

Div 8000 Communications

The Communicator

Shakespeare's Associates' Lisa Tromovitch shares with the Sandia Women's Connection

In her last year of college at Dartmouth College, Lisa Tromovitch set a goal for herself. "I told myself, all I want is to work full-time in the professional theater. I don't have to be rich or famous," she recalls. "And that is exactly what I got! I'm not rich or famous, but I do work full-time in the professional theater."

On March 26, Tromovitch was the Sandia Women's Connection's (SWC) distinguished speaker in honor of Women's History Month. She is the founder and producing artistic director of [Shakespeare's Associates](#), which puts on the [Livermore Shakespeare Festival](#) at [Concannon Vineyard](#) each summer.



Lisa Tromovitch

Tromovitch describes herself as "a high-achieving person who likes to work rather than play." She first envisioned herself becoming a doctor and was pre-med at Dartmouth. She enjoyed drama as a child and had heard that medical schools were looking for humanities majors, so she chose that as her major (pre-med was not a major).

"When I had to sit down and write a letter on why I wanted to become a doctor for my medical school applications, I didn't," explains Tromovitch. "I didn't write the essay because I didn't want to become a doctor."

Instead, she stayed at Dartmouth for a fifth year and did a thesis in drama. Her path after college, says Tromovitch, was very lucky. She worked in a professional regional theater in San Diego for a year before earning her MFA from Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

"I was fortunate to land a series of jobs that enabled me to be both an administrator and resident director," she says. "In the different places that I lived and worked, I was often asked to teach a course or two at the local university. So sort of by accident, I got teaching onto my resume."

In 2002, she came to the Livermore area because it was lacking a regional professional theater. "A colleague contacted me because I had co-founded a Shakespeare Company in Maine," explains Tromovitch. "This is an educated, affluent area, the ideal place for a regional professional theater."

She started the theater company in 2002; in 2006, the name became Shakespeare's Associates. Tromovitch is also a full-time professor of drama and chair of the theater arts department at the University of the Pacific. Running Shakespeare's Associates, which she now does part-time, is her scholarship.



Jennifer Le Blanc will appear as Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*. (Photo by CumulusLight.com)

While Shakespeare's Associates has occasionally produced fall and winter shows, the summer Livermore Shakespeare Festival, now in its 11th year, has been a constant. This year's productions are William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Liar* by David Ives, adapted from the comedy by Pierre Corneille.

The shows are performed outdoors at Concannon Vineyard with a Queen-Anne style Victorian home as the stage and backdrop. Originally built in 1895, the home has a rich history, including serving as the set for the 2004 horror film [Dead and Breakfast](#). Patrons are encouraged to come early and picnic on the winery grounds or eat dinner at the [Underdog Wine Bar](#) (reservations strongly recommended).

Tromovitch chose to produce *The Taming of the Shrew* for several reasons. The last two seasons of

the Livermore Shakespeare Festival have featured tragedies, so it is time for a comedy. Plus Tromovitch wanted to work with director Gary Armagnac again and he was keen to direct *Shrew*. The show is set in the post-WWII era, when men returned from the war looking for wives.

"I also look for something that resonates with the times," she says. "*The Taming of the Shrew* is about what leadership is and who gets to make decisions. There's a fine line for Kate in this show, between being an out-of-control shrew and finding power, leadership, and the ability to work with others. The tone of the show's ending will depend on how the actors interpret the lines, something we will work through in rehearsals. I'm excited to see how it evolves."

The Liar is a French farce set in Paris in 1643. Originally written by Corneille and updated by Ives, it tells the story of a charming young man who cannot tell the truth. His brilliant lies lead to hilarious situations through mistaken identities, hidden conversations, and letters passed to the wrong recipients.

While the show has always gone on, Tromovitch has faced some personal problems of her own. Last year she successfully underwent chemotherapy for cancer.

"When you face a serious, potentially fatal, illness, you have to question what you are doing," she says. "I'm thinking about where I want to be in five years. I never had a strategic plan, other than that promise I made to myself back when I was a college student."

As someone who'd rather work than play, Tromovitch says her most productive hours have always been from 10 pm to 2 am. But since chemotherapy, she doesn't have the same level of energy. "It's still shocking to me," she says. "Maybe I'll eventually get back to my old energy level, but I also know that, while I am a leader and starter, I'm not going to be the finisher. I will need to hand off the ball."

Shakespeare's Associates, she says, needs to grow. Currently the organization has two regular paid staff members—Tromovitch and part-time administrative director Katie Marcel—plus seasonal summer employees.

Shakespeare's Associates has thrived. "The economy wreaked havoc on the art world, yet we grew 10% last year. We are in a good place, but we need to be bigger and stronger," she says. "We need more board members. Currently we have a working board, meaning they fill the oversight role but also do a lot of hands-on work. We need additional board members who can focus on fundraising and advocacy."

You can support Shakespeare's Associates and enjoy the fruits of Tromovitch's labor at the Livermore Shakespeare Festival this summer. Performances for *The Taming of the Shrew* are June 27, 28, 29, July 7, 12, 13, 19, and 21; David Ives' *The Liar* will be performed on June 20, 21, 22, 30, July 5, 6, 14, and 20. All performances are held at Concannon Vineyards at 7:30 pm on Thursdays and Fridays and 7 pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The picnic area opens at 5:30 pm.

Tickets range from \$25 to \$44 with discounts for children, students, educators, and seniors. On Family Night, June 20 for *The Liar* and July 7 for *The Taming of the Shrew*, tickets for children 18 and younger are \$5. Catch a free preview of the 2013 Livermore Shakespeare Festival on Wednesday, June 5, at 7 pm at the Livermore Public Library.

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