

CONSIDERING AUDITIONING FOR KISS ME KATE?

Some folks are not familiar with Kiss Me Kate, so here are a few thoughts about a show that is one of the classic Broadway musicals.

The show, with music by Cole Porter and book by Sam and Bella Spewack, premiered in 1948, and in 1949 won the first Tony Award for Best Musical. We will be doing the 1999 version, which won the Tony for best revival. In 2019, another revival was very successful.

The story is about a company trying out a play in Baltimore, getting ready for Broadway. The play within a play is a musical version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, produced and directed by, and starring, Fred Graham. He claims to be 32 but is probably a little older. He has enticed his ex-wife, Lilli Vanessi, now a movie star, to return to theater to star as Katharine (the shrew).

The second leading couple is Bill and Lois, "night club hoofers," who are playing Kate's sister Bianca, and her suitor Lucentio. Bill has a serious gambling problem. Lois has a fidelity problem. Fred has his eye, and maybe more, on Lois. Bill signs Fred's name to an IOU to cover gambling debts. Two gangsters promptly show up to force Fred to pay, but he doesn't really owe the money, and doesn't have it anyway. The story is far-fetched, but funny.

In the first few scenes, the Broadway actors are introduced backstage. Then we move on stage to sixteenth century Padua for the show within a show. Likewise, funny.

Some of the dialogue is lifted from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Since we don't usually do Shakespeare here, this will give us some practice at it, without having to be Shakespearean actors.

There are music and dancing throughout the show, both in Baltimore and Italy. There are great production numbers starting each act, "Another Op'nin', Another Show" in Act I and "Too Darn Hot" in Act II. There are romantic songs, such as "So in Love" and "Wunderbar", and comic songs like "Always True to You in My Fashion" and "Tom, Dick or Harry". The eleven o'clock number, sung by the gangsters, "Brush Up Your Shakespeare", is one of the great comic songs in musical theater.

I hope this encourages many to audition for Kiss Me Kate. The cast of characters is listed elsewhere. It's a bit confusing, because there are many characters playing Baltimore roles and Padua roles. Several ensemble will be needed in addition to the named characters, and many named characters may appear in ensemble roles.

Last, this show is well suited for diverse casting, and race neutral casting. All are encouraged to audition.