Patience, King's Head - opera review – The Evening Standard

A traditional take on the Gilbert & Sullivan not-quite-classic

KIERON QUIRKE

Gilbert & Sullivan done well is rare enough. Charles Court Opera’s Patience is a traditional take on the not-quite-classic that is only a little hoary and twee, and grants a lot of entertainment into the bargain.

Patience doesn’t quite have the recognition factor of a Mikado or Pirates these days — probably down to its very specific satire. The story of two poets — one fleshly, one idyllic — who can’t help but have the girls chase them has its modern parallels, they’re just hard to reference while sticking to the original words.

John Savournin’s production doesn’t try. In a pleasant pub setting that captures the provinces very well, David Phipps-Davis’s Bunthorne cavorts around in gothic clothing, while his equally gothic maidens, including Helen Evora, sigh around him. Phipps-Davis is a sound comic presence. Amy J Payne as his slightly past-it suitor Lady Jane gets some of the night’s best laughs with her ode to her own decrepitude.

As the strangely motivated Patience, Joanna Marie Skillett is charming and likeable and sings like a dream. Yes, people end up box-stepping and linking arms and all that, but maybe banishing such amateurish archaisms from G&S is still too much to ask.

Until June 28 (kingsheadtheatre.com)