The Mikado
or, The Town of Titipu

Music
Sir Arthur Sullivan

Libretto
W. S. Gilbert

Conductor
Ruben Gurevich

Director
Vincent Liotta

Set Design
William Forrester

Lighting Design
Marianne Meadows

Costume Design
Heather Hudson

May 11, 1989 – 8:00 PM
Donor Recognition Night
May 12 & 13 – 3:00 PM
May 14 – 5:00 PM

Meany Theater
Dramatis Personæ

The Mikado of Japan
Nanki-Poo [His Son]
Ko-Ko [Lord High Executioner of Titipu]
Pooh-Bah [Lord High Everything Else]
Pish-Tush [a Noble Lord]
Yum-Yum [Three Sisters - Wards of Ko-Ko]
Pitti-Sing [Three Sisters - Wards of Ko-Ko]
Peep-Bo
Katisha [an elderly Lady, in love with Nanki-Poo]
Chorus of School Girls, Gentlemen, and Guards

Jeffrey Petryk
Jeffrey Hinze
Kurt Alakulppi
Jeff Caldwell
Aaron Brandon Caughey
Mel Ulrich
Paul Elgin
Christopher Johnson
Daniel J. Yarr III
Denise DeVoe
Alison W. Guay
Rochelle Reed
L. Ellen Taylor
Jennifer Sanderson
Kim Shreiner
Cynthia Beitmen
Ann E. Wopat

The action takes place in the town of Titipu

There will be a short intermission between Act I and Act II.

About The Mikado

When Princess Ida, the opera which immediately preceded The Mikado closed in October, 1884, Sullivan wrote to Gilbert:

"With Princess Ida I have come to the end of my capability in that class of piece. My tunes are in danger of becoming mere repetitions of my former pieces, my concerted movements are getting to possess a strong family likeness. I have rung all the changes possible in the way of variety and rhythm. It has hitherto been word-setting, I might almost say syllable-setting, for I have looked upon the words as being of such importance that I have been continually keeping down the music in order that not one should be lost."

He goes on to state his desire to set “a story of human interest and probability.” Gilbert’s response to this was to create The Mikado, a story which is much less satirical in its outlook than any of his earlier libretti. (Although the coincidences necessary for the plot of the story must give new meaning to the concept of probability). As a result, The Mikado takes on an air of gaiety which is much more blithe than that of the earlier Gilbert & Sullivan works. While, as one critic of the time put it, “the action goes on within measurable distance of a scaffold,” there is always at the forefront the atmosphere of sheer fun. This combination of silliness and black humor gives each character a definition which, while in many ways more caricatured, is at the same time much more individual. It is thus (in an admittedly Gilbertian manner) that The Mikado does manage to fulfill Sullivan’s desire for human scale by creating recognizable, and comforting, personalities. It is the recognizable qualities of each of the characters that we have chosen to capitalize upon in this production.

When this fun is wrapped in the exotic and colorful surroundings of what seems to be the unmistakably oriental, the charm of the visual only serves to enhance the magical quality of Gilbert’s never-never land. By Gilbert’s own admission, it is difficult to trace the actual inspiration for setting the story in Japan but it seems clear that the play was not inspired by a Japanese sword falling from his wall (as is commonly believed) but rather more generally by the fad for things Japanese which was prevalent in London of the 1880’s. It is in this spirit that we have created a visual production combining the forms of Japanese prints with the typically Japanese use of of color and clashing pattern (so riotous to our Western eyes) into which to place our otherwise very Occidental characters.

Finally, for those of you familiar with The Mikado, you may notice some significant differences in the orchestration which you will hear this evening from that which is traditionally heard. The version which we are using was commissioned by the Kentucky Opera Association and has been edited from the original autograph parts which were obtained from the O’Oyly Carte company.

—Vincent Liotta
Before the story begins, Nanki-Poo has fled to the town of Titipu from the court of his father, the Mikado of Japan, to escape marriage with a lady of the court, named Katisha. There, he has assumed the disguise of a musician and fallen in love with Yum-Yum; but he has been prevented from marrying her by her guardian, Ko-Ko, who wishes to marry her himself. Ko-Ko, however has been condemned to death for flirting; and, when Act I opens, Nanki-Poo is returning to Titipu to find out whether Yum-Yum is now free to marry him.

