

## **The Mikado**

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*A Mikado staged as never before – in cricket whites – works well*

In 1885, the librettist WS Gilbert parodied the arcane rules, petty hierarchies and crazily violent authorities of his time by transposing them to an imaginary old Japan. His *Mikado* worked for the Victorians who, for the most part, ignored the parody and enjoyed the japanesery. But for today's manga-mad world, director/adaptor Chris Monks has shifted this tale of love and imminent death-by-execution to the more formal, ritualistic and rule-bound setting of a contemporary cricket club.

Ludicrous? Yes! Just like the original operetta, and as wittily done with as light a touch. References to Japan remain; the audience is simply expected to accept that, on the green grass of an immaculate pitch Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner, in his cricket whites might decapitate Nanki-Poo (the Mikado's son, disguised as a surfer-style Aussie rhythm guitarist) by means of cricket bat, bales and stumps. Bowling a bit of a googly, the "three little maids" are not simpering schoolgirls but hockey stick-wielding hoydens. They, and the whole sparkling cast, not only sing Sullivan's music deliciously but play it, too, under Richard Atkinson's excellent musical direction.