

THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD

The McAdo



*The comic opera you love
as you've never seen it before!*



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

All Aboard

by Diane Radin

Travel with me to the mythical town of Ballydew in the Scottish Highlands.

No airfare, no lines to get through security, no narrow aisles, no delays due to mechanical difficulties or thunderstorms, no holding patterns, no overpriced boxed meals.

All you need to do is to purchase tickets online, drive a short way to the Worley Barton Theater, sit back and let the music of the Scottish **McAdo** take you to another time and another place. The parking is free, and the snacks and drinks are just \$1; the sound is magnificent; the lighting is perfect for your enjoyment; the scenery is evocative; the plaid costumes are colorful; and the supertitles are there to help you catch all the satirical humor of W. S. Gilbert.

This will be a fun-filled vacation from the real world—something we all need these days. Bring your friends. You would be amazed at how many people do not know the works of Gilbert & Sullivan. They are missing so much topsy-turvy joy. You will be doing them a big favor by introducing them to something that will enrich their lives. Gilbert & Sullivan Austin depends on you, our faithful friends, to bring new faces to our shows.

The fun begins on June 10th and continues for nine performances through June 19th. This year we offer four matinees and some very special extras at no extra charge. Selling out quickly is Russell Gregory Day on Sunday, June



12th, at 2pm when we will pay special tribute to one of GSA's best-loved performers. He might even treat us to a song in his inimitable style.

One hour before the final performance on Father's Day, June 19th, is set aside for children's activities and a visit backstage and with the orchestra. Kids love G&S shows, even if they don't get all the satire. The costumes, physical humor, lilting songs, and lively dancing entrance them. This is a great way to introduce young people to live theater. Bring the entire family on this trip.

The opening night performance is followed by a lavish buffet underwritten in large part by our friends at HEB, with Tiff's Treats providing sweets. The cast will join us for this feast, providing an opportunity to tell them in person how much you enjoyed their performance. Two evening shows are preceded by short talks about **The McAdo** and Gilbert & Sullivan.

So, all aboard! Join me on this trip to Scotland. You won't believe your ears and eyes!!

Music Rehearsals for *The McAdo*



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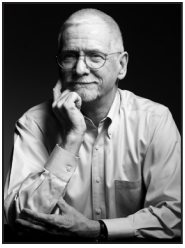
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“Mikado” to “McAdo” – Who Was Moved by the Move?

by Michael Meigs

The Mikado Committee knew we couldn't please everyone with our reworking of the most popular G&S operetta. And sure enough, one of the earliest reactions, back in 2019 when we first mooted the idea of moving to the Highlands, was from a gentleman in San Marcos who inveighed against our “eviscerating” *The Mikado*. I wrote to give him our rationale but got no reply.

On the other hand, leading Austin theatre director Rudy Ramirez told us he was pleased that he would at last be able to enjoy the work without feeling guilty about it.

Judging from Facebook commentary, where you stand on *The McAdo* may depend upon where you reside. Some UK citizens may bristle at a “tartan-face” production; one Facebook commentary from England read, “And I suppose they'll all be wearing red wigs!” The assumption appeared to be that GSA will be poking fun at the Scots (rather than at the English!). C. N., originally from the UK but now resident in Texas, wrote, “I wonder if next we shall have an English version of *The Gondoliers* with rowing boats on the Serpentine.” In contrast, N. V.-C. of the UK commented, “As a ‘person of pallor’ (British with American ancestry), I agree with you that *The Mikado* needs updating, so it appeals to the imagination of ALL audiences.”

Many Facebook comments are just bursts of opinion, but D. G. of Pittsburgh initiated a particularly helpful exchange: “Aren't you just replacing the stereotype of a Scottish person to avoid using a stereotype of a Japanese person? Just curious how you reconcile the two.”

I replied, “We don't view *The Mikado* as being unfair to Japanese, Japanese Americans, Asian Americans, or Asians, but our company and others face the reality that there are people of those ethnicities and others who object strongly to Gilbert's make-believe Japan. And we in the U.S. have a complex, close relationship with our citizens from those areas of the world, not least with the Nisei, who were put in internment camps during World War II. We don't view an adaptation of the work to show a mythical Scotland as unfair to the Scots, either; in fact, given the long, friendly enmity between those parts of the U.K., we suspect that many Scots will be happy to see Gilbert's English gentry mocked in a patently pseudo-Scottish setting. The Scottish producer with whom we discussed the notion in 2019 appeared rather flattered.”

