

## **Topsy Turvy**

In this relatively fallow period for decent movies (February), I wanted to signal to readers a movie that, while released two weeks ago here, is well worth a visit: *Topsy Turvy*, the new film from England's Mike Leigh about Gilbert and Sullivan's creation of "The Mikado," one of their greatest collaborations.

While the film has already received extremely good press, it struck me that many filmgoers might hesitate seeing a film which could seem, on its face, rather elite, narrowly targeted, and only for special tastes. I'm here to say that, yes, *Topsy Turvy* does carry an extra richness if you already know and admire Gilbert and Sullivan's special oeuvre, but you needn't be a die-hard fan to enjoy this full-hearted romp. For, beyond its being about the creators themselves (superbly portrayed by Jim Broadbent and Alan Corduner), it is equally as much about the creative process and the marvels of stagecraft.

The film's first 40 minutes are slow getting going, but once Gilbert discovers a new operetta subject by visiting a landmark Japanese exhibit in London, the film spins out scenes of production details, costuming, the rehearsal process, etc. that are wonderfully winning. Leigh (heretofore known for his caustic contemporary settings) handles the period material expertly, making the era come alive, and he cleverly balances the production sequences with finished numbers from "The Mikado" itself, thus showing how the preparation anticipates the finished work.

It is as good a show about show business as there has been in many years and worth seeing for that. How could not like a show with a sweet character named "Yum-Yum"?

*("Topsy Turvy" is a period piece which contains nothing objectionable)*

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