

WU?@therep

KISS ME, KATE

Book by Samuel and Bella Spewack

Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter

Directed by Victoria Bussert

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Kiss Me, Kate



the 11

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some

things are worth slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information on the playwright (**F&F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials more accessible to students and easier for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions.

You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including educational games, activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information.

Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom. As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and

welcome your feedback and questions.

NEATO!

Show Me Standards: CA 2, 3, 5, 6, 7; FA 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
and Illinois Learning Standards: 1, 2, 5, 25, 27.

MIHYAP: TOP TEN WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED AT THE REP

10. TBA Ushers will seat your school or class as a group, so even if you are dying to mingle with the group from the all girls school that just walked in the door, stick with your friends until you have been shown your section in the theatre.

9. SITD The house lights will dim immediately before the performance begins and then go dark. Fight off that oh-so-immature urge to whisper, giggle like a grade schooler, or yell at this time and during any other blackouts in the show.

8. SED Before the performance begins, turn off all cell phones, pagers, beepers and watch alarms. If you need to text, talk or dial back during intermission, please make sure to click off before the show resumes.

7. TMI Not to sound like your mom, but "if you need to go now, you needed to go then." Leaving the theatre during the performance is disruptive, so take care of any personal needs before the show starts.

6. RTM When you arrive at the theatre, read the production program. It's like a deluxe version of liner notes and a free souvenir, all in one.

5. P-ZA? NW! Though your ability to eat ten slices at one sitting may impress your friends, no one wants to listen to you chew, slurp or smack, so please leave all food, drink and gum outside the theatre.

4. TLK-2U-L8R We know that you will be dying to discuss what you see onstage with your friends, but please wait until intermission. Any talking—even whispering—is very distracting for both the actors onstage and the audience seated around you.

3. LOL Without you, we really wouldn't have a show. It's your job to laugh when a scene is funny or maybe even shed a tear or two in a tender moment. However, since you are not the audience at *The Jerry Springer Show* please refrain from inappropriate responses such as talking, whistling, making catcalls or singing along with the performers.

2. SOP While it's great that you want a celeb picture of your day at The Rep, the theatre is off-limits to the paparazzi. Flash photography interrupts the performance and along with videorecording is prohibited by Actors Equity rules. You can sneak a peek at production photos on our website, www.repstl.org.

1. LLTA Let the actors know that you respect their work by remaining for the curtain call at the end of the performance. Show your appreciation through applause.

A/S/L

A veteran of the theatre, POPS is the stage doorman.

HATTIE is Lilli's personal dresser, just as PAUL is for Fred.

The stage manager, RALPH tries to keep order in a production that is turning into a fiasco.

Young and beautiful nightclub performer LOIS LANE is making her stage debut with hopes that she will become a Broadway star.

Also in the show is BILL CALHOUN, Lois' troublemaking gambler of a boyfriend.

LILLI VANESSI is the star of the show and recent ex-wife of Fred.

Writer, producer, actor and director, FRED GRAHAM is putting it all on the line both professionally and personally for his new musical, *Shrew*.

HARRY TREVOR is a veteran character actor whose role gets him caught in the middle of the battling leads.

The two GANGSTERS are employed to collect on Bill's gambling debt, but they are after the wrong man.

GENERAL HARRISON HOWELL is Lilli's wealthy and politically connected new fiancé.

Members of the ENSEMBLE play stagehands, assistants and other various parts in both *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Shrew*.

<i>Shrew</i> Players:	
Pops	Padua Priest
Lois Lane	Bianca
Bill Calhoun	Lucentio
Lilli Vanessi	Katharine
Fred Graham	Petruchio
Harry Trevor	Baptista
Gangsters	Servants, donkey



WITH A BOOK by Samuel and Bella Spewack, and a score that is often considered one of Cole Porter's crowning achievements, *Kiss Me, Kate* has long been one of Broadway's musical gems. The show begins in the 1940s at Baltimore's Victoria Theatre, where Fred Graham is about to open *Shrew*, his new musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Finishing up the final rehearsal, we meet the stars of the show: Lilli Vanessi, Fred's ex-wife and currently the biggest name in the show, and Lois Lane, Fred's new infatuation and stage novice.