From Pooh-Bah and Pish-Tush, Nanki-Poo learns that Ko-Ko has become Lord High Executioner, thus preventing the sentence of decapitation from being carried out. Ko-Ko is, in fact, going to marry Yum-Yum that very afternoon.

Everything seems to be going well for Ko-Ko, but suddenly a letter comes from the Mikado ordering him to execute somebody or else lose his position as Lord High Executioner. He is in a quandry to find someone to execute, when Nanki-Poo appears, bent upon suicide because he can not marry Yum-Yum. By allowing Nanki-Poo to marry Yum-Yum for a month, Ko-Ko persuades him to be the subject for the public execution when the month is up. There is general rejoicing in this apparent solution to the problem, marred only by the unexpected appearance of Katisha, in quest of the vanished object of her affections, Nanki-Poo. She is driven away, but threatens to go to the Mikado about the matter.

Act II opens with Yum-Yum preparing for her marriage with Nanki-Poo. Ko-Ko comes in with the news that he has just discovered a law stating that when a married man is executed his wife must be buried alive. To save Yum-Yum from that fate, Nanki-Poo decides to kill himself at once. But this again throws Ko-Ko into a quandry to find someone to execute (especially as he has heard that the Mikado is on his way to Titipu). Nanki-Poo magnanimously offers himself for immediate decapitation, but Ko-Ko is unable to perform the act.

Another way out of the difficulty presents itself: Ko-Ko has Pooh-Bah make a false affidavit that Nanki-Poo has been executed, and bids Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum leave the country.

The Mikado soon appears. Ko-Ko thinks that the object of his visit is to see whether the execution has taken place. He accordingly produces the affidavit and describes, with gusto, the execution. But the Mikado has actually come in search of his lost son. When the fact transpires that the person whom Ko-Ko has supposedly executed is really the Mikado's son, Ko-Ko and his accomplices are declared guilty of "compassing the death of the Heir Apparent." The only hope for them is to admit the falsehood of the affidavit and produce Nanki-Poo alive. But, as Nanki-Poo has already married Yum-Yum and so can not marry Katisha, Katisha will surely insist on the execution of Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum. So Nanki-Poo refuses to "come back to life." Ko-Ko solves the problem by offering his hand in marriage to Katisha and she accepts him. Nanki-Poo and his new bride Yum-Yum return to reveal themselves to the Mikado and all live happily ever after.
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Ruben Gurevich, Conductor

Violin I
Shaun McBride
Karen Sorensen
Alan Sharp
Michelle Davis
Rebekah Coates
Shirley Lee
David Tobin

Jubilee Cooke
Melanie Edwards
Joseph Bichsel
Brian Schuld
Nora Engebretsen
Chris Marcum
Teresa Wang
Kristina Hattwig
Gretchen Yanover

Clarinet
Marvin Western
Steve Beagles

Shaun McBride
Melanie Edwards
Marvin Western
Karen Sorensen

Violin II
Jennifer Hillaker
Sunny Kim
David Brubaker
Susie Kim
Michele Burgess
Paul Elliott
Christine Chen
Anne Marie Hoffman

Jill Hermes
Ellen Bercovitz

Cello
Jubilee Cooke
Clarinet

Shaun McBride
Melanie Edwards
Cello

Clarinet

Steve Beagles
Alan Sharp
Joseph Bichsel

Bassoon
Michelle Davis
Brian Schuldt
Rebekah Coates
Krista Lake
Pete Hodges

Nora Engebretsen
Karen Sorensen

Bass

Sunny Kim
Bass

Soprano
Kelly Bowman
Anne Marie
Dustman
Deidre Jasper
Kristin Miles
Susan Mirghanbri
Kathleen E. Mohan
Maria Moser
Lynn Stratmeyer

Alto
Alice Bridgeforth
Jennifer Busch
Patricia Starr
Cheryl Hoffman

Tenor
Daniel Dunne
Brad Fanta
Greg Elder
Marc T. Montague
Paul C. Mueller

Flute
Jill Hermes
Ellen Bercovitz

Flute

Jill Hermes
Ellen Bercovitz

The Mikado's Rickshaw Attendants
Jason Ladum — Andy Wickstrand

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