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## The Classics Scorned?

by Eric Shorter

Helen Mirren has gone to Hollywood. The news does not alarm you? It does me. For she hasn't gone to Hollywood just to make a film. That would be forgiveable, banal, not worth mentioning. She has gone there to live. She has sold her London house.

At any rate that is what a recent interview assured us; and I find it very unassuring, since Miss Mirren has been one of those actresses (or must I call her actor?) whose gifts from the start were plain and very promising.

She began in fact with the National Youth Theatre. It was her Cleopatra who clobbered us all. Because of her shape? Well, she had a commendable figure. No doubt of that. But it was I think her dramatic weight which even the most erotically susceptible of critics could not deny.

And it has been the same ever since in whatever role she chose to play especially in her years with the Royal Shakespeare Co; and being a very modern sort of actress she has not acted as often as an earlier generation of actresses acted because except for a few authors like Willy Russell our modern playwrights seldom write for women. Moreover, you can

come forward now in a few well noted plays or films and you are famous. With a handful of such successes, especially in films or television, the marginal rewards accrue, especially in advertising, and then, you can pick and choose your roles with fastidious concern for all your interests — artistic, social, economic and so on.

Not that the revered Miss Mirren has pursued her career with other than overwhelming integrity and awe for the art of the theatre. But the ways of the modern world tend to take actors away from the stage sooner than they did because they get to the top so much more quickly than of yore.

When you reach the top quickly you needn't work as often as you did. Maybe you do not even have to work

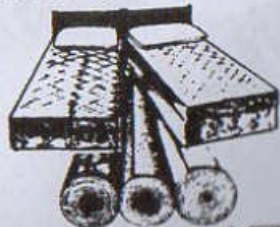
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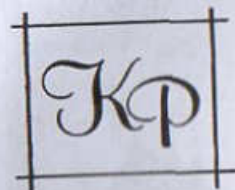
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at all. At any rate you can afford to wait for the perfect role and the perfect fee; which means that your admirers must wait as well.

Thus it is with me and Miss Mirren. Her on whom I pinned such special hopes as a stage player especially when she played the Duchess of Malfi at Manchester, must now be regarded as an exile, rather as Maggie Smith came to be regarded during her era in Canada.

But the thing that gave me even greater qualms than the report that Miss Mirren had moved to the west coast of the United States was her allusion in the report to her theatrical career. She spoke of the great theatrical women's roles as being now dinosaurish — or of its being dinosaurish to think still of them as part of a serious-minded actress's work.

What her dinosaurish simile meant wasn't absolutely obvious but the gist seemed clear. Miss Mirren saw herself an anti-dinosaurish. In other words, all that stuff about theatrical tradition encumbering an accomplished actress with a duty to her public, to go through hoops like Hedda Gabler or Lady Macbeth or Millamant or Bracknell or whatever was out. Is it? Can Miss Mirren dismiss that side of her art so glibly?

It may be the fashion on the west coast to deny the great roles in drama their importance even though it was one of them which brought Miss Mirren's art so potently among us.

But surely we aren't expected to regard Medea and Ranyevskaia, Rebecca West and Volumnia Portia

and Lady Teazle as defunct. Let us trust that Miss Mirren was distorted and that her hinted dismissal of classic stage acting as dinosaurish was only an allusion to some other aspect of the theatre that she considers dated.

For the fact is that whatever her personal opinion about whether a player of her experience and distinction owes anything to the theatre, her talent won't blossom in the cinema or on the telly as it would on the stage in challenging roles. Richard Burton learned that too late.

It isn't just a matter of the fleshpots. It is a proven artistic fact. Actors must act. The better actors must act as often as possible. And the greater the roles they have a chance to enact the greater the chance of their becoming if not great at least good.

One of today's difficulties for a younger, gifted player is what I mentioned at the start — the speed and shock with which fame can turn up. We used to speak of stars being made overnight in the days when a newcomer on the boards made a hit on a first night and the next day's papers, celebrating the achievement, promptly led to more publicity and roles.

