

Cricketing *Mikado* re-write puts spin on no-ball scandal

An ingenious version of [The Mikado](#) that swaps Japan for an English cricket club has put a spin on recent headlines thanks to a last minute re-write.

Writer Chris Monks has revised his cricketing version of the Gilbert and Sullivan masterpiece to reflect the recent no-ball 'spot-fixing' scandal. Audiences in Staffordshire will be the first to see the new version of the opera, referencing the controversy.

The incident centres around the recent test series between Pakistan and England where Pakistan bowlers allegedly delivered deliberate no-balls in return for cash. A no-ball occurs when a bowler oversteps the line behind which balls should be delivered.

The re-write follows a host of cricketing scandals that have coincided with Monks' *Mikado* and its staging at the New Vic. Swapping Japan for the idyllic setting of Titipu Cricket Club, Monks' popular version of the classic was a hit when it premiered at the New Vic in 1995, amidst another cricketing scandal involving ball tampering. Says Monks:

"We seem to have uncanny timing with The Mikado. When we first premiered it at the New Vic, I included references to then England Cricket Captain, Mike Atherton, who had been charged with ball-tampering. Then when we revived the production in 2000, South African cricket captain Hansie Cronje was accused of fixing matches for financial favours, so that made the cut. So this time it seemed appropriate to include no-balling bowlers!"

"I like to keep it topical and I always try to re-write things at the last possible minute. When we did the production in Scarborough earlier this year, it had some references to Capello and the England team's poor display. Of course I've had to take those out now that they're actually winning games! But like clockwork, another New Vic visit brings another cricketing scandal. It's perfect timing really."

The Mikado was the first in a series of witty and exhilarating interpretations of classic opera that have taken audiences and national critics by storm.

Since then, Monks has gone on to win five-star reviews and national plaudits for his adaptations at the New Vic, including a Clinton/Lewinsky-inspired version of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, a magical take on *Don Giovanni* and a love affair played out against the backdrop of Kwik Save for Bizet's *Carmen*.

Chris Monks is artistic director at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, following Alan Ayckbourn's retirement last year.

The Mikado runs at the New Vic Theatre until Saturday 18 September. Tickets, which cost £8.50 – £17.50 (with concessions available), can be booked by calling the New Vic's Box Office on 01782 717962, or book online at www.newvictheatre.org.uk.

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