Aletha Read, GSA media coordinator, added, “In the U.S., there are a lot of people of Scottish descent, including cast members. Traditionally, Scots have been in a position of power, including one-third of U.S. presidents. So, this would be considered ‘punching up’—making fun of a person in power. But the show actually makes fun of the British, not the people being portrayed. There won't be wigs, makeup, and bastardization of names to indicate that they are Scottish.”

One of the more acid comments from the other side of the Atlantic raised an issue of spelling. The writer complained at the GSA use of “McAdo” instead of the usual Scottish spelling “McAdoo.” That choice was intentional, of course, but also informed. We knew of the McAdoo clan. And here's a bit of trivia: the 1915 New Braunfels, Texas post office now operates as the restaurant “McAdoo's Seafood Company,” named for U.S. Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo, who commissioned construction of the building!

GSA was pleased to hear this from L. C. of the University of Portland: “As a Brit in America, I think there's a disconnect in understanding where G&S fans and companies in the U.K. are not fully aware of the impossibility of producing *The Mikado* in its original form in the U.S.A. This history of downright racist yellowface performances combined with the historic discrimination faced by the large Japanese community in America have led to perceptions that the opera is in its essence racist against Japanese people.

“Rather than trying to explain to a discriminated group why we think they shouldn't be offended by something (what right do non-Japanese people have to decide what Japanese people should find racist?) the only options faced by G&S companies are to reset and adapt the opera, or to never perform it again.

“I would hate to see the latter come to pass. *The Mikado* is the jewel in the crown of the Savoy Operas and deserves to be presented without the baggage that its original setting has landed it with.

“Therefore, I applaud those companies that are attempting to remove the elements of the opera that cause offence, while retaining as much of the original script and score as possible. These adaptations may not be perfect, but I will take an adaptation over never seeing or performing *The Mikado* again any day.”

We would greatly appreciate comments about *The McAdo*, as we plan to keep the show as part of our rotation of the works of Gilbert & Sullivan. You can send comments to me at michael@gilbertsullivan.org.



Excited about *The McAdo*?

by **Mary Hendren**

You've every reason to be! "It's a complete reimaged take on the show while maintaining all the original beauty of what is Gilbert & Sullivan," says director **Michelle Haché**. GSA's adaptation of *The Mikado* moves the operetta from the town of Titipu to the town of Ballydew. Michelle promises "a signature production that no one else has done before."

In GSA's approach to the operetta, some things are the same and some things are different. The comic hallmarks that characterize Gilbert & Sullivan brilliance are there: ill-fated lovers, pompous pronouncements, absurd encounters, mistaken identities plus delightful music and dancing. In the Austin production, character names, costumes, props, and scenery have changed to reflect 18th century Scotland. Michelle says the setting change has created enthusiasm. "It's been great fun digging into all things Scottish. The cast is learning the dialect, spot on."



Jennifer Rose Davis, who has done graphics work for GSA, serves as costume designer for *The McAdo*. Jennifer promises "kilts galore inspired by films about this period" along with "fun accessories that come with Scottish dress." Her company has created costumes to fit each performer.

Michelle and Jennifer selected four clothing colors—blue, red, green, and brown—to signify relationships in the manner of clan tartans.

Christine Jean-Jacques, who choreographed GSA's *The Gondoliers* in 2016, researched traditional Scottish dances that she has integrated into the choreography. Christie devoted a number of practices to teaching the performers the steps of traditional court dance.



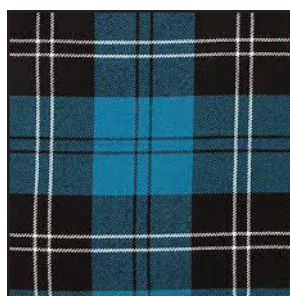
Ron Watson, Executive Artistic Director of the Georgetown Palace Theatre, is serving as the Technical Director for the show. From Michelle's sketches and Justin Dam's technical drawings, Ron is leading the construction of the set for *The McAdo*: a castle that rotates and serves as scenery for both acts. Ron also gathered the props for the show.



