

Oxted Operatic Society

The Mikado ,Tues 21 – Sat 25 April 2009 7.45pm nightly

Having had a brief break for Xmas and New Year, we are now busily preparing for our April production, the G&S favourite *The Mikado*. Rehearsals have already begun under the guidance of Fiona Steel (Director and Choreographer) and Graham Wright (Musical Director). We have our usual strong chorus for this show including some old faces as well as welcoming some new members. The strength of the cast is also reflected in the principal line up; Mikado – Paul Bailey-Smith, KoKo – James Klech, Pooh Bah – Paul Robinson, Pish Tush – Mike Tomlin, Yum Yum – Charlotte Edwards, Pitti-Sing – Cat Longhurst, Peep Bo – Katie Burns, Katisha – Dena Watts.

We still have the role of Nanky Poo to fill, which we have been unable to cast from within the society. We are looking for a tenor with a playing age of around 30. If you know of anyone who may be interested in auditioning for the part, please contact Dena Watts (01883 723084) to arrange an audition on a rehearsal evening.

Other news

We are delighted to announce that we will be performing *The Music Man* in November 09. We welcome back Neil Reynolds as Director and Fran Reynolds as Choreographer. We are waiting to finalise the production team with the Musical Director. Following on from this, our April 2010 show will be *Mack & Mabel* for which we welcome the production team of Peter Reed, Colin Warnock and Sue Mellor.

Having had the luxury of a permanent base for our costume and props store for the last couple of years, we had the unfortunate news in the run up to *Forum* we would no longer be able to continue our tenancy at Barrow Green Court. Despite the inconvenience of clashing with one of our shows, there was a massive effort by a few brave volunteers and the store was once again re-housed.

We are currently residing at Tandridge Farm; although this location is not ideal as a long term prospect due to the increased rent and reduced space we have been accustomed to. We are therefore on the look-out for a more permanent fixture. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please email John Bennett at treasurer@oxtedoperatic.co.uk.

Brand new theatre group 'Zooms' into action at the Barn!

Glow Theatre Group has hit the heights! This brand new children's theatre company is going from strength to strength, and the children had a wonderful time staging their first production at the Barn in December!

'Zoom!' was a huge success from start to finish, and the children produced some wonderful performances throughout this highly entertaining show.

All members of Glow Theatre Group take part in their productions, and excitement is mounting in the group now as they begin preparations for their entry into the *Southern Counties Drama Festival*. Glow will be performing *'The Pirates of Penrith'* as their entry for the Festival, and are working hard at developing their piratical presentation of this swashbuckling adventure. Glow is also preparing a cabaret of drama, comedy, song and dance for their end of term show, *"Stagecraft"*, performed at the Barn Theatre on 22nd March 2009.

For information about Glow, you can visit www.glowtheatregroup.co.uk or call Jackie on 01883 720167 for more information.

Aquarian Opera

GILVERT AND SULLIVAN'S

THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD, 18-21 MARCH 2009

Gilbert described *The Yeomen of the Guard* as 'the best thing we have done'. Sullivan said it was his favourite opera. Theatre critic Edward Seckerton described Yeomen as being 'on an altogether higher plane than anything else in the G and S cannon'. So what makes this operetta special?

The idea for 'Yeomen' first came to Gilbert while he was waiting for a train at Uxbridge Station and spotted a poster for the 'Tower Furnishing Company' which had a picture of the Tower of London with a Yeoman in the foreground. The plot centres around Colonel Fairfax who is imprisoned in the Tower of London awaiting execution on false charges made by his evil cousin who hopes to inherit his fortune. In order to thwart his cousin's plans Fairfax persuades his friend Sir Richard Cholmondley (a Yeomen Warder) to find a woman for him to marry prior to his execution, so that she, not his cousin, will inherit the estate. Elsie, supposedly betrothed to strolling jester Jack Point, agrees to become his wife for an hour before his death for 100 crowns. However, as Fairfax, helped by Sergeant Meryll, then manages to escape, by disguising himself as a Yeoman. This leaves Elsie, who had expected to be instantly widowed, still married to a man she has never set eyes on, having been blindfolded throughout the wedding

ceremony. By the end of the show, Elsie is overjoyed to find that the Yeoman who has been wooing her has in fact been none other than the (now pardoned) Fairfax, the man she married. Others are less fortunate. To cover up their part in Fairfax's escape Sergeant Meryll agrees to marry the formidable housekeeper Dame Carruthers, and his daughter Phoebe must wed the rather gruesome Head Jailer and Assistant Tormentor, Wilfred Shadbolt. Meanwhile, what becomes of the jester Jack Point who has lost his beloved Elsie forever? You will have to wait and see (but bring a hanky, man-size!).

The fact that this opera has both tragic and comic story lines sets it apart from Gilbert and Sullivan's other collaborations. There is a realness and a poignancy about the characters mixed in with the humour, leading Sullivan to write that Yeomen of the Guard was 'very human but funny also'. It is also the only G and S show in which writer Gilbert had some musical input; although Sullivan composed some of his finest tunes for Yeomen he could not find a tune for Jack Point's song, 'I Have a Song to Sing O'. When he mentioned this to Gilbert, the latter promptly hummed the tune of an old sea shanty he had in mind when he was writing the lyrics and this was the tune that Sullivan used, arguably the most memorable tune of the whole show!

Tickets are already on sale, so book early to avoid disappointment. Tickets are available from the ticket secretary on 01959 570868 until 1 March, and from Ibbett Mosely on 01883 712241 thereafter.