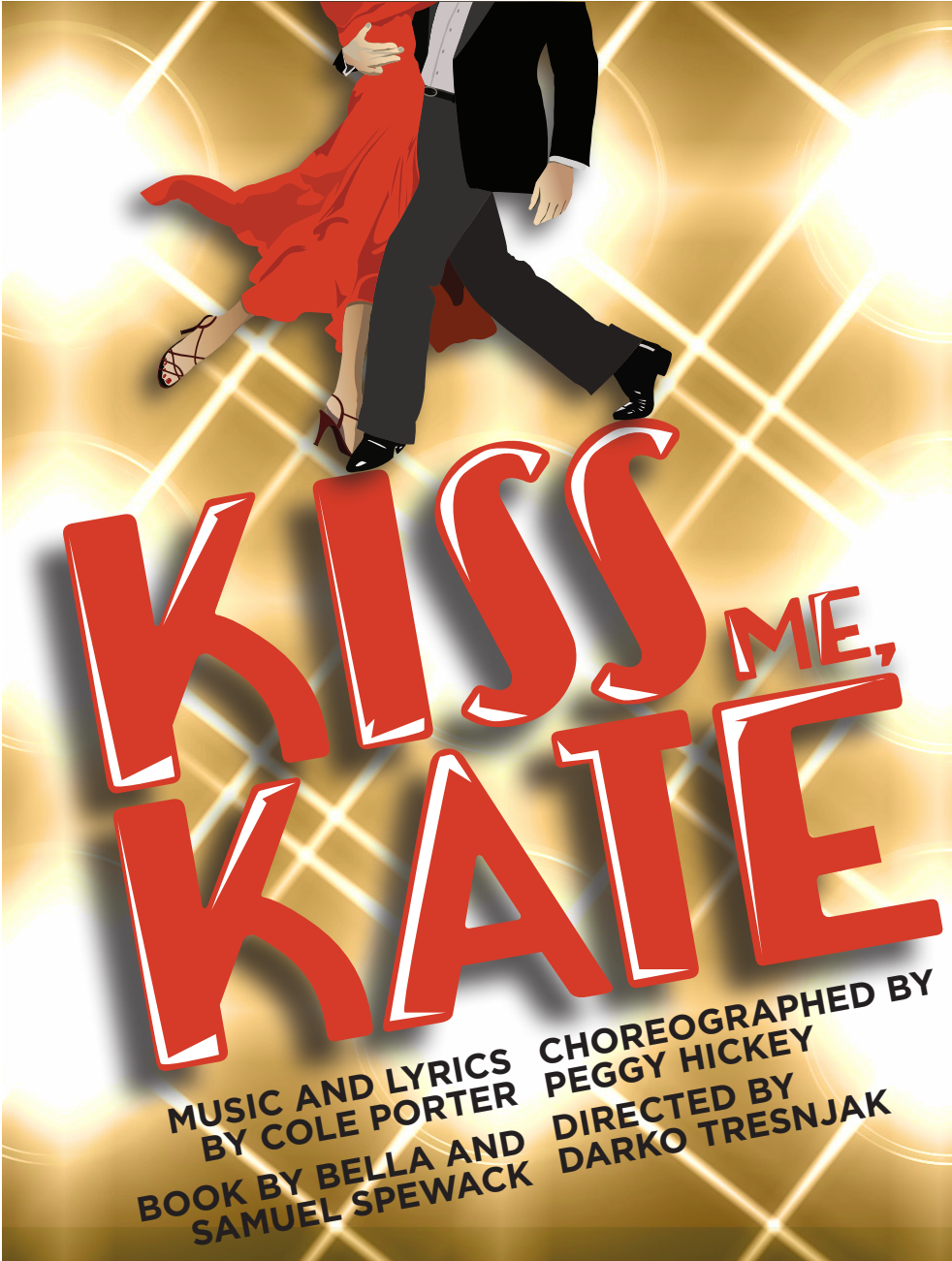


# STUDY GUIDE



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# *Study Guide Objectives*

This study guide serves as a classroom tool for teachers and students, and addresses the following Common Core Standards and Connecticut State Arts Standards:

## **COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS**

### **Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details**

- **Grade 7:** Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the themes.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop related elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

### **Reading Literature: Craft and Structure**

- **Grade 8:** Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

### **Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

- **Grade 8:** Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).

## **CONNECTICUT STANDARDS IN THEATRE**

1: *Creating*. Students will create theatre through improvising, writing and refining scripts.

