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‘A CHANCE FOR STAGE FOLKS TO SAY “HELLO”:
ENTERTAINMENT AND THEATRICALITY IN
KISS ME, KATE

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ABSTRACT

As Cole Porter's most commercially successful Broadway musical, *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) has been widely acknowledged as one of several significant works written during 'the Golden age' period of American musical theatre history. Through an in-depth examination of the genesis and reception of this musical and discussion of the extant analytical perspectives on the text, this thesis argues that *Kiss Me, Kate* has remained popular as a result of its underlying celebration of theatricality and of entertainment. Whereas previous scholarship has suggested that Porter and his co-authors, Sam and Bella Spewack, attempted to emulate Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943) by creating their own 'integrated musical', this thesis demonstrates how they commented on contemporary culture, on popular art forms, and the sanctity of Shakespeare and opera in deliberately mischievous ways. By mapping the influence of Porter and the Spewacks' previous work and their deliberate focus on theatricality and diversion in the development of this work, it shows how *Kiss Me, Kate* forms part of a wider trend in Broadway musicals. As a result, this study calls for a new analytical framework that distinguishes musicals like *Kiss Me, Kate* from the persistent methodologies that consider works exclusively through the lens of high art aesthetics. By acknowledging Porter and the Spewacks' reflexive celebration of and commentary on entertainment, it advocates a new position for musical theatre research that will encourage the study of other similar stage and screen texts that incorporate themes from, and react to, the popular cultural sphere to which they belong.

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CHAPTER ONE:

BIOGRAPHY, THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND ARCHIVAL RESEARCH:

APPROACHES TO *KISS ME, KATE*

Kiss Me, Kate presents a metatheatrical snapshot of the opening night performance of a musical version of William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. With a book by Sam and Bella Spewack and music by Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* ran for 1070 performances and became the fourth-longest running musical of the 1940s.¹ The show opened on 30 December, 1949 at the New Century Theatre, with a reported \$350,000 in advanced ticket sales, and went on to garner numerous accolades including the inaugural Tony Award for Best Musical (1949).² Following its opening success on Broadway, *Kiss Me, Kate* has been performed internationally, including productions in the UK (1951), Sweden (1952), Turkey (1963) and Japan (1965). In 1957, it became the first American musical to be performed in communist Europe and by 1968, it had been translated into over twenty languages including German, Hebrew and Yugoslavian.³ This international success is complemented by frequent American revivals, the release of MGM's film adaptation *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) and several television adaptations in America, Germany and UK. In 1999, British theatre director Michael Blakemore mounted a revised version of the show at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York that became the most nominated musical revival in Tony Award history.⁴ More recently, *Kiss Me, Kate* has been monumentalised in a critical edition by David Charles Abell and Seann Alderking.⁵

¹ *Kiss Me, Kate* was the fourth most successful show of the 1940s, beaten only by Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943), which ran for 2212 performances, *South Pacific* (1949), which ran for 1925 performances, and Irving Berlin, Herbert and Dorothy Fields's *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), which ran for 1147 performances. Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber* (Oxford University Press, New York: 2009), W31-32.

² 'Arriving here by way of Philadelphia, where the professional appraisers ecstatically likened it to such felicitous musicals as "Oklahoma!" and "Annie Get Your Gun," "Kiss Me, Kate" already is said to have amassed \$350,000 in advance sales.' Louis Calta, 'Premiere Tonight of 'Kiss Me, Kate'', *New York Times*, December 30, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

³ *Kiss Me, Kate* (titled *Daj buzi Kasiu*) opened at the Teatr Komedia in Warsaw on September 14, 1957. It then transferred Łódź in 1958. It has been revived several times, most recently in 2012.

⁴ In 2000, Blakemore became the first person to win the Tony Award for Director of a Musical (for *Kiss Me, Kate*) and Director of a Play (for the original Broadway production of Michael Frayn's *Copenhagen* (1998)) in the same year. The 1999 production of *Kiss Me, Kate* received 12 Tony nominations. 'Quick Facts and Tony Trivia', *Tony Awards*, accessed August 24, 2016.

http://www.tonyawards.com/en_US/history/facts/.

⁵ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate: A Musical Play*. eds. David C. Abell & Seann Alderking (Van Nuys, California: Alfred Publishing Company, 2014).

Kiss Me, Kate came as a result of a second collaboration between the Spewacks and Porter. The show combines an onstage redaction of Shakespeare's *The Taming of Shrew*, embellished by original songs by Porter, with the offstage war between leading actor Fred Graham and his ex-wife and co-star Lilli Vanessi. This narrative concept was based upon the real-life observations of Arnold Saint Subber who worked on a production of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1935), starring celebrated actors (and married couple) Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. Using this for inspiration, Bella Spewack created a fictional comedy in which Fred attempts to manipulate Lilli into remaining in his production (and with him) after she discovers his affair with secondary lead actress Lois. Lilli resists her continued attraction to Fred and wreaks havoc on the production by going off script and attacking Fred on stage. The plot is complicated by Lois's boyfriend Bill Calhoun, a degenerate gambler, who signs an I.O.U slip with Fred's name. As a result, two gangsters (known as the 'gunmen') arrive at the theatre to reclaim 'Fred's' debt, providing him with a unique opportunity to force Lilli to remain in the show. Fred explains to the gunmen that he cannot pay them unless Lilli is forced to continue the performance and they obligingly 'encourage' her to finish the performance.

After continuing with *The Taming of the Shrew* into the second act, Lilli's fiancé Harrison arrives to rescue her and take her to be married. Fred uses Harrison's naivety to represent a seemingly idyllic but claustrophobic picture of the domestic life waiting for Lilli if she leaves acting (and her life with him). However, his portrait of the future backfires and, on receiving news that the I.O.U has been written off, Lilli leaves her fiancé *and* walks out of Fred's production. With no option but to finish the performance, Fred begins the final scene of *The Taming of the Shrew* in which Petruchio orders Katherine to come to him even as Fred knows that Lilli will not meet her cue. However, she enters as directed and they complete the show, falling into each other's arms as the curtain comes down.

Drawing on themes in their earlier work that satirise elite communities and personal relationships (e.g. Porter's musical *Gay Divorce* (1932), the Spewacks' screenplay for *My Favorite Wife* (1940) and *Weekend at the Wardorf* (1944), and their combined efforts on *Leave It To Me!* (1938)), *Kiss Me, Kate's* authors produced a glamorous musical comedy about backstage relationships that captivated post-war audiences with its humour and exceptional score. Porter composed at least twenty-four songs whilst working on *Kiss Me, Kate* and the eighteen numbers included in the original Broadway

score are some of the finest of his career. Notably, 'So in Love', 'Too Darn Hot', 'Always True to You (In My Fashion)', and 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' have become familiar standards in subsequent revues and popular recordings as well as in the context of this musical.

Reflecting on the musical's position in Broadway musical history, this thesis will examine *Kiss Me, Kate* as a landmark work in a period of considerable competition. The show opened in the middle of a particularly rich season that included Arthur Miller's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Death of a Salesman* (1949) and Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's *South Pacific* (1949). Less well-remembered but commercially successful musicals, including Frank Loesser and George Abbott's *Where's Charley?* (1948) and Jule Styne, Leo Robin, Joseph Fields and Anita Loos' adaptation of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1949),⁶ also celebrated considerable runs during this time.⁷ Yet, unlike these later examples, *Kiss Me, Kate* has endured in the musical theatre repertoire and in public consciousness as the result of frequent revivals and comparatively faithful film and television adaptations. This thesis re-considers the genesis and performance history of *Kiss Me, Kate*, drawing on previously uncited archival materials as well as secondary literature to analyse its success. In this context, it argues that Porter and Spewack used *Kiss Me, Kate* to celebrate entertainment in the Broadway musical in contrast to other aesthetic priorities that emerged during the 1940s.

In order to situate this content, the remaining sections of this chapter signpost the key sources that inform this study and the theoretical approaches that have shaped current interpretations of this show. The next section therefore considers the biographical influence of Cole Porter on the reception to *Kiss Me, Kate*. This is followed by an introduction to the key analytical lenses that are used to read *Kiss Me, Kate* in scholarly discourse, the first of which (integration) stems directly from Cole Porter's role in shaping the text. Having highlighted these core concepts, it introduces the aesthetic conflicts that have shaped the secondary literature on the Broadway musical and highlights their influence on academic readings of *Kiss Me, Kate* before establishing the context for reading entertainment in stage and film musicals. Using this overview, this

⁶ The stage musical *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* included the hit song 'Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend' which was later popularised by Marilyn Monroe in the film adaptation. Other numbers 'Bye Bye Baby' and 'A Little Girl from Little Rock' were also used in the film adaptation. Otherwise Robin and Styne's score was completely scrapped.

⁷ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, W32.

chapter then outlines the structure and methodology of the thesis to follow, including its use of archival research, as a means of introducing the fundamental bases of this study.

Cole Porter: biography and personal legacy

Cole Porter has been mythologised as a unique representative of exclusive American society in the 1920s through to the late 1950s. His span of influence as a gifted songwriter, and society figure, has informed popular and academic representations of his work. The privilege of Porter's birth into one of the wealthiest families in Indiana, his private schooling and musical education at Yale and Harvard Universities form a potent background to the decadence associated with his adulthood. As a result, the 'glossy opulence' of his lifestyle, including cruises across Europe, a lavish house on the left bank in Paris, a thirty year lease at the exclusive Waldorf Astoria in New York, and his celebrity social circle, forms an aesthetic mystique around his work.⁸ These factors have inevitably shaped public interest in Porter as a noted celebrity as well as informed scholarship on Porter's musical development and creative interests. In addition to this, Porter's prolific success in the 1930s and resurgent popularity following the original Broadway production of *Kiss Me, Kate* positions him as an unusual composer-lyricist who characterised the voice of the well-educated elite.

In acknowledgement of the richness of his life and its glamorous appeal, Porter has been the subject of two films (*Night and Day* (1946) and *De-lovely* (2004)).⁹ Theatre historian Robert Kimball has also produced two volumes of lyrics: *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter* and an illustrated volume *Cole*, with Brendan Gill.¹⁰ The latter text includes short biographical notes, photographs from Porter's personal collection, and copies of

⁸ Frank Sinatra leased Porter's Waldorf suite after Porter died in 1964. In 2010, the *New York Daily News* reported that the suite was available to lease for \$140,000 per month. William Morrison, *Waldorf Astoria* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 110; Jose Martinez, 'Cole Porter's apartment at the Waldorf-Astoria can be yours for \$140K a month', *New York Daily News*, July 20, 2010, accessed September 7, 2016. <http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/cole-porter-apartment-waldorf-astoria-140k-month-article-1.467078>; The Associated Press, 'Cole Porter Is Dead; Songwriter Was 72', *New York Times*, October 19, 1964, accessed September 7, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0609.html>.

⁹ *Night and Day*, directed by Michael Curtiz, Warner Home Video (Burbank, California: 1946) [DVD]; *De-Lovely*, directed by Irwin Winkler, MGM Home Entertainment (Santa Monica, California: 2005) [DVD].

¹⁰ Robert Kimball, *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter* (New York: Vintage, 1984); Robert Kimball & Brendan Gill, *Cole* (New York: The Overlook Press, 1972).

many artefacts (letters, telegrams, newspaper clippings, etc.), which provides a detailed and opulent impression of Porter's life.¹¹ In addition to this, Jean Howard's illustrated volume *Travels with Cole Porter* characterises the romance associated with his day-to-day life and includes letters and anecdotes in addition to more than 300 photographs.¹² Porter's life has also been encapsulated by numerous biographies including David Ewen's *The Cole Porter Story*, George Eells' *The Life That Late He Led*, Charles Schwarz's *Cole Porter: a Biography*, and William McBrien's *Cole Porter: The Definitive Biography*.¹³ Each account has its own 'take' on Porter's life, referencing his financial and social privileges, his homosexuality, and the pervasiveness of his success as a popular songwriter, all of which have contributed to interpretations of Porter's work. As a result of this range of materials, there is considerable repetition of notable anecdotes and key moments in Porter's life. For example, no thorough depiction of Porter is complete without reference to a tragic riding accident he suffered in 1937. His injuries left him debilitated and shaped much of his time as he managed considerable pain and numerous operations across the following two decades.¹⁴

In spite of the relatively comprehensive coverage of Porter's life, scholarly literature on Porter (and on his work) has been comparatively limited until the publication of *A Cole Porter Companion* with a few notable exceptions including Matthew Shaftel's article on the song 'Night and Day' and Geoffrey Block's chapters on *Anything Goes* and *Kiss Me, Kate* in his monograph *Enchanted Evenings*.¹⁵ Whilst the 'composer as

¹¹ Kimball & Brendan Gill, *Cole*.

¹² Jean Howard, *Travels with Cole Porter* (New York: Abrams, 1991).

¹³ David Ewen, *The Cole Porter Story* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965); George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led* (London: W. H. Allen, 1967); Charles Schwartz, *Cole Porter: A Biography* (London: W.H. Allen, 1977); David Grafton, *Red, Hot & Rich: An Oral History of Cole Porter* (New York: Stein & Day, 1987); William McBrien, *Cole Porter: The Definitive Biography* (New York: Knopf Inc., 1998). Other examples include: Richard Hubler, *The Cole Porter Story* (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1965); Joseph Morella & George Mazzei: *Genius and Lust: The Creative Lives and Sexual Lives of Cole Porter and Noel Coward* (Bridgend: Robson Books, 1995); Stephen Citron, *Noel & Cole: The Sophisticates* (London: Hal Leonard, 2005).

¹⁴ Porter's legs were crushed by the horse and he suffered considerable injuries that led to a rare bone infection. He underwent over 30 operations in subsequent years to moderate the pain and help him to walk before having most of his right leg amputated in 1958. Howard Markel, 'The Painful Life of Cole Porter.' *Medscape General Medicine* 6.2 (2004): 47.

¹⁵ Don M. Randel, Matthew Shaftel & Susan Weiss (eds.), *A Cole Porter Companion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016); Matthew Shaftel, 'From inspiration to archive: Cole Porter's 'Night and Day'', *Journal Of Music Theory*, 43 (1999), accessed April 14, 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3090664>; Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 40-57, 215-232. Other examples include: Allen Forte, 'Secrets of Melody: Line and Design in the Songs of Cole Porter' *Musical Quarterly*, 77 (1993), accessed April 18, 2014. doi: 10.1093/mq/77.4.607; George Burrows,

author' trend is common in musical theatre research generally, the temporal significance of *Kiss Me, Kate* in the biographical arc of Porter's life emphasises its status as his most successful stage musical. His reputation as a songwriter had been impacted by the lack of standalone hits in his musicals such as *Panama Hattie* (1940) or *Something For the Boys* (1943) and by the commercial failure of the revue *Seven Lively Arts* (1944),¹⁶ the 'musical extravaganza' *Around the World* (1946)¹⁷ and the MGM film *The Pirate* (1947) in the years immediately preceding *Kiss Me, Kate*. The commercial popularity of *Kate* reinvigorated his career and led to another decade of Porter scores despite his declining health.

This narrative arc is heavily featured in the popular biographies on Porter's life and is most vehemently articulated by David Ewen, who refers to 'the slough of mediocrity' into which Porter had fallen.¹⁸ To some extent, this is built on Porter's own depiction of the progress of his career. In *The Cole Porter Story*, Hubler includes an extended interview with Porter in which he describes *Around the World* (known as *Eighty Days Around the World* in the text) as a failure 'so colossal' that it seriously compromised his reputation.¹⁹ Porter continued to describe *The Pirate* as 'a \$5,000,000 Hollywood picture that was unspeakably wretched, the worst that money could buy'.²⁰ This peak and trough is thereafter mirrored in the biographical accounts. For example, William McBrien introduces his chapter on *Kiss Me, Kate*, titled 'The Champ is Back', with the initially disappointing reception to *The Pirate* and subsequent questions about

'Anything Goes on an Ocean Liner: Musical Comedy as a Carnivalistic Heterotopia', *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 7 (2013), accessed June 14, 2016. doi: 10.1386/smt.7.3.327_1.

¹⁶ *The Seven Lively Arts* (1944) was a revue show directed by Broadway impresario Billy Rose and starred comedians Beatrice Lillie and Bert Lahr. Although the performance was originally devised with a full script, Rose had a bigger creative vision for the show. Alongside song contributions from Porter, Rose commissioned a suite of dance music - *Scènes de Ballet* - from Igor Stravinsky. Following the show's Philadelphia tryouts, Rose sent Stravinsky the following telegram: 'YOUR MUSIC GREAT SUCCESS STOP COULD BE SENSATIONAL SUCCESS IF YOU WOULD AUTHORIZE ROBERT RUSSELL BENNETT RETOUCH ORCHESTRATION STOP BENNETT ORCHESTRATES EVEN THE WORKS OF COLE PORTER'. Stravinsky merely replied: 'SATISFIED WITH GREAT SUCCESS'. The final revue rather overwhelmed audiences, with one reviewer suggesting that Rose had 'piled in a little bit of everything but the kitchen sink' although Porter's 'Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye' has endured as a pop standard. Charles Schwartz, *Cole Porter: A Biography*, 218.

¹⁷ Porter collaborated on *Around the World* with Orson Welles, who produced, directed and starred in the original Broadway production. Welles had considerable ambition for the musical. The short-lived spectacle included life-size mechanical elephants, an aerial ballet sequence, and a Japanese acrobatic troop. George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 255.

¹⁸ David Ewen, *The Cole Porter Story*, 131.

¹⁹ Richard G. Hubler, *The Cole Porter Story*, 50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Porter's viability as a commercially appealing collaborator.²¹ These accounts emphasise the dramatic shift *Kiss Me, Kate* created in Porter's professional life and contribute to the perception that this musical is special not simply because it has achieved continued box office success but because it returned Cole Porter to a position of influence in the Broadway sphere.

As well as highlighting *Kiss Me, Kate* as a reinvigoration of Porter's increasingly lacklustre professional life, biographers and scholars also draw notable attention to the 'dizzying variety of genres' and sophistication of this particular score.²² Lynne Laitman Siebert particularly connects Porter's musicality with his comprehensive training throughout her doctoral thesis and recent chapter in *A Cole Porter Companion*.²³ She uses this as a lens through which to celebrate *Kiss Me, Kate* as the most successful manifestation of Porter's musical abilities. In other chapters on *Kiss Me, Kate* by musicologists Geoffrey Block and by Joseph P. Swain, this concentration on the score is also pronounced.²⁴ There are numerous points of interest in Porter's songs which have produced a stimulating discussion of his musical abilities and the differences between *Kiss Me, Kate* and his other hit musicals. However, some disconnect from the text as a whole in all three of these accounts (and from the genesis of the musical in Swain's analysis) reduces the significance of other developmental factors on *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Musicologist Raymond Knapp highlights the challenge of writing about musical theatre genesis in the introduction to *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, describing musical theatre as: 'a highly collaborative form that inevitably dilutes whatever individual genius may contribute to particular creations'²⁵ *Kiss Me, Kate* provides a striking example of a Broadway musical in which the success of the score – namely, the individual contribution of Cole Porter as both composer and lyricist – has dominated subsequent reception, irrespective of any other creative

²¹ Schwartz also contrasts the difficulties Porter faced during the writing of *Around the World* and *The Pirate* with Porter and *Kiss Me, Kate* director John C. Wilson's previous close friendship as the framing context for understanding *Kiss Me, Kate*'s success. Charles Schwartz, *Cole Porter: A Biography*, 230-237; William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 300-304.

²² Lynn Laitman Siebert, *A Cole Porter Companion*, 303.

²³ Lynn Laitman Siebert, *Cole Porter: an analysis of five musical comedies and a thematic catalogue of the complete works* (PhD diss., City University of New York: 1975), 3-6, 348, 442-3.

²⁴ Geoffrey Block, 'Kiss Me, Kate: The Taming of Cole Porter' in *Enchanted Evenings*, 215-232.; Joseph P. Swain, 'Shakespeare as Musical' in *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2002), 139-164.

²⁵ Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) 3-4.

influences. This thesis therefore resituates Porter's considerable contribution to *Kiss Me, Kate* in the context of a collaborative process and the complex nature of creating a Broadway show. Using a range of archival materials supplemented by biographical texts and the analyses of Porter's work and life provided by scholars including Siebert, Block and Ethan Mordden, it will highlight key features of his compositional process as they relate to the development of this work. As a result, it will consider how Porter influenced the development of *Kiss Me, Kate* as well as its reception and evaluate to what extent the extant critical readings best reflect Porter's work and the creative processes that led to the original Broadway production of this show.

***Kiss Me, Kate* and integration: introducing the scholarly literature**

As has already been discussed, dedicated academic scholarship on Cole Porter is relatively limited and as a result, the discourse on *Kiss Me, Kate* is similarly small. However, its status as a landmark show of the 1940s that continues to be revived many decades later means that *Kiss Me, Kate* is briefly discussed in numerous historical surveys of the Broadway musical.²⁶ It receives more extensive attention (as mentioned above) in chapters by Geoffrey Block in *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*, Joseph P. Swain in *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey*, and Lynn Laitman Siebert in *A Cole Porter Companion*.²⁷ It is also covered at various lengths in several works by theatre historian Ethan Mordden, by Maya Cantu in her monograph *American Cinderellas on the Broadway Musical Stage*, and in articles by Dan Rebellato and John R Severn.²⁸ Each of these texts provides

²⁶ See examples such as: Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Comedy: From Adonis to Dreamgirls* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 171-2; Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears, 'The successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein from the 1940s to the 1960s' in William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 171-172; Andrew Lamb, *150 Years of Popular Musical Theatre* (Michigan: Yale University Press, 2002), 263-4. There are various passing references in: Mark N. Grant, *The Rise And Fall of the Broadway Musical* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004) 5, 140-141, 288, 290.

²⁷ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 215-232; Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 139-164; Lynn Laitman Siebert, 'Kiss Me, Kate' in Don M. Randel, Matthew Shaftel and Susan Weiss (eds.), *A Cole Porter Companion*, 286-304.

²⁸ Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Ethan Mordden, *Anything Goes: A History of American Musical Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Maya Cantu, "'Make Up Your Mind": Boss Ladies and Enchantresses in the 1940s Broadway Musical' in *American Cinderellas on the Broadway Musical Stage: Imagining the Working Girl from Irene to Gypsy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 101-

individual details and arguments that will be unpacked throughout this thesis. However, there are two analytical features that unify the majority of these texts: an examination of the structure of the show and a discussion of the dramatic interaction between the script and songs (integration). Cantu deviates slightly from this trend as her chapter on the 'boss ladies' of the 1940s specifically focuses on the representation of Lilli as a 1940s musical heroine. However, Cantu also dedicates a substantial part of her short analysis of *Kiss Me, Kate* to defining what kind of narrative the show has.

Emphasis on the structure and integration of *Kiss Me, Kate* has evolved from the continued discourse surrounding the influence of Rodgers and Hammerstein on the development of the Broadway musical. The commercial and lasting impact of their first show *Oklahoma!* (1943) and then *Carousel* (1945), *South Pacific* (1949), *The King and I* (1951) and *The Sound of Music* (1959) has positioned them as the dominant leaders of the evolution of the Golden Age musical and this has been reflected in the related scholarship. As such, Rodgers and Hammerstein's contribution to musical theatre has inevitably overshadowed the discussion of relatively transient successes of the 1940s like *Song of Norway* (1944), *Finian's Rainbow* (1947), or *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1949). In order to explain this creative dominance, scholars including Block have argued that there is 'a deeper relationship between music and drama' that begins in *Oklahoma!* and is continued throughout Rodgers and Hammerstein's work.²⁹ He highlights the coherent connection of elements of a musical as a fundamental feature of Rodgers and Hammerstein's creative collaboration. Whilst this textual evolution, also referred to as 'the integrated musical', is not exclusively associated with Rodgers and Hammerstein, the relationship between their work and this form dominates the analytical framework through which *Kiss Me, Kate* (and also Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946)) has been studied.³⁰ For example, when Siebert appraises *Kiss Me, Kate* at the end of her thematic analysis of the show, she situates it as reactive to the integrated musical:

156; Dan Rebellato, "No Theatre Guild Attraction Are We': *Kiss Me, Kate* and the Politics of the Integrated Musical', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 19 (2009), accessed 27 November, 2016. doi: 10.1080/10486800802583091; John R. Severn, 'A (white) woman's (ironic) places in *Kiss Me, Kate* and post-war America', *Studies in Musical Theatre*, 6 (2012), accessed 20 May 2017. doi: 10.1386/smt.6.2.173_1.

²⁹ This partial quotation is taken from a section of analysis in which Block explains Rodgers and Hammerstein's continued development of their artistic aspirations from *Oklahoma!* in *Carousel*. Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 199.

³⁰ This is usefully outlined by Millie Taylor in the introduction to her monograph *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment*. Millie Taylor, *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment* (Basingstoke: Ashgate, 2012), 4.

With *Kiss me, Kate* [sic], Porter met the challenge of the “new style of musical comedy,” simultaneously surpassing his past triumphs and establishing a new standard for the genre. ... [The] subtle refinement, the depth of expression, the inventiveness, and total integration of music, lyrics, and book distinguish *Kiss me, Kate* as one of the very finest musical comedies.³¹

Importantly, Siebert articulates the idea of an absolute narrative and thematic connection between the script and score of *Kiss Me, Kate* that is central to the readings of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Loosely, Siebert, Block and Swain each argue that *Kiss Me, Kate* shows Porter’s attempts ‘to channel music’s power to establish character:’ in other words, to write a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical.³²

In *American Musical Comedy*, Gerald Bordman demonstrates the pervasiveness of this interpretation in wider musical theatre scholarship by framing Porter’s earlier work in terms of the relationship between the songs and the shows in which they originated. He characterises many of these songs written in the 1930s as generic and not specific to any one musical:

They [the songs] never gave the impression of having been written specifically to further a plot, to maintain a carefully, contrived tone, or to create a unique mood. Many seemed like they could have been employed interchangeably, and many of them were not written for the shows in which they were finally used.³³

Here, Bordman anticipates his [brief] discussion of *Kiss Me, Kate* which specifically praises the ‘integrated’ character of Porter’s music with the Spewack script:

Because the two stories were developed logically and coherently and because their humor derived entirely from the situations and characters, the Spewacks’ work was acclaimed as a shining exemplar of the new school of lyric. Porter’s music and lyrics moved deftly and gracefully between the show’s two worlds, not merely decorating the

³¹ Lynn Laitman Siebert, *An Analysis of Five Musical Comedies*, 346-7.

³² Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 218.

³³ Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Comedy*, 145-6.

story, but commenting on it and moving it along. For once, Porter's songs seemed to belong to the show.³⁴

This example is significant because it concisely illustrates how 'integrated' readings of *Kiss Me, Kate* can also punctuate discussion of Porter's compositional output throughout his career.

Mordden and Rebellato present alternative arguments to this reading, each stating that *Kiss Me, Kate* does not conform to the dramatic rules of integration, in direct disagreement with Block, Bordman et al. However, both authors repeatedly focus on integration as a defining discussion point in their coverage of the show without providing meaningful alternative readings, almost validating this approach through lack of counterevidence.³⁵ In order to address both sides of this reading, this thesis specifically examines *Kiss Me, Kate* in connection to the integrated musical. It draws on the genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate* in order to relate Porter and the Spewacks' creative processes to the suggestion that *Kiss Me, Kate* was written with the conscious intention to mirror Rodgers and Hammerstein's work. It also draws on the reception of the original Broadway production of the show in order to situate the origins of this reading in alternative terms. This culminates in a discussion chapter that challenges the usefulness of the integrated reading when representing *Kiss Me, Kate* in musical theater scholarship and problematises this interpretation of 'a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical' as a fixed concept in scholarship.

Representing Shakespeare and gender in *Kiss Me, Kate*

In addition to an emphasis on the influence of Rodgers and Hammerstein, *Kiss Me, Kate* is frequently celebrated as one of the most successful works of popular culture to incorporate a work of Shakespeare. Other examples might include Arthur Laurents, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim's musical *West Side Story* (1957), Disney's animated film *The Lion King* (1994) and Gil Junger's romantic comedy film *10 Things I*

³⁴ Ibid., 171.

³⁵ Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin'*, 255-8; Dan Rebellato, 'No Theatre Guild Attraction Are We', 61-73.

Hate About You (1999).³⁶ This context is reflected in the critical reception to the show by two key approaches. Firstly, some readings of the musical situate *Kiss Me, Kate* in the context of previous Broadway productions, such as Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart's hit adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938), that have adapted the works of Shakespeare or were set in the contemporary [Tudor] period. Less successful examples, including *Swingin' the Dream* (1939) and *The Firebrand of Florence* (1947), have been used to explain financial challenges faced during the creation of the original Broadway production as well as to characterise *Kiss Me, Kate*'s unprecedented success where other shows had failed. Secondly, scholars have situated *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of a canon of adaptations of the works of Shakespeare, focussing on *The Taming of the Shrew* as the definitive creative influence on the show.³⁷ Not only do these readings prioritise the dramatic importance of Shakespeare's play and original characters above Porter and the Spewacks' original material, they also problematise *Kiss Me, Kate* as a misogynistic text as a result of reading *the Taming of the Shrew* narrative as the most pervasive aspect of the show.

This thesis addresses these readings in several ways. Firstly, it evaluates the manipulation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in the archival materials from the original Broadway production. It considers how Shakespeare's text was changed and its use evolved during the development of the original Broadway production.³⁸ Drawing on chapters by Barbara Hodgdon (*The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*), Julie Sanders (*Adaptation and Appropriation*), Frances Teague (*Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage*), Irene G. Dash (*Shakespeare and the American Musical*) and sections of doctoral theses by Carol E. Silverberg and Elinor Parsons, it questions to what extent *Kiss Me, Kate* can be effectively labelled as an

³⁶ Respectively, these works are based on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

³⁷ This is perhaps most evident in Irene G. Dash's chapter on *Kiss Me, Kate* in *Shakespeare and the American Musical*. Dash suggests that while *Kiss Me, Kate* is about 'the woman's dilemma of marriage versus career' and that Porter and Spewack have truly modernised *The Taming of the Shrew*, each of the layers of the text can be traced back to Shakespeare's play. Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010), 49-76 (49).

³⁸ Unless noted otherwise, all quotations taken from *The Taming of the Shrew* are cited from: William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Ann Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). References are to act, scene, line.

adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*.³⁹ It also evaluates whether the use of metatheatricality and intertextual connections between backstage and onstage can be correlated with the use of Shakespeare; this is the case made by Hodgdon and Sanders.⁴⁰ In so doing, it will comment on the need to *find* Shakespeare in *Kiss Me, Kate* beyond what is presented to the audience on stage.

Secondly, this thesis documents the immediate reception to the original Broadway production, including attitudes to the use of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and subsequent productions of the show as part of its performance history. Here, it particularly focuses on Adrian Noble's 1987 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) as a key example of the range of performance contexts in which *Kiss Me, Kate* continues to be staged. This revival, which is available to view on DVD at the RSC archives at Stratford-Upon-Avon, offers a valuable case study of how, even in the classical theatre, *Kiss Me, Kate* is primarily produced as a stage musical, with substantial revisions made to the musical arrangements and not to the Shakespearean content. Through this lens, it considers the practical role of *The Taming of the Shrew* in modern readings of the show in contrast to the theoretical implications of the play as a source text.

Finally, this thesis confronts the argument that *Kiss Me, Kate* can be considered as part of the misogynistic legacy of *The Taming of the Shrew* in a dedicated chapter on the representations of gender in the show. Through textual analysis and evaluation of the archival materials that indicate Porter and the Spewacks' thematic priorities, it considers to what extent *Kiss Me, Kate* promotes a masculinist narrative. It draws on the work of Hodgdon and Silverberg as well as Robert Lawson-Peebles' chapter 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare: The Case of *Kiss me [sic], Kate*' on George Sidney's film adaptation, to consider criticisms of Porter's 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' and the finale

³⁹ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006); Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical* (as previously); Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew: Screen Versions of The Taming of the Shrew* (PhD diss., University of London, 2008); Carol E. Silverberg, *If It's Good Enough for Shakespeare; the bard and the American Musical* (PhD diss., State University of New York at Binghamton, 2009).

⁴⁰ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade*, 1-38; Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 28-29. This is also shown in Stephen M. Buhler, 'Musical Shakespeares: attending to Ophelia, Juliet, and Desdemona' in Robert Shaughnessy (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 150-174.

of *Kiss Me, Kate*.⁴¹ In these sections, it reflects on how the reception of *The Taming of the Shrew* has shaped feminist discourse on *Kiss Me, Kate* more than the text of the musical itself.

Cultural aesthetics and entertainment

As can be seen in the previous sections of this chapter, literature on *Kiss Me, Kate* is generally reactive: it is situated in the context of the influence of Rodgers and Hammerstein or within the prevailing analyses of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Therefore, this musical has received minimal attention as a text in its own right. Both of these methods of interpreting the show elevate it from lowbrow culture to a text with high art values. The integrated reading positions *Kiss Me, Kate* as Porter's attempt to achieve new aesthetic ambitions stimulated by the development of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical whilst the adaptation argument emphasises the Shakespearean content as more valuable than Bella Spewack's original contributions to the work. This reflects the initial need to legitimise the Broadway musical as a valid research field: scholars have looked for parallels between key shows and well-established theories (often derived from classical musicology or theatre studies). As a result, there has been an emphasis on easily readable texts that crossover with art music, classical theatre and film.

In the introduction to *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, Knapp explicitly questions whether musical theatre can be considered as suitably comparable to other 'art forms', asking: 'Can American film and the American musical *truly* be thought of as art forms on the same level as, say, Shakespeare's plays and Mozart's operas?'⁴² Ultimately, he concludes that the answer to his question is complex as he explains:

[American musical theatre] draws heavily on elements of society much lower than its well-educated, more aesthetically minded elite; it appeals broadly to educated and uneducated alike; it responds shamelessly to commercial stimuli; and worst of all, it has managed to grow largely independent of its European roots, from which it might usefully have

⁴¹ Robert Lawson-Peebles, 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare: The Case of *Kiss me, Kate*' [sic] in Robert Lawson-Peebles, *Approaches to the American Musical* (Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press, 1996), 89-108.

⁴² Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 3.

absorbed that sense of aesthetic elevation Americans have so often found lacking in their indigenous artworks.⁴³

The multiplicity of influences that shaped early musical theatre means that it is possible to situate Broadway shows in a variety of contexts without fully exploring the text's individual features. The relationship between musicals, operetta and more distantly opera also becomes a useful perspective from which to validate musical theatre studies and can skew our research perspectives.

These considerations are certainly not exclusive to musical theatre scholarship. Shyon Baumann introduces early film studies methodologies in his monograph *Hollywood Highbrow: From Entertainment to Art*.⁴⁴ He continues that the 'legitimization of Hollywood film' occurred as a result of the evolution of American society, especially in the 1960s, and through an aesthetic shift in the industry itself.⁴⁵ He explains that the introduction of 'film as art' narratives in 1960s film reviews created the necessary 'intellectual viability' for film studies to evolve.⁴⁶ Although the emergent vocabulary and critical frameworks facilitated a new style of communication, it also limited film discourse to *artistic* cinema, to the qualities of specific films that are exclusively applicable for academic discourse. This progression is not dissimilar to the emphasis on integration as the seminal aesthetic idea of the post-*Oklahoma* musical; a greater connection between the dramatic elements (script, score, choreography) of the musical brings the form closer to opera. In Siebert's work on *Kiss Me, Kate*, she particularly emphasises the musical features of the score that demonstrate Porter's classical proficiency and frames *Kiss Me, Kate* as his 'masterwork'.⁴⁷ To some extent, she looks for examples of uniqueness, of artistry, and non-commercial intention in Porter's songs to justify *Kiss Me, Kate's* enduring success.⁴⁸

This thesis aims to revisit how we interpret the motivations of writing a musical in the 1940s after the success of *Oklahoma!* Whereas *Kiss Me Kate* has been situated as Porter's attempt to emulate a more serious musical form, this thesis argues that, through

⁴³ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁴ Shyon Baumann, *Hollywood Highbrow: From Entertainment to Art* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Lynne Laitman Siebert, *A Cole Porter Companion*, 291.

⁴⁸ John M. Clum summarises this line of discourse, commenting that: '[Kiss Me, Kate] proved Porter could be a contender in the post-*Oklahoma!* arena of integrated musicals.' John M. Clum, *Something for the Boys: Musical Theater and Gay Culture* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 9

the text, the authors deliberately subvert this intention, glorifying lowbrow entertainment. The prevailing focus on the classical influences that shape *Kiss Me, Kate*, and its connection to the integrated musical, have limited scholarly discussion of what one reviewer describes as ‘the show of shows’.⁴⁹ One of the significant challenges here is providing a clear definition of entertainment in theoretical terms. Film scholar Richard Dyer provides one of the most effective descriptions in the context of television revue shows. He writes:

[...] entertainment asserts the fact of human *energy* in the vitality of the dance number, the pow of the singing, the snap of the humour, the sparkle of the sexuality – so many showbiz clichés which none the less relate to a real-life assertive quality in the best of entertainment.⁵⁰

As Dyer captures the dynamism of effective entertainment, he also demonstrates the different levels on which it exists so that the impact of the extended tap sequence intersects with an amusing joke which is supplemented by a spectacular costume. *Kiss Me, Kate* provides a particularly interesting example in this case because the metalevels of the show celebrate these aspects of entertainment as they manifest in a stage musical. As the text also explores performance and theatricality, there is a cyclical union between the functional elements of the show (a section of dialogue; a song; a dance sequence), reflexive allusions to these elements, and an underlying commentary about the nature of entertainment. This gives the musical an appearance of postmodernity that has been ordinarily underplayed because of the external contexts to which the show is generally linked.

By contrast, this thesis aims to read the text of *Kiss Me, Kate* as a development of Porter and the Spewacks’ earlier works. For example, *Kiss Me, Kate* includes varied use of satire and farce, which are both integral to their earlier stage musical *Leave It To Me!*, based around the appointment of Alonso Goodhue, a wealthy bath manufacturer, as American ambassador to Russia. Goodhue is selected for office over the head of an influential newspaper proprietor who then dispatches his top investigative reporter Buckley Joyce Thomas to Russia to ruin Goodhue. However, Buck immediately discovers

⁴⁹ Robert Garland, ‘A Musical Comedy That Has Everything’, *New York Journal-American*, December 31, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

⁵⁰ Richard Dyer, *Light Entertainment* (London: British Film Institute, 1973) 39. Some of this text has been reprinted as a chapter ‘The Idea of Entertainment’ in Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 2002).

that Goodhue would like nothing more than to be recalled to America and they strike up a comedic alliance to ruin Goodhue's ambassadorial career with steadily escalating diplomatic incidents. Goodhue is perpetually rewarded for his violent attempts to ruin his career, ridiculing the diplomatic process in a particularly volatile period of international relations. The topicality of *Leave It To Me!*, including poking fun at Joseph Stalin, limited its run as well as its success internationally.⁵¹ In their tongue-in-cheek introduction to the published script of *Kiss Me, Kate*, the Spewacks refer to this show as the first of their two contributions to the 'New Art Form', positioning *Kiss Me, Kate* as a logical creative successor to *Leave It To Me!* and affirming the overlapping connections between these works.⁵² As part of the analysis of *Kiss Me, Kate*, this thesis will make some comparison between themes in *Leave It To Me!*, as well as in the Spewacks' screenplay for *My Favorite Wife* and other Porter shows in order to question to what extent this musical can truly be seen as a departure from what they had produced before.

Employing archival sources for research

The published literature on *Kiss Me, Kate* seldom reconciles details of the show's genesis with the original Broadway text. Although Geoffrey Block signposts some key differences between the first draft of the script (known by Block and in this thesis as 'the May libretto'), the main aim of his chapter is to provide a valuable overview of some aspects of the text in the context of his wider survey of the Broadway musical.⁵³ Therefore, this thesis brings together the first detailed description of the genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate* with a topical analysis of the original Broadway production and its reception. This structure is underpinned by considerable archival research that allows us to consider how *Kiss Me, Kate* was developed, to what extent the original Broadway text is a reflection of earlier drafts of the show, and how the musical has evolved in its subsequent reception. This

⁵¹ Theatre distributor Richard Madden wrote to Bella Spewack about the end of plans to take *Leave It To Me!* to Scandinavia, complaining about the outbreak of war in Europe: 'This damned war has just gotten in the way of every foreign production of my properties and now we add to it *Leave It To Me* [sic]. Some day I hope there will be a fitting accounting rendered e to that madman over there, who started all this hideous business.' CU BSS 42/*Leave It To Me!* Correspondence: letter from Richard Madden to Bella Spewack, December 12, 1939.

⁵² Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction' in Cole Porter, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1953) [known as *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf)] vii-viii.

⁵³ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 217, 226-9.

methodology is built on the previous work of scholars including Block, Tim Carter, Jeffrey Magee, Dominic McHugh, and Carol J. Oja, who each advocate the value of archival research as a significant component of assessing the Broadway musical.⁵⁴ As a result, this thesis aims to shed new light on the creation of *Kiss Me, Kate* as a basis for understanding the new analytical approach it advocates.

The materials cited come from numerous collections in the United States and England. Most substantially, this thesis draws on the Cole Porter papers split between the Cole Porter Trust, the Library of Congress and Yale University and the Spewack papers at Columbia University. These collections include seven copies from different stages of the original Broadway script, lyric sheets, copyist scores, and specific correspondence from the development of *Kiss Me, Kate*. In addition to these sources, this dissertation exploits materials in the Hanya Holm, Agnes de Mille, Benjamin Kranz, Harold Lang and Harry Clark papers at the New York Public Library as well as the (unprocessed) Alfred Drake papers at the Library Congress. Building on the collections of these individuals, it also cites materials from the performing arts division at the Victoria & Albert museum, the Lord Chamberlain's papers at the British Library and specific materials at the Royal Shakespeare Company's archives in Stratford-Upon-Avon.⁵⁵

Whilst there are a considerable range of materials on *Kiss Me, Kate* available to study, there are also noticeable gaps in what they cover. For example, there is continued ambiguity about the precise role that Sam Spewack played in the early development of *Kiss Me, Kate* that cannot be meaningfully addressed by the known sources alone. In his Porter biography, William McBrien explains that: 'According to Saint [Subber] (and others agree), "Bella gave [Sam] a share of her royalties..."⁵⁶ However, he does not define the basis on which Sam came to be credited for his contributions. In the transcript of an interview, leading actor Alfred Drake voices strong opinions that credit Sam with a

⁵⁴ Tim Carter, *Oklahoma!: The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2007); Jeffrey Magee, *Irving Berlin's American Musical Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press 2012); Dominic McHugh, *Loverly: The Life and Times of My Fair Lady* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Carol J. Oja, *Bernstein Meets Broadway: Collaborative Art in a Time of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁵⁵ These collections specifically relate to British productions of *Kiss Me, Kate*: the original London production (or Broadway transfer) (1951), the Sadler's Wells revival (1970), the Royal Shakespeare Company revival (1987), the West End transfer of Michael Blakemore's 1999 Broadway production (2001), and the Old Vic revival (2012).

⁵⁶ William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 308.

substantial influence over the show.⁵⁷ Yet it is also clear that Drake had little professional respect for Bella Spewack, often undermining her work on *Kiss Me, Kate* in contrast to most other sources. Correspondence and memoranda from March to May 1948 indicate that Sam was present at some of the early meetings between the creative team and attended the first script reading with Bella, Porter, Ayers, Subber and Wilson. In addition to this, this thesis reveals a draft script outline from April 1948, seemingly written by Sam, that noticeably contrasts with Bella's working materials. Passing references aside, Sam then disappears from all sources and is seldom referred to in the letters to Bella. It is conceivable that, as the Spewacks were living apart at the beginning of this period, some materials have been lost. However, it is equally plausible that Sam had a transitory but meaningful role in the early genesis of the show and re-entered the production team as *Kiss Me, Kate* opened in Philadelphia.

As this example demonstrates, archival research can yield imprecise results that also leave the judgment of significance to the author. While there are some tantalising fragments, especially in the two 'Notes and Worksheets' folders in the Spewack papers, it is impossible to contextualise all of these materials effectively. In acknowledgement of these concerns, this thesis prioritises materials that are part of a demonstrable sequence or of an ongoing conversation. For example, there is no extant documentation of the conversations that evidently took place in October 1948 that led to a number of changes to the script before the rehearsal process began. However, it is possible to trace some of Hanya Holm's annotations on her script drafts in the changes made to the developing text, which are functionally different to annotations made by Bella Spewack.⁵⁸ In this way, it situates evidence with other examples in order to give some nuance to a well-reported story that has largely overlooked the actual development of the text.

In addition to this archival research and the published scholarship outlined in this chapter, this thesis draws on a range of additional sources including the published script,⁵⁹ the published vocal score, multiple cast albums, the MGM film adaptation and

⁵⁷ This is a 38-page transcript of an extended conversation between Alfred Drake and *Show Music* journalist James Klosty in 1992 (soon before Drake's death). A short extract of this conversation (3pp.) was published in *Show Music* in 1998. CPT 1/1: typed transcript of an interview with Alfred Drake by James Klosty, 2-5. Known hereafter as 'Drake Transcript'; James Klosty, 'Alfred Drake on The Life That Late He Led', *Show Music*, Winter 1998/99 (14), 25-7.

⁵⁸ Holm generally focused on the practical details of the script, writing questions about blocking, ensemble numbers, and inconsistencies throughout her copies.

⁵⁹ The script was first published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1953 in close but coincidental proximity to the release of the MGM film. It was subsequently included by Stanley Richards in *Ten Great*

two television adaptations⁶⁰ and the recently published critical edition edited by David Charles Abell and Seann Alderking. It also exploits considerable research of contemporary and more recent reception in newspapers, magazines and on radio. For example, it draws on sketch representations of the original Broadway production in *American Vogue* (1949) and an interview with Howard Keel used in pre-concert coverage of a radio broadcast of *Kiss Me, Kate* on BBC Radio Two in 1996.⁶¹ This is supplemented by reflections on performances of the show, including the recordings of the Royal Shakespeare Company's revival in 1987 and the London production of Blakemore's Broadway revival as well as live performances at the Old Vic (2012), the BBC Proms (2014) and Opera North (2015). In this way, it combines a mixed research methodology that acknowledges the variety of contexts in which *Kiss Me, Kate* is recognised by a public and academic audience.

In summary, this thesis begins by establishing a comprehensive genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate*, documenting the key moments of progress and highlighting areas of thematic development. Chapter Two maps the early development of *Kiss Me, Kate*, describing how the key working collaborations were formed (and challenged) and analysing how Porter and Bella Spewack developed the first draft of the show. Using early drafts and correspondence from the period, it considers how the authors initially reconciled the backstage and *Taming of the Shrew* aspects of the text in order to create the May libretto. Chapter Three begins at a creative turning point, the introduction of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' to the score. In the context of the altered tone 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' brought to *Kiss Me, Kate*, Chapter Three discusses the casting and financial concerns that threatened to limit the production and the substantive changes made to the text during the rehearsal period. Concluding with the show's out-of-town opening at the Shubert Theatre in Philadelphia, this section

Musicals of the American Theatre (Radnor: Chilton Book Company, 1973). The text in both volumes is completely identical, with only a few minor syntactic changes from the Spewack script marked as the original Broadway text. All quotations (unless stated otherwise) have been taken from the Richards edition.

⁶⁰ I was fortunate enough to see *Kiss Me Kate* projected in 3D as part of the London Film Festival in 2015. I also attended a public screening of the television adaptation starring Howard Keel and Patricia Morison, which was recorded for the opening night's programming on BBC2.

⁶¹ 'People and Ideas: "Kiss Me, Kate"/"Lend an Ear"', *Vogue*, February 15, 1949, accessed November 21, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/879243858?accountid=9735>; Sheridan Morley, 'Introduction to *Kiss Me, Kate*', *Kiss Me Kate* [live performance] BBC Radio 2, London, October 5, 1996.

demonstrates how various aspects of the genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate* intersected to create a Broadway hit even as the cast and crew were convinced the musical would close before reaching New York.

In light of this history, Chapter Four examines the international reception of *Kiss Me, Kate*, signposting key productions and screen adaptations. Through the analysis of the Vienna Volksoper production (1956), the Royal Shakespeare Company production (1987) and Michael Blakemore's revised Broadway revival (1999), it maps a complex evolution that reflects different performance attitudes to the show. Additionally, it highlights the contrasting approaches between the film and television adaptations of *Kiss Me, Kate*, which have added to the multiplicity of the text. Through these examples, it reflects on the legacy of constantly revived Broadway shows that exist in different forms and aesthetic environments. In so doing, it covers the impacts of broadcast censorship, translation, and contemporary attitudes to Golden Age musicals as a framing context for the subsequent discussion chapters.

Chapter Five focuses exclusively on *Kiss Me, Kate* and the integrated musical. It details the key analytical frameworks associated with integration, including the connections between 'the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical', moralism and organicism in musical theatre scholarship. It then interrogates the extent to which *Kiss Me, Kate* can be effectively read in these terms, particularly drawing attention to Bella and Sam Spewack's introduction to the published script titled: 'How to Write a Musical Comedy: An Esoteric Analysis of a New Art Form'.⁶² It examines the development of the text as outlined in Chapters Two and Three, highlights the overlaps between *Kiss Me, Kate* in Porter's career and Irving Berlin's success with *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), and introduces a striking exchange of views in *The New York Times* about the strengths of shows like *Kiss Me, Kate* in comparison to the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, which underlines the topicality of this theme in contemporary attitudes to the stage musical.

Following this analysis, Chapter Six also revisits the genesis of the piece in order to evaluate readings of *Kiss Me, Kate* as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. By considering this writing process and the function of Shakespeare's play in the original text, it considers to what extent *The Taming of the Shrew* is present in *Kiss Me, Kate* and

⁶² A full transcription of this introduction is included in Appendix 2. Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction' in Cole Porter, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), vii-xix.

whether audiences can be expected actively to engage with it separately from the other elements of the show. This discussion provides a functional introduction to Chapter Seven, which analyses the gender implications of *Kiss Me, Kate* in light of its use of *The Taming of the Shrew* as well as a text in its own right. Here it draws on the performance history of the show, including the film adaptation and 1999 revival, in order to indicate how different interpretations of a Broadway text can have a considerable impact on their academic reception.

Finally, Chapter Eight outlines a new analytical lens through which to consider *Kiss Me, Kate*. By approaching entertainment as a vital aesthetic component of this show, we are able to understand a movement of work, including other less-well-recognised Broadway shows, that comments on musical theatre and on popular culture. Whereas previous scholars situate *Kiss Me, Kate* as an attempt to emulate *Oklahoma!*, this thesis suggests that it is one of several reactionary texts that functionally reject 'the serious musical' in favour of light entertainment. Drawing on the introduction of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and on the changes to the show during its genesis, its subversion of high culture, including *The Taming of the Shrew*, and the deliberate lack of seriousness in *Kiss Me, Kate* as a whole, this thesis concludes that future Broadway scholarship needs to acknowledge the presence of conscious entertainment and of the role of 'satire to divert' in the development of Golden Age musicals. In so doing, it suggests a new field of discourse in which to situate musical theatre works, including *Kiss Me, Kate*, that values these texts critically for their commercial and entertainment value and appreciates self-referential comedy as an integral feature of modern American popular culture.

CHAPTER TWO
FROM SHAKESPEARE TO SPEWACK:
EVOLVING A TEXT

The earliest details of the development of *Kiss Me, Kate* have always been vague, with exact time scales and meeting points impossible to determine. Over the course of a year from around November 1947, Lemuel Ayers, Arnold Saint Subber and Bella Spewack formed a production team and then recruited Cole Porter, agent and Broadway producer John C. Wilson (who directed *Kiss Me, Kate*) and choreographer Hanya Holm to develop the original Broadway text and production. When it opened on December 30, 1948 to excellent reviews and box-office success, *Kiss Me, Kate* established or re-invigorated the careers of nearly everyone involved. Yet, this developmental year, which was integral to the show's success and persistent longevity, has been only loosely documented. The following three chapters present a genesis and performance history of the musical, triangulating archival materials, published interviews, and secondary literature in order to confront academic assertions about adaptation, gender representation and musical integration in the subsequent analysis. As these theoretical concepts rely on specific interpretations of authorial intention, these chapters have been structured to consider what evidence there is to support such claims.

It is clear from the multiple script drafts available that *Kiss Me, Kate* underwent a complex evolution from its initial inception to the original Broadway production, that the songs and script were created as a result of divergent creative processes, and that there is a significant difference in narrative emphasis between the earliest draft and the original Broadway production. This chapter and the next particularly exploit four iterations of the script – the May libretto, the October 11 script, the rehearsal script (October 30) and the original Broadway text – which were developed through 1948. These scripts act as temporal markers that frame the structural development of the show.¹

¹ There are three versions of 'Script A', two of which ('Script A with notes' [1 & 2]) are copies of the original Broadway script. The third 'Script A' is the slightly amended libretto for the original London production (1951). Both copies of the original Broadway script include light annotations of additional directions or slight grammatical changes. Some of these notes have been included in the published script. They do not represent any substantive changes to the text. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Script A [London script (1951)]; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Script A with notes [1]; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Script A with notes [2].

However, it is worth noting that while these scripts act as useful indicators, they are not of exclusive significance. Instead, they offer tangible reference points through which the genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate* can be interpreted.

The script materials available in the Spewack papers are initially misleading as they are grouped inconsistently. For example, there are three script versions catalogued as ‘Script B’. Two of these, labelled ‘Script B’ [1] and ‘Script B with Notes’, are undated drafts, labelled by Geoffrey Block as “the May libretto”:² the earliest extant *Kiss Me, Kate* script.³ This is easily determined as some of the songs and sections of *The Taming of the Shrew* included are removed and repurposed in later drafts. There is also a strong correlation between this script and overview materials written in preparation for producing this first draft. However, the third ‘Script B’ is actually the libretto for the 1970 Sadler’s Wells revival.⁴ Similarly, the ‘Script C’s are also different drafts of the text: ‘Script C with Notes’ is the most disordered known version of the script with a number of additional leaves. The title page, which is several pages into the document, is dated October 11, 1948 and includes significant annotations by Bella Spewack. This document is a particularly useful snapshot of the substantive changes made to the final three scenes of *Kiss Me, Kate* in the later developmental period.⁵ ‘Script C’, dated October 30, 1948, is a copy of what will be known as ‘the rehearsal script’; this also has various annotations and indications of change. Supplementary to these materials, there is a further undated script draft in Hanya Holm’s papers.⁶ This script has several structural differences to any version of the show and provides a possible insight into some of the discord that developed between the creative team before the rehearsal period.

² It is interesting that Block settled on this name when Spewack’s deadline to deliver the script was June 1, 1948. As the extant evidence refers to meetings in May, I have decided to maintain this label for both copies of this script in the Spewack papers. As one copy is more substantially annotated than the other, ‘Script B [1]’ shall be known as the ‘May Libretto’ and ‘Script B with Notes’ shall be known as ‘May Libretto – Spewack’. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Script B, known hereafter as the ‘May Libretto’; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Script B with Notes, known hereafter as the ‘May Libretto – Spewack’; Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 217.

³ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto – Spewack. This script is also duplicated in Hanya Holm’s papers. NYPL HH 21/502: Undated script [2] (May Libretto).

⁴ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Script B [2] [known hereafter as Sadler’s Wells script (1970).] This document will not be referred to until Chapter Four. See pages 127-131 for more details.

⁵ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: ‘Script C with Notes’ [known hereafter as October 11 Script]; NYPL HH 21/503: *Kiss Me, Kate* Script (October 11, 1948).

⁶ This is also known as the ‘Blue Book’ in some of the notes on the show. NYPL HH 21/501: Undated script [1].

In addition to these script drafts, this account of the genesis considers several draft documents (some incomplete) contained in the Spewack papers including a previously overlooked source (briefly signposted in Chapter One) that indicates Sam Spewack's involvement in the early development of *Kiss Me, Kate*.⁷ These chapters also draw substantially on lyric sheets and music manuscripts from Porter and Holm's papers as well as other materials such as correspondence (letters, telegrams, etc.), a private memorandum from Bella Spewack, and an unpublished transcript of an interview with Alfred Drake.⁸ Both the memorandum and interview transcript present noticeably biased (and in the case of Drake, retrospective) accounts that cannot be corroborated by many other sources.⁹ However, they provide useful insight into the personal relationships between the collaborators during the writing and rehearsal process.

Through the use of these materials, supplemented by the published accounts available, this chapter therefore discusses the foundation of the initial creative team and examines how Porter and Bella Spewack approached the formative development of *Kiss Me, Kate*. It specifically investigates how Spewack and Porter constructed the backstage story, reacted to stimuli, and incorporated an intertextual connection between Fred and Lilli's professional and working relationships into the text from the outset. It also maps what is known of Bella Spewack's research process into *The Taming of the Shrew* and represents the different methods employed by Bella and Sam to adapt the play for *Kiss Me, Kate*. Therefore, this chapter divides this process into key stages to identify the practical and thematic points of interest that led Spewack and Porter to produce the first draft of *Kiss Me, Kate*: The May libretto.

⁷ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: typed memorandum of early genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate*, May 12, 1948, 7pp. Known hereafter as 'Spewack Memorandum'; CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: incomplete overview of Fred and Lilli's relationship history, 2pp; CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: untitled scene outline, April 28, 1948, 9pp.

⁸ Lyric sheets are available in LC CP 11/1-5 and NYPL HH 21/504. (For a full description, please see the bibliography. Individual items will have specific citations.) The memorandum document focuses on Spewack's interactions with Arnold Saint Subber but provides a clear narrative as contextualisation for this information. CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: 'Spewack Memorandum'; CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript.

⁹ Drake's recollections can be partially cross-referenced with John C. Wilson's brief account of the rehearsal process documented in his autobiography. However, Wilson's account is limited by its brevity. CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 4-7; John C. Wilson, 'Cole and *Kiss Me, Kate*' in *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, (eds.) Thomas S. Hischak and Jack Macauley (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 169-180.

Forming a collaboration

In late 1947, Arnold Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayers sought out a collaborator to write a new musical they had envisaged. The formation of their partnership has always been enigmatic. As such, John C. Wilson provides the only account of how they came to collaborate with one another, explaining that:

[Kiss Me, Kate] was born in a lawyer's waiting room one afternoon, when Arnold Subber (as he was known then) happened to sit down next to Lemuel Ayers. They didn't know one another but fell into a desultory conversation.¹⁰ Subber had just come from a summer theater on Long Island, where they had done a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and was enthusiastic about its commercial possibilities. That same afternoon, he succeeded in convincing Lem that they should join forces and produce it on Broadway.¹¹

Subber had “grown up” on Broadway, working as an office assistant to theatre operative Lee Shubert before becoming a stage manager (*Hellzapoppin* (1938); *Hollywood Pinafore* (1945); *Park Avenue* (1946)).¹² Yet neither he nor Ayers had experience of producing a Broadway show when they began discussions about *Kiss Me, Kate*.¹³ For his part, Ayers had established his professional profile as an influential Broadway designer, following the success of his sets for the original Broadway production of *The Pirate* (1942). He contributed designs to three of the most successful musicals of the decade – Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* (1943), Robert Wright and George Forrest's *Song of Norway*

¹⁰ There are several slight variations in this story. In the *New York Times*, Stephen Holden suggests that Ayers and Subber met via common acquaintance as Ayers ‘also had the notion of a musical based on the Shakespeare play.’ Stephen Holden, ‘Saint Subber, Theater Producer and a Neil Simon Partner, 76’, *New York Times*, April 21, 1994, accessed June 5, 2017.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1994/04/21/obituaries/saint-subber-theater-producer-and-a-neil-simon-partner76.html>.

¹¹ John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 169.

¹² Stephen Holden, ‘Saint Subber, Theatre Producer and a Neil Simon Partner’ *New York Times*, April 21, 1944, accessed November 15, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/04/21/obituaries/saint-subber-theater-producer-and-a-neil-simon-partner76.html>; Dan Dietz, *The Complete Book of Hollywood Musicals* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 282, 358.

¹³ Subber went on to produce several other musicals after *Kiss Me, Kate* although none achieved notable success. These included Porter's next show *Out of this World* (1950), Harold Arlen's *House of Flowers* (1954), the stage version of Lerner and Loewe's *Gigi* (1973) and Lerner and Bernstein's *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* (1976). Subber also produced seven plays by American playwright and Pulitzer Prize winner Neil Simon, including *Barefoot in the Park* (1963) and *The Odd Couple* (1965). Edward Jablonski, *Harold Arlen: Rhythm and Blues* (Boston: Northeastern University Press 1998), 244.

(1944) and Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg's *Bloomer Girl* (1944).¹⁴ Together, Subber and Ayers had practical and aesthetic insights into staging a musical but no functional way of producing the book or the songs.

The basic idea for *Kiss Me, Kate* – ‘a musical comedy treatment of *The Taming of the Shrew*’¹⁵ – is widely attributed to Subber although Bella Spewack maintained that the metatheatrical aspect of the show was her own invention.¹⁶ While Wilson suggests that Subber was reacting to a recent project he had been involved in, numerous accounts (including Subber's to William McBrien) relate how Subber had reacted to a production of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1935) that he had worked on.¹⁷ This production starred Broadway favourites (and married couple) Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne and is described by Shakespeare scholar Elizabeth Shafer as a landmark version of the play. She highlights the Fontanne/Lunt *Shrew* as ‘the big success of the mid-twentieth century...’; it went on to tour the US and be revived for benefit performances until 1940.¹⁸ This production has also been frequently cited as a significant influence on the original Broadway production of *Kiss Me, Kate*, supporting the basic notion that Subber originated it.¹⁹ Schafer identifies the reported similarities in staging between the Fontanne/Lunt production and the original Broadway production of *Kiss Me, Kate* in the introduction and notes of her edition of *The Taming of the Shrew* for Cambridge University Press' series *Shakespeare in Production*. Although many have linked the stage direction for Katherine to stuff sausages down her top with the Fontanne/Lunt *Shrew*,²⁰ Schafer also catalogues several specific flourishes (e.g. the shooting of a stage prop bird in

¹⁴ Ayers also worked as an art director at the MGM studios. He championed the idea of adapting *The Pirate* into a film musical. After Ayers worked with leading MGM producer Arthur Freed and director Vincente Minnelli on *Meet Me in St. Louis* in 1944, he promoted the concept of the film for which Porter later contributed several songs ('Mack the Black', 'Be A Clown', etc.). Ayers also directed a short sequence of MGM's *Ziegfeld Follies* (1946), 'Love', featuring Lena Horne. In addition, he co-produced Porter's *Out of This World* after *Kiss Me, Kate*. He later designed set and costumes for Wright and Forrest's *Kismet* (1953) and Adler and Ross' *The Pajama Game* (1954) before his untimely death in August 1955. Earl J. Hess & Pratibha A. Dabholkar, *The Cinematic Voyage of THE PIRATE: Kelly, Garland, and Minnelli at work* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2014), 32; Orville Kurth Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960* (Fayetteville & London: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), 131.

¹⁵ George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 238.

¹⁶ This is expanded more thoroughly in the following section of this chapter. See pages 32-3.

¹⁷ William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 303.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Schafer, 'Introduction' to William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 30.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Schafer, 'Introduction' to *The Taming of the Shrew*, 30-33.

²⁰ For example: CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 11-12.

the Lunt/Fontanne *Shrew* which is replicated by the gunmen in the Act One Finale) through which the earlier production 'lives on' in *Kiss Me, Kate*.

McBrien highlights that Subber 'observed the quarrels that sometimes ensued backstage between the two stars... and proposed a musical comedy based on the tale to Thornton Wilder,²¹ who was too busy at the time to get involved.'²² It is uncertain exactly how Subber and Ayers then identified Bella Spewack as their potential collaborator or if they seriously considered any other authors in their preliminary preparations to produce the show.²³ However, she recalled that they approached her via a mutual acquaintance, theatre agent Dick Lamarr, to ask if she would be interested in 'do[ing] a musical'.²⁴ As a result, she met with them, and after discussing their concept, agreed to write the book.

By contrast with the producers, Spewack was an established and successful author of numerous plays and screenplays. Together with her husband Sam, she had written several Broadway successes including the play *Boy Meets Girl* (1935) and the stage musical *Leave It to Me!* (1938) with songs written by Cole Porter. The Spewacks also gained some popularity as film writers, garnering an Oscar nomination for the screenplay of box office smash *My Favorite Wife* (1940) starring Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, as well as critical acclaim for their adaptation of Vicky Baum's novel *Grand Hotel* – *Week-End at the Waldorf* (1945) – starring Ginger Rogers, Walter Pidgeon and Van Johnson.²⁵ In the commentary to Wilson's autobiography, the editors describe the Spewacks as 'known for their satirical tone, wisecracking characters, and lively dialogue'.²⁶ This style of writing and her previous collaborative portfolio of work which

²¹ Wilder was a leading playwright and novelist, the only writer to have won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and for drama.

²² William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 303.

²³ Although McBrien alludes to Thornton Wilder (see quotation referenced above), there is no known evidence that Subber and Ayers pursued Wilder or any other script writer for *Kiss Me, Kate* whereas there are traces of other potential collaborations with alternative songwriters, choreographers and cast members.

²⁴ McBrien recounts that Porter was telephoned by his agent Richard Madden and not Dick Lamarr. After *Kiss Me, Kate* opened on Broadway, Lamarr sued Subber and Ayres for \$50,000 for his work in developing the show, which was never honoured. William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 303. CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 1; "DICK LAMARR GETS 40G IN 'KISS ME, KATE' CLAIM", *Variety*, January 24, 1949, 51.

²⁵ Dennis Hevesi, 'Bella Spewack, Author, 91, Dies; 'Kiss Me Kate' Is One of Her Hits', *New York Times* [online], April 29, 1990, accessed June 3, 2015.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/29/obituaries/bella-spewack-author-91-dies-kiss-me-kate-is-one-of-her-hits.html>.

²⁶ John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 173.

included writing and adapting texts as stage and screen comedies made Spewack an experienced and commercially practical potential collaborator for the new producers.

Although Spewack agreed to take on the project, her working relationship with Subber was strained from the first. Initially, she disagreed with his suggestions for a composer. Subber had a preference for ‘Sol Caplin’²⁷ [sic], Ralph Blane and Burton Lane.²⁸ Lane had had recent success with his score for *Finian’s Rainbow* (1947) with E.Y Harburg and Fred Saisy but was not interested in the show without a complete script to work from.²⁹ His appointment would also have left them in need of a lyricist. Eventually, Spewack persuaded Subber and Ayers to consider her former collaborator and ‘first choice’ for the show, Cole Porter, as a suitable match for their project.³⁰ Porter had experienced mixed professional success in the 1940s. His first four musicals of the decade – *Panama Hattie* (1940), *Let’s Face It* (1941), *Something for the Boys* (1943), and *Mexican Hayride* (1944) – were each box office hits. However, Billy Rose’s revue *Seven Lively Arts* (1944) for which Porter contributed several songs, including the well-loved ‘Ev’ry Time We Say Goodbye,’ and his subsequent collaboration with Orson Welles, *Around the World* (1946), achieved neither box office nor critical acclaim. Charles Schwartz describes how Porter ‘immediately rebuffed’ Spewack, feeling that ‘the basic plot was too esoteric; his own style would not be appropriate for a Shakespearean musical...’.³¹ In his own words, Porter felt that ‘... it could not be done.’³² However, Spewack continued to persist, drawing parallels between soap operas as she knew Porter was contemplating a related project and the “backstage” story she had developed.³³ According to Porter, ‘... [the

²⁷ According to notes on a meeting in 1950, Spewack discounted the television and film composer Sol Kaplan because she knew he had other contractual obligations. YISG MCB 5/83-85: ‘Notes on Conference held at Edward Colton’s office at 551 Fifth Avenue, New York City’ on March 22, 1950’.

²⁸ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 4; YISG MCB 5/83-85 ‘Notes on Conference held at Edward Colton’s office at 551 Fifth Avenue, New York City on March 22, 1950’, 2.

²⁹ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-4; George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 239.

³¹ Charles Schwartz, *Cole Porter: A Biography*, 231.

³² Cole Porter as quoted in Richard G. Huler, *The Cole Porter Story*, 50.

³³ Porter explained: ‘I commenced sweating on an idea with a soap opera writer [Elaine Carrington] – is a notion of how desperate I was may be given – when the famous writing team of Sam and Bella Spewack came to me with the suggestion of doing Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* as a musical.’ Cole Porter as quoted in Richard G. Huler, *The Cole Porter Story*, 50. There is also a brief allusion to Porter’s potential collaboration with Carrington in George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 239.

Spewacks] wrote a single scene. [He] read it, liked it, and wrote a single song', in this way founding their renewed collaboration.³⁴

Although Porter refers to the Spewacks together in his account, it is evident from the surrounding correspondence that Sam Spewack was not formally or actively involved in this stage of developing the show.³⁵ In a letter to Hollywood contact Walter Kane in April 1948, Bella explains that she and Sam were each unable 'to do any picture work for the time being' as Sam was working independently on his first novel (*The Busy, Busy People* published in October 1948) whilst she was writing *Kiss Me, Kate*:

As for myself, I have signed contracts on the musical I am doing with Cole Porter. Cole and I signed the same contract and in addition are signing collaboration contracts. Chances are I will be in California some time [sic] in July and will stay through August. I am supposed to deliver the first draft of my work on June 1st.³⁶

This letter establishes the key timeline of the first draft of *Kiss Me, Kate* as will be covered in this chapter. Having signed their contracts in March 1948, Porter and Spewack set about developing the show with a view to having a completed draft at the end of May. Furthermore, Spewack expected to travel to California when Porter removed there from New York in the summer.³⁷

With a composer, author and producers (as well as set and costume designer in Ayers) secured, the creative team lacked only a potential director. Once again, there is little extant evidence to indicate whether the collaborators discussed a range of individuals for this role. However, Schwartz and McBrien indicate it was hoped that the new contributor would help to support the inexperienced producers and lend another

³⁴ Porter indicates that 'We Shall Never Be Younger' was this first composition, which was cut from the score because it was too sad. Richard G. Hubler, *The Cole Porter Story*, 50-51.

³⁵ Sam Spewack is noticeably absent from Wilson's account of the development and Broadway opening of *Kiss Me, Kate* and although Drake attributes a significant influence to him, Sam Spewack is only mentioned as the script-fixer and mediator between Bella and the producers rather than as an active member of the production team. John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 171-181; CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript,

³⁶ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1948): letter from Bella Spewack to Walter Kane, April 1, 1948, 1.

³⁷ Spewack did not follow Porter. He wired her on June 24, 1948 to say: 'I SUGGEST THAT YOU DELAY YOUR VISIT HERE WRITING YOU DETAILS ON SATURDAY.' The letter he refers to has been lost but Spewack certainly did not visit him in California. Instead, they collaborated long distance for the duration of his stay. CU BSS E/Curated correspondence with Cole Porter: telegram from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack, June 24, 1948.

influential name to help market and fundraise for the show.³⁸ John C. Wilson was an emerging Broadway figure, particularly known for his collaborations with his former partner, Noel Coward. Wilson had known Porter since the 1920s when he and Coward had holidayed with Porter at the Palazzo Rezzonico in Venice.³⁹ In addition to producing Coward's musical revue *Set to Music* (1939) and the hit Harold Arlen/E. Y. Harburg musical *Bloomer Girl* (1944), which ran for 654 performances, Wilson had also worked on the Lunt/Fontanne *Taming of the Shrew* in 1935 and directed them in the stage play *The Pirate* (1942), for which Ayers had designed the sets.

According to Wilson, Porter phoned him to ask if he was 'still interested in doing a musical together' but he turned down the opportunity to co-produce, as he was concerned about compromising Ayers and Subber's vision for a show that they had conceived.⁴⁰ Wilson explains in his autobiography that he countered Porter's suggestion with an offer to direct the show, which Spewack and Porter both supported and on March 9, 1948 it was published in *the New York Times* that he had signed contracts to 'stage and supervise' a new 'unnamed' musical.⁴¹ In June, they added a rider to Wilson's contract specifying that he would not only 'direct and stage' *Kiss Me, Kate* but also 'completely and solely supervise, both financially and artistically, the production and operation of [it]'.⁴² In this way, Wilson was able to oversee conversations about every aspect of the show. However, his own and other accounts imply that while Wilson moderated the rehearsal process, Bella Spewack endeavoured to direct the development of the show regardless of the rest of the team. This is supported by correspondence written by Porter and Spewack in 1948 in which Porter attempts to address a rift between Bella and the producers and she defends her position. It is clear that Spewack felt outnumbered on several occasions, which perhaps foreshadows her persistent surveillance of the subsequent performance life and materials related to *Kiss Me, Kate*: her lawyers wrote

³⁸ Charles Schwartz, *Cole Porter: A Biography*, 234; William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 305.

³⁹ Robert Kimball, *Cole*, 72; George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 245.

⁴⁰ John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 171.

⁴¹ 'Last night John C. Wilson signed contracts under which he will stage and supervise a new musical, which Cole Porter and Bella Spewack are writing. As yet untitled, the production is based on an idea by Lemuel Ayers and Arnold Saint Subber, who will serve as sponsors of the venture. Reticent about the details of the forthcoming show, Miss Spewack conceded, however, that Mr. Porter's material – i.e. the music and lyrics – is excellent. Miss Spewack, of course, will provide the book.' Louis Calta, 'Wilson to Stage Musical', *New York Times*, March 9, 1948, 27, accessed November, 21, 2014. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/108315628?accountid=13828>.

⁴² CPT 3/1: rider to contract for John C. Wilson (first signed March 29, 1948), June 17, 1948.

numerous complaints about the Spewacks' billing in press and print materials about *Kiss Me, Kate* across nearly three decades.

Backstage: the preliminary materials.

As has been previously indicated, there are different accounts of who decided to incorporate the metatheatrical narrative into the structure of *Kiss Me, Kate*.⁴³ In some accounts, entire credit is given to Subber in conclusion that his observations of the Fontanne/Lunt *Taming of the Shrew* would have encouraged the backstage aspect of the text.⁴⁴ However, Bella Spewack maintained that the idea of expanding *Kiss Me, Kate* from a musical adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* to a bi-partial story about actors was her own:

I had an idea for doing a musical but it could not be all *Shrew*. The notion was to write a personal story of people putting on the *Shrew* and it would be a play within a play. [...] I told the boys [Subber and Ayers] the notion of the backstage story of an actor, [sic] and actress married and at odds- putting on a musical bersion [sic] of the Shrew.⁴⁵

There is no evidence to suggest that two perspectives do not emanate from the various meetings that Spewack, Ayers and Subber conducted in late 1947.⁴⁶ However, it is also possible that these differing accounts (given after this time) reflect the underlying tensions between Spewack and Subber. In a private account of the early genesis of the show, dated May 2, 1948 (and quoted above), Spewack acknowledged that she chose not to share her work-in-progress with the producers, consulting only with Porter and husband

⁴³ Also discussed in Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin'*, 252-253.

⁴⁴ For example, Alfred Drake explained he was unsure who originated it but thought it was most likely Subber and not Bella Spewack. In the interview transcript, he reminisces about the contention on this point, which was characterised at a cast party: 'About the end of the first year of the run I and the cast got together and assembled a special show based on how *Kiss Me Kate* [sic] had originated. [...] A typical pulling of legs event, strictly for fun. We used everybody: stagehands, wardrobe people, actors, singers, dancers. I think it was about an hour and a half long. The two comics in the show portrayed Lem Ayers and Saint Suber [sic] which were, in fact, the lead parts. Now in one scene Saint and Lem are sitting in the agents office looking at each other in stony silence when suddenly they both look up and say. "Taming of the Shrew!" at the same time. Because, of course, the stories went around that each one of them claimed he originated the idea.' CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 7.

⁴⁵ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 3. (Part of this document is also quoted by William McBrien: *Cole Porter*, 304.)

⁴⁶ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 1-2.

Sam as she deemed necessary.⁴⁷ Given some notable proximity of detail between *Kiss Me, Kate* and the Spewacks' screenplay for *My Favorite Wife*, as well as the lack of anecdotal evidence that ties Subber into the specifics of the text, it seems probable that Spewack took 'the boys' concept for a show and developed the integral details herself.⁴⁸

The earliest known sources for *Kiss Me, Kate* indicate that she devised detailed character profiles for Fred and Lilli. There are several paragraphs, describing their personalities in the synoptic materials for *Kiss Me, Kate* (temporarily titled *Backstage*) and in the first draft script: the May libretto.⁴⁹ These materials include a partial document which appears to be the latter half of a very detailed history of Fred and Lilli's relationship and provides context to the personal and professional insecurities that drive these characters in the final narrative.⁵⁰ The extant page begins after their marriage, explaining that:

They [Fred and Lilli] then tried some ~~little theatre~~ *off Broadway* productions of Ibsen, Strindberg, etc. on a shoe-string and failed so that each began taking parts offered to them separately. He was the better actor of the two, but she had the glamour and so achieved prominence before he did. The marriage oscillated between hate and love.⁵¹

⁴⁷ The working relationship between Subber, Ayers and Spewack became particularly fraught between April and August 1948. There are notable differences in the style of correspondence between Bella Spewack and Selma Tamber, the secretary to the *Kiss Me, Kate* company (later the Salem Company) and Cole Porter and her correspondence to Ayers and Subber (and on occasion to Wilson also). CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 4-5; CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 3-5; CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1948): proposed letter from Bella Spewack to Lemuel Ayers and Arnold Saint Subber, August 10, 1948.

⁴⁸ Spewack also suggests that she developed the backstage plot to accommodate one of their casting choices for Lilli/Katherine, Jarmila Novotna. Certainly, Spewack was urged to reintroduce parts of *The Taming of the Shrew*. (This will be expanded further in Chapter Three.) CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5.

⁴⁹ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto.

⁵⁰ This document also introduces Harrison Howell, 'a wealthy elder statesman', as Lilli's latest romantic connection and Fred's discovery of Lois: 'Fred, by dropping into a third rate nightclub, has found Lois Lane, a song and a dance girl, the ideal purity of Bianca. Besides, she's awfully good company.' A lot of this information is condensed in the *Backstage* synopsis, which articulately establishes Harrison Howell ('a gentleman, a scholar and a bore') as a romantic rival to Fred and Lois as an opportunist. CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: incomplete overview of Fred and Lilli's relationship history; CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 1-2.

