



Normanhurst Uniting Church Musical Society  
C/- Kent Blackmore  
8/33-35 Muriel St, Hornsby NSW 2077  
Ph. 9476-5242 (home)

### **AUDITIONS FOR 'THE MIKADO'**

Thank you for your enquiry regarding auditions for our next production, 'THE MIKADO'. Our website ([www.nucms.org](http://www.nucms.org)) will have any news updates. Please take the time to read the enclosed information sheet since it contains important details regarding the Society and your participation.

Auditions will be held on **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April** at Normanhurst Uniting Church. If you have not already booked an audition time, please contact me on 9476 5242. If we would like to offer you a principal role, you will be contacted by phone, otherwise you will be contacted by email.

If you are unable to attend the auditions due to very special circumstances a different audition date may be organised at the discretion of the production team.

Auditions, rehearsals and performances will be at the Uniting Church, 2 Buckingham Avenue Normanhurst. Rehearsals are held **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** at 8 – 10 pm and will commence **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May**. **Performance dates are 7-22 September**.

Membership of NUCMS is \$10 for the production and the show fee is \$60 per cast member.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any more information.

Yours sincerely

Kent Blackmore, NUCMS Secretary

[kblackmore@sydnemagic.net](mailto:kblackmore@sydnemagic.net)



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## **BACKGROUND, SYNOPSIS, CASTING & REHEARSAL INFORMATION**

### ***Background***

Opening in 1885, *The Mikado* is Gilbert and Sullivan's most successful collaboration, running for two years in its initial run, an unheard-of success at the time. Gilbert used a fantasy Japanese setting to disguise his satirical tale of small-town politics.

There have been many different versions of *The Mikado* produced since copyright expired. Some have used new musical arrangements (the ESSGEE version), some new scripts (Hot Mikado, Swing Mikado, Jazz Mikado).

Our production will use the original music but move the action to a contemporary Australian Outback town. There will be some changes to the script and lyrics to accommodate this change, but nothing that (we hope) will affect the enjoyment of the story.

### ***Characters***

Detailed character descriptions are given in the attached sheet.

### ***Auditions***

For the vocal audition, please prepare a two-to-three-minute song from a Gilbert & Sullivan opera, or any other light operetta, **excluding The Mikado**. Please bring printed music, in the correct key and clearly marked where you would like to begin and end.

For the speaking audition, please prepare a short monologue.

### ***Contributing to the Production***

NUCMS expects all members of the cast to contribute to building the scenery and making costumes at Working Bees (usually held on Saturdays).

### ***Attendance***

'THE MIKADO' will require a commitment to attend rehearsals from all of the Company. A detailed schedule will be available when rehearsals start. Please let us know at the auditions if you expect to be unavailable for particular rehearsals as it may be possible to accommodate individual requests for absence. The following dates will require the full cast

### ***Important Dates***

- Sitzprobe – TBC
- Technical Rehearsal & Full Show Run – 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> August (TBC)
- Dress Rehearsals – 4<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> September (TBC)
- Performances (September)
  - Friday 7<sup>th</sup> Eve
  - Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> Mat & Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> Eve
  - Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> Mat & Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> Eve
  - Friday 21<sup>st</sup> Eve
  - Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> Eve



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### **Synopsis**

Our story takes place in the town of Titipu where, having introduced themselves, the residents meet a touring musician named Nanki-Poo. He tells them of his love for Yum-Yum whom he first saw as he was playing in the Titipu town band. Yum-Yum was engaged to Ko-Ko, a cut price tailor, but he has been sentenced to death for flirting, so Nanki-Poo returns to find his beloved Yum-Yum and marry her.

The death sentence for flirting is the idea of the benevolent dictator, the Mikado. The townsfolk of Titipu decide to get around this law by appointing Ko-Ko Lord High Executioner on the grounds that he is unlikely to execute himself, or anyone else, leaving everyone free to carry on with their romantic dalliances. All the senior civil servants resign in protest at these shenanigans only to find that the ambitious Pooh-Bah snaps up all their jobs, salaries and perks to become Lord High Everything Else.

Ko-Ko is set to marry Yum-Yum who arrives with her girl-friends, Pitti Sing and Peep-Bo. When Yum-Yum sees the handsome Nanki-Poo, she is overjoyed since she does not love Ko-Ko, but duty makes her reluctantly realise that her wedding with the recently ennobled cheap tailor must take place.

Then a crisis hits the town. The Mikado is coming to visit Titipu to check that his anti-flirting law has been enacted. Since Nanki-Poo has decided to kill himself because he cannot marry Yum-Yum, Ko-Ko convinces him to become the necessary victim the Mikado wants to have executed. Nanki-Poo agrees on the condition that he weds Yum-Yum and they enjoy a month's married bliss before he gets the chop - after which, Ko-Ko can marry her.