AS THE CAST WORKS the curtain call we notice that Bill Calhoun, Lois' current main squeeze, is absent. Lois informs an agitated Fred that Bill is at the doctor's office, but we are soon to discover that Bill is actually out feeding one of his bad habits—gambling. Upon his return, we find out that he has just lost \$10,000 and he doesn't even have enough money to pay his two dollar cab fare. Stage doorman, Pops, shells out yet another loan for the rascal, but what's worse is that Bill has given Fred's name on the IOU he took out for his loss. Lois is horrified that Bill would do such a thing, not necessarily because it's wrong, but because she is afraid something will happen to Fred before he's able to jump-start her acting career.

ON OPENING NIGHT, the cast gets ready backstage. From his dressing room, Fred can hear Lilli talking on the phone to her fiancé, military man and politician General Harrison Howell. Suddenly jealous, Fred squabbles with his ex, but the tiff soon turns into reminiscing about their time together as young lovers. It is clear that the two still have feelings for each other, though neither is willing to admit it.

AS THE SHOW is about to begin, two burly gangsters arrive to collect on Bill's gambling debt. Since he gave Fred's name instead of his, the two are after the wrong man and no one seems to know quite what is going on. Fred insists he knows nothing about the debt,

but intent on collecting, the gangsters decide to stick around during the show and make sure their mark doesn't skip out on them.

MEANWHILE, as Fred is distracted, some flowers that he bought for Lois are delivered to Lilli by mistake. Recognizing her favorite flowers, Lilli is touched by the gesture. Fred rushes to Lilli's dressing room to explain the mistake, but she is so flattered by the gift that he can't bring himself to hurt her with the truth. She doesn't have time to read the note accompanying the bouquet before she takes the stage, so she tucks it into her bosom to keep it close to her heart during the show.

THE PLAY BEGINS WELL, until during a brief offstage moment Lilli has time to read the note. Realizing the flowers weren't for her, she takes her anger out on Fred, biting, kicking and slapping him onstage while in character. Fred attempts to carry on with the scene, but is finally angered enough that he responds to Lilli's attacks by turning her over his knee and spanking her—onstage! Horrified and embarrassed, Lilli calls her fiancé and lets him know she wants to leave the show and marry him immediately. Seeing that Lilli is trying to leave, Fred tells the two gangsters that he won't be able to pay his debt if his star leaves and the show closes. The two are more than happy to act as a barrier, even taking parts in the show to keep Ms. Vanessi in the building for the time being.

WHEN THE GENERAL finally arrives to rescue his fiancée, he shows his true colors as a domineering cad and paints a grim picture of what life will be like once they are married. Meanwhile, the gangsters contact their Boss to assure him that they are going to collect his money, only to find out that he has been "disposed" of, thereby nullifying the debt. Fred realizes that without their help he will never be able to keep Lilli at the theatre. Will she leave him high and dry without his leading lady, or will she give love a second chance?



OVERTURE: an orchestral piece at the beginning of an opera or musical

SIGNOR: Italian term of address or title of respect for a male

NOTES: specific points of feedback for a performer to work on

PRINCIPALS: primary or main characters in a play, musical or film

HOOFER: a professional dancer

CHIROPODIST: medical professional that treats foot ailments

LOUSE: to spoil or ruin

MAGNUM OPUS: the most important work of an artist

MERDE: a mild, generally humorous exclamation

ELOCUTIONARY: clear and expressive in speech, especially in pronunciation and articulation