⁵¹ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: incomplete overview of Fred and Lilli's relationship history. Italicised text represents annotations made in pencil by Bella Spewack.

The document then details how the marriage ended when Lilli secured a Hollywood contract before continuing to outline their lives apart with specific details such as Fred's 'SYRANO [sic] in French in Paris',⁵² which were later incorporated into dialogue in the May libretto (and later the original Broadway script):

Fred: Hollywood – swimming pool – avocado ranches. While I -- I put every penny I could scrape, borrow or steal into my Cyrano in Paris. My magnum opus! But I was a huge success.
Lilli: And you closed on Saturday? Four glorious performances!⁵³

In this example, Spewack takes the preliminary concept from her draft material and incorporates it into functional dialogue that establishes Fred and Lilli's professional rivalry, their individual progress after the failed marriage, and the ambiguity of their relationship during *Kiss Me, Kate*. At this formative stage, Spewack connects Fred and Lilli's romantic affections with their professional histories, foreshadowing the intertextual collisions later in the show.

This connection between the personal and professional dimensions of Fred and Lilli's characterisation is further evident in Spewack's *Backstage* outline – the first detailed overview of *Kiss Me, Kate*.⁵⁴ This document is mainly written in prose although there are some examples of dialogue where Spewack wished to illustrate an idea more fully. Immediately, she acknowledges the intentional narrative connection between 'backstage' and *The Taming of the Shrew* in the opening paragraph, explaining that:

The musical is a play within a play, your personal story paralleling Shakespeare's *Shrew*, and at certain points, the action flows right into the action of the other.⁵⁵

⁵² 'He [Fred], on his part, during the years of their separation took a fling doing the PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, SYRANO [sic] in French in Paris, gotten his own Workshop on the air where he read Walt Whitman for a solid hour. *The sponsor bowed out.*' Ibid.

⁵³ This scene was moved in the October 11 script but the exchange remained in the show. In the published script, the dialogue is the same but stage directions have been added: 'Fred: (*Bitterly*)... /Lilli: (*Looking into mirror*) [...]'. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 1-2-9; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: October 11 Script, 1-3-12; Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 208.

⁵⁴ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 10 pp.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1.

Spewack also describes *Backstage* as ‘a story of show business’, in which the romantic battle between Fred and Lilli has an intertextual connection with their vocations as actors: ‘a musical love story of the eternal serio-comic battle of male and female played against the events of an opening night of the tryout of a musical version of Shakespeare’s “Taming of the Shrew” [sic]...’⁵⁶ In this way, the earliest outline of *Kiss Me, Kate* immediately establishes the connection between Fred: the failing theatrical impresario, Lilli: a successful Hollywood actress, their temperamental connections with Petruchio and Katherine, and the reflexivity of this in a performance environment. Indeed, Spewack’s nine paragraph overview of the show at the beginning of this outline was included verbatim in the first publication of the original Broadway script.⁵⁷

The first act of *Backstage* resembles *Kiss Me, Kate* in general terms although the plot diverges as the story progresses. Fred is conscious that Lilli is seriously planning to marry Harrison Howell whilst Lilli is threatened by Fred’s interest in Lois.⁵⁸ They argue on and off stage whilst also interacting with Harrison Howell (present from the opening of the show in this outline) and a theatrical agent Leon Blurr.⁵⁹ Eventually, the altercations heighten and (as in the original Broadway script) Fred/Petruchio slaps Lilli/Katherine over his knee during the final *Taming of the Shrew* scene in Act One. Meanwhile Bill signs an I.O.U under Fred’s name and triggers the gunmen’s visit to the theatre. Fred uses the arrival of the gunmen to force Lilli to remain in the production even as she tries to leave. However, the plot diverges here when the gunmen force Lilli to change back into her costume and request that she perform a number from the show for them. She sings ‘That Special Face’ [sic] ‘from behind the screen where she is dressing,’ and Fred joins in.⁶⁰ Their duet segues into the final scene of Act One as a drop (with the words ‘Ford’s Theatre’ on it) hides Lilli’s dressing room and ‘members of audience’ wander about the stage, ‘whistling, humming and gradually singing “That Special Face.”’⁶¹

This alternative finale is striking as it was never realised in any script draft of *Kiss Me, Kate* but compellingly depicts the exchange of communication from the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 1-2; Cole Porter, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), xxi-xxii.

⁵⁸ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 2.

⁵⁹ The agent character is never referenced in any other *Kiss Me, Kate* documents known to the author.

⁶⁰ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 3.

⁶¹ Ibid.

performer to the audience. It also draws subtle attention to the artistic (and commercial) ambition of musical theatre songwriters to catch the audience with a hummable tune, demonstrating a very early indication of the nuances of *Kiss Me, Kate*. This scene also reveals the sophistication of reflexivity that Spewack envisioned for the text in combination with Porter's earliest songs including 'Another Openin' [sic], Another Show' and 'A Band of Strolling Players' (an early draft of 'We Open in Venice') (see Appendix 1). There is a connection of ideas in which Spewack and Porter constructed sections of *Kiss Me, Kate* to highlight the theatrical environment as well as to provide structural indications of the beginning and end of a performance.

'Another Op'nin' establishes the context of the onstage performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*; it highlights, through the titular lyrics, that *Kiss Me, Kate* is about the opening night of a theatrical production. The lyrics of the verse also reference aspects of mounting and delivering a show (e.g. undertaking rehearsals, prefacing a performance with an overture, wishing one another luck etc.) Furthermore, the phrase 'A chance for stage folks to say hello' personifies the transmission of performance from the players to the audience. These details demonstrate obvious metalevels in which the first musical number of *Kiss Me, Kate* focuses on familiar conventions surrounding, and leading up to, an opening night. Similarly, 'We Open in Venice' mirrors this reflexivity by creating a 'second beginning' that prefacing the onstage performance in *Kiss Me, Kate*. It reiterates the gesture of actors introducing themselves to the audience as a recognisable device in theatrical performance. The lyrics also incorporate an additional dimension to the layers of theatricality by referencing the life of itinerant actors and the experience of living on tour. As such, 'We Open in Venice' acts as a musical bridge from the backstage scenes to the onstage performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The cyclical construction evidenced here is similarly apparent in the unused finale, which incorporates the audience as an active part of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Furthermore, it establishes a twin scene to the opening of Act Two – the performance of 'Too Darn Hot' at the stage door – which was retained in the May libretto and original Broadway script. This is significant because it demonstrates a dialogue of communication between Porter and Spewack as well as two important thematic aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate*: the construction of musical theatre performances and the reception of entertainment.

Almost mirroring this unused scene, the second act of *Backstage* begins in the same way as *Kiss Me, Kate* – with 'Too Darn Hot' – but then immediately diverges. The

song is performed by ‘Three Negros’ who are hanging around the stage door and are later joined by Bill and members of the chorus to perform the dance sequence.⁶² The dance is interrupted by the call of the stage manager but instead of moving straight into Scene Two, Scene One continues as Bill is threatened by ‘Grogan, [his] host at the poker game’:

Bill is sure that Grogan will kill him, but Grogan assures him he doesn’t pack a gun. He hires others to do that for him.

As Bill moves toward the stage door, Grogan right behind him, two men who have been lounging in the alley, begin firing. Grogan drops.⁶³

In the theatre, the gunmen, unaware of the assassination, complain about the heat and step out into the alley. They discover Grogan’s body and the attendant police officers and rapidly return backstage, asking Fred if they can hide in the theatre. Fred dispatches them to the stalls and this ends their involvement in the show. This assassination subplot was also removed from *Kiss Me, Kate* before the May libretto. However, the gunmen make passing reference to an unseen character, Mr Hogan – their employer who is deposed by Mr Gumpy – but the details of his business are only conveyed through reportage.⁶⁴ Again, this provides an example of an extended idea in the draft materials that was consolidated into passing dialogue in the original Broadway script.

Unlike *Kiss Me, Kate*, the *Backstage* outline continues after the *Taming of the Shrew* performance has ended. Lilli informs Harrison Howell that she thinks they should break their engagement.⁶⁵ Then, Fred introduces Lilli to a mystery woman who he explains is his ex-fiancé and she tells Lilli that she cannot marry Fred because she cannot bear to think of all the lonely nights ‘as the wife of an actor’.⁶⁶ (Again, Spewack returns to the realities of the theatrical life as a preface to the final scene and Fred and Lilli’s

⁶² This is led by Paul, Fred’s African-American dresser, in *Kiss Me, Kate* but the two characters had not been connected at this stage.

⁶³ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 4.

⁶⁴ The gunmen refer to Mr Hogan – their employer – when they first interrogate Fred in Act One, Scene Three. In their penultimate scene (Act Two, Scene Six), they phone to ‘report in’ and are informed that Mr Hogan has been deposed by a Mr Gumpy, letting Fred out of the debt of honour: ‘First Gunman: Mr. Graham – (*Takes out IOU*) I guess this is the end of our very pleasant association. [...] You see, Mr. Gumpy declared a moratorium on Mr Hogan. His unidentified remains will be found floating in the bay tomorrow morning.’ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 284; 339-349.

⁶⁵ In order to allay his disappointment, Lilli suggests that Harrison fulfil his dream ‘to take a whack at a drum with an orchestra’ and he leaves. *Backstage* ends with a spotlight on Harrison in the orchestra pit. CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

reunion.) After the ex-fiancée has left, Fred and Lilli join the rest of the cast, who are waiting onstage for his notes. They are interrupted as the theatre agent Blurr returns with the president of a film company, who wants to discuss making *The Taming of the Shrew* ‘with Lili [sic] and Fred and Lois -- but in Padua, wherever that is.’⁶⁷ Fred asks Lilli what she thinks of the proposal and she replies, quoting part of Katherine’s final speech:

Lilli: “My husband is my lord, my life, my keeper, my head, my sovereign.”
Producer: Huh?
Fred: My wife is simply saying that she wants what I want, and I want it.
(Agent and Producer exit)
Lilli: You said, “My wife?”
Fred: (Quoting Shakespeare) “Indeed, I did – But what a fool I am to chat with you.
When I should bid good morrow to my bride
And seal the title with a lovely kiss!”⁶⁸

The route to this ending is quite different to *Kiss Me, Kate*, in which Lilli walks out on Fred and Harrison (as well as the performance) before returning at the last moment. However, the outline shows that Spewack always intended to end the musical with a romantic resolution. Once again, she intertwines Fred and Lilli’s romantic future with their professional lives as they embark on a new project together, articulately signposting the intertextuality between their ‘real lives’ and the performances that they give. Strikingly, the May libretto incorporates almost all of the characterisation that is established in these preliminary documents. The dialogue Spewack produced from it is substantially unaltered in the original Broadway text.⁶⁹

The backstage musical

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ For example, almost all of the Gunmen’s dialogue is the same in the May libretto as in the final Broadway and published scripts. There were slight additions made when ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ was incorporated but there were no significant changes to the dialogue otherwise. Similarly, the majority of the dialogue in Act One, Scene One and the exchanges between Fred and Lilli in their first dressing room scene (which changes position in the different script drafts) is almost identical.

Just as Spewack worked industriously to create the first draft of the script, Porter also produced a considerable number of songs in the early development period that were used in situ on Broadway. Dated lyric drafts show that, by April 7, 1948, he had developed lyrics for ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’, ‘I Sing of Love’, ‘I’ve Come to Wive it Wealthily in Padua’, ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’, ‘Were Thine That Special Face’ and the unused song ‘We Shall Never Be Younger’.⁷⁰ On April 22, Spewack was able to list 15 numbers in the *Backstage* outline as well as ballets and reprises.⁷¹ Taken together, the archival documentation indicates that Porter composed at least twenty-four songs for *Kiss Me, Kate*. However, by contrast with the development of the script, the source materials for the score are more varied. Although there are few musical examples transcribed by Porter, there are a significant number of autograph lyric drafts and fragments of other incomplete songs such as: ‘To Be or Not To Be’, ‘How Simple Life Would Be’ and ‘If You Love Your Job’, in addition to copyist scores.⁷² The lack of autograph music manuscripts forces us to rely on the copyist and published scores as documentation of the music. However, there are few discrepancies between these copyist scores and the published materials where no substantial changes were made (e.g. adding an opening verse to ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’), so this does not significantly compromise analysis of the songs.

Importantly, however, the extant song sources do not reveal the same linear development process as can be seen in Spewack’s early script preparation, nor did Porter work independently on the *Shrew* and *Baltimore* as seems likely with the book. In order to support the initial compositional phase, Spewack recalled that she provided Porter with sample titles as stimuli; the continuous thematic overlap of the songs and narrative ideas indicate that he wrote reactively to their discussions.⁷³ The introduction to the published script documents a part of this process, first handling *The Taming of the Shrew*: ‘At the third meeting we had jotted down likely song titles from Shakespeare’s own lines: “I’ve Come to Wive It Wealthily,” “Where Is the Life that Late I Led?” and

⁷⁰ LC CP 11/2: Folder of lyrics [1]; LC CP 11/3: Folder of lyrics [2]; NYPL HH 21/504: ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ lyric sheet, April 7, 1948.

⁷¹ A transcription of the musical numbers can be found in Appendix 1.

⁷² LC CP 11/1: ‘To Be or Not To Be’ autograph lyric draft; LC CP 11/1: ‘How Simple Life Would Be’ autograph lyric draft; LC CP 11/1: ‘If You Love Your Job’ autograph lyric draft; LC CP 11/1: ‘The Trouble With Me Is’ autograph lyric draft.

⁷³ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5.

“Were Thine That Special Face.”⁷⁴ This corresponds with *New York Times* music editor Howard Taubman’s account of Porter’s process published with interview excerpts soon after *Kiss Me, Kate* opened.⁷⁵ His article maps out Porter’s previous career and offers an insight into his writing practice:

Inspiration for the songs may arise vagrantly, but generally [Porter’s] approach is businesslike. When his book writer has provided him with a comprehensive outline of the show, Porter prepares a chart that shows at a glance the nature and spotting of the required numbers. He rarely interferes with the book. Without false pride he confesses, “I have no book sense.”⁷⁶

He works out the whole song before he sets it down on paper and tries it at the piano. The first step is to fix on a central idea; often a title holds the key. Then comes the tune. [...]

The lyrics come last. Frequently he thinks of the punch-line first, working backward from the last verse to the first. Occasionally he leaves lines and stanzas blank until the *mot juste* comes. His handy aids are a set of word books: a rhyming dictionary, foreign language dictionaries, medical dictionaries and a volume called “Words – Ancient and Modern.” When lyrics are too suggestive for more modest demands of radio and sheet music, he turns out alternative verses. The other day he had at hand a loose-leaf folder devoted to *Kiss Me, Kate*;⁷⁷ a little more than half its neatly-typed pages contained the words as they are sung at the Century Theatre, and the remainder the diluted version.⁷⁸

This extended quotation provides a meaningful insight into Porter’s lyric drafts, which vary considerably. On one lyric sheet for ‘How Simple Life Would Be’, Porter has transcribed the rhythm he intends to set text with over a neatly-written verse (see Figure

⁷⁴ Sam and Bella Spewack, ‘Introduction’ to Cole Porter, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), xi.

⁷⁵ Howard Taubman, ‘Cole Porter is Top again’, *New York Times* (Magazine), January 16, 1949, 20 [YISG scrapbook].

⁷⁶ Joseph P. Swain makes use of this expression as part of the framing context for his chapter on *Kiss Me, Kate*. He characterises Porter as disinterested rather than aware of his personal limitations. Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 139-40.

⁷⁷ This is very likely one of several ‘Folders of Lyrics’ held at the Library of Congress, which match this description very exactly. LC CP 11/1-5: Various folders of lyrics. Contents are typed (sometimes with annotations, mainly by Porter) lyric sheets, autograph drafts and excerpts written on notepaper from the Waldorf Astoria.

⁷⁸ Howard Taubman, ‘Cole Porter is Top again’, *New York Times Magazine*, January 16, 1949, 50 [YISG scrapbook].

2.1 below)⁷⁹ By contrast, he reworks the same sections of other songs numerous times before establishing the exact tone (*le mot juste*) he was looking for.

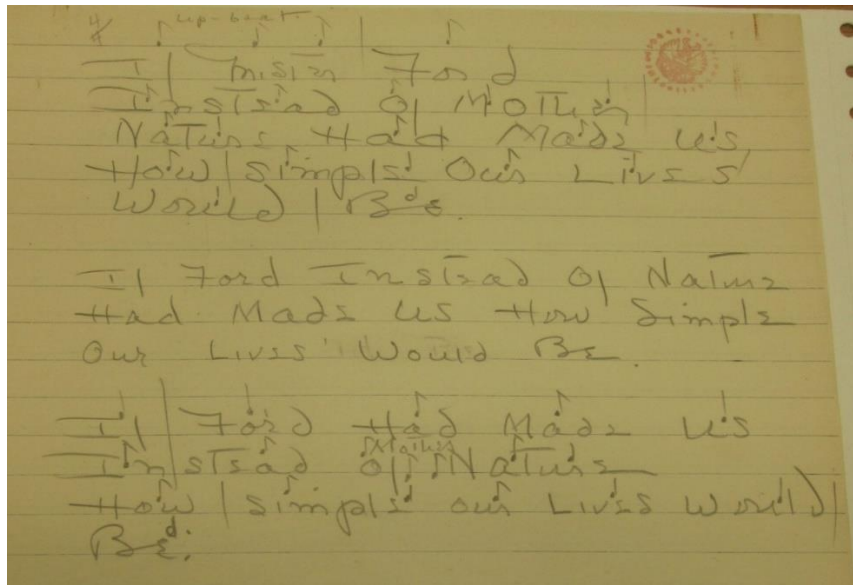


Figure 2.1: Photograph of annotated lyric sheet for ‘How Simple Life Would Be’

Porter’s method of reworking is perhaps most prominent in extant sources for ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’, which has 38 leaves listed in the Library of Congress finding aid.⁸⁰ To give one example, Porter revised part of the fourth refrain – ‘From Ohio Mister Thorne / Calls me up from night ‘til morn / Mister Thorne once cornered corn and that ain’t hay...’ – several times before selecting the final version.⁸¹ In one note, Porter drafted:

I go out from night ‘til morn
 With a guy (rube) called Harry Thorne
 Mister (Harry) Thorne just (once) cornered corn & that ain’t hay’.⁸²

The words in brackets indicate where Porter added alternative vocabulary above the initial words he had written (see the transcription of ‘Too Darn Hot’ for a visual

⁷⁹ LC CP 11/1: ‘How Simple Life Would Be’ autograph lyric sheet. (Photograph used in Figure 2.1 was taken by the author during a visit to the Library of Congress in October 2013.)

⁸⁰ ‘Cole Porter collection, 1912-1957,’ *Library of Congress*, accessed June 1, 2017.

http://findingaids.loc.gov/db/search/xq/searchMfer02.xq?_id=loc.music.eadmus.mu009008&_faSection=overview&_faSubsection=did&_dmdid.

⁸¹ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 333; Also written out in LC CP 11/1: ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ unused fourth refrain [C2].

⁸² LC CP 11/1: Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ unused version of fourth refrain [C4].

representation of this process). In another version, Porter used the same technique and replaced ‘...telephones from night to morn’ with the final version: ‘calls me up from...’.⁸³ He also experimented with using the expression ‘and that ain’t hay’ to close other draft verses, such as: ‘When the chink throws me a mink well that ain’t hay.’ In this way, we can see how he experimented with different phraseology.

A similar process is also apparent in the ‘Too Darn Hot’ lyric drafts. It is clear that Porter took meticulous care in selecting the right vocabulary to convey exactly the right meaning but also to fit a specific scansion. This is particularly noticeable when familiar with the rhythmic pattern of the different parts of this melody, which are initially set over a sparse rhythm section. As a result, draft lyrics with surplus syllables are particularly distinctive. For ‘Too Darn Hot’, ‘Where is The Life That Late I Led’ and ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’, Porter produced lists of names, nouns and adjectives that might be incorporated into different sections of the song.⁸⁴ In addition to this, he also experimented with variations of different lines, numbering his final selection along the margin (see Figure 2.2 below) in order to achieve the impact he desired.⁸⁵

⁸³ LC CP 11/1: ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ unused fourth refrain [C2].

⁸⁴ LC CP 11/1: ‘Too Darn Hot’ lyric draft [A1] (list of verbs that can be used as euphemisms or analogies for having sex); LC CP 11/1: ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’ lyric draft (list of names to call someone in a fight); LC CP 11/1: ‘Where Is The Life That Late I Led’ lyric draft [A2] (includes list of women’s names).

⁸⁵ LC CP 11/1: ‘Too Darn Hot’ lyric draft (Kinsey verse) 6. [Transcribed by the author.]

identical to the original Broadway score. Unlike the scene overview of Act One, the organisation of songs is already compartmentalised into one section of backstage songs, followed by the opening *Taming of the Shrew* section. The structure of music in Act Two music mirrors the simple alternation that is described in Spewack's outline of scenes. This indicates that there was close communication about the opportunity for and number of songs.

Although it was not among the first songs to be composed, the 'First Act Finale' provides a useful case study of how the available sources can be used in combination to demonstrate a traceable process of change in the score, similar to the development of 'I Sing of Love', 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)' or 'Wunderbar', but more effectively documented.⁸⁷ The 'Finale Act One' materials include an unusual lead sheet, transcribed by Porter, and several copyist scores. When seen together, they reveal that Porter first included a reprise-finale of 'Why Can't You Behave?' and 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' in the penultimate section of the song:

As is heard in the final version:

Chorus: What's that we heard? Oh, kiss him
 Petruchio: Oh, kiss me
 Kate: Bastard!
 Chorus: In Boston that's a censored word⁸⁸
 Petruchio: Oh, kiss me, kiss me
 Chorus: Oh, kiss him, kiss him, kiss him
 Kate: [Cadenza 'in a paroxysm of coloratura'] Never!

Discarded section of reprises:

Bianca: Why can't you behave?
 Oh why can't you behave?
 Chorus: Won't you turn that new leaf over, kiss him Katie and be his slave...
 Hattie: Another Op'ing [sic], another show in Philly, Boston or Baltimo'e,

⁸⁷ Each of these songs underwent minor changes. 'I Sing of Love' was rearranged as a duet, solo performance and ensemble number. Porter added an opening verse to 'Always True to You (In My Fashion)'. Finally, he added a short verse between refrains to 'Wunderbar'.

⁸⁸ This lyric was changed to 'Oh! Katie! That's a naughty word' during the rehearsal period. Every copy of the rehearsal script (belonging to Drake, Holm and Spewack) includes the original lyric but it has been changed in the original Broadway script and the published script. This may be because previews in Boston were dropped. It might also be because it references the censorship process too overtly.

P + Chorus: Kiss him/me, Kate... etc.⁸⁹

This return to the ‘backstage’ music in the Finale Act One is one of two examples in which Porter actively combined melodies from Baltimore and *The Shrew*.⁹⁰ Perhaps this was part of an experiment with the pre-established Broadway convention that recapitulates previously heard melodies at the close of each act. There is an isolated source in the Spewack papers that includes the breakdown of musical numbers in *Lady in the Dark* (1941) and *Brigadoon* (1947), which also suggests that they investigated the musical construction of other Broadway successes.⁹¹ In the case of *Brigadoon*, Lerner and Loewe’s finale also includes mini-reprises (including ‘Brigadoon’ and ‘The Heather on the Hill’), which may have influenced Porter’s compositional decision-making.

The autograph lead sheet, which maps out the different vocal lines (Petruccio, Kate and Chorus (including other soloists)) for the first 32 bars, also includes 16 bars of original melody that Porter has crossed through.⁹² In these bars, Petruccio reiterates the opening melody (‘So, kiss me, Kate, etc.’) but it has been partially transposed down a third. This suggests that Porter may have experimented with melodic variants of tunes just as he worked through different scansion and types of vocabulary when drafting song lyrics. More crucially, the lead sheet contributes to wider discussions about Porter’s writing process as a composer. It fits well with the supposition that Porter frequently performed his songs for copyists who then transcribed them for him, explaining the considerable lack of autograph scores in comparison to lyric drafts.⁹³ In the case of the ‘First Act Finale’, it would have been impossible for Porter to convey three contrapuntal

⁸⁹ Italics indicate the 20-bar section of music that revisits previous songs in Act One and was cut during the rehearsal period. LC CP 11/2: [Folder of lyrics] ‘Finale Act One’, 2.

⁹⁰ Both examples were unused. In addition to the mini-reprises, Porter also quotes ‘I Sing of Love’ in the melody of ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’ (bars 32-42). Lynn Laitman Siebert suggests that the mini-reprises in ‘Finale Act One’ were performed in the original Broadway production but they disappear from the script materials before the text was finalised and are not incorporated in the published score. David Charles Abell and Seann Alderking have designated these bars as a cut section in their critical report. YISG CP 39/255: ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’, 4; Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate: A Musical Play*, eds., David Charles Abell & Seann Alderking (Van Nuys, California Alfred Publishing Company, 2015), 716.

⁹¹ There appears to be a cover or previous sheet that has been ripped off this page so it is possible that these were not the only two examples. CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: Typed list of numbers in *Brigadoon* and *Lady in the Dark*.

⁹² LC CP 9/1: ‘First Act Finale’ autograph lead sheet, 2.

⁹³ Whilst there are a considerable of sketches in scrapbooks at Yale University, they are largely fragmented melodies often without (or with minimal) harmonic details. See YISG CP 46/290: ‘Big Sketchbook’.

vocal lines whilst playing an accompaniment. Dominic McHugh expands this theory – that Porter dictated to copyists where he was able to – in his article "I'll never know exactly who did what": Broadway composers as musical collaborators.' McHugh reviews a range of sources from across Porter's career, considering the nature of the extant sketch materials and what they reveal about Porter's process.⁹⁴ It is certainly evident from extant correspondence and related musical examples in the Yale University collection that Porter worked with arranger and composer Albert Sirmay in this way in at least one instance.⁹⁵

In addition to responding to 'the needs' of the show, there are also specific examples of Porter responding to wider themes in the *Backstage* outline and May libretto, linking the musical and textual concepts in this early version of the score and Spewack's formative ideas. This connection is most clearly evidenced in the example of 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' and 'We Open In Venice.' Here Porter exploits a familiar Broadway convention – the opening number – whilst creating structural parallels between sections of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Superficially, 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' and 'We Open in Venice' 'land' on their title phrases more than any other lyric, highlighting the words 'open' and 'opening' and emphasizing their introductory function. Porter also uses temporal and numeric listing to give the impression of progress: 'Four weeks, you rehearse and rehearse, / Three weeks [...] / One week [...]';⁹⁶ 'We open in Venice, We next play..., Then on to...'.⁹⁷ This has the effect of situating both songs as part of routine action; they are part of a sequence of events. However, the lyrics also suggest that there are bigger stories to tell, alluding to arduous rehearsals in 'Another Op'nin'⁹⁸ and heavy

⁹⁴ Dominic McHugh, "I'll never know exactly who did what": Broadway composers as musical collaborators,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 68 (2015), 605-652.

⁹⁵ For example, two letters, written a day apart during the development of *Mexican Hayride* (1944), indicate that Porter performed songs to Sirmay, which Sirmay then transcribed. On April 13, Sirmay begins his letter: 'Dear Cole, According to your wired request I am enclosing herewith a piano sketch of "I'm Afraid I Love You". At first I thought of only sending you a lead sheet, but then I made up my mind to make it a little bit fuller because I very well remember the harmonies.' The following day, Sirmay begins: 'Dear Cole: As requested in your wire, here is a full piano part to your song, "I'm Afraid I Love You".' YISG CP 36/239: letter from Albert Sirmay to Cole Porter, April 13, 1944; YISG CP 36/239: letter from Albert Sirmay to Cole Porter, April 14, 1944.

⁹⁶ Cole Porter, Sam Spewack & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 275-6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 288-9.

⁹⁸ In the verse of 'Another Op'nin', Porter gives a snapshot of the stresses and time pressures of rehearsal whilst playing on the homophone 'For/Four' to set up the sequence: 'Four weeks, you rehearse and rehearse/Three weeks and it couldn't be worse/One week, will it ever be right?' *Ibid.*, 275-6.

drinking in ‘We Open in Venice.’⁹⁹ Additionally, Porter shapes the humour of ‘We Open in Venice’ – the players become increasingly dispassionate about touring life – building on the reflexivity of Spewack’s initial *Backstage* concept whilst acknowledging a framing context for the onstage performance. The cyclical structure of repeated choruses and line-by-line itinerary of the lyrics draw attention to the craft of performance and subtly reiterate that *Kiss Me, Kate* is a musical about the actors and not about the play they are putting on. In this way, the lyrics shape both songs as establishing numbers, adding structural punctuation to the show.

Importantly, this use of music to reinforce the importance of the backstage narrative is also evident in Spewack’s situation of ‘Were Thine That Special Face’ in the *Backstage* overview.¹⁰⁰ The song is used in three consecutive contexts: it is heard as part of a performance being given by Fred and Lilli, is received by the gunmen as spectators, and is then remembered by ‘audience members’ in the interval. This is similar to how Porter connects ‘Another Op’nin’ and ‘We Open in Venice’ using the similar constructions whilst also demonstrating intertextuality between the different layers of *Kiss Me, Kate*. In this way, both script and score capture several nuances of performance. Both Spewack and Porter contribute to the metatext of *Kiss Me, Kate*, individually highlighting the physical setting of the theatre, the metatheatrical dimension of the musical, and the function of spectatorship as a part of putting on a performance that frames the internal details of the show.

Adapting The Taming of the Shrew

There is no archival evidence indicating how Bella Spewack re-acquainted herself with *The Taming of the Shrew*, a play at which she had not looked since school.¹⁰¹ However, she explains in an article, ‘My Life with Shakespeare’, that she undertook research into Shakespeare’s life and *The Taming of the Shrew* in the New York Public Library.¹⁰² She recalled consulting reviews of historical productions by George Bernard Shaw and as a

⁹⁹ ‘We open in Venice/We next play Verona/Then onto Cremona/Lots of bars in Cremona.’ Ibid., 288-9.

¹⁰⁰ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 3.

¹⁰¹ Spewack recalled telling Ayers and Subber how little she liked the play: ‘I said: “It’s a lousy play. I read it in high school. One of the worst Shakespeare wrote.”’ Bella Spewack, quoted in George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 238-9.

¹⁰² Bella Spewack, ‘My Life with Shakespeare’, *Musical Show*, March 1967, 2. [CU BSS 37]

result of this reading, Samuel Johnson's editions of Shakespeare's plays. Although there are no materials showing how she approached abridging *The Taming of the Shrew*,¹⁰³ she and Sam humorously characterised their process in the introduction to the published script:

How to Collaborate with W. Shakespeare

If you want to collaborate with Shakespeare, get two inexpensive copies of any one of his plays. Tear them out of their bindings and spread the pages on a large table or bed or floor, so that you can spot at a glance what you will retain and what you will discard. Take well-sharpened pencil, or pen that works, and so indicate.

Then with shears cut out the parts you intend using, and if you're handy with the paste-pot, paste up in sequence on ordinary copy paper. If allergic to paste or glue, use stapler. If you have no stapler, your lawyer is sure to have one.

Do not throw away discarded pages. Some wonderful ideas for songs may be among them. Or you can run up your own lampshade.

Total outlay: many, many sleepless nights and haggard days; cash \$2.50.¹⁰⁴

Later in the same text, they also provide a brief outline of the changes made to *The Taming of the Shrew*, explaining: 'it was necessary to drop the entire opening'. From the body of the piece it was necessary to drop the servants from Lucentio's and Petruchio's ménage, as well as the scene with the Pedant.¹⁰⁵ This provides a concise appraisal of the key narrative differences between *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew* but does not highlight the emphasis on Katherine and Petruchio that the authors contrived.

It is clear from the *Backstage* outline, an additional draft document dated April 28, 1948, and the May libretto that most of the substantive reductions to *The Taming of the Shrew* were made immediately, rather than through the development of the text.¹⁰⁶

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* consists of five acts of one or two extended scenes

¹⁰³ There are two copies of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the Spewack papers. However, they are both copies of the same edition that was published after the original Broadway production of *Kiss Me, Kate* had opened. CU BSS 26/Background: William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. M. R. Ridley (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1950) [two copies].

¹⁰⁴ Sam and Bella Spewack, 'Introduction' to Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), x.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii.

¹⁰⁶ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: outline of *Backstage*, April 28, 1948, 1-9.

with twenty-two named character roles.¹⁰⁷ It also begins with an Induction, a framing device in which a nobleman tricks a drunken tinker called Christopher Sly into believing he is a lord. The nobleman and his attendants then perform *The Taming of the Shrew* to Sly, their captive audience. The Spewack introduction to *Kiss Me, Kate* is the only instance in which the Induction is mentioned in any *Kiss Me, Kate* materials. Indeed, the *Backstage* outline makes minimal reference to *The Taming of the Shrew* at all, merely highlighting moments of structural overlap between *The Shrew* and *Baltimore*. Furthermore, it verbalises the superficial handling of *The Shrew* text in the explanation of the backstage interactions, which leads Fred to slap Lilli onstage during Act One:

After a series of amusing altercations between Fred and Lili [sic] as well as scenes with Leon Blurr, the agent, and Harrison Howell – we wind up the first part of Shakespeare’s *Shrew* with Fred taking Lili over his lap and walloping her. (We use only the high spots of the *Shrew* which is, for the most part, treated musically).¹⁰⁸

The synopsis continues, briefly mentioning the ongoing performance onstage, but it makes only two allusions to the actual *Taming of the Shrew* narrative.¹⁰⁹ In this way, Spewack signposted her intention to incorporate only specific parts of the play whilst also explaining that the music would shape the direction of this section of the show.

The *Backstage* overview is supplemented by an untitled overview of the first six scenes of *Kiss Me, Kate*, which appears to have been written by Sam Spewack.¹¹⁰ The authorship of this document is significant because of its divergence with other early

¹⁰⁷ It is likely that many of these parts would have been doubled in Elizabethan performances, requiring only fourteen performers. Ann Thompson, notes on William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 52.

¹⁰⁸ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 2.

¹⁰⁹ It cites a section performed in a dressing room scene with Fred, Lilli and the gunmen: ‘Fred... suggests that he and Lili rehearse a scene for the boys [gunmen] since they’re going to miss the show. Using a bench, they perform the horseback scene from the *Shrew*.’ This references the beginning of Act Four, Scene One of *The Taming of the Shrew*, later parts of which are incorporated into *Kiss Me, Kate*’s Act Two, Scene Three (including ‘Where Is The Life That Late I Led?’.) On their arrival at Petruchio’s house, Grumio, his servant, recounts Katherine and Petruchio’s troubled journey from Padua to Curtis [another servant]: ‘... thou shouldst have heard how her horse fell, and she under her horse; ... how she was bemoiled [covered in mud], how he left her with the horse upon her, ... how he swore, how she prayed that never prayed before...’ Additionally, Spewack quotes Katherine’s ‘Fie, fie,..’ speech after she, Fred, Lois and Bill are offered a film deal to record *The Taming of the Shrew* in Padua. CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 4, 6; William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 4.1.53-62.

¹¹⁰ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: untitled scene outline, dated April 28, 1948, 9pp.

script materials and its striking similarity to the original Broadway script many months later. This document begins ‘Scene opens as Bella outlined...’ and continues with misspellings/bastardisations of character names.¹¹¹ Additionally, there are no references to other features of these scenes, which Bella Spewack outlines in the *Backstage* synopsis. This indicates that the overview was drawn up by someone who was not involved in every creative discussion but was privy to the development of the text. Bella herself acknowledges sharing ideas with Sam in early 1948, which continues to support this supposition, even though he was not always present when meetings were taking place.¹¹²

In contrast to the *Backstage* overview, this document briefly outlines the Baltimore scenes, naming the songs to be included, and then details the first sections of *Kiss Me, Kate’s The Taming of the Shrew*.¹¹³ The passages of quoted text in this document are already substantially abridged and certain characters, including Petruchio’s servant Grumio, are completely written out as outlined above. In this overview, *Kiss Me, Kate* begins *The Taming of the Shrew* at line 48 of the text, discarding sections of speeches throughout and amalgamating Shakespeare’s Act One into four pages of dialogue.¹¹⁴ This document also provides the first indication of the interaction between Porter’s songs and the emerging script so that ‘We Open in Venice’ is written on its own before the first *Taming of the Shrew* scene (Act One, Scene Four), reaffirming its structural function as a second opening number.¹¹⁵ Baptista, Katherine, Bianca and her suitors then enter and Baptista declares that he will not give Bianca away until Katherine is married. The three suitors then perform ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ with Bianca after her father and Katherine have exited. ‘I Sing of Love’ is embedded into this opening *Taming of the Shrew* Street

¹¹¹ Examples of these misspellings include: Freddy, Lilly and Lola. These spellings are consistent with other preliminary materials in the Spewack papers, which suggest that this was written by someone present at some but not all meetings.

¹¹² CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5.

¹¹³ The ‘backstage’ songs listed are: ‘Another Opening [sic] Another Show’; ‘Why Canit [sic] You Behave’; ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’; ‘We Shall Never Be Younger’; and ‘A Woman’s Career.’ CU BSS 26: Notes and Worksheets [2]: untitled scene outline, dated April 28, 1948, 1-9.

¹¹⁴ As the Spewacks explained, they removed the Induction/Christopher Sly material from *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate*. ‘We Open in Venice’ provides as structural separation between the backstage and onstage locales and also acts as a second opening number suggesting that this is the beginning of *Kiss Me, Kate’s The Taming of the Shrew* and a snapshot of a scene that has already begun. An abridged production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in New York (June 2016) also began their production at this line in the text.

¹¹⁵ It is noteworthy that the scene breakdown of this document closely resembles the original Broadway script and not the May libretto, which Bella Spewack was preparing concurrently, adding to the inference that this was developed by Sam Spewack who was not part of the regular production meetings but was being consulted as and when Bella felt it was appropriate.

Scene as a solo ballad for Lucentio (Bill) underneath Bianca's balcony after he rhapsodises to Tranio about Bianca's beauty. Petruchio enters during the number and 'mockingly sings the refrain' before they greet one another and Petruchio performs 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua.'¹¹⁶

Porter's 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua', written in the same period, most closely resembles the abridging technique seen in this outline. There are no extant lyric drafts for any of the first *Taming of the Shrew* songs that show how Porter studied or experimented with Shakespeare's text in preparing his lyrics. (As has been recorded earlier, Spewack provided suggested titles as stimuli.) However, it is clear that he incorporated sections of text and concepts from *The Taming of the Shrew* into his lyrics.¹¹⁷ In the case of 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua', he abbreviates a passage of dialogue between Petruchio, Hortensio, Grumio, Gremio and Tranio from Act One, Scene Two of *The Taming of the Shrew*.¹¹⁸ In addition to quoting the title expression and opening lines from Shakespeare, Porter adapts imagery from this set of exchanges to structure the song. For example, he incorporates sections from two of Petruchio's speeches (lines 66-73 and 193-196 of Act One, Scene 2) (see below) in order to produce the last verse of the song. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio declaims:

Be she as foul as was Florentius' love
As old as Sibyl, and curst and shrewd
As Socrates' Xanthippe or a worst,
She moves me not, or not removes at least
Affection's edge in me, were she as rough 70
As the swelling Adriatic seas.
I've come to wive it wealthily in Padua;
If wealthily, then happily in Padua.

[...]

Think you a little din can daunt my ears
Have I not in my time heard lions roar?
Have I not heard the sea, puffed up with winds, 195
Rage like an angry boar chafèd with sweat?¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: untitled scene outline, dated April 28, 1948, 4.

¹¹⁷ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5.

¹¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 1.2.61-204.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.2-193-196.

Porter reinterprets these phrases, adding to the pre-established characterisation that Katherine is challenging and unruly:

If she roar like a winter breeze
On the rough Adriatic seas,
If she scream like a teething brat,
If she scratch like a tiger cat,
If she fight like a raging boar?
I have oft stuck a pig before.¹²⁰

Here, he changes Shakespeare's hypothetical descriptions to analogies, reinforcing the characterisation of Katherine as a Shrew and verbalising Petruchio's self-confident demeanour. Importantly, this method of paraphrasing, which Porter also used to write 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple', corresponds well with Sam Spewack's method of reducing *The Taming of the Shrew*. This offers additional support to the accounts that Sam was party to some of the formative discussions of *Kiss Me, Kate* that led to the production of this untitled overview.

The similarities between the scenes in this untitled document and the original Broadway script are telling as this alternate scene draft is strikingly dissimilar to Spewack's May libretto. Here Bella frames each song (except 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua') differently, making use of different sections of Shakespeare's text. By contrast with this document, in the May libretto, the character Tranio no longer exists, 'If Ever Married I'm' prefaces Lucentio's performance of 'I Sing of Love', and 'Tom, Dick or Harry' is incorporated much later in Act One, Scene Thirteen.¹²¹ Indeed, the substantial quotations from *The Taming of the Shrew* are found much later in the May libretto in Act One, Scene Thirteen (when Petruchio attempts to woo Katherine) or later in Act Two, Scenes Three and Seven. As with the undated overview, Spewack amalgamates Shakespeare's Acts Four and Five into the latter two scenes. Crucially, each author shows the same intention to abridge *The Taming of the Shrew* as far as is possible whilst maintaining the key narrative highlights in the principal and suitor narrative.

¹²⁰ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 297.

¹²¹ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* scripts: May Libretto, 1-7-33-35; 1-13-52-53.

Introducing the contemporary: adding to *The Taming of the Shrew*

In addition to the process of picking sections of *The Taming of the Shrew* to keep, discard or paraphrase, Bella Spewack and Porter each experimented with adding to the text in different ways. Indeed, the contrast between the untitled overview document and Spewack's writing in the May libretto makes clear the extent to which she hoped to remove Shakespeare from *The Taming of the Shrew*. As such, Spewack developed original dialogue as part of a new subplot for *The Taming of the Shrew*, which she indicates was to support a particular performer they hoped to cast as Lilli/Katherine.¹²² In these scenes,¹²³ Katherine impersonates a boy and introduces the concept of their marriage to Petruchio *herself*:

(At the end of number ['I've Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua'],
KATHERINE enters reading a book and holding an egg. SHE is dressed as
a boy. SHE sits on bench. HE [Petruchio] eyes her curiously)

Petruchio: Good morrow, lad! What signifies the egg?
(Sits beside her)

Katherine: There is a rumor, sir, that the world is round. That sailor
named Columbus has proved this to the Queen of Spain
with an egg.
(SHE holds out the egg and absorbedly gazes at it)
Galileo is of the same mind.¹²⁴

Petruchio and Katherine discuss eating the egg before the subject changes to who Petruchio is and why he has arrived in Padua. Spewack frames the conversation with her own dialogue. She then repurposes *Taming of the Shrew* dialogue between Petruchio, Grumio (his manservant) and Hortensio in Act One, Scene Two so that Katherine introduces the marriage situation to Petruchio and contrives to arrange his attentions towards her:

¹²² CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5.

¹²³ Katherine appears disguised as a boy in Act One, Scene Seven and Act One, Scene Eleven of the May libretto. During Act One, Scene Thirteen, she re-enters in her boy's outfit, having previously been dressed 'as Katherine', to greet Petruchio, who has come to meet Katherine. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 1-7-37-41; 1-11-46-48; 1-13-56-60.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-7-37-8.

Katherine: I can, Petruchio, help thee to a wife.
 Petruchio: (Laughs)
 Thou, stripling?

Katherine: (Holds up hand to stave off interruption)
 [From *The Taming of the Shrew*]
 With wealth enough, and young and beauteous,
 Brought up as best becomes a gentlewoman:
 Her only fault is that she is intolerable curst,
 And shrewd, and forward, so beyond all measure
 That, were my state far worse than it is,
 I would not wed her for a mine of gold.

Petruchio: Tell me her father's name, and 'tis enough:
 For I will board her, tho she chide as loud
 As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack.¹²⁵

Rather than paraphrasing Shakespeare as is seen in the overview document, Spewack disrupts *The Taming of the Shrew* with an additional plotline for Katherine and Petruchio. Not only does this affect the nuances of Katherine and Petruchio's relationship which impacts on the gender and narrative constructions of *The Taming of the Shrew* but it also poses a considerable change to the intertextuality between Shakespeare's play and the Baltimore storyline. In addition to this, Spewack draws on other external references (to Columbus and Galileo as above), expanding the onstage lexicon beyond *The Taming of the Shrew* as is apparent in many of Porter's songs.

In a separate example, Spewack incorporates a blatant reference to Shakespeare's Ophelia (*Hamlet*)¹²⁶ in Bianca's preface to 'If Ever Married I'm,' again disrupting *The Taming of the Shrew* as an exclusive reference work:

Bianca: (To audience) I must end my days in a nunnery. My sister,
 Katherine, will see to that.

[Song: If Ever Married I'm]

¹²⁵ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 1-1-62-102; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto – Spewack, 1-7-39.

¹²⁶ Porter's draft lyric for a song titled 'To Be or Not To Be' also makes pointed reference to *Hamlet*: 'To be or not to be / I know I've got to be / In love with you.' LC CP 11/1: 'To Be or Not To Be' autograph lyric draft.

This allusion sits comfortably with the contemporary harmonies of Porter's song and the topical references (e.g. 'make the cover of LIFE and Time' [magazines]).¹²⁷ It also provides an important context for reading Porter's lyrics, especially for his later compositions 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and 'I Hate Men'.

Porter's song contributions to *The Taming of the Shrew* (except 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua' and later, 'I Am Ashamed that Women are So Simple') derive loosely from Shakespeare's play but are articulated in his own style. As a result, Porter wrote the lyrics for 'If Ever Married I'm' without a direct quotation from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Although the song was cut after the May libretto, the lyric sheet for this song shows how he experimented with different musical and lyrical ideas in the *Shrew* score as well as the backstage songs. For example, Porter crudely evokes Shakespearean lexicology by playing with the placement of the verbs in each phrase:

Verse: If ever married I'm
 And the wedding bells no longer gaily chime,
 Will the honeymoon be hum-drum
 Or will I quick to the heavens climb?
 If ever married I'm.¹²⁸

However, this phraseology is displaced by the use of contemporary references in the choruses:

Chorus 1: If ever married I'm
 Will I vegetate in grandeur or in grime?
 Will my groom become a pauper
 Or will he buy out Guggenheim?
 If ever married I'm

Chorus 2: If ever married I'm
 Will my husband give me happiness sublime
 Or will he bore me till I brain 'im
 And make the cover of Life and Time?
 If ever married I'm.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ The full chorus is outlined below. LC CP 11/2: 'If Ever Married I'm' typed lyric sheet, April 8, 1948.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

In addition to the quasi-Elizabethan and modern details that are apparent in this song and are also evident in ‘We Open in Venice’, ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’, ‘I Sing of Love’ and ‘Where Is The Life That Late I Led?’, these lyrics also provide an early indication of the sexual allusions Porter would include in *Kiss Me, Kate*. The lyrics ‘Or will I quick to the heavens climb?’ and ‘Will my husband give me happiness sublime?’ can be interpreted innocently. However, they can also be read sexually. Whilst there are no surviving draft materials for ‘If Ever Married I’m’, it is clear in other draft lyrics (as suggested by Taubman) that Porter wrote differing explicit lyrics for *Kiss Me, Kate* and then made a choice about which versions to incorporate into the final draft. For example, in one unused verse from ‘Always True To You (In my Fashion)’, Porter wrote:

I’m just crazy, I confess,
For a brand new evening dress
I’d undress much more than less for Mainbocher¹³⁰

Although no one is in doubt that Lois (as an archetypal soubrette) would probably exchange sex in order to extract the luxury items she seeks from her patrons, this is never suggested directly. Porter removed all verses that specifically alluded to sex or obviously promiscuous activities from this song, making the potential nuances of ‘If Ever Married I’m’ part of a pattern of subtler allusions in all of Lois/Bianca’s songs. Importantly, these examples of additional narratives and songs that build on the themes in *The Taming of the Shrew* indicate that Porter and Spewack were employing similar techniques to disrupt the play and that Spewack thought that there was scope to expand the Shakespearean scenes. Whilst it could be argued that her additions to *The Taming of the Shrew* text were not as effective as Porter’s song lyrics, it is interesting that she seems to have used similar techniques to create ‘new Shakespeare’.

The May libretto

¹³⁰ Mainbocher was the working name of the American fashion designer Main Rousseau Bocher, who ran a fashion house of the same name. He became particularly famous for dressing the American social elite. (Linda Porter was one of his clients.) Mainbocher is probably most well-remembered for designing Wallis Simpson’s outfit for her wedding to the Duke of Windsor (formerly King Edward VIII) in 1937. LC CP 11/1: ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ autograph lyric draft [verses only] [B13].

When Spewack delivered her first draft of the script, she had drafted a considerable amount of the dialogue that was used in the original Broadway script.¹³¹ In order to produce this script, she simplified the chaotic interactions between Fred and Lilli and other external characters in the *Backstage* outline and focused on the couple and their bickering. However, this script has some notable points of difference. For example, it contains seventeen scenes in Act One in comparison to nine in the published script, including the imitation Shakespeare featuring Katherine as boy. Structurally, the May libretto also alternates considerably between on- and offstage, framing the altercations between Fred and Lilli in lots of different physical spaces in the theatre (e.g. the stage, both wings, and their dressing rooms) to create punctuated divisions between the two storylines (see scene breakdown of Act One on p.58).¹³² Given Spewack's background in film, it seems likely that this structure was designed in reference to the alternation of close locations in film comedies (e.g. in the Spewacks' screenplay for *My Favorite Wife* (1940), main protagonist Nick is forced to alternate between his two wives' hotel rooms in order to continue conversations with both women).

Ultimately, these transitions were simplified and Act One, Scenes Two, Five and Six of the May libretto were consolidated into Act One Scene Three, leaving the show with just a single dressing room scene between Act One, Scene One and the beginning of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Similarly, Act One, Scene Four of the May libretto – a scene outside the theatre set exclusively to accommodate 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' – was eventually amalgamated into Act One, Scene One.¹³³ Additionally, some short sections of dialogue including a one-sided phone call between Lilli and her Afghan hound

¹³¹ For example, almost no changes were made to the gunmen's dialogue.

¹³² Spewack also weaves Bill's explanation about his gambling debt through several scenes. In this draft, Bill is stood amongst the actors assembled in Act One, Scene One (rather than being absent) and observes Fred paying particular attention to Lois. Spewack explicitly demonstrates the personal animosity between Fred and Bill in this moment. Later, in Act One, Scene Nine, Bill tells Lois about the IOU and suggests she might 'hook the family jewels' to bail him out of trouble. Their discussion was cut after this script draft but the key points were ultimately incorporated into Bill and Lois' first scene (Act One, Scene Two). CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 1-1-4, 1-9-43.

¹³³ The scene direction reads: 'Exterior of Ford Theater. HATTIE comes on first, carrying package. Looks at marquee of "The Shrew". Starts singing: "ANOTHER OPENIN"' [sic]. Song and dance number. Other PLAYERS join her. MUSICIANS with instrument cases. WESTON UNION BOYS. Florists' MESSENGERS. BOBBY SOXERS with the new-old look – and autograph books.' CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 1-4-16.

Zuleika were removed.¹³⁴ In spite of these changes, the arc of the backstage plotline remained essentially the same from the May libretto forwards. Again, very little of Act Two was substantially reworked for Broadway; although Lilli does not leave the theatre when she is released by the gunmen, it is implied that she will leave Fred, Harrison and the production once the performance is over.¹³⁵

Spewack's early draft establishes the trajectory of the story in which Fred and Lilli fight, briefly reconcile, fight again, and then finish the show. The formative influence of the early outline and character backgrounds allowed her to shape the narrative and sections of dialogue exactly as they were to appear on Broadway in her first draft. The impracticalities of staging the May libretto and the discrepancy in length between acts (even within normal convention) undoubtedly led to the reduction of scenes to limit locations and focus the performance spaces as has been outlined above. This formative development reveals how much was established in the earliest months of writing *Kiss Me Kate*. Similarly, it is striking that the overall structure of the songs generally reflects the final organisation of the music. By working in partnership and moving from specific discussions to a first draft, it is clear to see that Porter and Spewack had a particular vision in mind for the show regardless of the other individuals with potential influence. However, the divergence of output between Spewack and Porter reveals how he immediately began to hone a particular method of producing songs with loose ties to *The Shrew* but pronouncedly contemporary overtones whilst she attempted to marry an original contemporary storyline with some of *The Taming of the Shrew* and some original 'Shakespearean' content. As a result, the first draft of *Kiss Me, Kate* became a hybrid of different styles: the reflexive ideas that were particularly evident in the *Backstage* outline were diluted with long and convoluted *Taming of the Shrew* scenes. Looking forward to the next stage of development, there was considerable work to be done in order to hone the raw ideas into a practical stage performance.

¹³⁴ After Fred and Lilli perform 'Wunderbar', Lilli receives a call (organised by Harrison) from her estate in Beverley Hills and proceeds to talk to Zuleika, the hound. 'She only talks French.' CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 1-2-12.

¹³⁵ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 2-6-29-30.

May Libretto – Act One

Scene One – Stage of Ford’s Theatre
Scene Two – Fred and Lilli’s Dressing rooms
Scene Three – Backstage – Stairs/landing area
Scene Four – Theatre Exterior
Scene Five – Fred and Lilli’s Dressing rooms
Scene Six - Fred and Lilli’s Dressing rooms
Scene Seven – *Shrew* Street Scene
Scene Eight – Backstage - in the wing
Scene Nine – Backstage - in the *opposite* wing
Scene Ten – *Shrew* [no setting]
Scene Eleven – Outside Baptista’s house
Scene Twelve – Backstage - in the wing
Scene Thirteen – Baptista’s garden
Scene Fourteen – Backstage - in the wing
Scene Fifteen – Baptista’s Garden
Scene Sixteen – Fred and Lilli’s Dressing rooms
Scene Seventeen – Exterior Church

Published Script – Act One

Scene One – Stage of Ford’s Theatre
Scene Two – The Corridor Backstage
Scene Three – Fred and Lilli’s dressing rooms
Scene Four – Padua
Scene Five – Street Scene, Padua.
Scene Six – Backstage
Scene Seven – Fred and Lilli’s dressing rooms
Scene Eight – Before the curtain
Scene Nine – Exterior Church¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto; Cole Porter, Sam Spewack & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 270-271.

CHAPTER THREE
FROM PAGE TO STAGE:
SHAPING *KISS ME, KATE* FOR PERFORMANCE

Towards the end of Spewack's memorandum from May 1948, she explains that: 'I have not given either Xouber [sic] or Ayers any script so far. It was agreed early in the game that I was not to be disturbed during the course of my writng [sic].'¹ Whilst it is not unusual for writers to work independently, the conscious act to exclude the producers from the development of *Kiss Me, Kate* meant that neither Subber nor Ayers was aware of how Spewack or Porter had interpreted their ideas into a complete text. The subsequent separation between Spewack and the producers, which is evidenced in numerous letters from her to Ayers, Subber and Wilson collectively, is partially reflected in the reportage around the later genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Nonetheless, the culmination of Porter and Spewack's ideas was formed in the May libretto, which provided a meaningful basis for developing the show.

This chapter examines the different turning points that led from the May libretto to the original Broadway production. First, it demonstrates the impact of the introduction of new songs by Porter to the score and the changes this made to Spewack's writing. It then characterises the challenging working environment (drawn from extant archival evidence) through which Spewack was forced to reconcile evolving musical content with contrasting input from Ayers, Subber and Wilson. Next, it considers the practical considerations of securing a cast and recruiting a choreographer in order to make the production possible, before highlighting the key changes made to the text during the rehearsal period leading to *Kiss Me, Kate*'s opening 'out-of-town' in Philadelphia. Through these stages, this chapter analyses how Porter influenced creative change over the show and also became central to maintaining some harmony amongst the production team. It also reflects the influence of Hanya Holm (and to a lesser extent, Alfred Drake) in order to reveal how *Kiss Me, Kate* was changed to facilitate practical concerns, including casting and set changes.

¹ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 6.

Finally, this chapter demonstrates how the lack of certainty felt by the individuals involved in the show was eradicated when *Kiss Me, Kate* opened in previews. Whilst there is no question that the creative team felt there were problems with the show, it is also evident that the formative development outlined in Chapter Two established many of the key aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate* that led to its success. Yet neither Spewack and Porter nor the producers nor cast really understood what they had managed to achieve until *Kiss Me, Kate* was before the public.

Unsolicited songs

After Spewack and Porter had presented the May libretto to Ayers, Subber and Wilson, Porter departed for his Californian estate to continue working on the score. Although he maintained regular contact with his other collaborators, Porter worked independently on the remaining songs. In this absence, he completed the act finales and also produced two of three supplementary songs that he had not been asked to compose. He first introduced 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' in a letter to John C. Wilson that he later shared with Bella:

I have already taken care of that next to closing spot. I had been looking for that spot for weeks, as I always have had one of those low comedy numbers in practically all my shows, just before the final scene. The number I have written should be sung by the two gunmen just before their final exit, on page 29 of Bella's original second act.

The number is titled Brush up your Shakespeare. Its music is reminiscent of East Side, West Side, i.e., the typical Bowery song of the 1900's, and I firmly believe it will tie up the show into a beautiful knot. The lyrics are a series of gags and I am almost sure that it will be a show-stopper and everyone that I have played it to is crazy about it. No doubt Bella will kill herself when she hears that I have written a number for the gangsters, but it is the type of song that any two vaudeville mugs could put over.²

In this letter to Wilson, Porter explains how he prepared 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' with the specific structure of his previous work in mind whilst also acknowledging how the song bridges the intertextual connection between the on- and offstage narratives.

² CU BSS E/Curated correspondence with Cole Porter: letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack (copied from letter to John. C. Wilson), June 16, 1948, 1.

However, when Porter then forwarded this to Spewack, he adjusted his view on the positioning of the song and showed an interesting engagement with the script:

In case Jack has not told you, I have written a sock song for the two gangsters. I indicated that they could sing this song on their exit on page 2-6-29 of your book. But now, on further consideration, I think it might ruin the rest of the scene. So I suggest that they enter after the scene is finished in front of the curtain & sing it just before we go into the final Shrew scene.³

In light of Porter's comment that he has 'no book sense' in his interview with Taubman,⁴ this amendment to the placement of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' is noteworthy. Here Porter is interested in using his song as the penultimate peak of the show (the 'eleven o'clock number') in order to achieve a particular effect. He immediately frames 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' as 'a gag number' – something to make the audience laugh – and disassociates it from the narrative of the show by setting it in isolation.

The efficacy of Porter's song has been widely acknowledged in the reception to *Kiss Me, Kate* as it has become one of the most well-known moments in the show. However, Porter's technique, incorporating Shakespeare's play titles and well-known character names in verses of (forced) rhyming couplets about seducing a woman, also shifted the emphasis of his work from the dramatic to the comedic. The joke in this song is complex as Porter pokes fun at Shakespeare and aggrandises the audience who are able to find the rhymes funny with only crude knowledge of the works of Shakespeare. In the following example, Porter successfully incorporates Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra* into a verse, which requires absolutely no knowledge of the works except that they exist:

Just declaim a few lines from *Othella*
And they'll think you're a helluva fella,
If your blonde won't respond when you flatter 'er
Tell her what Tony told Cleopaterer.⁵

³ CU BSS E/Curated correspondence with Cole Porter: letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack, June 16, 1948, 5-6.

⁴ Howard Taubman, 'Cole Porter is Top again', *New York Times Magazine*, January 16, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

⁵ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 324.

Porter laughs at the agency of the works of Shakespeare by relegating his famous works in the lexicon of the gunmen whilst capitalising on their cultural status in order to make the joke in the first place. Not only does this song offer humorous lyrics about the stereotypical romantic tussle between a man and a woman reminiscent of some vaudeville music but it also incorporates a subtle commentary on our expectations of performance (e.g. that this ‘spontaneous’ number is obviously contrived) and bawdy gender politics (that also has an intertextual connection to *The Taming of the Shrew*) in a single standalone number.

Porter constructed a new interpretation of Spewack’s formative ideas that threaded through other songs he had written and adhered with the characterisation of the gunmen. However, ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ does not connect with the wider direction of Spewack’s original *Taming of the Shrew*. Instead, Porter created a loose textual connection between the wider appropriation of Shakespeare in *Kiss Me, Kate* and the backstage storyline. Even as Porter alluded to the ‘next to closing spot’ in his letter, reflecting the structure of the show as a whole, the introduction of ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ to *Kiss Me, Kate* added emphasis to one of the fundamental elements of Porter’s compositional portfolio – a static number that becomes a successful hit in its own right.⁶ However, the loose connection to the Shakespearean intertextuality and with bawdy wordplay that is associated with both Porter and the Bard provides layers of richness to this song. There is a discernible connection between the rhetorical styles of both authors. However, Porter also plays with the recognition of ‘Shakespeare’ as both a revered literary figure and the author of famous works that we actually know little about. He uses the vaudevillian technique of appropriating language as slang or to create euphemisms to showcase and denigrate Shakespeare’s plays in equal measure while capitalising on a song form that facilitated the list-like style of lyrics Porter frequently favoured. As such, ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ provides an insight into the cyclical nature of this musical that creates performance by exploiting familiar conventions (e.g. lowbrow humour in vaudevillian showcases) in combination with a subtle comment on the position of Shakespeare in the popular sphere.

⁶ Joseph P. Swain particularly criticises this in the framing section of his introduction to *Kiss Me, Kate*, describing Porter’s previous career and characterising the musicals as: ‘a series of vacuous plays which cannot stand revival spiced up with songs which have been sung and played as standards the world over.’ Swain uses this backdrop to evaluate the dramatic intelligence of Porter’s songwriting for *Kiss Me, Kate*. Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 140.

Yet Porter added an additional complication in introducing this different type of song to the development of the show, which had already split into several directions. As Spewack approached completion of a second draft of the script, her refusal to share her working ideas with her collaborators enabled Porter to develop his work on the basis of their early meetings rather than on the text she had created. As Porter introduced a greater emphasis on the playful aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate* in 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', he began to reduce the representation of the story in his songs. He created a standalone number for the gunmen that exploits the use of Shakespeare and therefore 'belongs' to *Kiss Me, Kate* without it having any connection to the details of the plot. In so doing, he developed the textual character of the musical that comments on the use of *The Taming of the Shrew* whilst rejecting the idea that the song needed to fit within the narrative. Having established this precedent, Porter's later creations 'I Hate Men' and 'Bianca' were similarly mischievous as they reflected the Shakespearean context of the show without having any significant dramatic function. Whilst 'I Hate Men' establishes Katherine's character, her persona has already been described and illustrated earlier in the scene and is built on the representation of Lilli in the backstage scenes before. It has no practical connection to the dialogue around it and could easily have been performed by Katherine in any of her scenes.⁷ Similarly, Bill's tongue-in-cheek ode to Lois, 'Bianca', could have occurred at almost any point in the show. It is perhaps most effective when Lois's soubrettish tendencies have been fully revealed but her interaction with Fred in Act One, Scene One could have been sufficient evidence of her behaviour to accommodate this number.

In addition to 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', Porter also introduced its musical antithesis, 'I Am Ashamed that Women Are So Simple'. In his letter to Spewack, he wrote:

Also I have made a song out of the latter part of Kate's final speech beginning with "I am ashamed that women are so simple." (She can slide into this.) I have altered the beautiful words slightly but you will approve when you hear the song. This leads at once into a lively finale.⁸

⁷ In the Sadler's Wells revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* (1970), director Peter Coe revised several aspects of the libretto. He argued that 'I Hate Men' was one of three 'badly motivated' songs in *The Taming of the Shrew* scenes and appeared in an unnatural place in the libretto: '[it] has a little scene specially invented for it which seems unnecessary.' CU BSS 25/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1970): note written by Peter Coe, November 11, 1970, 1. [Possibly incomplete]

⁸ CU BSS E/Curated correspondence with Cole Porter: letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack, June 16, 1948, 6.

Although 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' came unexpectedly, it contributed to the general function of the Shakespearean songs in *Kiss Me, Kate*, paraphrasing Katherine's final speech beginning 'Fie, fie, unknit that threatening unkind brow'.⁹ Porter abridged the text from forty-five lines to twelve, quoting eight lines exactly and paraphrasing the final four:

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, ¹⁶⁵
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions and our
hearts
Should well agree with our external
parts? [...]

Then vail your stomachs, for it is no
boot,
And place your hands below your
husband's foot;
In token of which duty, if he please,
My hand is ready, may it do him ease.

Kiss Me, Kate:

[verbatim]

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.¹⁰

By adapting this closing speech, Porter succinctly brought the finale of *Kiss Me, Kate* and the ending of *The Taming of the Shrew* together, reaffirming the intertextuality between on- and offstage in the narrative. In the May libretto, Lilli does not leave the performance but appears as before in an extended closing scene, which paraphrases two sections of *The Taming of the Shrew*. This includes a wager between Petruchio, Baptista, and

⁹ At the end of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio, Lucentio and Hortensio enter into a bet as to whose wives have been altered by marriage. They each bet that their wife will be the first. William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 5.2.65-105.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.2.160-5.2.179; Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 346.

Lucentio on which of their wives will respond to a command to come to them.¹¹

Katherine is the only wife to obey her husband's summons and Petruchio challenges her to tell the other wives 'what duty they do owe their lords and masters.'¹² The simplicity of Porter's musical setting of her subsequent speech draws attention to Lilli's performance. In contrast to almost every other number in *Kiss Me, Kate*, this song has no jokes in it or ornamental details to distract from the melody or from this moment as a closing gesture. Here Porter also aligned the musical aspect of *Kiss Me, Kate* together with Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in a deliberate way that is distinctive from his other onstage numbers like 'Tom, Dick or Harry' or 'Where Is The Life That Late I Led?'.

With this new component to frame in the Act Two finale and an additional isolated number to incorporate at the end of the previous scene, Spewack was presented with new challenges. In the May libretto, Lilli tells Fred she is not going to marry Harrison but remains distant from him (Fred) and they close the penultimate scene with a return to 'We Shall Never Be Younger'.¹³ In Porter's estimation, both these new songs could be easily incorporated into the script without disrupting the dialogue, setting a precedent for his last two compositions: 'I Hate Men' and 'Bianca'. As with 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', 'I Hate Men' was added to *Kiss Me, Kate* practically in a scene in itself. (Although it is embedded in Act One, Scene Five, Katherine has been left alone and performs directly to the audience as in soliloquy). Similarly, 'Bianca' opens Act Two, Scene Six without having anything to do with what has come before or after it. However, both 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and 'I Am Ashamed that Women Are So Simple' (and 'Bianca' several months later) added to the denseness of the end of *Kiss Me, Kate*. These songs reframed Porter's approach to *The Taming of the Shrew* and laid down a gauntlet for Spewack to respond to.

Creative differences

While Porter worked away from the rest of the creative team in California, the professional relationships between Bella Spewack and the producers became increasingly strained. Having refused to share script drafts with anyone other than

¹¹ In Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, the wager is between Petruchio, Lucentio and Hortensio who has married the widow. Baptista is an onlooker and not a participant.

¹² CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* scripts: May Libretto, 2-7-31-40.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2-6-30.

Porter or Sam Spewack, Bella frustrated Ayers, Subber and Wilson and they became increasingly concerned that she was not able to work effectively on the libretto.¹⁴ In the same letter in which Porter introduced his new songs, he also responded to Wilson's concerns about the script:

I think that all sensible revisions that are made for economy's sake are excellent. As to cutting out Bella's scenes, where Kate is dressed as a boy, I think this is a good idea if you won't lose a lot of comedy by doing so and also if it won't mean that Were Thine That Special Face will be kicked around in different bad spots in the second act and finally cut out of the show, as most people think this is the best number in the show.

With regard to the second act, I can't for the life of me, [sic] figure out how I can make a number out of the "This is the moon if I say it is the moon" scene. If you all insist that I attempt this I must have explicit instructions. How much of the scene do you want incorporated into the number? Do you want the number to be literally Shakespeare's words or do you want me to alter them for the sake of rhyme etc.? Personally, I prefer Bella's first scene in the second act, where Petruchio appears before the curtain and tells the audience that Kate is not able to ride the mule to incorporating the original Shakespeare singing, and if you think it could be strong enough to go in next to closing I don't agree with you.¹⁵

Whereas some scholars have characterised Porter's sole interest in *Kiss Me, Kate* as being for the score,¹⁶ this letter provides two points of interest. Firstly, Porter was reading and paying attention to the development of the script and secondly, he was acting (at times) as an intermediary between Spewack and the others who were seeking his opinion about her work. He responded negatively to Wilson's suggestion to reintroduce more of *The Taming of the Shrew*, backing Spewack's abbreviation of the text in spite of their wishes.¹⁷

¹⁴ Alfred Drake later claimed that reading Spewack's early draft led him to turn *Kiss Me, Kate* down in the first instance: 'That early script had all kinds of stuff in it that, to me, made no sense.' CPT 1/I: Drake Transcript, 2.

¹⁵ CU BSS E/Curated correspondence with Cole Porter: letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack (copied from letter to John. C. Wilson), June 16, 1948. 1.

¹⁶ In his chapter on *Kiss Me, Kate*, Joseph P. Swain described how Porter was 'just not interested in the craft of the libretto', continuing later in that: 'Although [Porter] collaborated closely with his librettists, it is fairly clear that he worked as he always had, from an outline...' Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 139, 141.

¹⁷ Alfred Drake's interview also supports this interpretation. He wanted to expand the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes himself and was encouraged by Wilson and Subber to challenge Spewack in rehearsals in order to effect change on the script. Indeed, in their introduction to the published script, the Spewacks describe how they kept cut sections of *The Shrew* they liked to bolster the script when required: 'Here and there among the omitted passages were lines that we wanted to

In the context of his own work and the distance he was creating between the songs and the substance of *The Taming of the Shrew*, it seems likely that Porter was protecting his own materials as well as offering creative support. However, this also provides an indication about the difference in vision for the show between Porter and Spewack and the other collaborators, arguably augmenting Bella Spewack's claims that emphasis on the backstage storyline was her own.

Throughout the summer, Porter shared several items of correspondence with Spewack between June and August, indicating that she was being shut out of conversations with the other parties. Whilst he does not exclusively back Bella's work in this letter (cited above), it is clear that Porter is not supportive of all the ideas emanating from other members of the team. This seems to reflect the closed creative conversations between Sam, Bella and Porter in March and April 1948 that excluded the others. In addition to this snapshot of the conversations being had, Porter wired Bella more than once to praise the book, once signing off with: 'I CANNOT = TELL YOU HOW DELIGHTED I AM THAT YOU ARE COMING OUT HERE JULY FIRST STICK TO YOUR GUNS ABOUT YOUR WONDERFUL BOOK AND I SHALL ALWAYS BACK YOU GREAT LOVE = COLE.'¹⁸ He also wrote to her, asking her to approach him with script issues: 'You should write me always when there are book complications. In that way it will be easier for me to back you for I have great respect for your great talent and experience.'¹⁹ Whilst he does not suggest that Spewack required solidarity, it seems apparent from his repeated offers of support and praise that the undercurrent was not in her favour.

By August, tensions were such that Bella drafted a letter to Ayers and Subber requesting that they allow her to work in her own way and in consultation with Porter:

I read your letter of August 7th to Cole, and greatly resent and take exception to your statement that you and Jack doubt that I will ever apply my full creative powers to the further improvement of "Kiss Me Kate," [sic] and that I have been confused, evasive and mentally distraught and will continue to be so. When you told me the changes which you wanted to have made in the play, there were some that I said

keep, and we blithely distributed to the characters that remained. This came in handy when, during rehearsal, an actor would say: "I feel here I need another line," or "I'd like a handle for this speech." CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 4-6; Sam and Bella Spewack, 'Introduction' to Cole Porter, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), xvii.

¹⁸ CU BSS E/Curated correspondence with Cole Porter: telegram from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack [undated but catalogued with a related telegram dated June 19, 1948].

¹⁹ CU BSS E/Curated correspondence with Cole Porter: letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack, 16 June 1948.

I would make; there were others I refused to make, and there were still others that I said I would discuss with Cole and would then let you know whether I would make them [...] After I hear from Cole Porter with respect to the changes I am discussing with him, I will discuss with you the changes to be incorporated in my revised script and will then submit same in conformity with my contract with you.²⁰

In the rest of the draft, she continues to justify her position, highlighting that they had managed to raise substantial funds to support *Kiss Me, Kate* with the extant script and that she should maintain exclusive authority over its development.²¹ Her letter supports other accounts that the producers wanted to introduce a co-author to steer the script; Alfred Drake suggests that he was encouraged to stage a scene to force her to do so and that she nominated Sam before anyone else could be suggested.²² However, there is little evidence of Sam Spewack's involvement with the exception that Bella Spewack's original *Taming of the Shrew* materials were replaced with dialogue identical to the undated scene overview.²³ Drake commented that Sam was never present in rehearsals but that he 'focused the play' and made the rehearsal script workable but this is not immediately traceable in the extant sources.²⁴

It seems likely that some of this negative reaction may have centred on a script draft, which has been preserved in Hanya Holm's papers.²⁵ This version of the show seems to be reactive to Porter's letter as his suggestions have been crudely implemented. Bella Spewack's original Shakespeare scenes have been discarded and all of the dialogue from Shakespeare's 'sun and moon' scene has been removed from the final scene. In order to introduce 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple', Fred and Lilli's exchange (after the gunmen have cancelled the IOU) and their reprise of 'We Shall Never Be Younger' at the end of Act Two, Scene Six has also been cut. Similarly, the final scene of Act Two has been reduced from nine pages of dialogue to two (including 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple'). As a result of these changes,

²⁰ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1948): 'Proposed Letter to be sent by Bella Spewack to Lem Ayers', etc., August 10, 1948.

²¹ 'The fact that you have raised over \$100,000 indicates that the script must have merit. Naturally, changes will have to be made, in the script, but unless I can see my way clear to make them, I cannot – with justice to myself – attempt to write them. I want to put you on notice however, that you had no right to rewrite my material, you have no right to disseminate the revised version and you have no right to call in another person to rewrite my material.' *Ibid.*, etc., August 10, 1948.

²² CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 3-4.

²³ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: untitled scene outline, April 28, 1948.

²⁴ CPT 1/1, Drake Transcript, 4.

²⁵ NYPL HH 21/501: undated script [1].

Fred and Lilli's plotline leapt straight from their scene with Harrison in which Fred mocks her prospective domestic life to the Act Two Finale with Lilli entering immediately as Katherine to explain how women should obey their husbands. The final details of their narrative had been completely removed in order to accommodate the new music.

Other features of this script include positioning 'I've Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua' to precede 'We Open in Venice' as the first 'Shakespearean' song in the show – an order of music which is completely unique to this draft.²⁶ Similarly, 'I Sing of Love' is used to punctuate Act One, Scene Five three times.²⁷ It's not performed by Lucentio as in the May libretto but compartmentalises sections of dialogue between different characters. However, in this draft, Spewack moved 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' into Act One, Scene One and substantially reduced the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes throughout the first act; this reduction is replicated in the October 11 draft.²⁸ The discrepancies between these practical changes that make the musical easier to stage and contradictory ideas that seem to undermine the deliberate structure of the songs indicate a lack of certainty about the direction in which to take the show, reflecting the difference of approach manifesting between the authors and producers.

Securing a cast

In addition to managing these communication challenges, it was important to the success of the show to secure the right cast. Although Porter adapted the score to be more playful, the vocal colour and range of the music meant that they were looking to cast proficient singers to play Fred and Lilli who would also be able to negotiate the backstage comedy *and* deliver sections of *The Taming of the Shrew* convincingly. Casting also offered a potential point of interest to improve the appeal of the show during the fundraising process and as a result, the producers began investigating potential casting options for *Kiss Me, Kate* in early 1948.

²⁶ Ibid., 1-4-26-1-5-29.

²⁷ Ibid., 1-5-29-30; 1-5-33; 1-5-34; (1-9-50).

²⁸ In the October 11 version, Act One, Scene One opens with Lilli and Lois unsuccessfully rehearsing a section of *The Shrew* together and being interrupted by Fred and a reporter who wants to interview Lilli. This dialogue was removed in the rehearsal script and the scene returned to its original state in the May libretto. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* scripts: October 11 Script, 1-1-1-3.

Although other actors may have been discussed during the early meetings, there is no evidence to suggest that the producers considered any actor other than Alfred Drake for the leading role of Fred/Petruchio. Drake made his Broadway debut in 1935 in the chorus of a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* before later being cast in Rodgers and Hart's *Babes in Arms* (1937), in which he performed the title song.²⁹ His major break came when he took the lead role of Curly in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943). After the success of *Oklahoma!*, for which he received his first Drama Critics Award, Drake continued to perform on Broadway in shows including Duke Ellington's musical adaptation of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Beggar's Holiday* (1946), and a revival of Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* (1947).³⁰ As a result of this portfolio, Drake had established a respectable position on Broadway. However, his career had progressed slowly and he could hardly be described as 'a Broadway star'. Drake was a reliable performer who was associated with the success of *Oklahoma!* but would not be considered a box-office draw.

In March 1948, Drake starred in a new play by Allan Scott, *Joy to the World*, about a Hollywood executive who decides to speak out against the impact of censorship, which Subber and Wilson both went to see. They each admired Drake's performance and connected his character Alexander Soren – 'also an egotist and also a show-off' – to Fred, concluding that he might be their ideal candidate.³¹ After they approached him with the idea, Drake recalled going to the Waldorf Towers to meet Porter and hear him perform some of the songs:

Cole was an interesting interpreter of his own lyrics and music and he sang bits and pieces of it as he went along in his night clubby sort of style. The opening scene was just terrible. Because he was following what Bella Spewack, who was the only writer at that point, had written. But the other songs sounded marvellous. Then I read the script, and I became thoroughly discouraged. You see, I'm afraid that Mrs. Spewack, placed in juxtaposition to Shakespeare, wasn't doing too well. That early script had all kinds of stuff in it that, to me, made no sense.³²

²⁹ Tom Vallance, 'Obituary: Alfred Drake', *The Independent*, August 6, 1992, accessed June 6, 2015. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-alfred-drake-1538814.html>.

