

HOT MIKADO

Review – Ron Fosker

W S Gilbert may recognise some of his lyrics but what Arthur Sullivan would make of the music is another matter. For this is The Mikado updated – and then updated again.

Hot Mikado dates from 1939 with topical references to FD Roosevelt etc all dating from that period. But it has been played around with since then and now includes the likes of a Mikado in an Elvis wig and guitar backed by black-bobbed girls in 50s high-skirts.

Thus we get Three Little Maids done in the style of the Andrews Sisters and romantic leads fresh out of Rodgers and Hammerstein.

The ludicrous plot remains – yes, you can behead me in a month so long as I can marry Yum Yum now – as do most of the familiar songs, A Wand’ring Minstrel I, I’ve Got A Little List, Tit-Willow etc. But the teenage cast bring their own personalities to it and contrive a modern feel.

None more so than the romantic leads, Jake Davis and Zoe Rogers, reprising their double act of two years ago in High School Musical. Zoe has an ability to light up a stage with her charm and strong singing voice and Jake, something of a Public Hall veteran by now, brings his infectious personality to any part he plays.

They are given solid support by Faith Rogers and Martha Lawless – the other two parts of the Andrews Sisters and much else besides – as well as Josh Read as Pish-Tush, Ben Hermon (Koko) and Chris Adair (Pooh-Bah).

The Elvis Mikado (a remarkably mature performance by 13-year-old Mark Ellis) could have stolen the show, if it hadn’t already been pinched by Tilda Bourne’s Katisha.

A silky, sultry presence in an alarming hairpiece that even Lady Gaga might have disowned, she struts about the stage like a dominatrix, cackling, conniving and coruscating, before unleashing an amazing dark brown singing voice that owes rather more to Tina Turner than Dame Nellie Melba.

This was Nicola Mundell-Poole’s first stint as WOW director and she will have enjoyed the opportunity of working with some burgeoning talents.