

# Arts & Entertainment

Still funny after 101 years

## 'The Mikado' passes test of time delightfully

By Chris McCubbin  
Staff Reporter

*Our great Mikado, virtuous man,  
When he to rule the land began,  
Conceived to try a plan whereby  
Young men might best be steadied.  
So he declared with words succinct  
That all who flirted, leered or winked,  
Unless connubially linked,  
Should forthwith be beheaded!*

If this sounds like a completely ridiculous premise for an opera, that's because it is.

**When Gilbert's tales are combined with the infectious melodies and brilliant orchestrations of Arthur S. Sullivan the results are among the most enduring entertainments in the English language.**

William S. Gilbert's main genius was taking ridiculous situations, complicating them to the nth degree, then adding a healthy dose of telling social satire to prevent the story from becoming trivial. When Gilbert's tales are combined with the infectious melodies and brilliant orchestrations of Arthur S. Sullivan the results are among the most enduring entertainments in the English language.

"The Mikado" was first presented 101 years ago, at the midpoint of Gilbert and Sullivan's collaboration. Many people also consider it the highpoint of their work. "The Mikado" is set in a cartoonish vision of feudal Japan, and much of the humor comes from ancient in-jokes, forgotten

fads, and 100-year-old current events. Somehow it is just as funny today as it was a century ago. This is the other, more mysterious facet of Gilbert's genius.

The UNL School of Music Opera Theatre's production of "The Mikado" is requisitely delightful. The opening night audience last Saturday was treated to a nearly flawless performance, and left feeling relaxed and entertained.

The vocal performances were first rate, good enough actually to raise my opinion of the entire School of Music several notches. The accompaniment was simple piano, percussion and a discreetly-used synthesizer. Because of the small size of this ensemble, presumably, no overture was performed. Some people might find this nearly sacreligious, but I have always been bored by overtures, and I found I did not miss it at all.

The set is simple and modular. Most of the time the brightly colored costumes are what attracts the eye. The set seldom intrudes. The accompanists are boldly seated on the stage — a nice touch.

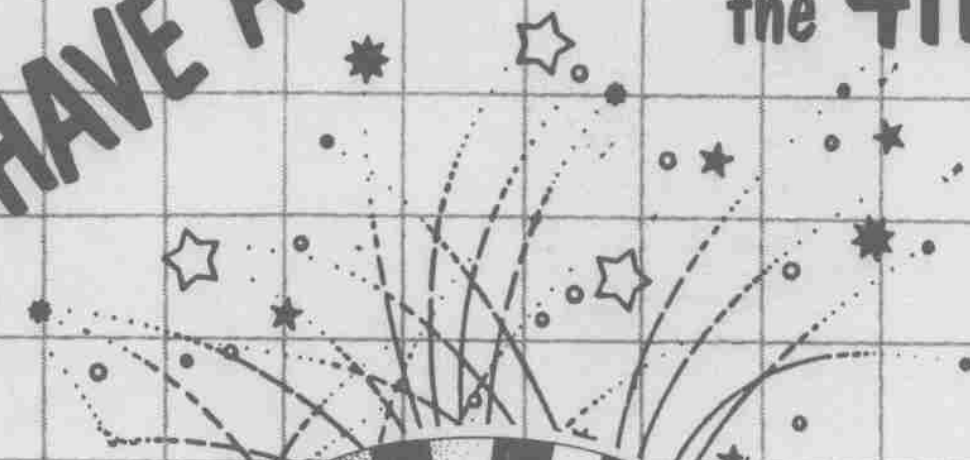
I did have a slight problem with the direction. There was a frenetic, campy quality to the acting which at times came perilously close to reducing Gilbert's well-delineated comic characters into a progression of clowns.

This one weakness I'm sure was not the actors' fault, and it was far from fatal. All of the cast put in fine, vigorous performances. The comic timing was excellent throughout. The cast could usually draw laughs from even the most esoteric in-joke. They also dealt well with the large number of takes and sight-gags that are a Gilbert and Sullivan tradition.

"The Mikado" is playing this Saturday and Sunday at 8 p.m. at Kimball Hall. There is a free "informance" lecture both nights at 7:15 p.m. in room 119 of the Westbrook Music Building. Tickets are \$5 and \$7, \$3 and \$5 for students and senior citizens. Tickets are available from the Kimball box office.



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## Roommate revenge

The toaster in the back of the shower was all the evidence that I needed. I was positive that my roommate was trying to kill me.

It all began, as far as one can tell, after our heated argument concerning my missing can of ravioli.

### Craig Anton

"What is mine is not yours," I tried to explain. But he persisted by pointing the finger at me and bringing up the dreaded beer situation. "Hey look, bud, I brought an entire six of beer in here one weekend and come Sunday all that was left was the cardboard box!" he said accusingly.

"Hey, don't hey me, 'cause I didn't drink it, there were some dudes from the Drumstick over that Saturday night, and they must have drank it, 'sides I hate Schafers."

"Well, it was your responsibility to replenish." "Don't bring up responsibility when I'm the only one that goes out to the dorms and steals toilet paper."

He slammed the door of his room.

"Fine, fine, walk away, ignore the situation, that's a real mature way of dealing with life. I hope your student loan doesn't come in!"

I think that was what finally did it. He avoided the apartment for days and would only come in late at night after I was asleep. Listening to him

at night, I knew he was plotting something.

They, day by day, the mystery began to unravel itself. It began with the ink I found in my answering machine, then the two dead minnows found in my half-gallon of milk. The topper came on Friday after an intense week of heat. Somehow, someone had managed to put a pound of butter on the W, X, and Y sections of my record collection.

Had I driven him off the deep end? Was it his twisted childhood? Was it my twisted childhood? Was it true that our mothers played golf together? Why was he turning my life into a living hell?

Where does one go in situations such as this? Was there such a thing as roommate police? Maybe what he needed was a good exorcism, right in the seat of his pants. The terror subsided for about a week, and then I found a letter which stated: "Gone home for some supplies, should be back sometime within the week."

It was then that paranoia set in. He could easily sneak into the house while I was asleep, chop me up, and then convince everyone that he was back home watching television. So I did the only thing left to do: I bought a gun. I also bought a big dog, an alarm system for my room, and my own TV.

About a week later I noticed that he had been back in the apartment. The next morning, I found the toaster hiding beneath some towels in the shower. He left me no other choice, I would have to kill him before he killed me.

I waited silently in the alley behind his dry-cleaning establishment. He took the trash out every day at exactly 4:30. I would of course make it look like an accident. But some unforeseen force had foiled my master plan. He never showed up. I waited, but only for about an hour. I had to get back in time to watch Double Jeopardy.

When I returned I found him sitting in the living room. "Hey, go grab a beer, how've you been? Man, I've been busy. Hey, sorry about being such a jerk lately. What have you been up to? How 'bout the old toaster in the shower gag? Pretty funny, huh? Grab a beer!"

Half smiling, I wondered if he was being serious. He was engrossed in WKRP.

I grabbed a beer, grabbed a handful of sunflower seeds and said, "Y'know it starts out as a joke, and then somebody always gets hurt."

He looked at me and said, "The new phone bill came today."