³⁰ *The Beggar's Holiday* featured Drake with Zero Mostel and Herbert Ross (later to become a major Broadway choreographer). The musical featured an interracial love affair in the midst of a corrupt shanty town, which led to picketing outside the theatre. It closed after 14 weeks. Uwe Böker (ed.), *John Gay's The Beggar's Opera, 1728-2004: adaptations and re-writings* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2006), 22.

³¹ CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 2.

³² *Ibid.*

In May, the *New York Times* reported that he was being considered for the role in two separate instances but Drake initially declined the role on the basis of his concerns with the script.³³ He was also disinclined to return to musical theatre: ‘... I wanted to go on in straight plays rather than go back to a musical. I always thought of myself as an actor, not as a singer, and I’m afraid I was bit of a snob about musicals, primarily because the characterisations were not fully developed.’³⁴ However, Subber and Wilson continued to persist, sending him a redrafted script (presumably the October 11 draft), and he relented as he had no better offers.³⁵

For Lilli, the producers investigated a range of performers. The musical style of Lilli’s role – a high mezzo-soprano with operatic inclinations – necessitated the casting of a female performer with an appropriately lyrical style of voice. Porter’s biographers highlight Czech opera star Jarmila Novotna and American coloratura soprano Lily Pons as two favoured choices.³⁶ It is possible that Pons’ association with Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, which clearly influenced Kate’s cadenza in the ‘Finale Act One’, might have made her particularly attractive for the role. However, there are no records of any persistent dialogue with Pons about the role. William McBrien determined that Novotna was Bella Spewack’s preferred choice for the role and that the producers considered having the singer ‘impersonate an Austrian, so her (Czech) accent wouldn’t obtrude’.³⁷ Indeed, Spewack suggests that she wrote ‘personal scenes as well as pseudo

³³ Lewis Funke, ‘News and Gossip of the Rialto’, *New York Times*, May 2, 1948, accessed January 11, 2017. <https://search-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/docview/108206304/7F8B20C41F22404APQ/2?accountid=13828>; Lewis Funke, ‘News and Gossip of the Rialto: Shaw Complains about ‘Superman’s’ Success – Other Items’, *New York Times*, May 23, 1948, accessed January 11, 2017. <https://search-proquest-com.sheffield.idm.oclc.org/docview/108188511/C4FC78DA70D94F2EPQ/2?accountid=13828>.

³⁴ CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 1.

³⁵ Drake refers to signing ‘a generous’ contract to play in *Kiss Me, Kate* but claimed that this was subject to an agreement that he would not take part in any of the fundraising events: ‘I may not have been a “star” but I was quite well known by then.’ *Ibid.*, 2-3, 10.

³⁶ George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 245; David Grafton, *Red, Hot & Rich*, 171-172; William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 305.

³⁷ Notes from a meeting held in 1950 include: ‘Bella Spewack was enthused about Novotna and wrote a number of things into the play for her.’ YISG MCB 5/83-85: ‘Notes on Conference held at Edward Colton’s office at 551 Fifth Avenue, New York City on March 22, 1950’, 6; William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 305

Shakespearean scenes' to suit the text to Novotna.³⁸ Her potential involvement in the show was reported in the *New York Times* in March:

Although nothing is signed, Jarmila Novotna of the Metropolitan Opera and Jose Ferrer are being spoken of as the leads in that untitled Cole Porter-Bella Spewack musical. The grapevine reports that Miss Novotna (she's no stranger to the Broadway stage having appeared four years ago in "Helen Goes to Troy") recently heard the music and is said to have expressed her whole-hearted approval over Mr. Porter's collection of sharps and flats.³⁹

Spewack recalls that they met with Novotna in mid-May to test out material with her but that Novotna was not convinced.⁴⁰ As a result, Porter left for California looking out for potential candidates for them to consider.

In addition to the opera stars considered, Spewack and Ayers also considered Nanette Fabray for *Kiss Me, Kate*; they went together to see her perform while she was co-starring in *High Button Shoes*.⁴¹ They also seriously considered Mary Martin. Martin had made her Broadway debut in Porter and the Spewacks' *Leave It To Me!* (1938), achieving acclaim for her performance of Porter's song 'My Heart Belongs to Daddy'. She then established herself as a star in Kurt Weill's *One Touch of Venus* (1943) (and later in the less successful *Lute Song* (1946)). Porter saw Martin perform in the national tour of *Annie Get Your Gun* (1948), whilst in California and invited her to read for Lilli. However, Eells reports that Porter did not feel Martin showed suitable enthusiasm for the show and that

³⁸ Spewack wrote that: 'Souber [sic] and Ayers knew nothing of these scenes until I read them at one night at the house. I talked over my idea with Mr. Spewack and told him I had to think of a yarn, a backstage story in order [sic] to go ahead with it.' CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5.

³⁹ It continues: 'Supposedly a secret, the plot is based on "The Taming of the Shrew" and stems from an idea of Lemuel Ayers and Arnold Saint Subber, who will produce it next season under John C. Wilson's supervision. It isn't a feat of the imagination to deduce that Miss Novotna would be the Katherine and Mr Ferrer the Petruchio.' Sam Zolotow, 'Novotna, Ferrer May Do a Musical', *New York Times*, March 17, 1948, accessed November 21, 2014.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/108304508?accountid=13828>.

⁴⁰ Drake does not acknowledge this meeting at all in his transcript, recalling that he knew Novotna had been considered but that her accent would have made her unsuitable for the Shrew: 'I had heard that Cole was interested in Jarmila Novotna, who was in the Metropolitan Opera, for the role of Lilli. I don't know what happened to that idea. I had seen her do The Bartered Bride and I knew she had an accent. Maybe they would have rewritten the role but they couldn't rewrite the Shrew!' CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 14; CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5.

⁴¹ CU BSS 37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings: Spewack Memorandum, 5; YISG MCB 5/83-85: 'Notes on Conference held at Edward Colton's office at 551 Fifth Avenue, New York City on March 22, 1950', 6.

Martin, by turn, was perplexed that Porter would not allow her to take the score away to learn.⁴² In addition to their shared lack of warmth during her meeting with Porter, Martin hoped to buy the rights to *South Pacific* but was outbid by Rodgers and Hammerstein.⁴³ Therefore, when she was approached by Richard Rodgers to read for and consider accepting the role of Nellie Forbush, she ‘felt the combination of the nurse [...] the modern story and the three songs had stronger appeal.’⁴⁴

Whilst this rejection may have come as a disappointment to Porter, Martin’s vocal style (like Nanette Fabray’s) was noticeably different to the operatic casting choices they considered for Lilli and in June 1948, he took up the cause of a completely new performer, B-Movie actress Patricia Morison. Morison had not performed on Broadway for four years since being cast in the musical *Allah Be Praised* (1944), which closed after only twenty performances. Previously to that she had played a minor role in a three-act operetta *The Two Bouquets* (through which she had become acquainted with Alfred Drake) in 1938.⁴⁵ During the run of *The Two Bouquets*, Morison was headhunted by Paramount Studios and had, with the exception of *Allah Be Praised*, worked solely in film before training for and starring in *Kiss Me, Kate*.

There are different accounts as to who first suggested Morison to the producers. One biographer suggests that Wilson found her and organised an audition with Porter whereas Alfred Drake claims he suggested Morison to the producers on the basis of the description of the actress they required.⁴⁶ He explained: ‘Most people are not very good at describing actors or actresses in terms of a particular role, but when they got all through I thought the only person who could... Well certainly I knew that Pat was beautiful and I knew that she could sing and I knew she could act.’⁴⁷ Drake was unsure whether his suggestion had been fed back to Porter as he heard of her audition retrospectively.⁴⁸ According to Morison, she had no idea about the details of the musical but Porter gave

⁴² George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 245.

⁴³ ‘One day the phone rang and it was Richard Rodgers saying that they had brought a new property, South Pacific. Would Miss Martin wait until she heard the music before making a decision? We knew the property. We had read it only the same week, and had tried to buy it only to find Rodgers and Hammerstein had already made the deal.’ Richard Halliday (1965) as quoted in George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 245.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Charles Schwartz, *Cole Porter: A Biography*, 233l.

⁴⁶ William McBrien suggests that it was John C. Wilson who first drew Porter’s attention to Morison. William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 306.

⁴⁷ CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 15-16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* (16.)

her the score to learn.⁴⁹ She then learned that Novotna had been provisionally cast as Lilli/Katherine and assumed that was the end of her association with it. However, Porter promoted Morison to Bella Spewack (and to Wilson) and encouraged them to consider her. He wrote:

There are two girls here working like maniacs for the Kate part, 1) Ruth Warwick & 2) Patricia Morison. I don't believe Warwick can sing the part even if she studies all summer because singing is not her vocation. [...]

Pat Morison is, to me, a much more interesting possibility. Apart from her voice which is a high mezzo, she looks like Lynn Fontanne & Kate. As I wired Jack, she is working with Constance Collier on the Kate part. I feel strongly that this is our girl. So much so that I believe we might over night [sic], create a great new star.

I can picture you putting your hat over your face & squirming in despair as I write you this but this Morison girl is the one.⁵⁰

Porter wished Spewack and Wilson to fly out and see Morison but was able to capitalise on a concert she was performing in with Bob Hope in New York and organised for her to sing for the producers.⁵¹ Morrison recalled that she had just signed to begin filming nine-part crime drama series, *The Cases of Eddie Drake*, for CBS when they offered her the part of Lilli and she had been concerned about dropping the television work.⁵² However, by October 16, 1948, the *New York Times* reported:

No contracts have been signed yet, but according to certain parties Patricia Morison is set for one of the leading stints in "Kiss Me, Kate," the Cole Porter-Sam and Bella Spewack musical, which is due here on Dec. 29 under the banner of Lemuel Ayers and Arnold Saint Subber. Miss

⁴⁹ Scott Feinberg, "Kiss Me Kate" Originator Patricia Morison Interviewed by Scott Feinberg.' *YouTube*, 1:03:57, posted by Scott Feinberg, June 6, 2013, accessed December 15, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQswR26fDFM>, 43:26-43:45.

⁵⁰ It is worth noting that later in this letter, Porter says that they have no one in mind for Fred/Petruchio so that Drake's suggestion was either conveyed anonymously or it was coincidental. CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1948): letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack, June 16, 1948, 1-3.

⁵¹ George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 246.

⁵² In her interview with Scott Feinberg, Morison explained that because the format of television series was so new, the CBS producers allowed her to film all her scenes, which were contained in a single set, in one go. In this way, they made it possible for her to take the role in *Kiss Me, Kate* and fulfil her contractual obligations to the television company. Scott Feinberg, "Kiss Me Kate" Originator Patricia Morison Interviewed by Scott Feinberg.' *YouTube*, 1:03:57, posted by Scott Feinberg, June 6, 2013. Accessed December 15, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQswR26fDFM>, 47:00-47:30.

Morison, say the scouts, will sign the necessary papers over the weekend.⁵³

During this back-and-forth, only Harold Lang was formally added to the cast to play Bill. In August 1948, the *New York Times* reported that he was to take the role 'for which Alfred Drake had previously been mentioned'.⁵⁴ However, there is no other evidence that this was ever the case. Lang had developed his portfolio as a successful ballet dancer before being featured in *Look Ma! I'm Dancin'* (1948), directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins and George Abbott with music by Hugh Martin. A friend of Subber's, he was keen to continue a 'cross-over' from ballet to the Broadway stage and saw *Kiss Me, Kate* as the next opportunity to achieve this direction in his career.⁵⁵ Despite this experience, Lang was still developing his profile and did not add glamour to the other potential casting.

The remaining roles were finalised in October 1948. Lisa Kirk and Lorenzo Fuller, who had both performed in fundraising auditions for *Kiss Me, Kate*, formally took their roles as Lois and Paul.⁵⁶ In addition to an announcement of Kirk's casting on October 2, Harry Clark and Jack Diamond were cast as the two gunmen.⁵⁷ Both men were known for their previous small character roles. Indeed, Clark changed careers from being a factory worker to a performer following his role in the union sponsored revue *Pins and Needles* (1937). He had also had more recent success in the revue *Call Me Mister* (1946) as well as in the minor role Stanley in *One Touch of Venus* (1943).⁵⁸ *New York Times* reporter Louis

⁵³ Louis Calta, 'Producers Avert Press Agents Row', *New York Times*, October 16, 1948, 9, accessed November 21, 2014. <https://search.proquest.com/sheffield.idm.oclc.org/docview/108251297?accountid=13828>.

⁵⁴ Louis Calta, 'HAROLD LANG GETS TOP ROLE IN SHOW', *New York Times*, August 21, 1948, accessed November 21, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/108260491?accountid=9735>.

⁵⁵ CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 6.

⁵⁶ Kirk (who made her Broadway debut in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Allegro* (1947)) and Fuller performed with Earl Wrightson, Christina Lind and pianist Joe Moon during the audition process. Wrightson, who previously starred as Benvenuto Cellini in *The Firebrand of Florence*, was later cast as Fred for part of the touring production. Louis Calta, 'LISA KIRK IS SIGNED FOR 'KISS ME, KATE'', *New York Times*, October 2, 1948. accessed November 21, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/108278571?accountid=9735>.

⁵⁷ Louis Calta, 'MILLER PLAY CASTS ITS LEADING ROLES: Lee J. Cobb, Anne Revere Join 'Death of a Salesman'', *New York Times*, October 28, 1948. accessed November 21, 2014. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/108232265?accountid=13828>.

⁵⁸ The parallels between Stanley – 'a lubberly, wooden-faced lout' and the second gunman are noticeable, as are the general similarities in style between Weill and Nash's barbershop waltz 'The Trouble with Women' and Porter's 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'. S.J Perelman, Ogden Nash and Kurt Weill, *One Touch of Venus* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chiltern Book Company, 1973), 150.

Calta also explained that the producers felt that *Kiss Me, Kate* was ‘in such an advanced state that it will not be necessary to spend more than two weeks on the road in advance of the Broadway opening.’⁵⁹

Even with such experienced performers in place, David Ewen characterises the lack of excitement the cast would have inspired:

If there were doubts about the capabilities of the young and inexperienced producers to mount a successful show, or about the willingness of Cole Porter to submit to the requirements of the new integrated kind of musical comedy, there were even greater ones inspired by the casting. Alfred Drake... was coming to the new musical after having suffered a series of failures on Broadway. Certainly, he was no longer a drawing card. And Patricia Morison... had never before starred in a Broadway production. Lisa Kirk and Harold Lang, selected for subsidiary roles, had proved themselves respectable performers... But not even their strongest admirers would say that either one was the kind of magnet that could draw customers into the theatre.⁶⁰

The producers had secured a leading actor who was not keen on the prospect of starring in a musical, had no respect for the book’s author, and was not confident in the success of the text paired with a moderately successful film actress who was not known for her singing. Whereas Novotna would have drawn curiosity and Mary Martin had recently starred on Broadway, Morison was not an exciting choice in spite of Porter’s faith that she would deliver the role effectively. As such, the casting for *Kiss Me, Kate* reflected other aspects of its genesis: the combination of different artistic visions and varied perception of the show’s commercial viability complicated each step towards Broadway. This lack of ‘magnetism’ as defined by Ewen was part of a wider negativity towards the project. In a recent interview, Patricia Morison explained this penetrated the fundraising process when Porter held ‘grand parties for all his rich friends’ in which performers would come and sing parts of the score. According to Morison, the guests would say: ‘No Cole, you don’t have it anymore’.⁶¹ In this way, no aspect of *Kiss Me, Kate* was in the

⁵⁹ Louis Calta, ‘MILLER PLAY CASTS ITS LEADING ROLES: Lee J. Cobb, Anne Revere Join ‘Death of a Salesman’’, *New York Times*, October 28, 1948. accessed November 21, 2014. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/108232265?accountid=13828>.

⁶⁰ David Ewen, *The Cole Porter Story*, 126.

⁶¹ Scott Feinberg, “‘Kiss Me Kate’ Originator Patricia Morison Interviewed by Scott Feinberg.’ *YouTube*, 1:03:57, posted by Scott Feinberg, June 6, 2013. Accessed December 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQswR26DFM>, 42:44-44:20.

auspicious state that might have been expected in light of its success when the show opened on Broadway.

Hanya Holm: expanding the creative collaboration

Whilst settling the principal casting for the show, the producers also turned their attention to recruiting a choreographer. Initially, they had hoped to secure Agnes de Mille, who had come to public attention with her choreography for Aaron Copland's ballet *Rodeo* in 1942 and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943). As a result of the success of *Oklahoma!*, including her iconic 'Dream Ballet' sequence, de Mille continued to gain prominence on Broadway, working on musicals including *Bloomer Girl* (1944), *Carousel* (1945) and *Brigadoon* (1947). Porter held the initial meeting with de Mille before he travelled to California and then John C. Wilson continued the negotiations to secure her for *Kiss Me, Kate*.⁶² (Wilson, (Ayers) and de Mille had worked together previously on *Bloomer Girl*.) However, in September, de Mille wrote to Wilson to turn down the show, explaining that she had been offered the opportunity to contribute to a revue in London:

I think you have without any question the score of the year and after talking to Saint this morning I am convinced that you also have a story with charming and effective theatre possibilities and one that would be considerable fun to work on. [...] But the review [sic] gives me the opportunity of doing three numbers I have been wanting to do for ten years - just simply that. I have worked so hard and so long that I feel that I had better do what I want to do and not strain to dig up material where I have no spontaneous enthusiasm.⁶³

Similar to Porter and Alfred Drake before her, de Mille rejected *Kiss Me, Kate* on the basis that the show did not spark immediate interest in her and, like Mary Martin, de Mille did not change her mind. As a result, Wilson replied to wish her luck with the revue, noting:

I am naturally, personally and professionally, very disappointed -- in the first category because all the dreary desperation of production when done with you becomes fun -- and in the second category because you are

⁶² YISG MCB 5/83-85: 'Notes on Conference held at Edward Colton's office at 551 Fifth Avenue, New York City on March 22, 1950', 6.

⁶³ In a note written on the envelope holding this letter, de Mille explains that her son had been about to undergo a serious operation and that she had not felt able to take on a Broadway musical at that time. NYPL ADM IX-10: Letter from Agnes de Mille to John C. Wilson, September 8, 1948.

beyond doubt the outstanding person in your field in theatre and have given us enormous style, elegance, cachet and to put it bluntly, box office. [...]

We are now searching around for a Substitute with a capital "S" but I completely understand and respect your choice and I think you know how sincerely I send you my fondest best wishes for the enterprise that you have embarked on.⁶⁴

The commercial advantage of securing de Mille, who had a list of recently successful musicals to commend her, might have helped the fundraising process, which was slow. Although Bella Spewack indicated in June that they had already amassed \$100,000 of financial backing, auditions to sponsors continued into October 1948, delaying the start of rehearsals. However, as soon as de Mille withdrew herself, Ayers and Subber immediately secured German dancer and choreographer Hanya Holm as their replacement collaborator. Holm had no previous experience of choreographing a Broadway musical but had established herself as a leading exponent of American modern dance. Subber initially contacted her in August 1948 to establish whether she would consider the position and she signed her contract on September 30, 1948.⁶⁵

The three scripts preserved in Holm's papers are heavily annotated as Holm examined the interplay between the framing dialogue and the musical numbers as she worked.⁶⁶ During this process, she suggested amendments and cuts to the script and songs to help the performers to move from stasis to dance as was appropriate. It is clear from a memorandum from her dance studio that she particularly hoped to showcase Harold Lang, often referring to 'Harry' rather than 'Bill' in her lists of characters. She mapped out every potential opportunity for Bill/Lucentio to dance, noting character details as she went.⁶⁷ For 'Tom, Dick or Harry' for example, Holm notes 'make up to Lois, [make] love to Bianca' and 'Woos Bianca as Lucentio but in the heat of dance forgets himself and becomes Bill Calhoun.'⁶⁸ She has then noted: "To 'Darn Hot' [sic] – back to

⁶⁴ NYPL ADM IX-10: Letter from John C. Wilson to Agnes de Mille, September 15, 1947.

⁶⁵ 'VERY INTERESTED IN DUSCUSSING [sic] THE NEW COLE PORTER SHOW WITH YOU. REHEARSAL LATTER PART OF OCTOBER. WOULD YOU WIRE WHETHER YOU ARE INTERESTED AND AVAILABLE ALSO WHEN YOU RETURN TO CITY BECAUSE PREPARATION SHOULD START IMMEDIATELY?' NYPL HH 20/497: telegram from Arnold Saint Subber to Hanya Holm, August 30, 1948; NYPL HH 20/498: Hanya Holm - *Kiss Me, Kate* contract [signed by Subber], September 30, 1948.

⁶⁶ NYPL HH 21/502: undated script [2] [May Libretto]; NYPL HH 21/501: undated script [1] [Interim script c. September 1948]; NYPL HH 21/503: October 11 script [Act One only].

⁶⁷ NYPL HH 20/499: typed memorandum with autograph annotations.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

old habits. On Stage – playing crap with Negro boys.⁶⁹ Holm made similar notes signposting narrative points in the margins of her script and it is clear that character progression was important to her thought process.⁷⁰

In addition to this, Holm paid conscious attention to the physical positions and interactions between characters throughout the script, prefacing the changes that would be made in rehearsal. For example, she noted that ‘Harold has to meet or see Bianca – both love at first sight’ in the first *Taming of the Shrew* scene.⁷¹ This interaction might have taken place in one of the three choreographed numbers originally planned in this scene and therefore have been an important visual moment for Holm to frame. Whilst her annotation is not realised as part of the final script, Bianca and Lucentio’s relationship is framed in the opening stage direction of the first *Taming of the Shrew* scene: ‘During dance, Bianca sidles forth, carrying a red rose, followed by Gremio and Hortensio carrying nothing. Lucentio tags along carrying books.’⁷² In the version of the script that Holm was working with, the dance later known as the ‘Rose Dance’ was a chorus number which had nothing to do with the three suitors’ narrative. However, the published stage direction relates this first interaction, the symbolism of the rose as an emblem of love and Lucentio’s ‘Rose Dance’, which directly follows ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ later in the scene. Whilst it is impossible to correlate these changes with Holm’s notes and the finished show, it is one of many examples where Holm made a suggestion in her notes that has been in some way realised in the final version of show.⁷³ As such, she affected subtle changes on the text that demonstrate how the text was adjusted to suit performance and helped to support Spewack and Porter’s ideas in her own creative remit.

The rehearsal period

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Several of these are written on notepaper from the Waldorf Astoria, indicating that she made her notes in meetings held in Porter’s apartment. Her interests in characterisation and the dramatic context of the songs complements what has previously been evidenced in Porter and Spewack’s creative processes. NYPL HH 20/500: Notes for *Kiss Me, Kate*.

⁷¹ NYPL HH 20/500: Excerpt from *Kiss Me, Kate* notebook [not paginated].

⁷² Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 290.

⁷³ Wilson suggests that there was harmonious collaboration through the rehearsal process of the show in his autobiography, confirming the interpretation that Holm was free to make suggestions, which were adopted where appropriate as with other collaborators through the development process. John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 175.

Rehearsals for *Kiss Me, Kate* began on November 1, 1948 and Wilson staged the production scene by scene with Drake's assistance.⁷⁴ In addition to this, both Bella Spewack and Porter attended rehearsals frequently with mixed effects on the show. Spewack noted that Porter was significantly more engaged with the production process of *Kiss Me, Kate* than he had been during *Leave It To Me!*: 'Cole attended practically all of the working sessions. He knew exactly how he wanted 'I Hate Men' to be staged. He was absorbed with every phase of the production.'⁷⁵ Patricia Morison has frequently recalled that Porter had been inspired by a scene in an operetta by Victor Herbert 'featuring a fellow who sang the line "I want what I want when I want it" and then slammed the table.'⁷⁶ Bassist and composer Mike Corda, who played in the orchestra for *Kiss Me, Kate* for the entire Broadway run, also added that although Porter was constantly present, he 'never intruded during rehearsal' and would relay his thoughts through the musical director, Pembroke Davenport.⁷⁷ In light of the previous disagreements about the development of the show, perhaps Porter felt it was particularly necessary to oversee how his work was managed.

Drake suggests that Bella Spewack's contributions to the rehearsal process were less well-received, complaining that she would talk over and undermine Wilson: 'There are people who direct the directors... Bella did it a couple of times... She obviously didn't know what she was talking about.'⁷⁸ This may have been a reflection of the disempowerment Spewack felt after disagreements about the focus of the libretto and her position as the initial creative instigator of the core ideas that shaped *Kiss Me, Kate*. In preparation for rehearsals, the entire *Taming of the Shrew* strand of the show had been stripped of her original text. The first scenes were changed to match Sam Spewack's overview from April and she had had to accommodate additional music from Porter who added 'I Hate Men' to the score. It is clear from extant correspondence that she began to

⁷⁴ Drake also suggests that he discussed the content of *The Taming of the Shrew* scenes with Bella Spewack in order to help her to improve those sections of the show: '... Bella and I sat in two of those miserable cane chairs on stage, with the rehearsal light on. And I talked to her for an hour about Shakespeare... I knew where the laughs were.' CPT 1/1: Drake Transcript, 3, 5, 9. See also George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 248.

⁷⁵ Bella Spewack as quoted in William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 310.

⁷⁶ Patricia Morrison as quoted in William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 311; Scott Feinberg, "'Kiss Me Kate" Originator Patricia Morison Interviewed by Scott Feinberg.' *YouTube*, 1:03:57, posted by Scott Feinberg, June 6, 2013. Accessed December 15, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQswR26fDFM>, 48:00-48:35

⁷⁷ David Grafton, *Red, Hot & Rich*, 169.

⁷⁸ CPT 1/1: Drake Interview, 13.

monitor production details meticulously to make sure that she was being appropriately and fairly represented. For example, she had her lawyer write to the producers to complain that she was not receiving accurate billing in the promotion of the show:

Gentlemen:

Bella Spewack saw a proof of an ad you are planning to run in which the name of John Wilson [sic] is in the larger type than her name. We are surprised at this and assume it is an error. The director's name is never larger than that of an author, particularly an author of the standing of Bella Spewack.

Will you also call your press department's attention to the fact that on all forms of advertising and publicity without limit, wherever authorship credit is given to Cole Porter, credit should also be given to Bella Spewack. This also applies to radio broadcasts.

Very truly yours⁷⁹

Possibly, Spewack sensed, even at this rehearsal stage, that once *Kiss Me, Kate* had opened to the public, the marketability and popular appeal of Porter's songs would surpass any critical acclaim the book might achieve, leaving her work behind. Certainly, she felt that she had to ensure her credit was not overlooked as had been agreed in her contract. After the Broadway opening, she and Colton wrote numerous letters to demand that her name be included and properly billed on various materials including on the publicity for the national tour.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1948): letter from Edward E. Colton to Arnold Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayers, November 11, 1948.

⁸⁰ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1950): letter from Edward E. Colton to Arnold Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayers, July 27, 1950.



Figure 3.1: Concept art by Lemuel Ayres for *Kiss Me, Kate*

According to McBrien, Ayers also became secretive about his designs for the show, mirroring Spewack's previous disinclination to share her work; he refused to show Subber his original costume designs for *Kiss Me, Kate* until they were complete.⁸¹ However, Subber was concerned that they were 'modern, à la Matisse' and not the period costumes that were required for *Kiss Me, Kate*.⁸² It is also clear from the single extant concept painting in Ayers' design collection at the New York Public Library that he initially approached the backstage design in a similar way (see Figure 3.1). The painting is brightly coloured and crowded whereas photos by Will Rapport, Eileen Darby and Stanley Kubrick of the original production show that the backstage scenes were relatively sparse in the final execution.⁸³

⁸¹ William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 311.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Rapport and Darby's photographs were widely used in the publicity for *Kiss Me, Kate*. Examples of their work can be found in the papers of Harry Clark, Hanya Holm and Harold Lang. Lang's collection also includes some uncredited photographs from backstage and pictures by Fred Fehl who documented over 1000 theatre productions. Fehl's photographic archive is held at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin. His dance photographs are currently being digitised. Other copies of photographs including some by Darby and Kubrick are available from the Museum of the City of New York's digitised photo collection [online]. NYPL HC 2/2.5 *Kiss Me Kate* scrapbook: signed photograph of Alfred Drake as Petruchio and press clippings including photographic illustrations; NYPL HH 798-800: *Kiss Me, Kate* photographs (rehearsals and performance); NYPL HL 3/3.10: Press clippings and candid photographs; Museum of the City of New York, '*Kiss Me, Kate* (musical)' digitised image collection, accessed October 10, 2016.

Separate from the ongoing tensions in the production team, McBrien characterised the working relationship between Harold Lang and other members of the cast and creative team as varied. He reports that Patricia Morison found Lang a ‘lovely artist, naughty but loveable.’⁸⁴ However, in one example, McBrien explains that: ‘Lang angered Porter when he appeared onstage with an excessively large codpiece. When Cole told Saint [Subber] to remove it, Saint said he was leaving that to Porter.’⁸⁵ During rehearsals, Lang pressured the producers to incorporate a solo number for him to perform as had been promised in his contract and Porter eventually composed and submitted ‘Bianca’ to be incorporated into the show.⁸⁶ There is no evidence to explain precisely how ‘Bianca’ came to be situated at the beginning of Act Two, Scene Six. However, the song, which verbalises both Bill’s awareness of Lois’ materialistic promiscuity and his continued attachment to her, functions as a response to ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’.

Finalising the ending

As the creative team moved towards the final draft of the script and a finished production, there were several aspects of the text that underwent further change. In Act One, Spewack inverted Fred and Lilli’s dressing room scene (including ‘Wunderbar’ and ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’) and Bill and Lois’ meeting on the stairs (‘Why Can’t You Behave?’), so that the action moves from onstage to backstage and then into the

<http://collections.mcny.org/C.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&VBID=24UAYWEGU3ZPK&SMLS=1&RW=1527&RH=822#/SearchResult&VBID=24UAYWEGU3LJ9&SMLS=1&RW=1527&RH=822>.

⁸⁴ There are two candid photos of Morison pulling faces backstage in Lang’s scrapbook collection of materials for *Kiss Me, Kate* in the New York Public Library. There are no other known ‘natural’ photos of any other member although there is a signed and dedicated photographic portrait of ‘Eddie and Sledge’ who danced ‘Too Darn Hot’ with Lang and Lorenzo Fuller. When cross-referenced with photos from the American Ballet Company in Lang’s slide collection, it seems likely that Lang took these photos himself. Patricia Morison as quoted in William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 310. NYPL HL 3/3.10: Photographs of Patricia Morison backstage in her first *Taming of the Shrew* costume.

⁸⁵ William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 310.

⁸⁶ When Lang was contracted, ‘I Sing of Love’ would have constituted as a solo song for his character. When the ‘Shrew Street Scene’ was stripped of Bella Spewack’s original dialogue, all the secondary roles were substantially reduced to focus on Katherine and Petruchio. For accounts of Lang’s request for a song, see George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 24 and William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 310.

dressing room.⁸⁷ Spewack also made revisions to sections of the text to improve the flow of these scenes. For example, in Act One, Scene Five of the October 11 script, she annotated three pages of dialogue with the letters A-E (see Figure 3.2) in order to re-organise the scene and resituate ‘So in Love’ in the text.⁸⁸ Similar annotations can be seen in Act One, Scene Three of Drake’s rehearsal script: text has been added so that Fred recalls an excerpt from the operetta that leads Lilli and him into their reconstructed performance of ‘Wunderbar’.⁸⁹

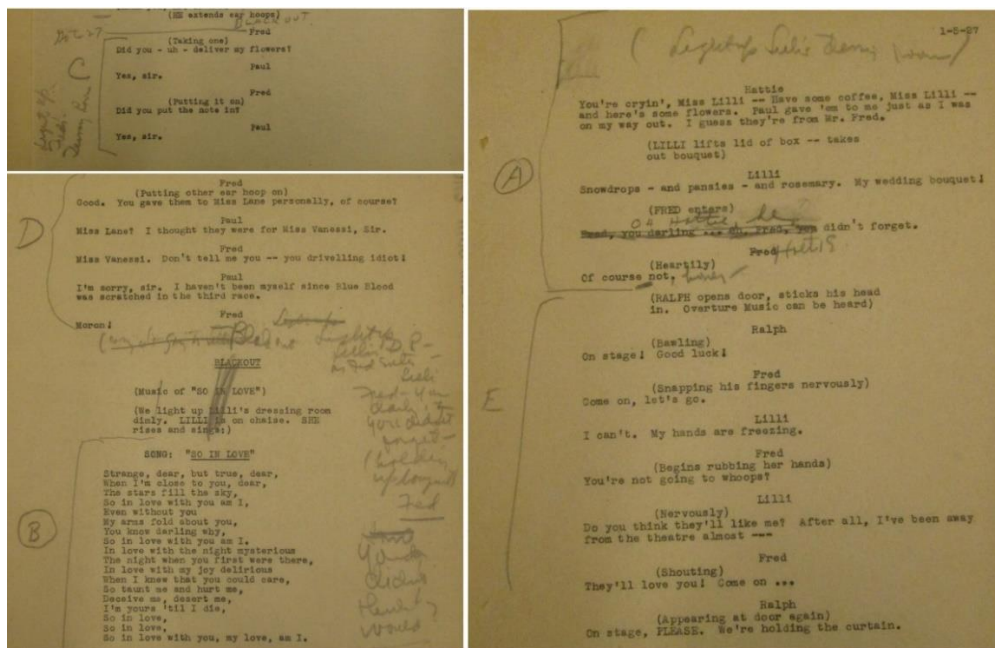


Figure 3.2: Bella Spewack’s annotations on Act One, Scene Five (October 11 script)

At the end of Act Two, the organisation of music from Scene Five through to the end of Scene Six was further complicated by the introduction of ‘Bianca’. With another song to consider, this forced a final decision: whether to have a song for Fred and Lilli at the end of Act Two, Scene Five leading straight into ‘Bianca’ in Scene Six before ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’. By the beginning of rehearsals, there were several options under consideration all of which were different from what was used in the original Broadway script. The narrative issue arises around the end of Lilli’s relationship with Harrison and

⁸⁷ In the rehearsal script, Fred and Lilli’s scene is Act One, Scene Two, as it had been in all previous drafts, and was followed by the ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ scene. This was reversed before the out of town opening in Philadelphia. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Rehearsal Script.

⁸⁸ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: October 11 Script, 1-5-25-27. (Edited photographs were taken by the author during visits to the Spewack papers at Columbia University in October 2013 and July 2016. They are organised in order of appearance in the October 11 script.)

⁸⁹ LC AD 2/2: Rehearsal Script, 1-3-13-16.

her subsequent actions. It is clear that Spewack was unsure whether Lilli should leave the production in Act Two, Scene Six and what music should be used to characterise this moment. This problem was compounded by the amount of music available to incorporate between the end of Act Two, Scene Five (in which Fred satirises Lilli's life with Harrison) and the finale in Scene Eight.⁹⁰ Between the May libretto and the original Broadway script, six songs – 'We Shall Never Be Younger,' 'It Was Great Fun the First Time,' 'So In Love,' 'A Woman's Career,' 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare,' and 'Bianca' – were each considered to fill different positions in this final section of the show. The various script versions, including Hanya Holm's interim script, reveal that the order and placement of music changed in each iteration.

Although Spewack placed 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' at the end of Scene Six in the interim script, Fred is still present while the gunmen perform the song. Indeed, Holm annotated the beginning of the song with: 'Fred – what happens to him? How about Fred joining in this thing?'⁹¹ There are no stage directions to indicate whether he observes their song or leaves. By the rehearsal script, Spewack had disassociated the song from this scene altogether, finally realising Porter's first suggestion and setting it in a scene of its own in front of the curtain.⁹² Spewack's annotations on the October 11 script are most indicative of how interchangeable she considered some of the songs to be and the number of potential changes that she envisioned.⁹³ At the end of Act Two, Scene Five, featuring Fred, Lilli, and Harrison, the typed text reads: '(Possible spot for either "WOMAN'S CAREER" or "WE SHALL NEVER BE YOUNGER")'.⁹⁴ Spewack scribbled this out and wrote 'So in Love', which has also been crossed out, and 'It Was Great Fun The

⁹⁰ The last three scenes of Act Two were saturated with potential song choices to incorporate and the necessary addition of 'Bianca' added to the musical's denseness.

⁹¹ Holm was also looking for an opportunity to incorporate a major set piece, which could be prepared behind the curtain if the song was performed in this way. NYPL HH 21/501: Interim Script, 2-6-32.

⁹² Hanya Holm hoped to capitalise on this moment in order to prepare the stage for a complicated dance to preface the finale. (This may have been based on the ballet titled 'Love is a Game – Battle of Shuttlecock and Battledore (Battle of the sexes)' in the *Backstage* overview.) Spewack noted that considerable book time was cut in order to accommodate 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and 'a beautiful dance for which the stairs had been built'. However, it seems that more music was cut than dialogue. Certainly, Alfred Drake's rehearsal script included several pages of added rather than discarded lines to learn. CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, [not paginated]; Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction', in Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), xv; LC AD 2/2: Rehearsal Script.

⁹³ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: October 11 Script, 2-5-30.

⁹⁴ Both 'A Woman's Career' and 'We Shall Never Be Younger' were cut from *Kiss Me, Kate* entirely during October revisions.

First Time' is left in its place. As a result, 'It Was Great Fun' was reprised at the end of Act Two, Scene Five (having been previously heard in Act One, Scene Three) of the rehearsal script before being cut before early tryouts.⁹⁵ The typed rehearsal scripts therefore include this reprise at the end of Scene Five but do not include any music in Scene Six before 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', which was given its own scene.

Between the October 11 draft and the rehearsal script, Spewack incorporated new dialogue at the end of Scene Six in which Fred tells her she is able to leave the theatre and after a short exchange, she does:

Fred: Sleeping Beauty waits in your dressing room.
Lilli: Let him NAP!
Fred: Don't tell me the bloom is off – (HE sneezes) – the rose?
Lilli: (On the verge of tears) You are not Hedda Hopper, and I don't care to discuss my personal life with you.
Fred: Same old Lilli... And I thought I detected a note of softness... a new humility... even a spark of affection... a glimmer of love...
Lilli: You're not going to hypnotize me, Svengali.
(SHE tips her hat a la Gunmen)
Au Revoir.
(SHE exits)⁹⁶

Spewack later added to this dialogue again, developing the scene to become more personal rather than manipulative:

Fred: Lilli, you can't walk out on me now.
Lilli: You walked out on me once.
Fred: But I came back.
Doorman: (Enters L.) Your cab's waiting Miss Vanessi.
(LILLI exits L.)⁹⁷

After this exit, Fred then performs a reprise of 'So in Love' before 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' in front of the curtain in the next scene. A functional replacement for 'It Was Great Fun the First Time', 'So in Love' has perhaps the most enigmatic genesis of any song in *Kiss Me, Kate*. It is mentioned first in the scene breakdown in Act Two of the

⁹⁵ LC AD 2/2: Rehearsal Script, 2-5-31.

⁹⁶ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Rehearsal script, 2-6-33-4.

⁹⁷ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: Script A with Notes [1] (Original Broadway Script), 2-6-34.

Backstage overview in April 1948.⁹⁸ Spewack has also written ‘So In Love Am I’ next to ‘We Shall Never Be Younger’ in Act One, Scene Five of the May libretto.⁹⁹ However, there are no dated lyric sheets for this song or transcriptions of the lyrics before September 8, 1948.¹⁰⁰ As a result, Geoffrey Block reasons that it was actually one of the last songs to be completed given its late appearance in the scripts.¹⁰¹ However, these earlier allusions indicate that the song was conceived in the very early genesis of the show.¹⁰² Unlike ‘Another Op’nin’ or ‘I Hate Men’, there are no references to ‘So In Love’ as unfinished or as a work in progress.¹⁰³

Drake noted the addition of the ‘So In Love’ reprise in pencil in his rehearsal script.¹⁰⁴ However, there are no details of the added dialogue, which seems uncharacteristic when compared with the other revisions to the script, which have been thoroughly transcribed throughout. This suggests that the song choice was finalised and then the framing dialogue tailored to suit it. Dramaturgically, the mirroring of ‘So in Love’, sung by Lilli in Act One and then reprised by Fred in Act Two, echoes the structural placement of ‘It Was Great Fun’ in both acts. However, whilst ‘It Was Great Fun’, ‘A Woman’s Career’ and ‘We Shall Never Be Younger’ were all arranged as duets, ‘So in Love’ created an additional connection between Fred and Lilli’s characters as a shared solo song. It also removed the repeated emphasis on Fred and Lilli’s past lives and focuses on their current emotional states in the moment of performance, reflecting the development of the rest of the score.

Kiss Me, Kate out of town

Kiss Me Kate had its first complete run-through at the New Amsterdam Roof on 42nd Street on 30 November. With ‘[n]o costumes, no sets, no props or orchestra; only a rehearsal pianist’, the cast were perturbed by the state of the show.¹⁰⁵ George Eells

⁹⁸ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, [not paginated].

⁹⁹ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* scripts: May Libretto, 1-5-21.

¹⁰⁰ The earliest dated lyric sheet is a loose leaf in NYPL HH 21/501: Undated script [1]

¹⁰¹ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 227.

¹⁰² ‘So in Love’ was definitely included in a similar structural position for at least one backer’s audition.

¹⁰³ For example, ‘I Hate Men’ is listed in the song breakdown as ‘Katherine’s song (not completed)’ in the interim script between the May libretto and October 11 draft. NYPL HH 21/501: undated script [1], not paginated.

¹⁰⁴ LC AD 2/2: Rehearsal Script, 2-6-34.

¹⁰⁵ William McBrien, *Cole Porter*, 317.

suggests that Subber hid playwright and director Moss Hart in the audience to listen to the performance, but Hart was not impressed by what he heard.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, Eells recounts that ‘The program concessionaire was so pessimistic that Dorothy Ross and her former husband George, who were the show’s press agents, offered to buy the program man’s share. He sold it to them, as well as the right to produce the programs.’¹⁰⁷ Indeed, George Ross was so discouraged that he sold half of his share to the show’s stage manager Ben Francis.¹⁰⁸ The difficulties of the rehearsal process and last minute changes to the show did not improve expectations. There seems to have been a prevailing pessimism that the content of the show was not strong enough to make a commercial hit. For example, Patricia Morison remembers being told to insist that ‘I Hate Men’ be cut from the score: ‘All the others thought the song would make me look bad.’¹⁰⁹

However, not everyone shared this pessimistic outlook. Indeed, Wilson wrote effusively to Porter’s wife Linda before the Philadelphia opening:

Darling Linda,

Who could have forseen [sic] on the Lido in 1925 a Cole Porter *Kiss Me Kate* [sic] staged by John C. Wilson?! Nor Princess Jane not even Elsa [Maxwell] and certainly not John C. Wilson.

I am so proud and happy about it all and Cole aside from simply being a genius is the sweetest kindest person in show business.

Good luck tonight – and even if some of the lights don’t work – they will by Saturday!¹¹⁰

Cole and Linda installed themselves in the Hotel Barclay in preparation to attend the first Philadelphia performance. Their suites, prepared by Porter’s assistant Paul, were furnished with ‘a dozen boxes of Kleenex [...], a piano and such favourite paintings as a Dali, a Grandma Moses and a Picasso’.¹¹¹ Linda Porter’s health was continually declining but she was determined to attend Porter’s opening night as she had always done before.¹¹²

Kiss Me, Kate premiered at the Shubert Theatre, Philadelphia on December 2 to hugely positive reviews. *Variety*’s out-of-town reviewer suggested that cuts to the show

¹⁰⁶ Eells recounts that Subber stowed Hart in the balcony of the theatre to observe and at the end of the performance, he turned to Subber and said ‘Too bad; you haven’t got it.’ George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 248.

¹⁰⁷ George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 249.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ David Grafton, *Red, Hot & Rich*, 167.

¹¹⁰ YISG CP 49/298: letter from John C. Wilson to Linda Porter [undated].

¹¹¹ George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 249.

¹¹² Ibid.

might be profitable but praised the unity between *The Taming of the Shrew* and backstage as well as the songs: “The dovetailing of the modern story has been so shrewdly done, and the Porter score is so consistently Grade-A that trimming will come hard.”¹¹³ Edwin H. Schloss, a friend of Spewack’s, also praised the first performance, describing the show as ‘brilliantly entertaining, charming and completely beguiling’. He continued:

In an imperfect world, no one has the right to look for perfection in – of all places – a theatrical opening. But after getting off to a somewhat tentative start last night the production fairly rocketed to gay distinction and it’s going to take a thesaurus-full of superlatives to give you a working blueprint of a delightful evening. [...] if you have any breath left add that Bella Spewack has contributed a witty and diverting book to hang the show on. [...] You will find no references to the First Folio, however, in Porter’s lyrics which crackle with that elfin sophistication, highly spiced mockery and stylish nostalgia of which he is a master.¹¹⁴

Here, Schloss draws early attention to lack of Shakespeare in *Kiss Me, Kate* as well as the playful character of Porter’s score, foreshadowing aspects of the critical reception to the original Broadway production. He later amplified his review when he wrote to Bella Spewack on December 8:

I am writing this to you because I dont [sic] know whether Sam is with you or you are living in solitary sin. In either case please thank him for the book which now occupies a prominent place on my “autographed by the author” shelf.

I am not going to bother you with calls because I know you must be very busy these days arranging for the investment of that fortune “Out of Shakespeare by Spewack”.¹¹⁵

The continued ambiguity of the Spewacks’ domestic arrangements has added to the confusion about Sam’s contribution to *Kiss Me, Kate*. However, it is clear from the changes to the script and differences in styles of the sources outlined in these chapters that he had a formative influence on the text and was perceived to steer the later development in a more satisfactory direction.

¹¹³ Waters, ‘Plays Out of Town: *Kiss Me, Kate*’, *Variety*, December 2, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹¹⁴ Edwin H. Schloss: ‘Cole Porter’s *Kiss Me Kate*’ [sic] Opens at Shubert’, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 3, 1948 [CU BSS Clippings].

¹¹⁵ CU BS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1948): letter from Edwin H. Schloss to Bella Spewack, December 2, 1948.

Strikingly, Schloss' review and subsequent acknowledgment of the show's success to Spewack is one of the few instances in which a critic positively highlights the musical's libretto. In compromising the script to accommodate more songs and being forced to take on ideas from Sam, it is hardly surprising that Bella had fought for her authorial credit in the first publicity for *Kiss Me, Kate*. She continued to defend her equal credit decades after the Broadway opening. Her insecurity about her intellectual property may also have developed with wider criticisms of the libretto in the Philadelphia reviews, which were subsequently reiterated after the Broadway opening. For example, Jerry Gaghan wrote in *The Philadelphia Daily News* that 'the show needs speeding in the early sequences and the second set has stretches of sag. These are largely book faults, which Bella Spewack can remedy. Some of her gags and situations also need artificial respiration and they would be better dropped.'¹¹⁶ Maurie Orodenker also commented that: '... whatever comedy creaks in the Spewack lines and situations, the Clark and Diamond combo does more than make up for it with the high hilarity of the 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' number. "Stopping the show cold" is merely lukewarm wordage for their wit here.'¹¹⁷ The latter review specifically suggests that the performers and score compensate for problems with the book, an opinion which has been subsequently perpetuated most notably by Ethan Mordden: 'It's my contention that *Kiss Me, Kate* is a show we love not despite its sloppy realism and irrelevant hunks of Shakespeare but because the score is so good that the rest doesn't matter.'¹¹⁸

In light of the complex but collaborative genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate*, the inevitable compartmentalisation of the elements of the musical in the first reviews hardly helped to ease the underlying tensions between Spewack, Ayers, Subber and Porter. However, the team rallied for Broadway with their show requiring no rewrites or additional material in hopeful anticipation of similarly positive reception by the metropolitan audience. The Broadway opening was trailed in various publications. For example, the *New York Times* reported that the show received 'uncommon huzzahs from Philadelphia' on December 4, and later, on December 30, the day of the Broadway premiere, that ticket sales had reached \$350,000.¹¹⁹ Illustrations were also published introducing Ayers' visual aesthetic

¹¹⁶ Jerry Gaghan, "'Kiss Me, Kate" at the Shubert; Cole Porter's new musical', *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 3, 1984 [CU BSS Clippings].

¹¹⁷ Maurie Orodenker, 'Kiss Me, Kate', *The Billboard*, December 11, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹¹⁸ Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin'*, 257-8.

¹¹⁹ Louis Calta, 'Premiere Tonight of 'Kiss Me, Kate'', *New York Times*, December 30, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

and framing *The Taming of Shrew* as well as the slapstick elements of the show (see Figure 3.2).

Kiss Me, Kate opened on Broadway on December 30, 1949 and received immediate critical acclaim, with reviewers praising multiple elements of the production – song, dance, script, cast, costumes, and direction – throughout. Porter purchased nearly 100 tickets to the opening in order to entertain a plethora of friends and VIPs. Elsa Maxwell described the experience of the evening in her column for the *New York Post*:

It was a thrill for me to hear the songs that I have been raving about for months, having heard them done as by Cole. There is no use talking about the show: every critic obligingly went overboard.¹²⁰

Hobe Morrison from *Variety* specifically illustrated the success of the piece, highlighting each successful element: ‘There’s fine singing, plus captivating personalities and performances, entertaining dancing, and stunning settings and costumes. Even the book, usually the catch in a musical, is interesting and serviceable.’¹²¹

Kiss Me, Kate was widely deemed to offer a complete package of music, comedy, visual spectacle and entertainment - ‘a song and dance version of a venerable comedy’ – that led to comparisons with other successes of the decade.¹²² In his out-of-town review, Jerry Gaghan connected *Kiss Me, Kate* to *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), prefacing continued discussions of its similarities and dissimilarities to other contemporary stage musicals.¹²³ Eminent *New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson responded to this by suggesting that while *Kiss Me, Kate* was thoroughly enjoyable, it would not garner equivalent canonical status: ‘Although the gods are very likely enjoying it [*Kiss Me, Kate*], they are not moving over to make room for it on the celestial reviewing stand.’¹²⁴ Only one New York reviewer, Howard Barnes, writing in *the New York Herald Tribune*, articulately dissented from this connection commenting that:

¹²⁰ Elsa Maxwell, ‘A Party Line’, *New York Post* (Home News), January 6, 1948, 12 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹²¹ ‘Plays on Broadway: Kiss Me, Kate’, *Variety*, January 5, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹²² Howard Barnes, ‘Shakespeare Is Advance To Musical Comedy Rank’, *New York Herald Tribune*, January 16, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹²³ Jerry Gaghan, ‘“Kiss Me, Kate” at the Shubert; Cole Porter’s new musical’, *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 3, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹²⁴ Brooks Atkinson, ‘“From Padua to Gotham” in “Kiss Me, Kate”’, *New York Times*, January 16, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

Any musical as fine as “Kate” inevitably suggests comparison with the wonder show, “Oklahoma!” Actually, they aren’t comparable, being utterly unlike in style, flavour and effect. But as long as there are shows like “Oklahoma!” and “Kate” nothing can quite take the place of the theatre.¹²⁵

Barnes’ response reflected a minority attitude to *Kiss Me, Kate* that separated it from ‘the wonder show’. However, he highlights a crucial nuance of the work’s reception: *Kiss Me, Kate* had immediate impact as a discernible work of theatre, entertaining its audience with a range of song, dance, comedy and aesthetic appeal and standing the musical in good stead for its future on Broadway and around the world.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Howard Barnes, ‘Shakespeare Is Advance To Musical Comedy Rank’, *New York Herald Tribune*, January 16, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

The New York Times.

The New York Times Company.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1948.



Patricia Morison is the lady getting the spanking from Alfred Drake in the musical, "Kiss Me, Kate," which contains memories of "The Taming of the Shrew." At the Century, Thursday.



Figure 3.2: Illustrations promoting *Kiss Me, Kate* on December 26, 1948¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Eldon Kelley, 'Cole Porter and Shakespeare Collaborate on Kiss Me, Kate', *New York Herald Tribune*, December 26, 1948; Don Freeman, *New York Times*, (December 26, 1948) [YISG Scrapbook].

CHAPTER FOUR:

AUDIENCES, DIRECTORS, AND OPERA HOUSES:

REFASHIONING *KISS ME, KATE* FOR THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE AND SCREEN

Kiss Me, Kate ran for nearly three years on Broadway, transferring from the New Century Theatre to the Shubert after 19 months. The geographical change of this replacement venue signifies the success this production achieved, relocating *Kiss Me, Kate* from West 58th Street, out of the way of most of the major theatres in Manhattan, to West 44th Street, just moments from Times Square. As a result of its new commercial appeal, the producers and authors marketed their property relentlessly in order to open *Kiss Me, Kate* in as many places as was financially viable.¹ In the decade following the Broadway opening, the musical was taken on national tour twice (1950 and 1955), was revived by the New York City Center Light Opera Company (1956) and opened in numerous international locations including London (1951), at the Vienna Volksoper (1956) and in Warsaw (1957).² (It was the first American musical licensed for performance in Communist Poland.³) In the following decade, *Kiss Me, Kate* was adapted for film and television four times and has been subsequently recorded by various casts and groups of performers. Unlike Porter's *Anything Goes* (1934) or Hammerstein and Kern's *Show Boat* (1927), *Kiss Me, Kate* has not been presented or interpreted as a multi-text musical with several distinct stage iterations as well as on-screen identities. However, the Tams-

¹ Sam and Bella Spewack continued to promote *Kiss Me, Kate* for revival for the remainder of their professional lives. The Spewack papers contain numerous letters to international agents and to the other owners of *Kiss Me, Kate* attempting to create new productions in Europe, to tie in promotions of the original cast album, the published script, film and television promotions in order to have *Kiss Me, Kate* on stage somewhere as much as possible.

² *Kiss Me, Kate* also opened in other countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark in 1952 and Switzerland in 1956. This list expanded significantly in the 1960s.

³ According to the *New York Times*, *Kiss Me, Kate* formed one of a considerable number of Western works that had been released in Poland in 1957, demonstrating a social backlash against the Soviet Union. Other examples include the appearance of novels by Ernest Hemingway and Raymond Chandler in translation and productions of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. However, the *New York Times* described *Kiss Me, Kate* as 'the most controversial', continuing: 'Critics denounced what they described as a "sham" production and said it was overambitious for the Polish theatre to try this difficult new form. But at the box office "Kiss Me Kate" [sic] is a hit and the manager is seeking the authors' permission to run beyond the originally agreed 200 performances.' Sydney Gruson, 'SOVIET ARTS FAIL TO ATTRACT POLES', *New York Times*, December 9, 1957, accessed June 4, 2017.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/114275970?accountid=13828>.

Witmark musical library offers licensing for three versions of *Kiss Me, Kate*: the original (1948), the revised version (1999) and, most recently, the critical edition (2015).

This chapter maps how *Kiss Me, Kate* has been adapted to, and re-imagined for, different performance environments in order to show the fluid status of the work. It includes details of musical changes, edits to the script and lyrics, and casting and venue choices, as well as production details such as costume and staging. It begins by looking at the problems of collaboration between the American creative team and British producer Jack Hylton during the original London production and considers the impact of casting and production disagreements on the viability of a transfer production. The following section examines key trends in the adaptation of *Kiss Me, Kate* for the screen, looking at the representation of the theatre and the use of direction and technology as means to capture the spectacle of the musical in different ways. Subsequently, it considers how productions of *Kiss Me, Kate* in the opera house and publicly funded theatre were able to experiment with aspects of the text as a partial result of different resources from conventional commercial performances. Finally, it reflects on the impact of the recent critical edition on our understanding of *Kiss Me, Kate* as a historic stage musical.

A troubled collaboration: *Kiss Me, Kate* in London (1951)

After the Broadway production was established, Wilson, Ayers and Subber turned their attention to the touring company and to the London transfer.⁴ In terms of the touring production, no changes were made to the libretto as the framing context of *The Taming of the Shrew* provided a palatable context for the bawdiest sections of the script.⁵ Wilson and Ayers slightly modified the staging and set for the touring company in order to make the production more easily reproducible in different venues.⁶ However, Porter's lyrics underwent some revision in order to sanitise direct allusions to sex under more stringent state censorship rules. In comparison to film and print media, theatre censorship in the United States was never consistently legislated on a federal level. In New York, members of the theatrical community in the late 1920s and in the 1930s persistently resisted the implementation of stringent legislation, although in 1927, the

⁴ John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 179-180.

⁵ NYPL BK/6: *Kiss Me, Kate* stage manager's script [Road Company].

⁶ John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 179.

Wales Padlock Law gave New York authorities the right to remove a theatre's licence if 'obscene, immoral or impure drama' was staged.⁷ In general, legislative change was directed by a focus on political subversion in theatre (e.g. promoting socialism or undermining foreign policy) or maintaining 'decent' values (e.g. suppressing the depiction of homosexuality or female sexual liberation on stage).⁸ However, different regulations were put in place in other state areas. For example, in Boston, censorship regulations also restricted the performance of texts that 'questioned the authority of traditional religion'.⁹

Although there is no extant correspondence requesting any changes to *Kiss Me, Kate* with regards to censorship regulations in different locations, Porter makes passing reference to the protocols in a cut lyric in 'Finale Act One'; 'In Boston that's a censored word!' was replaced with 'Oh! Katie! That's a naughty word'.¹⁰ Furthermore, there is a later example of correspondence from the Boston mayoral office regarding Porter's following project *Out of This World* (1950). Among the details in this letter, the censor's office requests that the production eliminate '[all] irreverent uses of the word "God"' and remove a character 'blessing himself after he shoots Juno'.¹¹ In this example, it is clear how irreverent humour underwent similar scrutiny to risqué content in Boston. As such, producers and authors of stage musicals had to consider alternative versions of their texts, which met the most extreme local regulations. This is perhaps most obviously demonstrated through the example of the state of Oklahoma where anti-miscegenation legislation did not simply prohibit the marriage of African-American citizens with white Americans as was the case in many states but prevented the marriage of anyone of African descent to anyone not of African descent.

In this context, several musical numbers in *Kiss Me, Kate* required some revision to meet local approval – 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)' and 'Too Darn Hot' were the most substantially changed. In the latter case, each lyric that implicitly or directly

⁷ John H. Houchin, *Censorship of the American theatre in the twentieth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103.

⁸ Houchin notes in his monograph on censorship that most actions of indecency were made on the basis of improper representations of women. *Ibid.*, 122.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ LC CP 11/2: [Folder of lyrics] 'Finale Act One', 2; Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 316

¹¹ YISG CP 49/298: letter from Beatrice J. Whelton, censor, City of Boston, Office of the Mayor to Michael Kavanaugh, November 29, 1950.

referenced orgasming or erectile dysfunction was replaced with new text about listening to jazz and playing sport:

And blow my top
With my baby tonight,

Break every rule
With my baby tonight,

I'd like to fool
With my baby tonight,
Break every rule
With my baby tonight,
But pillow, you'll be my baby
tonight,
'Cause it's too darn hot.

Original Broadway Production

And play bebop
For my baby tonight,

Get on the beam
With my baby tonight,

I'd like to *team*
With my baby tonight,
Get on the beam
With my baby tonight,
But *I'll only dream of* my baby
tonight,
Cause it's too darn hot.

***Kiss Me, Kate* Road
Company¹²**

Whilst they did not form substantive rewrites to the musical, these changes affected the colour of *Kiss Me, Kate* and its irreverent sub-commentary on relationships and in particular on the role of sex in relationships. This meant that some of the saucy playfulness of the original Broadway production was reduced as *Kiss Me, Kate* reached the wider American audience. Other seemingly subtle changes were made to the lyrics for radio broadcast. For example, the lyric 'Of course I'm aw'fully glad that mother had to marry father' in 'I Hate Men' was amended to 'Of course I'm aw'fully glad that mother deigned to marry father'.¹³ Similarly, the lyric 'Well at least till you dig my grave' in 'Why Can't You Behave?' was changed to "Cause you're all in the world I crave."¹⁴ Whilst these might seem like superficial amendments that would only momentarily register during performance, each of these examples show how accent points in Porter's lyrics (that poke fun at sex, at marriage, about a woman being dissatisfied with her partner) were

¹² This transcription is based on Porter's handwritten annotations over the vocal line on a copyist score labelled 'Road Co.' in Porter's papers in the Library of Congress. LC CP 9/6: 'Too Darn Hot' annotated vocal score (national tour), 2-3.

¹³ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 299; LC CP 11/4: [Folder of lyrics] 'I Hate Men' typed lyric sheet (for broadcast and publication), 1.

¹⁴ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 278; LC CP 11/4: [Folder of lyrics] 'Why Can't You Behave?' typed lyric sheet (for broadcast and publication).

sanitised. This subtly changes the character of the show where cheeky barbs were replaced with tamer content.

As *Kiss Me, Kate* continued to delight American audiences into 1950, theatre producer Jack Hylton flew to America and negotiated the exclusive British stage rights.¹⁵ Hylton established himself in the 1920s as a band leader, recording artist and savvy businessman. He was an early advocate of the Decca record label, turning down the option to sign with the established HMV in the early 1930s. At the outbreak of the Second World War, his band dissolved when many of the players were called up to serve. However, Hylton built a second career as a manager and producer in British theatre. Before securing rights to *Kiss Me, Kate*, Hylton had previously produced a successful revival of *Irene* (1919) and the London transfer production of *High Button Shoes* (1947) and was therefore a reliable person to trust the British version of *Kiss Me, Kate* with. His production opened at the London Coliseum with a try-out run in Oxford in February 1951.¹⁶ However, Hylton experienced continued frustration whilst working with the various members of the creative team as disagreements about royalties, partnerships, and the longevity of the Broadway production renewed tensions between Bella Spewack, Wilson, Ayers and Subber.¹⁷ The producers (Ayers and Subber) agreed to continue in their role in partnership with Hylton, but their contract also stipulated that they should provide a director to oversee the production.¹⁸ Hylton initially hoped that the producers

¹⁵ Hylton built his profile across the West End and has been credited with discovering numerous icons including Audrey Hepburn and Shirley Bassey. A basic timeline of Hylton's life is available as part of the web resources for his papers at Lancaster University. The London transfer of *High Button Shoes* included the young Alma Cogan and Audrey Hepburn in the chorus and went on a successful national tour. Hylton continued to produce other Broadway transfers including *Call Me Madam* (1952) and *Paint Your Wagon* (1952). Pete Faint, *Jack Hylton*, (S.I: Lulu.com, 2014), Kindle edition; Lancaster University, *About Jack Hylton* [online], accessed November 6, 2016.

<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/library/resources/special-collections/archives/jack-hylton-archive/about-jack-hylton/>.

¹⁶ The Oxford try-outs received considerable press attention when Princess Margaret took a group of guests from Blenheim Palace to see an early performance. She went to see the production a further three times after it had opened in London.

¹⁷ Selma Tamber, secretary to Ayers and Subber's production company (The Salem Company), labelled Hylton 'the Inspector General' in correspondence to Bella Spewack in August 1951. It is clear that Hylton felt that the American producers withheld information from him and that Sam and Bella Spewack, conversely, felt that Hylton showed no interest in collaborating with anyone. CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1951): Letter from Selma Tamber to Bella Spewack, August 6, 1951.

¹⁸ In this memorandum, Spewack outlines proposed casting changes to the Broadway, touring and proposed London cast before alluding to a contractual disagreement between Wilson, Ayers and Subber. The rest of the document outlines potential concepts for a third collaboration with

would secure Wilson and persuade him to oversee the London production in order to replicate the success of the Broadway and American touring productions. However, this preference was overruled as Ayers and Subber were not willing to offer Wilson a fee equivalent to his earnings in America (a 2% royalty); Wilson deemed this an unreasonable request.¹⁹

It is likely that the producers saw an opportunity to reduce costs and increase profits at a time when the Broadway production was beginning to run at a loss. Bella Spewack noted, in June 1950, that Subber was keen for Sam Spewack to direct *Kiss Me, Kate* in London. However, she also 'feared' that Ayers hoped to take charge of the new production.²⁰ She recalled that Subber emphatically rejected the suggestion that Ayers direct the production: 'Saint assured me that it [Ayers as director] would not [happen], and if so, only "over his dead body [...]" and reiterated his promise [...] that Pat Morrison [sic] would play the London Co.'²¹ It was during this period of discontent that Ayers and Subber dissolved their working partnership.²²

Porter. CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me Kate* Correspondence (1950): memorandum for Edward E. Colton (written by Bella Spewack), 1.

¹⁹ Wilson describes the situation more fully in his autobiography: 'I had neglected to insert in my original [Broadway] contract that my fee for any London engagement would automatically be equivalent to my New York percentage. Lem Ayers took advantage of this and insisted that as it was my third job on *Kate*, I should settle for half of my previous royalty. I must say that Jack Hylton was for me all the way, but Lem was firm and I was firmer, and in consequence, the London version was directed by Sam Spewack, who had the courtesy and good manners to have my original production acknowledged in the playbill.' John C. Wilson, *Noel, Tallulah, Cole and Me*, 180.

²⁰ Sam Spewack's mother was ill and Bella was also concerned that he would reject the offer to direct in order to be free to look after her. CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1950): memorandum for Edward E. Colton (written by Bella Spewack), 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

²² Little is known about the details of their disagreements, which also evolved during the development of Porter's next show *Out of This World* (1950). Subber and Ayers were named as co-producers on the show and Ayers also designed the sets for the production overseen by de Mille and choreographed by Holm; it is clear that for most of the production team, *Kiss Me, Kate* had not limited their future professional relationships. It seems most probable that Ayers, who was diagnosed with leukaemia after *Kiss Me, Kate* opened, was forced to reduce his working commitments. Meanwhile, Subber wanted to look for further opportunities to produce new shows. However, Ayers continued to design sets for *Out of this World* and then *My Darlin' Aida* (1952), the film musical *A Star is Born* (1954) and the Broadway production of *The Pajama Game* (1954) before his death. Orville Kurth Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960*, 132. Gerald Bordman and Thomas S. Hischak. "Ayers, Lemuel" in *The Oxford Companion to American Theatre* (Oxford University Press, 2004), accessed June 20, 2017. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195169867.001.0001/acref-9780195169867-e-0186>.

Following some negotiation, Sam Spewack agreed to direct *Kiss Me, Kate* in London, eventually signing contracts with Hylton in December 1950.²³ The producers also secured Patricia Morison to lead the London cast with rising star Julie Wilson as Lois.²⁴ Julie Wilson had played Lois in the national tour production and briefly on Broadway before opening in the London production.²⁵ They were joined by Bill Johnson (Petruchio), a Baltimore-born American actor who had previously starred in a production of the Spewacks' *Boy Meets Girl* and Hylton's hit London production of *Annie Get Your Gun* in 1947. In contrast to the out-of-town opening, the import of Wilson and Morison as glamorous American stars of a hit Broadway show dominated the post-opening publicity for *Kiss Me, Kate* and Wilson continued to build her career in London after the production closed. Morison's image became a substantial marketing point for the show in contrast with the overall reticence when she was cast in the original Broadway production.²⁶

Rather like the American national tour, the initial script preparations for the British production were subject to the approval of the Lord Chamberlain's office. All British stage presentations were subject to censorship and were submitted for approval before they could be performed.²⁷ This limited references and onstage depictions of themes including extra-marital relationships, homosexuality and suicide as well as onstage promiscuity and swearing. However, by the 1950s, these rules were more liberally enforced on comedic works where they avoided the glamorisation of immoral conduct.²⁸ In the first instance, Hylton submitted an unedited version of the Broadway script after Sam had signed to direct. The corresponding reader's report in the Lord Chamberlain's papers offers no recommended changes, closing with: 'This is a very gay affair, full of cracks and guyed Shakespeare. If Mr. Porter's music is up to standard, it should be as

²³ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1950): letter from The Salem Company [signed by Ayers] to Sam Spewack, December 11, 1950, 1-3.

²⁴ In the letter detailing Sam Spewack's contractual commitments, they name Australian actress Joy Nichols as the approved casting for Bianca. CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1950): letter from The Salem Company [signed by Ayers] to Sam Spewack, December 11, 1950, 3.

²⁵ Wilson was part of the original Los Angeles cast alongside Keith Andes (Fred), Anne Jeffreys (Lilli) and Marc Platt (Bill).

²⁶ There are numerous clippings in the V&A archives and the Cole Porter scrapbooks at Yale University. VA *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951) Press Clippings; YISG CP *Kiss Me, Kate* Scrapbooks.

²⁷ Dominic Shellard, Steve Nicholson, and Miriam Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets: British stage censorship and readers' reports from 1824 to 1968* (London: British Library, 2004), 1-2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

much of a winner over here [deletion] as it has been in the United States.’²⁹ Interestingly, in comparison to the US, there was nothing in the content of *Kiss Me, Kate* that was deemed inappropriate for British audiences.³⁰

After the report was released and the London rehearsals had begun, Hylton submitted specific changes, which are outlined in a five-page insert at the back of the script in the Lord Chamberlain’s collection.³¹ The amendments make minor adjustments to the depiction of Harrison Howell’s wartime career. Instead of having his own park bench, Howell boasts to Lois: ‘I’m the only statesmen who served through the war without writing his memoirs. Of course, I was a little handicapped – they never did tell me what was going on.’³² Hylton also submitted some minor modifications to the lyrics for ‘Where Is The Life That Late I Led?’, ‘Bianca’ and ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’.³³ These changes were written by Porter and sent to Hylton via Hanya Holm who was contracted to adapt her choreography for the West End production.³⁴ These amendments were largely functional, making American references suitable for British audiences. For example, Porter reviewed the opening four lines of ‘Where Is the Life That Late I Led’ to remove ‘puberty’ and the responding rhyming couplet ‘Shubert-y’ to read:

When at first aware of masculinity,
I began to finger feminine curls,
I became the toast of my vicinity,
For I have always had a multitude of girls...³⁵

Whilst it would be easy to draw great significance from this change in the context of censoring the sexualised content, Porter’s replacement section has no more innocence than the original lyric.³⁶ It is likely that it was necessary to replace the name of the

²⁹ BL LCP *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): Reader’s report reviewing Hylton’s application to stage *Kiss Me, Kate*, December 1, 1950.

³⁰ There is no extant correspondence to suggest that the original Broadway team were directed to make the changes they did for the Road Company tour. However, it seems likely that they would have been able to estimate what would and would not be tolerated under local censorship guidelines.

³¹ BL LCP *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): letter from Jack Hylton to the Comptroller, Lord Chamberlain’s Office, February 16, 1951; BL LCS *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): substitute text for *Kiss Me, Kate* [loose insert].

³² BL LCS *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): substitute text for *Kiss Me, Kate*, 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁶ As another practical example, in ‘Bianca’, Porter substituted ‘I would gladly give up coffee / For Sanka’, which references an instant brand of decaffeinated coffee that was not sold in Britain for a

Shubert brothers, which would be unfamiliar to a London audience, with something new. However, as with the American tour version, Porter revised 'Always True To You' more significantly by providing three substitute sections in the first, second and fourth refrains, slightly repositioning Lois's position as the soubrette.³⁷

Overall, the producers endeavoured to replicate the original Broadway production as far as possible with minimal changes to the script, score, choreography and sets. This is also evidenced by the original photos of the London production, which almost identically match many of the shots taken on Broadway.³⁸ The Lord Chamberlain's Office enforced only one additional change to the script during the run: to omit 'Man cannot live by bread alone' said in an exchange between the gun men in Act Two, Scene Four.³⁹ The change was prompted by a letter of complaint that suggested that the context of the line could be interpreted blasphemously.⁴⁰ The request was upheld and the offending line was substituted with 'All is not gold that glitters'.⁴¹ As a result, *Kiss Me, Kate* was presented to West End audiences as close to the Broadway version as was possible in the circumstances. Unlike the American tour production, the overall tone of the text was left almost entirely unchanged.

The appeal of the American actors and the hype surrounding *Kiss Me, Kate's* surprise success on Broadway meant that the London production was hotly anticipated. It received widely positive reviews in try-outs, with *The Daily Telegraph* highlighting the attendance of Princess Margaret as additional positive endorsement.⁴² *The Daily Mirror* also reported that eager audience members had queued at the Coliseum for up to 22 hours in order to purchase tickets.⁴³ This anticipation became a focus point of several of

repetition of 'I would swim from here / To far Casablanca.' BL LCS *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): substitute text for *Kiss Me, Kate*, 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁸ For example, a page spread in society magazine *Queen* includes several photos including of Bianca and her three suitors that is identical to Darby's photo of the original Broadway production. '*Kiss Me, Kate*', *Queen*, April 11, 1951. [VA Collection].

³⁹ BL LCS *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): Bound Script, 2-4-19/98.

⁴⁰ 'I believe there are still many people in this country sufficiently Christian to be offended by a "joke" like this. Personally, I feel very strongly about it, and should be most grateful if steps could be taken to have these quite unnecessary words censored forthwith.' BL LCP *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): letter from Mrs M. Hanaghan to the Lord Chamberlain, March 1951.

⁴¹ BL LCP *Kiss Me, Kate* (1951): Letter from (Sgd.) N.W. Gwatkin to Mr. Hartley, March 22, 1951.

⁴² '*The Shrew* Musicalised', *Daily Telegraph*, March 8, 1951 [VA Collection].

⁴³ Daily Mail Reporter, 'Queuers wait for 22 hours', *Daily Mail*, March 8, 1951 [VA Collection].

the West End reviews.⁴⁴ For example, *The Times*' reviewer prefaced their column on *Kiss Me, Kate* by noting that:

It has been for some time in the public minds that this renowned American musical was bound to succeed in London – a tribute, it is pleasant to think, to the potency of travellers' tales rather than to skilful advertising.

However, memory recalls no audience more murmuringly confident before the curtain rose of being about to enjoy itself, and the boxes on either side of the house toasting each other and the occasion in champagne lent an unwonted sparkle to the impression.⁴⁵

As such, the public perception of *Kiss Me, Kate* became directly correlated with the anticipation of a diverting night of entertainment, following its success across America. Building on similar framing remarks, London reviewers highlighted Morison's performance as central to the production's success: 'Miss Morison sings excellently, and is a shapely and harmonious creature, wholly worthy of the praises lavished on her in America...'⁴⁶ There was also universal praise for the costume design and Holm's choreography: 'The contribution by Hanya Holm, famous American modern dance creator to "Kiss Me, Kate" is considerable. Her dances are the decorative cement that binds the show together [...].'⁴⁷ However, there were also some criticisms of the humour in the backstage script.⁴⁸

Despite this largely positive response, by June 1951, Ayers and Subber were concerned that the London production was not maintaining its initial lustre.⁴⁹ In July, Bella Spewack's attorney Colton confirmed that 'business in Great Britain has dropped considerably.'⁵⁰ Simultaneously (and then, as a result), transatlantic relationships

⁴⁴ 'Coliseum: *Kiss Me, Kate*', *The Times*, March 9, 1951 [VA Collection]; 'The Arts and Entertainment: Guying the Bard', *The New Statesman and Nation*, March 17, 1951 [VA Collection].

⁴⁵ 'Coliseum: *Kiss Me, Kate*', *The Times*, March 9, 1951 [VA Collection].

⁴⁶ Harold Hobson, 'The Theatre: Derivations', *The Sunday Times*, March 11, 1951. See also: 'A Kiss Me Cry' *The Daily Mail*, March 9, 1951; Cecil Wilson, 'Yes, It Glows Of Certain Success', *The Daily Mail*, March 9, 1951 [All in VA Collection].

⁴⁷ Peter Williams, 'Something new in dance routine', *The Daily Mail*, March 9, 1951 [VA Collection].

⁴⁸ 'Coliseum: *Kiss Me, Kate*', *The Times*, March 9, 1951 [VA Collection]. Harold Hobson, 'The Theatre: Derivations', *The Sunday Times*, March 11, 1951 [VA Collection].

⁴⁹ Selma Tamber wrote to Bella Spewack on June 21, 1951 to discuss the closure of the Broadway production and closed her letter with 'KATE seems to have slipped quite a bit in London. Mr Hylton is here [in New York] but neither Lem or I have seen him.' CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1951): letter from Selma Tamber to Bella Spewack, June 21, 1951, 2.

⁵⁰ CU BSS 21 *Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Edward E. Colton to Bella Spewack, July 19, 1951, 3.

between the Spewacks, Hylton, Ayers and Subber grew less harmonious. In May 1951, Bella Spewack discovered an advert for a Columbia recording of the London cast for which she, Sam and Hylton received no royalty. She felt that Ayers and Subber had monopolised the property, only '[asking] us to participate in their losses – not their profits'.⁵¹ This contributed to the continually strained dialogue amongst the American collaborators. In a later example, Sam and Bella Spewack deliberately blocked a radio adaptation of the London production that Hylton hoped to organise. Hylton requested permission to organise a 90-minute version of *Kiss Me, Kate* for the BBC in August 1951, which the Spewacks' attorney urged Bella to grant in order to bolster ticket sales.⁵² However, she and Sam flew into London from Europe to stop the recording from taking place, with one newspaper article quoting them as saying: 'We will allow no adaptation unless we write it.'⁵³ As such, the Spewacks exerted their rights to restrict independent adaptations of *Kiss Me, Kate*, against the advice they had received, and prevented Hylton from maximising the publicity for his production as audience numbers were falling.

This lack of cohesive vision between the British and American parties continued when Patricia Morison asked to leave the production. Hylton wrote to the Spewacks on October 5, 1951 to say that he had done all he could to persuade Morison to stay but had found potential replacements, including Morison's ultimate successor, Helena Bliss, for them to approve.⁵⁴ Eventually, he persuaded Morison to continue the role until Christmas and organised private coaching for Bliss with Sam Spewack before she joined the production in London.⁵⁵ However, Bella Spewack continued to worry about the

⁵¹ '... It seems to be ethically and since the boys [Ayers and Subber] are co-producers with Hylton, that we have the right to participate in the London records, ... Please examine this thoroly [sic] with an eye to protecting our interests and incidentally, yours. They [Ayers and Subber] ask us to participate in their losses – not their profits. I don't want them to get away with it on these London recordings.' There is little follow-up information about what happened in terms of the Columbia record. However, later correspondence shows that Lemuel Ayers' royalty was one of the last to be cut in the process of reducing the Broadway production outgoings. There were ongoing arguments about the even division of royalty reductions. CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1951): letter from Bella Spewack to Edward E. Colton, May 24, 1951, 1; CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Bella Spewack to Edward E. Colton, June 14, 1951.

