



Presented by

**The Gilbert & Sullivan Society
of Edinburgh**
(Amateur)

King's Theatre, Edinburgh

Tuesday 10th March – Saturday, 14th March, 1992

Programme



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or

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by

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Synopsis

Ko-Ko, a cheap tailor of Titipu, having been condemned to death for flirting, is reprieved and raised to the exalted rank of Lord High Executioner. When Nanki-Poo arrives in the town, fleeing to escape the attentions of an elderly lady named Katisha, he falls madly in love with Yum-Yum, the Ward of Ko-Ko. Unfortunately, as Yum-Yum is betrothed to her guardian, their case seems a hopeless one.

A letter arrives from the Mikado announcing that somebody must be beheaded within the month and Ko-Ko racks his brains to think of a suitable victim.

Nanki-Poo, overcome with grief at

his inability to marry Yum-Yum, agrees to be beheaded in a month on condition that he be permitted to marry Yum-Yum at once. However, this argument is seriously flawed, for it is discovered that when a married man is beheaded his wife must be buried alive.

In the midst of this dilemma, the Mikado arrives and Ko-Ko pretends that he has beheaded Nanki-Poo. He is somewhat taken aback when he then learns that Nanki-Poo is the Mikado's son and that his punishment, and that of his compatriots, will be instant death – after lunch!!

A solution is found in the nick of time . . .



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The Management reserve the right to refuse admission and to make any alteration in the cast or programme which may be rendered necessary by illness or other unavoidable causes. This programme is fully protected by copyright and nothing may be printed wholly or in part without permission.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The King's Theatre wish to thank the St. Andrews Ambulance Association who are in attendance at all performances.



About the Opera . . .

"The Mikado" is, without doubt, the best known of all the Gilbert & Sullivan works. At the time of its inception the partners had been writing together for 14 years and Sullivan was beginning to express his dislike of the genre – although not of the cash that came with it! However, Gilbert's ideas for a Japanese opera fired Sullivan to compose his very best music and together they presented the world with one of the most perfect works of art in the English language. Its initial run at the Savoy Theatre, which started on 14th March, 1885, stretched to 672 performances and led to productions all over the world. In 1939 it became the first of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas to be filmed.

Despite, or perhaps because of, its popularity, in 1907 the Lord Chamberlain announced a ban on performances so as not to offend Crown Prince Fushimi of Japan who was visiting Britain. His Lordship had, of course, totally missed the point. "The Mikado" is as British as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, its satire and barbed humour being pointed directly at British institutions and customs, and hitting the mark far more accurately because of its Japanese disguise. Some of this satire may have faded, but enough remains valid today so that we can appreciate the effect Gilbert's libretto must have had on his 19th century audiences.

For over a hundred years "The Mikado" has been one of the most frequently played of all British stage properties, and as such the opera has been subjected to many liberties. These started early when Rutland Barrington, the original Pooh-Bah, introduced gags into his portrayal. Gilbert, who disliked anyone tampering with his work, was always chastising Barrington, but on

occasion he allowed some of the gags to be retained. A few of his 1908 additions, authorised by Gilbert, have been inserted tonight and many of you who know every word and note of the work may care to spot them! As well as having gags added to the script the show has frequently been presented in rewritten guise as, for example, "The Cool Mikado" (1962 film), "The Hot Mikado" (New York, 1939), and "The Swing Mikado" (Chicago, 1938). At least presenters of these versions had the courtesy to change the title so that audiences were forewarned. A recent production in London set the opera in an English seaside town, performed it *à la* Noel Coward and had the male chorus pulling at their eyes to suggest Japanese features. The show was a wonderful success with critics and audiences alike – but was it "The Mikado"?

Which brings me to tonight's show. Of all the works I've directed for the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Edinburgh, "The Mikado" has posed the most problems. It is notoriously more difficult to direct a masterpiece than to make a case for one of the lesser-known pieces such as last season's "The Grand Duke", and, despite the temptations to dabble with a "new-concept", I have settled on the decision to be true to what I perceive were the author's original intentions and present a colourful, stylish and hopefully entertaining show.

