

NODA REVIEW

The Gondoliers

Wolverton Gilbert & Sullivan Society

Venue: Stantonbury Theatre

Director/Conductor: Mike Crofts

Musical Director: Ros Whatmore

Choreography: Chris Bradley and Jo Bigg

Reviewed by Jenny Chandler 21/03/18

Set in the beautiful city of Venice and the mythical land of Baratavia 'The Gondoliers' originally staged in 1889 was the last genuine success in the Gilbert & Sullivan catalogue. Gilbert had used a similar storyline before – babes mixed up at birth one of high birth and the other more lowly with a twist on the tale at the finale.

The melodies and libretto were lively and tuneful and became very popular – 'Dance A Cachucha' 'Take A Pair of Sparkling Eyes' and 'Then One Of Us' are just three of them.

Wolverton's production was played at a good pace. The Society has some well-established members and the principals all gave confident, strong performances as I expected and they had good support from both chorus and orchestra. I thought Alan Bennett's Grand Inquisitor had the right amount gravity with an underlying threat and was rather splendidly costumed. I also enjoyed the performance of Luis Orozco as Luiz – a promising tenor voice.

The show opened brightly, as befits a sun drenched Venice, with the chorus's singing 'List And Learn'. This was followed nicely with a change of mood with the arrival of the Duke of Plaza-Toro and entourage. One of my favourite pieces in any Gilbert & Sullivan show has always been the quartets and I thought 'The One Of Us' and 'In Contemplative Fashion' were particularly well delivered.

The settings, lighting and sound were very good. The two sets were well appointed and added much to the ambience of the show. The costumes were all really colourful although I think could have been improved by the use of more substantial wigs. The whole piece was well supported by an efficient backstage team.

Overall I enjoyed this production very much. It was full of musicality and colour as I feel Gilbert and Sullivan intended. Congratulations on the surprising unveiling of Inez – a great twist in the tail!! Thank you too, to Clarence who made us feel very welcome. Good luck with all your future shows.

Jenny Chandler
N.O.D.A.