⁵² CU BSS 21/1951: letter from Edward E. Colton to Bella Spewack, July 19, 1951, 3; George Campey, 'BBC *Kiss Me Kate* show off', *Evening Standard*, July 19, 1951 [VA Collection].

⁵³ George Campey, 'BBC *Kiss Me Kate* show off', *Evening Standard*, July 19, 1951 [VA Collection].

⁵⁴ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Jack Hylton to Bella and Sam Spewack, October 4, 1951.

⁵⁵ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): Letter from Bella Spewack to Jack Hylton, October 17, 1951.

viability of British replacements for the American cast members and wrote to Hylton to request additional rehearsals to situate Bliss in the production:

It's therefore my wish – and Lem and Saint and Cole all feel the same way – that it be b- [missing text] if you asked Sam to get over to London about the same time as Miss Bliss gets over [...]

No stage manager, no matter how good, can direct. You know that. So let's pull together, please. There's a property at stake.⁵⁶

Hylton wrote irascibly by return, indicating his frustration at being dictated to:

Regarding Sam coming across to put her [Bliss] in the show, I do not think this is really necessary. Helena Bliss will be here and able to see Pat's performance for some considerable time. ... Johnson is giving a splendid performance and the business we are doing proves that the show is all right and under control.

You must forgive me saying, Bella that perhaps unwittingly you give the impression that we are altogether stupid and unintelligent on this side. It seems, therefore, necessary to remind you that I have much more at stake that [sic] you have and am not likely to neglect it. The production is looking absolutely "bang up to the minute" and much better than any "Kate" productions I saw on your side.⁵⁷

Subsequent correspondence shows that Hylton eventually relented and allowed Sam to run rehearsals with Bliss and the new company.⁵⁸ However, although the new casting led to an initial spike in box office receipts, the subsequent cast replacements led to renewed fears that the less-seasoned British performers were not able to manage the material effectively. In January 1952, Ayers and Subber's secretary Selma Tamber wrote to Spewack: 'I do hope [...] you are able to beat Hylton's brains in – I have heard lots of reports on the English company and know that he hasn't done a thing to keep the show the way it should have been, etc. – I agree with you about the billing and program – he

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Jack Hylton to Bella and Sam Spewack, October 22, 1951.

⁵⁸ 'All agree that Same [sic] did a wonderful job with Helena Bliss and with the company. According to his own letters this week, he worked very hard with them and the box office receipts proved his work bore fruit... In his latest letter, he writes that Princess Elizabeth was quoted as saying to Adelaide Hall [playing Hattie] at a charity shindig: - "I see you have a new leading lady in "Kiss Me Kate". What more announcement could one want?' CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Bella Spewack to Cole Porter, December 18, 1951.

could be forgiven anything in [sic] the replacements were good.’⁵⁹ Although Hylton fiercely maintained that he would never let a commercial interest collapse, Spewack and Tamber became certain that he was not interested in the continued success of *Kiss Me, Kate* as time passed.

The London production closed after 501 performances and then went national tour to considerable acclaim.⁶⁰ Hylton partly escalated this reception by trailing ‘return performances’ (e.g. a second fixture in at the Manchester Opera house in 1952) as ‘bowing to popular demand’.⁶¹ It is, perhaps, because of its success on tour that *Kiss Me, Kate* developed a popular reputation with British audiences and subsequently, as staple repertoire of British amateur theatrical companies. The practical challenge of filling the Coliseum, which had nearly 1000 more seats than either Broadway theatre, may partially have contributed to the early box office concerns in London. In contrast to the Broadway opening, Morison’s reputation as the star of a current Broadway hit musical drew initial attention in London but the replacements were neither sufficiently appealing or familiar with the style of work to keep the production running for a considerable period. Yet the initial appeal of the musical, its early publicity, and its (largely) positive reviews positioned *Kiss Me, Kate* as significant work that would certainly be revived in England in the years to come.

Stars and staginess: Adapting *Kiss Me, Kate* for the screen

Kiss Me, Kate’s producers received a range of film offers from a variety of sources before settling contracts with MGM in 1952. The proposed adaptations, the MGM feature film, and subsequent television adaptations each respond to concerns about casting and

⁵⁹ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1952): letter from Selma Tamber (The Salem Company) to Bella Spewack, January 18, 1952.

⁶⁰ The legacy of the success of *Kiss Me, Kate* in London and also on tour was shown in accounts of Julie Wilson’s subsequent projects in which it was cited as a noteworthy success that she was associated with. Wilson went on to succeed Mary Martin in the leading role Nellie Forbush in the London production of *South Pacific*. Examples of this reception include: Harold Hobson, ‘A Delight’, *The Sunday Times*, February 24, 1952, 2; Louis Calta, ‘HARRIS TO DIRECT NEW MILLER PLAY: Confirms Report, Although No Contracts Are Signed -- Julie Wilson Gets London Role’, *New York Times*, September 16, 1952. ‘Julie Wilson Wed to Manager’, November 23, 1954, *New York Times*, November 23, 1954, accessed on November 30, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/112928966?accountid=13828>.

⁶¹ ‘Classified ad 11 -- no title’, *Manchester Guardian*, November 22, 1952, accessed on November 30, 2017, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/479393220?accountid=13828>.

representing ‘the theatre’, which reflect some of the revisions made during the development of the original Broadway production. For example, the earliest film proposals responded to the challenge of encapsulating the nuances of the theatrical environment that form a major framing context for the show. Although there was an established tradition of ‘backstage’ film musicals, the text of *Kiss Me, Kate* brought the backstage storyline into the onstage performance, meaning that *The Taming of the Shrew* could not be straightforwardly filmed as static sequences as was usual on screen. The physical confines of having a single performance space in the theatre helped to accommodate fluid movement between the backstage and onstage scenes. This limitation of sets also facilitated the persistent merging of both narratives as the performance is constantly interrupted by the set changes etc. that add to the theatrical nature of the performance. However, on film, the range of location options (including creating an artificial theatre) presented potential challenges that might disrupt this central impression of being ‘caught up’ in a production. As a result, two producers each proposed options based around recording a live performance of *Kiss Me, Kate* instead of converting the work into a new format. This immediately avoided the potential pitfalls of translating the work on screen.

New York born director and producer Joseph Lerner made his offer to adapt the musical in August 1950. In the correspondence with Sam Spewack, Lerner’s representative hinted at his plans for the musical: ‘In view of the fact that Mr. Lerner proposes to utilize the facilities of your organization, etc., he would like to start to shoot the picture 3 or 4 months before the New York closing.’⁶² Lerner hoped to make use of the original Broadway production in order to create his version of *Kiss Me, Kate*. If he had succeeded, he might have created one of the first documents of an original Broadway production. It is not clear how exactly how Lerner’s interest in making the film ended but his idea lived on in the most protracted bid for the film rights made soon after by producer Sir Alexander Korda. Working along similar lines, Korda proposed to record a live performance of *Kiss Me, Kate* from London but with the original Broadway cast. Both proposals potentially circumnavigated the Spewacks’ concerns about amending their

⁶² CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1950): Letter from Ira Blue to Sam Spewack, August 4, 1950.

original libretto (as had been raised with the BBC radio broadcast in London).⁶³ They also addressed the challenge of representing the innately theatrical aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate* by showing the musical as it might be performed on stage. Both Sam and Bella Spewack actively pursued Korda's film bid. They each travelled prolifically in Europe after the success of *Kiss Me, Kate* on Broadway and in London, maintaining regular personal contact with Korda in order to monitor progress on his idea.⁶⁴ In December 1951, the *New York Times* reported the negotiations, claiming that the film would be made in Technicolor and that Drake might be 'sought to re-create his original lead role'.⁶⁵ However, the idea fell through when Korda was unable to secure sufficient financial backing.

In addition to these proposals, another early possibility included a potential deal with Columbia Pictures in 1951 that centred around securing a star performer to lead the film. Bella Spewack wrote enthusiastically to Ayers and Subber: 'The idea is to make it a vehicle for Rita Hayworth. Sam took her to see *Kate* in New York and she was delighted with the show. The chances are she asked Columbia to buy it for her.'⁶⁶ Spewack attempted to use Hayworth's possible involvement in the film as leverage with Ayers and Subber in order to keep *Kiss Me, Kate* running on Broadway.⁶⁷ She was concerned that closing the production in New York would damage the commercial appeal of the work to film investors. However, Spewack's attorney Edward Colton wrote to warn her that he had little confidence that Hayworth would be considered by Columbia, noting that they were not interested in casting performers who would require dubbing. Indeed, Colton highlighted the studio's concern that 'the type of songs in KISS ME KATE [sic] were of such a nature that they could not have it appear that they were *sung by Rita Hayworth when they were actually* being sung by someone else.'⁶⁸

⁶³ It is not clear from the correspondence about this production whether Korda hoped to use the original Broadway script as it was performed in America or with the minor revisions made during the London production.

⁶⁴ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Ben Schenkman to Bella Spewack, June 22, 1951.

⁶⁵ A.H Weiler, 'BY WAY OF REPORT', *New York Times*, December 9, 1951, accessed May 28, 2016. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/111917937?accountid=9735>.

⁶⁶ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Bella Spewack to "Salem" (Ayers and Subber), July 19, 1951.

⁶⁷ She wrote: 'In order to make a better deal with Columbia, it would be advisable to keep *Kate* running in New York as long as possible. See?' CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Bella Spewack to "Salem" (Ayers and Saint Subber), July 19, 1951.

⁶⁸ Italicised text represents a handwritten insertion by Colton. CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Edward E. Colton to Bella Spewack, July 18, 1951, 3.

Porter echoed Colton's warning, having 'immediately called up' Hayworth to clarify her involvement in this potential project. Hayworth immediately denied approaching any film studio with the idea of starring in *Kiss Me, Kate* as she felt that the role of Lilli/Katherine demanded too much singing.⁶⁹ Porter noted in his letter to Spewack that he was unconcerned about adapting Lilli/Katherine's songs to suit a lower vocal range but that the delivery of these numbers must be convincing: 'I agree with you perfectly that it (the role of Lilli) could be sung in a picture by a mezzo-soprano, or by a contralto. But if the part is to be sung at all, it must be well sung to be effective.'⁷⁰ Despite the casting concerns that shaped the development of the original Broadway production and also the London transfer, it is clear that the quality of the musical performances was deemed a top priority for the film adaptation over a star name. The nature of the score demanded that some of the actors cast would need to be proficient singers as well as performers.

With the challenge of securing capable but well-known performers and translating the theatrical aspect so integral to *Kiss Me, Kate* onto screen, the failure of earlier bids made way for MGM to acquire the film rights. Having released many of the most influential film musicals of all time including *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Meet Me in St Louis* (1944) and *Easter Parade* (1948), MGM had the production experience, directors, musicians, choreographers and a considerable list of stars available to create their adaptation. However, their version of *Kiss Me, Kate* received relatively second-rate investment once they had secured the property. Rather than adding this musical to a list of film adaptations under the supervision of prolific producer Arthur Freed, head of the unit responsible for producing film musicals, the studio assigned it to Jack Cummings with George Sidney to direct. To some extent, Sidney's recent success on two MGM adaptations of stage musicals – *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950) and their remake of *Show Boat* (1951) – made him a logical choice for the film. However, neither carried the equivalent prestige as Freed or studio director Vincente Minnelli.

When Cummings began to organise the casting for *Kiss Me, Kate*, he immediately settled on Kathryn Grayson in the role of Lilli. Grayson was an established MGM star and recording artist, known for her soprano voice. She had recently starred in Sidney's *Show*

⁶⁹ CU BSS E/Curated correspondence from Cole Porter: letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack, August 1, 1951.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Boat and in *Lovely to Look At* (1952),⁷¹ which had been produced by Cummings, and had strong working relationships with both men. However, in contrast to the original Broadway production, Cummings found casting Fred more challenging. MGM favourite Howard Keel auditioned for the role (as did Alfred Drake) early in the casting but reflected that Cummings was very resistant to using him opposite Grayson despite their previous success together working on both *Show Boat* and *Lovely to Look At*:

Kiss Me, Kate was a trauma for me. It really was. I was the last resort on that film[...] They were thinking of Danny Kaye and all sorts of things. They were thinking for a while of getting Olivier over and having somebody sing for him. Or to have him sing himself, you know. The producer on the film, Jack Cummings, said when my name come up said you put him on the film and you take my name off it. Finally, they just couldn't find the right person to do this part so finally the studio forced Jack Cummings, they said: 'Look you use Keel or that's it: nobody else.' So I went in to see Jack about it, and I said: 'Jack, I know I'm not the ideal person for this part.' I said: 'But nobody is. You are looking for an Olivier that can sing like Lanza or a Lanza who can act like Olivier and there isn't anybody.'⁷²

Here Keel characterised the ongoing struggle to match actors with the different skills required to play Fred well. While *Kiss Me, Kate* was undoubtedly developed with archetypes in mind, it was also written with the need for highly-skilled performers able to do justice to the potential entertainment value in this writing.

The vocal talents of Grayson and Keel (as well as their established rapport from previous films) facilitated a rich performance of the music as well as the energetic dynamic of Fred and Lilli's relationship. These abilities, along with a skilled supporting cast, meant that nearly all Porter's songs were retained (see breakdown in Appendix 3) for the film with arrangements by Saul Chaplin and André Previn. In one notable example, they incorporated a contrapuntal section of melody, quoting *Die Fledermaus*, in 'Wunderbar' that spotlights Grayson's vocal training and classical background.⁷³ Yet nearly all the other semi-operatic features of Lilli/Katherine's vocal music were completely eradicated. For example, the film adaption substantially abridges the 'Finale

⁷¹ MGM's adaptation of the Broadway musical *Roberta* (1933), *Lovely to Look At* starred Grayson as Stephanie (previously played by Irene Dunne in an RKO film adaptation (1935)). The film also featured Red Skelton, Ann Miller, Howard Keel,

⁷² Howard Keel [recorded interview] in Sheridan Morley, 'Introduction to *Kiss Me, Kate*', *Kiss Me Kate* [live performance] BBC Radio 2, London, October 5, 1996, 07:47-09:04.

⁷³ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 319.

Act One', removing Katherine's cadenza. Similarly, they removed the musical setting of 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' so that Grayson speaks the adapted lyrics when Porter's song would certainly have suited her better.

In contrast to the majority of post-Broadway activity for *Kiss Me, Kate*, Porter played an active part in the MGM adaptation, attending the filming on set most days.⁷⁴ He was contracted to produce up to three additional songs for the film but was let out of this agreement by permitting MGM to use the song 'From This Moment On' (cut from *Out of This World* (1950)) instead.⁷⁵ The number was inserted into the latter half of the film as the 'eleven o'clock number' displacing 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', which was then transposed to the alley outside the theatre. 'From This Moment On' provided another substantial diegetic dance sequence to *The Taming of the Shrew* scenes, in lieu of 'I Sing of Love' or 'the Rose Dance', which was similar to other set pieces like 'Tom, Dick or Harry' or 'I Hate Men'. However, it also contrasted well with backstage song moments like Fred and Lilli's performance of 'Wunderbar', waltzing in and around their dressing rooms and corridor or the gunmen's delivery of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' after Fred has watched Lilli drive off with Tex.⁷⁶ As such, Sidney, with the assistance of leading choreographer Hermes Pan, reflected some of the complexities of performance in the original Broadway production in the film adaptation by contrasting seemingly naturalistic moments ((ostensibly) spontaneously dancing with abandon around the furniture in 'Wunderbar') with visibly artificial sequences (e.g. hoisting Bianca's suitors on strings to create exceptionally high leaps in 'From This Moment On').

While the main body of music remained unaltered, keeping the structure of the original Broadway musical largely intact, many of Porter's song lyrics came under question as a result of heavily enforced government censorship administered by the Hays Office.⁷⁷ The 'Hays' or Motion Picture Production Code aimed to limit offensive and

⁷⁴ *Cole Porter in Hollywood: Too Darn Hot*, directed by Peter Fitzgerald, (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2003) [Special feature on *Kiss Me Kate*, directed by George Sidney (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2003) [DVD]].

⁷⁵ CPT 4/1: letter from John Wharton to Cole Porter, April 21, 1953.

⁷⁶ Tex was Dorothy Kingsley's re-imagination of Harrison Howell, whose name was presumably inspired by a lyric from 'Always True to You (In My Fashion)' which reads: 'There's an oilman known as "Tex" / Who is keen to give me checks / And his checks, I fear, mean that sex is here to stay!' Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 332.

⁷⁷ As a result of mounting pressure from conservative lobbying groups and the National League of Decency (founded by the Roman Catholic Church in America in 1934), former Postmaster General Will H. Hays introduced the Motion Picture Production Code to restrict the content of films on general distribution in the US. Although the Code was allegedly voluntary, films without 'the Hays

immoral content in films, particularly restricting any sexual content, such as ‘lustful kissing’ or suggestive gestures.⁷⁸ Indeed, a man and woman (even married) could not be shown to share a double bed on screen.⁷⁹ There were also restrictions on language, so that certain expressions like ‘Oh, God’ were prohibited. It is possible that these stipulations potentially limited the earlier appeal of live recordings of the original Broadway production because of the changes necessary to receive national distribution approval. Any filmmaker tackling an adaptation of *Kiss Me, Kate* would have to make some substantive revisions to Porter’s lyrics to remove the most direct references to sex, changing the character of the songs, if not the musical as a whole, in order to achieve approval.

Correspondence between Porter and musical arranger Chaplin offers some insight into the changes made to the song lyrics at MGM, which were submitted for Porter’s approval.⁸⁰ In the following example, Chaplin enclosed two verses of ‘I Hate Men’ that had been revised to remove references to extra-marital affairs:

In the song I HATE MEN, the censors objected to certain lines. We are using therefor: [sic]

“ . . . I Hate Men.
They should be kept like piggies in a pen.
Don’t wed a traveling salesman,
Though a tempting Tom he may be.
For on your wedding night he may be off to far Araby.
While he’s away in Mandalay,
It’s thee who’ll have the baby.
Oh, I Hate Men.

“If Thou shouldst wed a businessman,
Be wary, oh, be wary.
He’ll tell you he’s detained in town on business necessary.
His business is the business with his pretty secretary.

Office Seal of Approval’ could not be exhibited in public cinemas and so film production companies adapted the content of their work considerably to meet the standards of decency prescribed by the Code. In addition to limiting promiscuity and other vulgarity on screen, it also restricted scenes of graphic violence and surgery and monitored the depiction of religion in film. Peter Hay, *MGM: When The Lion Roars* (New York: Turner Publishing, Inc., 1991), 90-1; John Kobal, *Gotta Sing Gotta Dance: a Pictorial History of Film Musicals* (London, New York, Sidney & Toronto: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1970), 182, 197; *British Film Institute Screen Online*. ‘The Hays Code’, accessed June 30, 2017. <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/592022/>.

⁷⁸ Peter Hay, *MGM: When The Lion Roars*, 90.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Chaplin was subsequently jointly nominated for the Academy Award Best Music, Scoring for a Musical Picture for his work with André Previn on *Kiss Me Kate*.

Oh, I Hate Men. . .”

The above lyrics are acceptable to the censors. We will, of course, welcome any suggestions or improvements.⁸¹

Similar adjustments sanitised the most adult lyrics in *Kiss Me, Kate*, inevitably changing the impact of language more substantially than either the national tour or original London production. Whereas the original lyrics employ and incorporate sexualised humour, the film pokes fun at more abstract concepts like marriage and fidelity without referencing sex explicitly.⁸² Instead, sex is very literally represented by Ann Miller’s portrayal of Lois: she takes every opportunity to lift her skirts to her thigh in every scene in which she appears. She also performs a ‘family-friendly’ strip-tease, first throwing off a long coat to reveal a pink leotard and later tossing her scarf, gloves and jewellery at the camera and to her on-screen audience of Fred, Lilli and ‘Cole Porter’ (played by Ron Randell) during an exotic performance of ‘Too Darn Hot’ in the opening scene. The humour of watching Lilli, in a sober, dark two-piece suit, scorn Lois as she tap dances in her skimpy, neon outfit dilutes the sexualised aspect of this performance, also signposting the pseudo-love triangle at the beginning of film.⁸³

As part of their vision for the film of *Kiss Me Kate*, MGM experimented with new technology to add to its visual spectacle. A post-war slump in cinema box office receipts, which directly correlated to increased access to television at home, encouraged production companies to invest in developing new film technologies in order to re-engage audiences with an experience they could not replicate at home.⁸⁴ By 1953,

⁸¹ CPT 4/1: letter from Saul Chaplin to Cole Porter, April 10, 1953

⁸² It should be noted that not all lyrics were changed. For example, the phrase: ‘Any Tom, Harry or Dick / A dicka dick / A dicka dick’ survived censorship on tour, in the London transfer, and in the film adaptation. John M. Clum highlights this as a ‘barely double entendre’ that missed censorship whilst demonstrating how far Porter was prepared to push his allusions, which were generally phrased with purposeful imprecision. Cole Porter, Sam and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 294; John M. Clum, *Something for the Boys*, 72.

⁸³ The screen adaptation by Dorothy Kingsley situates ‘Too Darn Hot’ as an isolated song at the beginning of the film and as a spectacular almost opening number. ‘So in Love’ is performed earlier in the scene. Kingsley also creates a context for the rivalries backstage, which is established much slower in the original libretto.

⁸⁴ Porter particularly pastiches this reliance on technology to compel cinema audiences in the song ‘Stereophonic Sound’ written for *Silk Stockings* (1955). The film adaptation includes some particularly humorous direction which includes slamming a piano lid and swinging off a candelabra, simultaneously acknowledging other film musicals (after Porter’s lyrics) and heightening the effect of the sound editing. *Silk Stockings*, directed by Rouben Mamoulian, (Culver City, CA: Warner Home Video, 2003) [DVD].

approximately forty percent of films were released in colour, reflecting a twenty percent increase since 1952 and a tenfold increase since 1939.⁸⁵ This impetus to innovate and draw audiences was reflected in the development of *Kiss Me Kate*, which was filmed in widescreen, Ansco Color, and stereoscopic 3-D.⁸⁶ Not only was the image expansive with the *Taming of the Shrew* sets designed using perspective ratios to give extra depth in the frames supplementing the 3-D effect, but the multi-layered Ansco film was also chosen for its ability to show vivid colours (see Figure 4.1 below).⁸⁷ As result of this, the cast filmed each scene of the film twice for the 3D print and for widescreen.⁸⁸ Howard Keel recalled that the extreme lighting environment needed to penetrate the layers of the 3D camera filters was so hot that it was impossible to leave the set: 'it would be a drop of like fifty degrees and you'd chill and catch cold or just seize up.'⁸⁹ In addition to this duplicate recording, the filmmakers also devised short sequences exclusively for the 3-D version, including an extended introductory sequence to 'We Open in Venice' using flame and glitter throwers.

Not only did the bold colour palette and experimental effects enrich the spectacle of *Kiss Me, Kate* but they also facilitated a wider variety of cinematographic and

⁸⁵ By the end of the 1960s, film production had converted almost exclusively to colour film production. Sheldon Hall and Stephen Neale, *Epics, Spectacles, and Blockbusters: a Hollywood history* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 140.

⁸⁶ *Kiss Me Kate* was trailed as part of MGM's move to produce the majority of their films in the widescreen aspect ratio. MGM Vice President in charge of production and studio operations Dore Schary announced the 18-month plan to incorporate the widescreen film ratio into general operations in May 1953. Similarly, the trend for 3D-filmmaking was such that 69 pictures were produced using 3D technology. However, around a third of these were only released in a flat-screen format as Cinemascope took over as the popular film format. 'MGM TO PRODUCE WIDE-SCREEN, BUT ADAPTABLE TO ALL RATIOS', *Boxoffice*, May 9, 1953, accessed November 21, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1529360834?accountid=9735>; Drew Casper, *Postwar Hollywood: 1946-1962* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing; 2007), 116.

⁸⁷ Ansco Color was developed during the Second World War as a response to emergent German technology (Agfacolor). By 1950, they had developed a 35mm film format (substituting the 16mm) allowing feature films to be recorded with greater ease. The technology was developed as film absorbed colour more quickly than other technology available meaning that the print colours appeared in their richest form. MGM was the only studio really to embrace Ansco Color, having secured a contract with the company in 1948. They filmed three movie musicals (*Kiss Me Kate*, *Brigadoon* (1954) and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* (1954)) in Ansco. Andrew, Dudley, 'The Postwar Struggle for Color', *Cinema Journal*, 18 (1979), accessed June 28, 2016. doi:10.2307/1225441; Drew Casper, *Postwar Hollywood*, 94.

⁸⁸ Howard Keel described the process in which they would film the 3D version before removing all the cameras, resetting the lights and setting up the widescreen take. Howard Keel [recorded interview] in Sheridan Morley, 'Introduction to *Kiss Me, Kate*', *Kiss Me Kate* [live performance], BBC Radio 2, London, October 5, 1996.

⁸⁹ Howard Keel [recorded interview] in Sheridan Morley, 'Introduction to *Kiss Me, Kate*', *Kiss Me Kate* [live performance] BBC Radio 2, London, October 5, 1996.

directorial decisions, particularly in the *Taming of the Shrew* sections of the film.⁹⁰ For example, Sidney incorporated several ‘to the camera’ shots with actors performing straight down the lens, often in extreme close-up (see Still 2 in Figure 4.1: Ann Miller performs part of ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ straight to camera). Additionally, the film’s lighting and camera design mimics the effects of stage lighting, using spotlights in ‘I Hate Men’ and during the final scene to focus on Grayson, and traces the rise and fall of the dancers to emulate the movement of the eyes, as seen during Bill’s rooftop dance at the end of ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ and in the trio of dances during ‘From This Moment On.’⁹¹

Here Sidney made the most of what resources were made available to him. While Anasco Color brought a different visual palette to the film, it was not the most expensive or exciting technology available to MGM directors at the time. Indeed, he had already exploited many of the other staging and visual effects in earlier films. For example, Sidney incorporated “the audience” as a visible part of *Kiss Me Kate*. Not only are sections of the film shot from the back of the stage looking out into the audience (see shot four in Figure 4.1 below), there is a canned laughter reaction to Fred beating Lilli, and Keel performs ‘Where Is The Life That Late I Led?’ to a live, reactive, theatre. Sidney used similar techniques at several moments in *Scaramouche* (1952) in order to demonstrate the impact of the commedia dell’arte performances and the sword fighting throughout the film.⁹² Whilst his work on *Kiss Me Kate* was sympathetic to the

⁹⁰ Whilst some of these ideas were unique to *Kiss Me, Kate*, Sidney also borrowed ideas from his previous films. For example, Keel (as Petruchio) throws a powder ball of red paint into the camera to close ‘We Open in Venice’ and covers the cut to the opening sequence of ‘The Taming of the Shrew.’ He used the same device to signal the beginning of a theatrical performance in *Scaramouche* (1952). George Morris, ‘George Sidney: A Matter of Taste’, *Film Comment*, 13 (1977), 56-60, accessed December 11, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43451380>; *Kiss Me Kate*, directed by George Sidney [DVD], 38:43.

⁹¹ See Figure 4.1 for illustrations. *Kiss Me, Kate*, directed by George Sidney, [DVD], [*Taming of the Shrew* opening sequence] 37:06; [Miller to camera] 42:48; [Finale Act One] 01:12:50; [‘I Am Ashamed’] 01:47:12.

⁹² *Scaramouche* is adapted from the novel by Rafael Sabatini (1921). Set during at the beginning of the French Revolution, it follows the journey of main character Andre Moreau who wishes to exact revenge on master swordsman the Marquis de la Tour d’Azyr, who kills his pro-Revolutionary friend in a duel. In order to defeat the Marquis, Andre goes into hiding in the theatre troupe of his on and off lover, Lenore, taking on the masked role of Scarmouche (a clown, lazzi-like character from the commedia dell’arte). According to the information on the Turner Classic Movies website, MGM had initially planned to adapt *Scaramouche* as a film musical vehicle for Gene Kelly but leading actor Stewart Granger insisted that the role be included as part of his studio contract. Jeff Stafford, ‘*Scaramouche* (1952)’, *Turner Classic Movies* [online] Accessed June 10, 2017. <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/2053/Scaramouche/articles.html>; Steven P.J. Knapper, ‘Carnival, Comedy and the Commedia’ in Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick, *The Routledge Companion to Commedia dell’Arte* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 103-04.

performance conventions the film attempted to capture, Sidney brought little innovation to the film. The score, central performances and extended dancing sequences give *Kiss Me Kate* charm and appeal but Dorothy Kingsley's changes removed a lot of the dialogue from the backstage scenes in order to accommodate the volume of songs. Although she cleverly addresses creating a new frame for the text as the chorus have no role in the film and 'Another Op'nin, Another Show' was removed, the brevity of the film script and the impact of the Production Code limited the impact of the language that is central to the humour of the original Broadway show.⁹³

Later screen adaptations were faced with similar concerns as the MGM film. As a result, there are considerable overlaps in the filming techniques used. For example, signposting the stage is also a notable feature of two television adaptations of *Kiss Me, Kate*: Hallmark Hall of Fame (1958) and BBC2 (1964). In the Hallmark adaptation, which is a substantially abridged version of the stage musical, the proscenium arch is used to frame sections of the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes, and there are numerous shots from the wings and behind the drops as though from the perspective of someone in the production (see Still 3 in Figure 4.2). There is also canned applause after each *Taming of the Shrew* song, signalling the presence of an audience.

The BBC adaptation similarly emphasises the architectural presence of the theatre and audience as the camera pans around the stage as though in the wings while sections of architecture and props disrupt the view of the performance of 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' onstage. This deliberate representation of 'the theatre' on screen in each of these examples shows the extent to which these production teams recognised its significance to *Kiss Me, Kate*. The use of special effects that draw attention to performance moments in Sidney's *Kiss Me Kate* is mirrored by the choreographed stasis of the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes in both television adaptations. The need to perpetually reinforce the theatrical environment in this pointed way demonstrates its significance to the nature of *Kiss Me, Kate*.

⁹³ The incorporation of an opening audition scene frames the theatre setting effectively but the scene is heavily staged and the set is very deliberately dressed so that it becomes a forced beginning compared to the rest of the film.



Figure 4.1: Stills from *Kiss Me Kate* (1953)



Figure 4.2: Stills from *Kiss Me, Kate* (1958)⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *Kiss Me, Kate*, directed by George Schaefer, (1958, Pleasantville, New York: Video Artists International, Inc., 2010.) DVD, [Fred and Lilli in 'Wunderbar'] 12:01-04; [Fred's look to camera] 13:14-16; ['Backstage preview of 'We Open in Venice'] 20:52-21:09.

More pointedly, these television adaptations also make use of ‘to camera’ shots. In the Hallmark Hall of Fame adaptation, starring Drake and Morison in the lead roles, the director particularly uses ‘Wunderbar’ as an opportunity to draw attention to the actors *putting on a performance*. Drake and Morison attempt to outdo one another as they perform their lyrics to the camera (Still 1 in Figure 4.2). As Morison sings the climatic ‘Life’s divine, dear,’ (bars 98-100), Drake gives a withering look directly to camera (Still 2 in Figure 4.2). They then lose interest in their active performance as the romance of the moment draws their attention to one another. As such, this adaptation signposts both the nature of performance and performer in one short sequence. In the context of the success of the original Broadway production, Morison’s success in London, and the commercial appeal of MGM’s film, it is perhaps unsurprising that the two subsequent television adaptations starred Drake and Morison and Keel and Morison respectively. However, it also indicates how closely linked *Kiss Me, Kate* became with the performers that first starred in it, both on Broadway and in London. Furthermore, the screen iterations of this musical draw attention to the complex layers of entertainment in the show that are based on sex and theatrical performance that have to be reimagined when separated from a live performance context.

***Kiss Me, Kate* in the subsidised theatre**

Many of the elements of *Kiss Me, Kate* – the operetta pastiche, songs written with an opera singer in mind to play Lilli, the use of Shakespeare (understood as part of an elite cultural framework), etc. – resonate with high art values that are typically associated with the opera house. This helped to validate the transfer of *Kiss Me, Kate* from the commercial to the subsidised theatre, a curious but not completely unusual development for a musical comedy. In this new arena of opera houses and public theatre companies, *Kiss Me, Kate* entered a new aesthetic environment with different budgets and artistic priorities. Two productions – at the Vienna Volksoper and by the Sadler’s Wells opera company at the London Coliseum – present interesting examples of the adjustments made to the show in order to accommodate this new performance context and highlight some of the central features of the musical that were affected by this change.

Kiss Me, Kate has been highlighted as the first American musical to be performed at the Vienna Volksoper, premiering on February 14, 1956. The production achieved international recognition and was later described as ‘a sensation’.⁹⁵ *The New York Times* reported: ‘The enthusiastic first-night audience in the Volksoper applauded stamped and cheered [...] The most notable success of the evening was the Austro-German Ballet, with the dances that, since they needed no translation, produced major audience reaction. The costumes were eye-filling.’⁹⁶ As a result of this reception and the subsequent box office success, the production provided the impetus for a new system of programming at the Volksoper. It also promoted *Kiss Me, Kate* to other European institutions, launching a new medium in the opera house and a new style of performance for the text of the show itself.

When *Kiss Me, Kate* was proposed to the directors of the Volksoper, Austria had just received state independence after the occupation by the Allied forces until 1955 and was establishing itself as an independent country during the early Cold War. The decision to incorporate an American musical into the Viennese programme was suggested by resident dramaturg Marcel Prawy as an innovative way to reinvigorate box office sales but also to contribute to the promotion of American culture in post-war Austria.⁹⁷ However, the proposed production was met with significant resistance from the opera house staff – members of the orchestra wrote to management in protest – who felt it was inappropriate to introduce commercial, superficial material to a cultural centre, particularly in light of internal sensitivities to a perceived campaign of pro-American propaganda following Austrian independence.⁹⁸ In an interview much later, Prawy recalled that members of the company saw the introduction of an American musical as an opportunity to rehabilitate foreign popular cultural after the end of allied

⁹⁵ ‘City Opera’s Invigorator’, *New York Times*, March 31, 1959, accessed June 4, 2017.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/114810396?accountid=13828>.

⁹⁶ Special to *The New York Times*. ‘German Version of ‘Kiss Me, Kate’ Gets Cheers at its Opening Night in Vienna.’ *New York Times*, February 15, 1956, accessed June 3, 2017.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/113472347?accountid=13828>.

⁹⁷ Hermann Weissgärber, *You Can’t Copy Tradition: A View on the Eventful History and Bilateral Work of the Austro-American Institute of Education from 1926 – 2016. Volume 1 (1926-1971)*, 2016, [digital edition] no page numbers; Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War: the cultural mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 200.

⁹⁸ Marcel Prawy, ‘Marcel Prawy erzählt wie er das Musical nach Österreich holte.’ *YouTube*, 11:32. Posted by MusicalTheaterDetect, July 1, 2012, accessed June 3, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdW8A13xtqs>.

occupation. However, it seems more likely that this was an excuse to block the introduction of a 'new type' of work to the Volksoper. The house orchestra had little experience of performing any score with pronounced jazz features.

Although Prawy began rights negotiations with the producers in 1954 while other German language negotiations were underway, the Volksoper scheduled only a short preparation period to organise the production in spite of the challenges of designing and rehearsing a completely new type of piece.⁹⁹ He secured Heinz Rosen to direct and choreograph the production on Christmas Day 1955, even though Rosen had never seen or read *Kiss Me, Kate*, with the show opening on the following Valentine's Day.¹⁰⁰ Conscious of the unfamiliarity of some of the musical styles in *Kiss Me, Kate*, the Volksoper recruited three American singers, Brenda Lewis, Olive Moorefield and Hubert Dilworth, to perform Lilli, Lois and Paul, each of whom had to learn the entire show in German during the short, six-week rehearsal period. Moorefield, a young black actress, broke new boundaries as an African-American performer playing a leading role in a European opera house.¹⁰¹ Production conductor Julius Rudel also recounted the ruthless process they carried out to select 'the youngest, most attractive and slimmest' members of the Volksoper chorus who were then drilled in ballet, while the ballet dancers were taught to sing: 'To have singers moving and dancers singing was a revolution in Viennese production.'¹⁰²

In order to accommodate the score, the Volksoper employed extra musicians from Viennese dance and jazz bands to support and encourage the house players to feel the jazz accents of some of the music. The substitutions and musical adjustments required six orchestral rehearsals for the forty-five players in contrast to the usual two as the new musicians equally struggled with the complexities of the written score and rapid time changes.¹⁰³ However, the extra rehearsals also enabled the supplementary musicians to

⁹⁹ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate Correspondence* (1954): letter from Edward E. Colton to Bella Spewack and Robert Montgomery, November 2, 1954.

¹⁰⁰ 'Für "Kiss me, Kate" wurde der Regisseur und Choreograph Heinz Rosen am Weihnachtstag 1955 im Speisesaal des Hotel Regina engagiert; er kannte das Stück nur aus meiner Erzählungen.' – 'Director and choreographer Heinz Rosen was engaged for *Kiss Me, Kate* in the dining room of the Hotel Regina: he only knew the work from my descriptions.' Marcel Prawy, *Marcel Prawy Erzählt aus seinem Leben: ... und seine Vision der Oper des 21. Jahrhunderts; 30 Tage im Leben eines Neunzigjährigen*, (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 2001), 112 [translation from German by the author]

¹⁰¹ She continued to sing Lois in Belgium, France, and Germany after the success of *Kiss Me, Kate* and co-starred with William Warfield in the Volksoper's premiere of *Porgy and Bess* (1965).

¹⁰² Julius Rudel, 'And nobody missed the waltz!', *THEATRE ARTS*, June 1956, 80. [LC CP 11/8]

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

freestyle during the dance sequence in ‘Too Darn Hot’ (‘S’ist Viel Zu Heiss!’). Yet there was a worry that other musical elements would cause controversy. For example, there were concerns that the Austrian audience would be offended by ‘Wunderbar,’ and the pastiche of the Viennese waltz, as well as concern that the gunmen, who were played in the traditional Viennese manner – with unrestricted freedom to ad lib - would ruin the tone of the show.¹⁰⁴

The scale of the orchestra, the mixture of opera singers and musical theatre performers, and a substantial set and costume budget (which allowed them to build a real wall complete with fire escape) created a hybrid version of *Kiss Me, Kate* with contrasting production values to the original Broadway version. Prawy described how the audience appreciation of *Kiss Me, Kate* unexpectedly charmed the entire company and brought the Volksoper to the attention of new media forms: ‘The production of *Kiss Me, Kate* was the first time the Volksoper was covered on the newsreels or by television.’¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the impact of the orchestral performance was highlighted by US Cultural Affairs Officer Sam H. Linch, who praised the effect of the sound and the positive feedback the players subsequently gave: ‘The information has come to me that some of the orchestra members are quoted as saying that this is the first time that they have ever really heard such applause for their efforts. They were impressed, I know, by the graciousness with which you [conductor Julius Rudel] shared this applause.’¹⁰⁶

As such, this production of *Kiss Me, Kate* helped to unify the parties involved in creating each performance whilst demonstrating their skills to an appreciative audience. The core themes of the musical, particularly, its celebration of entertainment, facilitated this positivity and made *Kiss Me, Kate* non-threatening to the opera house audience. Although Prawy and Rudel maintained many of the jazz features and some of the idiomatic Broadway singing techniques in the lead casting, they were able to adapt *Kiss Me, Kate* to incorporate some of their own traditions including the scale of the orchestra and interactive comedic characters. This adjusted *Kiss Me, Kate* from a celebration of American culture (screwball comedies, musical theatre, gold-digger narratives, etc.) to a more universal celebration of entertainment.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 92

¹⁰⁵ ‘Wir hatten bei dieser “Kiss me, Kate” [sic] –Produktion auch zum ersten Mal Wochenschau und Fernsehen in der Volksoper.’ Marcel Prawy, *Marcel Prawy Erzählt...*, 113. [Translation from German by the author.]

¹⁰⁶ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1956): letter from Sam H. Linch to Julius Rudel.

As a result of this, Prawy continued to adapt the Volksoper production across Europe for several years. He revived *Kiss Me, Kate* at the Volksoper in 1957 and organised openings in Brussels, Trieste and in Italy, where he briefly pursued casting Patricia Morison opposite eminent Polish opera singer Jan Kiepura. He wrote to Bella Spewack in late 1957, asking her to have patience with the early European negotiations and celebrating the first revival of the Volksoper production as proof of the work's longevity in the company's programming: 'It is grand that we have really succeeded in making "repertory" out of your wonderful Kate.'¹⁰⁷ Whereas the first opening had provoked anti-American criticism and concern at the falling standards of the house in 1956, *Kiss Me, Kate* became a highlight of the season in 1957. Later, in 1961, Bella Spewack wrote to Cole Porter to celebrate the ripple effect of this success across Europe as Prawy launched *Kiss Me, Kate* in Brussels:

Cole dear:

EMBRASSEZ MOI, KATERINE opens at Le Theatre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels on June 15th. Yes, my love, in French with Belgian opera stars, soloist dancers from the Sadler [sic] Wells Ballet; the little American negress [Olive Moorehead] who sang Bianca in Vienna and Trieste and will now essay French. The conductor is Lambrecht from the Vienna Volksoper and the co-producer our pal, Dr Marcel Prawy.

Your orchestra numbers 55!

Ours will be the first American musical to play the opera house in English or French.

It will mark KATE's thirteenth language!

If it's at all like the Vienne [sic] Volksoper production, it'll be dreamy.¹⁰⁸

Here Spewack uses the Viennese production as a point of measurement for the Belgian *Embrassez Moi, Katherine*. In light of her criticisms of the London (and other) productions, this speaks for her high estimation of the Viennese adaptation. Bella also highlights the scope of the Belgian production: the orchestra more than double the size of the original Broadway band (which had 27 players) and the cast balancing opera stars with ballet dancers to meet the individual needs of the text. In contrast to some of the challenges faced in translating *Kiss Me, Kate* to a new scale on screen, the Volksoper production proved that this musical could exist successfully when performed by a

¹⁰⁷ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1957): letter from Marcel Prawy to Bella Spewack, November 14, 1957.

¹⁰⁸ CU BSS 22/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1961): letter from Bella Spewack to Cole Porter, May 30, 1961.

volume and range of forces that was unviable in a commercial context without alienating a new audience familiar with a different spectrum of aesthetic values.

Such was the success of the Viennese production - referred to as creating 'a sensation' in a later profile of Julius Rudel¹⁰⁹ – that it was perceived to set a new precedent for adopting more commercial repertoire.¹¹⁰ A report in the *New York Times* in February 1957 particularly emphasised the significance of *Kiss Me, Kate* in comparison to later productions of Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun* and Leonard Bernstein's *Wonderful Town* (1953), singling it out in comparison to two equally well-loved texts:

First-night indications were that it [*Annie Get Your Gun*] may rank somewhere between "Kiss Me, Kate," whose great success here two years ago was followed by a year's run and made the transplanted musical a permanent feature in Vienna, and "Wonderful Town," which was put on last autumn and did not take so well.¹¹¹

In this example, it is clear that the programming of *Kiss Me, Kate* led the Volksoper develop their programming to include other musicals as a result of its success but also that the production also established a practical benchmark for programming musical theatre in the opera house. As such, the lasting impact of this production was noted in some of the publicity prefacing the London Sadler's Wells production (1970) over a decade later. British journalist John Gale notes this influence in his introductory article to Sadler's Wells' *Kiss Me, Kate*: 'It seems at the Volksoper in Vienna, 'Kiss Me Kate [sic]' has been the greatest box office attraction in the theatre.'¹¹² A similar narrative is traceable in subsequent reportage about the Volksoper as well. For example, in 1984, Richard Traubner, author of *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, noted that the 1956 production started 'a passion for American musicals' in his article trailing the Volkoper's first visit to America.¹¹³ More recently, Barbara Petsch noted the legacy of *Kiss Me, Kate* in Vienna in her review of the Volksoper's new production, a revival in 2012, in *Die*

¹⁰⁹ 'City Opera's Invigorator: Julius Rudel', *New York Times*, March 31, 1951, accessed November 30, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/114810396?accountid=13828>

¹¹⁰ CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1957): letter from Marcel Prawy to Bella Spewack, November 14, 1957.

¹¹¹ Special to the *New York Times*, 'ANNIE' A HIT IN VIENNA', *New York Times*, February 28, 1957, accessed November 30, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/114248228?accountid=13828>.

¹¹² John Gale, 'How Carmen became Kate', *The Observer*, November 1, 1970, 9, accessed June 13, 2016. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/475991413?accountid=13828>.

¹¹³ Richard Traubner, 'From Vienna, With That Special Operetta Feeling', *New York Times*, April 8, 1984, accessed November 30, 2017.

<https://search.proquest.com/docview/122320481?accountid=13828>

Presse. Petsch particularly highlights the ‘delectable’ enjoyment of reading the comprehensive programme notes, which included a section on Olive Moorefield after her casting as Lois in 1956.¹¹⁴

Prawy’s compelling use of opera house resources (e.g. the in-house players and sizeable chorus) seemingly promoted the concept to other companies. By developing public expectation of a visual and musical spectacle as well as a night of entertainment, the Volksoper production also enabled subsidised companies to continue to experiment with the text to suit their own creative remits. For example, in 2008, Barrie Kosky’s production at the Komische Oper, Berlin, was eclectically designed with cowboys, drag queens, chorus girls in neon flapper dresses and oversized ruffs, as well as ‘the orchestra on stage with pink fezzes, on a podium encircled by a staircase [...]’¹¹⁵ In this production, ‘Viel Zu Heiß’ (‘Too Darn Hot’) was led by Lilli, Bill and Lois (rather than Paul and the dancers). The performers were supported by a large chorus, assembled on barstools, and wearing various designs of face paint reminiscent of the Weimar era, nodding to the aesthetic of Bob Fosse’s film adaptation of Kander and Ebb’s *Cabaret* (1972.)¹¹⁶ Similarly, the Opera North production (2015) – also the first fully-staged production using the Critical Edition – incorporated modern choreography with an unused dance sequence (‘the Harlequin ballet’) documented in the edition, and reframed the beginning of Act Two by repeating most of ‘Finale, Act One’ before ‘Too Darn Hot.’¹¹⁷

As the first (and hugely profitable) American musical comedy to really permeate the subsidised arts, *Kiss Me, Kate* helped to diversify opera house programming, paving

¹¹⁴ Barbara Petsch, ‘Kiss me Kate’ [sic], schwingvoll, witzig’, *Die Presse*, October 28, 2012, accessed November 30, 2017. <https://diepresse.com/home/kultur/news/1306297/Kiss-me-Kate-schwungvoll-witzig?from=suche.intern.portal>

¹¹⁵ Shirley Apthorp, ‘Kiss me, Kate, Komische Oper, Berlin’, *The Financial Times*, June 3, 2008, accessed November 3, 2016. <https://www.ft.com/content/28523cec-3188-11dd-b77c-0000779fd2ac>.

¹¹⁶ Indeed, a section of pair works in the dance sequence directly quotes choreography from ‘Mein Herr’ as members of the chorus, dressed in sequined underwear and thigh high boots, simulate performances reminiscent of a strip club. Each dance group has a reactive audience of actors and dancers responding to the dance as it is performed. Komische Oper, ‘Kiss me Kate (Komische Oper)’. YouTube, 10:02. Posted by macfonts, June 8, 2008, accessed March 10, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQN10cOUDIE>.

¹¹⁷ A recapitulation of the finale also begins Act Two of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s 1987 production of *Kiss Me, Kate*. In this instance, only the final section (bars 60-88) is heard whilst the audience is looking at the stage door, set in preparation for ‘Too Darn Hot’ to begin. RSC TS/2/2/1987/KISI: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], disc 2 [viewed at the Royal Shakespeare Company archive in December 2016]; *Kiss Me, Kate* by Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, [Programme]. Directed by Jo Davies. September-November 2015. Opera North, Grand Theatre, Leeds, 13.

the way for other works such as *Candide*, *My Fair Lady*, *West Side Story* and *Porgy and Bess*.¹¹⁸ Importantly, its initial use, as a popular and adaptable work, was to meet a commercial imperative reconnected opera companies with their contemporary audiences and improved ticket sales.¹¹⁹ However, this success also facilitated less well-received methods of experimentation. Peter Coe's production of *Kiss Me, Kate* (1970) for Sadler's Wells, starring Emile Belcourt and Ann Howard, reimaged the musical in 1940s England. The production, also hosted at the Coliseum, included a wrought iron set but featured costumes that emulated Ayers' original designs. While Coe believed he had initial approval from the Spewacks to revise the script, they became increasingly alarmed by the pervasiveness of the changes made to the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes and entered a lengthy exchange of views with Coe and Stephen Arlen, the Artistic Director of Sadler's Wells, about Coe's revised version of the text. Whilst attention was paid to changing all the locations, character names (Harrison to Lindsay and Bill Calhoun to Bill Calder) and topical comments on American politics, the adaptation made no alterations to jazzier songs like 'Tom, Dick or Harry' or 'Too Darn Hot', which incorporate largely American styles with deliberately idiomatic language (e.g. 'Howdy, Pop!' or 'A G.I./For his cutie-pie'.)¹²⁰ Figure 4.3 shows the first page of a letter including proposed amendments to the script sent on December 9, 1970 for Sam Spewack to approve. At the top of the letter, Sam has written: 'For heaven's sake. Will he [Peter Coe] stop tampering with dialogue! This show has been played!!'¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-colonization and the Cold War*, 201.

¹¹⁹ A similar phenomenon has been seen during recent revivals of *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* and *Sunset Boulevard* at the English National Opera in London and Julie Andrews' directorial debut of *My Fair Lady* at the Sydney Opera House.

¹²⁰ The second line of 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' is changed to omit the American tryout locations 'Phili, Boston, or Baltimo'" and is replaced by 'Glasgow, London or Tokyo' and Freddie and Lilli reminisce about playing the Theatre Royal in York and living over a fish and chip shop before singing 'Wunderbar'. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* scripts: Script A British (Sadler's Wells revival, 1970), ii; I-3-14; I-6-50; II-1-3.

¹²¹ CU BSS *Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1970): letter from Edmund Tracey to Adza Vincent, December 9, 1948, 1.

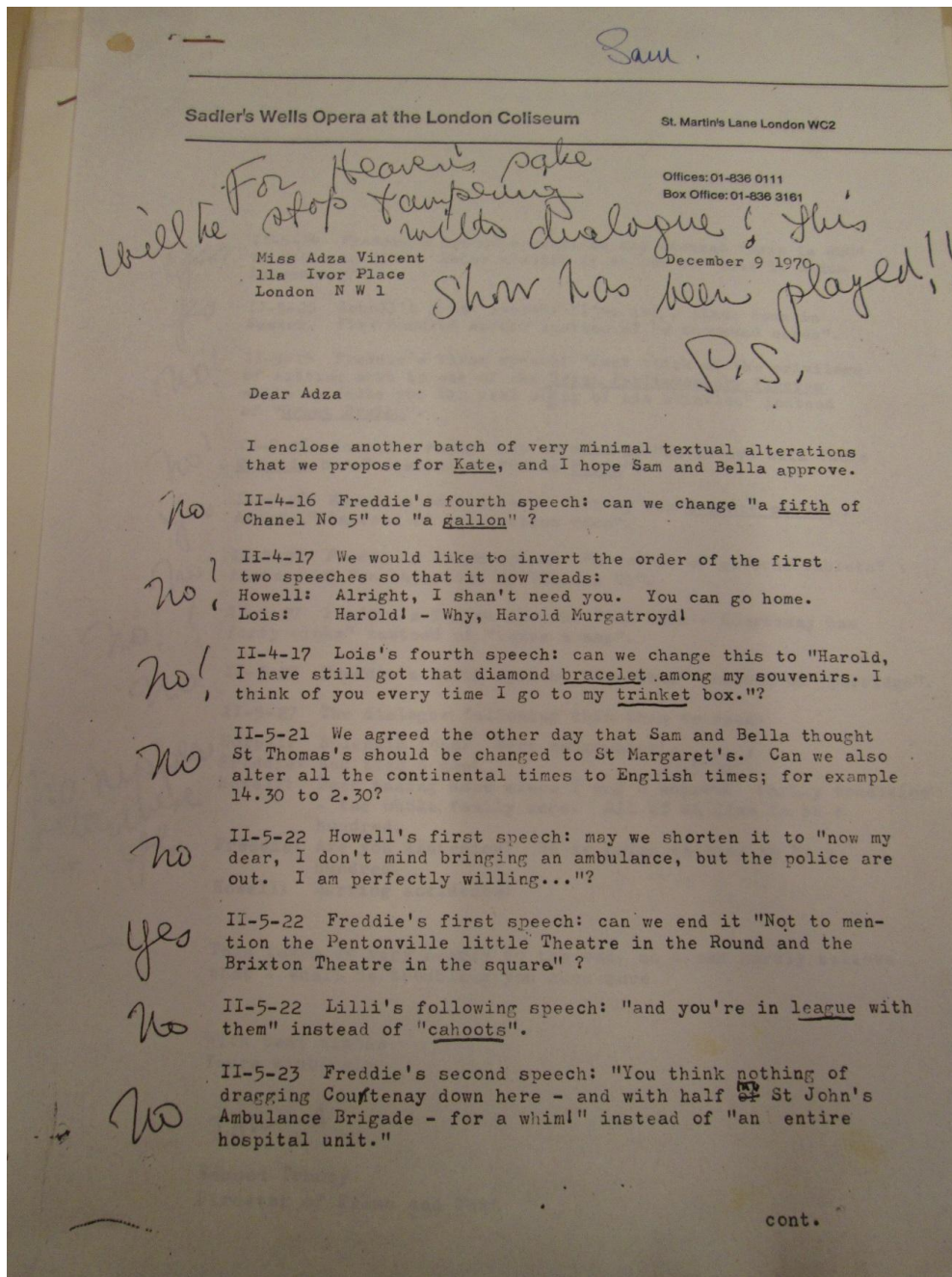


Figure 4.3: Photograph of letter detailing changes to the Sadler's Wells script¹²²

When Stephen Arlen wrote to Wharton about the production in September 1970, he described *Kiss Me, Kate* as 'something of an innovation' for the English opera house: 'The operatic canon included DIE FLEDERMAUS about ten years ago, albeit reluctantly. We pushed it a little further with THE MERRY WIDOW and that too got acceptance; and now

¹²² CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1970): letter from Edmund Tracey to Adza Vincent, December 9, 1948, 1.

we think it is time to take the next, rather longer, step into the great era of the American Musical.¹²³ Arlen indicated that they planned to premiere the show as ‘a special Christmas attraction’ before incorporating it into the core repertoire for annual and touring performances. It is clear he deemed *Kiss Me, Kate* a risk, raising concerns about the orchestrations of the original Broadway production and whether they were suitably contemporary.¹²⁴ However, it is clear from his comments that whilst Arlen saw *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of a progression of programming development for Sadler’s Wells, he did not perceive *Kiss Me, Kate* as an operetta. This was a new type of work for the company, which had features (like Porter’s complex score) that had potential appeal for a new contemporary audience.

However, Peter Coe was less happy with the essential parts of *Kiss Me, Kate*. In November 1970, he wrote to the Spewacks to outline several changes he felt were crucial to improve the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes.¹²⁵ In this note, he lists three reasons for revising the Shakespearean text:

1. It has been seriously mangled. Twenty years ago this may not have mattered so much as today. Now he [Shakespeare] is a pop author in this country and a major film has been made of *the Shrew*. The play will be running at the same time at the National Theatre. [...]
2. Inventing lines for Shakespeare is more difficult than one can imagine and the invented lines stand out like old fashioned sore thumbs. I have eliminated as many as possible. [...]
3. Three of the songs within the Shakespeare are badly motivated. “I Hate Men” has a little scene specially invented for it which seems unnecessary. ... The scene between “Tom, Dick and Harry” [sic] and “I’ve Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua” seems unnecessary... & “Were Thine That Special Face” comes in the most unlikely place, but unfortunately there seems to be no other place for it.¹²⁶

Coe’s disapproval of the Spewacks’ approach to *The Taming of the Shrew* was equally matched by Sam Spewack’s fury that they intended to make such substantial changes. Sam evidently wrote several draft responses to Coe, some which have been preserved in the ‘Notes and Worksheets’ folder [2] in the Spewack papers. There is also a copy of an

¹²³ CU BSS *Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1970): letter from Stephen Arlen to John Wharton, September 7, 1970, 1.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ CU BSS *Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1970): note written by Peter Coe, November 11, 1970.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 1-2.

undated telegram, which conveys the essence of his message to Coe, which is reiterated in subsequent correspondence:

APPRECIATE YOUR COMING CLOSER TO ORIGINAL KATE BUT CAN ACCEPT NO CHANGES IN SHAKESPEARE TEXT STOP BALANCE PERSONAL STORY SONGS DANCE AND SHAKESPEARE CAREFULLY TIMED AND WE INSIST KATE BE PLAYED AS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN STOP SEE NO ADVANTAGE IN SEMIAMERICAN [SIC] COMPANY IN LONDON STOP THIS IS AMERICAN MUSICAL STOP ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTEEN GERMAN PRODUCTIONS AND THIS WILL BE FELIX BLOCH EBEN BIGGEST YEAR YET STOP GERMANS PLAYED IT EXACTLY AS WRITTEN AFTER LONG AND DETAILED CONFERENCES WITH US STOP IF YOUR DIRECTOR WILL DIRECT AND NOT WRITE AND LISTEN TO ME I WILL COME OVER STOP EITHER DO IT OUR WAY OR FORGET IT REGARDS.¹²⁷

Building on this discontent, the Spewacks' British agent wrote to Sam warning him that Bella was very dissatisfied with the rehearsal performance she had seen but that they needed to prioritise salvaging the Spewacks' libretto.¹²⁸

Despite the clear instructions given in correspondence before the first performance, Coe went ahead with most of his changes and when, in January 1971, Sam Spewack attended a performance at the Coliseum, he was dismayed by what he saw. He wrote to Stephen Arlen in vehement terms that 'outrageous changes' had been made and that Coe had 'very carefully shovelled back his garbage dialogue we shovelled out.'¹²⁹ He continued:

One thing I will say for Mr Coe however – KISS ME KATE [sic] has hitherto been indestructible. He has managed to murder it.

Surely, to cite one of the many atrocities, you as a Producer must realise that WUNDERBAR was written as a satirical number. Mr Coe plays it straight. It's all dull, dull, dull.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: undated draft telegram from Sam Spewack to Stephen Arlen.

¹²⁸ Vincent wrote: 'Poor Bella, very rightly, longs for so many things to be changed in the production – but with only one week to go Sam, I am trying to persuade her that the most important matter is your script. Everything she says is absolutely right, but it becomes too frustrating beating one's head against a wall where Coe and his production are concerned. CU BSS 25/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1970) [2]: letter from Adza Vincent to Sam Spewack, November 16, 1971.

¹²⁹ CU BSS 25/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1971): letter from Sam Spewack to Stephen Arlen, January 19, 1971. 1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

Whilst this snapshot of correspondence, which continued as Sadler's Wells attempted to secure future production permissions,¹³¹ shows a dramatic disagreement between creator and interpreter, it also provides clear insights into the character of *Kiss Me, Kate* in the mind of the Spewacks and as potential repertoire for an opera company. Whereas the Viennese production aimed to translate *Kiss Me, Kate* to a new scale, with a more substantial orchestra, elaborate sets, ballet dancers and specialist singers, Sadler's Wells looked to adapt the text to their pre-existing forces.¹³² Coe identified that the text showed little reverence for the original *Taming of the Shrew* (i.e. the play). However, he saw this as a flaw rather than a feature of its development, which explains his lack of sympathy with some of Porter's score. As a result, the Sadler's Wells production appeared to lack sensitivity to the satirical undercurrent of this musical in spite of the jokes on comic opera and operetta throughout *Kiss Me, Kate*. In their completely different cases, the Volksoper and Sadler's Wells productions demonstrate how Porter and Spewack ultimately unified their individual creative visions to create an irreverent but largely universal celebration of entertainment that is most limited when interpreted in terms of its 'serious' or high art reference points.

***Kiss Me, Kate* at the Royal Shakespeare Company (1987)**

In light of the emphasis on adapting *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* to suit the needs of a British audience by Peter Coe, the production staged by the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in 1987 provides a useful case study of the show in the context of preserving Shakespeare's work in popular culture. The 1987 revival was directed by Adrian Noble and starred Nicola McAuliffe and Paul Jones. The RSC archives hold a DVD

¹³¹ Peter Coe's production was largely abandoned when Colin Graham was asked to take over. In a letter, dated April 6, 1971, Stephen Arlen outlined all the changes Coe had made that their revised version, which returned *Kiss Me, Kate* back to the original production details. CU BSS 25/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1971): letter from Stephen Arlen to Louis H. Aborn (Tams-Witmark), April 6, 1971.

¹³² Arlen hoped only to cast from affiliates of Sadler's Wells in order to situate *Kiss Me, Kate* as core repertoire for the company. The flexibility of subsidy in these contexts allows these productions to take risks and experiment with directorial choices that are not as readily available to commercial performances. However, *Kiss Me, Kate* was selected by Prawy particularly to reignite the box office appeal of the Volksoper. Similarly, Stephen Arlen was concerned with the consequences of a deficit at Sadler's Wells at the time. These two examples show how different companies managed prestige and expectation in their approaches to the show in their individual contexts.

recording of a performance given at Stratford-upon-Avon before the revival toured, ending with a run at the Old Vic in London.¹³³ Perhaps inevitably, the RSC production added many Shakespearean references throughout the show, particularly in the design concepts for the set drops. However, the production prioritised the music and the light-hearted satire at the core of *Kiss Me, Kate*. The professional experience of the cast (many of whom were known for their legitimate performances of Shakespeare) is evident in the relish with which they deliver *The Taming of the Shrew* and the over-the-top characterisation of several of the characters, in contrast to the sense of dullness implied in the correspondence about the Sadler's Wells production.

Importantly, Noble's production of *Kiss Me, Kate* added extra Shakespearean details in the same tone as is used by the Spewacks and Porter in the text. For example, a crosshatched illustration of Shakespeare's head and shoulders is depicted in the banner at the top of the curtain drop seen before 'We Open in Venice', during the interval and after the Act Two finale. Similarly, a bust of Shakespeare is painted as a garden ornament as part of the drop for the final *Taming of the Shrew* scene. His image, situated centrally in the painting, looks over the end of the performance, mirroring five busts (also including Homer and Sophocles) depicted on the safety curtain before which the gunmen perform 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'.¹³⁴ In this song, the spectre of Shakespeare is also personified when the gunmen walk on carrying a humorously oversized volume of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, which they dance around, present to the audience, pretend to read from, and repeatedly bow to during the delivery of the number.¹³⁵ Other additions included quotations of the most well-known lines from other works of Shakespeare including 'Alas poor Yorick' from *Hamlet* and three lines of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* between the verses of 'We Open in Venice', as well as an abridged version of the opening lines (1-35) of Shakespeare's Act Two, Scene One of *The Taming of the Shrew*.¹³⁶ In this section, Katherine has tied up Bianca and challenges her to say which of her suitors she truly prefers.

¹³³ The RSC had previously produced Trevor Nunn's *The Comedy of Errors* (the musical), completely separate from Rodgers and Hart's *The Boys from Syracuse*. *Kiss Me, Kate* was the first American musical they staged.

¹³⁴ RSC TS/2/2/1987/KIS1: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], disc 2.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ RSC TS/2/2/1987/KIS1: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], disc 1; William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 2.1.1-2.1.35.

These touches assert Shakespeare's authorial influence on *Kiss Me, Kate* in the context of being (initially) performed at the RSC theatre in Stratford-Upon-Avon before transferring to the West End. By representing Shakespeare as a superintendent presence, this production situates *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of the performance reception of the works of Shakespeare. However, none of these inflections changed the text of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Whereas Peter Coe reordered the songs in order to 'rationalise' *Kiss Me, Kate*, Noble's production included some re-orchestrations, such as a dance section in 'Too Darn Hot' that is reminiscent of Leonard Bernstein's 'Mambo' from *West Side Story*. This subtle link to another work in the canon of Shakespearean reception acknowledges the trend in American musicals. However, it still focuses on a musical feature, a dance showcase, in the middle of an extended dance sequence. In a different example, actors Emil Volk and John Bardon added considerable physical comedy to the gunmen roles that is not in the stage directions of the original Broadway script. Drawing on the theatrical precedents of slapstick, particularly familiar in the commedia (which is also referenced in the set design), this choice added to the impact of the gunmen in their scenes.

Given this emphasis on the silly and irreverent, the production had a mixed reception. Frank Rich wrote in *The New York Times* that: 'Mr Noble staged "Kiss Me. Kate" as if it were an undergraduate revue with a running time longer than "Macbeth" and with actors who all but wink at the audience after every song. He seems to have missed the joke.'¹³⁷ There is a sense here that Rich wanted a less energetic performance than is evident from the recording of the show. However, Linda Blandford prefaced her interview with Nicola McAuliffe in *The Guardian* by saying: 'Kiss Me, Kate at the Old Vic seems tailor-made for the American tourist. Cole Porter, good tunes in a version of designer luggage reassuringly initialled RSC. Precise, witty, disciplined: the musical played as chamber music, the ensemble not the star.'¹³⁸ Similarly, Michael Ratcliffe wrote effusively in *the Observer*:

Pastiche, parody and celebration are among the great pleasures of the RSC's first classic American musical. ... Mr Field [choreographer] together with the designers ... has inspired the overall confidence and raunchy colourful fizz of the show.

¹³⁷ Frank Rich, 'Theater: Three Musicals Liven Stages in London', *New York Times*, June 18, 1987, accessed June 4, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/110671252?accountid=13828>.

¹³⁸ Linda Blandford, 'Knocking 'Em Out at the Old Vic', *The Guardian*, August 11, 1987, accessed June 4, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/186832488?accountid=13828>.

The result may be both uncomplicatedly enjoyed as a buoyant and light-hearted entertainment whose precise weight Noble has judged to perfection, and savoured as a commentary on the immediate post-war years when Broadway prided itself on its sophistication and cultural wit, rushing in to candy-striped tights, rakish 'Renaissance' hats and numerous allusions to the Bard. Being witty about wit is a very rare gift but this team has it in spades.¹³⁹

Whereas Sadler's Wells took *Kiss Me, Kate* very seriously as a creative risk for an opera house negotiating a considerable deficit, the RSC took a different approach to the work, embracing the entertainment aspect of the show without negating the opportunity to celebrate its connection to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Kiss Me, Kate's function in the reception to Shakespeare has been evidenced by the enduring success of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' in revue-like events that celebrate the works of Shakespeare. For example, the song was performed by actors Henry Goodman and Rufus Hound as part of *Shakespeare Live! From The RSC* on April 23, 2016. *Shakespeare Live!* was hosted to celebrate the birth of Shakespeare and the 400th anniversary of his death and was broadcast live on the BBC as a significant cultural commemoration.¹⁴⁰ In another context, actresses Christine Baranski and Meryl Streep performed a revised version at the Shakespeare in the Park Public Theater Gala in 2016. Streep was dressed as (then) presidential candidate Donald Trump and asked Baranski (playing Hillary Clinton) to explain 'why all the women say no.'¹⁴¹ This politically charged performance prefaced a season including an all-female production of *The Taming of the Shrew* directed by Phyllida Lloyd. As such, this song embodies the complex status of *Kiss Me, Kate* that is simultaneously about, and completely divorced from, the legacy of Shakespeare's play.

Contemporary commerciality: revising *Kiss Me, Kate* for a new generation

¹³⁹ Michael Ratcliffe, 'Whirling in the Wings', *The Observer*, February 15, 1987, accessed June 4, 2017. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/477073806?accountid=13828>.

¹⁴⁰ The recording is now available on DVD. *Shakespeare Live!: from the RSC*, directed by Gregory Doran ([London]: BBC Worldwide, 2016) [DVD].

¹⁴¹ Footage of excerpts of this performance have been uploaded and removed from YouTube since the gala performance in April. A short clip can be found as part of: Melena Ryzik, 'Meryl Streep Does a Number on Donald Trump at Public Theater's Gala', *New York Times*, June 7, 2015, accessed June 10, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/08/theater/meryl-streep-donald-trump-public-theater.html>.

Whilst *Kiss Me, Kate* became part of subsidised programming in the United Kingdom and Europe, it continued to be revived concurrently in the commercial theatre. However, in 1999, Michael Blakemore's revival returned *Kiss Me, Kate* to the Broadway stage and re-established the show as a commercial force. The production was nominated for twelve Tony Awards (2000), the most of any musical revival in the Tony's history, and won five, including Best Actor (Brian Stokes Mitchell) and Best Musical Revival. Its success prompted a national tour and a West End transfer, which was filmed and is available on DVD.¹⁴² The 1999 production also became the second licensable version of *Kiss Me, Kate*, preserving this interpretation of the show as a significant iteration.

Tams-Witmark's licensing overview characterises the 1999 production as 'taking advantage of new technology in music and keeping in mind evolving social values'; it also notes that 'the book was carefully refined, not changed, for the new version.'¹⁴³ In fact, the script and score for this *Kiss Me, Kate* was substantially reimagined to modernise the show. The score was completely re-orchestrated by Don Sebesky to incorporate a keyboard synthesiser, an extensive percussion section, and reduced string and woodwind sections. The reduction in forces is reflected in the thinness of these orchestrations, which use the wind and percussion sections to highlight the jazz and rhythmic dance music and play down the pseudo-operetta aspects of the score. Abandoning the Golden Era conventions reminiscent of opera, the *Kiss Me, Kate* overture and entr'acte are omitted but arrangements of various sections of the score are incorporated into the dance passage of 'Another Op'nin', Another Show', which is used to open Act One, Scene One. The script outlines staggered entries as different chorus and cast members appear to clean, dress and populate the set, creating the backstage setting in song in direct parallel with 'Too Darn Hot'.¹⁴⁴

The script revisions include recasting Harrison Howell as a buffoonish American general, first conveyed in dialogue between Fred and Lilli preceding 'Wunderbar' in Act One, Scene Three, establishing the 1940s temporality explicitly by referencing the Second World War:

¹⁴²*Kiss Me, Kate*, directed by Chris Hunt, ([S.l.]: Arthaus Musik: 2010) [DVD].

¹⁴³'*Kiss Me, Kate* (Revised 1999)', *Tams-Witmark*, accessed July 4, 2016.

<http://www.tamswitmark.com/shows/kiss-me-kate-1999/>.

¹⁴⁴ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Tams-Witmark, revised June 4, 1999) [unpublished] [CPT] [known as '*Kiss Me, Kate* prompt book' (1999)], 1; Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* (DRG Records, 2001), [CD], Track 1.

Lilli: Dear sweet man. He's very big.
 Fred: Fat?
 Lilli: Historically big.
 Fred: George Washington?
 Lilli: Does the phrase 'Second World War' mean anything to you?
 Fred: You're dating Adolph [sic] Hitler? Congratulations.¹⁴⁵

This change of profession contributes to the most substantial alteration to the narrative in the 1999 production, which repositions Lilli's potential marriage. When Howell arrives in Act Two, Scene Four, his altered dialogue is littered with military references and threats to court martial Fred. This frames a new exchange about the right to discipline a wife:

General: [...] Chastising the little woman is the sacred privilege of a husband and no one else. You were out of line there, soldier.
 Fred: Yes sir, General!
 General: Restoring family discipline, Graham. Cherishing our women no matter what it takes. That is my message to the American people. That is why I am letting her make her farewell appearance in this little show of yours. "The Taming of the Shrew". I like the title and I like what it has to say.¹⁴⁶

Whereas Lilli's relationship to Howell previously showed her battle to negotiate the social expectations of a woman of her class and her attempts to provoke Fred's jealousy, the revised script gives Howell a superficial appreciation of the title of *The Taming of Shrew* and its implications about how marriage should function. This change attempts to situate *Kiss Me, Kate* in the historical 1940s with additional topical references and an outdated attitude to gender equality in marriage. However, in creating this context for the modern American audience, the revised script introduces sexism to *Kiss Me, Kate* that was never part of the original work as Bella Spewack shaped it. This reframes the sexual politics of *Kiss Me, Kate* as the backstage narrative closely mirrors *The Taming of the Shrew* in a new way. Effectively, this changes the agency of Lilli's character and undermines her strength of character and acts of defiance against Fred.

¹⁴⁵ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* prompt book (1999), 13.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

While the original Broadway script provides minimal information about Lilli and Harrison, the 1999 version also complicates the portrayal of their relationship by introducing 'From This Moment On' (from the MGM film). The song, set as a duet between Lilli and Howell, celebrates his latest success and their forthcoming marriage. The scene degenerates as Howell chastises Lilli for eating a late dinner and for being unpatriotic by proposing to wear a (French) Dior hat in public. This new script references Act Two, Scene Three of *The Taming of the Shrew* (unused in *Kiss Me, Kate*), in which Petruchio starves Katherine, as well as a section in which Petruchio tempts Katherine with beautiful clothes before throwing them away. Fred and the gunmen, who are present throughout the scene, interject with sections of abuse that are lifted from *The Taming of the Shrew*.¹⁴⁷ The addition of 'From This Moment On' and the adjustment of Howell's character heighten the farcical aspects of the backstage action, developing the fantastical dimension of the narrative. It positions *Kiss Me, Kate* in a comparable lexicon to more contemporary American film comedies with outlandish stereotypical characters behaving in unexpected irrational but entertaining frameworks (see characterisation in the work of Jim Carey (e.g. *Liar Liar* (1997)) or Adam Sandler, (e.g. *The Water Boy* (1999)).

In addition to this, Lilli's exit from the theatre is also adjusted so that she accompanies Howell out rather than abandoning him whilst he sleeps.¹⁴⁸ However, in the MGM film, which also makes this change, Lilli's departure with Howell frames Fred's (Keel's) despair that she has really gone and prompts the gunmen's conciliatory performance of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'.¹⁴⁹ The film's diegetic setting of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' subverts the song in a similar manner to the new placement of 'Too Darn Hot' at the beginning of the film. However, in the 1999 version, Lilli's departure with Howell disempowers her and limits the liberalism achieved in the original Broadway script. It also rebalances Porter's (uncensored) song lyrics and adheres more closely to a literal and misogynistic understanding of the lyrics of the subsequent 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'.

While Spewack and Porter drew on their personal knowledge of screwball comedy, the 1999 *Kiss Me, Kate* moved the script into a different comedic style which was

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 84-86.

¹⁴⁸ This change was also made in the screenplay for MGM's *Kiss Me Kate* with Lilli (Grayson) accompanying Tex out of the theatre. *Kiss Me Kate*, directed by George Sidney [DVD]; Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* prompt book (1999), 92.

¹⁴⁹ *Kiss Me Kate*, directed by George Sidney [DVD].

matched by the thinner, percussion-led re-orchestration. Just as the opera house setting introduced *Kiss Me, Kate* to a new aesthetic arena, the 1999 production accommodated the need for reduced forces and a different listening experience whilst responding to the ongoing commercial imperative. The casting of the lead actors, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, also continued the trend of employing proficient and experienced performers with the vocal dexterity to carry the musical demands of Porter's melodies, which were unaltered in spite of the re-orchestration. The narrative changes conservatise *Kiss Me, Kate* more significantly than previous adaptations but use repeated reference to the period setting (the 1940s) to justify and excuse outdated humour and social politics just as it uses the new Harrison to create an additional comedic circle within the text that speaks to the trend of contemporary popular comedy.

The Critical Edition: creating a musical monument

Whilst Blakemore's production was well-received and became a licensed version of the show for public performance, *Kiss Me, Kate* has become one of the first Golden Age works to be included in the movement of restoring and monumentalising Broadway musicals. The legacy of the different productions noted here and its numerous international revivals have positioned it as an unusual musical that has been adapted without being systematically rewritten in comparison to other shows (e.g. *Anything Goes* or *Show Boat*). Notably, *Kiss Me, Kate* was programmed as a semi-staged performance at the BBC Proms (2014), featuring the 45-piece John Wilson Orchestra. The concert was specifically marketed as using the 1948 arrangements of the show, continuing the ethos of the orchestra, which performs restorations of original orchestrations of music from the Golden Era of musical theatre and film.¹⁵⁰ Although a John Wilson Orchestra concert has become part of the annual programming of the BBC Proms, *Kiss Me, Kate* remains one of few complete musicals to have been programmed during the Proms.¹⁵¹ However, the marketing claim that promoted the original 1948 arrangements overlooked the difference

¹⁵⁰ 'Prom 21: The John Wilson Orchestra – *Kiss Me, Kate*', *BBC Proms*, accessed December 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/events/emqc8g>.

¹⁵¹ Other examples of musicals at the Proms include *Wonderful Town* (1999), an adaptation of *Oklahoma!* (2002) using a substantially revised book, *My Fair Lady* (2012) (also featuring the John Wilson Orchestra) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (2015). As part of the 2017 programme, John Wilson and his orchestra will lead two Proms' performances of the original Broadway version of *Oklahoma!*.

in scale between the Wilson orchestra to the original Broadway orchestra (45 players to 27). The performance also incorporated music for a tap sequence to close 'Bianca' that originated in the original London production.¹⁵² Whilst the audience received some impression of the original score, ultimately the performance experience, with costumes borrowed from a revival at the Old Vic (2012),¹⁵³ semi-staged, with new choreography, and the orchestra in a concert performance arrangement at the back of the stage, invalidated any implied textual authenticity.