5: *Researching and Interpreting*. Students will research, evaluate and apply cultural and historical information to make artistic choices.

7: *Analysis, Criticism and Meaning*. Students will analyze, critique, and construct meanings from works of theatre.

8: *History and Cultures*. Students will demonstrate an understanding of context by analyzing and comparing theatre in various cultures and historical periods.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDING THE THEATRE**

Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members are able to enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following audience etiquette topics with your students before you come to Hartford Stage.

- ◇ How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
  - Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience can affect what kind of performance the actors give. No two audiences are exactly the same and no two performances are exactly the same—this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students' behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.
  
- ◇ Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. Audience members are more than welcome to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Talking and calling out during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be?
  - Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently!
  
- ◇ Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off (or better yet, left at home or at school!). Texting, photography, and video recording are prohibited. Food and gum should not be taken into the theatre.
  
- ◇ Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun. If possible, restrooms should be used only during intermission.



# ***Kiss Me, Kate- Synopsis***

By Erin Frederick

In the late 1940s, a theatrical troupe in Baltimore prepares to start rehearsals for a musical version of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. Directing and leading the cast is Fred Graham and his ex-wife, Lili Vanessi, and sparks fly as the two former lovers battle it out behind the scenes. As rehearsals begin, Lili and Fred begin to realize that their relationship may not be quite as over as they initially thought. This situation is complicated by the fact that Fred has also been paying attention to the new flirtatious young actress, Lois Lane. Lois is also involved with the charming Bill Calhoun, a dancer with a gambling problem. His gambling has gotten so bad, in fact, that he owes \$10,000 to a couple of gangsters – an I.O.U. that he signed with Fred's name.

In the play-within-a-play, we learn that young Bianca (played by Lois) cannot be married until her older sister, Katherine (played by Lili), has found a husband. Katherine is a tough woman with a fierce temper, and so no man in town will have her. Their father, Baptista, believes his problems are solved when the boisterous Petruchio (played by Fred) comes to town, seeking a rich wife. While Petruchio does not feel love for Katherine, he agrees to wed her for the sake of her large dowry.

Backstage, Lili discovers that a bouquet of flowers she received from Fred was actually intended for Lois. Furious and heartbroken, she flies into a rage and announces she is quitting the production and leaving for good. Her departure is delayed, however, by the arrival of two gangsters coming to collect on Bill's \$10,000 debt.

Act II begins backstage at the theatre during intermission, as the actors complain that it is "Too Darn Hot." As the play-within-a-play resumes, we see that Petruchio and Katherine are now married. Katherine's fits of temper grate on Petruchio, and he bemoans his lost bachelorhood.

Backstage at the theatre, Bill chastises Lois for her constant flirtations, but she brushes him off. Bill, however, has another reason to celebrate – a sudden shakeup in the gangster world renders his I.O.U. worthless and lets him off the hook for his gambling debt. As the gangsters leave, Lili prepares to leave for good with her beau, General Harrison Howell, much to the dismay of Fred.

As the show comes to a close, Bill promises to gamble no more, Lois vows to be true to him (in her fashion), and Lili makes an unexpected return. She appears onstage as Katherine and uses Shakespeare's famous words to express her intent to stay and reunite with Fred.



Lili Vanessi's dressing robe.  
Costume design by Fabio Toblini

# ***The Taming of the Shrew – Synopsis***

By Erin Frederick

Baptista, a gentleman of Padua, has two daughters. Bianca, the youngest, has several suitors eager to claim her hand in marriage. One of them, Lucentio, has disguised himself as a student to get close to her, and the two fall in love. However, Baptista refuses to allow the sweet and mild-mannered Bianca to marry until he has found a husband for his older daughter, Katherine. Katherine is rude and aggressive toward her family members and any man who crosses her path; thus, there are no suitors willing to take her hand.

When the brash and bold Petruchio arrives from Verona in search of a wealthy wife, it appears as though everyone’s prayers have been answered. Baptista and Bianca’s suitors promise to pay him handsomely to woo Katherine. Petruchio accepts the challenge, though he gets more than he bargained for upon his first meeting with his bride-to-be. Katherine unleashes a torrent of abuse upon him, and Petruchio tells her that he will marry her whether she likes it or not.

