

ROLE BREAKDOWN FOR “KISS ME KATE”

Kiss Me Kate was first presented at the New Century Theatre in New York on December 30, 1948, with music by Cole Porter and lyrics and book by Samuel and Bella Spewack. It is a play within a play featuring a group of actors at a theatre in Baltimore on opening night of *The Shrew*, a musical adaptation of Shakespeare’s *A Taming of the Shrew*. It is a blending of operetta and of musical comedy, one of the last shows to do this. The story is a basic boy had girl, tries to get girl back, loses girl and gets her back again with the requisite happy ending and a lot of comedy in between. It pays homage not only to Shakespeare and operetta, but also vaudeville, featuring comic players in the form of 1940’s gangsters. The story is interrupted by songs and dances that do not necessarily advance the plot, but add to the fun of the evening. There will be cuts.

Fred Graham—30-50, strong baritone, commanding presence. He is actor, director and producer of the play within the play *The Shrew* and plays Petruchio—he has the lion’s share of Shakespearean dialogue. He is also Lilli’s ex-husband.

Lilli Vanessi—30-50, strong mezzo soprano. She is an actress of stage and screen, proud, haughty, much like her character Katherine in *The Shrew*, but also vulnerable. Ex-wife of Fred and engaged to Harrison Howell.

Lois Lane—20-30, strong mezzo belter. She is an actress, the quintessential airhead ingénue but with lots of charisma and charm. She also plays Bianca in *The Shrew*.

Bill Calhoun—20-30, strong tenor or baritenor. He is a ne’er-do-well actor who has a bit of a gambling problem. Is a Broadway hooper, so he should move well. He also plays Lucentio in *The Shrew*.

Harrison Howell—50+, does not sing. Dignified gentleman from Georgia, very political, sometimes played as a general or retired general. He is a little stuffy and kind of a hick and can have a bit of a Southern accent. He is engaged to Lilli Vanessi.

First Man (Gangster)—30-50+ comic baritone or tenor. He is the archetypical gangster complete with accent. Does some soft shoe in “Brush Up Your Shakespeare” so should move well. Also appears in *The Shrew* (unexpectedly)

Second Man (Gangster)—Qualities the same as the First Man, but a bit more reserved and dryer of wit.

Harry Trevor—50+, sings in the ensemble. He is an actor who appears mostly in *The Shrew* as Katherine and Bianca’s father, Baptista. He has mainly Shakespearean dialogue.

Hattie—Any age, good voice. She is Lilli's dresser and sings "Another Op'nin', Another Show and sings in "Too Darn Hot". Opens the show, so should have a good voice and charisma.

Ralph—Any age, sings in the ensemble in "Too Darn Hot" and "Another Op'nin', Another Show", may be featured as soloist as well. Is the stage manager of *The Shrew*. This role can be played by a woman as well (name will be changed).

Stage Doorman—Any age, sings in the ensemble in "Too Darn Hot".

Paul—Any age, tenor or baritenor. He is Fred's dresser and is the featured singer/dancer in "Too Darn Hot" so he should sing and move well.

Gremio and Hortensio—Any age, tenor or baritenor. Actors who appear in *The Shrew*. They will also sing in the ensemble of both *The Shrew* and in "Too Darn Hot". Both are featured in several numbers and should sing well and move well.

Haberdasher—Any age, can be played by a woman. An actor who sings in the ensemble throughout and plays the Haberdasher in *The Shrew*.

Nathaniel, Gregory, and Phillip—Any age. Actors who sing in the ensemble throughout and play Petruchio's man servants in *The Shrew*.

Ensemble—Actors, stage crew, wardrobe, etc, who sing in the ensemble throughout, both in modern day and in *The Shrew*. Many opportunities for small sung and danced solos. Some of the many small roles have names such as Truckman, Banker, Chauffeur, Singing Girls, Messenger and Cab Driver. Not all of the above roles will be required to read at callbacks.