



Be inspired by amateur theatre

Society : The Sainsbury Singers
Production : Hot Mikado
Date : Friday 27th May 2016
Venue : Hexagon - Reading
Report by : Jeanette Maskell

[Show Report](#)

I was delighted to be invited to review Sainsbury's latest offering of Hot Mikado. This was such a fun show, with its eclectic genre of music including jazz, gospel and blues.

It had been extremely well cast with excellent acting and singing from principals and chorus.

Brian Bretney – (The Mikado) – This was a well-defined natural characterisation, performed with great expertise. He brought so much humour to the role and his timing was impeccable. Dialogue was light and facetious yet strong and commanding. He moved with ease and his tapping highly commendable. He has a fine singing voice and this was more than apparent in his "Mikado Song".

Chris Thomas – (Nanki-Poo) – I was impressed by this young man's performance, he had a natural laid back demeanour and delivered his dialogue with great dynamics. His movement was innate and fluid and his interaction with all members of the cast was effected in the same manner. His relationship with Yum Yum was completely inherent and their scenes together were light hearted and fun. He has a handsome tenor voice which augmented all his numbers but in particular "A Wandering Minstrel" and "This is what I'll Never Do" and he can blow his own trumpet!

Abi Lingwood – (Yum-Yum) – I really enjoyed this young lady's performance; she was spirited and effervescent with excellent animated movement and facial expressions. The modulation and intonation in her dialogue was superb. Her true soprano voice was delightful and complemented her numbers. Along with Pitti Sing and Peep Bo "Three Little Maids" sung in close "Andrews Sisters" harmony was a highlight of the evening; however "The Sun and I" was the outright winner.

Lucy Hutson – (Pitti-Sing) – This was a standout performance by this young lady; she was breathtakingly sublime! Her dialogue and movement was energetic and vivacious. The tone and quality of her voice was captivating and totally suited to the music embellishing her numbers greatly. "For He's going to Marry Yum Yum" was superlative. (Did she forget to change her shoes for the finale of act 1 or was this deliberate?) A super all round performance!

Lorraine Cox – (Peep-Bo) – This young lady worked well with her two sisters and completed an excellent trio. Her dialogue was well delivered and her singing articulate and tuneful; blending well with the other two in "Three Little Maids". She had good movement and was sprightly and peppy.

Tony Demetriou – (Pish-Tush) – As one of the coolest gentlemen in Japan this young man gave a wonderful performance. He was an aptly chilled out dude and created a casual easy-going character; and his movement epitomised this. His dialogue was sharp and savvy as befitted the role and his singing smooth rhythmic and well-pitched. A well sung “Braid the Raven Hair”.

Gareth Wells – (Ko-Ko) – Is there nothing this young man can’t turn his hand to? I was really smitten with this ineffable characterisation; he was just ever so slightly camp delivering his dialogue with varied inflection containing excellent light and shade. He gambled and cavorted round the acting arena (in his garishly yellow suit and red hat which was most fetching!) in a most entertaining manner. Even when not involved in the action he never lost his character. Visually his facial expressions and body language was transcendent and his interaction with other members of the cast unparalleled. All his numbers were put over in character with accomplished singing; however the highlight was “Tit-Willow” which was terrific fun!

Stephen Cox – (Pooh-Bah) – As the Lord High “Everything Else” this young man gave an exemplary performance. He really hit the mark with his comedy and musical interpretation. He was visually animated with great freedom of movement. His dialogue was delivered at a naturally flowing pace with bounce and energy. I particularly enjoyed “I am so Proud”

Jessamy Vincent – (Katisha) – What a fantastic voice this young woman had! Her rendition of “The Hour of Gladness” was absolutely glorious; it was soulful stirring and fervid, I for one did not want it to end. She looked imposing and her presence was self-assured and confident. Dialogue was well crisp clear and well projected.

Matthew Smith – (Ping-Pong) – Although this was a minor character this young man gave a first rate performance; his singing in the opening number was accomplished showing off an excellent voice.