Other particulars? There's special lighting to mirror Scottish weather. The three little maids take on stronger personalities and aren't vocally constrained to sound "little." Members of the chorus play individual roles as villagers: the Ballydew thief, the town drunkard, the witch, and others.

Michelle is happy about the opportunity to direct *The McAdo*. "We are good friends getting together having a good time doing it." She adds, "I want to say what I owe to G&S Austin. I am here because the folks believed in me. I'm so honored and owe much to **Libby Weed** and the organization."

The Four Colors of *The McAdo*



blue



red



green



brown

See these swatches in glorious color on our website copy of this newsletter, at www.gilbertsullivan.org/newsletter-archive/

Character Thoughts on *The McAdo*

collected from cast members

by **Aletha Read**

As technology coordinator, I gather spotlights on our performers to share on social media for each show:

Mindy Rast-Keenan



I'm a part of the ensemble, which means I get a lot of liberty as to who she is. And right now my mind is going to a Luisa Madrigal-Scorpio, powerhouse-on-the-outside-girly-mush-on-the-inside type. In plaid.

I've wanted to work with Gilbert & Sullivan for a while now. I don't get to do musicals nearly as much as I'd like to, and the musicality of Gilbert and Sullivan's work is pretty unique, and fun as well. So I'm pretty eager to show off the challenge of it, and how it all fits together.

Reagan Murdock

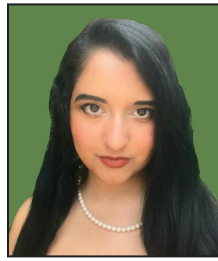


Coco is a man obsessed with comfort. He likes having a job with high honors that he doesn't even have to do, he likes the arts, celebrations, polite conversation, but he can quickly lose patience with anyone who gets in the way of those. He even keeps a list of people he wants dead, and it's all for

the most minor of inconveniences. But most of all, he wants that last piece of the perfect life puzzle: a pretty young wife. He's a clever man, very quick on his feet when he needs to turn an unfavorable situation around, but a lifetime of avoiding hardship hasn't taught him much in the way of bravery. His moment comes when he is given the choice between two very unfortunate outcomes. This time, he has to use his wits to not only get himself into a problem instead of out of it, but show someone that real, devoted, selfless love is truly possible after they had given up on it.

I'm definitely looking forward to the music. This show has some of the most famous timeless songs in the English language, and being able to share them with a modern audience is always a delight. I'm also working as the show's dialect coach, and I could not ask for better, more enthusiastic students to teach a Scottish accent to. They've all done better than I could have hoped with it so far, and I think it's going to be wonderful when performance time comes. But more than anything, I'm looking forward to simply performing with this company. I owe these people a great debt of affection, and waiting through two years of global pandemic and a move to Dallas will be worth it for the chance to have one final bow with these fine folks.

Sydney Pérez



After a two-year wait, I'm looking forward to finally performing this timeless music with such a wonderful cast! I'm lucky to be surrounded by the most talented colleagues who are working day and night to bring our upcoming production of *The McAdo*

Patricia Combs:



to life. As a member of the chorus, I can't wait to heighten the drama, deliver the jokes, and have a front-row seat for the action!

I'm really looking forward to sinking my teeth into the role of Katishagh. She has such a deep well of emotion to dip into. On the surface, she seems like a harridan bent on getting her way. But she is an incredibly lonely woman who craves affection, which comes from an unexpected (if reluctant) direction.

I'm also looking forward to the world that is going to be created by Michelle and Christine (our director and choreographer), the set that's being built, and most especially Jennifer's costume designs.

Julie Allison



I'm very excited to have the opportunity to play Pretty Jean/Pitti-Sing again. I did the role about seven years ago with the Cornell Savoyards in Ithaca, NY. I absolutely love this role and I can't wait to see how Pitti-Sing grows and evolves into Pretty Jean as I have grown and evolved in the last few years.

We've both changed, but there are definitely things that will stay the same. Pretty Jean thinks she's a tough, bad girl ... but she's actually an enormous goof ball with a heart of gold.