VIRILE: manly

FELICITATIONS: good wishes

CONNOISSEUR: an expert judge on taste in a specific field

BOTANY: scientific study of plants

ORDNANCE: mounted guns; artillery

AFFABILITY: friendliness; tendency to be good-natured

PEREMPTORY: insisting on immediate attention or obedience

AD LIBBING: making it up as you go along

UNCTION: expression arising from deep emotion

ARDENT: enthusiastic or passionate

CHATELS: personal possessions or a slave

FAMISH: to starve

FARTHINGALE: a hooped petticoat or circular pad of fabric around the hips

PORRINGER: a small bowl, typically with a handle, used for soup, stew or similar dishes

HABILIMENTS: clothing

CAPRICE: a sudden and unaccountable change of mood or behavior

LIBEL: a false statement aimed at defaming an individual

MOROSE: sullen and ill-tempered

BEGUINE: a popular dance of West Indian origin, similar to the fox trot

TAWDRY: showy but cheap and of poor quality

MORATORIUM: a temporary prohibition of activity

FORSOOTH: indeed





THE REINVENTION of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* is only one of Cole Porter's many musical triumphs. As an innovative and engaging composer and songwriter, he helped change the landscape of American music with his often daring, always witty, and ever brilliant brand of composing and songwriting.

AS ONE OF the most celebrated musical talents of his time, Cole Porter came onto the musical scene at a time when formula dominated popular music. His brilliant wielding of clever lyrics and complex forms brought a creative flair and sophistication to popular songwriting. Noted for his sense of rebellion and boldness for taking on such taboo subjects as sexuality, Cole helped redefine the way songs were written. His body of work still bears strong influence on the popular music of today.

COLE PORTER was born in Peru, Indiana on June 9, 1891. As the son of a druggist and wealthy matron, Cole was born into a wealth and privilege that helped pave the way to realizing his artistic talents. Cole was introduced to musical training at a young age, taking violin lessons as early as age six, piano at age eight, and even wrote his first operetta (a short opera) at age ten. Cole was also immersed in the theatrical from a young age; as one story recalls when a 14-year-old Cole entered prep school his mother purposely told the school he was 12.

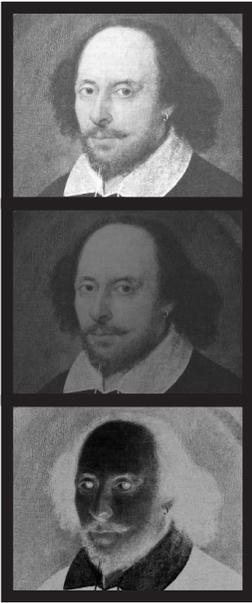
EARLY ON it seemed that Cole had found his calling, and from his teen years at Worcester Academy up to his graduation at Yale University, he was active as a songwriter for theatrical productions. Oddly enough though, Cole never spent any extensive amount of time in formal musical training, as he could never seem to stick with it. All of his innovation and talent seemed to spring entirely from instinct.

COLE'S LOVE FOR his art often made it seem as though he was always playing instead of working. His cynical and satirical style exuded a wink and a smile, and his very methods of creation often stuck others around him as less than serious. He was known to arbitrarily call out "Title!" after hearing a catchy word or phrase, and then write an entire song around the phrase.

COLE WAS A prolific composer/songwriter whose career often ebbed and flowed as it went from smash hit to startling disappointment. His ingenuity and bold style as often put him at risk to be criticized as it did to be praised. No matter how low the failure, however, Cole had a talent for returning as bold and original as before, and he always found a way to make a hit.

COLE PORTER'S fearless ingenuity and unyielding perseverance along with his creative flair continue to inspire modern day songwriting and composing. Cole's work continues to be celebrated today through successful productions and tributes from various artists around the globe.





WHILE COLE PORTER'S *Kiss Me, Kate* holds a brilliance and artistic flair that only Cole could bring to a musical, he didn't start from scratch in writing the show. *Kiss Me, Kate* is rooted in the brilliance of the play it's adapted from—William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. And while we've all read his plays in school, seen his work in production, and hear about him constantly, do we really know who William Shakespeare was?