This seems to fit the bill, and everyone rejoices until another crisis descends in the frightening person of Katisha, a lady who was previously engaged to Nanki-Poo. She tries to reveal Nanki-Poo's identity as the son and heir of the Mikado, but the locals refuse to listen to her, and she storms off vowing revenge.

On Yum-Yum's wedding day, Ko-Ko brings news that due to another cruel law, the wife of a beheaded man must be buried alive, a fate Yum-Yum does not relish on account of its stuffiness. Pooh-Bah and Ko-Ko decide that the only solution is to do a snow job on the Mikado. They will let Yum-Yum and Nanki-Poo get married, pack them off abroad on a honeymoon, then draw up false documents and lie to the Mikado about the execution.

Accompanied by Katisha, the Mikado arrives and is informed by Ko-Ko, Pooh-Bah and Pitti-Sing of the alleged execution of Nanki-Poo. The deceit boomerangs however, since yet another crazy law insists that no matter how ignorant of their actions, everyone remotely associated with the death of the heir apparent must be boiled alive. Since the bloodthirsty and husband-hungry Katisha is keen to see the plotters killed, the only solution seems to be for someone to marry Katisha as quickly as possible, then get her to beg the Mikado for mercy. Ko-Ko draws the short straw and marries the dragon lady.

When Nanki-Poo and his wife appear, there is a lot of complicated explaining to be done. Fortunately, by a justification even crazier than the fictitious laws, Ko-Ko manages to placate the Mikado, and with laughing song and merry dance, everyone lives happily ever after.



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## **A Few Notes for Candidates from the Directors**

Normanhurst Musical Society is a friendly and enthusiastic group and you can be assured of a warm welcome at all times. The audition process can sometimes seem like a heartless system that can make you feel exhausted and miserable. However, nobody has devised a better system for letting directors and producers envision each applicant, one by one, in the roles to be filled. The only thing wrong with the system is that it relies on human beings – on actors trying desperately to embody the director's vision of the part (with no way of knowing what that is) and the imagination and patience of the casting committee.

If you don't get the part, don't be hard on yourself. You may be terrific. Trouble is, directors don't just want talent; they want talent in the right package. Most of all, be positive about the experience. Look on the audition as further experience and as beneficial in itself. Remember that the worst that could happen is that you won't get the part you already don't have!

### ***The Song***

- Choose a piece that is appropriate for the type of show and role that you are auditioning for.
  - For example, if you're auditioning for *Rent*, don't choose a song from *Showboat* as your audition piece.
  - If you are auditioning for a real "character" role (for example, "Matron Mama Morton" in *Chicago*), don't use a piece intended for an ingenue character (meaning a sweet romantic lead, like "Marion the Librarian" from *The Music Man*).
- Choose a song from musical theatre repertoire.
  - Pop songs generally do not allow you to present your ability at its best.
- Choose something that you've already practised and have thoroughly prepared.
- Choose a song that is easy for you to perform under stress circumstances.
  - Avoid patter-type songs ("Giants in the Sky", "Seventy Six Trombones"), which are notoriously difficult and require careful coordination between pianist and singer.
  - Avoid songs with difficult pitch intervals or challenging rhythms.
- Choose a song that is easy for the accompanist to play
  - The audition accompanist has a very difficult job. They are presented with a wide range of music and may have little more than a few moments to prepare.
  - Bring sheet music in the correct key and with all cuts or repetitions clearly marked.
  - Place your music in a binder or tape the sheets together accordion style for the benefit of the accompanist.
- Never sing a cappella.
- Avoid songs that are:
  - Associated with a particular person (e.g. *Over The Rainbow*). Comparisons are inevitable.
  - Overly familiar. There is a wealth of material from which to choose without resorting to songs from *Les Miserable*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Cats* etc
  - From the current Broadway smash or revival. These songs are simply performed too often at auditions to work to your advantage.
- Be in good voice. If you haven't sung in a while, you can't expect to go into an audition and perform well.



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- If you're so sick you have a fever, or can hardly sing, don't put yourself (and everyone else!) through an audition.
- If you just have a cold or allergies, you may decide to audition anyway, especially if it's for a show you're dying to be in. Tell the audition panel ONCE that you are sick... but only ONCE! Don't use your sickness as an excuse... it gets old really fast.
- If the audition panel requests a song of a particular length, don't sing anything longer than that.
  - Have the section of song you want to sing picked out in advance.
  - Even if there are no restrictions on length, don't sing a long song.
  - Something 2 to 3 minutes is just fine; any longer, and you may get fidgety directors.
- Sing out. This is no time to be shy.