The Proms performance not only emanated from the landmark anniversary of the show but also from the success of David Charles Abell and Sean Alderking's critical edition, which was published in 2014. As part of its launch, Abell, a prolific musical theatre conductor, directed the premiere of the edition in a concert performance at Yale University, acknowledging Porter's musical education by situating it at his *alma mater*. Unlike many similar musical theatre editions, the critical report and appendices are available for free download (from the Yale University Library website) in addition to two-hundred [digital] pages of articles, newspaper clippings and sources used in the research process.¹⁵⁴ The editors 'privilege' those sources that can be associated with the opening night of the original Broadway production and the original London production as the last known point at which the entire original creative team were still equally involved.¹⁵⁵ In so doing, the edition offers another new version of *Kiss Me, Kate*, amalgamating aspects of the Broadway and London productions, whilst making use of the academic prestige of the archival research, connection to Yale University, and the difference of artistic approach to the Blakemore production.

Given the semblance of returning to an original and implicitly more authoritative version of *Kiss Me, Kate* that speaks to the intentions of its authors, it is striking that Abell has subsequently conducted several productions using the edition, which experiment with the staging and musical content of *Kiss Me, Kate*. As has been

¹⁵² *Kiss Me, Kate* by Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, [Programme]. [Stage] Directed by Shaun Kerrison. August 2, 2014. BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London.; Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Critical Edition – Piano/Vocal Score), 342-4.

¹⁵³ The Old Vic revival (2012) was directed by Trevor Nunn, starring Alex Bourne and Hannah Waddingham, and was staged using the Blakemore version.

¹⁵⁴ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate: A Musical Play*, eds. David Charles Abell and Seann Alderking, *Yale University Library*, accessed July 12, 2016.

http://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=cole_porter_critical_edition.

¹⁵⁵ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* [Critical Edition], Preface 1.

previously mentioned, the Opera North production incorporated the ‘Harlequin ballet’, a short dance sequence based on Holm’s Commedia dell’Arte sketches, and reimaged Act Two, Scene One, cutting the entr’acte and replaying the ‘Act One Finale’.¹⁵⁶ It also incorporated unusual set designs, including a meeting in a urinal, and had Katherine perform ‘I Hate Men’ to the assembled chorus as though she were holding court.¹⁵⁷ The critical edition and these performances of the musical belong largely to the subsidised strand of *Kiss Me, Kate*’s reception, representing the work as a text of historical value that should be restored whilst being contrasted with experimental production choices.

The *Kiss Me, Kate* Critical Edition became the third licensable version of the musical, showing the continuing evolution of the musical nearly seventy years after its first premiere. In creating an ‘ultimate’ version of the score within the critical edition, Abell and Alderking contribute to the dialogue that there is one fixed version of a stage musical that is representative of the author’s intentions, whereas this performance history demonstrates the breadth of changing contexts and styles in which *Kiss Me, Kate* has come to exist. In the earlier examples, these were each devised with permission from the authors. Indeed, a superficial examination of the Spewack papers indicates how rigorously they investigated changes to the script in translation as well as in new stagings before they would give permission for productions to go ahead. In this sense, the authors were willing to embrace adaptation on certain terms in order to secure the lasting impact of their work and the profitability of their property.

The varied versions of the show can be crudely delineated by the type of institution mounting the production. Therefore, subsidised productions like *Kiss Me, Kate* at Opera North played to their target audience by emphasising the musical aspect of the show and the sections of score most suited to their performers. In the Viennese example, Prawy had more sophisticated intentions: he wished to diversify the Volksoper’s musical repertoire and reinvigorate ticket sales by introducing a new but widely popular form that was defined by its fiscal viability as well as public favour. It was anti-American sentiment that shaped the initial resistance to the first production more than aesthetic snobbery about a musical in the opera house. Prawy deliberately

¹⁵⁶ *Kiss Me, Kate* by Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, [Programme]. Directed by Jo Davies. September–November 2015. Opera North, Grand Theatre, Leeds. (I attended a performance of this production in October 2015); ‘Kiss Me, Kate | Opera North | Interview with conductor David Charles Abell’, *YouTube*, 7:01. Posted by Opera North, November 5, 2015, accessed January 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ-aGVZQjAE>.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

investigated musicals with suitable themes for their aesthetic environment, with a musical style that could be adapted to suit classical performers. He initially considered *Annie Get Your Gun*, but determined that the Austrian audience might not have a cultural reference point for Buffalo Bill and his show.¹⁵⁸ In the context of improving Austro-American cultural relations, *Kiss Me, Kate* covered less distinctly American narrative themes and the theatricality of the original show, drawing on a variety of dramatic forms and musical styles, made it an appropriate choice.¹⁵⁹

The film and television versions, as well as the Blakemore revival, show how the musical was subjugated to censorship and temporal sensitivities, changing lyrics, removing songs and adapting the plot to make *Kiss Me, Kate* appropriate for the relevant context. However, each brought aspects of the original musical to the fore, whether by casting the original performers or celebrating the use of (mock) operetta by showcasing Kathryn Grayson or restoring Porter's sanitised lyrics. Yet each of these productions of *Kiss Me, Kate* highlights the underlining combination of aesthetic ideas Porter and Spewack embedded in the text. For example, the Volksoper introduced jazz musicians and specialist performers to support their classically-trained orchestral players in order to do justice to the range of musical styles in the score. Similarly, the Opera North production continued the balance of vocal styles established in the original Broadway production by pairing opera singers with established West End performers playing Lois and Bill.¹⁶⁰ This varied reception has allowed *Kiss Me, Kate* to exist as a fluid text, adaptable for a range of performance contexts that is not representative of many other Broadway musicals and which is reflective of the melding of different creative processes in the original development of the show.

¹⁵⁸ Marcel Prawy. 'Marcel Prawy erzählt wie er das Musical nach Österreich holte.' *YouTube*, 11:32. Posted by MusicalTheaterDetect, July 1, 2012. Accessed June 3, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdW8A13xtqs>

¹⁵⁹ This highlights an interesting contrast with the 1970 production at Sadler's Wells, which actively sought to make *Kiss Me, Kate* less American.

¹⁶⁰ They cast well-known performers Tiffany Graves and Ashley Day. Graves noted that she watched the film and the Zeffirelli *Taming of the Shrew* as part of preparation for the part. Day also repeats the story that Porter wrote a 'terrible song' ('Bianca') for Harold Lang. 'Kiss Me, Kate | Meet Tiffany Graves (Lois) & Ashley Day (Bill)', *YouTube*, 2:52. Posted by Opera North, October 20, 2015, accessed January 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZfaJgEomp4>.

CHAPTER FIVE:

KISS, ME KATE AND THE INTEGRATED MUSICAL

As is evident from its rich performance history, *Kiss Me, Kate* has been subject to a range of interpretations since it was first produced on Broadway. This diversity of approaches is also reflected in the varied (though relatively minimal) academic reception to this work. However, when renowned *New York Times* theatre critic Brooks Atkinson published an extended review of the original Broadway production, he highlighted two important themes that are central to contemporary musical theatre research: canonisation and integration. Both these concepts frame individual readings of *Kiss Me, Kate*.¹ As has been noted in Chapter Three, Atkinson builds on the out-of-town comparisons between *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), categorising them in terms of their contribution to the development of the Broadway musical. Positioning *Kiss Me, Kate* with *Annie Get Your Gun* ('which is perfection in the more modest field of book-and-song entertainment'), Atkinson differentiated between these shows and 'the immortal trio' – *Show Boat* (1927), *Porgy and Bess* (1935) and *Oklahoma!* - continuing that: 'Although the gods are very likely enjoying it [*Kiss Me, Kate*], they are not moving over to make room for it on the celestial reviewing stand.'²

Atkinson's implication, that *Kiss Me, Kate* appears perfect within the scope of 'modest' artistic ambition, foreshadows an underlying and complex value judgement in musical theatre research. This judgement not only differentiates works on the basis of commercial merit and lasting cultural appeal but also on textual complexity and the perceived creative aspirations of the individuals that wrote them. As a result, scholars have looked for trends in the development of texts and the nature of many of the most

¹ Atkinson first published a short review of *Kiss Me, Kate* in the *New York Times* December 31, 1948. He wrote 'Occasionally by some baffling miracle, everything seems to drop gracefully into its appointed place, in the composition of a song show, and that is the case here. No one has had to break his neck to dazzle the audience with his brilliance, and no one has had to run at frantic speed to get across the rough spots. [...] Under the supervision of John C. Wilson there are other treasures in this humorous phantasmagoria of song – the torrid pavement dancing of Fred Davis and Eddie Sledge [supporting Lorenzo Fuller in "Too Darn Hot"], the bland gunman fooling of Harry Clark and Jack Diamond, the antic dancing masquerade that serves as first scene to "The Taming of the Shrew" sequence. All these items have been gathered up neatly into the flowing pattern of a pleasant musical. To filch a good notion from *The New Yorker*, all you can say for "Kiss Me, Kate" is that it is terribly enjoyable.' Brooks Atkinson, 'At the Theatre', *New York Times*, December 31, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

² This quotation is also referenced in Chapter Three (p.91). Brooks Atkinson, "From Padua to Gotham" in 'Kiss Me, Kate', *New York Times*, January 16, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

successful Golden Age musicals in order to interpret how the form has evolved. However, Atkinson's selection of 'great' musicals (*Show Boat*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Oklahoma!*) helps to demonstrate the complexity of this process: *Kiss Me, Kate* is undeniably distinct from each of these works even though it has achieved equivalent status in musical theatre history. The points of difference between these works vary considerably and include several fundamental aspects including narrative themes, structure, and style of score. However, interpretation of these features is central to a method of reading musicals, known as 'integration'.

The integrated reading of musicals stems from the challenge of interpreting 'how music and lyrics serve, ignore, or contradict dramatic themes and ideas, both in specific scenes and in the shows as a whole.'³ In more developed terms, it investigates a tangible dramatic link between the script, song and dance elements of a musical and is used to delineate 'sophisticated' texts from more 'old-fashioned' works (in which the song and dance moments do not develop the narrative). This concept has been intrinsically linked to the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein and to an artistic aspiration to prioritise narrative 'coherence'. As such, the integrated musical is frequently understood as a template against which individual Broadway shows can be compared as well as a measurement of aesthetic value. Therefore, when Atkinson separates *Kiss Me, Kate* from *Show Boat*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Oklahoma!*, he implies that it has a different level of sophistication to these other works - he is differentiating between 'a book-and-song show' and other types of musical.

Geoffrey Block has contributed prolifically to the scholarly discourse on this subject.⁴ In his seminal monograph *Enchanted Evenings*, he provides a compelling reading of *Kiss Me, Kate* based on this research, arguing that Porter developed his score in reaction to Rodgers and Hammerstein's success and as an attempt to create his own integrated work. This interpretation is facilitated by Spewack and Porter's references to 'high art' (most notably to classical music in the score), which develops the idea that musicals written in the years following the success of *Oklahoma!* aspired more closely to the aesthetic principals of opera and operetta. As such, integration becomes complicated with other theoretical concepts including adaptation, naturalism and authenticity,

³ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 8.

⁴ This is particularly illustrated by his chapter 'Integration' in Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris & Stacy Wolf (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 97-110.

which are central to classical musicology, and convolutes the idea of canonisation in musical theatre further.

This chapter deconstructs concepts including ‘the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical’ and integration in order to represent how *Kiss Me, Kate* has been previously read and to highlight features of the work (and its genesis) that fundamentally challenge these ideas. Rather than conforming to the dramatic principles of integration, *Kiss Me, Kate* frequently comments on ‘putting on a musical’ through the internal analysis of creating a production that is threaded through the text. This is exemplified in revivals of the show, which experiment with intertextuality and continue to comment on the process of staging a musical. For example, in the RSC revival, part of the dance interlude in ‘Another Op’nin’, Another Show’ includes a theatre technician dancing with ladders and then being left to dangle from the lighting rig.⁵ This direction is preserved in the extensive stage directions introducing ‘Another Op’nin’, Another Show’ in Blakemore’s 1999 revival. During this number, moved to the very beginning of Act One, Scene One, the cast enter and build the set, and the chorus rehearse their routines, emulating a real life backstage environment.⁶ Rather than being a representational depiction of ‘theatre life’, these sequences romanticise and self-consciously highlight the theatrical process, commenting on our expectations of ‘what it is like to put on a play’.⁷

While integration provides a useful lens for evaluating stage musicals as multi-faceted texts, it has also become associated with deeper aesthetic concepts including moralism and naturalism, which cannot be traced in *Kiss Me, Kate*. In contrast to the seamlessness necessary to an integrated musical (which depends on some degree of narrative linearity), there are numerous examples of dialogue, lyrics and musical ideas in *Kiss Me, Kate* that are deliberately disruptive. Porter and Spewack poke fun at *The Taming of the Shrew*, at the romantic conventions of a musical, and at the idea of naturalism throughout the text. They also subvert an integrated reading of *Kiss Me, Kate* through the celebration of their own writing styles, by using standalone musical

⁵ RSC TS/2/2/1987/KIS1: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], disc 1.

⁶ ‘The STAGEHANDS attach the show curtain to pipes. It is lifted up. Whoops! It catches. The CAST ducks. One of the STAGEHANDS straightens the show curtain but HE catches onto the pipe as the curtain lowers; it lifts him in the air by the seat of his pants ... The STAGEHAND detaches himself and swings up into the flies.’ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* prompt book (1999), 1.

⁷ This same device is evident in the MGM film when Fred (Howard Keel) checks whether the (real-life) donkey has been housetrained. George Sidney, *Kiss Me, Kate* [DVD], 17:14-20.

numbers, familiar character tropes, and careful manipulation of the Shakespearean content. While Atkinson separates *Kiss Me, Kate* hierarchically from other hit musicals that might now be listed in a single canonical structure, he superficially appreciated that this musical (like *Annie Get Your Gun* and others) was not functionally similar to *Show Boat*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Oklahoma!*.

The complex interplay of interpreting *Kiss Me, Kate* in the context of other contemporary hit musicals, navigating the aesthetic trappings of classical musicology, considering the dominance of Rodgers and Hammerstein, and its biographical contexts in Porter's career, saturates readings of this work. As Cole Porter's most successful musical, it is widely seen as the show that most reflects his creative abilities. On this basis, *Kiss Me, Kate* has therefore been evaluated in terms of the creative values of the seminal musical of the period (*Oklahoma!*). However, the discourse surrounding *Oklahoma!* is sufficiently complicated to focus readings of *Kiss Me, Kate* on the defined parameters of 'integration' rather than any other quality of the text. By situating *Kiss Me, Kate* both as an integrated work and as Porter's interpretation of 'a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical', Block and other scholars apply uncomfortable paradigms to the text, which are not reflective of its genesis or performance history. Therefore, this chapter focuses on deconstructing these aesthetic layers in order to demonstrate how Porter and Spewack developed their own text. Building on the vital work of Block and Lynn Laitman Siebert, who provide deep analyses of the score, it argues that the sophistication of *Kiss Me, Kate* that has been previously attributed to integration is actually demonstrated in a complex collage of music, satire and irreverence, which characterises the work as a whole.

***Kiss Me, Kate* and the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical**

As has been briefly outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the intersection between the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical and whether a work is integrated or not, has become blurred. Ironically, each of their works most closely associated with this discourse (e.g. *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel* (1945) and *South Pacific* (1949)) has a distinct identity that is overlooked in order to produce a template with which to compare other musicals. Nonetheless it is important to acknowledge the specific characteristics associated with these works that are separate from the features of integration in order to understand

how Rodgers and Hammerstein's theoretical and aesthetic influence has been represented in musical theatre scholarship.

Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears provide a clear insight into this discourse in their chapter on the legacy of Rodgers and Hammerstein for contemporary musicals in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*.⁸ They explain:

The Rodgers and Hammerstein approach advocated earnestness and honesty of expression, and it was hardly ever gruesome or visibly violent. Rarely was it sexually explicit, and of course, no overt nudity was permitted. It minimised slapstick antics and pun-saturated wit. Song lyrics and dialogues were romantic and thoughtful; they built storylines, and most crucially, they developed characters.⁹

Their explanations characterises an aesthetic 'earnestness', sometimes represented as seriousness, that has become associated with Rodgers and Hammerstein's work. This has then been linked to a significant change in book writing that has been used to differentiate between the deliberate comedies at the heart of many 1930s musicals (including those by Rodgers and Hart, Irving Berlin and Cole Porter) and 'the musical play,' which prioritises storytelling and narrative truth. It has also been used to endorse the development of moralism – of conveying social or political messages – in contemporary musicals like *Finian's Rainbow* (1947) or, indeed, in *South Pacific*.

This approach limits a nuanced reading of aspects of Rodgers and Hammerstein's work, including the commercial imperative to entertain which they were obviously subject to. Not only does this fail to characterise the playfulness of 'People Will Say We're in Love' (*Oklahoma!*) but it also suggests that 'I Cain't Say No' or 'All or Nothing' was written in a new aesthetic context rather than being effective examples of old-fashioned writing in an innovative text. Functionally, this reflects the impetus to elevate stage musicals to the same plane as art music without providing an appropriate context to acknowledge lightness or comedy.

Geoffrey Block has developed this aspect of Broadway scholarship by reinforcing the concept of a seismic methodological change to writing musicals in *Enchanted Evenings*, which is ostensibly structured 'before and after' *Oklahoma!* Here he evaluates

⁸ Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears, 'The Successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein', *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 164-189.

⁹Ibid., 164-5.

his selected subjects in terms of their modernity as determined by the new aesthetic era introduced as a result of the impact of this show. In this way, Block uses the concept of a sustained narrative with related songs as a framework for interpreting the unexpected success of *Kiss Me, Kate*. He suggests that the better-developed storyline and connection between script and score differentiate it from other Porter musicals – a framework that is mirrored in the work of Lynn Laitman Siebert and Joseph P. Swain.¹⁰ They each use the pervasiveness of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s success and the positive commercial response to a more serious type of musical to frame their readings of *Kiss Me, Kate*.

As such, these scholars suggest that Porter felt pressure to respond to the impact of *Oklahoma!* and he realised his ambition to compete with *Kiss Me, Kate*. Siebert and Block each explain that Porter ‘publically acknowledged’ Rodgers and Hammerstein’s influence on his work, quoting the same interview (1964) documented in Richard G. Hubler’s *The Cole Porter Story*.¹¹ They use Porter’s reflections that Rodgers and Hammerstein made writing musicals harder as a reason to validate reading *Kiss Me, Kate* in comparison to the compositional ideas outlined above. Indeed, Swain prefaces his analysis of *Kiss Me, Kate*, a bi-partial dissection of the score (dividing the songs into two categories: Baltimore and *The Taming of the Shrew*), by establishing the influence of *Oklahoma!* and its integrated form on the direction of musical theatre composition, writing that:

The ideal of an integrated musical play that Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* made so convincing [...] was no boon to composers who had made successful careers not on the strength of dramatic instincts but simply on the superior quality of their songs.¹²

¹⁰ Lynn Laitman Siebert, *Cole Porter: an analysis of five musical comedies and a thematic catalogue of the complete works*, 267-351; Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 139-164; Lynn Laitman Siebert, *A Cole Porter Companion*, 286-304.

¹¹ From *Enchanted Evenings*: ‘Shortly before his death in 1964 Porter publically acknowledged the difficulty posed by the intimidating example of Rodgers and Hammerstein: “The librettos are much better, and the scores are much closer to the librettos than they used to be. Those two [Rodgers and Hammerstein] made it much harder for everyone else.” The spectre of “those two” would haunt Porter for his remaining creative years.’ Quotation from Hubler as documented in *An Analysis of Five Musical Comedies*: ‘In 1943 the *Oklahoma!* of Rodgers and Hammerstein hit the boards. It was a smash from the start. Porter knew it. “The librettos are much better and the sources are much closer to the book than they used to be,” he said. “They are, let us say, more musicianly.” It was undoubtedly the success of *Oklahoma!* which inspired him towards his *Kiss Me, Kate* five years later.’ Richard G. Hubler, *The Cole Porter Story*, 90. Quoted by Lynn Laitman Siebert, *An Analysis of Five Musical Comedies*, 346; Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 216.

¹² Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 139.

Here, Rodgers and Hammerstein and the integrated musical become synonymous in Swain's reading. He suggests that Porter reformed his approach to the libretto and characterisation of his musicals in response to the impact of *Oklahoma!*, marking *Kiss Me, Kate* as a reactive turning point in his career.¹³ Block also contributes to the frame of reactive development by mapping how Porter developed his ability to represent character in song in *Kiss Me, Kate* in comparison to his earlier musical *Anything Goes* (1934).¹⁴

This emphasis on Rodgers and Hammerstein, as both a challenge to Porter and an influence on *Kiss Me, Kate*, is further convoluted by its initial commercial competition with *South Pacific*, which opened less than four months later on April 7, 1949.¹⁵ This coincidence encouraged substantial critical comparison between the shows in the contemporary print media, which is also represented in some of the narratives of Cole Porter biographies.¹⁶ In this way, *Kiss Me, Kate* was subject to thematic and financial scrutiny in direct comparison to a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical soon after it opened. As a result, various appraisals of the two shows have contributed to the

¹³ Ibid., 139-141.

¹⁴ Block's reading of *Kiss Me, Kate* is framed by his previous analysis of the various rewrites to *Anything Goes*, in which he poses the question: 'Is the idea of the integrated musical heralded by Rodgers and Hammerstein in the 1940s intrinsically superior to a musical with an anachronistic book and timeless songs?' Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 47, 217-218.

¹⁵ In the short term, *South Pacific* was *Kiss Me, Kate*'s immediate commercial competition. There was additional but less substantial competition from George Abbott and Frank Loesser's *Where's Charley?*, which opened in October 1948 and ran into 1950, and Irving Berlin's *Miss Liberty*, which opened on July 15, 1949. *Miss Liberty* also ran for respectable 308 performances in spite of its derogatory critical reception. The popularity of *Kiss Me, Kate* and *South Pacific* as well as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) led to such a high demand for tickets that there was a resultant spike in ticket-touting. The New York Investigation Commissioner investigated the box office and ticket distribution methods of all three productions as agents and touts were able to inflate prices as a result of the public demand. Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Robert E. Sherwood: The Playwright in Peace and War* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 294-295; Richard Maney, 'Advice to Those Who Want Two on the Aisle', *New York Times*, June 5, 1949.

¹⁶ To give one example, Eells characterises the perceived impact of *South Pacific* on the success of *Kiss Me, Kate* at the end of his chapter: 'Was this [*Kiss Me, Kate*] the perfect musical success? "Almost," Cole said. "Then, unfortunately along came a little thing called *South Pacific*." Cole would have had to have been superhuman not to have regretted the temporary overshadowing of his work.' Although Eells refers to the impact of *South Pacific* on *Kiss Me, Kate* as temporary, this extract succinctly encapsulates the narrative that *South Pacific* dominated Broadway from its opening night. Bella Spewack also signposted her concern about the threat of *South Pacific* to the original London production in her correspondence with Jack Hylton. George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 255; CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1951): letter from Bella Spewack to Jack Hylton, October 17, 1951.

discourse highlighted in Atkinson's review, polarising 'serious' and 'light' musicals as artistically separate.¹⁷ For example, George Marek compared *Kiss Me, Kate* and *South Pacific* in the December 1949 edition of *Good Housekeeping*, writing:

Kiss Me, Kate was, all in all, the best of the three [Marek also discusses *Miss Liberty* in the same review]; but *South Pacific* contained finer and more memorable music. *Kiss Me, Kate* is gaudy and bawdy; *South Pacific*, a romance with a blend of home grown and exotic ingredients, is a more serious and slower moving tale.¹⁸

Here, Marek suggests that *South Pacific* belongs to a different class of show even though he found *Kiss Me, Kate* more entertaining. This use of language – emphasising the finer, more serious aspects of *South Pacific* – positions *Kiss Me, Kate* as a more frivolous theatrical choice and clearly illustrates the syntactic differentiation between 'the musical play' and 'the musical comedy.' Marek simultaneously praises *Kiss Me, Kate's* impact as a successful piece of entertainment and denigrates it (in comparison to *South Pacific*) by suggesting that the quality of the work is specifically related the aesthetic sphere it reaches.¹⁹

This example reflects one of the challenges presented by interpreting Rodgers and Hammerstein's works in this way. In some cases, it limits other musicals by creating an aesthetic delineation between subject matters, styles of song, etc. It also does a disadvantage to other script and songwriters by suggesting that less 'serious' works involve less creative investment from their authors. However, this approach also detracts from the entertainment value of *Oklahoma!* and *South Pacific* by suggesting that Rodgers and Hammerstein had risen above the shallowness of 1930s musical comedies. Indeed, Tim Carter problematizes this rhetoric – correlating the integrated musical with

¹⁷ There is an underlying implication that 'serious' musicals such as *Carousel* (1945) and *South Pacific*, which include social commentary or moralistic narratives, had higher artistic ambitions than 'lighter' texts like *Kiss Me, Kate* or *Annie Get Your Gun* and therefore belong to a different canon of musical works.

¹⁸ *Miss Liberty* is covered in less than three sentences in Marek's multi-paragraph review as he focuses on the songs and performances that he enjoyed in *Kate* and *South Pacific*. George Marek, 'Some Two Enchanted Evenings' *Good Housekeeping*, December 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹⁹ Theatre historian Ethan Mordden adheres strongly to this point of view that *Kiss Me, Kate* is notably less sophisticated than other stage musicals of the period. He suggests that the narrative is sufficiently slapdash to undermine the canonical status of the show, concluding that *Kiss Me, Kate* has become popular solely because of the efficacy of the score and not as a reflection of the value of any other dramatic component. Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin'*, 198.

earnest drama – as an inappropriate framework to discuss *Oklahoma!* given ‘the superficiality of the plot’.²⁰ In his monograph on this musical, Carter criticises the ‘lack of clarity’ with which Rodgers and Hammerstein exploited the integrated idea ‘when it suited them’.²¹ He also argues that while both men propagated the concept of integration when it was helpful to the promotion of their work, neither were committed to a fixed aesthetic concept.²² Furthermore, Carter raises a wider, significant point that Rodgers and Hammerstein shows were also written to achieve public appeal rather than to educate or reform the construction of every musical that followed.²³ Similarly, Jim Lovensheimer, who actually endorses the idea of integration at the beginning of his monograph on *South Pacific*, rejects the concept that Rodgers and Hammerstein intended to convey ‘messages’ in their work.²⁴ Here both Carter and Lovensheimer problematise central theories that have been applied to Rodgers and Hammerstein’s work. Therefore, this template for analysis (mapping seriousness, moralism and ultimately, integration in musicals) has been used to evaluate the creative ambitions of other Broadway writers even as it does not completely suit the authors of the works it was developed from.

In 1952, Richard Rodgers himself engaged in a public debate in the *New York Times* about the value of his works, reinforcing the lexicon around ‘serious’ and ‘lighter’ musicals, particularly in comparison to *Kiss Me, Kate*. The discussion was triggered by an

²⁰ Full quotation: ‘Moreover, any argument for serious drama in *Oklahoma!* is weakened, to say the least, by seeing the superficiality of the plot that focuses primarily, we might think, on who gets to take Laurey to the Box Social. There is not much action in *Oklahoma!* and its concerns do not seem to be particularly great. No one expects Shakespearean tragedy in a Broadway musical – at least before *West Side Story* (1957) – but one is left wondering whether *Oklahoma!* can bear the weight of its reception history.’ Tim Carter, *Oklahoma!*, 174.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Indeed, Carter notes the complaints of composers Kurt Weill and Jerome Kern that the *Oklahoma!* score was targeted at a much ‘lower’ audience than the integrated loftiness this break from conventional musical theatre was deemed to denote. *Ibid.*, 173-4.

²⁴ Lovensheimer situates Rodgers and Hammerstein’s political activities and ideas as part of the context for his thematic analysis of *South Pacific*, signposting their ‘focus on story and a seamless structure’ as distinct from their pursuit of social commentary in some of their works. Using the example of ‘You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught’ as a case study, Lovensheimer explains: ‘Richard Rodgers also addressed the “message” of *South Pacific* in his autobiography. After noting that “You’ve Got to Be Carefully Taught had been criticized for being “propagandistic,” he observed that the song, although subsequently appropriated by religious leaders nationwide, was never intended as a “message” song.’ He simply explained that it was the right number at the right spot in the show [...] Like Hammerstein, Rodgers insisted that the story and the characters took precedence in the process of creating a musical.’ Jim Lovensheimer, *South Pacific*, 13-14.

opinion piece by Fred Lounsberry, who decried ‘serious musicals’ and regretted that they had tainted the reception of *Kiss Me, Kate*:

I am not griping about “Kiss Me, Kate’s” luck; after all, it has made out fine. But I am trying to point out that it has been mysteriously sloughed off in certain influential quarters. Why? Because it is fluff, not drama. It has no significance. It happens to be brilliantly entertaining, but apparently that is a stigma. I hope we have many more shows with an equally emphatic stigma.

It is well and good to experiment with everything. The experiments of Rodgers and Hammerstein are laudable. But let us not make the mistake of depriving the theatre of its right to entertain, without further obligation.

To have the theatre reflect life is, we can be thankful, an accepted objective. But there is no ground for demanding that it do so all the time.²⁵

Lounsberry closed his piece by explaining that “The next time someone praises a musical show to me because it has realism or meaning or depth, I will take Irving Berlin’s walking stick and flail the conscientious non-objector over the head with it.”²⁶ In this example, Lounsberry characterises an aesthetic competition between perceived ‘types’ of musical, again situating Porter alongside Irving Berlin in contrast to Rodgers and Hammerstein. He also draws attention to a resistance to edify *Kiss Me, Kate* because of its lack of serious subject matter.

Rodgers was one of several known respondents to Lounsberry’s article, published in the following weeks. Firstly, he defended his work – ‘I do not wish to quarrel with his artistic criteria when he says “no one is going to tell me that “South Pacific” is musically or lyrically up to ‘Kiss Me, Kate.’” Conceivably we could find someone who might tell him just that...’. Then, Rodgers continued to argue that commercial smashes like *South Pacific* and *The King and I* (1951) demonstrated public demand for his ‘type’ of musicals, stabilising the market for shorter runs of ‘song and book’ shows.²⁷ His deliberate participation in this debate, during which he reinforces a hierarchy of texts, is interesting and unusual. Rodgers naturally endorsed the hierarchic language initially

²⁵ Fred Lounsberry, ‘Down With Sense’, *New York Times*, June 22, 1952 [YISG Scrapbook].

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Richard Rodgers, ‘In Defence of Sense’, *New York Times*, June 29, 1952. [Other respondents: Bosley Crowther, ‘Inanity Strikes Back’, *New York Times*, June 29, 1952. The *New York Times* published seven additional responses to Rodgers (and Crowther) on July 13, 1952 [YISG Scrapbook]. Copies of these articles can be found in Appendix 3.

applied by Lounsberry to situate his musicals above *Kiss Me, Kate*. However, he rejects that suggestion that *The King and I* demonstrated ‘the frightening inclination to leave entertainment behind’ by pointing out the ‘trouncing’ they received when they produced *Allegro* (1947). Crucially, Rodgers continues:

When Mr. Lounsberry refers to “Oklahoma” as the old horse,” I must admit that he is 50 per cent qualified to judge but I believe there is no more chance of eliminating comedy in the musical theater than there is of eliminating love in the song-writing profession.

The theatre as a whole has come on hard times. It isn’t the picnic it used to be by any means and at this moment the only truly healthy segment of the living theater is its musical wing. The healthiest and most successful portion of this wing is to be found in comparatively serious efforts. These are doing by far the biggest business so, perhaps if Mr. Lounsberry loves the theater so much and wishes it to stay open so he can have his nights of carefree goofiness, he might do well to support what he calls the serious musical and stop thinking of it as a menace.²⁸

As Rodgers rejects the notion that his work is not comparably entertaining to *Kiss Me, Kate*, he also capitalises on Lounsberry’s assertion that it [*Kate*] is fluff, vindicating ‘comparatively serious efforts’ as the saviour of the form. In so doing, he implies that *Kiss Me, Kate* is shallow and old fashioned in comparison to his own demonstrably more successful work, adding to the wider framework that it does not belong in the same strata as *Oklahoma!*, *South Pacific* and others.

This highlights the discrepancies in understanding what a Rodgers and Hammerstein show is and how it has been diversely associated with *Kiss Me, Kate*. In this final example, the reception articulates the distinction between serious and frivolous work that is associated with what *is* or *is not* a Rodgers and Hammerstein show. Whereas Block and Siebert demonstrate evident respect for *Kiss Me, Kate*, Joseph P. Swain and theatre historian Ethan Mordden are less impressed, perpetuating the idea that the show is less sophisticated than other musicals because it is not as dramatic as *Carousel* and the book is not sensible enough.²⁹ In contrast, Block and Siebert make the vital acknowledgement that Rodgers and Hammerstein demonstrated greater aesthetic

²⁸ Richard Rodgers, ‘In Defence of Sense’, *New York Times*, June 29, 1952.

²⁹ Although Mordden criticises *Kiss Me, Kate*, he also notes that it ‘is not *Carousel*: it’s Cole Porter getting as far from *Carousel* as he can get.’ He reasons that Porter was not interested in limiting the entertainment of his work but that Porter still aimed to emulate the new musical heights established by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 164; Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin’*, 259.

ambition than was previously seen in most musical theatre writing. However, in so doing, they also perpetuate the hierarchical assessment that Rodgers and Hammerstein's shows are superior by attempting to read Porter's work against their perceived creative aims.

In essence, *Kiss Me, Kate* rebels against the earnest 'thoughtfulness' that Riis and Sears describe: the persistent jokes aimed at the audience, farcical gangster subplot, and self-referential construction of the score disrupt the primary importance of the plot. There is no significant evidence that Porter or Spewack really envisaged the show as 'a musical play' or looked to establish any serious themes in it. As such, there is a disconnect between what Rodgers and Hammerstein achieved and how the impact of this success has been felt, which has sometimes obscured readings of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Indeed, Porter's comments on the impact of Rodgers and Hammerstein were not directly connected to his work on *Kiss Me, Kate*. By contrast, he cited Irving Berlin's score for *Annie Get Your Gun* as an influence on his writing.³⁰ Porter was inspired by the volume of music in Berlin's score and hoped to emulate it in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Given the textual overlap between these two shows, with an underlying thematic emphasis on performance as entertainment, this should perhaps be a more rigorously investigated musical connection than Porter's respect for Rodgers and Hammerstein. Without question, the lack of clear definition of 'the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical' and its associations with seriousness and integration make it an unhelpful approach to *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Reading integration in *Kiss Me, Kate*

Whilst no scholar claims outright that the integrated musical was exclusively invented by Rodgers and Hammerstein, a clear narrative dialogue has emerged (connecting them together) that has been used to codify a significant cross-section of works.³¹ In *Musical*

³⁰ Howard Taubman, 'Cole Porter is 'The Top' again', *New York Times*, January 16, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

³¹ This is not to say that all other interpretive methodologies have been abandoned across musical theatre scholarship. However, in the study of *Kiss Me, Kate*, this is undoubtedly the most pervasive approach. Those scholars such as Dan Rebellato who seek to abandon the integrated reading nonetheless prioritise problematising this methodology rather than looking to define *Kiss Me, Kate* in new terms. Indeed, Rebellato's article in the *Contemporary Theatre Review* formed part of a dedicated issue on 'new approaches' to musical theatre research although his

Theatre, Realism and Entertainment, Millie Taylor frames her monograph by outlining the conceptual overlap between integration and realism. She describes a 'body of scholarship that presumes a historical trajectory of the development of musical theatre from fragmentation to integration, which leads to the privileging of those musicals that support that trajectory, and an analytical process of looking first at the plot and then questioning how the songs support it.'³² The impact of this 'body of scholarship' [exemplified by Block, Swain, Siebert, Knapp et al. in the literature on *Kiss Me, Kate*] has built a substantial discourse on *Kiss Me, Kate* as an integrated work, even though 'integration' has come to represent a complex set of values.

Block outlines the basic principles of integration as they relate to the musico-dramatic text are in his chapter 'Integration' in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*. This provides a useful starting point from which to evaluate *Kiss Me, Kate*. Drawing from the writings of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Block highlights five 'Principles of Integration' as a method of evaluating a show:

1. The songs advance the plot.
2. The songs flow directly from the dialogue.
3. The songs express the characters who sing them.
4. The dances advance the plot and enhance the dramatic meaning of the songs that precede them.
5. The orchestra, through the accompaniment and underscoring, parallels, complements, or advances the action.³³

Although each of these concepts specifically analyses the text of a musical, they inevitably shape the framing discourse about the methods and decision-making process of the creators of the show as well.

reading focuses exclusively on the well-established integrated (and psychoanalytical) analytical methods. In addition to his contribution about *Kiss Me, Kate*, the edition included an article by Millie Taylor on integration and distance in *Sweeney Todd* as well as other critical theory (including race and gender studies) approaches to musicals including *Show Boat* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Dan Rebellato and Dominic Symonds (eds.), 'The Broadway musical: new approaches,' *Contemporary Theatre Review*, February 2009, 19 (1); Dan Rebellato, 'No Theatre Guild Attraction Are We: *Kiss Me, Kate* and the Politics of the Integrated Musical, 61-73; Millie Taylor, 'Integration and Distance in Musical Theatre: the Case of *Sweeney Todd*,' *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment*, 74-86.

³² Taylor describes the 'lack of clarity' associated with the term 'integration' in the introduction to her monograph. Millie Taylor, *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment*, 4.

³³ Geoffrey Block [as derived from the writings of Rodgers and Hammerstein], 'Integration' in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, 98-9.

As Taylor signposts in her commentary on integration, these principles are essentially predicated on an ‘ever-increasing focus on linear narrative as the defining feature of the combined musico-dramatic text.’³⁴ However, the relationship between the dramatic elements of *Kiss Me, Kate* is richer than a linear narrative will allow as there is interplay between the music, script and songs, their creative function and their impact on the show as a whole. For example, the intersection between ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ and ‘Always True to You (In My Fashion)’ in *Kiss Me, Kate* provides a case study of this communication between sections of the show as well as how Porter ultimately subverts these principles.

‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ (Act Two, Scene Four) functions as a conventional character number for Lois, confirming her identity as the gold-digging soubrette. It is playful, demonstrating her conscious agency over her body and physical appearance, making jokes about sexual exploits in order to gain financial rewards. Its irreverent depiction of Lois’ personal freedom has no place in a ‘serious’ musical. However, the introductory section, which recapitulates ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ (‘Oh Bill, / Why can’t you behave?’ etc.) flows directly from the previous dialogue. Using the Principles of Integration as a means of measurement, we have a superficial match. Indeed, whilst ‘Always True To You’ does not advance the plot as such, it reinforces the characterisation from earlier in the show. For example, it builds upon dialogue in Act One, Scene One, when she inconsistently calls Fred ‘Mr Graham’ and ‘honey’ and he briefly alludes to having a potentially euphemistic ‘private rehearsal’:

- Fred: I realize, Lois, that in nightclub work you don’t have to cheat – (*Theatrical expression to cover actor’s appearing to play a scene with another actor but actually aiming his lines out to the audience*)
- Lois: (*Interrupting*) Oh, don’t you though?
- Fred: You don’t have to cheat front, Miss Lane, but on stage when you’re playing scenes with other people, you do. This is your first show and I know it’s hard for you.
- Lois: (*almost baby-wise*) Do you mean thus (*Of course she turns wrong*) or thus?
- Fred: We’ll thus it later.³⁵

³⁴ Millie Taylor, *Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment*, 4.

³⁵ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 273.

In this way, 'Always True To You' might ostensibly be incorporated into an integrated reading of *Kiss Me, Kate*. However, it also connects Lois textually to Bianca, which problematises reading any individual song in isolation.

As such, 'Tom, Dick or Harry' consciously subverts Bianca's character function in *The Taming of the Shrew*, counteracting the third Principle of Integration: 'The songs express the characters that sing them'.³⁶ Bianca's perceived identity as virginal and innocent – the antithesis of Katherine – is fundamentally undermined in this song.³⁷ While it might be possible to read the cut song 'If Ever Married I'm' as demure – accepting that the duality of some of the lyrics are downplayed by the musical setting – the implication that Bianca only wishes to marry in order to lose her virginity is made clear by the lyrics of 'Tom, Dick or Harry'. It is also exaggerated by the frivolous popular style of the accompaniment that adds to the superficiality of both roles just as Bianca's sexual awareness and Lois' associated liberalism is indicatively interconnected. In this way, Lois is functionally situated as a soubrette, a contemporary evolution of the 1930s gold digger, and Bianca's identity is modernised in intertextual association with the actress (Lois) playing that part.

This characterisation (of the soubrette) as constructed in the libretto as well as in the score emanates from the traditions of the 1930s Broadway musical ('before Rodgers and Hammerstein') from both Porter and Spewack's most prolific period.³⁸ Indeed, 'Always True To You' can be connected with 'I Cain't Say No' and 'All or Nothing' from *Oklahoma!* as a commentary on female behaviour, reacting to the respective dramatic contexts. The latter examples show Ado Annie wrestling with how she should behave in comparison to how she feels compelled to behave while Lois celebrates her identity and

³⁶ Geoffrey Block, 'Integration' in *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, 99.

³⁷ In Shakespeare's play, Bianca is shown to understand her function, playing the role of a pure maiden in public, whilst encouraging her suitors and goading her sister in private.

³⁸ 'Always True To You' showcases Lois' self-assurance and enjoyment of the way she has chosen to live her life, extracting gifts and favours from willing men whilst only having emotional interest in Bill: a manifesto for the soubrette. Porter's song displays her as a later evolution of Anita Loos' heroine Lorelei Lee in the *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes / But They Marry Brunettes* series. Loos initially wrote a single short story as a private joke to friend H.L. Menken who had been ensnared by a woman she deemed to be a vapid blonde. When she passed the story on to Menken, the friend in question, he told her that it was publishable. Lorelei's diaries appeared serialized in Harper's *Bazaar* magazine in 1925, and were later published by Liverlight in November of the same year. The novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* sold out on its first day of distribution and became the surprise bestseller of the year. (It is interesting that the development of Jule Styne's musical adaptation of Loos' novels from c.1948-1950 coincided so exactly with *Kiss Me, Kate*.) Regina Barreca, 'Introduction' in Anita Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady and But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes* (London: Penguin, 1998), x-xi.

behaviour. All of these contribute to a familiar trope about flirtatious young women, which is as familiar in Jane Austen's depiction of Lydia Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* as it is developed in Anita Loos' gold-digger Lorelei Lee. Indeed, as has been highlighted in the previous section, both of Ado Annie's numbers are more related to an old-fashioned system of writing than the forward-looking musical play.

In addition to the lack of narrative significance in Porter's song, 'Always True To You' or 'Tom, Dick or Harry' both contain musical features that position these songs as performances rather than expositions of emotional development. For example, Bianca scats during 'Tom, Dick or Harry,' as though in a jazz ensemble, as a semi-virtuosic demonstration of freedom from the fixed verse/chorus structure of the song. Similarly, in 'Always True To You', Porter adds a score-stopping reference to the first line of 'La Marseillaise' (bars 42-3) in the accompaniment.³⁹ This disrupts the performance by quoting a disassociated melody just as Bianca scatting cuts against the Elizabethan context of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Here Porter shows his ability to create meaningful connections between sections of the score but actively undermines this by juxtaposing modern and old-fashioned ideas. For all that he wrote in insightful ways throughout *Kiss Me, Kate*, creating distinct musical identities for the main characters as is shown in this example, both Porter and Spewack wrote with archetypes rather than truly nuanced characters in mind.

Building on the generalisation of these character traits, Block specifically complains that *Kiss Me, Kate* 'ignores dramatic logic' in his chapter on integration in the *Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*.⁴⁰ He explains that it 'loses an opportunity for nuance when Porter presents his characteristic alternation between major and minor in both the *Shrew* numbers... and offers the show-stopping "Too Darn Hot" without even a fig leaf of an "integrated" rationale.'⁴¹ In articulating that *Kiss Me, Kate* does not adhere to the principles he has outlined, Block criticises the show, implying that Porter failed to realise untapped dramatic potential rather than acknowledging the craft with which Porter links even the most static numbers in either thematic or musical terms. 'Too Darn Hot' serves various functions without the need to 'contribute' to the narrative: it returns *Kiss Me, Kate* to the theatre; it mirrors the structural convention of 'Another Op'nin'

³⁹ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 163.

⁴⁰ Geoffrey Block, 'Integration,' *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, 108.

⁴¹ Ibid.

with a substantial ensemble number to open the act; and it restates the performative aspect of the backstage characters as they put on a show for one another.⁴² It also subtly states that while many musical theatre numbers purport to be about something mundane – like the weather – they are actually full of double entendres about sex. Just as Bianca’s chaste virginal identity is subverted by Lois’ backstage persona and ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ positions Bianca as a conscious and willing subject of desire, ‘Too Darn Hot’ separates casual sex (Fred’s attraction to Lois or Lois’ to Harrison) from genuine emotional attachment as is depicted between Fred and Lilli in ‘Wunderbar’ and ‘So in Love’. Block’s engagement with linearity and dramatic sense, central to the success of an integrated reading, is undermined by the cyclical aspect of *Kiss Me, Kate*. The ‘day-in-the-life’ conceit contributes to the complexity of this in *Kiss Me, Kate*. While the plot has an identifiable beginning, middle and end, there is no dramatic indication that *real* resolution has been reached.

‘I Sing of Love’ provides another significant example of the way the nature of songs evolved in the development of *Kiss Me, Kate*, limiting the suggestion that each song has a distinct narrative purpose in the score. Among one of the first songs Porter drafted for *Kiss Me, Kate*, ‘I Sing Of Love’ was not included in the original Broadway cast album or in the MGM film adaptation, which removes the role of the chorus from the text.⁴³ In some ways, it has been anonymised from the score. However, it is particularly interesting when interrogating integration as a factor in Porter’s compositional methodology as the song’s function changed substantially through the development of the script. In pages of draft materials predating the May libretto, Spewack wrote: ‘Scene: Music (I suggest”I [sic] Sing of Love” to get Italian atmosphere)’, putting it before ‘We Open in Venice’ as the establishing *Taming of the Shrew* song.⁴⁴ Then, in the May libretto, it was placed as a solo number for Lucentio (briefly joined by Petruchio) later in the same scene, and was reprised at Lucentio and Bianca’s wedding before the final scene.⁴⁵ In Holm’s interim script, it is used as musical punctuation to separate sections of *Shrew*

⁴² It also mirrors the discarded setting of ‘Were Thine That Special Face’ in the *Backstage* overview. CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: Outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948, 3.

⁴³ A typed lyric sheet of the refrain to ‘I Sing of Love’ is included in the earliest dated lyric materials in Cole Porter’s papers. LC CP 11/3: [Folder of lyrics] ‘I Sing of Love’ typed lyric sheet, April 7, 1948.

⁴⁴ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: draft page of script (annotated by Bella Spewack, 2pp.), 9 [This is the paginated number on the document. However, it is the second page of an incomplete draft that predates the May libretto.]

⁴⁵ CU BS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 1-7-34-35; 2-7-31.

dialogue between different sets of characters. Finally, it was repurposed as a chorus number later in the show. The lyrics were updated to ‘We sing of love [etc.]’ but the title was never changed. As such, this number was moved around to serve different dramatic purposes and singing configurations. Unlike ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ or ‘Where Is The Life That Late I Led’, ‘I Sing of Love’ is sufficiently generic that it suits almost any part of the *Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate*. The lyrics are not about anything in particular, although they do briefly laugh at *Oklahoma!*⁴⁶ This example alone undermines the principle that Porter wrote exclusively with specific dramatic contexts in mind.

From a wider perspective, the integrated reading of *Kiss Me, Kate* is largely predicated on using the original Broadway production as the only and definitive version of the show. Whereas this chapter draws on examples from a number of productions as well as the film adaptation to illustrate the cyclical nature of the work, previous interpretations have generally overlooked subsequent iterations of *Kiss Me, Kate* due to constraints of space but also because this evolution problematises an integrated reading. Detailed research into Porter and Spewack’s disconnected writing processes in the middle of the development of *Kiss Me, Kate* undermines any suggestion that there was a consciously synchronised effort to produce a linear text. Integrated readings of this musical that focus on Porter’s attempt to produce his own script-directed score following the principles identified by Block are also counteracted by Porter’s deliberately disruptive use of language and musical imagery (as described in ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ and ‘Always True To You (in My Fashion)’, which blur the temporality of *The Taming of the Shrew* and draw attention to concepts away from the narrative of the play.

Crucially, Porter plays with musical pastiche in ‘Wunderbar’ to undermine the realism of the number. Sam Spewack’s enduring frustration with the Sadler’s Wells rendering of Porter’s waltz is a clear indication of the satire of style the composer aimed to create. Furthermore, he experiments with contemporary music styles such as bebop in ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ or the beguine in ‘Were Thine That Special Face’. These musical gestures disrupt the temporality of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* and contribute to the complex range of musical ideas that characterise the score. As such, Porter wrote songs with individual features that sometimes related to the dramatic

⁴⁶ This lyric reads: ‘I get no glee / From songs about the sea / Or cowboy’s song about cattle / I won’t waste a note of my patters / On socially significant matters.’ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 311.

context but which often had minimal musical or textual synchronicity with what came before it. However, Porter achieved a semblance of continuity by using similar linguistic devices (list structures, rhyming couplets, etc.) and related musical styles (jazz, blues, bebop, etc.) so that sections of *Kiss Me, Kate* have overlapping characteristics without producing a genuinely homogenised score.

Integration and intertextuality

By prioritising interpreting *Kiss Me, Kate* through the lens of Rodgers and Hammerstein and the integrated musical, these readings draw attention to the emphasis on performance conventions in *Kiss Me, Kate*. The ensemble numbers, which, for example, function as establishing songs to open each act, draw attention to their functionality: ‘Another Op’nin’ announces the beginning of the show whilst ‘Too Darn Hot’ consciously acknowledges the interval as part of the structure of a theatre performance.⁴⁷ They also connect the on- and offstage dimensions of *Kiss Me, Kate* as the cast are as much the ‘troupe of strolling players’ in ‘I Sing of Love’ as they are the stagehands and chorus members in ‘Another Op’nin’ or ‘Too Darn Hot’.⁴⁸ In short, the characterisation and performance moments in *Kiss Me, Kate* contribute to one another in an (almost postmodern) reflection of what it is to put on a show. It is therefore insufficient to describe the internal production as either a parody or an adaptation: this *Taming of the Shrew* makes neither faithful use of the original source material nor does it satirise the play or the conventions of mounting a Shakespearean performance. For example, in ‘I’ve Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua,’ Porter celebrates some of Shakespeare’s dialogue, drawing attention to the original text and highlighting the performance context of the hero addressing an absorbed crowd, combining the historical and the modern together in a single character song.

It might be loosely argued that ‘I’ve Come To Wive It Weathily’ adheres to the first three of Block’s five principles of integration in that the song explains why Petruchio has arrived in Padua and what he intends to do there. It also follows a conversation between

⁴⁷ This is arguably replicated by Rodgers and Hammerstein in ‘Intermission Talk’ at the beginning of Act Two of *Me and Juliet* (1953).

⁴⁸ This duality (in which the chorus might play both a member of the *Taming of the Shrew* cast and a stagehand) also feeds into the intertextuality between the present day and Shakespearean performance practice where one actor might play several insignificant or untitled roles.

Petruchio and Lucentio in which they are discussing Lucentio's current occupation and it superficially establishes Petruchio as a domineering and seasoned womaniser who is fortune-hunting. However, most of this information is conveyed in the opening, titular phrase of the song and the entire context of Petruchio's arrival has been foreshadowed (or even predestined) by the suitors' need of a suitable candidate to marry Katherine.⁴⁹ Little would change in the drama if this song were cut. Petruchio speaks 'And as for me:' and then sings 'I've Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua', announcing a change of rhetorical style that signposts a song or monologue.⁵⁰ In consciously acknowledging the opening of the song in the dialogue, the number becomes separated from the flow of the scene; it is not embedded seamlessly. Here *Kiss Me, Kate* draws attention to the expectation of a song as well as to the beginning of the number. Porter also incorporates the reaction of Petruchio's audience into the texture of the song [bars 18-22, 38-42, 62-66 and 90-98] – the context of the number shapes its musical language with the chorus interjections affirming Petruchio's extemporisation.⁵¹ Therefore 'I've Come to Wive It Wealthily' draws attention to several familiar performance conventions, as well as referencing pub or drinking songs, well represented in the works of Shakespeare (adding another layer of intertextuality), in one microcosm.⁵²

The MGM film adaptation makes additional use of the melody of 'I've Come to Wive It Wealthily' as a leitmotif for Petruchio as well as a short reprise of the song, beginning 'I came and wived it wealthily in Padua', after Katherine and Petruchio's wedding.⁵³ Here, the musical arrangers have built on the performative construct of the original number to create a *Taming of the Shrew* soundtrack that reiterates the return to the onstage performance (to 'Padua') from the backstage scenes. This gesture is not

⁴⁹ This is definitely achieved in the original *Taming of the Shrew* text. However, Sam and Bella Spewack abridged their source material to focus on Katherine's marriage to Petruchio rather than the suitors' endeavours to wed Bianca. This is also achieved by the parallelism of the backstage story to *The Taming of the Shrew* as Fred and Lilli – the married couple – are there to play a married couple in the production. Indeed, for *Kiss Me, Kate* to progress, Fred and Lilli must be brought into close proximity on stage.

⁵⁰ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 296.

⁵¹ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 74-79.

⁵² There are obvious contextual differences between 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua' and 'I'm Getting Married in the Morning' from *My Fair Lady* or 'Oom Pah Pah' from *Oliver!* However, there is a wider connection in terms of the situation, the central function of the leading performer and the interaction between a lead singer and an audience. Porter was no stranger to writing songs like this in his earlier works. 'Blow, Gabriel, Blow' from *Anything Goes* (1934) incorporates aspects of these conventions as Reno Sweeney and her dancers perform to the guests on the boat.

⁵³ George Sidney, *Kiss Me Kate* [dvd], 01:13:32-14:01.

dissimilar to a gesture in the underscoring of the original Broadway score, which quotes the melody of 'Wunderbar' in Act Two, Scene Six.⁵⁴ Whereas in Act One, Scene Three 'Wunderbar' establishes Fred and Lilli's ongoing romantic attachment to one another, it signals the end of their relationship in Act Two as Lilli prepares to walk out of the theatre. Very subtly, the quotation echoes their sincere emotional interaction in Act One, which is later affirmed by Lilli's performance of 'So in Love'. Then, the pairing of these numbers is reiterated when Fred completes the musical sequence by singing his reprise of 'So in Love' after Lilli has left. In both examples, the melodies contribute to nuances of the plot and characterisation but they are also linked to the sections of performance they characterise. The second reprise of 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily' signals transition between the acts, masking the set change that is taking place. Similarly, the reference to 'Wunderbar' subtly relates Fred and Lilli's romance to their experiences in the theatre and their enjoyment in performing together, which are inextricably linked.

As was shown in Chapter Two, Bella Spewack consciously detailed the connection between the successes and failures of Fred and Lilli's professional life as part of the development of the first draft of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Although much of the detail of her preparations was left out of the final libretto, the interaction between 'Wunderbar' and 'So in Love' neatly affirms her earlier designs. Yet Swain and Block problematize the relationship between sections of the score despite their interest in *Kiss Me, Kate* as an integrated text. In *Enchanted Evenings*, Block specifically criticises the lack of dramatic rationale that leads Fred to reprise a song ('So in Love') he has never previously heard.⁵⁵ He suggests the verisimilitude of Lilli's initial performance is undermined by the symmetry of Fred's reprise, implying that the creators reused the song as a last moment adjustment rather than as part of a much more substantial consideration of how to end of the show. Similarly, Swain praises 'So in Love' as some of Porter's best writing but criticises the lack of coherence in the backstage score, particularly signposting the range

⁵⁴ It is difficult to attribute fair credit to the decision to use this quotation in the second instance although Robert Russell Bennett oversaw the orchestration of the original Broadway production. Nonetheless, the implied symmetry of the numbers at the opposite ends of each act helps to frame the musical structure of *Kate* as well as to define Fred and Lilli's relationship.

⁵⁵ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 228.

of musical styles as disparate and disconnected, showing ‘Porter’s vaunted and bewildering eclecticism.’⁵⁶

In his chapter, Swain privileges the published script and score of *Kiss Me, Kate* as the exclusive source material for his analysis of the show. The above example of ‘Wunderbar’ and ‘So in Love’ undermines this reading on a basic level. Even as there is a musical difference between the diatonic waltz of ‘Wunderbar’ and the complex shifting harmonies of ‘So in Love,’ there is a clear musico-dramatic connection. However, in addition to the original Broadway score, Porter composed three further songs for Fred and Lilli during the development of *Kiss Me, Kate*. These share certain musical features and even quote each other, challenging Swain’s perception further. Porter wrote ‘It Was Great Fun the First Time,’ ‘We Shall Never Be Younger,’ and ‘I’m Afraid, Sweetheart, I Love You’ as a mixture of duets and songs sung alternately by Fred and Lilli in separate locations on stage or in different scenes, mirroring the final result with ‘So In Love’.⁵⁷ The subjects of all of these songs are striking as they each parallel Spewack’s formative thematic interests. Not only do they provide examples of shared intention to incorporate romance and nostalgia into Fred and Lilli’s scenes, they present a different insight into Porter’s songwriting as these songs include melodic and structural features to one another that lie outside of the dramaturgy of the scenes in which they are (or were) situated.

Initially, ‘It Was Great Fun the First Time’ was embedded in *Kiss Me, Kate* in a similar way to its preceding number ‘Wunderbar’ (in Act One, Scene Three). Lilli presents Fred with the cork from the champagne bottle at their wedding breakfast and the couple fall into reminiscence.⁵⁸ As with ‘Wunderbar,’ ‘It Was Great Fun’ begins in the prefacing

⁵⁶ ‘The Baltimore songs have no such structural consistency [in comparison to the *Shrew* score], and show instead Porter’s vaunted and bewildering eclecticism.’ Joseph P. Swain, *The Broadway Musical*, 150.

⁵⁷ Porter also composed ‘A Woman’s Career’. The song was briefly set as a solo number for a cut character Angela Temple in the Backstage outline but was incorporated as a duet for Fred and Lilli in the May libretto. The song’s lyrics comment on how women are defined by their romantic connections regardless of any personal or professional success they might achieve. Fred performs this to Lilli having satirised her prospective home life with Harrison in Act Two, Scene Five (of the May libretto.) However, the number was cut during October 1948 and was not used during rehearsals. CU BSS 26/*Kiss Me, Kate* Notes and Worksheets [I]: outline of Backstage, April 22, 1948, ii; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 2-5-27; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: October 11 Script, 2-5-30.

⁵⁸ This difference in diegesis between the characters giving a performance and articulating their memories in song is exactly what Rebellato attempts to draw attention to in his article. However, as with other scholars, he relies on the first published materials as the key source material for

dialogue, which leads into the opening bars ('Remember Chez Tony / When we first went out to dine? [Etc.]'.⁵⁹ Similarly, Porter wrote a comparable call and response section or antiphonal section – 'I hate you!' 'I loathe you!' 'You Monster!' 'You Mess' (see Figure 5.1) – in 'Wunderbar' – 'Say you care, dear!' 'For you madly!'⁶⁰ – which could be loosely interpreted as an echo between songs and a temporal development from affection to bickering and name-calling. (Porter used a similar antiphonal structure again in 'Finale Act One' as the gunmen hold Lilli onstage and Petruchio/Fred and the chorus goad her.)⁶¹ Here he employs familiar musical vocabulary from lots of well-known duets such as the mounting competition between Frank and Annie in 'Anything You Can Do I Can Do Better' from *Annie Get Your Gun*. Rather than writing specifically to suit *Kiss Me, Kate*, Porter uses melodic patterns (that mimic speech) rather than the details of the scene to create his songs. This does not signpost integration. Instead, this provides an indication of how Porter reused musical ideas from one song to the next without creating sufficient textual unity to link the numbers together in the context of performance.

He: I hate you! She: I loathe you! He: You monster! She: You mess!

repeat according to stage

interpreting the show. Dan Rebellato, "No Theatre Guild Attraction Are We": *Kiss Me, Kate* and the Politics of Integration'.

⁵⁹ LC CP 11/2: [Folder of Lyrics] 'It Was Great Fun The First Time' typed lyric sheet, April 13, 1948.

⁶⁰ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 43-5. (Bars 86-103). This section appears twice in 'It Was Great Fun'. YISG CP 39/255: 'It Was Great Fun The First Time' fair copy.

⁶¹ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 117. (Bars 16-23)

Figure 5.1: Extract from ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’⁶²

It is clear that Porter replicated musical features in songs in draft versions of several parts of the score. For example, he experimented with the verses for ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ and ‘Bianca’, composing similarly structured patter-like expositions that preface the main body of song. The familiar opening to ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ was introduced to the script in the weeks leading up to rehearsals.⁶³ In this version, Lois recapitulates the chorus of her earlier ballad ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’, reproving Bill for doubting her loyalty to him: ‘Why Can’t You Behave? / Oh why can’t you behave? / How in hell can you be jealous / When you know, baby, I’m your slave?’⁶⁴ However, Porter wrote an alternative verse, which matches a melodic sketch (with a corresponding title) by Albert Sirmay:⁶⁵

I know a boy,
My favourite gent,
He gives me joy
But not a cent,
I could never love a lad more
But to be frank
I’d be happier if he had more
Cash in the bank.
Each time we try
Romantic nights,
He begs for my
Exclusive rights,
My reaction is to give in
But the risin’ cost o’ livin’
Fills my heart with fear
So I always say to him “Listen, dear...”⁶⁶

⁶² YISG 39/255: ‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’ fair copy, 7.

⁶³ According to the sequence of the script drafts, the opening verse was added to the rehearsal script. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* scripts: Rehearsal Script, 2-4-19.

⁶⁴ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 278.

⁶⁵ In a separate draft of the lyrics sent to Warner-Chappell for publication, there is a pencil note (not written by Porter) saying that the tune would be sent along after the lyrics ‘by the end of the week’, indicating that Sirmay transcribed this melody for Porter in the first instance. As the scansion of the lyrics and the rhythm of the melody are nearly identical and as both are labelled as the verse for ‘Always True To You’. There is no existing copy, record of receipt or later acknowledgement of this verse. It is not included in any recordings nor is it recorded in the published vocal score. LC CP 11/1: ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ unused verse [two copies]; YISG CP 39/254: Unused melody for ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’, 1-2.

⁶⁶ LC CP 11/1: ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ autograph draft (unused verse); LC CP 11/1: ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ autograph draft (unused verse, labelled for publication).

In this verse, Lois alludes to Bill indirectly rather than actively engaging with him. As a result, it changes the context of the song, making the audience the sole spectator to Lois' performance. It also reiterates detail that the audience has already heard whilst repositioning Lois' aggressive campaign to make Bill feel guilty for doubting her as a lament at his lack of money. It counteracts the self-assurance conveyed in the number to follow by suggesting that Lois regrets the path she is 'forced' to take, which is distinctly different to the rest of Porter and Spewack's representations of the character.

Similarly, Porter's unused verse for 'Bianca' contrasts with the style of the rest of the song.⁶⁷ In this draft version, Bill laments his failure to succeed as a songwriter:

In the street called 'Tin-pan [sic] Alley'
I have suffered endless wrongs,
For I'm the dog
Who writes incog.
All of Irving Berlin's great songs
Here's a new one, dedicated
To my fav'rite heroine,*
I'll sing it through
For all of you
Then take it away, Berlin!
Are yuh list'nin'?'⁶⁸
* pronounced heroin

In this verse, Bill justifies the song moment by reflecting on his role as a songwriter. However, in the chorus of 'Bianca', Porter contrasts Lois' 'practical' solutions to her material needs (in 'Always True To You') with Bill's faux-romantic gestures. The distance between the draft verse and the specific details of the chorus – i.e. substituting real coffee for an instant decaffeinated alternative 'Sanka' – are arguably inconsistent with the single focus characteristics of most of the *Kiss Me, Kate* score.⁶⁹ Here in 'Bianca', Porter uses noticeably contrived rhymes and undermines its sincerity as a conventional love

⁶⁷ The verse was included in materials for publication, presumably to amend the song for radio broadcast. However, there is no evidence that it was ever used. 'Bianca' was not widely recorded by the popular performers (e.g. Frank Sinatra and Ella Fitzgerald) who helped publicize musical theatre scores.

⁶⁸ The draft verse scans almost identically with the verse used in the published score, fitting the rhythm of the extant melody from bars 52-69. LC CP 11/1: 'Bianca' autograph lyric draft, 1; Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 177.

⁶⁹ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 181.

song in a manner similar to 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'. Again, he diverts attention from the substance of the song to the way in which the sentiment is communicated, contriving a level of artificiality. Crucially, these discarded verses show how Porter considered similar features in different songs - as is highlighted in the example from 'It Was Great Fun The First Time' - without building a narrative connection that supports an integrated reading of the score. Indeed, the choices to discard much of this material are indicative of the decision to *disconnect* parts of the songs rather than bring their musical language closer together.

The 'Look At Me' song

When describing *Oklahoma!*, Richard Rodgers refers to an optimal blending of the elements of a musical and attributes his show's success to the lack of anything 'extraneous or foreign': 'there was ... nothing that pushed itself into the spotlight yelling "Look at me!"'⁷⁰ Whilst this chapter has largely focused on the construction of *Kiss Me, Kate* through intertextual connections that subvert a linear, integrated reading, it has also demonstrated instances in which the score draws attention to itself rather than being part of a seamless flow of dramatic incidents. This section considers how an integrated reading of *Kiss Me, Kate* is further complicated by instances in which the text consciously signpost its own composition or draws attention to individual elements of the musical as part of the performance.

It has already been noted that although Porter acknowledged to John C. Wilson that he wrote 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' to 'tie up the show into a beautiful knot', he also spent weeks devising a song to satisfy the usual structure of his musicals – with a gag number in the penultimate phase.⁷¹ Indeed, Porter noted that he had tested this song on a number of friends in order to check that the jokes landed with an audience as he intended. Here he composed a song that spoke to the general context of *Kiss Me, Kate* but was also disconnected from the rest of the show. Whereas Richard Rodgers particularly

⁷⁰ Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages: An Autobiography*, (Cambridge, Mass: Da Capo, 2002), 227. Also quoted in Geoffrey Block, 'Integration,' *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, 98.

⁷¹ 'I always have had one of those low comedy numbers in practically all my shows, just before the final scene.' For the full quotation see p.61 of this thesis. CU BSS E/Curated Correspondence with Cole Porter: copy of letter from Cole Porter to John C. Wilson (shared with Bella Spewack), June 16, 1948.

celebrated the ‘dovetailing’ of script, song and dance in *Oklahoma!*, Porter actively looked to satisfy his own compositional inclinations, producing a static song for (originally) non-singing characters that literally stops the show. Not only does ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ draw attention to itself as an homage to standalone vaudeville performances, it showcases Porter’s linguistic abilities (his authorial signature) through the clever catalogue of Shakespeare’s plays packaged as a list of seduction techniques.

The intertextual brilliance of the song contributes to the challenge of interpreting its function in *Kiss Me, Kate*. It has been frequently been performed out of context (e.g. on *The Dean Martin Show* with Bob Hope and Juliet Prowse in February 1966 or as part of the *Shakespeare in the Park* opening night gala in April 2016).⁷² However, it simultaneously belongs to *Kiss Me, Kate* because of the juxtaposition of the singing gunmen, the performance setting, and the content of the lyrics. The improbability of the dramatic moment (in which the gunmen appear unawares on the wrong side of the safety curtain) contributes to the humour of the score, which could not feasibly take place in many other musicals. It contrasts the lowbrow characters performing a vaudeville number with clever wordplay based on the works of Shakespeare, delivered as a conscious performance. ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ is therefore neither integrated with *Kiss Me, Kate* – it does not advance the plot, build characterisation or expand any narrative theme – nor is it disconnected from its thematic or musical ideas. In this example, Porter proved that he could continue to write songs in his own way without detracting from the metatext of *Kiss Me, Kate* as implied by a non-integrated reading.

In similar terms, several of the dance moments, including the interlude in ‘Another Op’nin’, Another Show’, the ‘Rose Dance’, and the sequence at the end of ‘Too Darn Hot’, draw attention to the act of dancing as much as to the performance spectacle. The story that Porter simply produced ‘Bianca’ together to appease Harold Lang might arguably serve to explain its disconnect from the rest of Act Two, Scene Six, in which the gunmen cancel Fred’s I.O.U and Lilli walks out of the production.⁷³ However, this is largely in character with other sections of the score as has been outlined in Chapter Three and the number allows Bill to react to Lois’ flirtations before the show returns to

⁷² *The Dean Martin Show*, Episode No. 20, first broadcast February 3, 1966 on NBC, directed by Greg Garrison and written by Harry Crane; Melena Ryzik, ‘Meryl Streep Does a Number on Donald Trump at Public Theater’s Gala’ *New York Times*. June 7, 2015, accessed June 10, 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/08/theater/meryl-streep-donald-trump-public-theater.html>.

⁷³ George Eells, *The Life That Late He Led*, 246. (Also referenced by Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 226.)

the main narrative. Following the second chorus, 'Bianca' ends with an extended dance sequence with no narrative function but to showcase the dancer performing. Rather than this disconnect demonstrating poor writing as has been implied by Ethan Mordden, 'Bianca' continues the tenuous forced rhyme featured in other parts of the score and then becomes a vehicle for the dancer.⁷⁴ Whilst Porter might have been satirising Lang and his ambition to be a lead soloist in the show, it clear that Holm was anxious to give him as many dance opportunities as possible and when contextualised, it is not out of character with the rest of the show.

This dance sequence has become a feature number in numerous subsequent productions, affecting both the choreography and casting.⁷⁵ For this moment, Kathleen Marshall's choreography for the Blakemore production had performer Michael Berresse leaping, tumbling and back flipping across the set before climbing the three-storey set to reach Lois's dressing room. The demonstration of physical prowess contributes to the subtextual connection between dance and virility, which establishes Bill as the natural match for Lois, but ultimately showcases the act of performance.⁷⁶ Similarly, in the semi-staged BBC Proms performance (2014), Tony Yazbeck (Bill) performed a solo tap sequence to an assemblage of chorus girls, which included a reconstruction of a dance arrangement from the original London production.⁷⁷ At the end of this passage, Yazbeck tapped in call-and-response, in counterpoint, and then in deliberate sequence with the snare drum (unsupported by any other orchestration), drawing attention to his skill and footwork.⁷⁸ In these examples alone, 'Bianca' becomes a focal dance moment without

⁷⁴ Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin'*, 257-8.

⁷⁵ For example, in *Kiss Me, Kate* Sidney and Cummings cast up-and-coming dancer Tommy Rall who became known for his acrobatic style. Michael Blakemore chose established Broadway name Michael Berresse, who also performed in the London transfer. For the Old Vic production (2012), Nunn cast Australian film star Adam Garcia, who had garnered acclaim in the UK in the original London cast of *Wicked* starring opposite Idina Menzel as Fiyero and for a revival of *Tap Dogs*. Again, the Proms performance employed Tony Yazbeck, one of two established Broadway performer in the cast.

⁷⁶ As with Fred and Lilli, the emotional connection and enduring pairing of Bill and Lois is intrinsic to the success of *Kiss Me, Kate* and this is established by showing their similarities as well as instances of affection and engagement with one another.

⁷⁷ *Kiss Me, Kate* by Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, [Programme]. [Stage] Directed by Shaun Kerrison. August 2, 2014. BBC Proms, Royal Albert Hall, London.

⁷⁸ The RSC production by contrast had much less conventionally virtuosic dancing but incorporated aspects of modern dance and mime, which contrasted substantially with the other choreography in the show. *Kiss Me, Kate*, directed by Chris Hunt. [DVD]; RSC TS/2/2/1987/KISI: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], disc 2.

supporting the narrative or characterisation but contributes to the overall showcase of performance that is central to the design of *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Although 'Bianca' was cut from Sidney's film adaptation of *Kiss Me, Kate*, the latter incorporates a similar intricate and playful tap sequence across the theatre roof top for Bill (Tommy Rall) and Lois (Ann Miller) at the end of 'Why Can't You Behave?' which serves as a comparable substitute. Following Miller's 'Too Darn Hot' two scenes earlier, this is the only other extended dance sequence that takes place in the backstage locale of the film.⁷⁹ In addition to quick paced pair work, Hermes Pan's choreography has Rall swinging on ropes and leaping on hidden trampolines, building additional scale and artifice into the sequence by experimenting with speed, height and space.⁸⁰ Not only does this heighten the impact of Rall's balletic movements in contrast to the tap sections and faux boxing match with Miller, it also undermines any potential naturalism that might be read into the dramatic moment. Rall's feet fly towards the camera lens and he completes a sequence of leaps and bounces, as Miller watches, not moments after he cartwheels along the ledge of the roof. Just as the BBC Proms performances showed off rhythmic interplay between the dancer and the orchestra, Rall is shown in 'extreme situations', taking risks, without there ever being a sense of genuine danger. Rather, this context draws attention to him, the dancer, and the ease and fluidity with which he executes the routine.

In Sidney's film adaptation, all of Bill's solo work (e.g. 'the Rose Dance') has been removed, relegating him to a supporting dancer in 'Tom, Dick or Harry' and part of a pair in 'From This Moment On'.⁸¹ Therefore, the 'Why Can't You Behave?' dance sequence acts in lieu of these other opportunities that are less pertinent to the film. Abandoning naturalism, linearity and spontaneity, the sequence is clearly contrived and has no concept of realism. Even when Miller pretends to be anxious as Rall dances on 'the edge' of the building, her movements are so exaggerated that she looks more like a helpless damsel in an animation.⁸² Therefore, any indication of peril is undermined while adding

⁷⁹ Lilli and Fred briefly waltz during the staging of Wunderbar but they are only briefly in shot whilst dancing together.

⁸⁰ This also prefaces later use of wires and raised platforms in the dance passages of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

⁸¹ In the 3D version of *Kiss Me Kate*, there are cutaway shots of Lois preparing to dance onstage during Fred and Lilli's conversations in the wings. Bill is never given a leading role in the dance. George Sidney, *Kiss Me Kate* [DVD] [3D cut].

⁸² Indeed, Miller's hair, make-up and costume loosely resemble Olive Oyl from *Popeye*.

to the spectacle of this sequence. Indeed, it is this spectacle, coupled with the self-awareness evident when watching Rall dance (even as Miller becomes his audience), that subverts an integrated reading of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Pan's choreography has evident symmetry with 'Bianca' in the original Broadway production, demonstrating how dance is used in numerous iterations of the show as a method of display rather than as a narrative vehicle that relates to the plot.

In his writing on integration, Block signposts this construction as part of the pre-*Oklahoma!* era, explaining that: 'Before *Oklahoma!*, dances, when they followed a song, were considered more an accessory than an essential to the development of the story. Critics of non-integrated dance numbers are prone to accuse such numbers of stopping the show, when in fact these glorious extraneous moments *are* the show.'⁸³ Block describes this fragmentation as a joy of non-integrated shows. However, in *Kiss Me, Kate*, these moments, including 'Bianca,' 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and 'Too Darn Hot', also contribute to the intertextual layers of the text. This is far richer than a sequence of songs and dances tacked onto a flimsy plot and exemplifies the creative priority to divert the audience above telling an eloquent story.

***Kiss Me, Kate*, operetta and classical influences**

The integrated reading constructs a hierarchy of musicals based on an aesthetic relationship between the elements of the work (including the costumes and set design as well as the text, music, and movement). Therefore, those shows that can be categorised as drawing less attention to the differences of state between song, dance, and speech have been disassociated from others in which this is not deemed to be a dramatic priority. Alongside this, musicologists including Block, Swain and Siebert have correlated successful integration with the use of classical compositional techniques and references to art music and opera.⁸⁴ In this context, the analysis of musical features (such as the vocal cadenza in 'Finale Act One' of *Kiss Me, Kate*) becomes part of an intrinsic

⁸³ Geoffrey Block, 'Integration,' *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, 101.

⁸⁴ In the introduction to *Enchanted Evenings*, Block explains his analytical priorities explaining his focus on: 'integrated and more operatically constructed musicals filled with such techniques such as leitmotifs, foreshadowing, ... and classical borrowings.' Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 8.

separation between types of musical and the ambitions of composers to translate stage musicals into a distinct aesthetic arena.⁸⁵

Because of the complex range of musical ideas in *Kiss Me, Kate*, many of which have their origins in classical music, scholars position this show in a different musical sphere to Porter's previous works despite his early ballet *Within the Quota*, some of the musical character of *Jubilee* (1935) or his work alongside Stravinsky for *Seven Lively Arts*. However, this is predicated on the notion that *Kiss Me, Kate* is closer to an operetta than a conventional stage musical as well as being Porter's best attempt to create an integrated text. Block particularly characterizes *Kiss Me, Kate* as one of eight operettas in his 'canonical twelve' musicals as part of his article on the Broadway canon in *The Journal of Musicology*.⁸⁶ In acknowledging the unusual musical identity of the show, Block continues to situate *Kiss Me, Kate* in definitive terms: 'The contemporary operetta/musical comedy hybrid *Kiss Me, Kate* is taxonomically more ambiguous, but arguably shares more features commonly associated with operetta.'

In addition to noting *Kiss Me, Kate*'s established performance history as 'the most frequently performed musical in light opera houses around the world', Block identifies the vocal demands of the lead roles as one of the determining factors that situates *Kiss Me, Kate* as an operetta – 'As with most operettas, operatically trained singers are handy for those cast in the lead roles (Lilli/Kate and Fred/Petruccio).'⁸⁷ Whilst it is clear that Porter demonstrates his understanding of numerous classical forms and ideas, there is little evidence that he aimed to shape *Kiss Me, Kate* as an operetta. The unused and cut songs reveal that he definitely experimented with form and style including more legitimate songs (with sincere dramatic lyrics rather than satirical or humorous themes) like 'We Shall Never Be Younger'. However, this is not substantially reflected in the original Broadway score and ignores the jazz sections of the show as well as the satire of classical music demonstrated in 'Wunderbar', 'Finale Act One' and 'Where Is The Life That Late I Led?'

Siebert situates the richness of the *Kiss Me, Kate* score as the final actualisation of Porter's education and musical development, building this narrative – that *Kiss Me, Kate*

⁸⁵ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 120-1 (Bars 52-60).