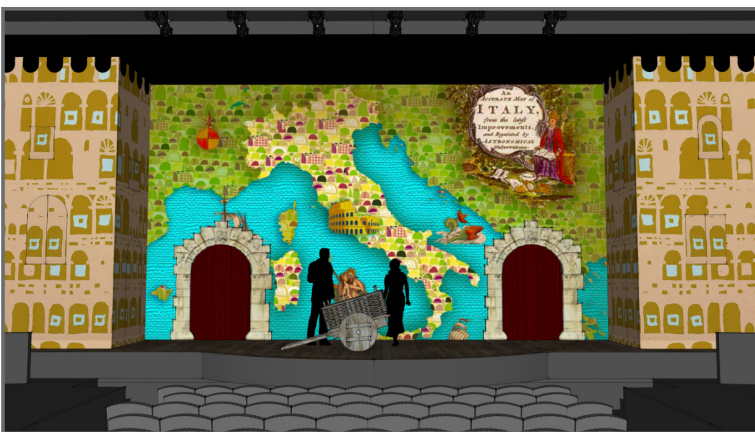
On the day of the wedding, Petruchio arrives late and is dressed like a buffoon. He acts like a drunkard and forces Katherine to leave before their wedding feast. Once they have arrived back at his house, Petruchio attempts to “tame” his wife by depriving her of food, sleep and new clothes, but still constantly praising her and telling her how much he loves her.

Back in Padua, Bianca and Lucentio have decided to elope. One of her other suitors, Hortensio, decides to marry a local widow instead. Petruchio and Katherine return to Padua for the nuptials. On the journey there, he constantly disagrees with everything she says, forcing her to say that the sun is the moon and an old man is a young woman. Finally worn down, Katherine agrees to everything her husband says. At the feast following Hortensio’s wedding, Petruchio, Lucentio and Hortensio make a bet that each can make their wife come when she is sent for. To everyone’s surprise, Katherine is the

only one of the three women to respond to the summoning. She delivers a speech about the duty women owe to their husbands. Having won the bet, Petruchio and Katherine leave the banquet to go off alone as a seemingly happily married couple.



Fred’s Petruchio costume.  
Costume design by Fabio Toblini.



The show curtain for *The Taming of the Shrew*. Set Design by Alexander Dodge.

## ***Kiss Me, Kate* – Character List**

**Fred Graham** – Writer, director, producer and actor; formerly married to Lilli; plays Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*

**Lilli Vanessi** – Stage star and screen actress; formerly married to Fred; plays Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*

**Lois Lane** – A nightclub singer in her first big stage role; plays Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*

**Bill Calhoun** – A Broadway dancer, Lois’s boyfriend, and a chronic gambler; plays Lucentio in *The Taming of the Shrew*

**Hattie** – Lilli Vanessi’s dresser and assistant

**Paul** – Fred Graham’s dresser and assistant

**1st Man** – An “enforcer” for a major crime boss

**2nd Man** – An “enforcer” for a major crime boss

**General Harrison Howell** – A military officer and politician; Lilli’s new man

**Ralph** – the stage manager

**Pops** – The stage doorman

**Harry Trevor** – an actor; plays Baptista, father to Katherine and Bianca in *The Taming of the Shrew*

**Actors and Actresses** – play various roles in *The Taming of the Shrew*, including Hortensio and Gremio, suitors to Bianca and other residents of Padua.



Lucentio and ensemble women from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Costumes design by Fabio Toblini.

# Cole Porter

by Aurelia Clunie



Cole Porter.

*Kiss Me, Kate* is widely known for its music, written by the popular composer Cole Porter. Cole Porter was born in Peru, Indiana, in 1891 to a well-to-do mother and a druggist father. He began playing the violin at age six, piano at age eight, and by age eleven was composing songs. His mother ensured that at least one of them was published and sent to friends and family. Porter enjoyed

the privileges of having a wealthy mother and grandfather who supported him throughout his life.

In 1905, Porter was sent to Worcester Academy in Massachusetts where he became class valedictorian. He then attended Yale, and while there composed over 300 songs including college musicals for his fraternity, Delta Kappa Epsilon, and the “Bulldog” fight song which is still sung at Yale today. He was a member of the Wiffenpoofs, the nation’s oldest college a capella group. At his grandfather’s wishes, Porter attended Harvard Law School in 1913, but with the permission of the dean, transferred after his first year into the School of Music to join the music faculty.

