Theatre review: Patience at the Kings Head Theatre

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Charles Court Opera pulls off yet another triumph of musical theatre – this time very English and from a past century. Gilbert and Sullivan can still hold sway when interpreted by company director John Savournin.

Patience was written in 1881 but is freshened up in Savournin’s production with a pub setting and three melancholy and rapturous maidens sitting at the bar drinking.

Someone remarked that the pub, created by designer Simon Bejer, feels more real than the one we passed through to access the auditorium.

It is totally perfect with optics, shiny mahogany bar and beer pumps with fully operable handles which pour a mean pint.

The melancholy ladies are Andrea Tweedale as Lady Saphir, Helen Evora as Lady Angela and the amazing and amusing contralto Amy J Payne as the Lady Jane. Each drinking their own bottle of spirits, they sing about their love for gothic poet Reginald Bunthorne (David Phipps-Davis).

Sadly, he only has eyes for barmaid Patience (Joanna Marie Skillett), who loves Henry Manning’s Archibald Grosvenor.

This is not surprising as Mr Manning, with his curly blond hair and elegant features, bears close resemblance to a tall elegant Greek god in a frock coat and frilly shirt.

The plot, of course, is idiotic but who cares with that soaring music, the divine singing and sharp wit of Gilbert’s book and lyrics – all handled beautifully by the cast.

The King’s Head is filled with soaring ecstatic sound and there are wonderfully witty rhymes and silly puns: ‘Patience, do you ever yearn?’ ‘I earn my living.’

One of the high points is Lady Jane’s aria about the distressing condition known as ageing and the deterioration of beauty, but there are too many to mention them all.

This is grown-up, witty, divinely frivolous entertainment at its very, very best.

Savournin is the genius behind it and the creatives and talented cast he has gathered are obviously having a ball wallowing in the silliness of this great comedy.

Rating: Five stars

Until June 28