Cole Porter’s delightful songs are some of the most sophisticated, witty, and melodious ever written for the American theater. Porter’s *Kiss Me, Kate*, considered one of Broadway’s greatest treasures, won the very first Tony Award for Best Musical.

The sparkling score follows the onstage romance and backstage antics of a cast putting on a musical version of William Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. This brilliant battle of the sexes features such unforgettable songs as *Too Darn Hot*, *So In Love*, *Always True To You In My Fashion* and *Another Op’nin’, Another Show*.

*Kiss Me, Kate* was inspired by the backstage bickering of famous husband-and-wife actors Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne during their 1935 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Alfred Lunt was a Wisconsin native and the couple owned Ten Chimneys, now a southeastern Wisconsin landmark.

Ray Jivoff will direct *Kiss Me, Kate*, marking his final show in his role as Skylight Music Theatre artistic director.

He described *Kiss Me, Kate* as “the perfect Skylight show because the book and music reflect our continuing mission of telling stories that sing. The score covers a wide range of styles, mirroring Skylight’s goal of presenting the full spectrum of music theatre. It is a delicious challenge for our cast of versatile performers who sing, dance and easily handle the musical’s witty dialogue along with Shakespearean text,” he said.

*Kiss Me, Kate* first opened on Broadway in 1948, had a Broadway revival in 1999 and is currently running in a new revival on Broadway and has been nominated for a 2019 Tony Award as the Best Revival of a musical. This is the first time Skylight has produced the show. The *Los Angeles Times* called *Kiss Me, Kate*, “A classic to be savored...enormous delight.” Variety said, “Vibrant, colorful... exhilarating!” *Kiss Me, Kate* isn’t just *Another Op’nin’, Another Show*. It’s a classic from the Golden Age of American musical theatre. It’s a must see!
Cole Albert Porter (1891 – 1964) was born in Peru, Indiana, the only child of a wealthy family. His father, Samuel Fenwick Porter, was a druggist and his mother, Kate was the daughter of J.O.Cole, “the richest man in Indiana,” a coal and timber speculator.

Porter began his musical training at an early age. He learned the violin at age six, the piano at eight, and wrote his first operetta at ten. His mother falsified his recorded birth year, changing it from 1891 to 1893 to make him appear more precocious.

Porter was sent to Worcester Academy in Massachusetts in 1905. He brought a piano with him and found that music, and his ability to entertain, made it easy for him to make friends.

Entering Yale University in 1909, Porter majored in English and minored in music. He was a member of several fraternities, and contributed to the campus humor magazine, The Yale Record. He was an early member of the Wiffenpoofs, Yale’s famous a capella singing group.

Porter wrote 300 songs while at Yale, including the football fight songs Bulldog and Bingo Eli Yale that are still played at the school today. After graduating, Porter enrolled in Harvard Law School in 1913. But he defied his domineering grandfather who wanted him to be a lawyer and switched to Harvard’s music department.

Unlike many successful Broadway composers, Porter wrote the lyrics as well as the music for his songs. In 1916, Porter’s first Broadway production, See America First, a “patriotic comic opera” modeled on Gilbert and Sullivan, was a flop, closing after two weeks.

In 1917, when the United States entered World War I, Porter moved to Paris and joined the French Foreign Legion. Even during the war, Porter maintained an apartment in Paris, where he entertained lavishly. His parties were extravagant and scandalous, with “much gay and bisexual activity, with guests that included nobility, celebrities and a large surplus of recreational drugs”.

In 1918, he met Linda Lee Thomas, a rich, Kentucky-born divorcée eight years his senior who became Porter’s confidante and companion. The couple married the following year. She knew about Porter’s homosexuality, but it was mutually advantageous for them to marry and they were genuinely devoted to each other. They remained married from 1919, until her death in 1954.

At the age of 36, Porter returned to Broadway in 1928 with the musical Paris, his first hit. The songs for the show included Let’s Misbehave and one of his best-known songs, Let’s Do It. Porter then wrote the score for a revue, Wake Up and Dream, which opened on Broadway in 1929. His song What Is This Thing Called Love? became immensely popular.

His last show of the 1920s was Fifty Million Frenchmen (1929), for which he wrote 28 songs, including You Do Something to Me, You’ve Got That Thing and The Tale of the Oyster. The show closed after only three weeks despite support from Irving Berlin, who took out an advertisement calling the show “The best musical comedy I’ve heard in years...One of the best collections of songs I have ever heard.” By the 1930s, he was one of the major Broadway composers.

