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## **A FRACTURED G&S TRILOGY**

### **Northern Light Theatre Company**

Shedley Theatre, Elizabeth

Until July 16

Review by Stephanie Johnson

Add a splash of “Pinafore”, a slash of “Pirates” and a dash of “Mikado” and what do you get? The answer is Northern Light Theatre Company’s crazy, clever, concoction of three much-loved Gilbert and Sullivan light operas.

“HMS Pinafore”, the “Pirates of Penzance” and “The Mikado” originally showcased the genius of William S Gilbert and Arthur S Sullivan. The “Fractured Trilogy” is a conduit for the comic genius of Damon Hill who has somehow intertwined these three tales into one. The result is a suitable silly, convoluted, but a nevertheless clever plot that fills the stage with dozens of chorus members and 18 principles.

Hill’s plot has many twists and turns. Japanese and English characters meld amidst mayhem and mirth – “miles from Titipu and we are still in the stirfry”. Many of the witticisms and story surprises are likely to be understood and appreciated by G&S officiantos. Others, less familiar with the original three stories, may be a little lost during the long night.

All can sit back and enjoy the performance of well-known favourites such as “Three Little Maids”, “I Am The Very Model Of A Modern Major General” and “Behold the Lord High Executioner.” A beautiful rendition of the “Madrigal” from “The Mikado” is a feature of Act Two.

Damon Hill’s artistry with the design of the spectacular and colourful set and Ann Humphries’ job as costume mistress do much to enhance the spectacle of this trilogy.

Director Ceri Hutton-Horner and choreographer Kerreane Sarti have done an admirable job with a huge cast.

All productions are a team effort. Nevertheless this is Hill’s night. Not only has he written the trilogy and designed the sets, but he also shines in his own personal trilogy of three roles – Sir Joseph Porter, Ko-Ko and Major General Stanley. The man has the makings of a comic genius in the ilk of Mel Brookes.

Rodney Hutton also proves a talented comic actor with his ribald and revolting rendition of Dick Deadeye.

Mark Horner leads the pirates with pizzazz as the Pirate King and Steve Rudd entertains with his arrogant, vain Frederic.

Ellyanne Bradford is delightful in her dual roles as Josephine and Yum Yum. Her acting, singing and pitch are all topnotch. Sue Pole is simply “crushing” as Hebe and Michael Williams stepped in admirably at the last-minute to do a dashing Ralph Rackstraw.

This is a firecracker of a night out, but beware it is a little disjointed at times and it is a long night. If you are a Gilbert & Sullivan fan you are likely to overlook the flaws and enjoy this spectacle and the wit that is Damon Hill.