

KISS ME KATE 2024

Plot, Character Descriptions & Audition Pieces

PLOT

Cole Porter's 'Kiss Me Kate' is a show within a show - an American theatre company putting on a musical version of Shakespeare's 'The Taming of The Shrew'. A show of two halves, the backstage scenes are set in the 1950's (unlike some productions we will be keeping this in the fabulous era of the 50's) and the 'show scenes' will be 'period Shakespeare'. Egotistical leading man, Fred Graham, is reunited with his ex-wife, Lilli Vanessi, when he hires her to play opposite one another in the production. The battle of the sexes continues onstage and off as it becomes clear that, as much as this couple profess to hating each other, they are also still in love. Alongside their bickering liaison, the show's supporting actress, Lois Lane, supports her gambling boyfriend, Bill Calhoun, as he attempts to evade the clutches of gangsters. Throw in some mistaken identity, the mob, and comedic routines – along with huge amounts of jazz dance, some tap, a brilliant score and plenty to do for the whole Company, you get the fabulous Tony award-winning 'Kiss Me Kate'!

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS & AUDITION PIECES

Lilli Vanessi / Katherine (Kate) – LEADING ROLE. A star of stage and screen actress and he ex-wife of director/actor Fred Graham who divorced one year previously. She is a regal diva with beauty, poise and the elegance of a movie star. Lilli is currently engaged to General Howell, but it is clear that her heart still lies with Fred. However, they argue constantly and are as high maintenance as each other. She is passionate, demanding, prickly and perfectly encapsulates her onstage persona as the fiery Katherine! Her temper is fierce, as is her wit – although we do often see her softer side when she realises her true feelings are still with Fred.

Very strong acting skills needed – she is intelligent, cunning, sarcastic, charismatic, funny, sweet (occasionally) with masses of stage presence. Vocals must be very strong (it's a tough sing!) with some belt, and must be a good mover. (Playing age 30s-50s).

Dialogue:

Act 1/3 p19-21 'Hello? Hello darling..' to 'Wunderbar'

Act 1/7 p53-54 up 'Get out! Get out! Get out!'

Vocal: 5. So In Love – beg to bar 77

9. I Hate Men – beg to bar 43

Fred Graham / Petruchio – LEADING ROLE. A prolific producer, director and actor and former husband of Lilli. He is producing a new touring version of 'The Taming Of The Shrew' and controversially has cast his -ex-wife to star opposite him in the lead role. Fred enjoying teasing Lilli, they argue constantly, but underneath it is clear that he still has strong feelings for her. However, he is also pursuing a relationship with Lois, a flirtatious young actress. Fred is passionate and demanding, high maintenance like his ex-wife. He is charismatic, funny, rather vain and overbearing at times! Must be an excellent actor and very strong vocalist, great comedy timing, with a physically imposing stage presence and a very large EGO, and be a good mover. (Playing age 35-50s)

Dialogue:

Act 1/5 p45-47

Act 1/7 p53-55 up to 'Come in gentlemen...'

Vocal: 10. Were Thine That Special Face – bar 75 to end

16. Where Is The Life That Late I Led – beg to bar 82

Lois Lane / Bianca – SUPPORTING ROLE. A former nightclub singer in her first featured role on stage. She doesn't really understand Shakespearean language, but what she lacks in knowledge she makes up in sexy charisma. Charismatic, attractive and alluring, and she knows it – she is an expert at employing her feminine wiles. She is in a relationship with Bill Calhoun, but is also having an affair with Fred Graham. A triple theatre role – must be an excellent dancer and vocalist, funny, flirty, and sickly sweet at times – vulnerable yet tough and determined. (Playing age 20-30s).

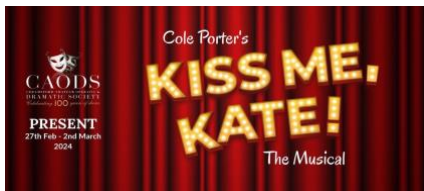
Dialogue:

Act 1 / 2 p14-16

Vocal: 3. Why Can't You Behave – whole song

17. Always True To You In My Fashion – bar 49 to end

(Bianca's may be asked to do the dance audition together on the day of auditions)



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Bill Calhoun / Lucentio – SUPPORTING ROLE. A Broadway hoofer and a compulsive gambler that always gets him into trouble with his girlfriend, Lois Lane. Bill possesses that irresistible 'charm' that gets him out of every tight spot (well mostly!). He cares for Lois deeply but worries about her flirtatious behaviour and string of previous boyfriends. Despite being charming, he is dishonest, and frequently loses large amounts of money. He signs an IOU under the name of Fred Graham which lands him (and the others) in rather a lot of hot water. Despite all this, Bill is a first-class entertainer / performer, and excellent song and dance man.

A triple threat role - excellent actor, vocalist and dancer (jazz style) – ability to tap also would be amazing!