Porter’s score for The New Yorkers (1930) acquired instant notoriety for including a song about a streetwalker, Love for Sale. The lyric was considered too explicit for radio play, though it was recorded and aired as an instrumental and rapidly became a standard. Porter often referred to it as his favorite song.

Next came Fred Astaire’s last stage show, Gay Divorcee (1932). It featured a hit that became Porter’s best-known song, Night and Day. Porter followed this with a show for Gertrude Lawrence, Nymph Errant (1933), which ran for 154 performances.

In 1934, Porter wrote what many consider his greatest score of this period, Anything Goes, which was an immediate hit. Its songs include I Get a Kick Out of You, All Through the Night, You’re the Top (one of his best-known list songs), and Blow, Gabriel, Blow, as well as the title number.

He followed that with Jubilee (1935), which was not a major hit, but it featured two songs that have become standards, Begin the Beguine and Just One of Those Things.

Anything Goes was the first of five Porter shows featuring Ethel Merman. He loved her loud, brassy voice and wrote many songs that displayed her strengths. Red, Hot and Blue (1936), featuring Merman, Jimmy Durante and Bob Hope, introduced It’s De-Lovely and Ridin’ High.
Porter also wrote for Hollywood movies in the mid-1930s, including *Born to Dance* (1936), with James Stewart, featuring *Easy to Love* and *I've Got You Under My Skin*, and *Rosalie* (1937), featuring *In the Still of the Night*.

Porter also composed the cowboy song *Don't Fence Me In* for *Adios, Argentina*, an unproduced movie, in 1934. It became a hit when Roy Rogers sang it in the 1944 film, *Hollywood Canteen*.

On October 24, 1937, Porter was horseback riding when his horse rolled on him and crushed his legs, leaving him disabled and in constant pain for the rest of his life. Though doctors told Porter's wife and mother that his right leg would have to be amputated, and possibly the left one as well, he refused to have the procedure.

He remained in the hospital for seven months. He returned to work as soon as he could, and composed the score of the Broadway musical, *Leave It to Me!* (1938) soon after the accident. The show was a hit and introduced Mary Martin singing *My Heart Belongs to Daddy* and *Most Gentlemen Don't Like Love*.

Next was *DuBarry Was a Lady* (1939), a particularly risqué show starring Merman and Bert Lahr. The score included *But in the Morning, No* (which was banned from the airwaves), *Well, Did You Evah?* and another classic up-tempo list song, *Friendship*.

This was followed by a series of flops and many thought Porter's best period was over. But he continued to write for Hollywood and he cooperated in the making of the film *Night and Day* (1946), a largely fictional biography of Porter, with Cary Grant implausibly cast in the lead. The film was a huge box office hit, chiefly because of the wealth of vintage Porter numbers in it. The biopic's success was in stark contrast to the failure of the film *The Pirate* (1948), with Judy Garland and Gene Kelly, in which five new Porter songs received little attention.

From this low spot, Porter made a conspicuous comeback in 1948 with *Kiss Me, Kate*. It was by far his most successful show, running for 1,077 performances in New York. It was made into a successful MGM musical in 1953.

Porter began the 1950s with *Out Of This World* (1950), which was not successful. His next show, *Can-Can* (1952), featuring *C'est Magnifique*, *It's All Right with Me* and the now classic *I Love Paris* was another hit. Porter's last Broadway production, *Silk Stockings* (1955) was loosely based on the Garbo film *Ninotchka*. A 1957 film version starred Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse.


In his last years, the horrible pain he experienced, the death of his mother in 1952 and his wife in 1954, all led to overwhelming depression and an increasing reliance on alcohol and narcotic painkillers.

In 1958, after over thirty surgeries, his right leg was amputated. The man whose songs epitomized wit and joy told friends after the amputation, “I am only half a man now.”

Porter never wrote another song after the amputation and spent the remaining six years of his life in relative seclusion. He died of kidney failure on October 15, 1964 at the age of 73. He is buried with his wife, Linda, in the family plot in Mount Hope Cemetery in his native Peru, Indiana.

Few people, except his closest friends and associates, had any idea of the painful and tragic life he led for more than 25 years. His life was more realistically portrayed in *De-Lovely*, a 2004 film starring Kevin Kline as Porter and Ashley Judd as Linda.

