)* Oh, yeah, exciting. Hey, where's this guy come off saying he's from Hazelton?

AUDREY: He is. Sorta. Well, I mean, his parents moved here...a couple of months ago. Don't you read the papers? *(Swooning over her paper.)* Oh, and he is just soooooo cute! Don't you think he's cute?

KATE: Only in an obvious kind of way.

AUDREY: Katie, sometimes you're such a dud.

KATE: *(A little impatient.)* So, Aud, what're you doing here?

AUDREY: I came to audition.

KATE: You did? *(Small laugh but catching herself.)* You did.

AUDREY: Yeah. What's wrong with that?

End of Freeview

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