

A More Humane Mikado by The Evanston Savoyaires



(from left) Pitt-Ee Cingue (Katarina Bakas), Cocoa (Henry Michael Odum), The Mikado (Robert Galbreath Jr.), Katty-Schah (Betsy Pennington Taylor), and Poob-Ah (Carl Chadek), Photo:Evanston Photographic Studios Inc.

By Erin Walker

The Evanston Savoyaires present a hilarious and creative retelling and reclothing of Gilbert and Sullivan's most successful work. Director **Kingsley Day's** *Mikado* was unique in so many ways: Rather than use its Japanese setting and costume in what is otherwise a British satire, he used a Western setting and creatively wrote an English version of the operetta's only Japanese song welcoming the Emperor, which made so much more sense. The country of Japan is now "Hay-pan," as well.



(from left) Nan-Keypu (Tejas Gururaja) and Poob-Ah (Carl Chadek), Photo: Evanston Photographic Studios Inc.

The delights of this performance start with the whimsical costuming of **Kate Setzer Kamphausen**, who dressed the chorus in a sea of strange monochromatic prints. The principals wore fanciful stripes and colors that heightened the comedy, notably the Grand Poob-Ah's in a comically short jacket and trousers that puffed out to increase his swagger. The Mikado dressed in a gold suit with five ruby pocket squares, and the three little maids from school had colorful cartoon dresses and wigs that almost looked like drawings from a picture book.



Three Little Maids from School (from left): Pitt-Ee Cingue (Katarina Bakas), lum-lum (Anna Caldwell), and Piep-Beaux (Lauren Sutherland), Photo: Evanston Photographic Studios Inc.

Sonically, the orchestra was large, around thirty musicians in the medium-sized auditorium. The choruses had strong voices that filled Chute Auditorium during the finales and ensemble numbers. The principal leads Nan-Keypu (**Tejas Gurujaja**) and lum-lum (**Anna Caldwell**) harmonized well with beautiful resonant mid tones.



The schoolgirls surrounding (from left) Pitt-Ee Cingue (Katarina Bakas), lum-lum (Anna Caldwell), and Piep-Beaux (Lauren Sutherland), Photo: Evanston Photographic Studios Inc.

The principal delight was the dynamic acting and playfulness. While I have seen and performed in many versions of *The Mikado*, the Sayovaires stood out in their playful approach. Pisch-Tusch (**Jack W. Ellis**) meted out glances stern and absurd, and pranced and moved effortlessly; Pitt-Ee Cingue (**Katrina Bakas**) amplified the comedy with her powerful control of her voice and facial expressions as the conflict heightened in the second act. The Mikado (**Robert Galbreath, Jr.**) played a more subtle and seemingly mild leader which made him a perfect foil for the punch line of the whole affair. Poob-Ah (**Carl Chadek**) sneered, growled, whined, falsetto'd and sang cadenzas more innovative than all the Mikados I've seen. Katty-Schah (**Besty Pennington Taylor**) and Cocoa (**Henry Michael Odum**)'s pantomime as he woos her was so wild and funny, blurting lines, gasping lines, and crying out lines, combining their decades of Gilbert and Sullivan experience.

(from left) Pitt-Ee Cingue (Katarina Bakas), Pisch-Tusch (Jack W. Ellis), lum-lum (Anna Caldwell), Nan-Keypu (Tejas Gururaja), Photo: Evanston Photographic Studios Inc.

Please enjoy *The Mikado* October 4, 7:30 p.m., Sunday, October 5, 3 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, October 10 – 11, 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, October 12, 3 p.m. Chute Auditorium (Chute School), 1400 Oakton Street, Evanston, Illinois [Tickets](#) or call 847-563-0155

(front row from left) Poob-Ah (Carl Chadek), Pisch-Tusch (Jack W. Ellis), Nan-Keypu (Tejas Gururaja), lum-lum (Anna Caldwell), Piep-Beaux (Lauren Sutherland), and Pitt- Ee Cingue (Katarina Bakas), Photo: Evanston Photographic Studios Inc.

The Evanston Savoyaires – Where professionals do community theater

Although the Savoyaires are a community theater group, the company draws its artistic staff and many of its leads from the ranks of Chicago-area theater and music professionals. Recent stage directors have included two-time Jeff Award winner Dominic Missimi, director of three dozen productions at Marriott Theater in Lincolnshire; Amy Uhl, a member of the directing team for the Broadway musical *Amazing Grace*; two-time Jeff winner Terry McCabe, artistic director of City Lit Theater; multiple Jeff nominee Elizabeth Margolius, who has directed for Bailiwick, Chicago Folks Operetta, and Greenhouse Theater; Martha Adrienne, who has directed for City Lit, Bowen Park Playhouse, and Canterbury Summer Theater; and Jeff winner Walter Stearns, executive director of the Mercury Theater.

The nobles defer to Cocoa, the Lord High Executioner (Henry Michael Odum), Photo: Evanston Photographic Studios Inc.

Performers who have played leading roles in recent Savoyaires productions have also been seen on stage at the Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Drury Lane Water Tower Place, Apple Tree Theatre, Theatre at the Center, Light Opera Works, Porchlight Music Theatre, Pegasus Players, Bailiwick Repertory Theatre, City Lit Theater, Noble Fool, Circle Theatre, Bowen Park Theatre, Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, and Drury Lane Evergreen Park. Recent scenic, costume, and lighting designers for the Savoyaires boast professional credits with Victory Gardens Theater, Lifeline Theatre, City Lit Theater, Apple Tree Theatre, National Pastime Theater, Briar Street Theatre, Light Opera Works, and Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire.

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