(Playing age 20-30s)

Dialogue:

Act 1/2 p15-16

Act 1/5 p37

Vocal: 19. Bianca – bars 52 – 101

(Bill's may be asked to do the dance audition together on the day of auditions)

First Man & Second Man (The Gangsters) – SUPPORTING ROLES. The archetypal gangsters (complete with accent) have been sent to the theatre in Baltimore by the unseen Mr Hogan to collect an IOU of \$10,000 in the name of Fred Graham. They do not realise that it is actually Bill who owes the money. The gangsters are tough and are not afraid to threaten those around them with guns. However, they are also rather polite in doing so and, after working six years in the prison library, have developed a unique way of words and an appreciation of Shakespeare, the theatre and love of the Bard! Must be excellent actors, superb comedy delivery and timing, hold the character throughout the show, but also charm the audience. Both gangsters unexpectedly appear in 'The Shrew'! Good movers would be very useful for their big number 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' – a Vaudeville classic!

The Second Man has the same qualities as the First Man but maybe more reserved and dryer of wit. (Playing ages 20s-50s)

Dialogue:

Act 1/3 p24-25

Vocal: 21. Brush Up Your Shakespeare – beg - 107

Hattie – SUPPORTING ROLE. Lilli's dresser and faithful assistant, who often finds her job tiresome but still goes beyond the call of duty. Popular with the cast and crew and always busy backstage. Hattie sings the opening number 'Another Openin' Another Show' so a strong vocal is needed and masses of stage presence. This role is flexible – it could be played as a slightly older lady, who has been in the business a long time, or we could make her a similar age to Lilli (or younger). Hattie can also dance in 'Too Darn Hot' as a featured dancer with Paul (depending on casting), so excellent dance skills would be welcomed (but not essential). But must be likeable and charismatic, with a flirtatious relationship with Paul. (Playing age – open to age).

Dialogue:

Act 1/3 p26

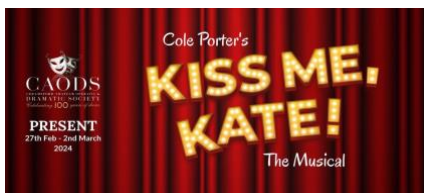
Vocal: 1. Another Op'nin', Another Show – bars 36 - 97

Paul - SUPPORTING ROLE. Fred Graham's dresser, and speciality dancer / vocalist of 'Too Darn Hot'. A committed worker supporting the leading man and boss, who goes above and beyond the call of duty of the job. He is excitable and entertaining, must be an excellent vocalist and dancer (Playing age – open to age).

Dialogue:

Act 1/2 p14

Vocal: 14. Too Darn Hot – bars 73 - 107



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Harry Trevor / Baptista – SUPPORTING ROLE. A veteran character actor. Harry primarily appears in the play as Katherine and Bianca's rich father, Baptista. Baptista will not allow his younger daughter Bianca to marry until his eldest daughter has done so. Eloquent in his delivery of Shakespeare, a key character in ensuring the story of the play unfolds. (Playing age 50's+).

Dialogue:

Act 1/5 p32-33

Vocal: Ensemble vocal

Flynt / Gremio – SUPPORTING ROLE. First suitor to Bianca and stars in the number 'Tom, Dick or Harry' amongst others. Featured dancer and vocalist in 'Too Darn Hot' as Flynt. Must be vocally strong, and an excellent jazz dancer. Will feature in all the Company numbers either as Flynt or Gremio. Comfortable with partner work also. Strong vocalist and dancer essential.

Dialogue:

Act 1/5 p32-33 (read Gremio & Hortensio lines)

Vocal: 7. Tom, Dick or Harry – beg to bar 52

Riley / Hortensio – SUPPORTING ROLE. Second suitor to Bianca and stars in the number 'Tom, Dick and Harry' as Hortensio, amongst others. Featured dancer and vocalist in 'Too Darn Hot' as Riley. Must be vocally strong, and an excellent jazz dancer. Will feature in all the Company numbers either as Flynt or Gremio. Comfortable with partner work also. Strong vocalist and dancer essential.

Dialogue:

Act 1/5 p32-33 (read Gremio & Hortensio lines)

Vocal: 7. Tom, Dick or Harry – beg to bar 52

General Harrison Howell – SUPPORTING ROLE. Engaged to Lill Vanessi, a former General of the Second World War and a traditional military man. Now the war is over he is pursuing a career in politics and has close ties to the White House. He is keen to marry Lilli as soon as possible and puts pressure on her to leave the show as soon as possible. A man of traditional values and strict military discipline, therefore does not fit into the theatrical world he finds himself involved in. Rather stuffy, could have a bit of a Southern accent. Could double in some scenes potentially or just be this character only, (Playing age 50's+)

Dialogue:

Ac 2/5 p83-85

Vocal: 18. From This Moment On – beg to bar 51

FEATURED ROLES – submit names please or will be allocated:

Pops (Stage Doorman) – vocalist

Ralph (Stage Manager) – vocalist

Various stagehands – vocalists

Dance Captain - dialogue

Wardrobe Lady – vocalist

Haberdasher – vocalist

THE COMPANY

DANCERS (Male & Female) – Dance audition will be set. There is a huge amount of choreography for the dancers to feature throughout the show. Energetic jazz and some tap primarily, alongside traditional "pavane" (court dances). Many opportunities for small featured dance roles and vocal solo lines. **DANCE AUDITION.**

ENSEMBLE (Male & Female) – There is a lot for the ensemble to get involved in which will require everyone to move to a decent standard, and have strong vocals. There are many different characters to get stuck into both set backstage in the era and once onstage for 'The Shrew' in full Shakespearean costume. **MOVEMENT AUDITION.**

VOCAL: 1a. Another Op'nin', Another Show beg to bar 140