After his first Broadway show, *See America First*, flopped, Porter traveled to France. In France, he considered joining the French Foreign Legion. He met Linda Lee Thomas, and the two married in 1919. The Porters enjoyed socialite life in Europe for much of the twenties. In 1928, Porter’s first big hit, “Let’s Do It (Let’s Fall in Love),” from the musical *Paris*, jumpstarted his Broadway career. His witty, sophisticated lyric style stood apart from romanticized love songs. He also wrote the music for *Anything Goes* (1934), which featured hit songs “I Get a Kick Out of You” and “You’re the Top,” as well as other memorable songs, including “Begin the Beguine” from the 1935 musical *Jubilee* and “It’s De-Lovely” from *Red Hot and Blue* (1936). He continued writing music for Broadway and films, including the songs “I’ve Got You Under My Skin” (1936) and “In the Still of the Night” (1937).

In 1937, Cole Porter suffered a riding accident during which a horse crushed his legs. He would undergo dozens of operations in the coming years, but continued writing for Broadway and Hollywood, including the musical *Kiss Me, Kate* in 1948. In 1954, his right leg was amputated due to his injuries from the riding accident. He did not write after the amputation. Cole Porter passed away on October 15, 1964, leaving a legacy of over 800 songs, as well as a heavy influence on American popular music and Broadway musical comedy.

## KISS ME, KATE TIME LINE

**1594** – *A Pleasant and Conceited Historie, called The taming of a Shrew* appears. This early version of the play has different character names and differs from the well-known version by Shakespeare. It may have been an early draft by Shakespeare, or the influence for his *The Taming of the Shrew*.

**1611** – John Fletcher writes *The Woman’s Prize or The Tamer Tamed*, a response to Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*.

**1623** – The well-known version of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* is published in the First Folio, the first collected works of Shakespeare’s plays.

**1929** – The first sound film adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* is released and stars real life husband and wife Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford. It was shot as a silent movie and sound was added later.

**April 12, 1945** – Vice President Harry S. Truman assumes the office of the president after Franklin Delano Roosevelt dies in office.

**November 2, 1948** –

Harry S. Truman defeats Thomas Dewey in a close presidential race, guaranteeing a second term for the president.

**December 30, 1948** –

*Kiss Me, Kate*, opens on Broadway. It runs for 1077 performances and closes July 28, 1951.

**1951** – *Kiss Me, Kate* opens in the West End in London.

**1953** – A film version of *Kiss Me, Kate*, starring Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel, is released.

**1967** – A film version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, starring real life husband and wife Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, is released.

**November 18, 1999** – A revival of *Kiss Me, Kate*, starring Brian Stokes Mitchell as Petruchio, opens on Broadway and runs for 881 performances.

**1999** – *Ten Things I Hate About You*, a film adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* set in a high school, is released, starring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger.

**2003** – The Royal Shakespeare Company produces *The Taming of the Shrew* and John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed*, both directed by Gregory Doran.

## *Creating Kiss Me, Kate*

By Elizabeth Williamson

The original idea for *Kiss Me, Kate* was inspired by tales of the backstage antics of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century theatre stars Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Lunt and Fontanne married in 1922 and performed together in over two dozen shows, becoming known as one of the greatest husband and wife acting teams of all time. They were especially well known for their work in comedies, and Noël Coward wrote his *Design for Living* especially for them.

Lunt and Fontanne's turns in *The Taming of the Shrew* made it one of the most popular productions the play had ever had. It had a cast of 52, including acrobats, musicians, and comic horses, and it ran, on and off, in New York and on tour, for five years. But it's remembered less for its scale than for the way Lunt and Fontanne played their roles. As Katharina, Fontanne threw objects from offstage at Lunt's Petruchio. When she finally came on stage, he spanked her. And their onstage behavior was widely perceived to mirror a tumultuous off-stage relationship.



Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1935).

Arnold Saint-Subber, the co-producer of *Kiss Me, Kate*, had worked backstage on the Lunt/Fontanne *Shrew*, and he thought that a backstage show about a feuding couple performing in *The Taming of the Shrew* could make a terrific musical. He brought the idea to Bella and Sam Spewack.



Sam and Bella Spewack.



From the names of the lead characters (Fontanne was christened Lillie Louise, and Fred could well be short for Alfred Lunt) to some of the stage directions, a number of the onstage antics that ended up in *Kiss Me, Kate* seem to have been taken directly from the Lunt/Fontanne *Shrew*. When Lunt as Petruchio was sending her dinner away, Fontanne as Katharina grabbed some sausages and started to shove them down her dress, as Lilli does in *Kate*. On her first appearance a bird was shot from the sky by a blunderbuss, which is echoed in the finale of Act One of *Kiss Me, Kate*. And Petruchio spanking Katharina became a major plot point for the musical.