⁸⁶ Geoffrey Block, 'The Broadway canon from Show Boat to West Side Story and the European Operatic Ideal', *The Journal of Musicology*, 11 (1993), accessed February 20, 2017. doi: 10.2307/764025, 539-40.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

is the manifestation of Porter's maturing compositional abilities – as part of her underlying argument that he needed to respond to the challenge set by Rodgers and Hammerstein.⁸⁸ She directly correlates the 'strong classical orientation' of Porter's score (including 'unbroken thematic development', 'cadential extension through deceptive cadences and codas' and 'more pervasive use of functional-diatonic classical harmonies') with integration, writing:

Not only do [the songs] arise out of the dialogue, they also provide musical portraits of the characters, and detail the evolution of personalities in the course of the script. Consequently, the songs are more emotionally "honest" and there is a larger proportion of openly expressive songs in *Kate*...⁸⁹

Here Siebert links integration in *Kiss Me, Kate* with her argument that Porter had embraced richer aesthetic ambitions as a response to the demand for a new, more earnest musical.

It might be argued that Porter's use of musical styles to characterise the different identities and temporalities in *Kiss Me, Kate* separates this work from his other musicals. However, this discourse overlooks the use of most of the score's 'classical' features in context. For example, Katherine's cadenza in 'Finale Act One' (bars 52-60 (transcribed in Figure 5.2)) interrupts the structure of the song as a whole: it contrasts with the antiphony before it.⁹⁰ Here Porter mocks the cadenza, loosely referencing the famous sequence between flute and soprano during Act Two, Scene Five ('the mad scene') of Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*.⁹¹ Porter mocks *Lucia* and the use of the dramatic cadenza by alluding to the 'mad scene' (after Lucia has murdered her husband in their wedding bed) as he characterises Katherine's frustrated temper tantrum.⁹² This is

⁸⁸ Lynn Laitman Siebert, *Cole Porter: an analysis of five musical comedies and a thematic catalogue of the complete works*, 349-50.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ The cadenza is also noted in Block's *Enchanted Evenings* as well as by Siebert. Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 224; Lynn Laitman Siebert, *Cole Porter: an analysis of five musical comedies and a thematic catalogue of the complete works*, 291.

⁹¹ The Donizetti score does not include annotation of a cadenza of this nature. It has been fairly widely accepted that this feature, in which 'Lucia' performs an extensive 'improvisation' accompanied by a solo flautist, was introduced by Nellie Melba in the late 1880s. Numerous star sopranos including Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland have performed their own noted interpretations of the cadenza after Melba. Each version includes comparable echoing and doubling as seen in the extract from *Kiss Me, Kate* in Figure 5.2.

⁹² This is also ironic as Lucia is imagining happy marriage with her true love.

humour is made more evident by the performance direction noted in the published script and critical edition – ‘angrily, in the paroxysm of coloratura’ – and through the mirroring of Katherine’s vocal phrases (see Figure) in the orchestral part.⁹³ Here the interplay between Katherine and the piccolo (echoing gestures established in the *Lucia* cadenza) once again undermines the notion of spontaneity in the score, laughing at the artifice of an ‘improvisation’ that is clearly rehearsed. As such, Porter’s cadenza is more than a performance flourish; it reacts to a dramatic performance convention, connecting the classical theatre (the *Taming of the Shrew* wedding) with grand opera whilst simultaneously making fun of the conventions it employs.

⁹³ The full stage direction reads: ‘(As KATHARINE starts coloratura, a girl enters carrying a bird. At the end of coloratura bird goes up in air. FIRST GUNMAN shoots at bird. Bird drops to stage, generally on BAPTISTA’s hat.)’ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* [Critical Edition], 175-6; Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 317.

Quasi Cadenza
 KATE: *Angrily*

Nev - er, nev-er, ne ³ ver, nev - er,

ne - ver, ne-ver, nev - er,

ne - ver, ne - ver, ne - ver, ne - ver, ne - ver, ne - ver, ne - ver, ne - ver, Ne - ver!

Stop! Joke... (bird and shot)

Figure 5.2: Katherine's cadenza in 'Finale Act One'⁹⁴

The tradition of operetta that includes aspects of mistaken identity, dressing-up, intrigue and farce clearly correlates with parts of *The Taming of the Shrew*, especially as it is portrayed in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Similarly, the backstage narrative lends itself to aspects of the form with Fred and Lilli as domineering leading characters at odds who then reconcile via a series of comedic incidents. However, Siebert and Block position this

⁹⁴ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 120-1. (See also Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate* [Critical Edition], 175-6.)

reading as part of naturalism in the construction of certain musicals. This is predicated on a seamless blend of dramatic elements throughout the show that is not realised in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Instead, the gunmen interrupt the coherence of *The Taming of the Shrew* whilst subverting the realism of the backstage narrative. Similarly, 'Wunderbar' begins as a parody of sincere performance as well as being part of the exposition of Fred and Lilli's emotions. The classical aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate* form a significant part of the identity of the show because Porter signposts them with such self-awareness but they are other from the rest of the score and he laughs at them. It is, arguably, this conceit that helps *Kiss Me, Kate* function so successfully in an opera house context. Just as the audience is able to recognise and laugh at the jokes in 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', they are able to laugh at the jokes at the expense of grand opera.

Characterising moralism, narrative truth, integration and high art values in *Kiss Me, Kate* is consistently problematized by different features of the score as well as the book. Because integration is so closely associated with the creative decision-making of the composer/lyricist, it also prioritises the score as the fundamental element of the text that unifies the other elements. As a result, this chapter has focused on how Porter persistently avoids and undermines the descriptors associated with integration throughout *Kiss Me, Kate*. The contemporary aspects of the score, particularly in the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes, have been downplayed in scholarly literature rather than celebrated as integral to the character of this work. As such, the conscious disruption of the Elizabethan context of *The Taming of the Shrew* demonstrates Porter's decision to shape the musical language of the show in this particular way. There is no question that either Porter or Spewack hoped to write a serious or earnest musical in the model outlined earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, it is obvious that Porter sought opportunities to be playful (in both music and lyrics) and to persistently undermine the sincerity of *The Taming of the Shrew*, developing the intertextuality written into the book by Spewack.

CHAPTER SIX

KISS ME, KATE AS A SHAKESPEAREAN MUSICAL: INTERPRETING INTERTEXTUALITY AND METATHEATRE

Kiss Me, Kate is understandably categorised as one of the most influential ‘Shakespeare musicals’ written for the Broadway stage. Consequently, many reviewers and scholars frame it in the context of earlier examples, especially citing Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart’s hit *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938) and the all-African-American jazz spectacle *Swingin’ the Dream* (1939) (which ran for only 13 performances) as its significant forerunners.¹ However, the ‘Shakespearean’ reception of *Kiss Me, Kate* is comparably complex to the literature on *Kiss Me, Kate* and the integrated musical. While *Kiss Me, Kate* simultaneously exploits *The Taming of the Shrew* and builds on the reception of Shakespeare’s plays in American popular culture, it also has unique characteristics that are completely separate from its reference work. While it is not necessary to be familiar with the story of *Romeo and Juliet* to enjoy *West Side Story* (1957), it would still be possible for an unenlightened audience member to provide a reasonably accurate summary of Shakespeare’s play (including the Tybalt/Mercutio subplot) from Arthur Laurents’ book. By contrast, *Kiss Me, Kate* does not incorporate numerous characters,

¹ An adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Boys from Syracuse* received excellent reviews and ran for 235 performances. With some similarity to the reception to *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Variety* praised *Syracuse* as a ‘musical smash’, pinpointing Rodgers and Hart’s score as ‘the single outstanding highlight of the production’. In contrast to this success, *Swingin’ the Dream*, adapted from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, ran very briefly. The show featured an impressive cast including Louis Armstrong, with music directed by Benny Goodman and choreography by Agnes de Mille. However, contemporary reviews criticised the substantial amount of original Shakespeare used, which detracted from the musical experience. Brooks Atkinson wrote in the *New York Times*: ‘Nothing that is left in the hodge-podge of Shakespeariana that opened at the Center Theatre last evening can hold a candle to the virtuosity of the Benny Goodman sextet. [...] But the going is heavy through long stretches of the evening. As an example of this legacy in the subsequent reception to *Kiss Me Kate*, John Heilpurn uses this context in an online review of Blakemore’s 1999 revival: ‘It wasn’t, incidentally, the first Broadway musical to be based on a play by Shakespeare. (The 1938 *The Boys from Syracuse* by Rodgers and Hart was inspired by *The Comedy of Errors*.) It was the first to use whole chunks of Shakespeare. The Bard and Cole Porter-wordsmiths, both.’ John Heilpurn, ‘This Kiss Me, Kate Comeback Is the Swellest Gig in Town’, *Observer*, November 29, 1999, accessed on March 23, 2017. <http://observer.com/1999/11/this-kiss-me-kate-comeback-is-the-swelld-gig-in-town/>; ‘Plays on Broadway – Boys from Syracuse’, *Variety*, November 30, 1938, 48, accessed December 15, 2015. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1476052222?accountid=9735>; Brooks Atkinson, ‘The Play: Swinging Shakespeare’s ‘Dream’ with Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong and Maxine Sullivan’, *New York Times*, November 30, 1939, accessed December 15, 2015. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/102900804?accountid=13828>.

central plot details or structures from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Furthermore, the onstage production is not a coherent performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* and the details of Shakespeare's play are frequently obscured as the Baltimore plotline takes over.

Some contemporary critics including Brooks Atkinson frame the use of the play in *Kiss Me, Kate* minimally, noting that 'Shakespeare has supplied a few bedraggled scenes from "The Taming of the Shrew"', which are used 'as a springboard' for the backstage narrative.² Others, such as Mark Barron, explain that whilst there is a lot of enjoyable, original material, 'the ending of "Kiss Me, Kate" is conventional enough to excite everyone and at the same time, prevent Shakespearean purists from rising indignantly from their seats to hurry to their portmanteaus to write an indignant letter to the editor'.³ However, Bella Spewack comments in her introduction to the published script that an audience member in London described *Kiss Me, Kate* as 'a skit' on *The Taming of the Shrew* to a confused companion.⁴ In a similar way, Richard Watts Jr. (the *New York Post*) includes Shakespeare as one of the contributors to the show, framing his rave review with: 'Since there is nothing to do but make this notice a list of tributes to those involved, I might as well begin with the popular and successful William Shakespeare'.⁵ He continues:

There is a surprising amount of "The Taming of the Shrew" in the excellent book that Bella and Samuel Spewack have devised by a simple and sensible process of mixing the Shakespearean play with the fortunes of a modern actor and actress who are appearing in it. The scheme turns out exceptionally well and it only remains to be said that the team of Shakespeare and Spewack works as harmoniously as the collaboration of Spewack and Cole Porter.⁶

In these examples alone, there is a lack of consensus about the functional purpose of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate*. The last example by Watts serves as a useful demonstration that, to some, the relatively scant use of *The Taming of the Shrew* had

² Brooks Atkinson, 'At the Theatre', *New York Times*, December 31, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

³ Mark Barron, 'New Show Rings Bell', *Kansas City MO Times*, December 31, 1948 [YISG Scrapbook].

⁴ Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction', in Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), xi.

⁵ Richard Watts Jr., 'New Musical Comedy Lives Up to Promise,' *New York Post* (Home News), December 31, 1948, 8 [YISG Scrapbook].

⁶ Ibid.

considerable impact on the text. It is also striking that Watts excludes Porter as a participant in collaboration with William Shakespeare.

Whereas the scholarship on integration consistently defines how *Kiss Me, Kate* does or does not conform with its analytical framework, the literature on the role of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* is more varied. Geoffrey Block cleverly uses the analogy of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the subtitle of his chapter ‘*Kiss Me, Kate: The Taming of Cole Porter*’, signposting William Shakespeare as the second of ‘Two Tough Acts To Follow’ for Porter and the Spewacks.⁷ In this way, he characterises the domineering creative influence of Rodgers and Hammerstein and of Shakespeare over the creative development of the show. However, his chapter focuses on the process of bringing the text into being – e.g. he details the timeline of changes made to *The Taming of the Shrew* in the script drafts – but does not define how Shakespeare or his play contribute to the musical.⁸

Irene Dash argues the significance of *The Taming of the Shrew* to nearly every aspect of *Kiss Me, Kate* in her chapter on the musical. She writes that ‘Shakespeare sets the pattern’ from which the key issues arise.⁹ Drawing on a study of the Spewack papers, Dash emphasises how Spewack (and Porter) readdressed *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* by focusing on a woman’s need to choose between domesticity and pursuing a career. However, she allows the authors very little original creative input, linking the frame, characterisation, sexual politics and staging of *Kiss Me, Kate* to the original Shakespeare play or to the Fontanne/Lunt production (1935). Here Dash highlights the personal influence of Bella Spewack (who she names as the first female adaptor of *The Taming of the Shrew* on the American stage) and Hanya Holm on the development of *Kiss Me, Kate*, following in the path of Lynn Fontanne and Caroline Hancock (set-designer) on their production of *The Taming of the Shrew*.¹⁰ As such, she correlates the success of *Kiss Me, Kate* to the complex influence of powerful women who re-interpreted *The Taming of the Shrew* for modern audiences. Crucially, Dash celebrates *Kiss Me, Kate* through her analysis of its fundamental overlap with *The Taming of the Shrew* in almost every detail;

⁷ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 215.

⁸ Block explains the unexpected introduction of ‘Brush Up Shakespeare’ and provides a succinct overview of the adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* through the script drafts. Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 225-6.

⁹ Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, 52-3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62-3, 65-6.

she reads the musical as complex and sophisticated because of the permeating representation of *The Shrew* in every level of the show.

In contrast, Shakespearean scholar Barbara Hodgdon situates *Kiss Me, Kate* alongside other adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*, distancing it (especially the film adaption) from Shakespeare's original text. She begins her brief discussion of *Kiss Me, Kate* by explaining that 'this *Shrew* quite literally swings to a different tune', continuing that:

Ultimately, *Kiss Me, Kate* is less interested in shrewing around than in placating, through song and dance, the cultural tensions of screwing around: wiving it wealthily in Padua takes second place to floating desire, affecting unruly women... and ex-husbands alike...¹¹

Hodgdon, alongside fellow Shakespearean scholar Frances Teague, emphasises how *Kiss Me, Kate* brings (or indeed, returns) 'Shakespeare' to the popular cultural sphere.¹² For Teague as well as Tetsuo Kiski and Carol E. Silverberg, *Kiss Me, Kate* forms part of a wider research focus on Shakespeare in popular theatre. Kiski and Silverberg each consider Shakespeare and the American musical in their respective publications whilst Teague employs some comparison between *Kiss Me, Kate* and Rodgers and Hart's *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938) as part of her analysis of the show.¹³ Without saying so, these chapters suggest that *Kiss Me, Kate* sits parallel to the reception of *The Taming of the Shrew* but that its identity as a popular stage musical returns *The Shrew* to a comparable aesthetic context as its first Elizabethan performances. Yet these authors also superimpose aspects of *The Taming of the Shrew* onto *Kiss Me, Kate* (e.g. by arguing that Shakespeare's framing character Christopher Sly has been incorporated into other roles) in order to illustrate how Shakespeare has permeated the text in a wide-reaching way.

Building on this, Elinor Parsons presents a detailed examination of various screen adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* in her doctoral thesis, positioning the original Broadway production, Sidney's film adaptation, and the London recording of the 1999 revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of her wider analysis of 'frames' in Shakespeare's

¹¹ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*, 20.

¹² Ibid; Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the Popular American Stage*, 141.

¹³ Tetsuo Kiski, 'Shakespeare and the Musical', 157-167; Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 49-98; Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage*, 140-1.

play.¹⁴ She identifies specific meta-levels in these versions of *Kiss Me, Kate* in order to demonstrate how the play-within-a-play format acts as a sophisticated equivalent to the metatheatricality in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Here Parsons simultaneously acknowledges *Kiss Me, Kate*'s independence from *The Taming of the Shrew* and presents numerous methods of reading the text exclusively from a Shakespearean perspective.¹⁵ Importantly, her thesis draws attention to nuances of Hodgdon and Teague's work that ascribe unused features of *The Taming of the Shrew* to *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Because of the success of Spewack and Porter's intertextual parallels and the complex layering of a stage musical, it is not possible (or appropriate) to isolate what is connected to *The Taming of the Shrew* and what is 'original' in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Instead, this chapter addresses the concern that scholars consider *The Taming of the Shrew* as a defining stimulus for *Kiss Me, Kate*. It questions the pertinence of a Shakespeare-centric reading of the musical and examines how a prioritisation of *The Taming of the Shrew* can limit our understanding of *Kiss Me, Kate* and its interest to contemporary scholars and audiences. As a result, this chapter is divided to address three central ideas that permeate readings of the show: (1) representing *Kiss Me, Kate* as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, (2) defining its metatheatrical structure as entirely derivative from *The Taming of the Shrew*, and (3) locating discarded Shakespearean narratives and characters throughout the musical. Through these themes, this chapter comments on the need to *find* Shakespeare in *Kiss Me, Kate* and argues that emphasising *The Taming of the Shrew* in isolation from the rest of the content of the plot overlooks key features of the work as a whole.

Reading *Kiss Me, Kate* as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*

A definition of the relationship between *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew* is perhaps complicated by the use of language in various acknowledgments to Shakespeare preserved in the published materials. For example, the Faber Music published vocal

¹⁴ Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 2, 16, 132.

¹⁵ Silverberg and Parsons also consider whether *Kiss Me, Kate* can be interpreted as part of *The Taming of the Shrew*'s perceived misogynistic legacy. This aspect of the Shakespearean reception will be discussed throughout Chapter Seven of this thesis. Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 5. Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 110.

score includes the subtitle 'based on *The Taming of the Shrew*'¹⁶ and the first published script includes the dedication 'To W.S. from B.S. and S.S.'¹⁷ These examples recognise the place of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* but are not necessarily a reflection of the details of the show. While the musical directly quotes *The Taming of the Shrew* and Spewack exploits its central plot device as part of the backstage narrative, it is not just about *The Taming of the Shrew*, nor does the backstage storyline follow *The Shrew*. In other words, parts of *Kiss Me, Kate* are completely independent from Shakespeare's play.

Instead of interpreting these acknowledgements as significant credits to the weighty influence of Shakespeare, they can be read as similarly playful to the appropriation of Shakespeare's play titles in 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'. In light of the stark irreverence of Sam and Bella's introduction to the Knopf edition of the script, their dedication can also be perceived as a light-hearted statement, along the lines of 'Look what we did!' Indeed, the Spewacks' and Porter's references to *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate*, after the original Broadway production opened, vary considerably.¹⁸ They reflect the different approaches evident in the genesis, reaffirming that there was no definitive vision for the final show. As a result, neither Porter nor the Spewacks were able to characterise an approach to adapting *The Shrew* because the writing process was not directed in this way.

Indeed, the Spewacks' introduction to the published script humorously characterises a practical detachment from *The Taming of the Shrew*, which could be misinterpreted when approaching *Kiss Me, Kate* from the modern perspective that *The Shrew* is a classic text. Their overview, 'How to Collaborate with W. Shakespeare', prefaces a similar description titled 'How to Collaborate with C. Porter', which begins: 'With Porter it is a little bit different. You can't attack him with shears and paste, and you can't spread him out on the bed or the floor [...]'¹⁹ Here the Spewacks have chosen this tone deliberately. As is clear in both Sam and Bella's letters throughout their involvement in the history of *Kiss Me, Kate*, they moderated their language to suit the

¹⁶ This is also noted by Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 112.

¹⁷ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 1; Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction' in Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), v.

¹⁸ Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction' in Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf); Bella Spewack, 'My Life with Shakespeare', *Musical Stages*, 1-2. [CU BSS 37]; Cole Porter, 'Kate and I', *Sonny Disc Digest*. April 1949, 5-6 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹⁹ Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction' in Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), x. (For full quotation, see Appendix 2.)

context and audience. In this introduction, they adopt a playful tone while characterising their collaboration with Porter in comparison to working with a fixed text (that is also a revered work of classical theatre). Importantly, this example supports the archival evidence that neither Spewack was invested in preserving *The Taming of the Shrew* in any artistic context beyond that which served the backstage narrative.

The challenge of defining the nature of the relationship between *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Kiss Me, Kate* is also complicated by the linguistic and cultural connotations associated with adaptation and appropriation. In her monograph on these processes and their related theories, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders provides a useful framework for understanding the complexities of both topics in the popular arts. She highlights the pervasiveness of source texts in musicals, noting: ‘The stage and film musical [is] an inherently adaptational form, often reworking canonical plays, poems and novels into a mode that deploys song and dance to deliver its narrative.’²⁰ Building on the premise that most works are the result of some process of evolution, Sanders then presents a complex analysis of a network of connections between texts including novels, plays, films and musicals.²¹ She suggests that most adaptations involve one or more of several creative processes - to offer a comment on a source, to attempt to make a text relevant or to transition a text from one genre to another (e.g. a play into a musical) - whereas ‘appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain’.²²

In this context, Sanders briefly discusses *Kiss Me, Kate*, framing it as ‘both adaptation and appropriation at the same time’:

Audiences register two levels of adaptation and appropriation. The embedded ‘*The Shrew*’ musical is a more straightforward adaptation, ... reworking the characters and events in a song and dance format. As a result, many of the central songs, including ‘I Hate Men’, derive from the musical-within-the-musical.²³

²⁰ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 27.

²¹ For example, Sanders suggests that Porter’s contribution to *Kiss Me, Kate* ‘was clearly an informing influence’ for Kenneth Branagh when making his film adaptation of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1999). Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 23.

²² Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 18-19; 26.

²³ *Ibid.*, 28.

Sanders continues to suggest that the metatheatrical structure of *Kiss Me, Kate* is 'quasi-Shakespearean', noting the repeated use of the play-within-a-play device in Shakespeare's plays. She argues: 'If the pure adaptation rests in the embedded musical, then the appropriative aspect is found in the wider framework story of the US theatre performers and in the related subplot of the Mafia henchmen seeking debt repayment...'²⁴. Here Sanders hedges the chance to label *Kiss Me, Kate* as an adaptation but it is also clear that her reading privileges *The Taming of the Shrew* and Shakespeare as the most significant influences on the text that permeates its component narratives. However, this approach is problematised by her own explanation that '[the] spectator or reader must be able to participate in the play of similarity and difference perceived between the original, source, or inspiration to appreciate fully the reshaping or rewriting undertaken by the adaptive text'.²⁵ Sanders is suggesting that any *Kiss Me, Kate* audience should be able to make differentiations between the original *Taming of the Shrew* and its representation in *Kiss Me, Kate*.

However, *Kiss Me, Kate* incorporates relatively little of the *Taming of the Shrew* text in its libretto once the characters and their motivations have been established. It is clear that the authors actively selected sections of *The Taming of the Shrew* that facilitated parallels between or heightened the backstage drama of *Kiss Me, Kate*.²⁶ As

²⁴ Ibid., 28-9.

²⁵ This description is not unique to Sanders. In her monograph *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon offers a similar position: 'Knowing or unknowing, we experience adaptations across media differently than we do adaptations within the same medium. But even in the latter case, adaptation as adaptation involves, for its knowing audience, an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing.' Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 45; Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* ([S.l.], Routledge, 2012), 139.

²⁶ Irene Dash makes a compelling and detailed argument about how *Kiss Me, Kate* translates aspects of *The Taming of the Shrew* into sections of the backstage storyline, providing an alternate perspective on adaptation. For example, she suggests that Lilli and Lois' relationship with Harrison Howell mimics the relationship between Katherine, Bianca and Baptista in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Dash suggests that Lilli and Lois have a 'shared intimacy' because of their ties to Howell, affirming his economic, social and political status that they do not share (just as Baptista has similar agency over his daughters, treating them each as goods to bargain away even though he shows them varying interest and affection). Dash continues to suggest that while Shakespeare's Petruchio is a 'frightening portrait of a husband' (to Elizabethan *and* modern audiences), Bella Spewack has translated this so that Howell becomes 'the new horror'. She suggests that ideas of *The Taming of Shrew* continue to be transmitted through *Kiss Me, Kate* as the trial of marrying an unpleasant man is replaced by the threat of marrying a boring one. However, this threat of marriage is a nuance of the backstage storyline. Like the presence of the gunmen, Howell (and marriage to him) has a catalytic effect on Fred and Lilli's romance that is not neatly linked back to *The Shrew*. While there is some similarity of agency between Baptista and Howell, they are not demonstrably linked. Furthermore, the underlying connection between Lilli and Lois that Dash

such, the revisions made between the May libretto and the original Broadway script demonstrate that pages of Shakespearean dialogue were discarded even after the substantial suitors' subplot and numerous minor characters had been removed. Secondly, this definition of adaptation assumes that audiences are sufficiently familiar with the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew* to re-insert the missing scenes and characters themselves. Yet none of the playbills or programmes for the original Broadway production, national tour or London transfer for *Kiss Me, Kate* include an overview of *The Taming of the Shrew*.²⁷ This suggests that a working knowledge of the Shakespearean plot (even as an aide-memoire) was deemed unnecessary to understand or enjoy *Kiss Me, Kate*. Finally, it presumes that the narrative details of *The Taming of the Shrew* are pertinent to the progress of *Kiss Me, Kate*, whereas the text is abandoned once the basic parallel between Katherine and Petruchio and Fred and Lilli has been established.

Clearly, adaptation is a complex process and it would be impossible to determine exactly what constitutes an 'authentic' adaptation. As such, Sanders makes it clear that she is not interested in faithfulness to the original sources as a measure of successful adaptation: 'The sheer possibility of testing fidelity in any tangible way is surely also in question when dealing with such labile texts as Shakespeare's plays. Adaptation studies are, then, not about making polarized value judgements, but about analysing process, ideology, and methodology'.²⁸ It would be hard to characterise *Kiss Me, Kate* as unfaithful to *The Taming of the Shrew* in so far as the authors quote the original text and employ the central narrative arc as part of telling the backstage storyline. Yet the Spewacks verbalise a clear ideological disconnect from the play in the introduction to the script. They each limited their engagement with the details of the play. Their individual 'processes' explore how *The Taming of the Shrew* best served the original features of the libretto. This is evidenced (as has been argued in Chapter Five) by the features of the backstage story that permeate the onstage drama (e.g. Bianca becomes like Lois; Lilli is overly aggressive as Katherine, having read the note with the flowers, etc.).

describes does not unify these women or their actions. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, we can recognise that Bianca and Katherine react in varied ways to the identical situation. This is not the case in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Indeed, Howell's character is insufficiently developed to show much influence over the drama of the text. As such, it does not mirror *The Taming of the Shrew* or impact *Kiss Me, Kate* enough to suggest it is a key interpretation of Shakespeare in this show. Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, 54-5.

²⁷ None of the programmes accessed by the author in this study include synoptic details of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

²⁸ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 20.

In more substantial terms, the idea that *Kiss Me, Kate* is or contains an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* is fundamentally undermined by the disintegration of the onstage performance as the show progresses.²⁹ *The Taming of the Shrew* is not straightforwardly adapted or appropriated: it is overwhelmed. As the backstage drama develops, it disturbs the onstage production, drawing attention away from 'the Shakespeare' and focusing on the collapse of the performance as a whole. This is exemplified in 'Finale Act One' when one of the gunmen shoots a prop bird after Katherine sings her 'never, never' cadenza.³⁰ The libretto indicates that the gunmen have already disrupted the progress of the wedding scene from the moment that they appear onstage with Lilli/Katherine. Later, when one gunman produces his gun and shoots the prop bird, it reasserts their interference with the performance, cutting through *The Taming of the Shrew* and reiterating all the performers' backstage identities.³¹ The significance of this intervention has been interpreted in numerous ways by different productions. Adrian Noble's RSC production particularly signposts these interruptions as the gunmen are dressed in garish dresses (reminiscent of Cinderella's ugly sisters) and they introduce several physical disturbances throughout the remaining *Taming of the Shrew* scenes.³² Given the context of the RSC's status as a classical theatre company that

²⁹ The RSC production includes an extra repetition of some of Baptista's lines from the opening of Act Two, Scene Eight at the beginning of Act Two, Scene Seven. The actor is interrupted by the gunmen and the cast leave the stage to allow for the beginning of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare.' This direction shows the disruption to *The Taming of the Shrew* rather than carrying on the internal performance as though nothing has happened. Later, Lilli completes the performance in her own clothes and not in costume, further signposting the backstage interventions rather than a legitimate performance of the play. RSC TS/2/2/1987/KIS1: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], disc 2.

³⁰ In addition to the reference to *Lucia di Lammermoor* noted in Chapter Five, Porter's cadenza is subversive here as the character overlap between Lilli and Katherine is completely blurred. It also delays the progress of the scene and interrupts the onstage action, pastiching and commenting on the musical convention in the same instance. Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 313-9.

³¹ As is noted in Chapter Two, the shooting is highlighted by Elizabeth Schafer as one of several details referencing the Fontanne/Lunt production. However, that gunshot prefaced Katherine's first entrance and was part of the characterisation of her role. Here the gunmen break the temporality of *The Taming of the Shrew* once again and draw attention to the people on the stage in their behind-the-scenes identities not as genuine characters in *The Taming of the Shrew*. We are perpetually reminded that the performance onstage is artificial. Elizabeth Schafer, 'Introduction' to *The Taming of the Shrew*, 32.

³² During the 'Finale Act One,' one gunman brandishes a handbag which is clearly shown to contain his gun. They both physically confront the cast during this scene, briefly attacking Bill, in order to create a perimeter around Lilli. In Act Two, Scene Three, one of the gunmen exits by back flipping over Petruchio's table before colliding with the door that the other gunman has opened into his face. The slapstick aspects of this representation heighten the comedy of these scenes. However, they situate the gunmen even more clearly in the tradition of early film comedy rather

preserves and promotes the works of Shakespeare, it is striking that this production amplifies this aspect of *Kiss Me, Kate*, undermining the integrity of *The Taming of the Shrew* even further than is indicated in Spewack's script.

Whilst the intertextual connection between *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew* is most visibly evidenced by the overlapping characterisation of Fred and Lilli, there are also striking differences between the contemporary figures and their characters. This means that while Fred and Lilli resemble their *Taming of the Shrew* characters, they are not Petruchio and Katherine. The dialogue in Act One, Scene One introduces the fragile relationship between Fred and Lilli and establishes them as the central, warring protagonists familiar from *The Taming of the Shrew* but also as the typical romantic heroes at odds as the result of a quarrel. Familiarity with *The Taming of the Shrew* enriches this characterisation but it is communicative as a familiar narrative construct without a working knowledge of the play. Then, the couple strike a truce in Act One, Scene Three, having reconnected during 'Wunderbar', demonstrating that there is residual understanding and emotional attachment between them. There is no context in *The Taming of the Shrew* to assume or interpret any emotional connection between Petruchio and Kate until the last stage of the play.³³

It is particularly interesting here that Bella Spewack constructed additional *Taming of the Shrew* scenes, which give Katherine, disguised as a boy, and Petruchio an amicable first encounter and lead Katherine to introduce the idea of Petruchio attempting to marry her.³⁴ Not only does Spewack give Katherine new agency over her future but she aligns *The Taming of the Shrew* with the backstage narrative. Irene Dash suggests that this characterisation reflected Bella Spewack's hatred of male dominance, which is reflected in the (cut) line – 'I pity the sex [women]' – which the disguised

than Shakespearean buffoons. RSC TS/2/2/1987/KIS1: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], discs 1 & 2.

³³ Some feminist interpretations of *The Taming of the Shrew* suggest that Katherine never submits emotionally to Petruchio but makes a life-preserving decision to humour him, whilst retaining her own mental independence. Penny Gay proposes that this is a performance decision, noting that: 'Many actresses, desperate for a romantic ending, argue that in the 'sun and moon' scene Kate learns to play Petruchio's game – even treating it as an erotic game.' In this context, Katherine *pretends* to give way rather than breaks under the pressure of the moment. Penny Gay, 'Farce: *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*', *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*, 27.

³⁴ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto – Spewack, 1-7-31-41.

Katherine state to Petruchio.³⁵ Dash suggests that Spewack was writing ‘on topic’, addressing the underlying suggestion that women had to marry (as is briefly highlighted in ‘I Hate Men’).³⁶ However, she situates her entire reading of *Kiss Me, Kate* in the context that *The Taming of the Shrew* dominates *Kiss Me, Kate*. She removes the possibility that Bella was playing with Shakespeare more independently or looking for a different humour or context for *The Shrew*. However, if we consider Bella’s additional storyline in which Katherine contrives Petruchio to be her potential suitor (especially in the knowledge of his misogynist attitudes) then every nuance of their relationship is altered. Spewack’s original scenes could have fundamentally changed *The Taming of the Shrew* and significantly disrupted the few remaining quotations of the text that are represented in *Kiss Me, Kate*.

As such, the scholarship underrepresents Bella Spewack’s contributions to *Kiss Me, Kate*. Although these scenes were discarded, they suggest that she considered the intertextuality between the works reflexively. By emphasising the thematic overlaps between *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, the current scholarship neglects to realise how Bella Spewack went beyond both *The Shrew* and the image of a disgruntled married couple to create *Kiss Me, Kate*. The adaptation reading focuses on how *The Taming of the Shrew* is manifested in the structure and body of the text. However, Bella’s faux-Shakespeare scenes demonstrate how she developed original ideas to serve her own creative agenda. Whilst this adds an additional layer to the intertextual impact of *The Taming of the Shrew* on *Kiss Me, Kate*, it also suggests that Spewack felt sufficiently free to construct ‘Shakespeare’ in order to suit her own purposes. As a result of this freedom and their lack of ideological engagement with *The Shrew*, *Kiss Me, Kate* cannot be effectively characterised in this way. Not only does the intertextuality of the backstage storyline change *The Taming of the Shrew* but it also goes significantly beyond the themes and details of Shakespeare’s original text.

Metatheatricality in *Kiss Me, Kate*

³⁵ Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, 57; CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 1-7-38.

³⁶ ‘Of course I’m awfully glad that Mother had to marry Father.’ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 299.

Several scholars have logically aligned the metatheatrical play-within-a-play device in *Kiss Me, Kate* with the use of *The Taming of the Shrew* as a source text. Frances Teague notes: 'Like Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Kiss Me, Kate* is both framed and reflexive'; the *Shrew* performance is contained within the Baltimore scenario but both aspects of the text feed into one another.³⁷ However, there is a continued lack of consistency in how this parallel can be effectively defined, demonstrating the priority to find Shakespeare in *Kiss Me, Kate* rather than to read the different sections of the text as part of an entire work. While the use of a metatheatrical device is a significant structural overlap between these texts, Shakespeare and Spewack use it to different effect in their respective writings. The framing of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* is unlike the external context in Shakespeare's text and this problematises comparisons between the two.

In her doctoral thesis, Elinor Parsons loosely interprets the use of metatheatricality in *Kiss Me, Kate* as connected to *The Taming of the Shrew*, explaining that 'Although it loses any straightforward structural equivalent to the Christopher Sly sequence, the complexity of its intertextual references and the manipulation of the on-stage/off-stage dynamic that it achieves is a particularly sophisticated equivalent to Shakespeare's framing device.'³⁸ Certainly, the intertextual connections between the two plotlines in *Kiss Me, Kate* are sufficiently rich that it is easy to attribute parallels to *The Taming of the Shrew* to the metatheatrical construct. Yet, this metatheatricality exists differently. Penny Gay argues that the Sly Induction (see Chapter Two for an overview) serves a dual purpose, which 'alert[s] the audience to the artificiality of theatre' and establishes distance between them and the 'cruelty and violence' of the play.³⁹ While the play-within-a-play frame draws attention to the theatricality of *Kiss Me, Kate* and the artifice of theatre, *The Taming of the Shrew* provides a lens through which to understand Fred and Lilli. Therefore, the internal performance persistently merges with what is happening backstage so that we are watching both plots at once. The intertextuality is such that the *Taming of the Shrew* sequences enable physical equality between Fred and Lilli (i.e. they each have 'legitimate' grounds to assault other) in complete contrast to the power

³⁷ Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the Popular American Stage*, 136.

³⁸ Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 112.

³⁹ Penny Gay, 'Farce: *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*', 28-9.

balance between Katherine and Petruchio.⁴⁰ However, the contemporary 1940s context limits their sparring to the *Shrew* scenes in recognition that they would not beat each other up in other circumstances. In contrast with the Sly Induction, which abstracts Petruchio's abuse of Katherine as a fiction, the play-within-the-play in *Kiss Me, Kate* facilitates violence between Fred and Lilli.

Again, this approach that situates metatheatre in *Kiss Me, Kate* alongside the Sly Induction is problematised by the inference that the audience knows that there is a metatheatrical aspect to *The Taming of the Shrew*. As Penny Gay notes, the Sly Induction is not always incorporated into productions of *The Taming of the Shrew*, particularly in the contemporary era.⁴¹ As has been noted previously, the details of *The Taming of the Shrew* are seldom signposted to audience members as a necessary point of reference watching *Kiss Me, Kate*. Therefore, there is no illustrative connection to Shakespeare's play and only laterally to the wider use of metatheatrical devices in Shakespeare's work. Whilst 'We Open in Venice' announces the beginning of the internal performance, acknowledging the play-within-a-play dimension of *Kiss Me, Kate*, this song functions efficiently whether the audience is aware of the Sly Induction frame in *The Taming of the Shrew* or not. The theoretical symmetry is pleasing but it is not vital to the dramaturgy of *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Hodgdon argues that the metatheatrical framework of *Kiss Me, Kate* is equivalent to the opening scenes of two film adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*: a Punch-and-Judy sequence beginning *The Taming of the Shrew* (1929) starring Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks Snr and the 'carnavalesque prologue' to Zeffirelli's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1966) starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor.⁴² Both her examples preface the primary narrative of *The Taming of the Shrew*, literally 'framing' a thematic aspect of the film to follow. As a result of this, Hodgdon intrinsically links the play-within-a-play structure in *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of the reception to theatricality in *The Taming of the Shrew*. She suggests that several adaptations of the play highlight performance (in the broadest) in order to contextualise the main narrative of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

⁴⁰ The gender politics of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Kiss Me, Kate* are explored thoroughly in Chapter Seven. However, it is worth noting that in *Kiss Me, Kate*, Lilli assaults Fred (several times) first. There is also no indication that she has any fear of his physical domination of her.

⁴¹ Penny Gay, 'Farce: *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*', 28-30.

⁴² Although he creates a unique sequence, Zeffirelli makes no use of or reference to the Sly Induction. Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*, 27.

However, *Kiss Me, Kate* comments on the performance conventions and expectations of the stage musical far beyond its use of *The Taming of the Shrew*. For example, Act One, Scene One establishes both the backstage construct and introduces *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁴³ Following this, ‘Another Op’nin’, Another Show’ comments on the tiered aspect of *Kiss Me, Kate* whereby performers are playing stagehands and actors who are then in a play.⁴⁴ It simultaneously announces that this musical is about people putting on a play (and during this number, it could be *any* play) and acts as ‘the opening number’ by situating the moment in time in a production cycle.⁴⁵ In some ways, this mirrors Hodgdon’s examples. However, the relationship between Fred and Lilli is only laterally framed in these examples. This commentary on ‘theatre-life’ is not exclusively linked to the main narrative of the show and Spewack and Porter’s representations of performance have few demonstrable connections to the *Taming of the Shrew* performance as is implied above.

Instead, ‘performance’ (or the process of acting) is essential to the details of Fred and Lilli’s relationship. For example, in the framing context of ‘Wunderbar’, Fred and Lilli realise that they are still in love with each other whilst re-enacting a romantic duet from their past. Moreover, ‘Wunderbar’ itself is framed as a stereotypical textual convention – the inevitable love duet – in the prefacing dialogue. Not only does the intentionally generic romantic lyric and waltz represent Fred and Lilli’s genuine emotional connection⁴⁶ but the song moment is also constructed to simultaneously acknowledge and satirise this convention.⁴⁷ As is shown in this example (as well as the

⁴³ Elinor Parsons notes that ‘The elision of character is clear at the beginning when Fred uses both names and calls for ‘Baptista... Harry’ and ‘Bianca... Lois’. There is an immediate textual relationship between the performers and their *Shrew* characters. Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 113.

⁴⁴ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 275-6.

⁴⁵ This is escalated in the 1999 revival in which ‘Another Op’nin’ replaces (and incorporates) the overture, beginning each performance.

⁴⁶ Tetsuo Kiski notes that: ‘An attentive listener will realize, however that the Jungfrau is more than four thousand metres high, and even if there were a chalet located in a still higher place, a secretly romping couple in it would be frozen to death in next to no time. [...] It is true that “Wunderbar” is meant to be a bad song from a bad operetta, but if it were only that, it would debase the affection between Fred and Lilli and irrevocably alienate the two central characters. What is striking about the song is that it is actually a tour de force, and in spite of its cheapness, it succeeds in capturing the *real* excitement of the love they once felt and no doubt still feel.’ Tetsuo Kiski, *Shakespeare and the Musical*, 163.

⁴⁷ In addition to this, Fred and Lilli pretend to play parts that they were never cast in, as leading man and woman, foreshadowing their dominance over the production of *The Taming of the Shrew* now that they have artistic and financial autonomy. With the exception of Bianca’s marriage, the

one above), Porter and Spewack experimented with different representations of performance and theatricality in *Kiss Me, Kate*. However, this exploration is closely linked to conventions of entertainment (to enthusiastic performance, to one-up-manship between star performers, to romantic tropes) that are not directly or evidently connected to *The Taming of the Shrew* despite Shakespeare's frequent use of metatheatricality in plays including *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* and *Othello*.⁴⁸

The basic parallel between play-within-a-play devices in both works does not sufficiently characterise the use of metatheatricality in *Kiss Me, Kate*, which is central to every element of the musical. Again, it does not give sufficient credit to Porter or Spewack for the deliberate thought that is apparent in the earliest development of this work. The approach that intrinsically links the Sly Induction and metatheatricality in *Kiss Me, Kate* also discards Subber's account of the inception of *Kiss Me, Kate* – that he observed Lunt and Fontanne fighting backstage during their 1935 production and felt it might be the basis of a show. It limits Bella Spewack's authorial contribution to *Kiss Me, Kate* by suggesting that she simply emulated structures already laid out by Shakespeare.⁴⁹ It also facilitates a binary reading of *Kiss Me, Kate* that has been used to define the score (particularly by Swain) as well as to construct temporal planes in *Kiss Me, Kate*. For example, Parsons reads the metatheatrical frame as the definitive feature of *Kiss Me, Kate* and highlights the use of juxtaposition and alternation in numerous aspects of the show.⁵⁰ As a result, she problematises the relationship between the metatextual layers of *Kiss Me, Kate* where the overture simultaneously prefaces the performance of *Kiss Me, Kate* and is a diegetic part of Act One, Scene One.

In attempting to map textual planes (on- and offstage), Parsons argues that diegetic music in the backstage rehearsal 'destabilises expectations of a straightforward'

impetus for which frames Petruchio's marriage to Katherine, the *Kiss Me, Kate* audience only see selected scenes from *The Taming of the Shrew* which revolve around Petruchio and/or Katherine.

⁴⁸ It is worth noting that Judd D. Hubert analyses numerous Shakespeare plays in his monograph *Metatheatricality: The Example of Shakespeare*. However, he makes very limited reference to *The Taming of the Shrew* because it does not frequently include 'linguistic signs that, [...] explicitly or implicitly designate the art of stagecraft or entertainment.' Hubert illustrates this with an example from *Macbeth* in which the title character alludes to being dressed up to give a performance, foreshadowing his role as the murderer later in the play by drawing on a recognisable convention of theatre. Judd D. Hubert, *Metatheatricality – The Example of Shakespeare* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 1.

⁴⁹ The lack of recognition of Spewack's influence over the book is also noted by Parsons. Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 110-11.

⁵⁰ Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 115.

separation between the two.⁵¹ Although she initially rejects the idea of reading *Kiss Me, Kate* as an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Parsons continues to rely on the concept that all of the *Taming of the Shrew* songs are based on and speak to the Shakespearean concept above all else. Yet the diverse musical style of the score subverts the temporality of *The Taming of the Shrew*, undermining the internal play's identity as a distinct textual plane. Whilst 'Tom, Dick or Harry' encompasses Bianca's romantic indifference to her potential suitors as demonstrated in Act Two, Scene One of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*,⁵² it is also clear (as has been demonstrated in Chapter Five of this thesis) that the popular style of the song juxtaposes with the Elizabethan setting and pairs it with 'Why Can't You Behave' and 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)'; Lois' musical identity is consistently aligned with contemporary music styles regardless of the 'location' of the number.

Locating Christopher Sly in *Kiss Me, Kate*

In addition to representing the framing devices in *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew* as intrinsically linked, several scholars have gone beyond this to find a textual representation of the character Christopher Sly in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Teague, Silverberg et al. each discuss how the Sly Induction has been incorporated or reflected in the structure of *Kiss Me, Kate* even as Spewack clearly indicated that '[in] adapting *The Shrew* for the play within the play, it was necessary to drop the entire opening.'⁵³ Yet there is a continued lack of consensus about how the character Sly exists in *Kiss Me, Kate*, demonstrating the need to locate parts of *The Taming of the Shrew* that are not easily found.

For example, Teague proposes that 'the book may suggest a parallel to the Shakespearean original, with Graham as the trickster Lord and Vanessi as his dupe,

⁵¹ Parsons consistently rejects the arguments presented by Dan Rebellato in his article on integration. However, she employs the same methodology, problematising the diegesis of the musical numbers in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 111 (see Note 28); Dan Rebellato, "No Theatre Guild Attraction Are We': *Kiss Me, Kate* and the Politics of the Integrated Musical', 101-156.

⁵² This is noted by Parsons, who explains how each of five less faithful songs in the *Shrew* score actually adheres to dramatic themes and characterisation in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 114-5.

⁵³ Bella Spewack and Sam Spewack, 'Introduction' in Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf), xvii.

Sly'.⁵⁴ She is implying that Fred plays puppeteer to Lilli and that she is blindly tricked into following his direction.⁵⁵ However, this significantly limits Lilli's agency; it does not allow for her persistent acts of rebellion (disrupting rehearsals, mocking Fred, destabilising the *Shrew* performance, etc.), nor for the impression that Lilli knows what Fred is doing. When Fred appeals to Lilli not to leave the performance in Act Two, Scene Six, she responds: 'You're not going to hypnotize me, Svengali.'⁵⁶ The dialogue demonstrates that Lilli understands the emotional manipulation Fred is using as well as his unspoken wish to keep her around. Their characters are complementary and distinct from *The Taming of the Shrew* because Lilli is a match for Fred and understands how he behaves just as Lois is completely dispassionate about her relationship with him and he has no meaningful interest in her.

Teague's Sly comparison feeds into the wider argument made by Hodgdon that *Kiss Me, Kate* 'tolerates no ruptures in masculine dominance'.⁵⁷ However, it makes no allowance for the nuances of *Kiss Me, Kate* that prevent Fred from actually being in control of anything throughout the show. Just as the original *Taming of the Shrew* is decimated through the disruptions in the onstage performance, the backstage storyline deliberately shows each character flailing in some way while attempting to manage the farcical interactions with one another. Only the gunmen have some semblance of control but their functional purpose as comedic catalysts who propel the story is immediately curtailed when they are no longer useful.

By contrast with Teague, Hodgdon proposes that *Kiss Me, Kate* 'reworks Shakespeare as sadistic Bard through two Sly-surrogate hoodlums...' who establish the link between the sexual undertones of *the Taming of the Shrew* and 1940s misogynistic gender politics.⁵⁸ She constructs this parallel in terms of a social hierarchy in both texts: Sly is both lower class and an outsider to the joke being played on him and the gunmen are positioned in similar terms. As with the example of matching framing devices, this

⁵⁴ She then acknowledges that this interpretation is undermined by Lois's exploitation of Fred. Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the Popular American Stage*, 136.

⁵⁵ This is partly supported by Diana E. Henderson who passingly alludes to Petruchio as 'the narrator for the titular musical-within-a-musical.' Henderson situates *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of a movement of work in the early 1950s that supported returning women to their proper domestic place. Diana E. Henderson, in Richard Burt and Lynda E. Boose, eds., *Shakespeare the Movie, II: Popularising the plays on film, TV, video and DVD* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003), 121.

⁵⁶ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 340.

⁵⁷ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances & Appropriations*, 20.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

example highlights some similarities between *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Kiss Me, Kate* without considering the text as a whole. Again, Hodgdon's reading of *Kate* focuses on its affirmation of masculinity and she argues that 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' reinforces '*Shrew*'s discourse of phallic potency'.⁵⁹ However, she does not sufficiently account for the gunmen's role as active commentators. The gunmen are not passive like Sly: they are not impacted by their experiences in the theatre, and their dialogue and song positions them as commentators who weave in and out of the narratives. (Indeed, Irene Dash highlights that their character type is 'derived from a long comedic tradition that goes back at least as far as Shakespeare and surely, much further to classical comedy'.)⁶⁰ As such, they can disappear from the story when they no longer serve a dramatic function. Sly's character arguably provides distance from receiving *The Taming of the Shrew* too seriously but has no impact on the development of the principal narrative itself. As the 'main' *Shrew* narrative is where the intertextuality in *Kiss Me, Kate* derives from, this comparison mischaracterises the gunmen and asserts connections to *The Taming of the Shrew* that are not clearly represented in the musical.

Parsons suggests that Hodgdon's reading 'may be misleading', arguing herself that the gunmen may more closely resemble Shakespeare's 'ancient angel',⁶¹ given their catalytic impact on *Kiss Me, Kate*. Here, she is referencing Biondello (Lucentio's servant), who says: '... but at last I spied an ancient angel coming down the hill...', announcing the entrance of a passing merchant in Act Four, Scene Two of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The merchant moves the *Taming of the Shrew* plot forward by enabling Lucentio and Biondello to continue their scheme to ensure Bianca marries Lucentio. Lucentio has outbid Bianca's other suitors for the opportunity to marry Bianca but needs his father to make good his financial commitments to Baptista. Having made the bargain without his father's knowledge or with any expectation of support, he and his servant Biondello seek out a stranger to impersonate his father and honour his pledge. Parsons also proposes that Harrison Howell fits the same model as he is the financial benefactor of the *Taming of the Shrew* production and his arrival provides the necessary dramatic means to move the plot forward.⁶² There is a certain parallel here but again, this comparison is only apparent to an audience member who has rich knowledge of the details of *The Taming of*

⁵⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁰ Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, 61.

⁶¹ Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 117.

⁶² Ibid., 128.

the Shrew. There is no context to know anything about this subplot in *Kiss Me, Kate* and, as such, it is not a direct parallel between the narratives. The premise in which a useful character arrives at the right moment is such a basic feature of most playwriting that it is perhaps a connection too far to suggest that the gunmen ‘resemble’ a metaphor used to describe a minor role in *The Taming of the Shrew*, and are, therefore, written in direct response to Shakespeare’s play.

In complete contrast to these readings, Silverberg perceives Sly in Sidney’s film in a completely different guise. She explains that:

With the addition of a fictionalized Cole Porter, the film hints at the Christopher Sly Induction framing from Shakespeare’s *Shrew* and establishes the idea that we now have a show within a show within a movie. In this contextualization, Porter then serves as the Induction’s Lord, who puts on a show for Sly, which in this case, is the film’s audience.⁶³

As Silverberg highlights, Dorothy Kingsley’s establishing scene in *Kiss Me Kate* is one of the most interesting features of the film that addresses a functional difference between stage and screen performances of this text. The physical presence of the theatre, the staging, a proscenium arch, etc. provide a literal frame to a live performance of *Kiss Me, Kate*, which is less easily established on screen. As such, the audition scene at the beginning of the film provides all of the necessary details about the key relationships, the inevitable tensions in rehearsal, and the performance to come. As Silverberg suggests, it proves a new filmic frame to the story to lead into the theatre scenes. Abstractly, her interpretation of the scene, which puts Porter at the centre of the text, controlling what is then put before the audience, is really striking given his impact in shaping the development of the original Broadway script.⁶⁴ Indeed, in the film, the songs are even more dominant than in any of the stage versions. However, Ron Randell’s portrayal of Porter in the film is truly impotent. He has no command of the scene, is led by Keel’s Fred throughout, and seems bewildered by Lois’s performance of ‘Too Darn Hot’. Here

⁶³ Carol E. Silverberg, *If it’s good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 74.

⁶⁴ It does do considerable disservice to Bella (and Sam) Spewack. However, Silverberg is very clear in the conclusions of her chapter that Bella Spewack has not received proportional acknowledgement for a contribution to the text. Carol E. Silverberg, *If it’s good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 97.

Silverberg's analogy provides a fascinating perspective on how we might perceive *Kiss Me, Kate* as a whole but it is less useful as a piece of textual analysis.

Without question, the metatheatrical device connects both texts in an obvious way. However, these scholars attempt to locate Sly (and the Lord) in the functional characterisation of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Parsons provides further examples of this practice by associating Lois' choice of ginger ale in the film adaptation to Sly's request for ale in *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁶⁵ She also connects the 'sexually charged performance' of 'Too Darn Hot' with Sly's demands of his 'wife'.⁶⁶ Parsons argues that Lois is comparable to 'the Lord' in the Induction, dominating the film's opening scene and orchestrating a performance to persuade Porter to cast her.⁶⁷ Indeed, Parsons develops this argument to read various aspects of *The Taming of the Shrew* back into *Kiss Me, Kate*. For example, she suggests that the dropping of the comma in the film adaptation brings it 'closer to Shakespeare's text' by demonstrating an authorial intent to explore Katherine more thoroughly.⁶⁸

When examining the stage musical, Parsons also equates the progressive casting of the African-American characters Paul and Hattie who hold significant roles in the backstage story with 'the kind of alternative community that Petruchio's household provides in *The Taming of the Shrew*'.⁶⁹ There is no evidence that Bella Spewack ever made conscious reference to this section of Shakespeare's play or that she ever indicated incorporating the discarded aspects of *The Taming of the Shrew* into *Kiss Me, Kate*. Indeed, Paul's racial identity was dictated by 'Too Darn Hot' when Spewack amalgamated Fred's dresser with the lead singer (who was always designated as African-American) of Porter's song. The buffoonish ineptitudes of Petruchio's staff are notably dissimilar to the representations of these characters who form part of the theatre ensemble without being substantially differentiated by their racial identities. Indeed, both 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' and 'Too Darn Hot' situate Hattie and Paul in amongst the other

⁶⁵ Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 117; William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction 2.70.

⁶⁶ One of the Lord's companions, Bartholomew, has 'disguised' himself as a woman and pretends to be Sly's wife. (Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 117.); William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction 2.95-123.

⁶⁷ Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 117.

⁶⁸ Parsons also comments that emphasis on Bella Spewack's 'reservations' about handling *The Taming of the Shrew* have overwhelmed acknowledging her guiding influence over the book. Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 110-11.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

characters in a fairly seamless way. Whereas Petruchio's servants impede his plans and add extra comedy sequences (almost as relief from the taming itself), Hattie and Paul add to the richness of the company.

There is evident intertextuality between *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. As a result, features of Shakespeare's play have undeniably informed aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate*. For example, there is an evident parallel between the characterisation of Fred and Lilli and their tussle for dominance over the other, which is reactive to *The Shrew*. However, Porter and Spewack make this link superficial: she appears challenging and he, a womaniser. Yet Fred and Lilli are written more subtly so that she has emotional range and he is clearly motivated by his emotional connection to her. In 'I Hate Men', Katherine's difficult temperament is actually subverted by Porter's playful justification of her disapproval of marriage so that *The Taming of the Shrew* is updated. Rather than inserting ideas from *The Shrew* into *Kiss Me, Kate*, Porter and Spewack chose what they wanted and adapted it to suit their needs. As a result, Shakespeare's Christopher Sly and the Lord are neither literally or metaphorically represented in *Kiss Me, Kate*.

This musical celebrates the opportunities for humour in the *Taming of the Shrew* connections it contains. Porter and the Spewacks identified accent moments and capitalised on them so that the parallels to *The Taming of the Shrew* are a discernible part of the joke (e.g. Lilli *seems* like Katherine so 'I Hate Men' is doubly funny). By reading cut aspects of *The Shrew* into *Kiss Me, Kate*, scholars limit our understanding of the creativity involved in this process. The archival evidence suggests that Sam was initially responsible for editing the first *Shrew* scenes. These moments establish the onstage performance before Lilli discovers she has been misled. Bella Spewack then contrived the subsequent disintegration of the play when Lilli has read Fred's note. Without *The Taming of the Shrew* and its pre-existing narrative, these scenes would not be as funny as they are. They would not establish the context for Lilli to attack Fred or him to paddle her. As such, there is no need to identify deeper textual relationships between it and *Kiss Me, Kate* for, without *The Taming of the Shrew*, much of the central action could not take place. Other textual elements of this musical derive from external sources to Shakespeare's play. This does not undermine its significance but places it as one of several creative reference points, which intrinsically shape *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Mock tudor: Shakespeare in the visual culture of *Kiss Me, Kate*

In the context of these extensive readings of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate*, it is striking that no one has made an argument connecting the visual culture (and potential staging choices) of the two works together. Holm and Ayers definitely explored an aesthetic connection between 16th century Italian theatre and the original Broadway production, which continues to be preserved in the visual identity of several screen and stage revivals. For example, it is clear in Holm's papers that she thoroughly investigated the commedia dell'arte as an integral influence for the *Taming of the Shrew* staging and dances.⁷⁰ Penny Gay outlines references to the commedia in *The Taming of the Shrew* in *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Comedies*.⁷¹ In her overview of *The Shrew*, she maps Petruchio, Baptista, Bianca, Lucentio and the servants onto the typical characters of the commedia (e.g. Baptista as a Pantalone character, one of the *vecchi* or old men), separating Katherine's character as the notable exception.⁷²

This connection was clearly recognised by Holm, who hoped to construct a dance sequence around the characters of the commedia in parts of the Padua Street Scenes (Act One, Scene Four and Act One, Scene Nine). She sketched an image of a pageant wagon as part of her research (see Figure 6.1) and later in her notes, she incorporated this into her vision for *Kiss Me, Kate*, writing: 'Players in Parade, Riding [sic] on simple cart + itinerant players follow by foot'.⁷³ It is noticeable that aspects of this have been created in subsequent performances of *Kiss Me, Kate*. For example, the RSC production had the lead actors arrive on a cart (very similar to Holm's drawing) before 'We Open in Venice'.⁷⁴ Similarly, Opera North's production introduced the cut 'Harlequin ballet', which was

⁷⁰ A form of street theatre, the commedia dell'arte originated in Venice in the 1600s and was based on improvised stories, constructed around stock characters including masters, servants and lovers.

⁷¹ Penny Gay, 'Farce: *The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merry Wives of Windsor*', 16-34. There are also passing references to the use of the commedia in *The Taming of the Shrew* in several chapters in Judith Chaffee and Oliver Crick (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Commedia Dell'Arte* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2017), particularly in Edward Grenwar's chapter 'The Old Man's Spectacles: Commedia and Shakespeare', 305-6.

⁷² Gay suggests that Katherine's character emanates from 'a long tradition in English theatre and in popular ballads' that includes 'a talkative, hot-tempered and ungovernable woman.' She gives examples including Noah's wife in the Mystery play as well as Judy from Punch and Judy puppet shows. Penny Gay, 'Farce: *The Comedy of Errors, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merry Wives of Windsor*', 23-24.

⁷³ NYPL HH 20/500 – Excerpt from *Kiss Me, Kate* notebook.

⁷⁴ RSC TS/2/2/1987/KISI: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], disc 1.

choreographed with obvious reference to the commedia.⁷⁵ Indeed, the Harlequin print (repeating diamonds or rhombi derived from the costumes of the dell'arte) has translated to the wider visual culture associated with *Kiss Me, Kate*. It is evident in parts of Ayers' set and costume design for *The Taming of the Shrew* as well as the poster for the original Broadway production (see Figure 6.2 for some illustrations). This was preserved in some of the design for the Sidney film adaptation and shown in the posters and title sequence of the film.

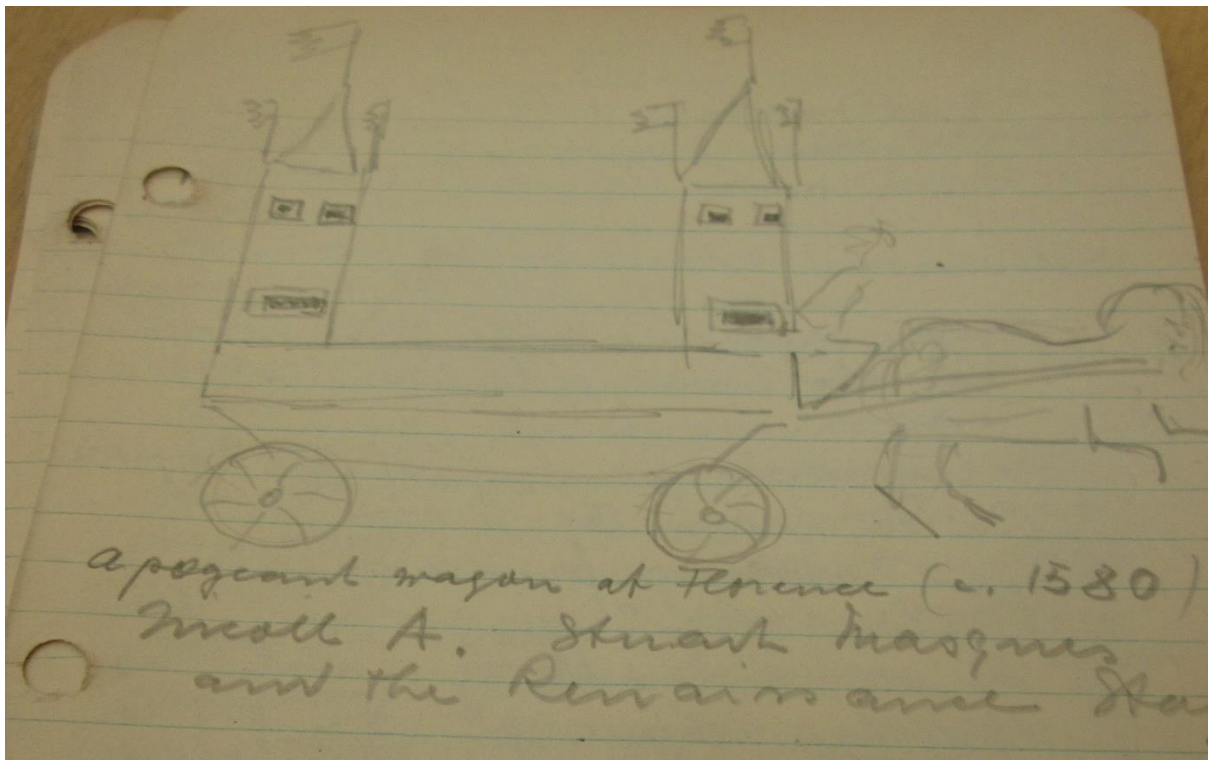


Figure 6.1: Sketch of 'a pageant wagon' drawn by Holm in her *Kiss Me, Kate* notebook

In framing her criticism of the representation of Katherine in numerous adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Hodgdon notes that: 'Performances have persistently reproduced signs of that narrative [women's abjection to male mastery]: Petruchio may carry a whip, wear a boxing glove, spank Kate, gag and tie her with rope and chains.'⁷⁶ Her summation of this feature of performances of *The Taming of the Shrew* is noticeably apt when assessing the promotional materials for the original Broadway production of

⁷⁵ *Kiss Me, Kate* by Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, [Programme]. Directed by Jo Davies. September-November 2015. Opera North, Grand Theatre, Leeds.

⁷⁶ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriation*, 2.

Kiss Me, Kate. Without pre-empting the discussion of gender representations in Chapter Seven, the marketing for *Kiss Me, Kate* incorporated recognisable imagery from *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Again, 'pseudo-Elizabethan costumes' have become a significant part of staging *Kiss Me, Kate*, which is also demonstrated in these examples from the original Broadway production.⁷⁷ Tetsuo Kiski signposts this deliberate costume design as integral to simulating a consumable Shakespearean performance.⁷⁸ He highlights this as one of his 'three possible ways to make a musical comedy out of Shakespeare'.⁷⁹ Yet, this costuming in *Kiss Me, Kate* is as ironic as it is indicative of the change in period. Whilst the aesthetic shift moves *Kiss Me, Kate* into the performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the bold, garish colours and patterns (which have been frequently replicated in subsequent productions) also draw attention to the metatheatrical construct itself: we are watching actors in costume rather than a legitimate performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Importantly, the aesthetic richness of *Kiss Me, Kate* is not exclusive to the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes, especially since revivals of *Kiss Me, Kate* continue to be set in the 1940s rather than reimagined in a modern context. In her appraisal of Blakemore's *Kiss Me, Kate*, Parsons signposts the set design of the dressing rooms, which include fake memorabilia of Fred and Lilli's performances.⁸⁰ Whilst considering the dislocations created by recording a (partially) live performance, Parsons draws attention to the construction of Fred and Lilli's professional personas. However, it is clear that building Fred and Lilli's character histories has been part of numerous iterations of the show regardless of the parallel characterisations between *Kiss Me, Kate* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. It is noteworthy that this is developed from the histories outlined in Spewack's extensive character profiles that have been partially preserved in sections of dialogue. The production photography for the original Broadway production also indicates that Lilli's dressing room was prettily dressed in contrast to the sparse brick walls and iron staircase in the rest of the backstage scenes.⁸¹ Other productions have expanded this aspect of characterisation and design, developing the backstage identities further. For example, the RSC production produced a fake programme for Fred's production *The*

⁷⁷ Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 131.

⁷⁸ Tetsuo Kiski, 'Shakespeare and the Musical', 158.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ She makes similar note of set design in the opening scene of Sidney's *Kiss Me Kate*. Elinor Parsons, *The Framing of the Shrew*, 131.

⁸¹ See Footnote 83 of Chapter Three for details of production photos (p.82).

Taming of the Shrew with including biographies of ‘the cast’ and production photographs.⁸²

As such, there is considerable continuity between productions of *Kiss Me, Kate* that are directly related to the internal production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Although the links to the commedia and borrowed imagery demonstrate the significance of *The Shrew* to the visual concepts associated with *Kiss Me, Kate*, the artificial handling of these features becomes part of the separate identity of this musical (rather than as an homage to Shakespeare). This demonstrates the central point that *Kiss Me, Kate* is not simply a derivation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Although Ayers responded to the commedia (as is evidenced here), his modernist painting for backstage indicates the range of aesthetic reference points he explored. As in this example, a ‘Shakespearean reading’ of *Kiss Me, Kate* undermines other independent creative influences and decisions in the genesis of the musical. It also elevates *The Taming of the Shrew* although the play neither preserved nor well-treated in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Although Parsons and Teague offer various alternative approaches to dissipate the view that *Kiss Me, Kate* is a legitimate adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*, their analyses are limited by the controlling ideas of their research, namely, interpretations the works of Shakespeare.

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, *Kiss Me, Kate* incorporates several aspects of *The Taming of the Shrew*. However, the musical is more than its inclusion of these narrative and structural concepts. Some of the most engaging sections of the show, especially the songs, have little tangible relationship to *the Shrew*. Silverberg’s analogy to Porter as the Lord manipulating the audience through the use of song actually provides an important insight into how *Kiss Me, Kate* is different to and separate from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Even as Porter monumentalises sections of *The Shrew* in ‘I’ve Come to Wive It Wealthily in Padua’ and ‘I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple’, his other songs interfere with the legitimacy of the internal play before the backstage narrative begins to disrupt the actual performance. ‘We Open in Venice’, ‘Tom Dick or Harry’ and ‘I Hate Men’ each relate to *The Taming of the Shrew* but make substantial references outside of the Shakespearean orbit onstage and again, the jazz nuances of ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ and the scat section in the reprise form part of the overall character of *Kiss Me, Kate*. These songs offer a light-hearted and modern commentary on *The Shrew* but do not develop its

⁸² *Kiss Me, Kate* by Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, [Programme]. Directed by Adrian Noble. May 1987. The Old Vic. London.

independent identity as a work of classical theatre or its narrative within *Kiss Me, Kate* as a whole. Here, Porter proclaims the presence of Shakespeare without making substantial use of the work itself, just as the Spewacks exploit the Bard without allowing - or requiring - us to become familiar with the *Taming of the Shrew* narrative.



Figure 6.2: Examples of some of the visual culture associated with *Kiss Me, Kate*⁸³

⁸³ James Rouse, *Alfred Drake and Patricia Morison in "Kiss Me, Kate"* [illustration] from R.E.P SENDERFER, 'Living Theater – New Cole Porter-Bella Spewack Musical Comedy Has Premiere Here at the Shubert Theater', *The Evening Bulletin* (Philadelphia), December 3, 1948; Eldon KELLEY, 'Cole Porter and Shakespeare Collaborate on *Kiss Me, Kate*', *The New York Herald Tribune*, December 26, 1948; Don FREEMAN, *New York Times*, December 26, 1948; illustration '*Kiss Me, Kate*' from *The New Yorker*, February 26, 1949; advert for original cast album recording in San Francisco Civic Light Opera programme for 1949 season (*Kiss Me, Kate* opened August, 8, 1949); photograph of original Broadway cast on cover of *Waldorf-Astoria Promenade*, September 1949; *Kiss Me, Kate* First Birthday announcement as shown in the *New York Herald Tribune* and *New York Daily News*, December 30, 1949.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'WHY, THERE'S A WENCH':

REPRESENTING GENDER IDENTITIES IN *KISS ME, KATE*

Whereas the scholarly readings of integration and *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* are structured across whole articles and chapters, the representation of gender politics in *Kiss Me, Kate* has been less consistently illustrated. Because of the interplay between the backstage narrative and *Taming of the Shrew* scenes in *Kiss Me, Kate*, a lot of the scholarship has focused attention on the role of *The Shrew* and its implications for the musical text. As such, critical reception of *The Shrew* has substantially shaped how gender is read in *Kiss Me, Kate*. For example, Barbara Hodgdon highlights the 'dominant-submissive undertext' of Shakespeare's play and its impact on *Kiss Me, Kate* rather than the relationship between the two sections of the text.¹ As such, most scholars agree that *Kiss Me, Kate* offers a partly problematic perspective on its female characters as part of a wider anti-marriage theme. Frances Teague characterises this by explaining that: 'Perhaps the most interesting aspect of [the interrogation of heterosexual relationships] is its malleable vision of gender and sexuality.'² She tantalises us by suggesting that *Kiss Me, Kate* handles this aspect of characterisation in complex way. However, she only briefly reviews literature by McBrien, Hodgdon, Richard Burt³ and John M. Clum,⁴ before concluding that '[*Kiss Me, Kate*'s] gestures toward sexual freedom finally collapse into

¹ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade*, 22.

² Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage*, 141-2.

³ Burt briefly analyses the film adaptation *Kiss Me Kate* in his book on queer subtexts in film versions of Shakespeare texts. He argues that the text involves a series of double entendres (such as Fred not being 'big' enough for the role) that highlight Lilli/Katherine's 'ass' and 'Graham's inadequate penis size', explaining that: 'These puns inscribe a closeted, gay critique both of the theatrical adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the film and of the male characters who play the Shakespeare parts...' Richard Burt, 'The Love That Dare Not Speak Shakespeare's Name: New Shakesqueer Cinema' in Lynda E. Boose and Richard Burt, *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularising the plays on film, TV, and video*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 246.

⁴ Clum makes intermittent references to *Kiss Me, Kate* during his wider reading of gayness in American musical theatre culture. His monograph addresses numerous themes including: star identities, coding and queer subtexts, innuendo as well as casting and production personnel. John M. Clum, *Something for the Boys*.

cynical conservatism.⁵ She suggests that although *Kiss Me, Kate* seems to bemoan marriage, in the end, it 'backs down for safe conventionality'.⁶

Whereas Teague implies that *Kiss Me, Kate* presents a rich representation of gender, Barbara Hodgdon complains that ultimately, the show reinforces many of the masculinist themes of *The Taming of the Shrew*, promoting male dominance, joking about violence against women, and endorsing male virility.⁷ Her interpretation that *Kiss Me, Kate* is a largely conservative text that only seems to present sexual liberalism is perhaps the most well-represented reading of the show. As such, Carol E. Silverberg builds on this, arguing that considerable sections of *Kiss Me, Kate* validate and make light of domestic violence. She particularly highlights the marketing of the film adaptation, complaining that it builds on the titillation featured in the original Broadway version and endorses 'that it's ok for a man to spank a woman'.⁸ Indeed, Silverberg constructs a sub-argument in her chapter, suggesting that *Kiss Me, Kate* reflects biographical information about the creative team, explaining: 'Without the emotional slapping around that Bella received from her unfaithful husband, she would have lacked material for her somewhat subversive libretto'.⁹ Here she underplays Bella Spewack's creative abilities but elsewhere Silverberg also highlights Spewack's contribution to *Kiss Me, Kate* in an effort to reverse her lack of visibility in the reception of the show.

Through these readings, there are several overlapping points of interest. Firstly, they each consider the impact of *The Taming of the Shrew* and its controversial gender politics on the development of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Through this discussion, Teague, Hodgdon and Silverberg each highlight 'the slapping scene' (Act One, Scene Five), 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and the use of Katherine's final soliloquy as vital evidence supporting a conservative, masculinist reading of *Kiss Me, Kate*. The emphasis on 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' is particularly pronounced in all literature on *Kiss Me, Kate* because of its pivotal place in the genesis of the show.¹⁰ Geoffrey Block also highlights the use of

⁵ Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage*, 142.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁷ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade*, 21-3.

⁸ Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 72-3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰ Geoffrey Block provides the least extensive coverage of this song, highlighting its significance in passing during the 'Shakespeare' section of his chapter. 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' is also central to Robert Lawson-Peebles' reading of the film adaptation. Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 225-6; Robert Lawson-Peebles, 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare: The Case of *Kiss me, Kate*', 104-5.

Katherine's speech as 'a serious challenge to a feminist interpretation of *Kiss Me, Kate*' as the lens for considering sexism in other major musicals of the Golden Age.¹¹ He concludes: 'Porter and Spewack's Katherine may, like Shakespeare, put her hand at Petruchio's feet, but at least she is not asked to fetch his slippers.'¹²

Block and Maya Cantu provide alternative contexts for interpreting *Kiss Me, Kate*. While Block particularly focuses on Katherine as a distinct character, he also acknowledges that some parts of *Kiss Me, Kate* have embraced more modern sensibilities. Although she makes no acknowledgement of Block's previous analysis, Cantu also situates *Kiss Me, Kate* alongside other contemporary musicals including *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946) and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1949) looking at how 1940s female protagonists can be read together and in the context of wider popular culture. In contrast to other interpretations of the show, Cantu highlights the textual similarities between *Kiss Me, Kate* and the 'the Comedy of Remarriage' in various screwball films, concluding that 'Fred and Lilli find equal ground and mutuality through their shared identity as theatrical vagabonds'.¹³ Cantu hints that *Kiss Me, Kate* provides a far more effective depiction of female emancipation through its representation of Lilli than has been previously recognised. Through her wider comparisons with popular films, she (like Block) draws vital attention to the context of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Like the original Elizabethan production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Kiss Me, Kate* sits within a canon of popular entertainment, which is intended to divert. As a comedy, it makes light of serious subjects and, as has been highlighted in the analysis of integration, subverts conventional moralism as part of its wider satire of the development of musicals.

In this context, this chapter examines the different interpretations of gender identities in *Kiss Me, Kate* and considers to what extent an understanding of the nuances of this theme informs a reading of the show as a whole. It begins by considering the intertextual relationship between Baltimore and *The Taming of the Shrew*. As was highlighted in Chapter Six, scholars have often read *The Taming of the Shrew* into *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of clarifying the play's role in the text. In reaction to this trend, this chapter aims to consider the entire text evenly and to establish those areas where the contemporary context and updated gender roles have altered *The Taming of the Shrew* in

¹¹ Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 229.

¹² *Ibid.*, 232.

¹³ Maya Cantu, *American Cinderellas on the Broadway Musical Stage*, 128-9.

Kiss Me, Kate. Building on this, the following section reflects on the nuances of gender, class and race demonstrated in the portrayal of Hattie and Paul, who have no crossover role between Baltimore and *The Shrew*. Here, the chapter examines how this characterisation has been developed in reference to familiar character tropes whilst challenging modern interpretations of social inclusivity in the 1940s.

Having considered these aspects, the chapter highlights the formative influence of screwball comedy writing on the development of *Kiss Me, Kate*. Taken together with this insight into gender in *The Taming of the Shrew* and the contemporary features of the text, the influence of screwball provides a useful context for the following section interpreting physical violence. This section reflects on whether the ‘Punch and Judy’ legacy of Shakespeare’s play and the potential problems that arise from a ‘dominance by force’ narrative are evident in *Kiss Me, Kate* and can be said to reflect the text effectively. Here it assesses the impact of ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ and its representation of gender and sexual equality on *Kiss Me, Kate* as a whole in order to address concerns raised in the existing literature. Finally, it evaluates to what extent ‘I Am Ashamed that Women Are So Simple’ can be said to destabilise a feminist reading of *Kiss Me, Kate*. This section considers the wider representation of Lilli in connection to Katherine and the dramatic significance of Shakespeare’s text in this performance moment. In so doing, it demonstrates that *Kiss Me, Kate* introduces modernity to the gender roles in *The Taming of the Shrew* and frequently undermines masculine authority without compromising the necessary happy ending of the show. As such, the original aspects of the text overtake the adaptation of *The Shrew* once more in order to allow modern audiences to consume and enjoy this show without experiencing any social discomfort.

Contemporising *The Taming of the Shrew*: intertextuality and modernity

As was briefly signposted in Chapter Six and in the introduction to this chapter, Barbara Hodgdon reads *Kiss Me, Kate* from the perspective that it presents some of the most masculinist traits of *The Taming of the Shrew* as she argues that *Kiss Me, Kate* allows ‘no ruptures in male dominance.’¹⁴ As such, Petruchio’s professed attitudes are mirrored by Fred so that he presents behaviour that seems to embody the masculine ideals

¹⁴ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*, 20

characterised in sections of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Spewack immediately establishes this tone when Fred is introduced as 'FREDERICK GRAHAM, writer, director, actor and superman' in the opening stage directions of Act One, Scene One.¹⁵ Yet she conveys his aspirations to be an impresario, a commander of the arts, while subverting his status with the added humour of 'superman'. In so doing, she establishes Fred at the top of the hierarchy of players and constructs a straightforward link between his backstage identity as the heroic lead and Petruchio's dominance in *The Taming of the Shrew* but also indicates the scope of his vanity.

