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## Ouachita Opera Theatre to present “The Mikado” Nov. 20-23

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NEWS

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**Ouachita Opera Theatre to present “The Mikado” Nov. 20-23**

*By Chelsea Whelpley*

November 7, 2014

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University's Division of Music/Opera Theatre will present Sir Arthur Sullivan's opera *The Mikado* on Nov. 20-22 at 7:30 p.m. as well as a matinee performance on Nov. 23 at 2:30 p.m. in Jones Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$12 each and may be purchased at [www.obu.edu/boxoffice](http://www.obu.edu/boxoffice).

“People will laugh,” said Dr. Glenda Secrest, OBU professor of music, who serves as stage director for the show. “This is a really good opportunity for someone who has never seen an opera to come and experience the genre and realize it can be lots of fun.”

A quirky love story set in the town of Titipu, Japan, *The Mikado* is a two-act opera centered on themes of forbidden love and deception. Nanki-Poo, the Mikado's son, fled from his father's palace to escape an arranged marriage to an elderly lady of the court and has become a wandering musician. Nanki-Poo falls in love with Yum-Yum, but he cannot marry her because Ko-Ko, her guardian, has decided to marry her himself.

“This is one of the most entertaining operas that Ouachita has put on in a while,” said Todd McNeel, who plays the Mikado. “I sit in rehearsal and watch the show when I'm not on stage and I am in constant laughter. We student-performers work really hard to put on a great production for our peers.”

“We're just so proud of the students, their accomplishments and how they bring their vision within our vision,” Secrest said. “You have to make this creation together to make it successful. They've built the kingdom of Titipu in their minds.”

“As a freshman, I never would have even dreamed of having a title role in the opera my senior year,” added McNeel. “The day I signed up to be in the opera chorus my freshman year, my life changed. Now I can't even imagine being anything else other than an opera singer. I've really found my voice and I am happy to have had great professors and a voice teacher to help me develop into the singer I am today.”

“When we look at what opera we will do, we have to consider if it is something that will be appealing to the public and something that our current student population can manage artistically,” said Dr. Jon Secrest, who serves as producer and music director of *The Mikado* and chair of OBU's department of applied music. “One of our primary goals is always going to be to make opera more accessible to the general public so that we can dispel some of the stereotypes and myths that exist with opera and prove to people that they can have fun when they attend – even in a highly evolved artistic form like this.”

The opera will be fully produced with sets, lighting, costumes and orchestral accompaniment.

“It's going to be a visual spectacle,” added Dr. Jon Secrest. “It's absolutely unbelievable what we do now with the visual aspect of the production compared to what we started with.”

This will be the final year that Dr. Jon Secrest and Dr. Glenda Secrest serve as co-directors for the opera. The Secrests will continue to teach voice lessons and in the classroom, but they are handing over

responsibility of the opera production to Ouachita voice instructor David Stanley. In 2000, Stanley had a leading role in Ouachita's original production of *The Mikado* – the first opera performed in Jones Performing Arts Center.

“Here you have a student that came through the program and now he's come back and is teaching for OBU, making a full circle,” said Dr. Glenda Secrest. “We wanted someone who is passionate and capable of taking over the opera program.”

“This year's production is much more elaborate and involved than the original production,” said David Stanley, who serves as the conductor and assistant music director. “The sets will be bigger and better. There will be more performers on stage with more intricate staging and choreography.”

Also involved in the production are Joey Licklider, JPAC manager, who serves as technical director for the show, and Kacy Earnest, a freshman theatre arts major from El Dorado, Ark., who serves as stage manager.

Tickets are \$12 each and may be purchased at the Jones Performing Arts Center Box Office weekdays from 1-5 p.m. Tickets may also be purchased online at [www.obu.edu/boxoffice](http://www.obu.edu/boxoffice). Students with a valid OBU ID may receive one free ticket. For more information, call the box office at (870) 245-5555 during business hours.

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