The Spewacks agreed to write the book, and they insisted on bringing in Cole Porter, whom they'd worked happily with in the late 30's. Porter had had major successes (including *Anything Goes* in 1934) but after World War II he'd had several flops, and the producers weren't eager to bring him on board; Bella Spewack eventually had to tell Saint-Subber that she simply wouldn't do *Kiss Me, Kate* without Cole Porter.

Porter had already written a number of his greatest songs (including "Let's Do It," "Night and Day," and "You're the Top"), but *Kiss Me, Kate* was by far his most challenging score to compose yet. He had to create two different musical worlds – one Shakespearean world for the musical of *The Taming of the Shrew* that Fred and Lilli are starring in, and one for their "real-life" backstage.

When *Kiss Me, Kate* opened on Broadway in 1948 it more than justified the Spewacks' faith in Porter. It ran for 1,077 performances in New York. The New York Times critic Brooks Atkinson wrote that "Kiss Me, Kate," had "the best musical comedy book of the year" and that Porter had "written his best score in years." It won 5 Tony Awards, for Best Musical, Best Produced Show, Best Script, Best Score and Best Costumes.



Patricia Morrison in the original production of *Kiss Me, Kate*.

**Question:**

1. Bella and Sam Spewack were inspired to create a show based on Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne's performances in *The Taming of the Shrew*. What celebrity couple would star in a present day production of *The Taming of the Shrew*?

# Adaptations of a Classic Text

There are many famous adaptations of *The Taming of The Shrew*. Below are examples of three film adaptations.

**1929:** Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks starred in the first “talkie” film version of one of Shakespeare’s plays. Filmed as a silent movie with sound and lines added later, this version uses slapstick violence to tell the story of Kate and Petruchio’s tumultuous relationship. Pickford and Fairbanks were married at the time, but it was widely known that their relationship was strained at that point. Pickford is noted for her wink to the camera during Katherine’s final monologue. It is often interpreted as an unspoken message to Bianca “I haven’t been completely ‘tamed’.”

**1967:** Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton starred in a film version directed by Franco Zeffirelli. The two were married at the time, but had a widely publicized on-again-off-again relationship.

**1999:** *10 Things I Hate About You*, a romantic comedy based on *The Taming of the Shrew* is released. The movie takes place in a high school and the Bianca character is not allowed to date until her older sister Kat does.

## Questions:

1. Compare and contrast similarities and differences among these films and *Kiss Me Kate*. How do they tell the story similarly? How are they different? How does each work speak to its audience?
2. What affect does genre have on each version? How does a musical tell a different story than a romantic comedy, or an almost silent film?
3. If you were to adapt *The Taming of the Shrew* today, where would it be set? What genre would you use to tell this story? Would you want to use the original *Shrew* to tell a different story about present day characters like Porter and the Spewacks did? Why? How would you approach it?
4. Take the following excerpt from Act 4, scene 5 of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. Try turning this moment into a song. Which lines would you keep? Which would you cut? Would you include the characters Hortensio and Grumio, or cut them and write a song just for Katherine and Petruchio? What style of music best fits this moment?

**PETRUCHIO**

Come on, i’God’s name, once more toward our father’s.  
Good Lord, how bright and goodly shines the moon!

**KATHERINA**

The moon? The sun; it is not moonlight now.

**PETRUCHIO**

I know it is the sun that shines so bright.

**PETRUCHIO**

Now by my mother’s son – and that’s myself -  
It shall be moon or star or what I list  
Or e’er I journey to your father’s house.  
(to Grumio) Go on and fetch our horses back again.

--Evermore crossed and crossed, nothing but crossed.

**HORTENSIO (to Katherina)**

Say as he says, or we shall never go.

**KATHERINA**

Forward, I pray, since we have come so far,  
And be it moon or sun or what you please,  
And if you please to call it a rush-candle,  
Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me.

**PETRUCHIO**

I say it is the moon.

**KATHERINA**

I know it is the moon

**PETRUCHIO**

Nay then, you lie; it is the blessed sun.

**KATHERINA**

Then God be blest, it is the blessed sun,  
But sun it is not, when you say it is not,  
And the moon changes even as your mind.  
What you will have it named, even that it is,  
And so it shall be so for Katherine.

**HORTENSIO**

Petruchio, go thy ways, the field is won.

**PETRUCHIO**

Well, forward, forward, thus the bowl should run,  
And not unluckily against the bias.