Cole Porter's work set standards of sophistication and wit seldom matched in the popular musical theater. His songs show an elegance of expression and a cool detachment that epitomizes a sophistication peculiar to the 1930s. He was also an authentically talented creator of original melodies. Like George Gershwin, he frequently disregarded the accepted formulas of the conventional popular song (usually a rigid 32-measure framework) and turned out pieces of charm and distinction.

The Cole Porter Festival is held each year in his hometown of Peru, Indiana on the weekend nearest to Porter's birthday on June 9th.
Kiss Me, Kate was inspired by the on-stage/off-stage battling of husband-and-wife actors Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne during their 1935 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. When Bella and Sam Spewack were approached in 1948 to write the book for the musical *Kate*, they were in the midst of their own marital woes. Always known as a bickering couple, the Spewacks were an unusual match. Sam was born in Ukraine, but grew up in New York where he attended Stuyvesant High School and received a degree from Columbia College. Bella, the oldest of three children of a single mother, was born Bella Cohen in Bucharest, Romania. Her family emigrated to the Lower East Side of Manhattan when she was a child.

After graduation from Washington Irving High School, she worked as a journalist for socialist and pacifist newspapers such as *The New York Call*. Her work drew attention from Sam, working as a reporter for *The World*, and the couple married in 1922. Shortly after, they moved to Moscow, where they worked as news correspondents for the next four years. After returning to the US, they settled in New Hope, Pennsylvania.

Sam wrote several novels, including *Mon Paul*, *The Skyscraper Murder* and *The Murder in the Gilded Cage*. The couple collaborated on many plays, the best known being *My Three Angels*, which was adapted as the film *We're No Angels*. The two wrote screenplays throughout the 1930s, earning an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Story for *My Favorite Wife* in 1940. They also wrote a remake of *Grand Hotel*, entitled *Week-End at the Waldorf* (1945), starring Ginger Rogers.

The state of her tempestuous marriage probably attracted Bella to the *Kiss Me, Kate* project. Bringing on Cole Porter as composer and lyricist stirred the creative pot even more. Porter was not sure that he was capable of writing a "book show," an integrated musical where the songs further the plot and are part of the narrative as opposed to breaking up the action. Porter's specialty was highly sophisticated patter songs laden with innuendo and often wry detachment, which he did not think would lend itself to the new musical theatre form.

What's more, the team was following on the heels of Rodgers and Hammerstein, already credited with two important book musicals: *Oklahoma!* (1943) and *Carousel* (1945), with *South Pacific* about to launch on Broadway. The era was to become known as the Golden Age of Musicals.

Then there were the enormous differences in the backgrounds and politics between the Spewacks, who were Jews and Socialists and Porter, a wealthy WASP. But they agreed to give it a try. Bella began working with Porter on her own, but eventually her husband joined the team, though she ended up doing most of the work.

Porter came up with the solution to their major problem. Instead of just setting Shakespeare's play to music, why not make it a backstage musical and feature a show within a show—an operetta of the play being performed by battling stars who mimic their personas on stage.

For the bickering dialogue, the Spewack's had a wealth of experience to draw on while Porter was comfortable with the backstage milieu similar to some of his previous shows and several of the movies to which he had contributed.

*Kiss Me, Kate* turned but to be truly "Wunderbar" for them all. In 1949, it won the first Tony Award for Best Musical. Sam and Bella Spewack won for the Best Author (Musical) category and Cole Porter won for Best Original Score. The musical proved to be Porter's only show to run for more than 1,000 performances on Broadway.
Husband and wife acting team Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne are widely considered the greatest acting team in the history of American theatre. Their 1935 production of Taming of the Shrew (pictured to the right) inspired Kiss Me, Kate.

Arnold Saint-Subber, a young stage manager working on that production, took note of their passionate behavior on-stage and off. By 1947, Saint-Subber had become a Broadway producer and assembled the team that created Kiss Me, Kate based on his recollection of the Lunts.

The musical is full of references to their production. For instance, Fontanne opened the show by shooting a bird with a shotgun, echoed in Kate’s Act 1 finale. At one point, Lilli shoves sausages down the front of her dress, just as Fontanne did in Shrew. And Lunt and Fontanne’s infamous spanking scene in 1935 has become a pivotal moment in the musical.

Actor Alfred Lunt was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1892. His wife, actress Lynn Fontanne, was born in 1887 in London, England. Both had successful individual careers but achieved their greatest fame together.

In 1922, Fontanne and Lunt were married. By the mid-1920s, they were the most popular and highest-paid stage actors in the country. At the height of their careers, they took enormous pay cuts to sign on with The Theatre Guild, a fledgling company dedicated to performing new and avant-garde work.