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE is often held to be the greatest English writer of all time, and certainly one of the greatest (if not *the* greatest) playwrights ever. The total sum of his work includes 38 plays, two long narrative poems and 154 sonnets. Other than his body of work, Shakespeare did not leave much behind for historians to study. Consequently, much of Shakespeare's life is shrouded in mystery and folklore.

IT IS KNOWN that William Shakespeare was born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden in April 1564 (it's often speculated that his date of birth was April 23, based on his recorded christening on April 26). His place of birth is known as Stratford-upon-Avon, and John Shakespeare's house (the believed birthplace of his famous son) still stands today and serves as the home of Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust.

THE THIRD AMONG eight children, it is presumed that Shakespeare attended King Edward VI Grammar School. Being the son of a prominent town official (his father was an alderman and a glover, his mother from an upper class family) he probably attended the school at no cost. While there, he more than likely would have been educated intensively in literature and Latin grammar.

AT AGE 18, Shakespeare married 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. Together they would have three children—Susanna and twins Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet would die at age 11 of bubonic plague, while the others

would eventually all find themselves moving with the family to London.

BY 1592, Shakespeare was a well-known playwright in London. By 1594, he was an actor, writer and part-owner of the company Lord Chamberlain's Men (named for its sponsor), which would later become the King's Men under King James I. While known to have acted in his own work from time to time, Shakespeare was also known to have acted in several other productions, most notably work of one of his greatest contemporaries and rivals, Ben Jonson.

WHILE SHAKESPEARE'S work is often based on plays and stories belonging to others, he brought innovative and invigorating new dimensions to drama. His ability to tightly intertwine engaging plot lines, meld unlikely genres together and explore the inner workings of characters took the theatre to new heights, the effects of which are still felt today. His work stands as some of the most widely produced and adapted of any dramatist.

THE BARD'S WORK is widely known in the theatre, but his influence doesn't stop there. His work slips into our everyday speech since his poetic writing holds many witty sayings. Many expressions we use today like "with baited breath" or "a foregone conclusion" come from Shakespeare's work. Shakespeare even coined hundreds of new words including "moonbeam," "shudder" and "puke." Have you ever heard (or said) any of the following?

**"TO BE OR NOT TO BE,
THAT IS THE QUESTION."**

**"ALL THE WORLD'S
A STAGE."**

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

**"ALL THAT GLITTERS IS
NOT GOLD."**

"ET TU, BRUTE?"

BU

COLE PORTER'S cleverly adapted *Kiss Me, Kate* takes one of William Shakespeare's classic plays, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and imbues a whimsical quality that reinvigorates the text in a way that only music can. While this idea may have its own sense of novelty, the magic and enchantment of music in performance has been delighting audiences as far back as recorded history takes us.

MUSIC AND STORYTELLING have a rich history, rooted in the ancients' use of song, dance and chanting to tell stories onstage. In fact, historians believe that many ancient Greek plays were actually partially or entirely chanted or sung as opposed to our modern naturalistic delivery of lines onstage. Musical theatre itself also finds its roots not only in "unsung" plays, but also in storytelling ballads (stories told through

song form) that have been passed down orally across time and cultures.

MUSICAL THEATRE celebrates theatricality in ways that many other forms of entertainment simply cannot match, and the key word behind nearly every successful musical is "BIG." That is to say—big sets, big productions, big stars, big dance numbers—everything in its oversized, opulent glory. While in the early days this often called into question the integrity of the art, musical theatre has evolved over time to not only revel in its spectacle, but also explore intriguing and memorable plot lines, epic characters and lend insight into the human condition as strongly as any other form of art.