Petruchio's musical identity focuses almost entirely on his conquests with or over women, building on the notion that masculinity is correlated with virility. In 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua', he performs to an assembled crowd and is supported by the male chorus. Paraphrasing several sections of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the song advocates Petruchio's physical and mental superiority over his potential spouse, foreshadowing the battle of wills to come with Katherine later in the show. In addition to this, Porter craftily includes nuanced lyrics that associate Petruchio's identity with sexual dominance. In one crude moment, he proclaims: 'If she fight like a raging boar, / I have oft stuck a pig before'.¹⁶ Not only does Porter capture some of the bawdiness of Shakespeare's *Shrew*, he also establishes Fred/Petruchio in terms that (in *Kiss Me, Kate*) he will fail to live up to. When Lilli begins to attack Fred after 'Were Thine That Special Face?', he is barely able to contain the *Shrew* scene, let alone stop Lilli from exacting revenge on him. Similarly, the patter sections of 'Where Is The Life That Late I Led?' reinforce Petruchio's status as a sexual predator. Yet in *Kiss Me, Kate*, Petruchio's masculinity is set in contrast to Katherine's unwillingness to submit to him, unlike the list of women he presents during the song. His masculinity is assured by the tales of his conquests but is also undermined by Katherine's apparent aversion to him. Backstage, it also becomes increasingly clear that Lois has no interest in Fred beyond securing her role in the show and Lilli aggressively undermines demonstrations of his power over her by destroying his production. In this way, the intertextuality of *Kiss Me, Kate* diminishes Petruchio (as performed by Fred) in the context of the modern and more emancipated women.

¹⁵ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 273.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 297.

Importantly, 'Where Is The Life?' is functionally counterbalanced by Lois's subsequent performance of 'Always True To You (in My Fashion)'. Lois's song subverts Fred's dominance as the romantic lead as she provides a female perspective on the same gender-defining promiscuity characterised in Petruccio's songs. The confidence of character demonstrated in the self-assured but sexually playful lyric redresses the potential imbalance of sexual agency in the text. Again, the ambiguity that develops around who instigated Fred and Lois' relationship also complicates his identity as the dominant male. Lois' skill at manipulating the men around her into doing what she wants gives her character unexplored power. Whilst Fred could be said to showcase Lois as evidence of the attractive, young women he is able to attract, their relationship is symbiotic: she pleases his vanity whilst he is facilitating her ambitions to build her profile as a star.

Porter spent a significant amount of time developing the verses of 'Always True To You'. Joseph Morella and George Mazzei refer to it as 'the naughty song from the show, reviving Porter's fascination for women who sell their charms.'¹⁷ In their reading, the number is a simple expression of Lois' 'willingness to bed down with one and all' in order to advance her material position.¹⁸ It is clear that Porter intended to leave the audience in no doubt of her sexual liberation. Indeed, one discarded half-verse, which received an unusually large number of pages of revision, clearly articulates Lois' physical freedom with affluent and/or socially prestigious men:

There's a poker playing drip
With a bankroll on his hip,
When the drip says "Let's play strip" I gladly play
But I'm always true to you, darlin', in my fashion
'Cause you're always true to me, darlin' in your way.¹⁹

This verse was considered for inclusion in the final draft as Porter tested it in combination with several other half-verses.²⁰ The direct reference to Lois 'stripping for cash' was probably too candid for contemporary audiences but also undermined the

¹⁷ Joseph Morella & George Mazzei, *Genius and Lust*, 206.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ LC CP 11/1: 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)' autograph lyric draft [D2].

²⁰ Porter tried verses he particularly liked in various combinations in his pencil drafts, not only for 'Always True To You' but also for drafts of songs in *Can-Can* and *Silk Stockings*.

playful euphemisms that Porter developed in the rest of the song. We are left in no doubt of how Lois operates, but her activities are so well presented that her exploits remain comedic and tasteful despite the crude implications.

In this way, 'Always True To You' situates Lois in exactly the same place as Petruchio during 'Where Is The Life?', taking pleasure in regaling the audience with tales of her exploits. Again, this destabilises Fred as his emotional involvement with Lilli and his self-interest flaw him; he is not Petruchio and is not able to disregard his ex-wife entirely. By contrast, Lois emphatically demonstrates that her sexual adventures and her relationship with Bill are discrete in her mind. This develops the characterisation previously explored in Bianca's 'Tom, Dick or Harry'. Whereas the text of *Kiss Me, Kate* frequently demonstrates how Fred is not like Petruchio (even if he would like to be), Lois modernises Bianca and changes her agency. Rather than seeing a vulnerable, if flirtatious, young woman who becomes infatuated with one of her suitors, *Kiss Me, Kate's* Bianca is feisty and uninterested in romance or marriage – she, like Lois, is interested in her suitors for sex (and advantage). Furthermore, 'Tom, Dick or Harry' prefaces this textual shift as Bianca's suitors pitch their eligibility *to her* and not to her father, Baptista – the business aspect of the marriage becomes part of Bianca's dialogue in *Kiss Me, Kate*.²¹

As has been demonstrated here, the nuances of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate* are informed by the backstage storyline. In result, the sexual politics between Fred and Lilli are completely different to those depicted in Shakespeare's *Shrew*. Not only is Lilli more financially successful than Fred – with the power (or agency) to make independent choices – but she is also able to tease and rebuff him. There is important gender interplay in the details of the script that also allows Lilli to undermine Fred's dominance over proceedings. For example, Fred's attempts to domineer Lilli and to inflate his status in front of her are undermined in Act One, Scene Six where she is able to draw attention to his vanity and lack of commercial success. Subtly augmenting the

²¹ Irene Dash notes that, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Baptista bargains the prices for his daughters, seeking to make a profit from them. Neither Bianca nor Katherine is exempt from this treatment in spite of the differences in their characters and neither daughter has a say in the husband they are given. She highlights records of women being forced to marry their father's preference that Shakespeare was reflecting his time. Irene Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, 53-4.

intertextual links between him and Petruchio, Fred justifies sending Lois a replica of Lilli's wedding bouquet by saying he is young and single:

Fred: All right, all right! I sent the child some flowers – I sent her a card with the flowers. May I point out that I'm free, male and thirty-one!
Lilli: (*derisively*) Thirty-one – hah!
Fred: All right, thirty-two. What the hell has my age got to do with this? They were full, rich years and I am proud of them...²²

By drawing attention to Fred lying about his age and depicting Lilli's scorn as she recognises his behaviour for what it is, the text satirises his status as the romantic lead and Fred is shown to be ridiculous. Here he is emasculated by the need to falsely represent himself to justify his interest in Lois. Fred attempts to reassert himself over Lilli, who has adlibbed dialogue and assaulted him onstage in the previous scene: 'I couldn't teach you manners as a wife, but by God I'll teach you manners as an actress!'²³ This threat, made in frustration at Lilli's continued aggression, is important. Read superficially and out of context, this quotation seems to link exactly with Petruchio's methods that aim to force Katherine into submission, echoing his famous promise that has been heard in Act One, Scene Five, directly before this:

Petruchio: For I am he, am born to tame you, Kate;
And to bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Conformable as other household Kates.²⁴

However, in Fred's version of this speech, he admits he has already failed to mould Lilli. Crucially, the context and tone of *Kiss Me, Kate* inform his speech. We know that Fred would never actually beat or lock Lilli up. Whilst he is shown to be vain and cunning, he is not deliberately nasty. If Spewack aimed to demonstrate sincere physical aggression then Fred might retaliate when Lilli slaps him as she exits this scene.²⁵ Instead, he worries about whether she has damaged his appearance. This is because *Kiss Me, Kate* is

²² Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 307.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ (Quotation from William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*) in Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 305.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 307.

not a realistic or serious text. The violence is physical comedy designed to be silly and unbelievable and therefore, non-threatening. As such, the attacks during the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes provide comedic release of tension in Fred and Lilli's relationship. Both characters participate because they understand what the other is doing. They make use of the opportunity available to them and it is funny precisely because it would not happen in any other context.

Undoubtedly, behavioural characteristics of Shakespeare's characters are identifiable in the *Kiss Me, Kate* players, just as moments of the original plot reference the *Shrew* play. However, this overlooks the sophistication of parts of the original *Kate* material, including aspects of 1930s screwball comedy, as well as the music and lyrics in shaping the show. For example, in Act One, Scene Two, Fred and Lilli perform 'Wonderbar' together following a rapid exchange of insults. The number pastiches a mannered romantic duet in a Viennese operetta and simultaneously emphasises the gendered archetypes of frivolous, wealthy gentry cooing frothily. Importantly, this style and form was certainly a deliberate choice by Porter, and was then developed by Robert Russell Bennett who orchestrated the song's melody to preface Fred's reprise of 'So In Love' in Act Two, Scene Six. In this way, 'Wonderbar' becomes the leitmotif for their relationship. The song therefore confirms the roles of Fred and Lilli as hero and heroine, the romantic leads of the show, and this is reinforced by their first diegetic musical performance together.

This effect is achieved by a conscious choice on the part of the show's creative team. Indeed, earlier in the same scene, Fred and Lilli's gender identities are articulately introduced in the preceding dialogue. Lilli acknowledges her financial independence (made in Hollywood) and illustrates this in her line: 'Every night before I go to bed, that's exactly what I do. Roll in my money. Wonderful for the hips'.²⁶ Interestingly, the fact that Lilli has wealth generated from her own success is never really explored in *Kiss Me, Kate*. However, this line emphasises her affluence whilst featuring her womanliness in a sexualised context. Their discussion continues a few lines later as Lilli and Fred compare both their pecuniary success and role as the breadwinner during their marriage. Here, Lilli has status over Fred in direct contrast to Shakespeare's Katherine, whose very gender ranks her beneath Petruchio. However, in *Kiss Me, Kate*, Lilli's identity is fused with Katherine so that her agency is seen in the excerpts of the *Shrew* performance.

²⁶ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 280.

Symbiotically, Maya Cantu notes that playing Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew* facilitates Lilli's departure from Harrison: her vocation as an actress provides her with a means of independence.²⁷ There is a fluidity here that demonstrates the complexity of gender where Lilli's comparative emancipation shapes Katherine.

Hattie and Paul: intertextual relationships between race, class and gender

In the context of the period of the original Broadway production, the representation of African-American characters, Hattie and Paul, in *Kiss Me, Kate* is particularly interesting. Both characters carry a major song and dance moment at the opening of each act. These songs, 'Another Op'nin', 'Another Show' and 'Too Darn Hot', may appear superficially innocuous, situating, or resituating, the audience, within the performance. However, they are central to the structure and position of both characters at the heart of the ensemble. Details of racialised language, musical settings and context help to form these characters. In addition, their racial identities – 'HATTIE, LILLI'S Negro maid' and 'PAUL, FRED'S Negro dresser' – are specified in the stage directions whereas other minor characters such as Ralph are simply referred to by their job description – 'the stage manager'.²⁸ It is therefore clear that the ethnicity of these characters is significant enough to be written into the text. Paul and Hattie are situated in social positions, ostensibly as servants or staff of the lead actors, within the hierarchy of the cast that are appropriate to their racial status in the context of the late 1940s. Here, there is a direct parallel between their roles as the maid and dresser and their genders. 'Another Op'nin' specifically focuses on the working environment of the theatre in parallel with the excitement of opening night, mapping directly onto Hattie's role as Lilli's maid and a member of the crew. Similarly, 'Too Darn Hot' specifically draws attention to the maleness of sexual desire and virility, yet also impotence. Crucially, both of these numbers are central to the structure and character of *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Parts of Hattie's dialogue with Lilli were cut from early drafts of the script, reducing her to a background presence after Act One, Scene One. However, these sections reveal deeper characterisation that sheds light on the relationship between Hattie's race,

²⁷ Maya Cantu, *American Cinderellas on the Broadway Musical Stage*, 128.

²⁸ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 273; 276; 273 (respectively).

class and gender as she supplies the link in the female archetypes shown in *Kiss Me, Kate*. In the triptych of the heroine, anti-heroine and mother figure, Hattie represents the matriarch, as she waits on Lilli like a nursemaid. This characterisation perpetuates a 'Mammie' stereotype as Hattie loosely resembles a subservient black confidante, full of life's wisdom, who placates her spoilt, entitled mistress. This is most evident in a short section of discarded dialogue in Act One, Scene Three. Initially, Hattie remarks that she would only receive an expensive wire in an emergency, signposting the difference in her and Lilli's social positions, and then she begins to rebuke Lilli for shouting at Fred in front of the company:

- Lilli: (Sitting down and kicking off shoes) All those wires for me?
- Hattie: They certainly ain't for me. Only time I get a wire is when somebody dies or needs money. (SHE doesn't look directly at Lilli. Crosses to pick up Lilli's hat, puts hat on shelf)
- Lilli: What's the matter, Hattie? Cat got your tongue?
- Hattie: (Turning to her) I told you count up to a hundred, if it was essential. But there you go losing your temper all over the place. And with him, of all people!²⁹

Here Hattie moderates Lilli and exposes her actual motive for appearing in the production: to reconcile with Fred. Hattie is also able to chastise Lilli as she represents constant support and loyalty without threatening Lilli's status. In this way, Lilli is offered constructive advice, which she can then choose to follow or disregard as Hattie is her servant regardless of any emotional connection. This kind of relationship between an employer and member of staff is familiar in depictions of American domestic environments (see Mammie in *Gone With the Wind* or to some extent Queenie in *Show Boat*). In the context of the racial dimension in which Hattie is the only character to use consistently abbreviated or ungrammatical English, her role as a proto-Mammie is confirmed.³⁰ This linguistic feature has been loosely written into the text of 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' as well as into the dialogue above.

²⁹ CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* scripts: October 11 Script, 1-3-7

³⁰ There is also potential significance in the name 'Hattie' in the context of the phenomenon of Margaret Mitchell's Pulitzer prize winning novel *Gone With The Wind* (1936) and the subsequent film adaptation (1939). Scarlett O'Hara's maid Mammy embodies the archetypal portrayal of a female African-American servant navigating the caprices of her spoilt white mistress. Actress Hattie McDaniel was the first African-American to win an Oscar, for her performance of the role.

As the section was removed from the rehearsal script, Hattie becomes almost silent and Lilli loses her only congenial exchange with another woman. This also isolates Lilli from the other characters by removing the only example of her having meaningful dialogue with anyone other than Fred. However, whilst Hattie has few remaining lines, she is the only character (apart from Fred) to use Lilli's first name, referring to her always as 'Miss Lilli'. Harrison never refers to Lilli by her first name. By contrast, Paul always calls Fred 'Mr. Graham'. Not only does this indicate familiarity between Lilli and Hattie, but it also implies the character of their relationship: traditionally, a domestic servant would address a child in their care by their first name and an adult in more formal terms. Although Hattie has not been with Lilli since she was a child (given the basic arrangements the latter describes with Fred in Act One, Scene Three), this impression is sufficient to situate Hattie's character and reinforce the everydayness of 'Another Op'nin' as Hattie continues with her work around the chaos her mistress causes around her.

In contrast to Hattie's relationship with Lilli, Paul, in spite of being in Fred's employ, is less familiar with Fred's motivation as is demonstrated when he assumes that Fred would send flowers to Lilli rather than to Lois. There is no indication that Paul has any other significance to Fred. Paul is also situated in a similar gambling class to Bill when the mistake is discovered, exclaiming: 'I'm sorry, sir. I haven't been myself since Blue Blood was scratched in the third race!'³¹ Similarly, this disinterest is characterised early when Paul is asked by Lois if 'Mr Graham's got two dollars?' and Paul responds humorously: 'Mr Graham? Not him! He's a producer!'³² In the early drafts of the script, Paul was a separate character to the African-American performer designated to sing 'Too Darn Hot' with his two companions. The parts were amalgamated as the script was simplified. The stage directions prefacing the number are particularly precise, detailing how Paul steps out of the stage door into a 'dimly lit alley' where 'two Negro friends [...] are seated on an empty packing-case playing cards in desultory fashion' and the number begins.³³ It continues to describe how Bill 'comes out for a quiet smoke' and he and the other dancers join 'in a spirited jazz session [...] with Bacchanalian zest', finally stating: 'We must assume that it's never too hot to dance.'³⁴ The specificity of these directions is

³¹ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 287.

³² *Ibid.*, 277.

³³ *Ibid.*, 319.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

interesting given that 'Too Darn Hot' serves no narrative function. Rather, it is a major dance moment for the three African-American performers and then for Bill and the chorus as well. The spectacle of the moment captured a lot of attention in the reception of the original Broadway production and the African-American performers were included in various illustrations during the early coverage of *Kiss Me, Kate*. In one example, American *Vogue* selected a pencil illustration of this scene in their January 1949 edition where they might have been expected to showcase Lemuel Ayers' costumes.³⁵ Irene Dash also notes that Holm's choreography for this sequence was praised as innovative and experimental with a variety of styles (including jitterbug) that moved 'Too Darn Hot' away from any stereotypical minstrel show associations or generic tap routines.³⁶

Given the sexualised lyrics of 'Too Darn Hot', which focus on the debilitating effect of extreme heat on male libido, this reception is significant, particularly in the context of contemporary concerns about racial profiling. Given that sexual command has become a focal point of Petruchio's character in *Kiss Me, Kate*, 'Too Darn Hot' feeds in the intertextuality between the backstage story and *The Shrew*. As the lyrics set up various encounters between the man and his love interest, the contrast between virility and impotence thematically gender the song, positioning it in the same mode as 'Where Is the Life That Late I Led?' and 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', adding to the adultness of the show in a specifically masculine mode. Indeed, the maleness of 'Too Darn Hot', which is directly associated with its sexualised lyrics, feeds into the wider thematic frame of *Kiss Me, Kate*. This is particularly evident when contextualised with 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)'. Lois' motivation is not sexual: it is financial. She is promiscuous in order to achieve her goals rather than because she enjoys sex.

Similarly, the introduction to Bill's solo song 'Bianca', which begins with a series of deliveries for Lois, also continues this element of characterisation. Initially, Bill is scorned by the chorus girls who laugh at this blatant infidelity. However, in the refrain of the chorus (see below), Bill's physical authority over Lois is implied:

Bianca, Bianca,
Oh baby, will you be mine?
Bianca, Bianca,
You better answer yes

³⁵ 'People and Ideas: "Kiss Me, Kate"/"Lend an Ear"', *Vogue*, February 15, 1949, accessed November 21, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/879243858?accountid=9735>.

³⁶ Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, 69.

Or Poppa Spanka.
To win you, Bianca,
There's nothing I would not do.³⁷

The sexual overtones of this second line – ‘you better answer yes or Poppa Spanka’ – jar with the romantic context of the number as Bill professes his love for Lois in spite of appearances. Nonetheless, it remains consistent with the sexually submissive inferences in ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ which are uncharacteristic with the rest of the language Porter uses in the show. The line is carefully accented in the music, with a rest in each part (bar 85), which accents the choreography as well as the lyric.³⁸ Here both ‘Always True To You’ and ‘Bianca’ conform to the wider subtext of *Kiss Me, Kate* that has been characterised in ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare.’ ‘Too Darn Hot’ provides a further perspective on this theme, which directly addresses the animalistic side of sex. Porter’s use of euphemism avoided censorship.³⁹ Nonetheless, the lyrics describe several scenarios directly before sex and Porter ends with playful pairings including ‘A marine/For his Queen’ that cannot obscure the underlying meaning.⁴⁰ It is therefore significant that rather than have this number performed by another cast member or the chorus in general, it has been set for three African-American characters, two of whom appear in *Kiss Me, Kate* to perform this number alone.

It is possible to argue that the musical style of the number, which is loosely jazzy, featuring the brass and rhythm sections of the orchestra as well as ethnographic profiling, dictated that the performers should be African-American by association.

³⁷ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 339.

³⁸ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 178.

³⁹ In his lyric drafts, Porter created lists of phrases- ‘I’d like to be with...’; ‘I’d like to spree with’ - and potential rhymes to end the couplets in the verses including ‘vive L’amour!’ and ‘temperature’ to write into the verses. LC CP 11/1 – ‘Too Darn Hot’ [autograph pencil drafts] [A3]; [A2].

⁴⁰ As with many of Porter’s works, it has been frequently alleged that some of the language in the lyrics of *Kiss Me, Kate* have secondary meaning in ‘gay coding’. In *Something for the Boys*, John M. Clum describes how *Kiss Me, Kate* ‘speaks volumes about the musical as a gay art form’, highlighting that Arnold Saint Subber as ‘openly gay’, John C. Wilson and Porter (as well as ‘randily bisexual’ Harold Lang), each brought creative influence of some kind to the original text. In his monograph, Clum uses examples from most Porter shows including *Nymph Errant* (1933), *Let’s Face It* (1941) and *Silk Stockings* (1955). Mark Fearnow highlights Gerald Mast’s earlier analysis that Porter frequently refers to love as ‘it’ or as ‘a thing’, imbuing his work with ambiguity about the role romance played in his life. Fearnow mentions the blatant ‘dick’ joke in the lyrics of ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’, drawing attention the doubleness of Porter’s lyrics in this and many further examples. John M. Clum, *Something for the Boys*, 9; Mark Fearnow, ‘Let’s Do It: The Layered Life of Cole Porter’ in Kim Marra & Robert A. Schanke, (eds.), *Staging Desire: Queer Readings of American Theater History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 157.

However, this does not apply to ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ or sections of ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ for example. Rather, Paul and the dancers’ racial identity has been characterised in the music as an integral part of the song. In a similar way, Hattie’s class is determined by her role status leading a performance given by the stage crew and chorus rather than the principal cast. This inference is deeply entrenched in the differentiation between Fred and Lilli with lofty, heroic aspirations (success, acclaim, love, etc.) and the rest of the company who are interested in money, sex and/or advantage. As this is characterised by two people of colour, the intertextual link between race and class throughout the musical is clearly evident. Similarly, the relationship between the race of these characters, their heteronormative employment, and the musical depiction of the black woman who is incessantly working to clean up after her mistress and the black man who is preoccupied with sex and gambling relies on a preconception of gender identities as well as racial ones. While these characterisations cannot be described as entirely modern, the central status of these roles in the musical fabric of *Kiss Me, Kate* show a degree of social integration that sits separately to the questions of class.

***Kiss Me, Kate* and the screwball comedy**

In *American Cinderellas on the Broadway Stage*, Maya Cantu characterises *Kiss Me, Kate* as part of a wider trend of ‘battle of the sexes’ musicals in the post-World War II era.⁴¹ She particularly correlates *Kiss Me, Kate* with the theme of remarriage, which was regularly used in screwball comedy films including *The Awful Truth* (1937) and *His Girl Friday* (1939). This theme is also central to the Spewacks’ screenplay for *My Favorite Wife* (1940) and to *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), which Porter helped adapt as the film musical *High Society* (1956).⁴² Screwball comedies frequently centre around a love story and are

⁴¹ Maya Cantu, *American Cinderellas on the Broadway Stage*, 5, 100-156.

⁴² *My Favorite Wife* follows the farcical happenings of the life of Nick Arden (Cary Grant). His first wife Ellen (Irene Dunne) is declared dead seven years after going missing during a boat accident. Nick wants to be married to Bianca (Gail Patrick), a woman he met while looking for Ellen. However, on the day of Bianca and Nick’s marriage, Ellen returns, having been rescued from the island she was stranded on by a lost ship. Nick discovers Ellen in the lobby of his hotel where he plans to have his honeymoon with Bianca and is delighted to see her but cannot bring himself to tell Bianca the truth. It transpires that Ellen was stranded with a man Birkett on the island and Nick becomes very distracted trying to juggle lying to Bianca, talking to Ellen and investigating what really happened. Eventually, everyone ends up in court with the judge who declared Ellen dead and married Nick and Bianca. The judge annuls the marriage with Bianca and leaves Ellen

characterised by sharp, quick-paced dialogue and chaotic narratives leading to the romantic union or reconciliation of the central couple. Intended as light relief for their contemporary Depression era audience, these screenplays compress serious situations into improbably messy plotlines, providing an escapist fantasy for their audiences.⁴³ In their introduction to *The Screwball Comedy Films: a History and Filmography, 1934-1942*, Byrge and Milton Miller characterise this phenomenon:

In short, the screwball comedy pleased the movie-going public by combining slapstick with sophistication, as characters who supposedly had ample reason to follow strict social convention took leave of at least some measure of their comfortable sanity and reverted to childish pranks while in evening dress, unabashedly wearing their egos on their sleeves...⁴⁴

The authors also highlight how the fictional world of these comedies is ‘ultimately nonsensical’ as characters abandon normal behaviours in order to achieve their romantic objectives.⁴⁵ This can be seen in *Kiss Me, Kate* in direct parallel to Howard Hawkes’ *His Girl Friday*, in which newspaper editor Walter Burns (Cary Grant) contrives to disrupt the nuptials of his ex-wife and top reporter Hildy Johnson (Rosalind Russell) with a lucrative investigation into the innocence of a convicted murderer.⁴⁶ Burns tries to prevent Johnson from leaving town with her fiancé, using various distractions including getting her fiancé repeatedly arrested and organising the kidnap of Johnson’s mother-in-law to be. In *Kiss Me, Kate*, Fred contrives to prevent Lilli from leaving the production, after she discovers that Fred has sent a card and flowers to Lois. Fred exploits the appearance of two gangsters who are collecting Bill’s forged gambling debt to force Lilli to continue the performance before her fiancé Harrison Howell arrives to extricate her.

and Nick to sort out their relationship for themselves. After Nick says he needs time to think, Ellen briefly resists recommencing their marriage until Nick finally confesses through a protracted series of snippet conversations that he wants to be with her. *My Favorite Wife*, directed by Garson Kanin, (S.l.: Universal Pictures UK, 2007).

⁴³ Duane Byrge and Robert Milton Miller, *The Screwball Comedy Films: a History and Filmography 1934-1942* (Chicago & London: St. James, 1991), 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁶ *His Girl Friday*, directed by Howard Hawkes, (Los Angeles, CA: Delta Entertainment Corp., 2001).

Similarly, there is a structural overlap between *Kiss Me, Kate* and the Spewacks' screenplay for *My Favorite Wife* in that the hero Nick Arden (also played by Cary Grant) is caught between two women (his first wife Ellen who has been declared dead and his new bride Bianca) and goes to extreme lengths not to lose the first. The 'other man' in first wife Ellen's life, Stephen Birkett, is ostensibly a non-character who adds a complication to the progress of the relationship and resolution of the plot, which is also reminiscent of the Harrison Howell sub-narrative in *Kiss Me, Kate*. In *My Favorite Wife*, Nick becomes jealous of the potential intimacy of Ellen's relationship with Birkett after they have been shipwrecked together for seven years. Birkett turns out to be an athlete and a very strict vegetarian: a handsome man who appears to be the epitome of virtue and wants to marry Eve. Birkett's vegetarianism – he repeatedly orders carrot sticks to eat – becomes the subject of Nick's scorn as evidence of Birkett's blandness and a way to denigrate him to Eve. This seems to be a precursor to Fred's systematic breakdown of Lilli's future domestic boredom with Howell in Act Two of *Kiss Me, Kate*.⁴⁷ Indeed, Fred's speech in *Kiss Me, Kate* is very similar to some of the dialogue in the dinner scene in *The Awful Truth* in which Jerry Warriner (again played by Grant) tries to undermine his (soon-to-be) ex-wife's happiness with her fiancé Dan by pretending to envy her future life. When he learns she is moving to Oklahoma, he responds: 'Lucy, you lucky girl! No more running around the nightspots. No more prowling around in New York shops. I shall think of you every time a new show opens and think to myself: she's well out of it.'⁴⁸

In terms of the regression associated with *The Taming of the Shrew*, it might be argued that the inevitable romantic reconciliation in screwball comedy is socially conservative; it promotes heterosexual monogamy. However, there is a difference between being compelled or trapped into a relationship and choosing to stay, which is integral to reading these narratives. The escapist themes of romantic pre-determinism and enduring love certainly reinforce normative storylines but they do not necessarily mean that the relationships depicted are abusive. In addition to this, the female characters in each of these works have agency. They are independent, articulate and ready to confront or challenge the men in their way. Admittedly, there is always a character that loses out (Harrison Howell in *Kiss Me, Kate*; Bianca in *My Favorite Wife*;

⁴⁷ Cole Porter, Sam and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 333-337.

⁴⁸ *The Awful Truth*, directed by Leo McCarey (Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment, 2003), 28:00-28:13.

Johnson's fiancé Bruce in *His Girl Friday*) but this is not a gendered precedent in screwball comedy. In *Kiss Me, Kate*, Spewack and Porter handle this in similarly nuanced terms. Lois has an entourage of admirers she has sought out whilst Lilli and Fred have physical and emotional parity. These details weaken the suggestion that the show reinforces negative patterns in gender equality. Similarly, the notions of conventional relationships are persistently undermined: Fred and Lilli are performing *with* Lois, Harrison is paying for the play, Bill is aware of Lois's interactions with her wealthy admirers and loves her anyway.

In these examples alone, it is clear that aspects of Fred and Lilli's dialogue have been clearly derived from plot conventions in a completely alternative context to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Indeed, many of the features of the backstage relationships in *Kiss Me, Kate* are informed by other conventions and cultural reference points that are not immediately traceable in Shakespeare's text. The Spewacks co-authored *My Favorite Wife* many years before *Kiss Me, Kate* and yet there are striking textual similarities between these works even as they are completely different.⁴⁹ In a similar way, *His Girl Friday* focuses on the extreme lengths the male lead pursues to prevent his love interest from leaving him. Female lead Johnson (Russell) lingers out of professional curiosity to investigate the story Burns (Grant) tempts her with, leading to additional narrative distractors including interrupting the scheduled execution of the accused murderer and rescuing her fiancé from numerous pranks Burns plays on him. The complications in *Kiss Me, Kate*'s Baltimore including Bill's gambling debt and the arrival of the gunmen are in-keeping with the shape of a screwball narrative. In this way, *Kiss Me, Kate* can be seen as a development of a popular entertainment model that Bella Spewack had already worked on earlier in her career. Crucially, the gender construction that positions single-minded (and often career-driven) women against charismatic men they have rejected is central to this film medium and adds to the cultural complexity of *Kiss Me, Kate*. The intertextual narrative between Baltimore and *The Taming of the Shrew* is cleverly framed by this model. Indeed, the screwball format provides the contemporary vehicle through which the intertextuality in *Kiss Me, Kate* is conveyed.

⁴⁹ There are also striking similarities in terms of plot structure between *My Favorite Wife* and *The Awful Truth*.

Interpreting violence in *Kiss Me, Kate*

'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' remains one of the controversial moments in *Kiss Me, Kate* for scholars despite its noticeable popularity in stage productions of the show. For Silverberg and Hodgdon, it is fundamental in reaffirming the masculine voice in the musical before the final scene. Porter's lyrics seem to advocate sexual violence as a means of asserting male authority over desirable women. Indeed, Porter wrote one particularly unappealing lyric – 'If she threatens to call the policey / Put her wise to the Rape of Lucrecy'.⁵⁰ Whereas Bella Spewack suggests she was never allowed to see 'What Does Your Servant Dream About?' because 'the boys' thought it was too coarse, this lyric was included in the interim script draft, which was sent to Hanya Holm. However, it was removed by the October 11 draft.⁵¹ The implications of the song are further complicated by the fact that Fred has used the gunmen to control Lilli. Even though he cannot contain her himself, he exploits their threatening abilities to keep her in the show.

Although the gunmen never carry out any physical violence against anyone, the threat is continually made from their first appearance. In Act One, Scene Three, the Second Man uses the guise of expressing regret to his companion to mask a threat against Fred: 'If I hadda do something to him, I'd cry like a baby'.⁵² Then, later, in Act One, Scene Seven, the First Man threatens Lilli with a gun by transferring 'the weight offa one side and onto the other' and they continue then to hold her in the theatre, preventing her from leaving, until they discover their employer Mr Hogan has been killed by another gangster (Act Two, Scene Six) – 'His [Mr Hogan's] unidentified remains will be found floating in the bay tomorrow morning'.⁵³ As such, there is an implication of violence written through the gunmen's appearances in *Kiss Me, Kate*. However, the severity of these moments and of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' needs to be understood in the wider context of the musical

The gunmen are persistently made ridiculous throughout *Kiss Me, Kate*. In most productions, they are dressed up in garish, inappropriate costumes or in bad drag when entering the *Taming of the Shrew* performance. In the film adaptation, they perform an awkward but amusing shuffle dance while singing 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' that

⁵⁰ LC CP 11/1: 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', typed lyric draft, 1.

⁵¹ NYPL HH 21/501: *Kiss Me, Kate* undated script [1], 2-6-32.

⁵² Cole Porter, Sam and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 284.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 310, 340.

distracts from the content in the same way that the placement of the song in front of the curtain facilitates over-the-top, vaudevillian performances. As such, any menace inferred from a literal reading of their actions or the lyrics of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' is dissipated. For example, when Fred claims he didn't sign the IOU in Act One, Scene Three, they reply:

First Man:	The minute a man signs an IOU everything goes dark.
Second Man:	The doctors call it magnesia.
First Man:	We cure it. ⁵⁴

We laugh at the malapropism, and therefore, the absurdity of the expression rather than at the idea that these characters are legitimate gangsters who mean to do harm. In this way, the gunmen introduce sufficient tension and opportunity to propel *Kiss Me, Kate* forward. However, we find humour in the unlikeliness of their characterisation and not in the violence they describe or represent. Both in 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' and in the gunmen's dialogue throughout *Kiss Me, Kate*, these characters are diminished by their repeated mistakes. They are frequently undermined, reducing the credibility of the threat they present and framing the moments of 'comedy violence' in a familiar lexicon to earlier slapstick, screwball and vaudevillian comedy duos.

In addition to this, 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' can also be read ironically in the context of the representation of *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Lilli and Lois have such agency that none of the men are really able to contain their behaviour. Indeed, Lilli and Lois each undermine the *Shrew* performance by bringing their offstage identities onstage. A literal reading of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' reveals a hugely problematic attitude to women's rights but there is minimal context to read any part of *Kiss Me, Kate* as sincere or moralistic. Porter wrote the song in order to raise laughs. It is, of course, possible to write comedy in bad taste and at the expense of someone. However, there is little context for receiving 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' as a guide to living or an anthem for misogyny. As with the whole musical, the song is anti-moralistic but it does not advocate abuse nor does it glamorise the intention to commit violence. It is set artificially and in the context of two lowbrow characters who are deliberately performing to the crowd. The emphasis on performativity in this musical number has equivalent

⁵⁴ Ibid., 285.

significance to the use of inaccurate expressions in the gunmen's dialogue. Spewack and Porter create some distance between the violence that the gunmen frequently describe and their role as comedy figures by maintaining focus on their methods of communication as much as their message.

To some extent, this reading of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' – as a reassertion of misogyny in *Kiss Me, Kate* – forms part of a wider suggestion that Fred's humiliation of Lilli in Act One, Scene Five is an act of domestic violence. Taken out of context, a man subduing a woman by beating her like a child in front of an audience is easily interpreted in problematic ways. However, it is slightly disingenuous to suggest that the slapping scene in *Kiss Me, Kate* advocates misogynistic domestic violence and especially violence against women when Lilli instigates the fight and has successfully attacked Fred for a period before he retaliates. Similarly, it is hard to assert that 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' exemplifies the gender politics of *Kiss Me, Kate* when Lilli (and Lois) is shown to have complex agency throughout the show. Furthermore, 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' is performed in deliberate isolation from the rest of the show; it does not contribute to the backstage plot. However, it adds to the commentary on different 'types' of musical number by parodying vaudevillian conventions (including bawdy humour). It also associates the depiction of seedy sexual predation with lowbrow immorality by situating it in the same aesthetic sphere as the gunmen.

Both Hodgdon and Silverberg particularly criticise the film version of *Kiss Me, Kate* and suggest that this adaptation heightens the problematic aspects of the original Broadway production. (They each read *Kiss Me, Kate* with some fluidity so that gestures in the film become fundamental to reading the musical 'as a whole'.) Silverberg particularly suggests that violence 'permeates the film through the blocking and stage business'.⁵⁵ She signposts the choreography of 'Why Can't You Behave?', including a fake boxing match and high kicks down the camera lens, as a demonstration of the subtle gestures that reinforce the acceptability of domestic violence in the film version. This example is particularly interesting as it contrasts with her wider point that the film makes Lilli more aggressive (she smashes plant pots, etc.) and reduces Fred's embarrassment at her hands (Lilli is thrown across the mule so Fred does not suffer as a result of beating her; his assault of her does not disrupt the play).⁵⁶ Whereas these literal

⁵⁵ Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 78.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

examples contribute to the performance of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the figurative ‘violence’ in ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ contributes playfully to the idea that couples tussle. It is also set in the context of a number of tricks and stunts that are deliberately silly (e.g. Bill (Tommy Rall) bouncing on hidden trampolines to elevate his leaps). Rather than adding to an oppressive commentary, the opening tap duet between Bill and Lois in the film subtly mirrors ‘Wunderbar’. We understand that, like Fred and Lilli, Bill and Lois have a shared vocation and are, ultimately, in love with one another. Again, Lois (Ann Miller) admires Bill and the spectacle of his performance as the choreography continues. As is highlighted in Chapter Six, this ‘spot’ showcases the act of performance using a model that is a normal part of film musicals. Although the boxing gestures could be a part of a ‘violent’ metalevel in the film, it is clear that this belongs to a dance sequence that metaphorically resolves the lovers’ quarrel preceding it. The need to locate aspects of the *Taming of the Shrew* text in *Kiss Me, Kate*, as discussed in Chapter Six, is perhaps evident here. The details of Hermes Pan’s choreography for Rall and Miller make a statement about the nature of performance and the expectation of spectacle. This gels with the wider exploration of metatheatricity in *Kiss Me, Kate* more convincingly than with an additional violent narrative between Bill and Lois that has no wider context.

Silverberg also highlights that the onstage performers are shocked to see Fred (Howard Keel) beat Lilli (Kathryn Grayson) during *The Shrew*’s wedding scene. However, she suggests that the film’s captive audience will assume that it is another part of *The Taming of the Shrew* performance, in some way normalising this assault in comparison to stage productions.⁵⁷ Her argument, predicated partially on the marketing images for the film, claims that Fred’s retaliation is glorified in the reception to the original Broadway production and that the film proves this case. The grin on Keel’s face as he reaps revenge on Katherine/Lilli could perhaps be read to amplify the unpleasantness of the slapping. However, Keel plays Petruchio as a semi-piratical villain adorned with whip and a gleeful laugh, which helps to clarify the moments when Fred ‘breaks character’. As such, he grabs Lilli as Fred but presents the slapping to the audience as Petruchio. There is no sense that he takes any lasting pleasure in hurting Lilli and indeed, Grayson’s performance is crucial as in the final scene of the film, she is comfortable, in control and also gives Fred/Petruchio a knowing look.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁵⁸ George Sidney, *Kiss Me Kate* [DVD], 01:48:27-32.

This is not to suggest that slapping someone is not a violent act but to argue that the context of *Kiss Me, Kate* is vital to characterising the text. Even-handed retaliation in a fight is not the same as systematic abuse. Silverberg claims that: 'Because Lilly [sic] has control over Fred in terms of money and star power, he resorts to any means possible, including violence to control her'.⁵⁹ However, Fred only seeks to pacify Lilli when she begins to destroy his production. *Kiss Me, Kate* opens with a tangible demonstration that Lilli has agency to do what she wants when she calls Fred a bastard and storms out: he is forced to carry on anyway. Yet he and she reconcile soon after and demonstrate a degree of affection and mutual respect. While there may be harrowing productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* in which the violence against Katherine is truly and rightly shocking, *Kiss Me, Kate* situates all physical violence in the context that there is equality between Fred and Lilli. The slapping is a last resort when she refuses to stop attacking him. It is performed (as highlighted above) through a means of physical comedy reminiscent of Buster Keaton or Tom and Jerry and subsequent slapstick examples that have become central to popular American culture.

'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple'

In addition to arguing that *Kiss Me, Kate* develops some of the masculinist themes of *The Taming of the Shrew*, some scholars situate the use of Katherine's final soliloquy (beginning 'Fie, fie! unknit that threatening unkind brow') in the finale as one of the least progressive features of the text.⁶⁰ As the speech advocates that a wife should moderate her behaviour and be submissive to her husband's demands, the use of this speech contributes to scholarly readings that argue *Kiss Me, Kate* reflects poorly on the agency of its female characters; the construction of the final scene (Act Two, Scene Eight) becomes problematic as it requires Lilli's Katherine to finish the *Shrew* scene in order to resolve her love story with Fred. In other words, Kate has to be tamed by Petruchio in order for Lilli to return to Fred. This has facilitated some interpretations of *Kiss Me, Kate* as conforming to and endorsing a pro-patriarchal reading of *The Shrew* in which Kate has submitted psychologically to Petruchio. Indeed, Silverberg suggests that Porter's song

⁵⁹ Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 63.

⁶⁰ William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 5.2.136-179

setting of Shakespeare's speech is an inevitable gesture following the anti-feminist lyrics of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', writing:

Not surprisingly, after the statement of how women should give in to men's sexual needs, the show ends with "Woman Are So Simple" [sic]... *Kiss Me, Kate's* creative team pays reverence to Shakespeare's words through keeping a reprimand to women intact during the play's resolution.⁶¹

Although she acknowledges that there are complex gender portrayals in *Kiss Me, Kate*, Silverberg's overall reading of the show particularly emphasises the details of violence (especially against the female characters) in the text and positions the film and reception to *Kiss Me, Kate* as disappointingly anti-feminist.⁶² She situates 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' as a final gesture in a derogatory and troubling narrative that diminishes Lilli by fundamentally combining her story with Katherine's.

To some extent, Silverberg's approach, that this ending contributes a subtheme of misogyny, exemplifies Barbara Hodgdon's suggestion that discussions of *The Taming of the Shrew* 'invariably understand [it] through its ending' (i.e. through Katherine's final speech).⁶³ Hodgdon argues that modern interpretations of the *Shrew* have 'reconfigured' Katherine's speech in order to avoid the 'no-choice politics of its ending.'⁶⁴ She suggested that various productions and academic readings of *The Taming of the Shrew* have struggled to adapt the play's narrative to give Katherine unobjectionable parity with and emotional independence from Petruchio, regardless of his methods of abusing her. In the revisionist approach to *The Shrew*, Katherine maintains her psychological independence from Petruchio, only pretending to submit to his will. This interpretation aims to

⁶¹ In contrast, Irene Dash argues that it is possible to interpret Katherine's speech ironically, that its length in the original *Taming of the Shrew* text is so extreme that Shakespearean audiences may have understood it in such terms. She also notes that in the Fontanne/Lunt production, Katherine raised her hand as she described putting it beneath her husband's foot and then slapped Petruchio. She suggests that the contemporary audience would have been largely familiar with the irreverence of that production as it had achieved such success and would therefore access *The Taming of the Shrew* rather differently than contemporary commentaries might suggest. Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 68; Irene G. Dash, *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, 74.

⁶² Silverberg particularly notes Bella Spewack's lack of representation in popular reception to *Kiss Me, Kate* arguing that her contribution to the text has been largely forgotten, mirroring some of the underlying issues represented in the text. Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 97-8.

⁶³ Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*, 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

demonstrate that Katherine can maintain her agency in spite of Petruchio's actions.⁶⁵ However, the revisionist reading has been partially discredited by some scholars, claiming that Shakespeare's play was problematic according to Elizabethan standards as well in contemporary performance.⁶⁶

This divide in interpretations has informed the Shakespearean readings of *Kiss Me, Kate* with Hodgdon clearly aligning her reading of this musical with the idea that there is no way of de-problematising Shakespeare's play. In this context, she prefaces her reading of Sidney's film by distancing *Kiss Me, Kate* from the plot of *The Taming of the Shrew*, before focusing on how the use of 3-D technology in the film heightens Fred/Petruchio's visibility over the rest of the cast. She argues that the visual impact of the 3-D sequences reduces the emphasis on the subjugation of Katherine in the film in order to promote monogamous happiness in the final scene.⁶⁷ Although the MGM adaptation of *Kiss Me, Kate* is an integral part of the history of the work, it is worth noting that it is the only known adaptation of *Kiss Me, Kate* in which 'I Am Ashamed' is not a musical moment and is therefore an exception to her own argument outlined above.

Similarly, Silverberg notes that in the silent film adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1927), Mary Pickford destabilises Katherine's final speech by adding a deliberate wink to camera to show that she is complicit in subterfuge rather than advocating submissiveness.⁶⁸ She then indicates that, in the London recording of *Kiss Me, Kate* (after Blakemore's 1999 production), Katherine (Rachel York) mirrors this gesture to the

⁶⁵ John C. Bean, 'Comic Structure and the Humanizing of Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*' in Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Green & Carol Thomas Neely, (eds.), *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 65.

⁶⁶ Linda Woodbridge and Michael Hattaway as cited in Michael Shapiro, 'Framing the Taming: Metatheatrical Awareness of Female Impersonation in *The Taming of the Shrew*' in *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 23, Early Shakespeare Special Number (1993), 143, accessed May 16, 2015. doi: 10.2307/3507978.

⁶⁷ Hodgdon's approach is superficially supported by Kenneth C. Rothwell, who makes passing reference to *Kiss Me Kate* in *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television*. He defines *Kiss Me Kate* as a 'mirror movie' in which a backstage story is subjugated to mirror the Shakespearean narrative in the film musical format. Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*, 21; Kenneth C. Rothwell, *A History of Shakespeare on Screen: A Century of Film and Television* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 215.

⁶⁸ Hodgdon also describes this moment: 'As she [Kate (Pickford)] finishes her vow, a cut to mid-close-up isolates her broad wink, which Bianca, in an ensuing mid-shot, acknowledges'. Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 87; Barbara Hodgdon, *The Shakespeare Trade: Performances and Appropriations*, 15.

audience (and to Bianca, downstage).⁶⁹ She argues that, in contemporising *Kiss Me, Kate* to appease contemporary sensibilities to poor representations of gender equality, this wink mediates the content of the speech to some extent.⁷⁰ However, the gesture is not preserved in the stage directions of the Blakemore script and is therefore not included in performances that are not so demonstrably referential to other versions of *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁷¹ Where Silverberg suggests that this gesture is necessary to ameliorate our modern reactions to this section of *The Taming of the Shrew*, it seems an unnecessary flourish in the context that *Kiss Me, Kate* never truly reflects the original Shakespearean text. Indeed, both Silverberg and Hodgdon aim to identify how *Kiss Me, Kate* unsuccessfully diverts attention from a misogynistic end to the musical (and to some extent, to *The Taming of the Shrew*). However, they fail to acknowledge the stasis Porter and Spewack achieved around 'I Am Ashamed' in the final scene or the possibility that they could have cut the sequence altogether. This song moment is more complex than simply using Katherine's defeat as a quick resolution to the show.

As has been noted in Chapters Two and Three, Porter and Spewack worked on the final section of *Kiss Me, Kate* more than any other part of the musical. It is therefore possible to trace some of the process that led to their setting of 'I Am Ashamed'. For example, the May libretto included nearly 100 lines of the last scene of *The Taming of the Shrew* as well as parts of Act Four, Scene Five (the 'Sun and Moon' scene), in contrast to the very sparse quotations in the original Broadway script.⁷² Most of this framing dialogue was removed and Porter's abridged song setting replaced Katherine's speech (which Spewack had included in its entirety). The deletion of the 'sun and moon' scene is important here because it is the focal moment in *The Taming of the Shrew* when Katherine is shown either to break under Petruchio's persistent bullying or to make a conscious decision to humour him, depending on the reading of the text. However, *Kiss Me, Kate* avoids nearly all reference to the 'taming' sections of *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the scenes that remain Katherine provides considerable opposition to Petruchio and

⁶⁹ *Kiss Me, Kate*, directed by Chris Hunt [DVD], 02:23:42-44.

⁷⁰ Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 87

⁷¹ As has been noted before, there are noticeable costuming similarities between the Blakemore production and the Burton/Taylor film adaptation of *The Shrew*. Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* prompt book (1999), 98.

⁷² In the May libretto, Spewack combined Act 4, Scene 5 - the 'Sun and Moon' scene' - from *The Taming of the Shrew* with Act Five, Scene Two. CU BSS 27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts: May Libretto, 2-7-31-32; William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, 5.2.65-185.

prevents him from consummating the marriage (leading into ‘Where Is the Life That Late I Led?’). As such, ‘I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple’ is not set at the end of a demonstrable pattern of physical and psychological abuse; it arises after two hours of drama in which Lilli/Katherine both antagonises and successfully retaliates against Fred/Petruchio.

Whilst the act of delivering a part of this soliloquy connects Lilli’s actions to her performance as Katherine, it is important to note that Lilli’s return to the stage itself differentiates *Kiss Me, Kate* from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Having exited the theatre in Act Two, Scene Six, Lilli is not compelled to return: she decides to. This freedom of choice is also amplified by the fact that the script does not provide an offstage resolution (conversation, marriage, etc.) that confirms that Fred and Lilli’s reconciliation is more than temporary or ultimately, professional. Silverberg also highlights that Lilli does not embrace domesticity: ‘Instead of joining Howell on his isolated Georgia farmstead, Lilli opts to keep her acting career. Unfortunately, she has to put up with Fred, but both she and he know who really is in control: his career would go nowhere without her’.⁷³ Again, the act of returning demonstrates Lilli’s agency rather than diminishes it.

As a song, ‘I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple’ also takes on a new identity from the soliloquy as a distinct act of performance and as the penultimate gesture of the show. Here the musical moment is as significant as the text that Porter has set. For the first and only time in the play, Lilli performs a solo song to an assembled audience who listen to her without interruption.⁷⁴ On every dramatic plane, onstage, offstage and for the audience, Lilli becomes the central performer just as the resolution of *Kiss Me, Kate* is entirely bound up in her decision-making. Her choice to finish the performance is solidified in this moment and whilst it is clear that Spewack did not initially envisage that Lilli would leave the production, both she and Porter developed a potent dramatic moment that makes use of stasis in an increasingly chaotic narrative. As such, the evolution of the framing context of ‘I Am Ashamed’ contributes meaningfully to the disintegration of Fred’s *The Taming of the Shrew*, which seems irreparably destroyed and is then revived by Lilli’s entrance.

⁷³ Carol E. Silverberg, *If it’s good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 71.

⁷⁴ Several productions have incorporated the chorus into ‘I Hate Men’ rather than having it as a true solo number for Katherine. However, the script describes Katherine as ‘alone, surly and unhappy’ as she performs this number. (There is no description of characters entering during the song in the 1999 libretto either.) Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 299.

Cantu subtly illuminates the nature of 'I Am Ashamed' in the text, explaining: 'Paradoxically, Lilli obtains her liberation through the acting of Katherine's submission...' ⁷⁵ Having highlighted the characteristic parallels between Lilli and Hildy Johnson (Rosalind Russell) in *His Girl Friday*, Cantu implicitly draws attention to the fact that the audience understands that Lilli is not Katherine. There is sufficient dramatic context to separate Lilli's story and identity from Katherine's speech, understanding that as the backstage commotions have resolved themselves, the onstage performance is no longer compromised by external disruptions. As such, we share in Fred's joy and relief that Lilli has returned and is playing the part and we are able to receive her performance as such. Shakespeare's original speech does not speak for Lilli's character, her experiences during the play, nor is it framed in any context that can be said to translate into real life. The comedic features of *Kiss Me, Kate*, of Fred and Lilli's skirmishes, and the stylistic details familiar from screwball comedy are rich enough to suggest that if Fred were to 'louse up' again, Lilli would recommence causing chaos. Her choice to return is not an act of submission but a decision to put up with Fred because she loves him, and the theatre, more. Lilli's performance of 'I Am Ashamed' is a demonstration of her agency. It cannot be characterised as a vocalisation of misogynistic principles.

As such, the representations of gender in *Kiss Me, Kate* are complex as they also have an impact upon the class and narrative functions of the characters throughout the text. There are clear archetypes to which both the Spewacks and Porter have written in order to create a rich intertextual relationship between *The Taming of the Shrew* text and the backstage story. To modern sensibilities, the taming of Katherine and the racial profiling of Hattie and Paul may seem problematic if not pejorative. However, the temporal context of the show in post-Second World War Baltimore as well as the main focus on the production and principal romantic relationship are written sensitively to these identities. As such, the invention of Hattie and Paul acknowledges the presence of African-American stagehands in 1940s productions; their music (particularly 'Too Darn Hot') acknowledges, but does not comment on their race. However, both characters represent familiar and specifically gendered character traits (a domestic confidante and a sexually-driven gambler). Because race is not incorporated into the textual language of *Kiss Me, Kate* in a potent way, many productions replace Paul and Hattie with non-black

⁷⁵ Maya Cantu, *American Cinderellas on the Broadway Musical Stage*, 129.

performers. These characters are important, however, as they highlight an aspect of the text which could be interpreted negatively. Whereas the class status of Paul and Hattie might seem to indicate servitude, their command of the opening numbers of each act positions them integrally to the musical.

We can extend this approach to evaluate the representation of Lilli also. Read through the ending of the show and in the context of the reception to *The Taming of the Shrew*, Lilli's character is most limited by the gender constructions in *Kiss Me, Kate*. According to the approach outlined above, Lilli saves the play by performing Katherine's soliloquy but by returning in this way, she diminishes her acts of rebellion. However, Lilli rejects a conventionally appealing life of comfort, wealth and social position with Harrison to stay with Fred. Her return facilitates the romantic narrative of *Kiss Me, Kate* in that she returns to the 'right' man. However, her characterisation through the text transcends the representation of Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Lilli has parity with Fred. She has financial independence and none of the gestures in Act Two, Scene Eight suggest that they will carry on differently after the play. As such, Lilli is not diminished by performing 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple'; the act does not change her character because we can differentiate between her and Katherine.

Extant criticisms of 'I Am Ashamed' are limited in two ways. They focus on Fred's physical dominance over Lilli and on the misogynistic context of the original speech in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. As has been argued in this chapter, we are able to differentiate between stage violence (the disintegration of *The Taming of the Shrew* in Act One, Scene Five) and 'real' violence (e.g. the gunmen describing what they might do to Fred or threatening Lilli with a gun). It is difficult to problematize *Kiss Me, Kate* in terms of physical dominance when Lilli both instigates and finishes their fight sequence in Act One, Scene Five and Scene Six. Similarly, we do not experience the same campaign of abuse as is depicted in *The Taming of the Shrew* in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Lilli's 'right to reply' to Fred, to retaliate and, ultimately, to extricate herself from the production is vital here. In *Kiss Me, Kate*, Lilli has the ability to cause Fred harm literally, professionally and financially without recourse whereas Katherine has no agency once the marriage has taken place. Furthermore, Lilli has other points of status over Fred (e.g. financial independence and a successful film career) that do not exist for Katherine. By determining the balance of power in this relationship through the lens that Fred may be

able hit her harder, this reading ignores all the details of the show in which Fred is made to look ridiculous and Lilli (and Lois) are demonstrated to have noteworthy agency.

There is an undeniable insidiousness to the exploitation of ‘the threat of violence’ by Fred towards Lilli in the backstage storyline that certainly limits the progressivity of this musical. This is made less comfortable by the allusions to violence in ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’, which can easily be read as a chauvinistic masterpiece, advocating daily abuse of women for the sexual pleasure of their male aggressors. However, ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ exemplifies a balance of ‘edgy’ comedy and satire of performance that is part of the language of *Kiss Me, Kate* that also prevents this musical from being fundamentally problematic. The situation of this song is reflexive and obviously contrived. While the lyrics are bawdy and aggressive, the number as a whole is performed by the least credible players who end up on the wrong side of the theatre curtain and yet, are able to rhyme ‘heinous’ and ‘*Coriolanus*’.⁷⁶ Any semblance of spontaneity is disrupted by the rhymes in Porter’s lyrics as well as the soft shoe choreography that has become a feature of this song moment. As the gunmen should not have the literary knowledge or vocabulary to construct the lyrics nor the ability to deliver a vaudevillian showcase,⁷⁷ the artificiality of this song intersects with the deliberately risqué lyrics.

Here Porter plays with nuances of class, education and performance to satirise the social status of the works of Shakespeare and the art of seduction. These topics become siphons for a wider joke at the expense of the gunmen rather than a potential victim of abuse. Porter drafted far less wholesome lyrics, which seem to further problematise this song. However, ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ is deliberately on the edge of taste and satirises the values of *The Taming of the Shrew* by making them ridiculous. Not only are the works of Shakespeare displaced in the lyrics but the imagery created through the use of their titles undermines the potential violence of the song. This song tells an ephemeral joke about class, education and elitism and in so doing, does not absolve the actions described. We laugh at the absurdity of the moment not at a validation of sexual abuse.

As has been outlined in the screwball comedy analysis in this chapter, *Kiss Me, Kate* has shared characteristics with comedic and entertaining narratives that exploit convoluted plotlines to characterise a romance. Both the 1940s musical and the earlier

⁷⁶ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 343.

⁷⁷ The “education” they have amassed while in prison is clearly insufficient for them to coin phrases accurately.

screwball comedy include predetermined gender roles that are central to this romance: Fred and Lilli are husband and wife, they are meant to be together and are therefore destined to return to one another. This narrative is familiar in numerous other works, e.g. Noel Coward's *Private Lives* (1930), *The Philadelphia Story* or the convoluted romantic entanglements in the Spewacks' adapted screenplay for *Weekend At the Waldorf* (1945).⁷⁸ The authors have returned to devices from their most prolific work in order to write characters embedded into the wider gender narrative of the Shakespearean text. In light of this, there are aspects of the text that persistently satirise masculinity and attribute vanity to both genders. The balance between serious drama, farce, archetypal characters and subversion of these constructs gives the text richness as well as humour. Whilst Fred behaves in manipulative and unattractive ways in order to keep his production together, he does not abuse Lilli in terms that are comparable to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The script framing 'Wunderbar' as well as the song itself foreshadows 'So In Love' and indicates sincerity in Fred's reprise performance after Lilli leaves the theatre. Silverberg argues that: 'In both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, the female is equated with a commodity that must be manipulated: Katherine's value is on half her father's lands and thirty thousand crowns; Lilli is worth the revenue of a successful Broadway musical.'⁷⁹ However, it is clear that Fred values Lilli far beyond her financial contribution to the show. During 'Wunderbar', they demonstrate genuine reciprocal affection, which is developed in both performances of 'So In Love.' Lilli is the only character with whom Fred has consistently equal conversations just as she is the only character he really fails to manage.

In terms of representing gender, Fred is never edified above Lilli. She is able to outmanoeuvre him by using Harrison in the same way that he exploits the gunmen. Their relationship is a perpetual power struggle. However, there is a balance of agency between Fred and Lilli, which is totally absent from *The Taming of the Shrew*. While *Kiss Me, Kate* has been criticised for developing the misogynistic aspects of *The Shrew* in line with an emphasis on contemporary 1940s gender politics, Spewack and Porter's backstage context interrupts and changes the Shakespeare text to allow symbiosis

⁷⁸ This narrative theme continued to feature in Porter's later works *Can-Can* (1953) and *High Society* (1956).

⁷⁹ Carol E. Silverberg, *If it's good enough for Shakespeare: The Bard and the American Musical*, 63-4.

between Lilli and Katherine. At the end of the musical, Lilli has her wealth, career and romantic life in control, and all as a result of her own work and decision-making. Furthermore, Lois is not diminished through the text and continues to exist comfortably; the relative liberation of Katherine in *Kiss Me, Kate* is also mirrored in the parallels between Lois and Bianca. For all that this narrative does not promote a militant ideology in which Lilli should dismiss Fred for his troubling patterns of behaviour, *Kiss Me, Kate* does not actively promote misogyny or relegate its female characters as a result of its connection to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Given that we do not see most of *The Taming of Shrew*, it is a mistake to characterise the rest of *Kiss Me, Kate* in terms of a narrative we do not receive. Instead, *Kiss Me, Kate* uses the contemporary context and characterisation to update parts of *The Shrew*, giving Bianca new agency and Katherine onstage parity with Petruchio. The triumph is universal as everyone ends with what they want without compromising their social status to achieve it.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

'I WON'T WASTE A NOTE OF MY PATTERS ON SOCIALLY SIGNIFICANT MATTERS':

KISS ME, KATE AND ENTERTAINMENT

The initial triumph of the original Broadway production of *Kiss Me, Kate* came as a surprise to critics and audiences as well as to many involved in the making of the show. Cole Porter had experienced diminished success through the 1940s and the Spewacks enjoyed only sporadic acclaim throughout their careers. This context, and the unusual narrative that combined a play about actors with a performance of a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, dampened its financial appeal and threatened to limit its commercial reach. Despite this early scepticism and the show being performed away from the heart of Broadway at the New Century Theater, *Kiss Me, Kate* captured public attention and became the fourth most successful musical of the decade. Although the plot line allegedly deterred potential investors, *Kiss Me, Kate's* underlying focus on performers and the nature of performance has made it a flexible and continually engaging text that comments on and satirises musical theatre tropes. Rather than embracing serious or highbrow themes, *Kiss Me, Kate* makes light of every subject it handles, encompassing a plethora of musical styles and cultural reference points while telling the story of Fred and Lilli's romantic reunion. It remains one of the most successful musicals of its period to include reflexive sub-commentaries on musical theatre and popular culture. It also contains a postmodern subtext that satirises high art.¹

As a result of the use of *The Taming of the Shrew* and the biographical context of *Kiss Me, Kate* in Porter's working life, scholars have considered how these aspects differentiate it from Porter's other musicals. These approaches to *Kiss Me, Kate* have been shaped in part by the extant archival materials that highlight certain sections of the working processes that led to the creation of the text. As such, these sources complicate the representation of the collaboration Porter, Bella Spewack and the other individuals involved in the original Broadway production. Whilst it is clear that there was extensive collaboration in the early development and rehearsal stages of the show,

¹ Other examples of this subversion include Junior's jazz-influenced disruption of a ballet performance in Rodgers and Hart's *On Your Toes* (1936) or songs such as 'Just a Little Joint with the Jukebox' and 'The Three Bs' from *Best Foot Forward* (1941).

the sources infrequently detail who did or said what. This means that Sam Spewack's influence on the development of *Kiss Me, Kate* remains hard to define.² However, this thesis has clarified what the sources can tell us. For example, we can see Sam's early involvement in reducing *The Taming of the Shrew* as it appears in the final script of *Kiss Me, Kate*.³ This is significant because it demonstrates that, even in the period during which Porter, Bella and Sam Spewack were meeting, they were each developing material separately and bringing it together afterwards. It also shows how Sam interpreted Bella's ideas as they would appear in the original Broadway production in April 1948 before she had finished her first draft of the script.

Porter also attributed the creation of the gunmen to Sam, which seems plausible in light of his presence at the meetings developing the first draft materials. After this point, Sam is only passingly referred to until the production's opening in Philadelphia. In many ways, his impact on the show is much more apparent as *Kiss Me, Kate* opened internationally, particularly as the director of the London transfer (1950) and as a creative consultant to the Sadler's Wells revival (1970). In addition to the inconsistent evidence of Sam's involvement, there are few materials that specifically pertain to the rehearsal period. However, it remains possible to trace the impact of some of Hanya Holm's annotations on her script drafts and private notes in the final changes made to the text. As a result, Porter and Bella Spewack's roles remain the most defined whilst it is possible to acknowledge the formative influence of other creative parties. It is also clear that all the individuals involved in the development of *Kiss Me, Kate* experimented with playful interpretations of the core ideas developed by Porter and Spewack.

Using different iterations of the script alongside the extant song and lyric drafts to map a timeline of this process, it is possible to compare the range of ideas in the May libretto to the pre-rehearsal version, the rehearsal draft and the original Broadway script. Through these stages, *Kiss Me, Kate* includes less and less of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the songs become more contemporary, and the text becomes less about extemporising emotions ('If Ever Married I'm,' 'It Was Great Fun the First Time', and 'We Shall Never Be

² A brief study of the correspondence in Spewack papers at Columbia University makes it possible to speculate that Sam Spewack was a less prolific letter writer than Bella Spewack. As *Kiss Me, Kate* was written during a period of separation, it is possible that materials by and to Sam Spewack from this time were not preserved. Many of the *Kiss Me, Kate* materials in their collection are disordered fragments of larger documents. It is certain that they only provide a snapshot of the materials used at the time that were then retained and selected for preservation.

³ CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [2]: untitled scene outline, April 28, 1948, 1-9.

Younger' were all cut) and more about advancing and heightening the humour of the show as a whole. The text evolved as Porter introduced increasingly playful musical numbers, including 'Tom, Dick or Harry', 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', and later, 'I Hate Men'. These songs altered *Kiss Me, Kate*, framing the irreverent tone with which the show handles *The Taming of the Shrew* in a diverting, subversive way.

As such, it is clear that *Kiss Me, Kate* pushes against some of the emergent conventions in 1940s musical theatre. This interpretation of what we might loosely call a postmodern attitude in the text is partly drawn from analysis by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*.⁴ While Hutcheon does not address musical theatre as a form directly, she provides a useful clarification of how she perceives postmodernism in contrast to other readings that focus on its negative and deconstructive qualities. She writes that: '[P]ostmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts the very concepts it challenges.'⁵ Indeed, Martin Carlson neatly summarises Hutcheon's work in *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, writing:

This approach to postmodernism focused upon the tendency of the modernist project in all of the arts to become increasingly an art for artists and critics, highly abstract and technical, and saw postmodernism, at least in part, as a reaction, restoring art to a broader public without sacrificing its aesthetic richness or complexity.⁶

This framework provides a useful model for understanding a useful new perspective for reading *Kiss Me, Kate* in the context of its celebration and commentary on entertainment for entertainment's sake. Whereas the integrated approach focuses on largely 'technical' details (e.g. whether a story coheres or a dance sequence develops meaning), and the Shakespearean model looks for deep textual connections to *The Taming of the Shrew*, it is clear that *Kiss Me, Kate* reacts against these concepts.⁷

⁴ She develops her approach from the work of architect theorists like Charles Jenks in order to codify the reactionary nature of postmodernism that is both reflexive (looking inwards) and completely reliant on fixed external systems of meaning (in *Kiss Me, Kate*, this could be gender archetypes). This is particularly articulated in the introduction to her chapter 'Modelling the Postmodern: Parody and Politics'. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988) (23-4.)

⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 3.

⁶ Martin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (2nd ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2004), 146.

⁷ See the outline of Block's 'Principles of Integration' (after Rodgers and Hammerstein) in Chapter Five (p.149) of this thesis.

Undermining high culture in *Kiss Me, Kate*

Part of the potency of *Kiss Me, Kate* is found in the persistent irreverent humour that punctuates every aspect of the work. It pokes fun at numerous themes such as the Washington elite (as represented by Harrison), the middle-aged men (including Fred) who succumb to Lois, and the caprices of actresses like Lilli. More than this, the text continually subverts high art pretensions by framing them as ridiculous or unfavourable in comparison to other layers of the show. This attitude, simultaneously reflexive and satirical, is demonstrated throughout *Kiss Me, Kate*. Porter and Spewack both play with the use of *The Taming of the Shrew* in order to subvert pretentiousness within the backstage story, in the representation of the onstage performance and the use of Shakespeare more generally. In this way, the writing in *Kiss Me, Kate* destabilises high art values on micro and macro metalevels.

In the details of the script, Fred's performances as famous theatrical heroes (Hamlet, Peer Gynt, Cyrano de Bergerac) are described as box office flops whilst *The Taming of the Shrew* is saturated with contemporary references to popular culture and news (e.g. one of Bianca's suitors introduces himself as a would-be Al Capone in the introduction to 'Tom, Dick or Harry'). On a broader level, the authors demonstrate the deliberateness of using *The Taming of the Shrew* in the intricacy of the intertextual writing in *Kiss Me, Kate*. Yet they also comment on this choice of Shakespeare in the text when Fred jokes about 'the six other fellows who've been sitting up nights re-writing him' and Porter playfully appropriates the titles of Shakespeare's plays in the lyrics of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', disrupting their cultural status as revered texts.⁸ Similarly, Spewack playfully undermines the credibility of *The Shrew* text when Fred dismisses the gunmen in Act Two, Scene Three – 'Get ye hence. Go to, go to-' – and the First Man echoes 'Come to, come to-' having not initially understood the quasi-Shakespearean command.⁹

The use of classical music references in the score and the initial plans to cast an opera singer in the role of Lilli have been used (particularly by Block) to support an

⁸ In this way, the authors simultaneously acknowledge and satirise the elevated cultural status of *The Taming of the Shrew*, arguably positioning the play (via the show more generally) closer to its original performance context (to divert Elizabethan crowds) than has been previously acknowledged. Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 275.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 323.

elevated reading of *Kiss Me, Kate*.¹⁰ However, the operatic moments in *Kiss Me, Kate* are largely sardonic. For example, the dialogue that frames ‘Wunderbar’ conjures an intentionally ludicrous image of the fictional operetta Fred and Lilli had appeared in ‘that for some reason was laid in Switzerland. But the costumes were Dutch.’¹¹ This laughs at the cultural identity of operetta as a characteristically European art form and frames ‘Wunderbar’ (in part) as a pastiche. Again, Spewack’s prefacing dialogue – ‘There was a waltz in it. Remember? Something about a bar?’ – makes deliberate fun of the title of the song. Porter and Spewack exploit the romantic duet and waltz trope whilst articulately demonstrating the artificial insincerity of the moment they have crafted. Similarly, Katherine’s cadenza in ‘Finale Act One’, during which she decorates numerous repetitions of the word ‘never’, mocks the virtuosic tradition itself. Rather than using this feature to demonstrate Lilli’s vocal prowess, Porter verbalises Lilli/Katherine’s intertextual fury, undermining the aesthetic value of this convention.

Although scholars including Block and Siebert react to Porter’s reflections on Rodgers and Hammerstein in their analyses of *Kiss Me, Kate*,¹² it is striking that Porter specifically signposted his admiration of Irving Berlin’s contribution to *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946) in reference to his work on *Kiss Me, Kate*.¹³ Porter indicates that he found the quantity of music in the *Annie Get Your Gun* score inspiring, perhaps explaining the quantity of songs in *Kiss Me, Kate* and his level of personal involvement (sitting in rehearsals etc.), which was uncharacteristic. His remark suggests a specific point of reactivity in Porter’s mind that contrasts with his reflections on Rodgers and Hammerstein’s influence on the form. The difference here becomes more interesting in light of a natural comparison between the songs ‘There’s No Business Like Show Business’ in *Annie Get Your Gun* and ‘Another Op’nin’, Another Show’ in *Kiss Me, Kate* and between the respective successes of these shows in the careers of these composers.¹⁴

¹⁰ Geoffrey Block, ‘The Broadway canon from Show Boat to West Side Story and the European Operatic Ideal,’ *The Journal of Musicology*, 539-40.

¹¹ Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 281.

¹² This is discussed on pages 89-90 of this thesis. Lynn Laitman Siebert, *An Analysis of Five Musical Comedies*, 346; Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings*, 216; Richard G. Hubler, *The Cole Porter Story*, 90.

¹³ Howard Taubman, ‘Cole Porter is ‘The Top’ again’, *New York Times*, January 16, 1949 [YISG Scrapbook].

¹⁴ Lynn Laitman Siebert, *A Cole Porter Companion*, 289; Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 213.

Although *Annie Get Your Gun* is commonly situated in terms of nationalism, celebrating American values including the Buffalo Bill performance context,¹⁵ there is insignificant commentary on the theatrical theme of the show, which is layered in the book as well as the score. This theme comments on the transformative nature of performance, the effects this can have on personal identity, and the practical challenges of running a theatre troupe. In this way, there is a fascinating textual overlap between *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Kiss Me, Kate* that celebrates mass entertainment. For example, 'There's No Business Like Show Business' punctuates the original Broadway score of *Annie Get Your Gun* several times and is initially used to mobilise Annie in the same way that Fred uses the appeal of theatre to coax Lilli to stay in the production of *The Shrew*. The shared vision of entertainment is shown to be appealing, something to aspire to, and to enjoy. *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Kiss Me, Kate* celebrate 'middle' and 'low' culture through their characterisation, script and song writing, subtextually explaining why this form of entertainment is superior and more immediate than higher alternatives.

The emphasis here on the pleasure of performance in both texts perhaps explains Richard Rodgers' unusual response to criticisms of *South Pacific* and *The King and I* in *The New York Times*.¹⁶ His comments focus on *Kiss Me, Kate*, but also reference less commercially dominant musical comedies as a subgenre of musicals. By entering this discussion and defending his work in such a specific way, Rodgers draws attention to a difference in style and approach that validates his 'comparatively serious efforts' over *Kiss Me, Kate* and other 'nights of carefree goofiness'.¹⁷ He characterises an understandable resistance to framing a musical in terms of its entertainment because this seems to depreciate the aesthetic worth of the text and reinforce the idea that musicals are frivolous, vacuous, and prohibitively commercial. However, *Kiss Me, Kate* provides a meaningful example of a musical text that features a discussion of entertainment in its metalevels. To ignore the crude and satirical aspects of the show that have been deliberately incorporated on this basis misrepresents this text. Indeed, the lines of argument that emphasise thematic changes in 1940s musicals (after Rodgers and Hammerstein) away from musical comedy also underrepresent the entertaining

¹⁵ This movement is closely associated with Western Art music composers. Timothy P. Donovan, 'Annie Get Your Gun: A Last Celebration of Nationalism', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 12 (1978), accessed April 4, 2017. doi: 10.1111/j.0022-3840.1978.1203_531.x.

¹⁶ See full discussion of this article on p.145-7.

¹⁷ Richard Rodgers, "In Defence of Sense", *New York Times*, June 29, 1952.

aspects of shows like *Oklahoma!* and *South Pacific*. Neither of these works is immediately comparable to *Kiss Me, Kate* in terms of its subtextual exploration of performance but examples such as 'I Enjoy Being a Girl' from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song* (1958) demonstrate how Rodgers and Hammerstein incorporated non-narrative pleasure into their work.

The text of *Kiss Me, Kate* undermines the notion that integration is the only method in which musicals were developed after *Oklahoma!*, acknowledging the disjointed creative development of this and many other Broadway shows and making fun of the rehearsal and performance process. Not only do the play-within-a-play device and the concept of the show (watching a company launch a new production) facilitate reflexivity but the changes to the script and evolution of the score also show that this was a thematic priority for Porter and Spewack. For example, songs including 'It Was Great Fun The First Time' and 'We Shall Never Be Younger', which were written in similar musical styles (and with melodic references to each other), were dropped.¹⁸ The additional songs ('So in Love', 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple', 'I Hate Men' and 'Bianca') expand the variety of musical styles in *Kiss Me, Kate*, and, with the exception of 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple', their lyrics extend the conscious commentary on popular culture that forms part of the showcase aspect of this text.

Here, the creative team reflect the topical differences in approaches to musicals whilst celebrating the multiplicity of popular culture and popular entertainment forms. In 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', 'I Hate Men' and 'Bianca', the characters verbalise playful defiance of certain cultural conventions (e.g. wanting to get married, respecting the cultural arts, demanding monogamy) that build on the deliberate playfulness of 'Tom, Dick or Harry', 'Where is the Life That Late I Led?' and 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)'. Their rebelliousness is focused on the purpose of entertaining in order to put on a good show. Indeed, these songs, and the characters that perform them, allow *Kiss Me, Kate* to subvert the moralistic expectations that have been outlined in readings of *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel* and *South Pacific*;¹⁹ they (the songs and characters) are knowingly constructed and represented in light, comedic terms in order to limit the social

¹⁸ 'If Ever Married I'm' and 'A Woman's Career' were also cut from the May libretto.

¹⁹ See Riis and Sears, Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears, 'The Successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein', *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*.

commentary in this text. In a cycle of complex ideas, aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate* comment on the expectations of a musical, of musical theatre writers, and effective ways to divert and entertain an audience.

Temporality, layering and comedy

In her article ‘Music, the Musical and Postmodernism in Baz Luhrmann’s *Moulin Rouge*’, Ann van der Merwe draws attention to the backstage aspect of this film and the layering of different styles of music, which is also evident in *Kiss Me, Kate*.²⁰ She cites the disruption of time during ‘The Trolley Song’ in Vincente Minnelli’s *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944) as a significant, early illustration of a technique evident throughout *Moulin Rouge* (and also in *Kiss Me, Kate*).²¹ However, one of the key aspects of *Kiss Me, Kate* is that Porter and Spewack maintain a narrative through-line as the Baltimore story continues throughout *The Taming of the Shrew* performance. Unlike many backstage musicals (see examples from *Show Boat* (1927), *On Your Toes* (1936), *Easter Parade* (1948), etc.) where the onstage numbers are static and separate from the main plot of the show or film, the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes in *Kiss Me, Kate* evolve the backstage plot as we watch Fred and Lilli perform and use the play to exact revenge on each other. It is for this reason that *The Taming of the Shrew* is so integral to *Kiss Me, Kate*: it is part of the backstage plot. Rather than building on the legacy of *The Taming of the Shrew* to create a new version of the play, Spewack and Porter use Shakespeare as a tool to build the characterisation of the actors, heighten the narrative accents of their plotline, and enrich the metatheatricality of the work.