Although the Lunts were considered at their best in comedies by George Bernard Shaw, Noël Coward and Terence Rattigan, they believed strongly that creating great theatre with broad impact was far more important than money. Along with taking large cuts in salary, they put two clauses into their contracts that would profoundly affect the rest of their lives and careers.

First, the Lunts insisted that they only act together, rather than in separate plays. By 1928, until they retired in 1960, they never appeared on stage separately. The other requirement of the contract with The Theatre Guild was that they would not act in the summer, in order to spend the off-season at Ten Chimneys, their home in Genesee Depot, Wisconsin. Their estate became an important place for artistic creation, discussion and inspiration.

The couple constantly strove for perfection and rehearsed almost continuously to attain the effortless rapport that was their hallmark. They were instrumental in the transition of American theatre from oratory (or declamation) to naturalism. They revolutionized theatre with innovations that we now accept as commonplace: overlapping dialogue, turning their backs to the audience, passionate physical contact and a level of truth and realism in everything they did that simply could not be found on the American stage prior to the Lunts.

Although their first movie together, The Guardsman, was a critical and commercial success, they hated the process of making films and chose to dedicate their careers to live theatre. Lynn reportedly told a studio head, “My dear sir, we can be bought, but we cannot be bored. No more films”.

Their devotion to excellence was matched by the respect and affection they inspired in their peers and protégés:
“Everything I know about acting I learned from Alfred Lunt.” Laurence Olivier

“The Lunts were my friends. They were my idols, my teachers, my mentors. I think of all the lucky things that happened to me in my life in the theatre, the Lunts were the luckiest.” Helen Hayes

In 1958, the Lunts began the American run of what would be their final stage performance, Magnificent Yankee for the Hallmark Hall of Fame television series, winning Emmy Awards for their performances. Two years later Fontanne appeared alone in a television production of Anastasia; it was her first performance without Lunt since 1928.

Alfred died in 1977, at the age of 84; Lynn passed away six years later, in 1983, at the age of 96. A monument at their grave reads, “Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne were universally regarded as the greatest acting team in the history of the English speaking theatre. They were married for 55 years and were inseparable both on and off the stage.”

Ten Chimneys, their estate in Genesee Depot, located in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, is now a house museum and resource center for theatre. It has been designated a national historic landmark and is open for public tours May through December 1st. Advance reservations for tours are recommended.
William Shakespeare, English poet, playwright and actor is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and the "Bard of Avon."

His works consist of 37 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, some of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every language, including Star Trek's Klingon, and are performed more often than any other playwright. His works are known for their universal themes and insight into the human condition. He is credited with introducing nearly 3,000 words to the English language.

Shakespeare was born and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, about 100 miles northwest of London. Most sources say that he was born April 26, 1564 and died April 23, 1616. His father was a successful leather merchant who served as an alderman.

Little is known about his childhood; he went to the local grammar school where he learned poetry, history, Greek and Latin. When he turned eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years older than he. They had three children: Susanna and twins Hamnet and Judith.

Sometime between 1585 and 1592, he began a successful career in London as an actor, writer and part-owner of a theatre company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as the King's Men.

Shakespeare produced most of his works between 1589 and 1613. His early plays were primarily comedies and histories. Until about 1608, he wrote mainly tragedies, among them Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth, all considered to be among the finest works in the English language. In the last phase of his life, he wrote tragicomedies (also known as romances) and collaborated with other playwrights.

At age 49 (around 1613), he appears to have retired to Stratford, where he died three years later.

Shakespeare is known for his innovation using literary devices such as genre, plot and characterization in revolutionary ways to expand on their dramatic potential. He wrote soliloquies, (characters speaking directly to the audience), not only to propel the plot but also to display a character's secret life.

Scholars have broken the plays into three categories: Comedies, Tragedies and Histories. But, he often blended genres, which was not traditionally done at the time. For instance, Romeo and Juliet is both a romance and a tragedy, Much Ado About Nothing and The Merchant of Venice have elements of both tragedy and comedy.

Brush Up Your Shakespeare

One of the most popular numbers in Kiss Me, Kate is sung by the two gangsters near the end of the second act, a classic "eleven o'clock number". It features Porter's irreverent wit at its most bawdy. The premise of the song is spelled out in the opening lyrics:

The girls today in society,  
Go for classical poetry,  
So to win their hearts  
you must quote with ease,  
Aeschylus and Euripedes…  
But the poet of them all,  
That will start 'em simply ravin',  
Is the poet people call  
The Bard of Stratford on Avon.