They say such instantaneous fame no longer happens. One can see why. There are other sources, chiefly television. There is wider fragmentation today of talents, which is perhaps why they no longer develop as they did. They aren't encouraged to stick at it. Miss Mirren has done the stage some service. One is just sorry to see her (by the sound of it) so willing to go. Maybe like Maggie Smith she will return.

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**Bob Dixon writes**

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Musical Director **MARK NEWPORT**

## CHARACTERS

Mikado  
Nanki Poo  
Ko Ko  
Poo Bah  
Pish Tush  
Yum Yum  
Petti Sing  
Peep Bow  
Katisha

**Howard Wright**  
**Mick Wilson**  
**Geoff Knight**  
**James Inwood**  
**Colin Arrowsmith**  
**Jonquil Willcocks**  
**Greta Jenkins**  
**Caroline Hide**  
**Sarah McLintock**

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Mike Gilbert, Stan Goldie, Colin Heath, Curt Mason, Pedro Wilson.

## Female Chorus

Jaqui Bligh, Kay Clarke, Susan Collings, Rosemary Dimes, Beryl France,  
Katie Golding, Marjorie Hanson, Julia Harris, Elspeth Lindsey,  
Doreen McGee, Diane Padley, Sally Pearson, Janet Sinfield, Jean Streepton.

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Musical Director  
Production Assistant  
Rehearsal Pianist  
Stage Manager  
Lighting  
Set  
  
Costumes  
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Props  
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**Mark Newport**  
**Sally Pascoe**  
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**George Cook, Chelmsford**  
**Katie Golding**  
**Jill Rout**  
**Evelyn Wilkinson**  
**Basil Gathergood**

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

### ACT ONE Courtyard of Ko Ko's official Residence

If you Want to Know Who We Are .....	Men's Chorus
A Wandering Minstrel I .....	Nanki Poo
Our Great Mikado .....	Pish Tush & Chorus
Young Men Despair .....	Poo Bah, Nanki Poo & Pish Tush
Behold The Lord High Executioner .....	Ko Ko & Chorus
As Some Day it May Happen .....	Ko Ko & Men's Chorus
Comes a Train of Little Ladies .....	Ladies Chorus
Three Little Maids From School .....	Yum Yum, Peep Bo & Pitti Sing
So Please You Sir, We Much Regret .....	Quartet
Were You Not To Ko Ko Plighted .....	Yum Yum & Kanki Poo
I Am So Proud .....	Ko Ko, Poo Bah & Pish Tush
Finale .....	Company

### ACT TWO Ko Ko's Garden

Braid The Raven Hair .....	Pitti Sing & Ladie's Chorus
The Sun, Whose Rays .....	Yum Yum
Brightly Dawns Our Wedding Day .....	Yum Yum, Pitti Sing, Nanki Poo & Ko Ko
Entrance of Mikado .....	Company
A More Humane Mikado .....	Mikado
The Criminal Cried As He Dropped Him Down .....	Pitti Sing, Ko Ko, Poo Bah & Chorus
Glee .....	Pitti Sing, Katisha, Ko Ko, Poo Bah & Mikado
The Flowers That Bloom in The Spring .....	Nanki Poo & Ko Ko
Alone and Yet Alive .....	Katisha
On A Tree By A River .....	Ko Ko
There is Beauty in The Bellow of The Blast .....	Katisha & Ko Ko
Finale .....	Company

### Orchestra

*Hugh*

<i>Vilains:</i>	Clare Pitchard, Michael O'Dea
<i>Cello:</i>	Miranda Bingley
<i>Double Bass:</i>	Elizabeth Harré
<i>Flute:</i>	Alison Street
<i>Clarinet:</i>	Ashley Pearce
<i>Horn:</i>	Sally Barker
<i>Piano:</i>	Jane Beament
<i>Director:</i>	Mark Newport

