



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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THE MIKADO

Gilbert & Sullivan Society of SA

Scott Theatre

Until 29 October 2011

Review by Jamie Wright

There has to be a reason companies are still staging 'The Mikado' – though it certainly isn't for Gilbert and Sullivan's accurate representation of Japan's history or use of its language. It wasn't, however, an attempt to expose Victorian-era English audiences to Japanese culture, but the means by which they could satirise their own.

It is the story of the residents of the town of Titipu, particularly Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner; Nanki-Poo, a singing waiter with a secret; Yum-Yum, Ko-Ko's ward and fiancée; and Pooh-Bah, the Lord High Everything Else (it makes sense in context).

Director Richard Trevaskis has extracted the maximum amount of comedy from the script, which helps give life to a show that falls in pace from time to time. Contemporary jokes – references to karaoke and climate change; the props now include an iPad – have been added, and while this sort of contemporisation can be a risk, in this instance it fits well with the ever-so-slightly corny feel of the show.

The orchestra, led by Ross Curtis (who also re-orchestrated the score), were generally good, though there were several occasions where they came in too late. Plus the choice of synthesised instruments from the keyboard section seemed out of place, often to the point of being distracting.

The singing from the ensemble is up to the G&S Society's usual exceptional standards, and all the principals deliver wonderful performances, with David Lampard energetic and comical as Ko-Ko and Ian Andrew and Liana Nagy excellent as the lovers Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum. Timothy Ide is hilarious and deliciously dry as Pooh-Bah while David Rapkin is regal as the Mikado and Danii Zappia is cool and reptilian as Katisha.

Designer David Lampard's excellent costumes are, like the show itself, a mix of Japanese and English styles, and this motif is carried subtly – and sometimes not-so-subtly – in other ways throughout the show. He's also eschewed the traditional heavy white makeup for the female characters – which, no doubt, the cast are very thankful for. The set – also by Lampard – is both decorative and functional.

The excellent performances, energised arrangements and clever, eye-catching design gives this production as many chances to shine as is possible. It does however, face somewhat of an uphill battle against the show itself, which – by contemporary standards – moves at a gentle pace, with few options to liven it with choreography; at many points it's more of a concert than a musical.

However, fans of the comic opera – and G&S in particular – should put this one at the top of the list.