Below is a list of all of Shakespeare's plays. Those mentioned in the song, Brush Up Your Shakespeare are in bold.

Comedies

Tragedies
Antony and Cleopatra, Hamlet, Coriolanus, Macbeth, Othello, Titus Andronicus, Julius Caesar, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, Timon of Athens

Histories
1,2, and 3 Henry VI, 1 and 2 Henry IV, King John, Henry V, Henry VIII, Richard II, Richard III

Costume design by Jason Orlenko
Kiss Me, Kate follows the onstage romance and backstage passion among a cast putting on a musical version of William Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew. Although it is impossible to date The Taming of the Shrew exactly, evidence marks it as one of Shakespeare’s earliest comedies, written most likely in the late 1580s or early 1590s.

The Taming of the Shrew can be traced to a variety of sources. The primary plot, the story of Katherine and Petruchio, finds its roots in folk tales and songs common in Shakespeare’s day. While growing up, Shakespeare was surrounded by a very public debate over the nature of women, including specific arguments on a woman’s duty and role in marriage.

The play begins with a framing device, often referred to as the induction, in which a mischievous nobleman tricks a drunken tinker named Christopher Sly into believing he is actually a nobleman himself and the play is performed for Sly’s diversion.

The main plot depicts the courtship of Petruchio and Katherina, the headstrong, obdurate “shrew”. Initially, Katherina is an unwilling participant in the relationship; however, Petruchio “tames” her with various psychological torments, such as keeping her from eating and drinking, until she becomes (in his thinking) a desirable, compliant, and obedient bride. The subplot features a competition between the suitors of Katherina’s younger sister, Bianca, who is seen as the “ideal” woman.

There is also evidence that Shrew made even Shakespeare’s contemporary audiences more than a little squeamish. When Shrew continued to be staged and adapted, in the late 1890s, playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote that “No man with any decency of feeling can sit [the final act] out in the company of a woman without being extremely ashamed.”

On the other hand, the play has also been adored by many fans from its beginning. For all its controversy, Shrew remains one of the most performed and adapted plays in Shakespeare’s body of work. It has been transformed numerous times for stage, screen, opera, ballet and musical theatre; perhaps the most famous adaptations being Cole Porter’s Kiss Me, Kate and the 1967 film of the play, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. The 1999 high school comedy film 10 Things I Hate About You is also loosely based on the play.

Of course, it is also regarded as one of the great grandfathers of the “battle of the sexes” story line, a formula that has inspired countless movies – the Tracy and Hepburn films, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, The War of the Roses, and many more. There are endless television series (take your pick, but see especially a young Bruce Willis going toe-to-toe with Cybill Shepherd in Moonlighting).

While there’s no doubt that Shrew portrays patriarchy at its worst – the question is, what is the play’s attitude toward such actions and behavior? Does it condone domestic abuse and celebrate painful and humiliating tactics to reform “shrewish” behavior? Or, does it satirize, mock and ridicule unfair social attitudes toward women? Or, is it merely a light-hearted farce that is not meant to be taken seriously at all? These are important questions that have sparked centuries of debate.

Whether or not one thinks the play is vile, hilarious, or some combination of the two, asking tough questions and thinking hard about the problems posed by the text is a good thing. It forces us to question our own assumptions about “proper” gender roles and attitudes about the power dynamics between romantic couples, friends – even family.
In the Ford Theatre in Baltimore, the cast of a musical version of William Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* rehearses for the opening of the show that evening (*Another Op’nin’, Another Show*).

Director/producer/leading man Fred Graham stars as Petruchio, and his ex-wife, movie star Lilli Vanessi, is playing Katherine. The two argue incessantly, and Lilli is particularly angered by Fred’s flirtation with the attractive young actress Lois Lane, who is playing Bianca.

After the rehearsal, Lois’ boyfriend Bill appears; he is playing Lucentio, but he missed the rehearsal because he was gambling. He tells her that he signed a $10,000 IOU in Fred’s name, and Lois reprimands him (*Why Can’t You Behave?*).

As they prepare for the performance in their adjoining dressing rooms, Fred and Lilli continue teasing each other, and Lilli shows off her engagement ring from General Harrison Howell, a Washington insider. She reminds Fred that it’s the anniversary of their divorce. They then reminisce about the operetta they were both appearing in when they met (*Wunderbar*).