Excerpted from *The Taming of the Shrew*.  
By William Shakespeare. Ed. Barbara Hodgdon.  
London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010.

## ***Interview with Peggy Hickey, Kiss Me, Kate Choreographer***

Education Enrollment and Marketing Coordinator, Erin Frederick, discussed craft, rehearsal, and the joys of Kiss Me, Kate with choreographer Peggy Hickey.

### **Q: What is your favorite part about choreographing for the stage?**

A: Well, there's so much I love, because I'm a dancer. Mostly just... at the core, I love to dance. I think you have to love the core of it the most. I love dancing. I love moving. For stage, I think the added fun is telling a story. Telling a story through movement. When you can make an audience laugh in a dance, or feel something, that's the goal. So I think that's my favorite thing: using movement to help people hear music better and feel the story.



Peggy Hickey

### **Q: How is choreographing for musical theatre different than your work choreographing for opera or for television?**

A: It's actually not that different. The biggest difference is television to stage. Opera and musical theatre and Shakespeare are all storytelling with human bodies onstage. When you add camera, it's a whole other art form. So, I've had to learn over the years, when I've done film and television, that I have to see what the art director wants. How are they going to edit it? The editor is sometimes the choreographer. I had to learn that. You know, it doesn't matter what it looks like proscenium – if they're going to look at it from the side through one camera, and they're only going to see legs, then I don't need to bother with anything else. If they just want to see legs from the side.... So, you know, I've had to "learn camera," and that was a whole other education. It's good and fun, but just different.

### **Q: What does a typical day look like for you in rehearsal?**

A: In a show like this, which is a dance show... we call this a DANCE show, with capital letters. As opposed to *Gentleman's Guide*, which is... you know - you could pull a muscle, but it would be harder. *(She laughs.)* I mean it [*Gentleman's Guide*] was certainly very physical, but for this show, we do a full physical warmup an hour before the eight-hour day. And that's voluntary, because we can't ask the actors to work more than eight hours a day. But the danger level, the risk... it's like they're professional athletes. So to keep the possibility of injury as far away from us as possible, we offer a warmup - that I give, or my assistant gives, or the dance captain gives – every day. And that adds an hour to our day, but we know that everyone will be warmed up and safe. So, you know, the routine of that... getting used to new dance shoes, the floors, the costumes... everything affects a dancer. So we're just layering those things on, and now we're about to go to the stage, so it's going to get even more complicated.



Director Darko Tresnjak and choreographer Peggy Hickey in rehearsal.

### **Q: Do you have any routines in addition to the warmup that help you or help the dancers with the process?**

A: Well, professional actor-dancers have... we just have a way of working so that you can go eight hours a day. A show is only like two and a half hours long at the most, but we work at it for eight hours [in rehearsals]. So the routine has to be what we call "marking." If you went full out and blew it out every time, you would die. So the actors have to pace themselves; they also have to build their stamina so they can sing while they're dancing huge. It's a training effect. So it's like any sports team or something where it's really brutal at first, and everyone's sore, and everyone's exhausted, and slowly.... Like, we had our last room run just now, and you can see the ease. They're getting more easy with it, which means they're getting it in their muscles.

**Q: So what has your personal dance background been?**

A: I started dancing when I was four. My parents put me in ballet and movement class when I was really little, and they took me to ballets, and I just... I was hooked from the time I was tiny. I always knew what I wanted to be. I was not one of those kids who was ever confused. I was a dancer from before I could even walk. They put me in classes actually because I was born with congenitally displaced hips. I was a breech birth, and it displaced the hip joints. They put me in ballet so that I could walk correctly, and then I just started liking it.



The company of *Kiss Me*, Kate rehearses.

**Q: That's so interesting. Did it ever give you any trouble dancing?**

A: No, I'm really flexible and strong. My hips have never popped out. So, so far so good! (*She laughs.*)

**Q: What do you think has been the most useful thing you learned in your career as a dancer that you've brought over to your career as a choreographer?**



Actress Robin Masella stretches.

A: Well, I came from a summer stock theater. I grew up in Sacramento, CA, where they have this wonderful summer stock called Music Circus. In the summer, they used to do seven shows in eight weeks. I think they do less now. But you were cast for the whole summer. One week you would learn *Fiddler on the Roof* and the next, you would do *La Cage aux Folles*, and the next week you did *Hello, Dolly!*, and the week after that was *A Chorus Line*. A new team of directors and choreographers would arrive from New York every week, so I got to work with all these amazing people. In one summer, I'd meet seven or eight choreographers. It really helped inspire me, and I went, "I want to do that. I want to do what they do." So I was only about in my early

twenties when I transferred to choreography.

