

WORDS FROM THE WISE ...



Rebuttal of Mikado Review

To the GAZETTE:

To coin a phrase of GAZETTE drama critic Stephen R. Mills, "un-professional" would be one word, though certainly not the only one, to describe his recent review of Dalhousie University's production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado". Mr. Mills seems to have lent support to the very poignant phrase "a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing." I am not one to argue with Mr. Mills for his panning of the light operetta per se although I myself enjoyed it and thought it on the whole well done. My disapproval with his review instead rests on the following two grounds.

Firstly there are the bases of his actual criticisms in the review. They are almost embarrassing in their exposure of one who has not done his homework on an artform before criticizing it. His reference to a number of amusing songs, in between snatches of savagely satirical dialogue, infers a lack of understanding of one of the most elementary concepts

behind this form of theatre — "light operetta" — which distinguishes it from that of a musical. Those number of amusing songs are in fact an integral functioning part of the overall dialogue sequence of the play. In reality it is their rhythm coupled with words which provide the epoch of satire, not any interlude of sorts. One cannot make an honest appraisal of any Gilbert and Sullivan work unless this is kept in the forefront of the mind at all times.

Unlike conventional drama the audience is supposed to perform an active function throughout the operetta. Every company staging these light operettas, from the official Gilbert and Sullivan company downward gears its productions to encourage laughter and clapping throughout the performances. Arrangements are always made for encores during the actual show, to make the most of the more enthusiastic outbursts. Any criticism of a Gilbert and Sullivan production, especially from the viewpoint of

timing and staging, must realistically consider this.

I could continue at great length in a rebuttal to Mr. Mills' allegations that set construction and costumes were "sloppy". However since I am already in danger of writing a review myself I will make just a few remarks concerning the implications of this operetta being produced in the traditional form. The sets looked awkward because their style of design was a hundred years old, as it should be in a straight traditional production.

I find it hard likewise to fault Dalhousie for costuming. Costumes were ordered from the Malabar company in Montreal. They have a standard set of costuming they provide for all productions of "The Mikado". Theatre groups renting from them, especially smaller ones, have little if any control in determining the quality and specific style of costumes they desire. Any criticism of costumes, to be realistic and valid, can only be made with the above fact as a

starting point. To pursue the matter beyond this can only be done by going to the source of the problem, Malabar theatrical equipment company.

My second major ground of disapproval with Mr. Mills goes beyond the field of literary criticism. It concerns the concept of responsible journalism. The review attempts to completely describe the quality of the performance of the leads in one paragraph with a single word, "mediocre". I personally do not share this opinion. However that is not the important issue here, as like or dislike of characters in any performance is primarily a matter of personal preferences and opinion.

Of paramount importance is the length, or more appropriately the lack of length, to which Mr. Mills went to make his analysis. Its pedantic overtones borders on an insult to the very integrity of the people involved. Many of the leads in the play were of a professional status. Nancy Delong, Scott Savage and

Phillip May are some obvious examples. Without a doubt such a status means they must be willing to bear criticism for their efforts. However in deference to the years of intensive training necessary to reach this status, and the fact that either directly or indirectly such work is their source of livelihood, any such criticism must be of a constructive nature substantiated by intelligent commentary.

The Dalhousie GAZETTE, like all newspapers occupies a position of trust and responsibility in its respective community. Regrettably in this instance, these duties have been blatantly ingored, with regard to the treatment of its own students and faculty in a school endeavor.

Sincerely yours,
John G. Kelly
Law III

Mikado Appraisal Unrepresentative View

To the GAZETTE:

In last week's Gazette was a critique of the Dalhousie Operetta 'Mikado'. Unfortunately your critic's appraisal of the production was unrepresentative of most student opinion. People not seeing the production, but reading Mr. Mills' remarks would think the operetta a complete failure and barely worth the effort again. For that reason I have written this letter to portray a somewhat more

positive critique.

True the production may have been unprofessional. It was performed by students from diverse disciplines other than music and by local people outside the university milieu. It was a collection of people, many of whom had never sung in operetta before. And the result was three nights of a full house with overwhelming enthusiasm for a performance well done. Sure there were technical flaws

and perhaps all the lyrics were not heard, but in spite of this the audience enjoyed it. And whether or not we applauded at the end of the overture or laughed at the humorous antics was not a sign of bad taste but a sign of appreciation to a group who had rehearsed so hard to present the operetta to us.

Does Mr. Mills expect us to sit through a Gilbert and Sullivan comedy and not show some visible signs that we are enjoying it? Such spontaneity on the part of the audience tends to bring out the best in its performers. Actors are motivated to perform to their utmost when they can see and hear that their efforts are not in vain. So let us laugh and enjoy ourselves, for that is the whole purpose of Gilbert and Sullivan and if you wish to sit resolutely back and stolidly grimace every time the audience expresses its approval then that is your prerogative.

The Mikado is just one of several operas that have been

performed by the Dalhousie group. Each time it performs the attendance grows larger than before. The continued support of the Dalhousie company is required and the majority of people do support it and regard it as an asset to the cultural life of the community.

Such productions are a credit not only to those who participate in them but to Dalhousie University as a whole and many of us will continue to look forward to future productions.

Yours truly,
Robert Miller

Gazette wishes
you
Merry Christmas



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Long Hair THE WRONG WAY OF LIFE

Here is what the Personnel Manager
of a large firm wrote to
the Editor of the Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch:

"Does the length of a man's hair affect his personality? Definitely yes. It also affects his entire outlook on life, including politics, morals, marriage and responsibilities.

"While interviewing over 14,000 men for employment during the past seven years, the trend seems to be the longer the hair, the more left-wing oriented the individual is, whereas the shorter the hair, definitely more right-wing.

"The left-wingers reject self-discipline, authority, regulations or even proven logic and reasoning. They are more easily swayed by popular opinions and propaganda, and they tend to accept and do anything if someone simply suggests it's the style. Many employers find they tend to be more dreamers than doers, where the reverse is the trend on men with short hair. Even completely bald-headed men tend to be more right-wing, provided they don't wear long wigs or toupees.

"Now why is this so? Mainly it is due to a self-centered personality. The liberal left-wingers seem to be more selfish and only aspire to goals that will bene-

fit them individually regardless of the cost to others. They actually believe that long hair is beautiful on a man and feel naked without it. They try to make up for lack of ability by attracting attention or becoming a sex symbol. Many women have played this game for centuries, hoping to gain the necessities and luxuries of life.

"The long-haired liberals also reject the basic hunter-warrior responsibilities of man. They seem to think that society should provide for them and that someone else should guarantee protection, or else they don't really believe there are any enemies. In fact, some tend to bow before enemies, hoping to gain friendship. Unfortunately they fail to realize this always results in loss of freedom and finally slavery. In many cases they actually believe their enemies will provide a better life for them. Even in politics the new liberals of the Democratic Party all seem to fit the above and like the rest, they use the long hair as a symbol of recognition of the same. Long hair is not just a hair style; it is a way of life."

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (1 Cor. 11:4)