Two gangsters arrive to collect the $10,000 IOU from Fred, who insists that he never signed it. The gangsters threaten him, saying he better remember the debt and they will return later. In her dressing room, Lilli receives flowers from Fred, and she realizes that she is still *So In Love*.

Fred realizes that Paul, his dresser has delivered flowers and a love note intended for Lois to Lilli instead. He tries to prevent Lilli from reading the card, but Lilli takes the card with her onstage, saying she will read it later.

The show begins (*We Open in Venice*). Baptista, Katherine and Bianca’s wealthy father, will not allow his younger daughter Bianca to marry until his older daughter Katherine is married. But Kate is ill tempered, and no man wants to marry her.

Three suitors, Lucentio, Hortensio and Gremio, try to woo Bianca, and she says that she would marry any of them (*Tom, Dick or Harry*). Petruchio, a friend of Lucentio, arrives, expressing a desire to marry into wealth (*I’ve Come to Wive it Wealthily in Padua*). The suitors hatch a plan for him to marry Kate.

Kate, however, has no intentions of getting married (*I Hate Men*). Nonetheless, Petruchio attempts to woo her (*Were Thine That Special Face*). Offstage, Lilli has an opportunity to read the card and we hear her angry reaction from onstage. She enters off-cue and begins hitting Fred, who tries to remain in character as Baptista grants Petruchio permission to marry Kate. Finally, in exasperation, Fred steps out of the play and throws Lilli over his shoulder, carrying her offstage as he spanks her and she spanks him. The stage manager and the cast attempt to keep the show going as chaos ensues.

Offstage, Lilli furiously declares she is leaving the show. However, the gangsters have reappeared, and Fred tells them that if Lilli quits, he’ll have to close the show and won’t be able to pay them the $10,000. The gangsters, at gunpoint, force Lilli to stay.

Onstage, Bianca and Lucentio and the cast dance together (*Cantiamo d’Amor*). Petruchio and Kate, newly wed, exit the church, followed by the gangsters, now dressed in *Shrew* costumes. Petruchio implores Kate to kiss him, and she refuses. He finally carries her offstage (*Kiss Me, Kate*).
During the show’s intermission, the cast and crew relax in the alley behind the theater. Paul, Fred’s assistant, along with other cast members, lament that it’s Too Darn Hot to meet their lovers that night. The play continues, and Petruchio, exhausted from ‘taming’ Katherine, mourns for his now-lost bachelor life (Where Is the Life That Late I Led?).

Offstage, Lilli’s fiancé Harrison Howell looks for her. He runs into Lois, who recognizes him as a former lover but promises not to tell Lilli. Bill is shocked to overhear this, but Lois tells him that even if she is involved with other men, she is faithful to him in her own way (Always True to You in My Fashion).

Lilli tries to explain to General Howell that she is being forced to stay at the theatre by the gangsters, but Howell doesn’t believe her and wants to discuss wedding plans (From This Moment On).

Fred sarcastically points out how boring Lilli’s life would be if she stayed in the theatre rather than keeping house for the General and living on an allowance. Bill sings a love song he has written for Lois (Bianca).

The gangsters discover that their boss has been killed, so the IOU is no longer valid. Lilli leaves as Fred unsuccessfully tries to convince her to stay (So in Love Reprise). The gangsters get caught on stage and improvise a tribute to the Bard (Brush Up Your Shakespeare).

The company is on stage for the conclusion of the play, the wedding of Bianca and Lucentio, despite Lilli’s absence. Just in time, Lilli enters and delivers Kate’s final speech beautifully (I Am Ashamed That People Are So Simple). Fred and Lilli reconcile on stage, and the play ends with the two couples united (Finale).

All costume designs by Jason Orlenko
Cole Porter wrote both the lyrics and music for his songs, with so much individuality that critics and fans created a new genre known as “the Cole Porter style.”

The hallmarks of a typical Porter song were lyrics that were urbane or witty and a melody with a sinuous, brooding strain. Some of his best-known songs with that quality were *What Is This Thing Called Love*, *Night and Day*, *Love for Sale*, and *Begin the Beguine*. And he relished a grammatical challenge such as *Were Thine That Special Face* from *Kiss Me, Kate*, written entirely in the subjunctive case.

Yet, an equally typical and recognizable Porter song, *Let's Do It*, has a simple, bouncy melody and a lyric based on a long and entertaining list of similarities or contrasts that ticked off the love habits of birds, flowers, fish, insects and various types of humans.

