

'Mikado' is fun at ASF

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ally get together with girl but not without many obstacles and lots of familial confusion, this is a somewhat complicated story, so here is a very brief synopsis.

Nanki-Poo ("A Wandering Minstrel" he is in love with Yum-Yum who is the ward of Ko-Ko who is also in love with Yum-Yum. Ko-Ko has been made Lord High Executioner after having his death sentence for flirting commuted, sort of, because, it was cleverly discovered, he can't possibly execute anyone else for flirting unless he executes himself first.

Nanki-Poo is secretly the son of The Mikado, ruler of Japan (who, by the way, doesn't make his entrance until the second act, causing one to wonder why the play isn't called "The Lord High Executioner" or "Nanki-Poo" or even "Yum-Yum", after all, "The Pirates of Penzance" were on stage a lot and right away).

Anyway, The Mikado gets irked because Ko-Ko hasn't bothered to execute anyone so he orders him to chop off at least one head within 30 days, a distressing situation for Ko-Ko who is (remember?) next in line for the chop. So, Nanki-Poo agrees to substitute for Ko-Ko but only if he can marry Yum-Yum. Ko-Ko agrees because, after all, the marriage will only last 30 days.

Get it? That's the plot, pretty much.

And it is well done. Weather and Rice have done a wonderful job of bringing this all to life and they have great help from a terrific group of actors, particularly Roger Anderson who plays Ko-Ko with great energy and the judicious use of a falsetto squeal. One of his most memorable moments is in the song "I've Got a Little List" in which he lists all of those who could, should or might be for the chop. It has been updated to include the likes of our illustrious presidential date, Monica Lewinsky, among others, so listen carefully. The key to the number is the relish with which Anderson performs it. He knows exactly what he's singing, he knows exactly how he wants us to react and he gets us to do it.

Anderson is a delight every second he's on stage. True, it is a wonderful part, but not every actor would take advantage of it the way Anderson does. The key is, he's having fun out there and he

him. He might be the Lord High Executioner but, gee, we really like him!

Also excellent is Monika Kendall as Yum-Yum, who has a lovely voice and a winning manner. It's easy to see why she is so sought after.

Michael Moore, who plays Nanki-Poo, has a most memorable voice, a voice that seems to have been made for Gilbert and Sullivan with a very British, upper-crust quality that tells us immediately that he can't possibly be only a simple wandering minstrel. No, there's something more to this guy.

And watch carefully for Charlotte A. Dore, one of the "three little maids." She has very little to do on her own, but she does it wonderfully. Here is another example of someone taking a small part and making the most of it. I liked her immensely. Pity she didn't have more to do.

But if you don't fall in love with Michele Henderson, then you aren't paying attention and you should be. She plays Katisha, an elderly lady who has her sights set on Nanki-Poo (she is the reason he fled his father's court) and she has as much fun on stage as does Mr. Anderson. Her facial expressions are worth the price of admission. Hers is a wonderful performance and it is only a pity that Gilbert and Sullivan didn't write into "The Mikado" some great conflict between Katisha and Ko-Ko so we could see Ms. Henderson and Mr. Anderson have at it.

For me, one of the most interesting aspects of this production was how well the chorus performed. This group of young actors was particularly good in terms of always being in character and never losing focus. And it's hard, when you don't have all that much to do except be in character to be in character. I don't think we give enough credit to those who also serve, but they deserve it.

The bottom line on "The Mikado" is that you don't have to love Gilbert and Sullivan to have a great time at this production. It is fun, period. And sometimes that's all theater needs to be about. How much fun? There was a woman across the aisle from me who laughed almost non-stop. Everybody else laughed a lot, but she laughed all the time. If you have half as much fun as she had last Saturday, you'll be glad you