## SYNOPSIS

Nanki-Poo, the son of the Mikado of Japan, has fled his father's court because he has had the misfortune to be loved by the elderly, ugly Katisha and now wanders about the country disguised as a wandering minstrel. A year before he had seen, and loved immediately, Yum-Yum, one of the wards of Ko-Ko, a cheap tailor recently appointed Lord High Executioner, and has now returned to Titipu to search for her. However, Ko-Ko intends to marry Yum-Yum himself and plans his marriage with the aid of Pooh-Bah (the Lord High Everything Else), when a message is received from the Mikado asking why no executions have taken place in Titipu and threatening the demotion of the town to a village. It is decided that Nanki-Poo would be the ideal person to be beheaded within the month stipulated by the Mikado, but he demands Yum-Yum's hand in marriage as payment, to which Ko-Ko reluctantly agrees. Act I ends with the arrival of Katisha in search of Nanki-Poo, and she is naturally furious when she learns of the intended marriage. In Act II Yum-Yum is told, as she prepares for her wedding, that after her husband has been beheaded she is doomed to be buried alive and begins to wonder if it is all worthwhile. At this point the Mikado is announced, having come to see if his orders have been carried out. Pooh-Bah has signed a certificate that Nanki-Poo has been beheaded, and indeed details of the execution have been given to the Mikado by him, Ko-Ko and their fellow conspirator, Pitti-Sing; unfortunately, Katisha sees the name on the certificate and, believing his sone to have been killed, the Mikado arranges for the execution of the three plotters. In desperation Ko-Ko offers to marry Katisha, who is captivated by him on the rebound and pleads with the Mikado for clemency for all three; at this stage Nanki-Poo returns to life with his bride Yum-Yum, who receives the Mikado's blessing, while Katisha, furious that she has been tricked, is to spend the rest of her life with Ko-Ko.

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1955 The Gondoliers	1972 Brigadoon. Gilbert & Sullivan Concert
1956 Iolanthe. Patience	The Boyfriend
1957 The Mikado	1973 Oklahoma. The Mikado
1958 Yeoman of the Guard	1974 The Pyjama Game. Salad Days
1959 Trial by Jury	1975 Fiddler on the Roof
1960 Pirates of Penzance	How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying
1961 The Gondoliers. Gypsy Baron	1976 Music Hall. Iolanthe
1962 Iolanthe	1977 Flappers and Flannels. Maid of the Mountains
1963 HMS Pinafore	1978 Oh! What a Lovely War. Orpheus in the Underworld
1964 Brigadoon	1979 Free as Air. The Arcadians
1965 The Mikado	1980 Music Hall. Cabaret
1966 La Belle Helene. Trial by Jury	1981 Carousel. Call Me Madam
1967 Ruddigore	1982 Sweet Charity. The Card
1968 Lilac Time. Music Hall	1983 Memories. The Gondoliers
1969 Yeoman of the Guard. Music Hall	1984 States Alive. Fiddler on the Roof
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# Another Off-Stage Who Dunit

by *Patrick Ludlow*

Philip Yale Drew, better known as Young Buffalo, had led a see-saw career as a performer when in 1929 he became the leading suspect in the notorious Reading murder case.

Young Buffalo (not so young by '29) had done pictures in Hollywood and toured the sticks of the States with a cowboy act where he'd been seen by our Ellen Terry who suggested that he and his steed should make a bid for London.

This he did, following it with a gallop round the regions. But after a while his gallops became trots and when Tom Mix and his horse started doing that sort of thing better in films, Drew's act was passé. And so was Philip himself for his addiction to alcohol was apparent in cheek and jowl.

Nevertheless he persuaded that excellent actress (and one time neighbour of mine), Olga Lindo, to produce and finance a tour of a piece called 'The Monster'.