While *You're the Top* is an exercise in finding superlatives that include “the nimble tread of the feet of Fred Astaire,” “a Shakespeare sonnet, a Bendel bonnet, you're Mickey Mouse!” And he could get corny and folksy with tunes like *Don't Fence Me In* and *Friendship* or sweetly romantic with *True Love* and *So In Love*.

Porter was a careful craftsman whose work won the admiration of his peers. Composer Richard Rodgers said, “Few people realize how architecturally excellent his music is. There's a foundation, a structure and an embellishment. Then you add the emotion he's put in and the result is - Cole Porter.”

David Lehman in his book, *A Fine Romance: Jewish Songwriters, American Songs* tells the story of a struggling young Porter meeting the already famous Rodgers and telling him “I finally figured out the secret of writing hits...I'll write Jewish tunes.” And he did, in minor-key masterpieces such as *Everytime We Say Goodbye*, *In the Still of the Night*, *I Love Paris* and many more. The music in Yiddish theatre was probably influential, while the synagogue-derived “sound of lamentation” threads through many of his songs, and his minor-key melodies are unmistakably eastern Mediterranean flavored.

“It's ironic,” wrote Rodgers, despite the abundance of Jewish composers, (like Rodgers, Berlin, Kern, Gershwin) “the most enduring ‘Jewish’ music was written by an Episcopalian millionaire from Peru, Indiana.”

Porter explained how he worked. “First I think of an idea for a song and then I fit it to a title. Then I go to work on a melody, spotting the title at certain moments in the melody. Then I write the lyric, the end first, that way it has a strong finish...I do the lyrics the way I'd do a crossword puzzle. I try to give myself a meter which will make the lyric as easy as possible to write, but without being banal. I try to pick my rhyme words from a long list with the same ending.”

Porter’s busy, almost frenetic social life never interfered with his creativity. Although he wrote mainly for Broadway, most of his songs were written far from Broadway. He wrote during a round-the- world cruise and while he was cruising down the Rhine.

“I’ve done lots of work at dinner, sitting between two bores,” he once said. “I can feign listening beautifully. I can work anywhere.” Proof of that is certainly in the fact that in the hours immediately after his fateful horse riding accident, as he waited for emergency medical help, he composed in his head the lyrics for what became *At Long Last Love.*
Definitions of some theatre and historical references

**Merde!:** This is a term to wish “Good Luck” in ballet and opera. It is a French exclamation, literally “Shit!” The history of “merde” begins in the 19th-century, when patrons of the Paris Opéra would arrive at the theatre in horse-drawn carriages. If there was a full house, there was sure to be a lot of horse manure in front of the theater. Saying “merde” became a way for performers to wish each other a full and approving audience.

**Hoofer:** A professional dancer, especially a tap dancer.

**Sarah Bernhardt:** (1844 – 1923) Bernhardt was a French stage actress, regarded as one the finest actresses of the 19th century. She was the first actor to become a worldwide celebrity.

**Cyrano de Bergerac** is a verse drama in five acts by Edmond Rostand, based on a 17th-century nobleman of the same name, known for his bold adventures and large nose. Cyrano is a favorite role for actors.

**Peer Gynt:** A five-act play in verse by the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen, it is one of the most widely performed Norwegian plays. It is also an opera by Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg.

**Barter Theatre:** Located in Abingdon, Virginia, it opened in 1933 during the Great Depression, when most patrons were unable to pay the full ticket price and paid admittance with food goods, hence the name “Barter”. Many well-known actors got their start there including Gregory Peck, Ernest Borgnine, Patricia Neal, Ned Beatty and Hume Cronyn.

**L.B. Mayer:** Louis Burt Mayer was an American film producer and a founder of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios (MGM) in 1924. Under his management, MGM became the film industry’s most prestigious movie studio, accumulating the largest concentration of leading writers, directors and stars in Hollywood.

**The Group Theatre:** A theater collective based in New York City and formed in 1931 by Harold Clurman, Cheryl Crawford and Lee Strasberg. They were pioneers of what would become an “American acting technique,” derived from the teachings of Konstantin Stanislavski, based in a forceful, naturalistic and highly disciplined artistry.

**Dowry:** The property and money that a woman brings to her husband at marriage. In Kiss Me, Kate Petruchio boastfully sings, “I’ve come to wive it wealthily in Padua.”