AS CLEVER AS Cole Porter's adaptation of *The Taming the Shrew* may be, the idea of adapting a play for musical theatre isn't actually a new one. Musical theatre sets a grand stage for the adaptation of many art forms, most commonly plays and movies. The first production to solidify the musical as a legitimate American art form, *Oklahoma!*, was actually adapted from Native American playwright Lynn Riggs' poetic play, *Green Grow the Lilacs*.

IN FACT, many of the most celebrated musicals today are adaptations of prior works. *West Side Story* is an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. *The Wiz* is an adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*. *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Sunset Boulevard* are all popular adaptations of films with the same name.

KISS ME, KATE follows in the great tradition of musicals by bringing a time-tested story to the stage in a new and innovative way, accentuating the classic play before it while engaging today's audience in its own magical, musical way.



STEREOTYPES

KISS ME, KATE often utilizes humor based on stereotypes of women. The entire premise of the play it is adapted from centers around “taming” a woman. A specific moment of this in the musical is when the General says to Fred, “We both know women need a firm hand from time to time. In fact, between you and me, they like it!” The two men have been speaking on what they believe to be the capricious nature of women, and that it’s a man’s responsibility to keep women in check. Katharine herself sings, “I am ashamed that women are so simple.” While the play give us a good laugh, it also challenges us to question the stereotypes that we hold, and think about what’s at stake for others when we cling to such stereotypes.

SELF-AWARENESS

COLE PORTER’S musical cleverly engages in the meta-theatrical, when a play or musical is aware of itself, often initiating contact with the audience or putting on a

play within a play. In this case, *Kiss Me, Kate* seems to play with both addressing the audience directly and putting up a musical production at the same time. The play often gives us a glimpse of what can happen behind the scenes, and it encourages us to laugh along with it at itself. Because *Kiss Me, Kate* is so self-aware, it begs us to be aware of ourselves. To be able to step outside of ourselves and objectively look at who we are, even be able to laugh at ourselves when necessary.

COOPERATION

Through all of the taming going on, *Kiss Me, Kate* reveals the necessity of cooperation. As the musical helps illustrate, any theatrical production demands the work and cooperation of many individuals—stage hands, designers, stage managers, directors and actors. When any one of these individuals decides not to be a part of the team, things can go very wrong (as seen in moments throughout the musical). *Kiss Me, Kate* encourages us to cooperate with others and help our team put forth the best work possible.

READ MORE ABOUT IT

www.geocities.com/porterguide/

The Cole Porter Reference Guide gives a chronological tour of all of his works.

www.coleporter.org

This official Cole Porter website features a biography, CD and book guide as well as a discussion forum for Porter fans.

***Kiss Me, Kate*, 109 minutes, MGM, 1953, DVD.**

This DVD features Howard Keel and Kathryn Grayson as the battling lovers.

Bloom, Ken. *Broadway Musicals: The 101 Greatest Shows of All Time*. Black Dog & Leventhal, 2004. Interested in musical theatre?

This book covers Broadway’s most influential, popular and enduring shows of all time.

***Broadway – The Golden Age by the Legends Who Were There*. 111 minutes, RCA, 2004, DVD.**

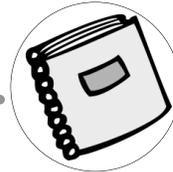
Interviews with Marlon Brando, Carol Channing, Jerry Herman and more discuss everything from performance, Broadway culture and taking a show on the road to thoughts on the current generation.

Kantor, Michael and Laurence Maslon. *B’Way: The American Musical*. Bulfinch, 2004.

This companion book to the PBS series of the same name talks about key musicals, historical context and important trends.



HOW DO THEY DO THAT?



LIBRETTIST: Creates the structure, the building blocks for a musical and writes all spoken dialogue.



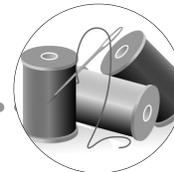
COMPOSER: It's a musical right? So we need music. This person creates the songs, the tunes for the soundtrack you'll want to buy later.



IDEA: This is where it all begins—the foundation for everything a play or musical will become. Without this, no one has a job.