This year we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sir Arthur Sullivan – and, in my own small way, I'm celebrating the 30th anniversary of my joining the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Edinburgh (as a babe-in-arms, of course). Hopefully these events will be capped by a successful show. I await your verdict!

ALAN BORTHWICK



Chorus of Schoolgirls

CLAIRE BORTHWICK
 JOYCE BOYD
 CAMINA BROWN
 JACQUIE BRUCE
 DOREEN CADDOW
 MARGARET CORMACK
 ALISON CRICHTON
 ANN CROMBIE
 KATE DUFFIELD
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 ANN GORDON
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 KATHARINE TAYLOR
 LINDSEY TERRIS
 ANNE THOMSON
 * BARBARA THOMSON
 ELIZABETH THOMSON
 CARYNNE WALTON
 MICKEY YORK

* Denotes understudy

Dramatis Personae

Dramatis Personae

The Mikado of Japan ROLAND YORK
 Nanki-Poo (*his son, disguised as a wandering minstrel
 and in love with Yum-Yum*) COLIN FLEMING
 Ko-Ko (*Lord High Executioner of Titipu*) MAXWELL SMART
 Pooh-Bah (*Lord High Everything Else*) JAMES C. DINSMORE
 Pish-Tush (*A Noble Lord*) GEORGE MCHOLLAN
 Go-To ANDREW GRELN
 Yum-Yum } FIONA SCRIMGER
 Pitti-Sing } (*Three Sisters – Wards of Ko-Ko*) CHRISTINE LESLIE
 Peep-Bo } HAZEL CLARKE
 Katisha (*an elderly lady in love with Nanki-Poo*) HEATHER BOYD

OVERTURE

Act I: Courtyard of Ko-Ko's Official Residence

Act II: Ko-Ko's Garden



Chorus of Nobles and Guards

PETER AIKMAN
 BRIAN CADDOW
 GORDON CAMPBELL
 STEWART COGHILL
 DONALD CRAIG *
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 JOHN REID
 BRIAN ROBERTSON *
 GRAHAM SIMPSON
 DAVID SMITH

Japanese Dogs

WENDY BORTHWICK
 ANDREW CRAWFORD

* Denotes understudy

About the music . . .

In 1884, Sullivan's score for "Princess Ida" had been highly praised by many critics, the *Sunday Times*, in particular, considering it his best yet. However, box office receipts had started to fall by March of that year (the opera having opened in January) and D'Oyly Carte had written to both Sullivan and Gilbert, requesting them to start work immediately on a new piece, to replace "Ida" in the summer.

This letter prompted Sullivan to have one of his periodic fits of doubt as to whether he could continue to write comic opera, and he had, in turn, written a frank letter to Gilbert in which he stated, ". . . My tunes are in danger of becoming mere repetitions . . . the music is never allowed to rise and speak for itself . . . I should like to set a story of human interest and probability."

After Sullivan's refusal to contemplate yet another reworking of the "lozenge" plot, Gilbert produced the draft of "The Mikado", with which Sullivan was enchanted, setting to work as soon as Gilbert's first lyrics arrived on his desk. (It is ironic, however, that he should accept the plot as a story of "human interest and probability", as "The Mikado" is almost pure nonsense from start to finish!)

So, somewhat inauspiciously, was born what was to become their most famous – and greatest – collaboration. It won superlative notices from the beginning and every number shows Sullivan at the peak of his powers. He was surely aided in achieving this consistent quality by Gilbert's inspired lyrics, which clothe a supremely English confection in a Japanese mask.

