

For better or worse, 'Mikado' drips with silliness

By PATRICK MEIGHAN
Telegraph Staff

MILFORD — Nanki-Poo, son of The Mikado (emperor of Japan, fleeing to the outlying city of Tifflip, disguised as a traveling minstrel) — second frontman, specifically — rather than marry an elderly hag named Katisha, who through duplicity has claimed the right to his hand.

He is instead in love with Yum-Yum, a beautiful though conceited maiden about to be betrothed to Ko-Ko, the dimwitted Lord High Executioner.

Despite this difficulty, Katisha can't compete with the fair Yum-Yum for Nanki-Poo's affections. "I am," Katisha explains, "in acquired taste."

So too is a Gilbert and Sullivan light opera, and one I admit I

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haven't been able to fully acquire. Not that I hate it. Silliness is an admirable trait in entertainment.

"The Mikado," the American Singer Festival's final offering of the '98 summer season, has it in spades: Silly names and costumes, song lyrics dripping with shameless puns, action trash with slapstick and a plot that makes about as much sense as a Three Stooges skit.

I prefer my silliness a tad lower on the Stouge scale. A night attending a Gilbert and Sullivan musical comedy is to me like a belated booster: One hit and you're good for another seven years.

Still, the ASF production has

much to recommend it — if you're into this sort of thing.

The performances of Roger Anderson as Ko-Ko and Tony Buzzano as Poo-Poo-Bah, the snooty Lord High Everything Else (don't ask) were gems. Both played the silliness to the hilt and were a joy to watch.

As Yum-Yum, Minika Kendall's vocals were delicious (see — you can't even write about this stuff without a pun of your own slipping in).

How silly is it? Both Kendall and Michael Moore as Nanki-Poo appeared in a Broadway production of "The Mikado" with Steve Allen, the piano-whizz former talk-show host whose struck is about as silly as they come.

As for the music, this opera (who ever coined the term "light opera," anyway?) contains some of

Gilbert and Sullivan's best-known songs, including "Three Little Maids From Schiraz," "The Flowers that Blossom in the Spring (Tra-la)," "Willow, Tra-Willow" and the undated, politically incorrect "I've Got a Little List."

If you like to have your silly bone tickled, this is the show for you. "The Mikado" continues through the weekend at the ASF's summer home on Route 13 north of the Milford Oval.

I should note here that the set,

designed by David Potts, is terrific. In fact, all of the sets at ASF productions this season have been remarkable, and I've been negligent in not raving more about them. Kudos, all around.

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Historic Association plans lunchtime lectures on heritage of Manchester

MANCHESTER — Bring lunch outdoors to enjoy the late summer talks on Wednesdays in September. The Bag Lunch Lecture Series is a new program offered by the Manchester Historic Association.

Topics concerning the city's heritage will be presented free of charge from noon to 1 p.m. on each Wednesday, Sept. 9, 30.

The subject of the discussion on Sept. 9 in Victory Park will be "New Hampshire Archaeology: The View From Amoskang." Mrs. Stinson of the new Sturtevant Museum will cover 12,000 years of history revealed by local archaeological discoveries.

Also at Victory Park, Kathryn Strub will present "Fish Lumps: Grants & the Catholic Church in

Canadian Ancestors" on Sept. 23 at Victory Park.

If it rains, these talks will be relocated to the Indoor Program Gallery at the Manchester Historic Association building at the south side of the park.

The Bag Lunch Lecture Series will move to City Hall Plaza on Sept. 30 for "A Snack Preview of the City Hall Removations" by Leo Bertier and Walter Stiles. Rain cancellation for this program will be an indoor space at City Hall.

The Manchester Historic Association is located at 129 Amherst St. in downtown Manchester, in the Victory Park Historic District. Museum and library hours are Tues-

day through Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, call 622-7531.

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