

A Topsy Turvy Mikado – Houston July 2019

Background information for auditionees

Do you want to be involved in the World Premiere of a brand new Gilbert & Sullivan Opera?

Then you need to audition for an exciting new version of The Mikado, to be called “A Topsy Turvy Mikado” with Houston Gilbert & Sullivan Society for the Summer of 2019.

Prompted by Mike Leigh’s highly successful film, Topsy Turvy, which catalogued the artistic trials and tribulations of the relationship between W.S Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan, Alistair Donkin, our long standing Stage Director has created an entirely new version of The Mikado which takes place onstage at London’s Savoy Theatre at the last non dress rehearsal, prior to the arrival of the costumes, some 5 days before the premiere in March 1885.

During the course of this production the successful auditionees will be playing, not the characters from The Mikado – Ko Ko, Pooh Bah, Yum Yum, Katisha etc – but the actors who actually created the roles over 120 years ago – George Grossmith, Rutland Barrington, Durward Lely, Rosina Brandram, Jessie Bond etc. All of the performers will be in Victorian day dress befitting a rehearsal, not Japanese costumes, wigs and makeup.

In addition to the roles of the original actors, there is also a role for W. S Gilbert himself who will be played by an actor sitting in the sound booth at the rear of the auditorium using a ‘God mic’ to give instruction and corrections to the cast onstage.

To be completely authentic we will be using the original libretto from 1885 which has some variations from the libretto used in modern productions. This will show how the production developed in rehearsal but will also have certain of the musical items in their original positions, often in different Acts! There will also be insights into the private lives of some of these original actors – a drug addict, a recovering alcoholic etc.

The only cast members onstage wearing Japanese costume will be members of Houston's Japanese community who, through the good offices of the Japan America Society, have agreed to stage a representation of the Japanese Exhibition in London's Knightsbridge district which gave Gilbert the idea of a setting for *The Mikado* during the Overture to each performance

© **Alistair Donkin 6th December 2018**