Kazia Grainger – (Wei-Ling) – This is another minor character that gave her all. She looked great, moved well and her singing was pretty and tuneful. I would’ve liked a little more projection; however her winning smile more than compensated for this.

Ladies and Gentlemen of Japan – This chorus was superb! They danced sang and acted with the greatest aplomb; they were lively animated and perfectly in character. Their entrances and exits happened effortlessly ensuring the pace never wavered. I always maintain the principals could not do the show without a great chorus to back them and here the chorus certainly made this point.

Cath Hannan/Emily Hiscock/HannanRakowska – (Lead Tap Dancers) – These three young ladies did extremely well leading the routine. They were tightly in step and the sound was as one!

Wendy Carne – (Producer) – I was fortunate to meet Wendy after the show and chat to her about her experience directing this amazing fun packed piece of theatre. She told me she didn’t like G&S but this had changed her mind completely! She had done an outstanding job with this work and her overall vision was original innovative and creative. The diverse

characterisations had been well delineated affected and stylised. Having the band in a Japanese Tea House on stage and interacting with the cast was inspired and added to the humour. This was a show that she should be immensely proud of and one that I'm sure the society and audience will be talking about for years to come! I left feeling exhilarated elated and extremely happy.

Jon Brooks – (Musical Director) – Musically principals and chorus were faultless with impeccable diction, infallible timing and perfect entrances. I'm sure a lot of time and commitment had gone into achieving such a high standard. The small band was splendid being well controlled; brassy and loud yet accompanying the singers sympathetically so as not to drown them ensuring we never missed any of the lyrics.

Denise Schult – (Choreographer) – I have seen several shows choreographed by this young lady but this is by far my favourite. Her routines were imaginative lively and bright and were performed by the cast with a sparkling ambience. I liked the way she had two dancers appear from behind the parasols at the start; it set the mood for the rest of the show. The finales to both acts were designed to create high impact and energy and were most enjoyable.

Kim Hollamby – (Lighting Designer) – This was an excellent plot. I liked the way the stage was flooded with light and then the atmospheric dimness of the act 1 finale. The variation of colour behind the wall worked extremely well though the shadow lighting in “Braid the Raven Hair” unfortunately did not. Follow spots (**– Operated by Nathan Isaac & Louis Martin**) were well controlled and did much to enhance the overall look of the piece.

John Ollerenshaw/Sally Ollerenshaw – (Sound) – Sound was absolutely spot on, there was good balance between all characters and the hanging mics picked up the chorus splendidly. Sound effects at the start created a real flavour of Japan (it made me glad I had been to the loo when I heard the trickling water) while all others were appropriate for the piece.

John Simmonds – (Stage Manager) **Becca Simons** (DSM) **& Crew** – With no scene changes the crew had little or nothing to do; however it is necessary to have experts on hand should anything go awry.

Kazia Grant– (Props) – The stage had been well dressed and all other props had been well collated and appropriate to the piece.

Set Hire – Proscenium – This set was stunning! It was fresh and bright and created in instant impact on entrance to the auditorium. It also gave the cast maximum acting space.

Amanda Bretney – (Wardrobe Designer) – **Emma Reeves** – (Supervisor) – It must have been so much fun getting these costumes together. The colour scheme of the female costumes contrasted well with gentlemen's and the overall effect was delightful. I particularly liked the gentlemen's brightly coloured ties with their uniformly coloured zoot suits and the three little maids' saucy school girl uniforms. Accessories complemented the costumes and I really liked the gentlemen's spats. It was nice to see that although the gents all wore hats they were far enough back of the face so we could still see all their expressions.

Kerry Thomas – (Makeup Design) **& Team** – Make up was well applied being strong enough to carry over the foot lights! The gents' facial makeup was aptly Japanese coloured and looked great.

Catherine Hannan – (Hair & Wigs) – Hair had been well fashioned in keeping with the style of the piece.

John Jones – (Front of House Manager) **& Team** – The front of house team were clearly visible making themselves known to the audience. Once again I would like to thank John and Ann for their hospitality and in looking after me and keeping me entertained.

Thank you

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