**The Theatre Guild:** A theatrical society founded in New York City in 1918 for the production of high-quality, noncommercial American and foreign plays. The Guild had a long association with George Bernard Shaw and Eugene O’Neill and also produced works by Pulitzer Prize winners Sidney Howard, William Saroyan, Maxwell Anderson and Robert Sherwood. The Theatre Guild contributed significantly to American musical theatre by producing George Gershwin and DuBose Heyward’s Porgy and Bess and Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein’s Oklahoma!

**Kinsey Report**

The Kinsey Reports are two books on human sexual behavior, Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948) and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (1953) by Alfred Kinsey, a zoologist at Indiana University and the founder of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction.

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**Baltimore’s Ford Theatre:**

Once a popular venue for Broadway-bound productions, the Ford in Baltimore opened in 1871. Gilbert and Sullivan’s H.M.S. Pinafore made its American debut there and almost every theatrical star played its stage. The building gained a reputation as a haven for animals from a cat named Dickie who occasionally wandered on stage during shows to deer in the balcony and bats in the dressing rooms.

In Kiss Me Kate, there is a reference to the theatre’s small audiences of later years. In 1964, after the final curtain, the audience sang Auld Lang Syne. The theatre was then razed and became a parking lot.

**Cheat out:** To turn toward the audience more than would be natural, for instance in a staged conversation.

**Break a Leg:** Well-wishers typically say “Break a leg” to performers before they go on stage to wish them “good luck”. This originated in Music Hall/Vaudeville days in the 1800s. It refers to the leg or curtain used to mask the offstage wings. Producers had acts on stand-by to fill the bill and if they didn’t actually appear on stage, or get to break the visual plane of the leg line, they received no fee. “Break a Leg” became a wish that you would get on stage and be paid for a performance.
Louella Parsons (above, 1881 – 1972)
Between 1915 and 1960, she was America's premier movie gossip columnist who commanded a following of more than forty million readers. Hollywood celebrities feared her. Fans loved her for her "just folks," small-town image. Parsons became notorious for her involvement in the suppression of the 1941 film, Citizen Kane and her use of blackmail in the service of Hearst's political and personal agendas.

Dewey Defeats Truman was an incorrect headline on the front page of the Chicago Daily Tribune on November 3, 1948, the day after incumbent US President Harry S. Truman won an upset victory over Republican challenger and Governor of New York, Thomas E. Dewey. It was famously held up by Truman the morning after his successful election, smiling triumphantly at the error.

Dior and his “New Look”
Christian Dior (1905 – 1957) was a French fashion designer and founder of one of the world's top fashion houses. When Dior launched his fashion collection in 1947, it quickly became known as the "New Look." The revolutionary style featured a silhouette characterized by a small, nipped-in waist and a full skirt falling below mid-calf length, which emphasized the bust and hips. The collection overall showcased more stereotypically feminine designs in contrast to the popular fashions of wartime. The New Look was welcomed as a refreshing antidote to the austerity of wartime and de-feminizing uniforms.

General Harrison Howell is modeled on General Douglas MacArthur (1880 – 1964, above), a well-known officer with a distinguished record in World War I. He was recalled to active duty in 1941, to become commander of US Army Forces in the Pacific War between the US and Japan. President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to retreat to Australia, where MacArthur made his famous speech in which he declared, "I came through and I shall return." This statement is echoed by General Howell in Kiss Me, Kate.

Noel Coward reference:
In dialogue between Fred and General Howell, Fred quotes a Noel Coward play, saying, "Women should be struck regularly, like gongs." It is a line from his 1930 comedy, Private Lives.

“A sensible Republican cloth coat”
This line in the show refers to “The Checkers speech” made in 1952 by Republican Vice Presidential candidate Richard Nixon. He’d been accused of improprieties relating to a fund established to reimburse him for his political expenses. Nixon delivered a television address in which he defended himself, stating that regardless of what anyone said, he intended to keep one gift given to his children: a black-and-white dog named Checkers, thus giving the address its popular name.

Nixon outlined his families assets and liabilities including their mortgaged homes in Washington and California. He concluded with, "I should say this, that Pat doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat. And I always tell her that she'd look good in anything!"

Just a note of thanks to my Audience Guide partner for fifteen years, Justine Leonard. She has generously volunteered her time and been my trusted and invaluable collaborator on these guides. I couldn’t have done it without her. To quote Cole Porter:
It was just one of those things, Just one of those crazy flings, One of those bells that now and then rings, Just one of those things.

So good bye, dear, and amen, Here's hoping we meet now and then, It was great fun But it was just one of those things.

With gratitude,
Ray