

KISS ME KATE - Chelmsford Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society at the Civic Theatre (4th April – 9th April) 2005

Kiss Me Kate focuses on Lilli Vanessi (Claire McGeough) and Fred Graham (David Pridige), a battling, once-married couple who are reunited to star in a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. On stage they fight it out as Shakespeare's Katharine and Petruchio - while backstage they continue to clash. A fight on the opening night threatens the production, as well as two thugs who have the mistaken idea that Fred owes their boss money and insist on staying next to him all night. This is a show that exudes more backstage romance, off-stage antics and centre stage fun than any other musical and with eighteen unforgettable Cole Porter songs, is the perfect vehicle for a talented amateur company like C.A.O.D.S. Expectations were high as the audience settled down to be entertained but the big 'show biz' number 'Another opening, Another Show' that opens this show, proved disappointing, with the production lacking the energy and vitality that this company is normally renowned for. The slow start persisted through the first few numbers but was redeemed by the fabulous costumes and hard working principals who gradually developed their characters to win us over. A fun number, 'I Hate Men' was given a saucy treatment by Claire Mc Geough and when it reached 'Were Thine That Special Face,' sung splendidly by David Pridige, the stage was truly 'Venetian carnival' all black and gold, with dancers in elaborate gowns and fabulous masks. The popular gangster figures (Patrick Tucker and Martin Burgess) arrived, and by the end of the first act this show was in full swing. Act two opened to an orgy of red, orange and purple, heralding the 'Too Darn Hot' number, with the gangsters in 'drag,' stealing the scenes as their characters became completely stage struck. Karen Kelleher (Lois Lane) made a delightful, dizzy starlet and received great applause for her rendition of 'Always True to You Darling in My Fashion,' she was ably partnered by Ben Martins (Bill Calhoun). The finale was the culmination of a show that was both a visual and musical delight, treating the audience to a fun evening at the theatre, with the added bonus of songs they could go home singing.

Cheryl Rogers