Olga's parents, Frank and Marion, were already in management and they ran the show with Drew playing, oddly enough as it transpired, the part of a detective. It was a moderate success — in the No 2's — and when they had done some dozen dates and were at Trent Bridge a real detective called at Drew's digs and asked him to

accompany him to the station. Drew said: 'Sure'. And was interrogated for three hours.

Now the Monster Company had played Reading some four weeks previously and on the evening of the 22nd of June at six o'clock Alfred Oliver was seen alive and well, seated in his tobacconists shop in Cross Street, Reading. Ten minutes later he was found dying, his head battered in bloody profusion.

To my mind it's odd that Drew remembered as much as he did: he was sure he'd never entered Oliver's shop, he'd probably sauntered round the town, but he'd no recollection of Cross Street.

While Drew was being questioned another detective drove a lady from Reading to Trent Bridge who in the evening identified Drew, when he entered the stage door, as the man she'd seen emerging from the tobacconist's wiping blood from his face.

Impressive evidence. But, without corroboration, insufficient for a charge. Imagine a defence counsel cross-examining: 'Would you expect a murderer to walk into the street before removing blood from his face?'

For another month various detectives trailed the Monster Company and harassed Drew; but

elucidating little the investigators passed the buck to the Coroner hoping that from an inquest something would emerge to incriminate their man.

The publicity was fantastic with the gutter press wallowing in the mire and legal scribes criticising the irregularities. There was evidence of trousers — bloody *maybe* — sent to the cleaners; a stick — that Drew had never been seen with — which *might* have been used in the affray; and a number of shoppers testified to Drew being the man they had seen 'acting in a peculiar way' (some said 'staggering') in Cross Street. But the best witness, from the police angle, was the lady who was now positive she had seen Mr Drew coming out of the victim's shop wiping blood from his face.

Belatedly Drew had instructed a solicitor and he was able to rebut some of the allegations. The police maintained that the motive was larceny as ten pounds had been taken from the till; but as Drew was drawing nearly twenty, on a percentage basis, and his expenses in digs were less than a fiver (whisky 60p a bottle) he was hardly likely to commit murder for a tenner.

Again the time factor was on Drew's side. At Reading they must have played twice nightly for the curtain rang up at 6.50. And on that Saturday Drew was said to be in the theatre when the half was called which according to the evidence was 6.20. But by my reckoning 6.15 for 'the half' is called thirty five minutes prior to the opening. So, if the police were to be believed, a few minutes after that foul bloody murder Drew was in his dressing room making up — and soon after that on stage playing his part normally.

What fun an advocate like Marshall

Hall could have had reducing the police to pulp.

However Drew was placed in a poor light when the Lindo's (whose interest was to have their actor cleared) had to admit there'd been a row in the afternoon about his swigging from a bottle of Scotch when he should have been keeping himself in trim for the show. That, of course, tied up with 'the man seen staggering'. Still it was all flimsy and the jury's verdict was: 'Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown.'

For some time there'd been a faction of the public who felt the actor had been badly treated and there was clapping and cheering despite the usher's cries of 'Order'. And, outside, the multitude wishing to congratulate its hero was so great that the police, who for so long had cast him as a villain, were forced to clear his path. All the way back to his hotel it was a royal progress. There, from the balcony, he made a speech — and gave an encore — thanking his fans.

The rejuvenated Buffalo made personal appearances in cinemas and theatres and returned to the Monster Company where, for a while, business soared.

Then something happened — the events are foggy — but the Lindo's disposed of their rights in the piece and left the company; and the newspapers which had previously besmirched him returned to the attack hinting that the Lindo's, while supporting him during the case, had known all along he was guilty and were glad to be rid of him.

The story, along with other exciting tales, is brilliantly researched in Jonathan Goodman's book 'Acts of Murder' (Harrap £9.95).

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2 LINES





**MIDDLE TAR** As defined by H.M. Government  
**DANGER: Government Health WARNING:**  
**CIGARETTES CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH**