

A Small Mind At The Theatre

"One day A Small Mind hopes to run from the stalls pursued by a bear. In the meantime, he reviews."

TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2015

Review of The Mikado performed at Royal & Derngate (Royal), Northampton by the Northampton Gilbert & Sullivan Group

Never having seen a complete production of any Gilbert & Sullivan show before and with mostly my only experience of their music coming from The Two Ronnies, the Northampton Gilbert & Sullivan Group's production was always going to come as a surprise. Opera has also never been on my list and I listened in a certain amount of trepidation to the opening "If You Want To Know Who We Are" and remained unsure to its end despite its impressive quality.

However with the arrival of "A Wand'ring Mistrel" in the form of Nanki-Poo (Tom Rushton), things all of a sudden became clearer and the comedy that I was expecting slowly began to emerge. It built from those opening few moments in my mind of not being sure if this was for me, to nearly three hours later my not wanting it to end.

We are presented at the start with a simple oriental set, stylish and clean which remains unchanged throughout the entire production. Against this backdrop the performers, bedecked in wonderful colourful costumes from the Costume Store, tell their tale of self-execution, love, false death and suicide. All the markings of lovely comedy!

Once again from an amateur production, the cast are superb (one single prompt all show on opening night is fine by me) and show a devilish amount of skill. Top of the honours have to be Charles Mills as Ko-Ko and Simon Crask as Pooh-Bah. Between them they crank the comedy levels to one hundred percent. Crask carrying his terrible burden at his waistband for tremendous comedy effect, as well as projecting his booming, pompous voice I am very sure to the distant edges of the upper circle. Mills though is the star through the whole production, a jovial but put upon presence and "smooth" dance moves during "Here's a how-de-do!". Also his little list performance during "As Some Day It May Happen" is just magnificently perfect. The rest of the cast are also all superb, including the wonderful sour-faced Katisha played by Ann Whittaker with her groping techniques (poor Ko-Ko). Rosie Kalve is also wonderful as Pitti-Sing and from my own ear, the best singer of the production.


The modern and local alterations to the show are excellent also, with many lovely new things "put on the list". Indeed after a minor few of last nights crowd, I have a few myself I might be putting on my own list. Kudos also for getting Weston Favell and London Midland into Gilbert & Sullivan. Also worth special, special mention are the fans (of the waving variety). There was a lot of my fans bigger than yours going on, and the actual fan work of the cast was superb, just stunning.

So once again I have yet another genre to be putting on my list (in a good way this time), it was an absolute hoot of a show, wonderfully put together by director Tim Hurst-Brown and featuring a superb fourteen group band directed by David Chambers. Go and put your botty-poo in a sitipu position and see the wonderful Town Of Titipu!

★★★★½

Performance reviewed: Monday 16th March, 2015 at the Royal & Derngate (Royal), Northampton.

The Mikado is on at the Royal & Derngate until Saturday 21st March, 2015, details here: <http://www.royalandderngate.co.uk/whatson/2015-2016/Royal/165951/?view=Standard>

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