

**Society** : St. Albans Operatic Society  
**Production** : Kiss me Kate  
**Date** : November 1994  
**Venue** : Alban Arena  
**Report by** : Lennie Self

St. Albans Operatic Society 9th November 1994

Add together the wonderful music of Cole Porter, the dramatic story of "Kiss me Kate", the intermingled excerpts from "The Taming of the Shrew", the talents of St. Alban's Operatic Society, and the facilities at the Alban Arena and you have all the ingredients for a successful show.

Wednesday night's performance played to a delighted audience.

Giles Turner controlled the orchestra well, and from the start of the overture you could appreciate their well controlled and rhythmic interpretation of the score. The show contains some of Cole Porter's best loved melodies and overall they were sung well by principals and chorus alike.

A good opening to a show is so important, it does set the audience's mood for the whole evening, and the general build up of back stage bustle and a confident, energetic Hattie - Jane Porster - and good chorus singing and movement in "Another Op'nin Another Show" set the standard for the ensuing production.

From her first entrance Carla Tams was captivating, as Lois/Bianca singing, dancing and acting convincingly with verve and enthusiasm. She was well partnered by John Dell as Bill/Lucentio, who displayed the abilities to sing, act and dance. I particularly liked "Why Can't you Behave".

Alison Mills looked lovely and gave a spirited, shrewish portrayal as Lilli/Kate but at times on Wednesday appeared vocally stretched (particularly noticeable in "I Wonderbar!"), but I enjoyed "I Hate Men". Robert Milner gave a strong performance dramatically and vocally as Fred/Petruchio, "Were Thine that Special Pace" and "Where is the Life That Late I Led" were especially enjoyable. Lilli and Fred worked well together, especially in the scenes in the dressing rooms, however, once the dressing rooms were established in the mind of the audience they could have come further downstage as at times it appeared rather cramped and the dialogue difficult to hear.

Gremio and Hortensio sang and moved well. The singing and balance was superb in "U Tom, Dick and Harry".

"I've Come to To Wive it Wealthily in Padua" with Petruchio, and the boys' part was another highlight.

In the smaller parts Frank Powis made his mark as a rather bemused and gentle Baptists/Harry, whilst Tug Wilson made a very effective Harrison Howell. Playing the part as a Texan rather than the usual upright New England politician gave it more flamboyance.

Throughout the show the chorus sang, acted and danced well. How wonderful to see so many ladies tap dancing, to Bianca in Act 2. The choreography was effective, especially in "We opened in Paris" but occasionally repetitive.

The gangsters were wonderful. They are super parts and were very well played by David Berridge and Peter Stearn, contrasting well physically with good accents and mannerisms. "Brush up your Shakespeare" was one of the highlights of the evening.

Overall it was a very entertaining show, with effective sets and costumes, especially the "Taming of the Shrew" costumes, which contrasted so well with the everyday rehearsal clothes of the cast.

An obviously well rehearsed and enthusiastic show, but occasionally the action was slow and lacked verve. There were some very nice groupings, but there was a noticeable gap at the back of the stage in "Kiss me Kate" in the finale of Act 1.  
Thank you for inviting us, and thank you for your hospitality