### ***The Monologue***

- Pick material that reflects your strengths as a performer, suits your age and demonstrates the image you wish to project.
- Differentiate between monologues that have literary value (good pieces of writing) and those that are dramatic (they play well). Opt for the latter.
- Select a piece that allows you to make strong acting choices.
- DO NOT select pieces that attempt to shock with their use of bad language or obscene physical action.
- Don't block the monologue, but don't give a flat reading – somewhere in between is ideal.
- If you don't know your monologue by heart, have the script at hand. Nothing is worse than watching someone struggling to remember words.

### ***Other Guidelines***

- Bring a photo (headshot) that you can leave with the audition panel.
  - This need not be fancy – a simple printed digital photo is all that is required so that the audition panel can put names to faces.
- Before you leave home, make sure that you have everything you will need.
- Be early. Leave yourself enough time to fill in the audition form, have a drink and use the bathroom.
- Enter with confidence.
  - Believe it or not, the way you walk on stage can either make a great impression on the director, or a very bad one.
  - Keep good posture (shoulders back!), your chin at a natural level, don't stare at the floor. Walk with confidence, even when you're terrified.
- Don't apologise. This goes along with having confidence.
- Dress well and comfortably
  - Don't come in costume, but don't miss the chance to "dress the part" a little, either.
  - For example, women auditioning for Oklahoma would do well to wear dresses with fuller skirts, and men auditioning for the role of Professor Higgins in My Fair Lady should wear slacks and a jacket.
- If there's going to be a dance audition, make sure you have appropriate shoes and are wearing something you can move in.


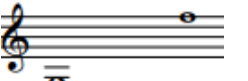


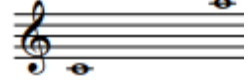

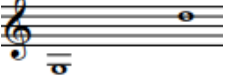
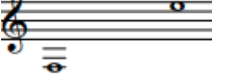
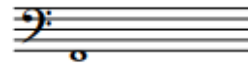


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- Be friendly. You don't want to be overly talkative, but you shouldn't be antisocial, either. Smile and be personable. The production team wants to know that they will be spending the next few months with people that are easy to get along with.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets.
- Turn off your mobile phone.
- Be patient. Auditions are, unfortunately, a long gruelling process for everyone.
- Enjoy yourself.

We will contact all candidates with our casting decision, but we will not enter into any further correspondence. Wishing you every success in your audition experience.

## CHARACTER DETAILS

| CHARACTER  | DESCRIPTION  | VOCAL DESCRIPTION & RANGE |   |
|------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| Yum-Yum    | Yum-Yum, home from college with her friends. All are girls about town, but Yum-Yum is the leader – the others definitely look up to her as “Senior Girl”. She wants to move up the social ladder and is hoping she has read her ill-disguised suitor correctly, and is working (ok, maybe even scheming) toward that goal. | Soprano                   |    |
| Pitti-Sing | Pitti-Sing, is a prankster. If there is trouble of any sort, you can be sure that she is up to her neck in it. Still, you can't help loving her quick wit and boundless energy.  | Alto                      |    |
| Beep-Bo    | Peep-Bo is the bookish, slightly nerdy of the three. She occasionally opens her mouth and puts her foot right in.  | Mezzo                     |    |
| Katisha    | The political assistant to The Mikado. She is, in her own mind at least, if not the leader, then at least Vice-Presidentrix of Ultimate Power. This is a comic role that needs to carry many moments of laughter.  | Alto                      |    |
| Nanki-Poo  | A second-rate singer. He is Mr. Upstanding. Mr. Sincere. Mr. Earnest. He is cleverer than he first appears and is also quick to turn the any situation to his advantage.   | Tenor                     |    |
| Ko-Ko      | A local man turned bureaucrat who defines the “Peter Principle”. He has risen quite far above his level of incompetence. His is a great man - in his own mind.   | Baritone                  |   |
| Pooh-Bah   | Pooh-Bah is a local politician on the make. He is quite happy to accept any honour or position, as long as it improves his lot. Like Sir Humphrey (“Yes Minister”) he manipulates every situation to his own advantage.  | Baritone                  |  |
| Pish-Tush  | Pish-Tush is ever the middle-level bureaucrat (Bernard from “Yes Minister”) with an earnest desire to do the right thing.  | Bass-<br>Baritone         |  |
| The Mikado | The Mikado is the leader of the State, determined to track down his errant son and free himself from Katisha. Like many politicians, he is somewhat disconnected from the people and doesn't seem to care about the effect that his rulings have.  | Bass                      |  |