There is inherent reflexivity in any metatheatrical text that draws attention to it being a performance itself. However, *Kiss Me, Kate* not only incorporates details like finalising the overture, fixing the curtain calls and adlibbing but also idealises and comments on performance as well. For example, in ‘Another Op’nin’ Another Show’, we hear about the drudgery of the rehearsal process contrasted with the anticipation of the performance beginning whilst receiving the actual opening number of the show. This

²⁰ Anne van der Merwe, ‘Music, the Musical and Postmodernism in Baz Luhrmann’s *Moulin Rouge*’, *Music and the Moving Image*, 3 (2010), accessed April 6, 2017, 31. doi: 10.5406/musimoviimag.3.3.0031

²¹ Ibid.

construction provides a foundation for the promotion of entertainment at the expense of high art, which runs through *Kiss Me, Kate*. This is partially achieved by the frequent allusions to popular culture – to L.B. Mayer in ‘We Open in Venice’, to Lassie in ‘I Hate Men’ or to Harrison’s Mickey Mouse collection in Act Two, Scene Four.²² These references acknowledge such examples as landmarks and reference points that the audience is immediately able to contextualise. In this way, they have equal significance to the allusions to classical music as it is these aesthetic contrasts that characterise *Kiss Me, Kate*. During the *Taming of the Shrew* scenes, the pop references in the song lyrics also disrupt the temporality of these scenes and remind us that we are watching a (relatively) contemporary show. They also situate *The Taming of the Shrew* alongside popular culture rather than in opposition to it. These references are a functional part of the internal satire of high art in *Kiss Me, Kate* as they punctuate the Shakespearean lexicology in an intentionally contemporary and commercial way.

The layering of these references also demonstrates a wider approach in *Kiss Me, Kate* that employs a more compartmentalised structure, facilitating an underlying satire of ‘book songs’ that develop the plot. Examples like ‘Tom, Dick, or Harry’, ‘I Hate Men’ or ‘Where Is the Life That Late I Led?’ each seem to speak to the *Taming of the Shrew* plot but are actually irreverent songs about sex and marriage that are ultimately disconnected from the play. For example, ‘I Hate Men’ gives Katherine a solo number in *The Taming of the Shrew* that appears to develop her reputation as ‘a Shrew’. However, the number humorously outlines and validates why Katherine does not trust or respect men and would never want to be married, making an obvious intertextual connection with Lilli and her troubles with Fred. Instead of making an eloquent or impassioned speech, Katherine screams, throws props around and rants about secretaries and pregnancy, e.g. ‘But don’t forget ’tis he who’ll have the fun and thee the baby’.²³ ‘I Hate Men’ is a disrespectful, contemporary ballad of womanhood and marriage, which is framed by and drawn from the *Taming of the Shrew* context but has little more to do with it. In similar terms, ‘Tom, Dick or Harry’ superficially summarises the suitors’ plot but is musically distinct from any Shakespearean motifs in the score. As Lois scats ‘A-dick, a-dick, a-dick’ over her suitors’ barbershop-like accompaniment (bars 20-29 (encore)), it is

²² Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 288; 300; 336.

²³ *Ibid.*, 300.

clear that this number (like 'I Hate Men') is completely unserious.²⁴ This pretend improvisation undermines any sincerity the song has and laughs at a familiar conceit in the process: Bianca is not a young woman in love but a young woman in lust. 'Tom, Dick or Harry' disrupts the idealism of youthful romance just as 'I Hate Men' vindicates rather than censures Katherine (and Lilli's) attitude to men.

These examples from *Kiss Me, Kate* are not dissimilar to the use of contemporary language and idioms in Rodgers and Hart's *A Connecticut Yankee* (1927).²⁵ Both 'Thou Swell' and 'On a Desert Island for One' juxtapose modern musical styles and language with references to a different historical time, perpetually reminding us of the contemporary framing context of the Arthurian section of the show. They have a clear overlap with 'Tom, Dick or Harry' whilst 'To Keep My Love Alive', which was added to the 1943 Broadway revival, functions similarly to 'I Hate Men'. In this number, Morgan Le Fay lists the ways in which she has murdered her different husbands: 'Sir Thomas had insomnia / He couldn't sleep at night / I bought a little arsenic / He's sleeping now alright.'²⁶ Like 'I Hate Men' or 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', 'To Keep My Love Alive' is not a 'book song'; it has no deep connection to its framing storyline. It does not need to. It entertains by characterising the misdemeanours of a homicidal princess in a string of awkward but diverting rhyming verses (e.g. pairing 'sanatorium', 'emporium', and 'in memoriam').²⁷ *A Connecticut Yankee* is not as reflexive or satirical of the musical form as *Kiss Me, Kate* but it clearly shows the same type of comedy that uses the vehicle of the lyrics – a song – as part of a joke. As with 'A Little Priest' in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979), where the humour is rooted in the juxtaposition of cannibalism in the lyrics and the waltz accompaniment, or in a different sense, during 'Marian the Librarian' in *The Music Man*, when Harold Hill disturbs the peace and order of the library as he sings and dances, there is a consciousness that the song vehicle

²⁴ Cole Porter, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 70.

²⁵ Based on Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Rodgers and Hart's musical follows its hero Martin who is attacked by his ex-girlfriend Fay on the eve of his marriage to his fiancée Alice. Martin is transported to Arthurian Camelot and the majority of the musical follows the transposed narrative as Martin falls for Alisande (Alice). The king's jealous sister Morgan le Fay (Fay) kidnaps Alisande and when Martin has rescued her, he wakes up and realises he has been in love with Alice all along.

²⁶ Lyrics transcribed from Richard Rodgers, *A Connecticut Yankee*, Universal, 2001 [digital] [accessed via Spotify].

²⁷ Full lyric: 'Sir Charles came from a sanatorium / And yelled for drinks in my emporium / I mixed one drink – he's in memoriam / To keep my love alive.' Lyrics transcribed from Richard Rodgers, *A Connecticut Yankee*, Universal, 2001 [digital] [accessed via Spotify].

heightens the humour of the moment. This reflexivity, which is amplified by the theatrical context of *Kiss Me, Kate*, is a functional part of musical theatre writing – a thematic trend that looks inwards at popular cultural practices as well as at effective methods of entertaining audiences who were very familiar with the conventions of the form.

The basic narrative framework of *Kiss Me, Kate* also draws a humorous comparison between a company of actors performing *The Taming of the Shrew* and the play they are performing. As such, it laughs at pretentious representations of actors – creating characters and being other than who they are in real-life. This concept has been clearly translated into the plot and characterisation of *Kiss Me, Kate*: every character seems ridiculous at some stage. For example, Fred claims to have lofty professional aspirations but casts an inexperienced chorus girl he may be sleeping with in a central role. More abstractly, the show makes fun of theatre conventions (such as the opening or ‘eleven o’clock’ number) by repetitively drawing attention to the act of performance in both the libretto and song moments. Just as ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’ reduces some of Shakespeare’s most famous plays to playful adjectives in a vaudeville showstopper that the gunmen are ‘forced’ to perform, the libretto draws attention to the classical roles Fred has performed that have been box office flops. In this way, *Kiss Me, Kate* subtly suggests that not only does a show *not* need to be serious but also that serious performances are often less enjoyable.

Bella Spewack conceived the main cast of characters in *Kiss Me, Kate* from archetypes in contemporary popular culture, including 1930s screwball comedy and gold-digger tropes, which are matched by Sam Spewack’s gunmen. In addition to using recognisable character types, the script plays with the expectations of their roles. For example, Lois is shown to have agency over Harrison Howell (and Fred) without having any interest in using it whilst the gunmen subvert our expectations of their education and cultural awareness throughout their dialogue. In conjunction with the background profiles Bella Spewack produced for Fred, Lilli and, briefly, Lois, Porter developed some of this characterisation in his song-writing, particularly in ‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ and ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’. More generally, those blues, jazz, barbershop and beguine sections, which cut against the Viennese waltz and operatic inflections of the score, demonstrate how Porter drew on a similar range of influences to Spewack.

Contemporary audiences are familiar with the complex layering of references to, and jokes about, popular culture as a theme of numerous hit television shows. Some notable examples include the animated sitcom Matt Groening's *The Simpsons* (1989-)²⁸ and films such as Disney's *Aladdin* (1992), Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and DreamWorks' *Shrek* (2001). All of these examples make use of archetypes, collage-like layering of jokes and allusions to wider popular culture as well as music (including diegetic song and underscoring) to comment on the stories that they are telling and to reflect their place in wider popular culture. For example, the *Shrek* series uses familiar fairy tale characters and character types to play with audience expectations. The screenplay uses fairy tales reflexively in the dialogue to acknowledge the context of the film and to laugh at how it is constructed.²⁹ In this way, the screenplay establishes a recurring joke that the character Donkey can talk even though many animals have speaking roles. Similarly, the soundtrack uses modal figures to superficially evoke a medieval setting but idiomatically incorporates Leonard Cohen's pop standard 'Hallelujah' as part of a montage sequence of discontented lovers.³⁰ As a result of these layers in the animation, the stage musical adaptation *Shrek! The Musical* (2008) employs repeated references to other stage musicals, perpetually drawing attention to multiplicity of the text.³¹

This technique is similarly used in the musical adaptation of the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975): *Spamalot* (2005). The show parodies the legends of Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table but also includes a subplot in which Arthur attempts to put on a musical. It is saturated with references to other Broadway shows including *Carousel*, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Producers* as well as

²⁸ The reflexivity in *The Simpsons*, which uses layers of references to consistently laugh at high culture and comment on popular culture is also evident in other television series, including *South Park* (1997-) and *Family Guy* (1999-). Each of these examples incorporates musical theatre numbers as part of their cultural satire (e.g. 'See My Vest' in Season Six, Episode Twenty of *The Simpsons* which parodies 'Be Our Guest' from *Beauty and the Beast*).

²⁹ For example, the villain Lord Farquaad interrogates The Gingerbread Man by dunking him in milk and stripping him of his edible decorations. When The Gingerbread Man succumbs to the torture, he begins a call and response version of children's rhyme 'The Muffin Man'.

³⁰ Other examples include a parody of Date Line and a pastiche of film techniques from cult film *The Matrix*.

³¹ For example, in 'Freak Flag', the animals decide to defy Lord Farquaad under a green banner that deliberately resembles the original poster for Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg's *Les Misérables* (1980).

other popular cultural phenomena.³² These influences destabilise the Arthurian aspects of *Spamalot* but shape the musical. On a meta-level, *Spamalot* persistently parodies conventions of a Broadway show (e.g. 'The Song that Goes Like This', 'You Won't Succeed On Broadway' and 'Diva's Lament (Whatever Happened To My Part?)'). However, it exploits these aspects of stage musicals as part of its own construction. Both *Spamalot* and *Shrek* follow the legacy of other reflexive works, including a number of stage musicals. For example, there are interesting parallels between *Shrek* and Stephen Sondheim's earlier musical *Into the Woods* (1987). The song 'On the Steps of the Palace' comments both on the dramatic moment of getting stuck to the stairs and on what it might be like to be Cinderella whilst 'Agony' satirises the stereotypical characteristics of fairy-tale princes. Both these illustrations comment on the subject of the show but also the narrative and character types the performers represent. 'Agony' is deliberately constructed as an amusing competition between brothers. The reprise in Act Two builds on this as it shows the true nature of the skirt-chasing womanisers.³³

As such, *Kiss Me, Kate* is part of a significant trend in popular American entertainment that comments on surrounding culture as well the different vehicles of communication (films, musicals, television sitcoms etc.). Therefore, reading *Kiss Me, Kate* as a backstage musical with pro-entertainment themes positions the show in a different analytical framework that distinguishes its references to opera and classical theatre from any artistic aspiration to high culture. This underlying commentary, in which popular culture comments on popular culture, has been an enduring subtheme of American popular entertainment as has been highlighted above. However, there is an extensive collection of works that can be situated in this way. For example, this can be seen in stage and film musicals including *Face the Music* (1932), *As Thousands Cheer* (1933), *Best Foot Forward* (1941), *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), (the MGM film adaptation of) *The Band Wagon* (1953), *Damn Yankees* (1955) and in hit television sitcoms such as *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957), *Make Room for Daddy* (later known as *The Danny Thomas Show*) (1953-64) and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961-66). A similar reflexivity is evident in other recent examples including both films and the stage adaptation of *The Producers* (1968, 2001,

³² For example, 'His Name is Lancelot' blatantly quotes the title phrase of Barry Manilow's hit record 'Copacabana' and continually references pop anthem 'YMCA' as part of Lancelot's 'coming out' song.

³³ This is well-illustrated by the staging of 'Agony' in Rob Marshall's film adaptation in which the two princes (Chris Pine and Billy Magnussen) prostrate themselves, beating their chests, strutting and posing at the top of a waterfall.

2005), through the television run of *The Muppets Show* (1976-1981) and in both recent Disney film releases *The Muppets* (2011) and *Muppets Most Wanted* (2014). In *The Muppets Show*, examples including Julie Andrews performing ‘The Lonely Goatherd’ with the farmyard animals rather than children (1977) show how musical theatre is positioned as a pivotal entertainment form whilst being undermined by its framing context. Similarly, the opening number of recent smash hit film musical *La La Land* (2016) satirises the convention of people transitioning from a mundane task (sitting in traffic) to a dynamic song and dance number.³⁴

Porter and Spewack capitalise on the development of satire through the 1930s, evolving themes and characterisation from their earlier work, in order to shape *Kiss Me, Kate* as both a contemporary and a reactionary musical. Importantly, when situated in the wider context of reflexive satire in American popular entertainment, it is possible to resolve some of the problems raised by the existing readings of the show. For example, it does not matter that Fred has not heard Lilli sing ‘So in Love’ if we understand that this song is part of a sequence of dramatic gestures. Lilli’s performance comments on the romantic reconciliation we witness in ‘Wunderbar’ (in a similar gesture, perhaps, to the alternating song structure of Kurt Weill and Alan Jay Lerner’s *Love Life* (1948))³⁵ and Fred’s reprise comes in reaction to the disintegration of their partnership. Lilli’s performance is not naturalistic and neither is Fred’s. ‘So in Love’ is also disjunctive from the comedic and light-hearted tone of the rest of the score.³⁶ Porter lets us know that this is ‘the love song’, beautifully written and poignant: a highlight of the score. As a result, it passes from one lover to the other. Indeed, ‘So in Love’ is not functionally dissimilar to ‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’. In the context of Porter’s catalogue of standalone hits about the different aspects of love (e.g. ‘Night and Day’, ‘I Get a Kick Out of You’, ‘Ev’ry Time We Say Goodbye’, etc.), it loosely relates to the framing context but has its own

³⁴ This is not dissimilar to ‘Life’s a Happy Song’ in *The Muppets* (2011).

³⁵ Weill and Lerner alternate ‘book songs’ with vaudevillian numbers that comment on the previous scene.

³⁶ John M. Clum describes ‘So in Love’ as ‘one of the most masochistic ballads ever written’, suggesting it might be better suited to Julie Jordan in *Carousel*. He suggests that its ‘extremity’ coheres with Lilli’s character but that we know not to take it seriously because it was written by Porter. However, ‘So In Love’ is a narrative benchmark for *Kiss Me, Kate* because it highlights the difference between the sincere and the satirical numbers. Whereas we can believe Lilli might love Fred as a result of this song, Lois’ ‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ is undermined by the generic details of her ballad and then by her social attitudes as characterised in her later songs. As such, ‘So in Love’ becomes the standard from which the rest of *Kiss Me, Kate* deviates. John M. Clum, *Something for the Boys*, 90-1.

dramatic purpose. In this example and numerous other illustrations made in this thesis, we can see how Porter and Spewack reflected trends in musicals and in other popular entertainment forms (physical comedy and slapstick, satire, vaudeville) to construct layers within *Kiss Me, Kate* moving away from Shakespeare or telling a naturalistic story of romance. As such, *Kiss Me, Kate* contributes to the discourse on metatheatre, on musical theatre writing and the role of high art in popular entertainment that has permeated American popular culture for nearly a hundred years.

Resituating *Kiss Me, Kate* in musical theatre research

This thesis has combined archival research and textual analysis of *Kiss Me, Kate* in order to create a full study of this seminal show and present a new reading of entertainment in musical theatre scholarship. Chapter One establishes the basis for this research and highlights the underpinning analytical themes that frame the current literature on the show. By introducing concepts including integration, adaptation theory (and briefly, postmodernism) as part of the investigative context for the work, the thesis evaluates how each section of evidence contributes to, or conflicts with, the established discourse on *Kiss Me, Kate*. Therefore, in Chapters Two and Three, which describe the creative and working processes that led to the original Broadway production, it is possible to signpost noteworthy materials that have been previously overlooked. It is clear that Porter and Bella Spewack began writing *Kiss Me, Kate* with the main narrative and characterisation already determined. Spewack took Subber's observations of the Lunt/Fontanne production of *The Taming of the Shrew* and devised a story around the romantic troubles of her own fictional actors. Having decided the basic outline of the story, she, Porter and Sam Spewack each developed their own materials, which were later amalgamated into a single text.

Because of the separateness of this working methodology, exacerbated further when Porter went to work in California, there are clear specific differences between their approaches. For example, Bella Spewack developed original 'Shakespearean' scenes to extend the intertextuality between Baltimore and *The Taming of the Shrew* while Sam Spewack abridged *The Taming of the Shrew* to the bare minimum text that still enabled their narrative. In spite of these differences, there are clear similarities between Bella Spewack's use of non-contemporary references in her fake *Taming of the Shrew* dialogue

and Porter's use of modern idioms in songs like 'If Ever Married I'm' and 'We Open in Venice'. Porter and Spewack meant to disrupt the temporality of *The Taming of the Shrew* as part of amalgamating the two parts of *Kiss Me, Kate* into a linear narrative.

Both Bella Spewack and Porter produced a considerable amount of material for *Kiss Me, Kate*, which left it at a potentially unmanageable length. As a result, the later period of the development of show (also influenced by Holm and Drake) included some experimentation with Fred and Lilli's songs as well as finalising which excerpts of *The Taming of the Shrew* to retain in order to streamline the show. Porter's later additions, 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', 'I Hate Men', and 'Bianca', demonstrate how the *Kiss Me, Kate* score evolved from sincere songs about personal relationships ('It Was Great Fun the First Time', 'I'm Afraid Sweetheart I Love You', etc.) to a series of witty, satirical revue-like numbers. Because each of these songs loosely connects to the general narrative themes of the show and plays with the Shakespearean features of the text, some scholars have interpreted this as Porter's attempt to achieve integration. However, the reflexivity of these musical numbers – e.g. Bill explains 'So I've written her [Lois] a love song' in the introductory verse to 'Bianca' – draws attention to the song moment and laughs at it. Instead of moving towards the aesthetic ideals attributed to the post-*Oklahoma!* musical, the original Broadway text subverts naturalism and realism as part of the humour of the show.

As this chapter has argued, Porter and Spewack's layered approach to entertainment in *Kiss Me, Kate* is part of a wider subsection of American popular culture that looks inward and comments on the form itself.³⁷ However, as Chapter Four shows, *Kiss Me, Kate* has had a complex performance history in different settings. This has arguably lost some emphasis on 'entertainment for entertainment's sake' that is apparent in the original Broadway production. The MGM film adaptation inconsistently uses and abbreviates the original text so that the book is substantially reduced, losing some of the most pointed dialogue and some of Porter's more risqué lyrics. The introduction of 'From This Moment On' provides a great opportunity to dance for Miller, Fosse, Rall, etc. but is dissimilar to 'Tom, Dick or Harry' or 'Where Is the Life That Late I Led?'. Unlike these numbers, 'From This Moment On' does not functionally subvert *The*

³⁷ Further examples of this can be seen in Disney's most recent 'princess film' *Moana* (2016) which includes self-reflexive commentary such as the lines: 'If you wear a dress and have an animal sidekick, you are a princess' and 'If you start singing, I'm gonna throw up.'

Taming of the Shrew in its language although it is in a more contemporary musical style. As a result, this song does not build on the layers of humour in the original Broadway text as 'Bianca' or 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' do. Indeed, although the film retains 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare', its new context – performed to Fred in the alleyway by the stage door – detracts from its impact in stage productions. The gunmen's song is no longer part of a performance in such pointed circumstances. In addition to these details, the majority of the classical moments in the score have been removed so that classically-trained singer Grayson does not perform the 'Finale Act One Cadenza' or sing 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple.' Indeed, the added quotation from *Die Fledermaus* in the middle of 'Wunderbar' rather counteracts the pastiche effect of the song, adding some musical legitimacy to the performance. Each of these changes has a cumulative effect on the film adaptation. Therefore, the concept of entertainment in the film is partially transmitted through special effects and elaborate dance sequences but is not comparatively fluent throughout the narrative or musical numbers.

In addition to the impact of the film as a lasting document of this show, the metatheatricity of *Kiss Me, Kate* has facilitated experimentation with the musical, especially in the opera house productions with different creative priorities to the commercial theatre. More recently, the separation between productions in the subsidised and commercial theatre is evidenced by the differences between the 1999 and critical edition versions of the show, which address different contemporary concerns: making Golden Age musicals modern and restoring Golden Age musicals to their former glory. For example, the 1999 revival has re-orchestrated the score to support reduced and synthetic instrumentation. This homogenises some of the different styles of song, creating a substantially different sound to the original cast recording (at which Porter was present). In making *Kiss Me, Kate* more practical for contemporary musical theatre companies as well as better suited to the expectations of modern listeners, some of the character of the original score is changed. In direct contrast, the critical edition restores the original orchestral parts and introduces to public attention unused ballet music from the original Broadway production. However, this (now licensable) version of *Kiss Me, Kate* has not yet been performed by a commercial theatre company.³⁸ The Opera North production was similarly experimental to previous opera house versions, introducing the

³⁸ The production at the Châtelet Theatre in Paris (2016) starred opera singers David Pittsinger and Christine Buffle.

short 'Harlequin ballet' to *The Taming of the Shrew* and changing the beginning of Act Two. It also starred opera singers and used Opera North's classically-trained chorus, giving significant parts of the score a different character. In each of these examples, it is evident that *Kiss Me, Kate* continues to evolve as a work. However, these adjustments to suit new formats and audiences diminish some of the original humour of the show, particularly by masking some of the jokes made at the expense of opera.

Chapter Five considers to what extent we can interpret *Kiss Me, Kate* through the lens of a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical and the integrated model that connects Broadway composers with high art aesthetics. Here, the use of classical music in the score and the role of the opera singer feed the discourse that *Kiss Me, Kate* is Cole Porter's attempt to achieve the aspirations he explored as a young composer when working on his ballet *Within the Quota* (1923). In *Kiss Me, Kate*, Porter shows his abilities to write 'in the style of' different kinds of music rather than to write to a list of aesthetic criteria that (in any case) Rodgers and Hammerstein themselves did not consistently adhere to. The discussion of this method of reading the show, alongside the critical analyses of adaptation and gender discourse in Chapters Six and Seven, demonstrates how these lenses are insufficient to represent this work. *Kiss Me, Kate* is not Porter or Spewack's best attempt to write a serious or elevated musical: it mocks the elevated status of the works of Shakespeare, it makes fun of opera and classical theatre and it undermines the fictional operetta it refers to. This satire of highbrow culture is achieved in numerous ways including the use of jazz in contrast to the Shakespearean context, by making allusions to Mickey Mouse and Lassie and by using 1940s colloquialisms in the Shakespearean songs.

In this context, Chapter Six argues that *Kiss Me, Kate* is not an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew* as the *Shrew* scenes are supplemented by intertextual interference from Baltimore. It is therefore hard to justify a conventional reading of the Shakespearean sections of the show. *Kiss Me, Kate* does not present a performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* that can be read in isolation from other aspects of the text. The two narratives (Baltimore and *The Shrew*) perpetually amalgamate so that 'Tom, Dick or Harry' is as much Lois' song as Bianca's. Similarly, we understand that Lilli is heightening Katherine's attack on Petruchio in order to assault Fred. Both plots contribute to the dramatic content of the show. As a result, readings of *Kiss Me, Kate* that suggest it contributes to the misogynistic discourse of *The Taming of the Shrew* are

complicated. As is detailed in Chapter Seven, this argument assumes that the *Taming of the Shrew* context is fully understood and supersedes the other dramaturgical aspects of the finale (i.e. Fred and Lilli's reconciliation) so that we receive 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' as a pointed statement about women's domestic status following the admittedly problematic content of 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare.' However, *Kiss Me, Kate* is not concerned with moralistic narratives: it does not have a 'take home message' for its audiences. Instead, the authors understood that *The Taming of the Shrew* provides the perfect vehicle to humorously examine the backstage lives of a discontented couple. Its intertextual connection to Baltimore is insufficient to argue that the Shakespearean scenes foreshadow the entire plot of the musical.³⁹

Following these lines of argument, the current chapter has argued that *Kiss Me, Kate* is more effectively read via the entertainment and theatrical themes in the text. *Kiss Me, Kate* is an irreverent show that mocks high culture, comments on the process of writing and putting on a musical, and contributes to a wider subset of reflexive works that examine and reference American popular culture. The crude aspect of some of the humour and amusing intertextual narrative has tempered the reception of the show. For those who compare it to 'the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical', *Kiss Me, Kate* fails to achieve an equivalent dramatic impact because it lacks a tangible message. However, the evolution of the script and score, the framing of several musical numbers, the layering of styles, quotations and references, and the irreverent use of *The Taming of the Shrew* suggests that this is a deliberate choice made by the authors during the writing process.

Individually, Porter, Sam and Bella Spewack each contributed subversive components to *Kiss Me, Kate* that laugh at the notion of a 'serious' musical and lauds the satire they each cultivated in other works. As such, *Kiss Me, Kate* sheds a meaningful light on the beginnings of postmodernity in American popular culture and this study demonstrates the need to expand the analytical lenses through which we understand the Broadway musical. This will allow us to better evaluate entertainment and comedy in alternative terms to high art values. *Kiss Me, Kate* evidences deliberate writing that was used to create a diverting and commercially lasting text. This thesis has re-evaluated this musical and interpreted its entertainment value through the lens of reflexive subthemes. In this way, it provides a new interpretative model for considering Broadway musicals

³⁹ Again, this assumes that the audiences *need* to know *The Taming of the Shrew* to understand and enjoy *Kiss Me, Kate*.

that have been overlooked as a result of their lack of aesthetic themes in spite of their popular and commercial acclaim (e.g. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1949), *The Pajama Game* (1954) or *The Music Man* (1957)). In the example of *Kiss Me, Kate*, Porter and the Spewacks have employed contrasts between musical styles, types of performances and layers of meaning to create a rich, funny musical that continues to be revived around the world.⁴⁰

This thesis has used *Kiss Me, Kate* to establish an argument for accepting and acknowledging pro-entertainment themes as an important and complex part of the genesis and reception of these shows. Rather than reading entertainment either as an exclusively commercial or low cultural practice that degrades the stage musical, *Kiss Me, Kate* demonstrates how these authors incorporated farce, spectacle and theatricality into a single text without fundamentally compromising the narrative or the effectiveness of the score. This musical continues to delight international audiences because its central themes (love, theatricality, and entertainment) have universal appeal. Porter's score is consistently excellent and the Spewacks' book highlights the appeal of romantic comedies and the continued humour to be found through Shakespeare without needing to engage with his works. Even as the creative team expected *Kiss Me, Kate* to flop, it is clear that Porter and Spewack developed the text in a deliberate direction and produced one of the most enduring musical comedies in Broadway history. 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' remains perhaps the most well-remembered moment in the show. This realisation of several creative visions, with two New York gangsters dancing soft-shoe and proclaiming false wisdom about how to catch a woman using the works as Shakespeare in rhyme, embodies the complex, eclectic and bewilderingly humorous impact that *Kiss Me, Kate* continues to achieve. In the slightly altered words of Porter's 'Were Thine That Special Face': they wrote it with their tongues in their cheeks and their lips in a smile.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Indeed, the Opera North production will be revived again at the London Coliseum in 2018, returning *Kiss Me, Kate* to its original London venue. Georgia Snow, 'Kiss Me, Kate to open at London Coliseum', *The Stage*, April 6, 2017, accessed May 10, 2017.

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2017/opera-norths-kiss-me-kate-to-open-at-london-coliseum/>.

⁴¹ After Cole Porter, Sam & Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate*, 302.

APPENDIX I: OVERVIEW OF MUSIC IN *BACKSTAGE*

Outline of the musical numbers in CU BSS 26/Notes and Worksheets [1]: Outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948.

Act One

Act Two

1. Waltz – Lili [sic] and Fred
2. It Was Great Fun The First Time – Lili and Fred
3. A Woman's Career – Angela Temple, Ballet of the Lonely Bed
4. We Shall Never Be Younger – Solos for Lilli and Fred
5. Another Openin', Another Show -- Company Ensemble
6. Why Can't You Behave -- Bianca

14. Too Darn Hot – Negro Trio. Dance Number, Bill and Company
15. So In Love Am I [sic] – Lili
16. True To You, Darlin' In My Fashion – Bianca
17. We Shall Never Be Younger – Reprise, Lili and Fred

Songs in *The Shrew*

Songs in *The Shrew*

7. A Band of Strolling Players – Lucentio and Mountebanks
8. If Ever Married I'm -- Bianca
9. I Sing of Love -- Lucentio and Petruchio
10. I've Come to Wive It Wealthily – Petruchio
11. Were Thine That Special Face – Lili (As Boy)
12. Tarantella -- Dance with Petruchio
- Reprise – Were Thine That Special Face -- Lili (As Woman)
13. Tom, Dick or Harry -- Bianca, Lucentio and Suitors (quartetto)

18. Where Is the Life That Late I Led? – Petruchio
19. Love Is A GAME - - Ballet of Shuttlecock and Battledore (Battle of the Sexes)

APPENDIX 2: INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLISHED SCRIPT (KNOPF)

Transcription of the introduction to the Alfred A. Knopf published script (1953) by Sam and Bella Spewack (vii-xix).

How to Write A Musical Comedy An Esoteric Analysis of a New Art Form

BOOKS are being written about it, symposiums held, and letters exchanged between savants of Akron and Ankara. It is therefore fitting that we, the undersigned, having written two (2) examples of the New Art Form, enter the discussion forthwith.

Ordinarily we write plays – just plays. But about every ten years we tiptoe with typewriters into musical meadows. Thus, in 1938 we emerged with *Leave It to Me*, a study of a Kansan who is made Ambassador to Soviet Russia against his will, and who devotes himself to the business of getting recalled. This was before the era of the New Art Form. So we ran a year in New York and a year on the road.

In 1948 we wrote *Kiss Me, Kate*. Definitely New Art Form.

For both, Cole Porter provided wonderful music and lyrics.

Ergo, if we all live long enough, 1958 should see a third collaboration.

But while we're still fresh and in our right senses we want to contribute our mite to the study of the New Art Form.

You may remember that the old musical comedy consisted of a story (book), songs, dances, scenery, girls, and boys.

But there is an indefinable "something else" in the New Art Form. Is it the product of a mysterious blending of kinetics, plastics, social significance, abstractionism, atonal atavism, a fluid capitalist structure, and plenty of money in the hands of the wrong people?

We realized when we embarked on *Kiss Me, Kate* that just having fun with Victor Moore as an Ambassador to Russia would not be enough. That was all right in 1938. But 1948 was made of sterner stuff. The New Art Form required a message.

For instance, *Call Me Madam*: money ain't everything. *Pal Joey*: don't be a heel. These crusades, articulated for the first time in the New Art Form, have had a profound

effect upon our society. We have a message, too. It's Shakespeare's: slap your wife around; she'll thank you for it.

Sociologists have not yet measured the influence of *Kiss Me, Kate* upon domestic relations, but when they do get around to it they will discover that a preponderant number of wedding anniversaries (ranging from the first to the fiftieth) were celebrated by happy or resigned couples scattered nightly throughout the audience during its run. Our mail orders generally began with an explanation that the tickets were wanted for the anniversary date.

The cultural impact of the comedy has been profound. At its British debut, in Oxford, two natives of that damp ancient seat of learning met during the intermission for this bit of dialogue:

"Difficult to follow, what?"

"It's a skit on Shakespeare, you know."

"Really?"

Fortunately this was not a typical reaction. From New York to California, in Australia and New Zealand, in the Scandinavian countries and wherever else Western culture still reigns, men and women quenched their thirst for the New Art Form and were pathetically grateful for they had only the music and literature of the ages to draw upon, and thus were in a pitiable condition until we rescued them with *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Now, how did our contribution to this miracle of the New Art Form come about?

Devious and intricate and thorny was the path. But after all the legal beagles got their licks in and the Dramatists Guild contract was duly signed and sealed and mislaid, we embarked on the business of writing a play within a play *cum musica*. The newest parlay in town became the triple play. Shakespeare to Spewack to Porter.

How to Collaborate with W. Shakespeare

If you want to collaborate with Shakespeare, get two inexpensive copies of any one of his plays. Tear them out of their bindings and spread the pages on a large table or bed or floor, so that you can spot at a glance what you will retain and what you will discard. Take well-sharpened pencil, or pen that works, and so indicate.

Then with shears cut out the parts you intend using, and if you're handy with the paste-pot, paste up in sequence on ordinary copy paper. If allergic to paste or glue, use stapler. If you have no stapler, your lawyer is sure to have one.

Do not throw away discarded pages. Some wonderful ideas for songs may be among them. Or you can run up your own lampshade.

Total outlay: many, many sleepless nights and haggard days; cash \$2.50.

How to Collaborate with C. Porter

WITH Porter it is a little bit different. You can't attack him with shears and paste, and you can't spread him out on the bed or the floor. If it's your own play, it's comparatively easy to get Porter to accent the idea. But if it's Shakespeare's play it takes a deal of persuasion. When we approached him with the notion of making a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew* he whispered: "What?" At the second discussion of the same theme, he told us that he had tried reading the play and had then had it read to him.

"I don't understand a word of it," he sighed.

At the third meeting we had jotted down like song titles from Shakespeare's own lines: "I've Come to Wive It Wealthily," "Where Is the Life that Late I Led?" and "Were Thine That Special Face." Mr. Porter brightened.

"Well, let's try."

In our not at all human opinion, Mr. Porter then wrote his finest score. The song, "Were Thine That Special Face," by itself may very well live as more than a minor classic.

The process of welding book, music, and lyrics into one organic whole was not easy. Mr. Porter not only probed each characterization and motivation, but in turn asked us to do the same with his lyrics.

For example:

PORTER: *Tell me about Lois Lane. She's not a bad girl, is she?*

SPEWACKS: *Oh, no. She's unmoral rather than immoral.*

PORTER: *Just what do you mean by that?*

SPEWACKS: *Well, Lois Lane at the age of fourteen started a career that should have landed her in the reformatory by this time.*

PORTER: *All the time she's really in love with Bill Calhoun the hooper, isn't she?*

SPEWACKS: *Not in love, Cole. She loves him the way a mother loves a child. Mostly for his weaknesses – like his gambling and lack of ambition – and of course she thinks he's a wonderful dancer.*

PORTER: *She really cares for him?*

SPEWACKS: *In her way, yes.*

New scenes about Lois and Bill were sent to Porter the next day. And the next 2.a.m. the phone rang.

“Are you asleep?” asked Porter.

We were.

“Stay right where you are and listen.”

Porter played and sang “Why Can’t You Behave?” over the telephone, and the next day the Lois-Bill scenes were cut again and again. They became smaller and smaller in rehearsal – and never did authors care less.

One night, as we were about to leave, Porter asked if we knew who had written a poem with the line, “I have been faithful to thee...”

“Cynara! In my fashion,” we finished for him.

We guessed Ernest Dowson or Alan Seeger, and of course it was Ernest Dowson. That poem was require quoting in the twenties.

About a week later Porter played and sang for us “Always True to You in My Fashion.” It’s five years since we heard it first, but we knew then that we were destined to hear it over and over again.

There is evidently something in the chemical blending of our collaboration that moves Porter to his bawdiest. Both “Fashion” and “My Heart Belongs to Daddy” (from *Leave It to Me*) are piquant narrations of the confession school. While insisting on the essential purity of the heroine, they are case histories with a lusty twist.

Lyricaly the song “Why Can’t You Behave/” has tragic implications, but the scene that led to it was meant to be funny. By the time of Philadelphia tryout the parts of Lois and Bill contained only the essentials for the plot and song cues. We could afford to be ruthless in cutting our own lines, but we hated to cut Shakespeare, and we hated to cur Porter. Three songs dropped out during rehearsal, and we fought to retain at least one of them. But in the face of seventeen numbers, it was well we lost that battle. We were a long show.

Porter was in California when we airmailed him the finished draft of the book, and he wired: “The best musical comedy book I have ever read arrived this morning. Congratulations.”

In addition, Porter sent Katharine’s song of capitulation, “I Am Ashamed that Women Are So Simple,” using the only lyrics by Shakespeare in the comedy; then, late,

the lengthy, punning “Brush Up Your Shakespeare.” Accompanying these lyrics Porter wrote: “Belle will probably cut her throat when she gets this.” As it had been agreed at the outset that Porter would write no songs for our gunmen, we were rather surprised, but we realized that according to the classic standards of Broadway it was a “boff” number – a show-stopper, if you please. Perhaps not a New Art Form, but definitely a must for the male patron. So instead of any throat-cutting, we dropped the final scene (all Shakespeare) and a beautiful dance for which the stairs had been built. We had exactly three minutes left in which to finish a show.

Our collaborative correspondence swelled and waned as the weeks grew into months. And Cole’s letters, which had once started with “*Bellissima Carissima*,” veered to the accusation that the Spewack obstinacy was the defect of “charming Roumanian-Hungarian nature.” In a later letter to the fledgling producers he said: “Whenever I try to talk sense to Bella it is like trying to talk sense to Russia.”

Bella, hurt, wrote: “Russia will now reply and retreat into Mongolian silence.”

The loves and hates that go with the production of a play are laid to rest as soon as the play is on, whether it’s a hit or a failure. Where all has been peaches or cream you generally have a flop. Mutual admiration at a tryout is deadly. The biggest fight in regard to this production was the spotting of “Were Thine That Special Face.” The producers did not like the song and wanted to place it in the second half where it could be dropped easily. It stayed in the first act.

During rehearsal Porter himself wanted to drop “Tom, Dick, or Harry,” the quartet number with Bianca and her suitors. We fought against that – insisted on it being restaged. The performers concocted a jazz finish for it, and when it was all done Porter clapped his hands delightedly, applause that was multiplied a thousandfold when we opened in Philadelphia four weeks later.

We have always tried to let a song tell part of the story where it could do so, and we have always been willing to cut large passages of book, as we certainly did in *Kiss Me, Kate*. The spoken word in a musical comedy must compete with music, dance, color, and movement. When a spoken scene does compete successfully with these powerfully appealing elements, the writers can take pride in their craftsmanship. But anyone writing the book for a musical must be prepared to cut – and cut – and cut. There is no room for the writer’s love of his own words. “Love” lingers longest in lyrics.

Summing Up

THE WRITING of a musical comedy is a craft in itself, just as writing a play or a screenplay is. But they all have three things in common: situation, dialogue, and hard work.

In the realm of the musical show there are: first, the play with music; second, the operetta; third, the musical comedy; and fourth, the spectacle or extravaganza with music. In the first and last categories the songs do not carry forward the plot – or shall we say the story? In the operetta (and in the opera, for that matter) the songs do. In the musical comedy the songs should serve a similar function, but occasionally they serve a mood function instead; someone feels happy or sad and you get “Oh, What a Beautiful Morning!” or “Why Was I Born?”

Musicals can be based on anything. *The King and I* had for its predecessor *Anna and the King of Siam*, the experiences of an Englishwoman assigned to teach the children of the King of Siam during the last century. It was a best-seller as a book and an equally successful film before it was equipped with songs and a ballet. *My Darlin' Aida* emanated from the opera without *My and Darlin'*. The adaptation kept the original music, but showed the events as occurring in the South during the Civil War, A.D. instead of in Egypt B.C. *Pal Joey* is based on a fiction series of letters from a heel of a hooper to a friend, which first appeared in *The New Yorker*.

And yet the musical comedy cannot revolve around just anything. It must not only be about something; it must also be entertaining. Unlike the straight play, this form is elastic – provided it can be made to serve the ear and the eye.

For example, *Leave It to Me* can be called a play with music, or none of the songs that Cole Porter wrote for that comedy of ours advanced the story one iota. “My Heart Belongs to Daddy” merely repeated what Dolly had already told Buck Thomas: that she had to leave him because she listened to her heart and not her head. When it was sung by Mary Martin, who cared if she had already told her reasons? Of the musical fact that her heart belonged to Daddy the public could not get enough. Incidentally, that was Mary Martin’s first appearance on Broadway and the first time a strip-tease took place in snowbound Siberia.

But in *Kiss Me*, *Kate* Cole Porter’s songs served the story, especially in Shakespeare’s *Shrew*, the play within the play. When Petruchio sings “I’ve Come to Wive It Wealthily,” or when Lucentio, Gremio and Hortensio join with Bianca to sing “Tom,

Dick, or Harry,” Shakespeare’s deathless words of plottage go into limbo. Where Porter’s melodious substitution takes about five minutes with encores, Shakespeare takes twenty.

For in order to keep the actors in his stock company loyal and contented, Shakespeare frequently padded the parts of his lesser characters, and the audience did not object because in those days nobody had to make the 11:20 to the suburbs.

In adapting *The Shrew* for the play within the play, it was necessary to drop the entire opening. From the body of the piece it was necessary to drop the servants from Lucentio’s and Petruchio’s ménage, as well as the scene with the Pedant. Here and there among the omitted passages were lines that we wanted to keep and these we blithely distributed to the characters that remained. They came in handy when, during rehearsal, an actor would say: “I feel here I need another line,” or “I’d like a handle for this speech.”

There was plenty of misgiving when *Kiss Me, Kate* was about to open in England, Shakespeare’s own land. Would the English be offended or would they appreciate that we had been faithful to the Bard in our fashion? The tryout was in Oxford, and if the New Theatre had been triple its size it would still not have been adequate accommodation for the crowds who wanted to see it. In London there were one million paying customers at the Coliseum despite the handicap of a stage where the Old and New Testaments could be played simultaneously. And on tour in England, Scotland and Wales, *Kiss Me, Kate* has to date played fourteen months – with an all British cast. A second touring company starts next month.

Scandinavia also knows and loves its Shakespeare, but there too *Kiss Me, Kate* has been given a hospitable welcome. As of this writing it is the most successful musical in Scandinavian theatrical history. A touring company is still making the trek, perhaps, by this time, in Lapland.

Whatever was used of Shakespeare was used *à la mot*. Only two lines were borrowed from other Shakespeare sources – one from *Hamlet* and one from *Macbeth*. You find them.

Vital Statistics

The Taming of the Shrew was played in New York as far back as 1768, and again in 1785, About one hundred years later it was revived by Augustin Daly with John Drew and Ada Rehan, who took it on the road in 1902 with Otis Skinner as Petruchio. Several years later Charles Richman took the part. Sothorn and Marlowe used it in their repertory, and in 1927 Basil Sidney and Mary Ellis played it in modern costumes. Alfred Lunt and Lynn

Fontanne revived it in 1935. On December 30, 1948, *Kiss Me, Kate* opened, to establish the longest run *The Shrew* ever had anywhere any time, including Shakespeare's own.

Statistically, the performances in New York numbered 1077, and across the United States it played 1064 times. More than four million Americans have seen and heard it.

Since its closing *Kiss Me, Kate* lives on in summer and winter stock, indoor and outdoor presentations in tent, stadium, and arena productions. This summer, performances are scheduled with municipal light opera companies in Kansas City, St. Louis, Dallas, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

The race horse, Kiss Me, Kate, paid \$17.94 at Belmont on May 23, 1951.

- SAM AND BELLA SPEWACK

March 20, 1953

New York

**APPENDIX 3: BREAKDOWN OF SONGS IN THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION
AND FILM ADAPTATION**

Titles in italics either indicate songs from the original Broadway production that were omitted from the film or are supplementary to the original Broadway score. Titles in bold highlight which numbers were moved in the organisation of the film.

Kiss Me, Kate (1949)

'Another Op'nin, Another Show'
 Why Can't You Behave?
 'Wunderbar'
 'So In Love'
 'We Open In Venice'
 'Tom, Dick Or Harry'
 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua'
 'I Hate Men'
 'Were Thine That Special Face?'
'We Sing of Love'
 'Finale Act One'

 'Too Darn Hot'
 'Where Is The Life That Late I Led?'
 'Always True To You In My Fashion'
'Bianca'
'So In Love (Reprise)'
 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'
'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple'
 'So Kiss Me, Kate': Finale Act Two'

Kiss Me Kate (1953)

'So In Love'
'Too Darn Hot'
 'Why Can't You Behave?'
 'Wunderbar'
'So In Love (Reprise)'
 'We Open In Venice'
 'Tom, Dick Or Harry'
 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua'
 'I Hate Men'
 'Were Thine That Special Face?'
 'Finale Act One' [abridged]
'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua' (reprise)
 'Where Is The Life That Late I Led?'
 'Always True To You In My Fashion'
 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'
'From This Moment On'
 'So Kiss Me, Kate': Finale Act Two'

APPENDIX 4: 'DOWN WITH SENSE'

Copy of microfilm scans of 'Down With Sense' written Fred Lounsberry and responses by Richard Rodgers and members of the public in the *New York Times* (1952) [YISG Scrapbook]

DOWN WITH SENSE

More Fun and Less 'Art' Urged for Musicals

By FRED LOUNSBERRY

The writer is program promotion director of the WGR Broadcasting Corporation in Buffalo and a self-admitted partisan of Cole Porter.

SOME months ago I was browsing through some old sheet music and came upon Irving Berlin's "My Walking Stick." Reading it through, I found the line: "I'd go insane without my cane." And it struck me that there, in six words, was the thing we are in danger of losing in our musical theatre. The old essence of gaiety, goofiness and abandon which allows a performer to be applauded for elaborating such trivia is falling into disrepute and is, I fear, in the very shadow of extinction.

The reason is, of course, the melancholy sense of responsibility that has been acquired by the leading practitioners of the musical-drama art. In the beginning, we have "Oklahoma!" to blame. But it is not all the old horse's fault. The people who actually made "Oklahoma!" the well-spring of our troubles were the critics who were so overwhelmed by perfect entertainment that they went on a transcendental binge and called it "a pure slice of Americana," "folk art," and all the other things that city people seem to find tolerable about life in the country.

That "Oklahoma!" may have been these things, I will not deny. But if it was, it was an irrelevant coincidence. The popularity of "Oklahoma!" can be traced mainly, believe it or not, to a fine book, fine songs, fine performances, and the always necessary luck of having been produced when it was just what the world wanted. It was excellent entertainment and still is. But the appraisers called it something more, and Rodgers and Hammerstein, suddenly seized with a mission, set out to do something worth while in the musical theatre.

That Special Aspect

"Carousel" followed and was awfully good. "Allegro," leaving entertainment back in the mist and justifying itself almost exclusively on its social-artistic weight, was terrible. Regaining their equilibrium, Rodgers and Hammerstein restored the factor of entertainment to their work and delivered "South Pacific," which has done fantastically well. And lately we have had "The King and I," delightful to attend, but musically and lyrically again showing the frightening inclination to leave entertainment behind and advance with art.

Now I am not fool enough to launch a severe criticism against Rodgers and Hammerstein. They are, Heaven knows, excellent creative men. Their shows and songs are good, the songs especially so in view of the current popular music as a whole.

What I might criticize is that special aspect of their output, the leaning toward seriousness and sense, and the leaning away from carefree fun. I criticize this because I dread to see it carried to its obvious extreme, and I feel it is necessary to make the criticism because our journalists who happen to be working as theatre critics seem to feel that this seriousness is not only the coming thing but the only thing.

Thus, there is apt to be not only an extension of the trend in the work of Rodgers and Hammerstein but also an imitation of it in the work of less skilled craftsmen. As a matter of fact, this has already begun. "The Little Foxes," a morbid play, was made into the musical drama, "Regina," which, they say, was morbid in more ways than the atmospheric. A musical is planned with Eugene O'Neill's "Desire Under the Elms" as its basis. I am crazy about O'Neill, but the thought of seeing his grim tragedy set to music depresses me. There are other examples on Broadway, but let's take a brief look at the motion picture.

The Movies, Too

Go to see an old Marx Brothers film, and you will be instantly impressed with how serious our modern musical comedies of the screen have become. Today, everything has to make sense, be logical, and be explained. There is little or no tomfoolery left. You seldom see, in a current comedy, a scene inserted simply because it is funny. The concern today is with story line and that means sense and seriousness and responsibility. If no one were going to the movies these days, I would say, "No wonder no one's going to the movies these days!"

This dilemma is the outgrowth of the fanaticism to which we are, to a large degree, addicted in this country. It is all or nothing. We have had some successful musicals which overlapped into the drama field and, as a result, these are the thing, and anything else is fluff. An interesting demonstration of this is a comparison of the press received by two shows which opened within a few months of

each other, "Kiss Me, Kate" and "South Pacific."

No one is going to tell me that "South Pacific" is musically or lyrically up to "Kiss Me, Kate." Nor is anyone going to convince me that Ezio Pinza and Mary Martin were any more compelling than Alfred Drake and Patricia Morison. Both shows, as we all know, did handsomely.

But read the Broadway and Hollywood columnists, or listen to the comedians, and what do you find being referred to as the one and only apex of musical theatre art? "South Pacific." This, despite the fact that "Kiss Me, Kate" cleaned up on endless tours in the United States, cleaned up in London where it got a better reception than "South Pacific," and also cleaned up in Stockholm, where its opening was hailed as the greatest event in the history of the Swedish theatre, which, you'll recall, had considerable dealings with one of the most exciting dramatists of all time, August Strindberg.

Abolish the Stigma

I am not griping about "Kiss Me, Kate's" luck; after all, it has made out fine. But I am trying to point out that it has been mysteriously sloughed off in certain influential quarters. Why? Because it is fluff, not drama. It has no significance. It happens to be brilliantly entertaining, but apparently that is a stigma. I hope we have many more shows with an equally emphatic stigma.

It is well and good to experiment with everything. The experiments of Rodgers and Hammerstein are laudable. But let us not make the mistake of depriving the theatre of its right to entertain, without further obligation.

To have the theatre reflect life is, we can be thankful, an accepted objective. But there is no ground for demanding that it do so all the time. Escape is recognized as a valid part of life. Escape is why sensible people go to ball games and concerts and parties. Escape is what Noel Coward wrote "Blithe Spirit" for, when London was in its worst days of World War II.

So, let us, while reserving seats five months ahead for the latest hit by Rodgers and Hammerstein, also plan to give ourselves an uncomplicated treat by attending a foolish show about an implausible character who would go insane without his cane, or his latest equivalent.

The next time somebody praises a musical show to me because it has realism or meaning or depth, I will take Irving Berlin's walking stick and flail the conscientious non-objector over the head with it.

IN DEFENSE OF SENSE

'Serious' Musicals Suit Public, Composer Says

In reply to Fred Lounsberry's article deploring the current musical mode on stage and screen, Mr. Rodgers writes on behalf of the theatre and, elsewhere on this page, Bosley Crowther answers for the screen.

By RICHARD RODGERS

WHEN I was a small boy, a little band of us used to roam through the outskirts of the Long Island village in which we lived, searching for a vacant house. Our pleasures were simple and direct in those days. All we wanted to do was break some windows. There was something delightful about the smack of the stone as it hit the smooth surface and something almost funny in the tinkle of the glass as it fell to the floor inside.

It's safe to assume that when small boys grow up most of them turn to more constructive pursuits. Occasionally, however, we find a man, mature in years, who still finds something pleasurable in the tinkle of the glass he has broken. The stone he throws may even be verbal instead of mineral. Such a case is one Mr. Fred Lounsberry.

There's a big difference, however. This house is not vacant. It's a musical comedy house and it's inhabited by people who do their best to dispense entertainment for gain. Any attempt to discomfort them by the unwarranted destruction of their property is likely to bring forth howls of rage. Have a howl: Mr. Lounsberry resorts to an ancient and specious technique—that of making a misstatement and attempting to make it appear true by means of other misstatements or half-truths. His first misstatement is the basis for his entire article. He declares that in the present-day musical comedy theatre "the old essence of gaiety, goofiness and abandon . . . is falling into disrepute and is in the very shadow of extinction."

I wonder where anything goofier than Phil Silvers in "Top Banana" can be found. I would be willing to pay a very stiff price for a pair of tickets to see it. I cannot conceive of any more gaiety (and charm and wit) than there is in the current "New Faces" and for abandon, give me "Guys and Dolls."

Proper Credit

Mr. Lounsberry holds Rodgers and Hammerstein largely responsible for this deplorable condition in our musical theatre, but, at the moment, the three carefree and irresponsible musicals named above outnumber the two that might be labeled "serious," although, perhaps, they don't out-gross them. He traces the downfall of musical comedy back to "Oklahoma!" and accuses the critics of being "so overwhelmed by perfect entertainment that they went on a transcendental binge and called it 'folk art,' etc." Then comes his best piece of logic. "The popularity of 'Oklahoma!' can be traced mainly, believe it or not, to a fine book, fine songs, fine performances and the always-necessary luck of having been produced when it was just what the world wanted. It was excellent entertainment and still is."

So far, I don't understand what the man is criticizing, but I can't help thinking of something that happened when we gave a birthday party for one of my daughters who was then 5 years old. There was the inevitable magician and the inevitable dog that fetched the proper-colored handkerchief and could bark up to five or six at command. One of my daughter's guests, a little boy about her age, suddenly said, in a thoroughly disgusted tone, "Aw, he's trained." I find it surprising that Mr. Lounsberry is smart enough to realize that "Oklahoma!" was produced at exactly the proper time, but doesn't give us credit for having known it ourselves and accuses us of being lucky.

He presents us with a very interesting sentence regarding "The King and I." He calls it "delightful to attend, but musically and lyrically again showing the frightening inclination to leave entertainment behind and advance with art." I'd like to know how anything that shows a frightening inclination to leave entertainment behind can possibly be delightful to attend. The critics certainly don't need me to defend them, but I resent this man's implication that our men who write of the theatre are stupid enough to be pushed around by any bogus art attempt. Certainly, the seriousness with which Mr. Lounsberry believes the critics are being seduced didn't do us much good in the case of "Allegro." They gave it a trouncing.

"Pal Joey"

In case Mr. Lounsberry wonders why I have not thrown the rather phenomenal success of "Pal Joey" in his teeth, I have been saving it because I have a special point to make. First of all, our friend will have to admit that this is a very unserious evening in the theatre and that its only overtones are those of laughter. Then we might examine the fact that when the piece was first produced in 1941, although it was done superbly at the time, it had a comparatively small public. I submit that its success today, with an equally superb production, is due to the fact that

the musical theatre has made sufficient strides in its concept of entertainment to be able to treat a subject matter that offended certain portions of the public and the press eleven years ago.

This advance in thinking was due, I believe, to such shows as "Carousel" and "South Pacific." The horizon was broadened considerably by musical plays of this type and today the theatregoer buys his musical comedy ticket with no preconceptions.

I will happily grant Mr. Lounsberry his premise that "Kiss Me, Kate" was, in general, more lighthearted and less serious than "South Pacific" and I do not wish to quarrel with his artistic criteria when he says "no one is going to tell me that 'South Pacific' is musically or lyrically up to 'Kiss Me, Kate.'" Conceivably we could find someone who might tell him just that but perhaps what he means is that he wouldn't be willing to listen. What is annoying is that once again he challenges the critics with having fallen for something without validity in preferring "South Pacific" and hints that the public knew better.

Some Figures

I must point out here that "Kiss Me, Kate" played 1,077 performances in New York and that "South Pacific" at the close of business last Saturday night (June 21) played its 1,318th performance and last week grossed \$44,066.50. All this in the large Majestic Theatre, whereas "Kiss Me, Kate" eventually had to go to the Shubert Theatre, a comparatively small house. "Kiss Me, Kate" played thirty-three weeks in Chicago and that company is now permanently closed. "South Pacific" played sixty-seven weeks in Chicago and is still touring. Three weeks ago it played to \$72,015.

Mr. Lounsberry is not the first one to raise the question of the so-called serious musical but I am convinced that all this excitement is over nothing. When Mr. Lounsberry refers to "Oklahoma!" as "the old horse," I must admit that he is 50 per cent qualified to judge, but I believe there is no more chance of eliminating comedy in the musical theatre than there is of eliminating love in the song-writing profession.

The theatre as a whole has come on hard times. It isn't the picnic it used to be by any means and at this moment the only truly healthy segment of the living theatre is its musical wing. The healthiest and most successful portion of this wing is to be found in the comparatively serious efforts. These are doing by far the biggest business so, perhaps, if Mr. Lounsberry loves the theatre so much and wishes it to stay open so that he can have his nights of carefree goofiness, he might do well to support what he calls the serious musical and stop thinking of it as a menace.

The following responses were published under the heading 'Controversy in the Mailroom' in the *New York Times* on July 19, 1952.

To the Drama Editor:
I'VE been waiting a long time for that piece by Fred Lounsberry about the tragic trend in musical comedies. I, too, dislike to suffer at musical shows. When I'm out for fun, I want fun; I don't want to get the creeps.
 Much as I love Rodgers and Hammerstein for their priceless music and lovely lyrics and for their own fine gentlemanly selves, I do not like their injection of solemnity into musical show books.
 New York. DON HEROLD.

Terrifying

To the Drama Editor:
 Fred Lounsberry's piece, "Down With Sense," was somewhat terrifying. Apparently, he wishes to turn back time in its flight, along with musical comedy.

The old musicals may have had more laughs, but how dreary were the intervening vapid love affairs and the insipid goings-on in Graustarkia. Holding the thought that the tomfoolery was escape was a job in itself.

Surely, from the standpoint of art and adult enjoyment, humor growing out of story, incident and character is more enjoyable than the few explosive moments provided by the old comics who, great as they were, could not keep the old type of musical alive.

New York. BERNARD SOBEL.

Matter of Taste

To the Drama Editor:
 I am sure that all of Lewis Carroll's devotees were at least in

partial sympathy with Mr. Lounsberry's eulogy of the absurd. But even if one were not in agreement with him, it has to be admitted that he presented his thesis with consistency and taste. Certainly nothing he wrote called for Mr. Rodgers' ensuing vilifications in an article that was little more than a long screech.

Before accusing Mr. Lounsberry's well-reasoned article of illogic, Mr. Rodgers should take a look at his own fragmented "howl." While claiming that Mr. Lounsberry's plea for occasional absurdity is one no intelligent man could make, he lists at length and apparently with admiration, the goofy dramas presently to be seen on Broadway. It is first of all necessary to make sense before writing in defense of it. CLAUDE HELEN YOST.
 New York.

Unique Approach

To the Drama Editor:
 Fred Lounsberry has a unique approach to the problem of what is and what is not appealing in Broadway shows, for he seems to manage to miss the fun in just those places where the general public seems to find it.

And it is very odd, indeed, in decrying "seriousness" in musicals, that he paradoxically sticks up for "Kiss Me, Kate" against "Oklahoma!" and "South Pacific," when it has seemed to a good many theatregoers that "Kiss Me, Kate" was rather heavy-going compared to the other two.

The story of "South Pacific" may be serious, but who pays too much attention to such a detail in a musical when there are songs like "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair," "There Is Nothin' Like a Dame," "A Won-

derful Guy," "Cockeyed Optimist," "Bloody Mary," and "Honey Bun"?
 MARY HECKSCHER.
 Princeton, N. J.

Visual Factor

To the Drama Editor:
 I approve of almost everything that Mr. Lounsberry wrote. For instance, "Kiss Me, Kate" certainly made a more enjoyable evening than "South Pacific." My only disagreement is that while I have enjoyed hearing the Rodgers and Hammerstein songs on the radio and, occasionally, trying to sing them, I cannot say that I came away from seeing any of the musicals with a feeling of having been entertained.

THOMAS H. QUINN.
 Providence, R. I.

No Nonsense

To the Drama Editor:
 Mr. Lounsberry says "Down with sense." And, though he says some Rodgers and Hammerstein shows were "awfully good," he would have us experience the barrenness of seasons without a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical. He would have us unable to sing the sweet tune and say the lovely lyrics of "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," or any other of their fine and living works.

JAMES SHELTON.
 New York.

Old Stuff

To the Drama Editor:
 Apparently Mr. Lounsberry would be content to see the musical stage filled with the imitations of Viennese operetta and the burlesques and farce which made up our musical comedy fare just a few years ago.

CHARLES H. STONE.
 Harrisburg, Pa.

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Letter from Cole Porter to Bella Spewack, August 1, 1951.

21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1948)

Letter from Bella Spewack to Walter Kane, April 1, 1948.

Proposed letter from Bella Spewack to Lemuel Ayers and Arnold Saint Subber, August 10, 1948.

Letter from Edward E. Colton to Arnold Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayers, November 11, 1948.

Letter from Edwin H. Schloss to Bella Spewack, December 2, 1948.

21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1950)

Memorandum for Edward E. Colton (written by Bella Spewack)

Letter from Edward E. Colton to Arnold Saint Subber and Lemuel Ayers, July 27, 1950.

Letter from The Salem Company [signed by Lemuel Ayers] to Sam Spewack, December 11, 1950

CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1951):

Letter from Bella Spewack to Edward E. Colton, May 24, 1951.

Letter from Bella Spewack to Edward E. Colton, June 14, 1951

Letter from Selma Tamber to Bella Spewack, June 21, 1951.

Letter from Ben Schenkman to Bella Spewack, June 22, 1951.

letter from Edward E. Colton to Bella Spewack, July 18, 1951

Letter from Edward E. Colton to Bella Spewack, July 19, 1951

Letter from Bella Spewack to "Salem" (Ayers and Saint Subber), July 19, 1951.

Letter from Selma Tamber to Bella Spewack, August 6, 1951.

Letter from Jack Hylton to Bella and Sam Spewack, October 4, 1951.

Letter from Bella Spewack to Jack Hylton, October 17, 1951.

Letter from Jack Hylton to Bella and Sam Spewack, October 22, 1951.

Letter from Bella Spewack to Cole Porter, December 18, 1951.

CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1952):

Letter from Selma Tamber (The Salem Company) to Bella Spewack, January 18, 1952.

CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1954):

Letter from Edward E. Colton to Bella Spewack and Robert
Montgomery, November 2, 1954

CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1956):

Letter from Sam H. Linch to Julius Rudel [undated]

CU BSS 21/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1957):

Letter from Marcel Prawy to Bella Spewack, November 14, 1957

CU BSS 22/*Kiss Me, Kate* Correspondence (1961):

Letter from Bella Spewack to Cole Porter, May 30, 1961

25/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1970) [1]:

Letter from Louis H. Aborn to Bella Spewack, August 21, 1970.

(Sadler's Wells do not want a visit)

Letter from Stephen Arlen to John F. Wharton, September 2, 1970.

Copy of letter from John F. Wharton to Stephen Arlen, September
11, 1970.

Letter from Stephen Arlen to Bella Spewack, September 16, 1970.

Letter from Bella Spewack to Stephen Arlen, September 25, 1970.

Letter from Stephen Arlen to Bella Spewack, September 30, 1970.

Telegram from Stephen Arlen to Bella Spewack, October 1, 1970.

(About arrival at Sadler's Wells)

(Handwritten copy of) letter from Adza Vincent to Stephen Arlen,
October 18, 1970. 'Sue has been so helpful and managed to keep the
Waldorf at bay but...'

Telegram from Edward Renton to Tams-Witmark, October 21, 1970.
(Bella over Peter Coe's absence)

Telegram from Edward Renton to Tams-Witmark, October 26, 1970.
(Bella Spewack has agreed Coe can make special adaptation)

Copy of telegram from Bella Spewack [signed Spewak] to Stephen Arlen, October 28, 1970. (She does not agree to Coe's rewrites).

Letter from Louis H. Aborn to Bella Spewack, November 4, 1970.

Note from Peter Coe [to Sam Spewack], November 11, 1970.

Letter from Edmund Tracey to Adza Vincent, December 9, 1948
(annotated by Sam Spewack). *Duplicated in Folder 2.*

25/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1970) [2]:

Letter from John F. Wharton to Bella Spewack, July 14, 1970.
(Asking about 'What Does Your Servant Dream About?')

Letter from Bella Spewack to John F. Wharton, August 4, 1970.
(Does not know about 'What Does Your Servant Dream About?')

Letter from John F. Wharton to Bella Spewack, September 21, 1970.

Telegram from Tams-Witmark to Edward Renton, October 28, 1970.
(Sam wants to go to London to help)

Letter from Stephen Arlen (dictated) to Sam and Bella Spewack,
November 10, 1970. (Includes casting)

Letter from Stephen Arlen (dictated) to Sam Spewack, November 10,
1970.

Letter from Geoffroy Millais to Bella Spewack, November 12, 1970.
(Re: BBC broadcast)

Letter from [unsigned] (Adza Vincent) to Stephen Arlen, November 20, 1970.

Letter from Adza Vincent to Sam Spewack, November 16, 1971.

25/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1971) [1]:

(Handwritten) letter from Adza Vincent to Bella Spewack, January 4, 1971

Letter from Sam Spewack to Stephen Arlen, January 19, 1971.

Letter from Stephen Arlen to Sam Spewack, January 21, 1971.

Letter to Louis H. Aborn from Edward Renton, February 17, 1971.

Telegram from Tams-Witmark to Stephen Arlen [unsigned], April 21, 1971.

Letter from Louis H. Aborn to Stephen Arlen, April 21, 1971. (Heavily annotated by Sam and Bella Spewack)

Letter from Bella Spewack to Adza Vincent, April 22, 1971 (includes 'Comedia del Arte hog wash')

Memorandum (re: Sadler's Wells revival) from Sam and Bella Spewack, May 10, 1971. *Duplicate in Folder 2.*

Draft letter to Stephen Arlen [from Sam Spewack (unsigned)], c. May 10, 1971.

Letter from Geoffroy Millais (BBC) to Sam and Bella Spewack, October 8, 1970. Filed incorrectly.

25/*Kiss Me, Kate* correspondence (1971) [2]:

Letter from Stephen Arlen to Louis H. Aborn (Tams-Witmark), April 6, 1971.

Letter from Edmund Tracey to Louis H. Aborn, April 27, 1971.

Internal memorandum from Colin Graham to Stephen Arlen, May 24, 1971.

Letter from Stephen Arlen to Louis H. Aborn, June 1, 1971.

Letter from Marcel Prawy to Bella Spewack, November 22, 1971.

Letter from Bella Spewack to Julius Rudel, November 27, 1971

26/Background

William Shakespeare. *The Taming of the Shrew*. Ed. M. R. Ridley. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1950 [two copies]

26/Notes and Worksheets [1]:

Outline of *Backstage*, April 22, 1948.

Typed list of numbers in *Brigadoon* and *Lady in the Dark*.

Incomplete draft pages of May libretto (annotated by Bella Spewack) 2pp. [paginated 8-9]

26/Notes and Worksheets [2]

Overview of Fred and Lilli's relationship history, 2pp. [incomplete]

Untitled scene outline. April 28, 1948, 9pp. [probable author: Sam Spewack]

Undated draft telegram from Sam Spewack to Stephen Arlen

27/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts

Script A [London script (1951)]

Script A with notes [1] [original Broadway script]

Script A with notes [2] (different annotations to A[1])

Script B [May libretto]

Script B [Sadler's Wells Script (1970)]

Script B with notes [May libretto - Spewack]
Script C [October 30 Script (with annotation)]
Script C with notes (additional pages added) [October 11 Script]
Script C "final" [unmarked October 30 Script]

28/*Kiss Me, Kate* Scripts

Script D for TV (incomplete)
Script D for TV (complete)
Script E for Hallmark Hall of Fame (annotated)
Script F for BBC2

37/*Kiss Me, Kate* Clippings:

Typed memorandum of early genesis of *Kiss Me, Kate*, May 12, 1948,
7pp. (Known as 'Spewack Memorandum', possibly incomplete)

42/*Leave It to Me* Correspondence

Letter from Richard Madden to Bella Spewack, December 12, 1939

Alfred Drake Papers [unprocessed], Library of Congress [LC AD]

2/2: Rehearsal Script (annotations by several authors including Drake and Spewack)

Cole Porter Papers, Library of Congress [LC CP]

8/6: 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)' (fair copy, corrected by ASZ, 6pp.)
'Always True To You (In My Fashion)' (road company, fair copy, 8pp.)
8/7: 'Another Op'nin', Another Show' (fair copy with annotations, 6pp.)
'Another Op'nin', Another Show', revised ending, fair copy, 1p.)
8/8: 'Bianca' fair copy, 5pp. (corrected by Albert Sirmay)
8/9: 'Bianca's Theme' (copyist's score in pencil, 2pp.)
8/10: 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' (fair copy, edited by CP in pencil, 7pp.)
'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' (fair copy, original lyrics, 7pp.)

- 8/11: 'Finale, Act II' (copyist's score in pencil with pen sections, 16pp.)
- 8/12: 'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' (fair copy, ASZ autograph edited by CP, 4pp.)
'I Am Ashamed That Women Are So Simple' (melodic sketch with lyrics in pencil, CP, 1p.)
- 8/13: 'I Hate Men' (fair copy, 4pp.)
- 8/14: 'I Sing of Love' (fair copy, annotated by CP and ASZ, 8pp.)
- 8/15: 'I'm Afraid, Sweetheart, I Love You' (copyist's score in pencil, 5pp.)
- 8/16: 'I've Come To Wive It Wealthily In Padua' (fair copy, 8pp.)
- 8/17: 'Kate's Theme' (fair copy in pencil, 2pp.)
-
- 9/1: 'First Act Finale' autograph lead sheet, 2pp.
'Finale, Act One' (partial copyist score with annotations, 2pp.)
'Finale, Act One' (fair copy, 19pp.)
- 9/2: 'Love is the Only Thing' (melodic sketch in pencil, copyist and CP, 1p.)
- 9/3: 'Petruccio's Theme' (copyist's score in pencil, 3pp.)
- 9/4: 'So In Love' (fair copy, 5pp.)
- 9/5: 'Tom, Dick or Harry' (fair copy, corrected by ASZ, 10pp.)
- 9/6: 'Too Darn Hot' (fair copy, corrected by ASZ, 10pp.)
'Too Darn Hot' (road company fair copy, corrected by CP, 10pp.)
- 9/7: 'We Open in Venice' (fair copy, 5pp.)
- 9/8: 'Were Thine That Special Face' (fair copy, annotated by CP, 5pp.)
- 9/9: 'What Does Your Servant Dream About?' (fair copy in pencil, 6pp.)
- 9/10: 'Where is the Life That Late I Led?' (fair copy, 10pp.)
- 9/11: 'Why Can't You Behave?' (fair copy, corrected by ASZ, 5pp.)
- 9/12: 'Wunderbar' (copyist score of verse in pencil, 2pp.)
'Wunderbar' (fair copy, annotated by CP, 6pp.)
-
- 10/1: Piano-vocal scores (#1-17)
- 10/2: Piano-vocal scores (#18-28)
- 10/3: Piano vocal scores (#29-47)
-
- 11/1: 'Always True To You' (In My Fashion)' autograph draft of unused verse

‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ autograph draft of unused verse (labelled for publication)

‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’, autograph draft refrain (‘Out of China’) [B3]

‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’, autograph draft refrain (‘Mainboucher’) [B13]

‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’, autograph draft refrain (fourth refrain) [C2]

‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’, autograph draft refrain (fourth refrain) [C4]

‘Always True To You (In My Fashion)’ autograph lyric draft (‘Let’s play strip’) [D2]

‘I Hate Men’, autograph draft (heavily annotated)

‘I Hate Men’, autograph draft (‘gag lyrics’)

‘I Hate Men’, autograph draft (‘synonyms of hate’)

‘How Simple Life Would Be’, autograph draft

‘Finale, Act II’, autograph draft

‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’, autograph drafts (3pp.)

‘Brush Up Your Shakespeare’, typed lyric sheets (4pp.)

‘Bianca’, fair copy of unused verses, (2pp.)

‘Bianca’, autograph notes for lyrics, (6pp.)

‘If You Love Your Job’, autograph draft

‘I’m Afraid, Sweetheart, I Love You’, autograph draft, (2pp.)

‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’, autograph draft

‘It Was Great Fun The First Time’, autograph draft (list of names)

‘I’ve Come To Wive It Wealthily in Padua’ autograph lyric drafts (2pp.)

‘Security or Love’, autograph draft (fragment)

‘To be or not to be’, autograph draft (fragment)

‘The Trouble With Me Is’, autograph draft (fragment)

‘Too Darn Hot’, autograph draft (list of verbs) [A1]

‘Too Darn Hot’, autograph draft verse (Kinsey report) [A6] [transcribed]

‘Too Darn Hot’ (notes for lyric, 3pp.)

‘Were Thine That Special Face’, autograph notes for lyrics.

‘Where is the Life That Late I Led?’ autograph notes for lyrics, (2pp.)

‘Where is the Life That Late I Led?’, autograph draft (includes of names) [A2]

‘Why Can’t You Behave?’ autograph draft

- 'A Woman's Career' autograph draft
'Wunderbar', typed lyric, (1p.)f
- 11/2: Folder of lyrics [1]:
'If Ever Married I'm' typed lyric sheet, April 8, 1948.
'Finale Act One'
- 11/3: Folder of Lyrics [2]:
'I Sing of Love' typed lyric sheet, April 7, 1948.
- 11/4: Typed lyric sheets (annotated by CP with lyric alterations for public broadcast)
- 11/5: Book of 'extra lyrics' (typed)

Harry Clark Papers, New York Public Library [NYPL HC]

- 2/2.5: *Kiss Me Kate Scrapbook* (includes photographs, notes, and press clippings)

Benjamin Kranz Papers, New York Public Library [NYPL BK]

- 6: *Kiss Me, Kate* stage manager's script [Road Company].

Harold Lang Papers, New York Public Library [NYPL HL]

- 3/3.10: Assorted press clippings for original Broadway production and later revivals. Photos including candid photographs of Patricia Morison backstage.

Agnes de Mille Papers New York Public Library [NYPL ADM]

- IX-10: Letter from Agnes de Mille to John C. Wilson, September 8, 1948.
Letter from John C. Wilson to Agnes de Mille, September 15, 1947.

Hanya Holm Papers, New York Public Library [NYPL HH]

- 20/497: Telegram from Arnold Saint Subber to Hanya Holm, August 30, 1948.
- 20/498: *Kiss Me, Kate* Contract, September 30, 1948.
- 20/499: Typed memorandum (with autograph annotations)
- 20/500: Loose notes on *Kiss Me, Kate* (Waldorf Astoria paper)
Kiss Me, Kate Notebook.
- 21/501: Undated Script [1] [Annotated/Known as the 'Blue Book']
- 21/502: Undated Script [2] [Copy of the May libretto]
- 21/503: Script, October 11, 1948 [Act One only]
- 21/504: [Folder of dated lyric sheets:]
'I Sing of Love';
'Tom, Dick or Harry', April 7, 1948.
'If Ever Married I'm'
'Why Can't You Behave?'
'Wunderbar'
'Too Darn Hot'
'It Was Great Fun the First Time'
'But I'm Always True to You (In My Fashion)' [sic]
'Where Is the Life That Late I Led'
'A Woman's Career'
- 798-800: *Kiss Me, Kate* production photographs (mainly by Eileen Darby)

Royal Shakespeare Company Archives [RSC]

- TS/2/2/1987/KIS1: Adrian Noble (dir.), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1987) [DVD], 2 discs [viewed at the Royal Shakespeare Company archive in December 2016].

William McBrien Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University [YISG MCB]

5/83-85: 'Notes on Conference held at Edward Colton's office at 551 Fifth Avenue, New York City', March 22, 1950.

Cole Porter Papers, Irving S. Gilmore Library, Yale University [YISG CP]

36/239: Letter from Albert Sirmay to Cole Porter, April 13, 1948, 1p.

Letter from Albert Sirmay to Cole Porter, April 14, 1948, 2pp.

39/254: 'Always True To You (In My Fashion)' pencil sketch of unused melody (opening verse), (transcribed by Albert Sirmay), 4pp.

39/255: 'A Woman's Career', fair copy (corrected by Albert Sirmay), 5pp.)

'If Ever Married I'm', fair copy, 4pp.

'It Was Great Fun The First Time', fair copy, 5pp.

'It Was Great Fun The First Time', fair copy, 10pp.

'We Shall Never Be Younger', fair copy, 5pp.

'What Does Your Servant Dream About?', fair copy, 5pp.

46/290: Big Sketchbook (extracts of musical ideas) [not paginated]

49/298: Letter from Beatrice J. Whelton, Censor, City of Boston, Office of the Mayor to Michael Kavanaugh, November 29, 1950.

49/302: Note from Alfred Drake to Cole Porter (December 2, 1948)

Letter from Pembroke Davenport to Cole Porter (January 25, 1949)

Letter from Mrs William Vom Rath (December 4, 1948)

49/303: Letter from Marcel Prawy to Cole Porter (31 May, 1963)

Scripts

Perelman, S.J., Ogden Nash and Kurt Weill, *One Touch of Venus* in *Ten Great Musicals of the American Theatre*. Ed. by Richards, S. Radnor: Chilton Book Company, 1973.

Porter, Cole, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack. *Kiss Me, Kate*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1953 [known as *Kiss Me, Kate* (Knopf)]

Porter, Cole, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* in Richards, Stanley. ed. *Ten Great Musicals of the American Theatre*. Radnor: Chilton Book Company, 1973.

Porter, Cole, Sam Spewack and Bella Spewack, *Kiss Me, Kate* [prompt book] (Tams-Witmark, revised June 4, 1999) [unpublished] [CPT] [known as 'Kiss Me, Kate prompt book' (1999)]

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Spewack, Bella & Samuel Spewack. *Boy Meets Girl and Spring Song: Two Plays*. New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc, [n.d.]

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The critical report can also be accessed online:

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http://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=cole_porter_critical_edition

Magazines, Newspapers and Pamphlets

Please note that where no author has been credited, the article or report has been listed alphabetically by publication (e.g. no author attribution in Variety will be found under 'v' in this section).

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Calta, Louis. "LISA KIRK IS SIGNED FOR 'KISS ME, KATE'". *New York Times*. October 2, 1948. Accessed November 21, 2014. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/108278571?accountid=9735>

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Calta, Louis. 'HARRIS TO DIRECT NEW MILLER PLAY: Confirms Report, Although No Contracts Are Signed -- Julie Wilson Gets London Role'. *New York Times*. September 16, 1952.

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Crowther, Bosley. 'Inanity Strikes Back'. *New York Times*. June 29, 1952 [YISG Scrapbook].

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