Sullivan found that the variety of the lyrics and their adaptability to character allowed him to model his musical shapes on the author's poetic ones; the insistent alliteration of the words in the duet "There is beauty in the bellow of the blast", for example, is mirrored in the melody, and internal rhymes are set to the same musical phrase. The wonderful contrapuntal interlocking of the three different melodies in the trio "I am so proud", shows superb musical resource and manages to convey the characters of the protagonists very clearly – Pooh-Bah's line is rather solemn and pompous, whereas Ko-Ko's is more agitated; Pish-Tush is allotted a dignified but alert line with more than a hint of dry humour, and the piece ends with splendid elan, as the three contemplate the somewhat dubious pleasure of the "big, black block".

The orchestration shows, again, the supreme mastery Sullivan has in the restricted medium of the "pit" band and the score is, throughout, light-years away from the mundane and usually pedestrian orchestral "accompaniments" which Sullivan's contemporaries utilised. As ever, the score perfectly balances the mood of the moment and bristles with felicities which continue to enchant over 100 years after they were first heard. Listen, for example, to the deftly thrown-in reference to Bach's "Great" G-minor fugue which appears in the Mikado's song, and to the woodwind "shrieks" which mirror Pitti-Sing's words in the trio, "The criminal cried". Both soloists and chorus are given music of a quality rarely found in operetta, and which bubbles and sparkles in keeping with the

effervescence of the plot. The opening, male chorus is set perfectly for the greatest vocal effect and the women, in turn, have a delightful counterpart in the tranquility of the opening to Act 2. (Interestingly, Sullivan eschews one of his favourite devices in "The Mikado" – the double chorus – but one hardly notices its absence amid the wealth of inspired solos and ensembles with which the score abounds.)

Sullivan's love of the madrigal form is nowhere more beautifully epitomised than in the exquisite "Brightly dawns", in Act 2, where the character Go-To has his moment of musical glory, entering to provide the bass line in preference to the lighter baritone required by Pish-Tush. And Sullivan's softening of Gilbert's at times harsh treatment of elderly, spinster women reaches one of its heights in Act 2 also, where he sets Katisha's anguished plea, "Alone, and yet alive" to music of great tenderness and true pathos, the worried semi-

quaver figure at "Hearts do not break" giving way to more lyrical, repeated quavers, followed by strings playing "tremolando", at "Oh, living, I".

As was quite usual, both Sullivan and Gilbert made alterations to the original text and score, after the first performance; these are incorporated in the printed vocal score and mirrored in the D'Oyly Carte band parts, which I am using. The Overture, not one of Sullivan's but, probably, by Francois Cellier or Hamilton Clarke, is being played in its uncut version; it may not be of the stylistic quality of "Iolanthe" or "Yeomen", but I think it is, nevertheless, a splendid opening to a work of perennial freshness and vitality. Perhaps the "Theatre" review of March, 1885, best sums it up; "Nothing fresher, gayer or more captivating has ever bid for public favour than this delightful composition."

DAVID LYLE
Musical Director



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Brass

DAVID RIMER *horn*
MARIAN KIRTON *horn*
GORDON THOMSON *trumpet*
ANDREW KINNEAR *trumpet*
JOHN ADAM *trombone*
NEIL SHORT *trombone*

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members of the cast

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our thanks to all those who have given help in the presentation of "The Mikado" – Brian Caddow for designing and making the gentlemen's fans, Bermans for providing the Japanese dogs, North British Distillery Co. Ltd., The Makars, J. Fairbairn (Joiners), North Leith Parish Church, Janitor of Craiglockhart School, Martyn Strachan, Pinegrove Garden Centre, Kirk Session and Church Officers of Davidson's Mains Parish Church, and to the many others who have helped in some way to make this production possible; and finally to the resident staff of the King's Theatre who do so much to make a visit to their theatre for both audience and performers so enjoyable.



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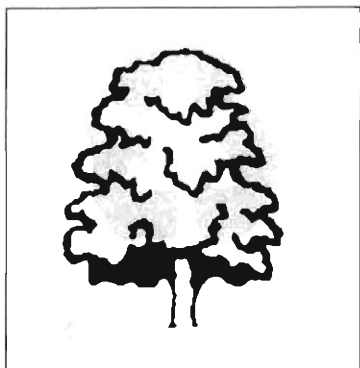
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