Susan Johnston Taylor



I'm excited to sing this glorious music in a production that will be unlike anyone has seen before. I love Scotland, so I can't wait to figuratively return to the highlands!

(continued on next page)

Carlee Abschneider



I am excited to be performing and working with so many talented people and to expose the work to viewers in a new way. Also, I've never performed with bagpipes before so I think that will be really fun!

Sixty-Second Book Reviews, #14

Two Books by Richard Suart
on the ENO *Mikado*

Reviewed by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

As we anticipate GSA's production of *The McAdo*, this is an opportune time to reflect on two recent books concerning the novel production of the opera by English National Opera that opened in 1986. This production predated the current controversy regarding the Gilbert & Sullivan masterpiece by nearly two decades, and in many ways it anticipated the changes in store for *The Mikado*. The director, Dr. Jonathan Miller, well before the words "cultural appropriation" came to be applied to the opera, determined to remove *The Mikado* from Japan, avoiding "wigs with chopsticks in them" and other traditional Japanese elements. He set his production in an English seaside hotel, gave his actors clipped university accents, and drew inspiration from the Marx Brothers' film *Duck Soup* (the stage set is predominately black and white, and Miller wanted Katisha to be based on Groucho's formidable foil in his movies, Margaret Dumont). Miller cast mostly ENO stalwarts, but went well outside the world of opera for his Ko-Ko, engaging Monty Python's Eric Idle.

It was a smash despite the heartburn it likely gave traditionalists with its over-the-top business, dancing chambermaids, and headless bellhops, and it has been revived by the ENO every year (or every two or three years) since. It has been performed by the ENO cast in the United States, released on video, and even broadcast on PBS—as one of the "Great Performances," if memory serves.

Eric Idle left the show after its first season (1986/87) and was ultimately replaced by Richard Suart, the most active "patter-man" in Gilbert & Sullivan productions (and recordings) in the U.K. for the past generation or



two. Mr. Suart's *Mikado Memories* is a lovely picture-book (there are over 200 photographic images of the show, most of them in color) but also a chronicle of the original conception of the show, with memories from designers and other production personnel, as well as interesting memories from the original cast.

In short, for admirers of this production, "Nothing could possibly be more satisfactory."

Unless one adds Mr. Suart's smaller but also beautifully illustrated *They'd None of 'em Be Missed*. This book (compiled with A. S. H. Smyth) reproduces many of Mr. Suart's versions of Ko-Ko's "I've got



a little list," for the custom is, in the ENO production, that the list is "always up-to-date," often changing nightly. By a set of curious chances, this book even contains a photo from my collection (one of Groucho as Ko-Ko for The Bell Telephone Hour). And while contemporary references can sometimes be puzzling, there are lots of laughs for the belly and delights for the eye.

Both of Richard Suart's books, *Mikado Memories* and *They'd None of 'em Be Missed* (London: Pallas Athene Limited, 2019 and 2008) are available from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Note: videos of the *ENO Mikado* may be found on YouTube; for example, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXyYMn7NDwU.

Join Us!

We encourage you to join GSA to help keep the joys of Gilbert & Sullivan alive. We offer many levels of membership, starting with basic member at \$30 per year. To join, renew, or donate, visit www.gilbertsullivan.org/join/.

You can also support GSA effortlessly by joining Amazon Smile. Once you sign up on Amazon.com, Amazon will rebate 0.5% of all eligible purchases to the charity of your choice. We hope you choose GSA! You will find us listed as "Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin Texas Inc."

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late August; the deadline for submissions will be about August 1. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



Coming Events

June 10-19 **The McAdo** summer grand production:

Worley Barton Theater, 11908 North Lamar, Austin

Friday	June 10	7:30	Free Gala Buffet after show
Saturday	June 11	2:00	
Saturday	June 11	7:30	Pre-Show Talk (6:30)
Sunday	June 12	2:00	Russell Gregory Day
Thursday	June 16	7:30	Reduced-Price Thursday
Friday	June 17	7:30	Pre-Show Talk (6:30)
Saturday	June 18	2:00	
Saturday	June 18	7:30	
Sunday	June 19	2:00	Children's Activities (1:00)

For ticket information, please visit our website at

www.gilbertsullivan.org



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