

BROS Theatre Company

## **Kiss Me Kate • June 2005 • Minack Theatre**

REVIEW

With truly "Wunderbar" weather, a capacity Bank Holiday audience, whose sense of anticipation was all but tangible and whose expectations, like those of Dickens, were great, plus the music and lyrics, not to mention magic, of Cole Porter and a company raring to go for Another Op'nin', Another Show, the BROS Theatre Company's production of Kiss Me Kate had to be a winner.

Reckoned to be Cole Porter's own favourite show, one which opened in New York's New Century Theatre 57 years ago and has since been acclaimed as "one of the masterpieces of American musical theatre", its story line - not to be studied too closely or taken too seriously - owes a lot to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and revolves around the on and off stage conflict between the actors playing Kate and Petruchio during a try out of the play in the Ford Theatre in Baltimore.

A play within a play, it presents problems in production, all of which director Wesley Henderson Roe, with the help of choreographer Melanie Edwards, musical director Martin Wilcox, and a huge back stage crew, copes with admirably to come up with a show which is as appealing and assured, and on occasion, as aggressive, as it is *Too Darn Hot*.

The big numbers in Cole Porter's brilliant score - one feels that the Bard himself would have been proud to have written some of these songs - are put over with pizzazz, and all praise to the company's energetic and eager troupe of hoofers, so, too, is the solo spot, Lucy Clement's rendering as the dumb and dizzy blonde Lois (Bianca) of *Always True To You In My Fashion*, and the duet by the pair of hoods, the amusing "Mickey Mice", Paul Kirkbright (Ripper) and Lawrence Keal (Knuckles), with their encore entreating, show-stopping *Brush Up Your Shakespeare*.

Ultimately, however, the show stands or falls on the standard of performance given by the protagonists in this battle of the sexes, and the company is fortunate in having two such fiery opponents as Sue Astbury as Lilli (Kate), who delivers her solo *I Hate Men* with relish and rage, and Bryan Cardus as Fred (Petruchio), who *Wives It* as wonderfully as he does *Wealthily In Padua*.

A couple in real danger of doing themselves an injury before the week is over, they slug it out, slapping, kicking and kissing, one another with gusto - their amalgam of clowning, choreography and timing, in the extremely physical *Were Thine That Special Face* is first-rate. While I'm still not sure who won this particular battle, or even the war eventually, it hardly matters. Long before the curtain comes down, they do more than enough to ensure that this production, from its ingenious programme to their final embrace and kiss, is, in every sense, a "spanking" success and a victory for the BROS Theatre Company.

**Frank Ruhrmund  
The Cornishman**

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"Last Friday afternoon I had the immense pleasure of attending your production of "Kiss Me Kate" at The Minack. I frequently go to the theatre in London and elsewhere but I can scarcely remember enjoying any show quite as much as yours. There were 5 of us in our group and the weather was superb. But above all else your players were simply brilliant. In fact I fell in love with all those lovely girls!! I always envy you.. I, as a dentist, have always inflicted, at the very least, discomfort and misery on the public but you give such joy and pleasure!!! Congratulations to all your company on such a magnificent show".

"My wife and I visited your show last Thursday, Kiss Me Kate at the Minack theatre, what a show!!! please send our congratulations to all the cast for a superb performance on a cold evening on a cliff!! it takes great dedication to sing, in your underwear, It's too darn hot!!! If you ever plan a trip to Minack again, email me please. All the singers and dancers were stunning, if that's what amateurs can do put em on the tele, give us some real entertainment many thanks for making my second visit to a show at the minack such a memorable one, my first visit was over forty years ago, with keynsham youth centre, I was about 19 or so, we saw dark side of the moon, I cant remember any of the show, but, I remembered minack! it was wonderful to be back. again my thanks to all involved "

"Good afternoon. Just a quick note to thank your company for the marvellous production of Kiss Me Kate at the Minack last week. Given the location and facilities the company were brilliant and so enthusiastic. Please keep coming back to Cornwall and I trust that all the members returned with fond memories of their time here. Thank you once again"

"Please could you pass on my congratulations to your company for an outstanding production of Kiss Me Kate down at the Minack. I really enjoyed it. In particular I was very impressed by the lady playing Kate/Lilli. Please could you pass on my email details to her since I am very interested in contacting her to see whether she would be interested in performing elsewhere."

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**Various**