

## East Surrey Operatic Society: Review

### Performance: Kiss me Kate!

Review by: Sylvia Gammon. Mid Street South Nutfield

East Surrey Operatic Society (ESOS), The Harlequin, Redhill.



ESOS's production delivered sheer entertainment from the moment the full cast hit the pace with Another Opening, Another Show, right through to the inevitable happy ending.

Admittedly, the story of the on and off-stage relationships between the two fictional actors touring a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew* takes a bit of following in places but the journey is more than worthwhile just to hear some of Cole Porter's most enduring and memorable numbers – especially when performed as well as here.

Director Paul Longhurst and the team cast every key and supporting role without compromise. It would be difficult to think of a better Lilli than Jane Hogg. Celebrating the first anniversary of her divorce from Fred, she was vituperative in the dressing room and a virago as Kate in the play within a play. She demonstrated her ability to hold the stage in her solo *So In Love*, although her *I Hate Men* could have used a little more passion. Lee Power showed how fire fought fire as Fred and co-star Petruchio but recalled the good times in *Were Thine That Special Face* although later reflected wistfully *Where Is The Life That Late I Led*. Their voices were perfectly balanced on their duet *Wunderbar*.

Alys Dreux (Lois/Bianca) and Francis Radford (Bill/Lucentio) were equally well matched – she with a display of flighty; he portraying an amiable rogue. Stephen Bonnett and Terry Foster made the most of the scene stealing opportunities offered to the 'gangsters' – not only in their showcase *Brush Up Your Shakespeare* but also as two unlikely actors, taking to the stage to ensure Lilli didn't skip town.

The opening to Act II was meticulously built by Jon Ford and the ensemble from a languid start to full throttle as they declared that it was *Too Darn Hot*. This was just one of choreographer Vanessa Chambers' many imaginative, often athletic routines. Kevin Stuart weighed in with his portrayal of a bone-headed General and Nick Rogers contributed many brief, perfectly-timed appearances as stage manager Ralph.

The sparkling, sometimes astringent dialogue, crisply delivered throughout, was always totally audible.

Stage manager Ross Savage and the crew seemed to change locations in a blink which, together with episodes played in front of the drapes, meant that action flowed continuously.

Musical director Susan Rowlinson's interpretation of the score was, itself, worth the ticket price.

Please don't close down the Harlequin

Once again I would like to sing the praises of the East Surrey Operatic Society, after seeing their recent brilliant production of *Kiss Me Kate* by Cole Porter. My daughter and I believe they get better and better each time we see their shows at the Harlequin. The music, acting and costumes as ever were fantastic. The singing, dancing and comedy were so good.

It is such a pleasure to be able to be taken into a world of music and laughter in a local theatre, and to be able to enjoy the facilities there. Many people would not be able to enjoy such entertainment if the Harlequin theatre is closed. It is one asset that we would not like to lose. It has a variety of entertainment to appeal to everyone.

There is such a wealth of talent in the area which will be affected if this is lost. Where will all the local societies be able to put on their wonderful shows? We appeal to the Reigate & Banstead Council, please don't close the Harlequin.

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