DIRECTOR: Moves the play from the page to the stage. Makes decisions about staging and tells the actors what to do.



DESIGN: (Set, Costume, Sound, Lights...) This team of specialists creates the world of the play in following with the Director's vision.



PRODUCING THEATRE: Loves the script! Purchases the rights to produce the piece, raises the money and hires all the folks who will bring the show to life.

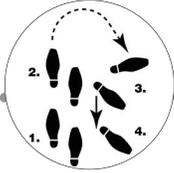


GENERAL MANAGER: Supervises the business and (cha-ching!) the money to make sure the show is successful.

In *Kiss Me, Kate* you see some of the backstage happenings that make a musical come together, but there's a lot more that goes into producing a show than just what happens backstage. Here's how shows like the one you're attending make it from a mere idea in someone's head to the glitz and glamour of a full stage production.



LYRICIST: Writes the words to the composer's songs, those wonderful lyrics you'll have stuck in your head for the rest of the day.



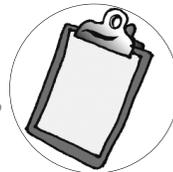
CHOREOGRAPHER: Those spunky dance numbers would be nothing but a mess without this person who makes sure everyone steps together.



CONDUCTOR: Leads the orchestra at every performance, keeping the composer's vision.



MUSICIANS: Down in the pit their keys, drums and horns create live music every night.



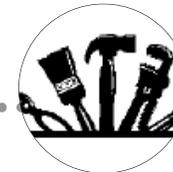
CASTING: Conducts auditions all around the world to find the perfect face to fit the role.



ACTORS: Onstage they become someone else and bring the play to life.



STAGE MANAGER: Their work behind the scenes keeps everything running smoothly out front.



TECHNICIANS: Whether it's electric, scenery or sound, they make sure every piece works perfectly.



MARKETING: See this show! See this show! See this show... You get the picture.



EDUCATION: Got questions about what's happening onstage? Here's the people to ask.



BOX OFFICE/USHERS: They sell you a ticket and put you in your seat (literally).



HOUSE MANAGER: In charge of the theatre building on the day of shows. Makes sure the soda's stocked, the audience is happy and any emergencies are under control.



AUDIENCE: The final piece of the puzzle. You let us know whether all this hard work was worth it. Come again—and next time bring friends!



SWDY?

*"Four weeks, you rehearse and rehearse,
Three weeks, and it couldn't be worse,
One week, will it ever be right?
Then out o' the hat, it's that big first
night!"*

- Hattie seems to paint a bleak picture of life in the theatre. Have you ever been involved in a stage production? Was your experience anything like this?

*"I'll never forgive you if anything
happens to Mr. Graham before I'm a star
on Broadway."*

- Lois certainly doesn't seem to be too concerned about Fred, just about her own star rising. Have you known anyone who pretended to care about someone in order to get something out of them? Have you ever felt used like this? What did you do?

*"Deceive me, desert me,
I'm yours 'til I die,
So in love,
So in love,
So in love with you, my love, am I."*

- Lilli admits that love can be painful. She and Fred have both been hurt by love, yet their feelings remain, even after divorce. What is so powerful about love that it makes you willing to be hurt? When is the pain too much to bear? How can you make the decision about when to let someone go if they are hurting you?

*"I hate men.
I can't abide 'em even now and then.
Than ever marry one of them, I'd rest a
virgin rather,
For husbands are a boring lot and only
give you bother."*

- Katharine certainly has a low opinion of the opposite sex. Why do you think she is so against men? What has colored her opinion? Do you know anyone who is this prejudiced against another group? Why, and what can be done to change his or her mind?

*"Now see here Graham. You're a man of
the world. We both know women need a
firm hand from time to time. In fact,
between you and me, they like it!"*

- What do you think of the General's view of relationships? He seems to think that he is in control of his wife and that she will enjoy being commanded. What do you think Lilli would say about this?