

# NLT's 'Mikado' makes to-do list

BY CLARE AUKOFER

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If you're making a little list of things to do this summer, consider jotting down New Lyric Theatre's production of "The Mikado" at Piedmont Virginia Community College's V. Earl Dickinson Building.

Usually, NLT warms our winters with their productions, but this year clearly decided to help fill the gap left by Heritage Repertory Theatre's temporary hiatus.

Cool.

NLT's shows are always fun — not just for the company but for the audience. Since nobody in the company gets paid, this is, in the strictest sense of the word, an amateur production — and in every sense a community show.

But the production is professional quality through and through, from the orchestra to the chorus and beyond, and shows what people who love theater and love their audiences (and are maybe just a little strange) can do.

This is a good way to introduce a newcomer to Gilbert and Sullivan, or to convert the unwilling.

"The Mikado" is arguably the most popular opera ever, possibly because it's not an opera in the way most people think of them. This is downright silly, a sort of Monty Python of the Victorian age, lampooning all accepted conventions. The words come at you at lightning speed, so be prepared to listen fast.

It's the story of a Nanki-Poo, a young prince of Japan, who has left his father the



**Bob Miller (from left), Brian Geiger, Daniel Hager and Charles Lancaster, cast members of New Lyric Theatre's production of "The Mikado," peer around the Downtown Transit Center.**

Courtesy of New Lyric Theatre

Mikado's court for fear of actually having to wed the highly undesirable Katisha. He travels the country disguised as a wandering minstrel (in NLT's production, a wandering second trombonist) looking for his true love, Yum Yum — who, alas, is being forced to wed the tailor-turned-Lord High Executioner, KoKo, whose closest advisor is the nobleman Pooh-Bah, the Lord High Everything Else.

Got that? Never mind; there's a synopsis in the pro-

gram. Besides, the plot doesn't matter all that much.

As always, Greg Harris' musical direction, critical to making any Gilbert and Sullivan show work, is right on, working in tandem with Christopher N. Spangler's stage direction.

Spangler had some really good performers to work with, and with them he has come up with some fun interpretations.

Dan Stern's KoKo is definitely more of the tailor than the executioner, in good hu-

mor and good voice. His and the company's contributions to the "I have a little list" (of people who should be executed) number is quite funny this year — even paying tribute to the person who played that role the last time NLT did this show, in 2001.

Gary White has been working with NLT for a while, and getting better each time, and he does Nanki Poo proud — as does Micah Michelle Griswold as the lovely Yum Yum.

Wendy Novicoff reprises

## DETAILS

### "The Mikado"

New Lyric Theatre

7:30 p.m. Wednesday, 7:30

p.m. Thursday, 7:30 p.m.

Friday and 2 and 7:30 p.m.

Saturday

V. Earl Dickinson Building  
at Piedmont Virginia  
Community College

\$17, \$15 seniors, students  
and children. All tickets for  
Wednesday's show are \$10.

[www.newlyrictheatre.com](http://www.newlyrictheatre.com)

977-7478

her role as Katisha, and is as funny this go-around as she was the last — which is impressive.

Nick Heiderstadt is a master of transformation as Pooh-Bah, and Kenneth H. Waller's bumbling Mikado is a treat.

Set, costumes, lights and sound, by Daniel J. Hager II, Amy Goffman, Tracie Steger Skipper and Doug Campbell, respectively, are proof that the technical side doesn't have to be complicated or outrageously expensive to work well. Take a look high up on the house walls during the "Tit Willow" number in the second act.

The individual performances are good, but what makes this show, and all of NLT's shows so far, work so well is the strength of the ensemble. Everybody works together, everybody works equally hard and the result is a production you'd have to be a seasoned curmudgeon not to enjoy.