

Kiss Me, Kate – A triumph!

A while after having got my tickets for Kiss Me, Kate, I began puzzling as to whether I'd actually seen the show in the past or whether reinforced memory (or probably a 'senior moment') had convinced me that I had. Later a bit of Google research revealed to me that I hadn't ever seen the show, but that many of the songs were familiar and personal favourites. Then I pondered as to whether the show had been conceived merely as a vehicle for Cole Porter's songs or there was more to it. I need not have worried. When I saw the show on opening night it all came alive. What a treat! Not only the wonderful songs, but funny (and very funny at times) dialogue, some genuinely moving moments – the scene when Kate/Lilli and Petrucio/Fred change from animosity to rediscovered love was beautifully handled – and altogether the movement and choreography held everything together seamlessly.

From the moment the band (and they were so professional that they were, for me, the orchestra in the pit at a west-end show – well done especially Sue Burnett) struck up the opening number of Another Op'nin' Another Show and the well realised set filled with the enthusiastic and beautifully choreographed cast I knew we were in for a wonderful evening.

Every time I come to see Rotherfield Players I marvel at their courage (and sometimes audacity) in taking on such difficult and complex work. And every time their efforts give a brilliant success. And then they go on and surpass their efforts the next time!

And now where to begin with detailed comments? Let me share a few of my scribbled notes I took during the show: -

- Opening. A genuine West End/Broadway show 'bustle'.
- Stage door/corridor set. Simple but effective.
- Dressing room(s) realisation. Clever and well done.
- 'I Hate Men'. As a bloke I was frightened. (And the props stayed together!)
- Grape treading. Evocative, costumes lovely.
- 'Too Darned Hot'. Beautifully handled and danced.
- 'Always True to You Darling'. One of my all time favourites and Peggy Lee would have been proud of Kate.
- 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare'. Such fun
- Final scene. Breathtaking!

As to individuals, Sara Thorne and Barry Shyvers as the leads were magnificent. From their wonderful singing, to their tempestuous, and to their tender scenes they just brought the characters to life. Kate Organ, as ever, was a tour-de-force and her 'torch' singing excellent. And then the so many who contributed so much – Jon Alcock and Simon Kerr-Davis as the gangsters (straight out of the Godfather); Derek Holland with an inevitably good performance; James Gallifant 'type cast' but brilliant, and everyone else in the cast all contributing whatever they were doing with action, smiles (so often missing in amateur performances) and so good to see youngsters on stage as Rotherfield Players always manage where possible.

The backstage and support teams were, as ever, so efficient – especially with the complicated scene changes and a special mention for Hazel Buck and her team for the magnificent costumes, to Gillian Earle and contributors for the 'west-end-standard' program and Clare and John Greenyer for props.

Last, and of course, not least, huge praise to Alison Organ as Director, Ros Williams as Co-Director and Catherine Ireland and Sophie Richardson for choreography. As an amateur dramatics man, I could only stand (or actually sit in the lovely tiered seating) and marvel at the incredibly high standards that you produce.

Thank you all again for a wonderful evening.

Andy Miller