

Pucker performance borrows from the bard

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History has shown that if you want a surefire hit musical, you can't go far wrong by pinching a story from the most popular and enduring literary figure of all time, adding a few catchy tunes by the likes of, say, Leonard Bernstein or Cole Porter, as well as some dazzling dance numbers and bada bing - you've got a winner!



At least, it worked for West Side Story and Kiss Me Kate, whose combination of Shakespeare and showstoppers has made them two of the best-loved musicals in the history of musical theatre - helped no end by big budget Hollywood film versions and endless recordings, naturally.

The perennial appeal of the Shakespearean musical should, then, work very much in favour of the Shinfield Players when its production of Kiss Me Kate opens on Wednesday (June 12) at its Reading theatre.

The story is set on Broadway, where egotistical performer Fred Graham finds himself reunited with ex-Wife Lilli Vanessi when they are cast in the leading roles of Petruchio and Kate in a production of Taming of the Shrew. Cue lively and hilarious goings on as the actually-still-in-love couple bicker and fight, while grappling with a couple of hoods who have mistaken Fred for someone else. In the background, former cabaret performers Lois Lane and Bill Calhoun struggle to keep their romance alive.

Laced with memorable Cole Porter songs such as Too Darn Hot, Wunderbar and Brush Up Your Shakespeare, this vibrant piece of whimsy was inspired by the infamous on-and-off stage battles between married stars Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne and even worked its magic on Sam and Bella Spewack who, by the time they had finished the libretto for the show were reunited after a period of separation. Aaaah!

Kiss Me Kate runs until Saturday, June 12, and performances begin at 7.45pm. Tickets are £7. Contact: 0118 926 7135.