**Q: Do you think that variety has helped you to be more versatile as a choreographer?**

A: Oh definitely. And because I live in California, and there's so much television and film, I really got opportunities early – like *The Brady Bunch Movie* and things like that – that I probably wouldn't have gotten had I been on the East Coast. I've been really lucky to have a big diversity in my work – from Shakespeare to MTV. Lots of stuff.

**Q: Where do you find inspiration for your work? Are there any particular artists that have been particularly influential for you?**

A: Well, without sounding too trite, I'm going to say Darko Tresnjak. We've been an artistic couple for fourteen years, and he is one of my greatest inspirations. He thinks in 3D. He thinks like nobody else thinks. His brain works in a way that I cannot even begin to fathom, but it's in a way that makes me a better artist. So honestly... there are so many inspirations: musicians, composers, painters, other choreographers. I'm inspired on a daily basis by my dancers, by my assistant, by our conductor... you know, I am so lucky to work with these great artists, and I never forget that. Every day is a gift, and I am thrilled to be here.

**Q: Looking at *Kiss Me, Kate* in particular, is there a particular scene or moment that you are the most proud of, or that you enjoy working on the most?**

A: Well gosh, so much of it! I've gotta say... I'm torn between "Tom, Dick and Harry" or "Too Darn Hot." I love so much of it, but those are my showpieces. And the dancers –all of them are just incredible, just glorious. So it's a treat to work with them.

**Q: Is there anything in particular that you think our young audience members should keep an eye out for?**

A: All these artists started out where your young audience is. You just show up. Go take a dance class. Go sing. Go take an acting class. Go back, and go back, and go back. Make lots of mistakes. That's what we do every day here – we just have been doing it for so long that it looks more polished. But when we start.... They [the dancers] are where they are because of dance classes and singing classes and acting classes that their parents put them in when they were little. So you've got to start paying the dues now to get to the prize later. And that applies to everything, really. So I think that it really isn't unattainable. It really is within their grasp – they just have to understand that they have to show up every day. Do what makes them happy. Do the thing you love, and you'll be rewarded.



Actress Shina Ann Morris rehearses with the company.

**Q: Do you have any advice for aspiring young choreographers?**

A: I really think choreographers have to DANCE. It sounds weird – you would think, "Yeah, of course." But there are some people who say, "I just want to choreograph. I don't want to go through the 'being a dancer' part of it." Though some people become choreographers because their knees can't take a dancing career. I know a couple of people who went into choreography because it became clear early on that their body couldn't sustain the pounding. But for me, the best thing is to dance and dance and dance as a dancer and to work with as many choreographers as you can. Then see about assisting them, observe, see lots of theatre. The more you try lots of different styles, the more you'll be able to choose what your style is.

### **Questions:**

1. In the play-within-a-play, Petruchio leaves Katherine at the altar. Everyone is left waiting for him to arrive to his own wedding. He arrives late, after Kate has given up. After seeing *Kiss Me Kate*, how does Peggy Hickey's choreography enhance the sense of expectation and disappointment?
2. Compare the dances of Lois Lane's character in "Always True to You in My Fashion" to that of the gangsters in "Brush up Your Shakespeare." How are they different? What does specific choreography for a character tell the audience about that character's behavior and motivations?
3. Consider the numbers "Tom, Dick, and Harry" and "Too Darn Hot." What do you think are the five most important things a dancer must remember to be part of an ensemble number like these? Discuss with your class and come up with five rules for a successful dance ensemble.
4. What are your favorite dance styles and why?

## Suggested Activities

### Research: A Life in the Theatre

In *Kiss Me, Kate*, Robert Hannon Davis plays Ralph, the stage manager. In theatre, a stage manager writes down all the blocking (where actors stand and move), keeps everyone on schedule, and in a world where “the show must go on,” ensures that it does. Research the following duties of a stage manager:

- ⤴ Recording blocking
- ⤴ Line Notes
- ⤴ Scheduling
- ⤴ Tech Rehearsal
- ⤴ Maintaining the prompt book
- ⤴ Calling a show



Robert Hannon Davis

**Look for moments in the show in which Ralph fulfills these duties. What traits do you think you would need to become a stage manager?**

### Writing

At the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Katherine delivers the longest speech in the play. In it, she chastises other wives for being outspoken and disobedient to their husbands. Some believe Katherine has truly changed and become the model, obedient wife that was expected of Elizabethan women in Shakespeare’s time. Others believe an actress may use this speech to “play Petruchio’s game” but still retain equal footing with him within their marriage. Below, Katherine in *Kiss Me, Kate* sings this portion of the speech from *The Taming of The Shrew*.

