

KNAPHILL AND ST. JOHN'S OPERATIC GROUP – 'THE MIKADO'

MARCH 2006

Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas continue to draw an audience from the older generation but this updated E.N.O. version should surely appeal to the younger generation too. Sadly there were not many in evidence on the evening I attended. The humour is as relevant and funny today as it was when written, and the little touches to bring the libretto right up to date were much appreciated by the audience.

Under the direction of Brian Steel the orchestra was beautifully balanced and controlled, and their positioning on stage added even more to the to the dazzling visual appeal of the whole production.

Martine Young's stage direction was superb. She created imaginative and attractive company settings, I particularly liked 'The Sun Who's Ray's', and the principals worked hard at their individual characters when not involved in the main action.

The cast acquitted themselves admirably and their roles were strongly interpreted.

I'm surprise to read that Giselle Thorne originally sang as an alto as she had no problem at all with the high notes needed as Yum-Yum.

Samantha Clark made a spirited Peep-Bo with wonderful facial expressions and good sense of the comedy and timing, and Jane Carruthers also had fun with the role of Pitti-Sing.

The three girls made an attractive and talented trio.

Barry Audsley played Nanki-Poo confidently and sang well, and although Pish-Tush is not perhaps the most interesting part to undertake John Atkinson made his mark with his North Country accent and country costume.

In the role of the distinguished Pooh-Bah, Rod Parsons gave an impressive performance in both acting and singing.

Steven Moore took a little time to capture the audience as Ko-Ko but once he did he was first class. He brought out the humour splendidly providing some incredibly funny moments and his singing was very good.

A regal Katisha from Anne Smith, perhaps a little less scary than she might have been, and as The Mikado, Graham Ellis played the part well but could have been a little more imposing.

It was unusual to have so much dance involvement but the Susan Robinson School of Ballet added much to this polished production. My only negative comment would be that they detracted considerably from the beautifully sung Madrigal. It stands on it's own merits without the need for any prancing around in the background.

The large chorus had good volume and quality when singing and their movements were confidently executed.

The sound and lighting was good; how refreshing to see a production that does not depend on personal microphones!

Costumes were magnificent and the black and white really looked stunning. I am pleased that Martine convinced the committee, who must have been delighted with the results.

The set too was striking, from the white stage to the Japanese banners, (brilliant that they actually meant something!) and the properties were good. The circular seat/garden, stage left, was all that was needed to make a simple but sophisticated and useful set.

Your programme is nicely presented and the page on the banners and the glossary add extra interest.

Thank you for inviting me to review the show, which I thoroughly enjoyed, and also for your kind hospitality on the evening. I was sorry not to come up on stage afterwards on this occasion, but look forward to the next time.

The two directors put together a first class production. Congratulations to every-one involved, both on stage and back stage, in this stunning adaptation of 'The Mikado'

E. Gloria Smith
N.O.D.A. Regional Representative