I am ashamed that women are so simple  
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,  
Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway  
When they are bound to serve, love and obey.  
Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,  
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,  
But that our soft conditions and our hearts  
Should well agree with our external parts?  
So, wife, hold your temper and meekly put  
Your hand ‘neath the sole of your husband’s foot,  
In token of which duty, if he please,  
My hand is ready, ready, may it do him ease.

What do you think a woman’s “duty to her husband” should be? Has it changed in the last four hundred years? Has it changed in the last sixty years? How?

In the space below, try writing your own version of Katherine’s advice to wives.

When you see the play, pay close attention to Katherine’s actions. In what ways does she compromise? In what ways does she retain her headstrong nature? How does this reflect in Lilli Vanessi’s relationship with Fred Graham?

## Adaptation

In the following excerpt from Act 1 Scene 1 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Hermia's father has just commanded that she must marry Demetrius and not Lysander, whom she loves. Using the scene below, write an adapted scene or songs for *A Midsummer Night's Dream: The Musical*.

### LYSANDER

Ay me, for aught that I could ever read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth.  
But either it was different in blood--

### HERMIA

O cross! Too high to be enthralled to low.

### LYSANDER

Or else misgraffed in respect of years--

### HERMIA

O spite! Too old to be engaged to young.

### LYSANDER

Or else it stood upon the choice of merit--

### HERMIA

O hell! To choose love by another's eyes.

### LYSANDER

Or if there were a sympathy in choice,  
War, death or sickness did lay siege to it,  
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:  
So quick bright things come to confusion.

### HERMIA

If then true lovers have been ever crossed,  
It stands as an edict in destiny.  
Then let us teach our trial patience,  
Because it is a customary cross,  
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,  
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

### LYSANDER

A good persuasion. Therefore hear me, Hermia.  
I have a widow aunt, a dowager  
Of great revenue, and she hath no child.  
From Athens is her house removed seven leagues,  
And she respects me as her only son.  
There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee,  
And to that place the sharp Athenian law  
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me, then  
Steal forth thy father's house tomorrow night.  
And in the wood, a league without the town,  
Where I did meet thee once with Helena,  
To do observance to a morn of May,  
There will I stay for thee.

### HERMIA

My good Lysander!  
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,  
In that same place thou hast appointed me,  
Tomorrow truly will I meet thee.

### LYSANDER

Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.  
*Enter Helena*

### HERMIA

God speed fair Helena, wither away?

### HELENA

Call you me fair? That fair again unsay.  
Demetrius loves you fair: O happy fair!  
Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air.  
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,  
Your words I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go,  
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,  
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.  
O, teach me how you look, and with what art  
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

### HERMIA

I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

### HELENA

O, that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

### HERMIA

I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

### HELENA

O, that my prayers could such affection move!

### HERMIA

The more I hate, the more he follows me.

### HELENA

The more I love, the more he hateth me.

### HERMIA

His folly, Helena, is none of mine.

### HELENA

None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

### HERMIA

Take comfort: he no more shall see my face.  
Lysander and myself will fly this place.

### LYSANDER

Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:  
Tomorrow night, when Phoebe doth behold  
Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass,  
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,  
A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,  
Through Athens' gates we have devised to steal.

### HERMIA

And in the wood, where often you and I  
Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie,  
Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,  
There my Lysander and myself shall meet.  
Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us,  
And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius! --  
Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight  
From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight. Exit

### LYSANDER

I will, my Hermia, --Helena, adieu.  
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! Exit

### HELENA

How happy some o'er other some can be!  
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.  
But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so:  
He will not know what all but he doth know.  
And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,  
So, I, admiring of his qualities.  
Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.,  
And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.  
For ere Demetrius looked on Hermia's eyne,  
He hailed down oaths that he was only mine.  
And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,  
So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.  
I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:  
Then to the wood will he tomorrow night  
Pursue her; and for this intelligence,  
If I have thanks, it is a dear expense.  
But herein mean I to enrich my pain,  
To have his sight thither and back again. Exit

Excerpted from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By William Shakespeare. Eds. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen. New York: The Modern Library, 2007.]



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