

2021 SYD
FEST



H.M.S. PINAFORE

SIREN THEATRE CO



Photo: Harvey House Productions

Photo: Clare Hawley

H.M.S. PINAFORE

SIREN THEATRE CO

RIVERSIDE THEATRES

13–23 JANUARY

100 MINS

Producer and Director Kate Gaul

Music Director Antonio Fernandez

Choreographer Ash Bee

Lighting Designer Becky Russell

Sound Designer Nate Edmondson

Production Designer Melanie Liertz

Production Manager Felix Kulakowski

Stage Manager Kirsty Walker

Assistant Stage Manager Meaghan Fitzpatrick

Rehearsal Observer Natalie Low

Production Management Secondment Fiona Lloyd

Original Music Director Zara Stanton

CAST

Josef Ber

Thomas Campbell

Tobias Cole

Hanna Greenshields

Sean Hall

Bobbie-Jean Henning

Elora Ledger

Dominic Lui

Billie Palin

Zachary Selmes

Daniel Vershuer

ABOUT THE SHOW

One of Gilbert and Sullivan's best-loved operettas is given a hilarious, sexy and sequin-spangled spin.

Mistaken identity, star-crossed lovers, sisters, sailors and the trickiest of tongue twisters abound in this nautical caper.

Aboard the good ship H.M.S. Pinafore, the captain's daughter, Josephine has fallen in love with a lowly sailor, Ralph Rackstraw, despite her father's plan to marry her to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Joseph Porter. As the lovers lament their predicament and plan their escape, a surprise disclosure from an unlikely quarter shows that not all is as it seems.

Featuring the classic songs 'I am the Monarch of the Sea', 'I'm Called Little Buttercup' and 'He is an Englishman', *H.M.S. Pinafore* is a sharp satire of the English social hierarchical system of the Victorian Age.

Directed by Kate Gaul and premiered at the Hayes Theatre in 2019 to rave reviews, this dazzling production "reinvigorates the comic operetta for an audience today, giving it a fabulous, fresh spin" (Limelight).



Photo: Clare Hawley



CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABOUT SIREN THEATRE CO

Siren Theatre Co inspires artists and audiences with bold imaginative experiences.

Siren Theatre Co is an independent professional theatre company based in Sydney. Since 1997 the company has commissioned and produced new Australian plays, classics, made plays for young people and families, partnered with producing and presenting organisations.

Siren is always evolving but these things hold true: the work would look ridiculous in other mediums; always tell a good story; keep the actor at the centre of the work; don't add to the crap in the world; the work will be beautiful, rigorous, imaginative and timely.

DIRECTORS NOTE

What a pleasure to bringing *H.M.S. Pinafore* back to Sydney in 2021 after starting life at Hayes Theatre before a NSW tour at the beginning of 2020 (which we completed just before the first COVID lockdown!).

I'm originally from Tasmania and beautiful Theatre Royal in Hobart looms large in my imagination. It is a Georgian theatre with walls carved by convicts and built notably, shipmen who were used to working with the materials of the theatre in another context – at sea. The ropes, pulleys canvas and timber on a boat became the stuff of magic in the theatre. A working theatre (of yesteryear) – with all of its low-tech brilliance becomes the world on deck H.M.S Pinafore. Like a message in a bottle, the production unfolds, transforms, and delivers a dispatch of love – and that love is love no matter who you are.

By reducing the cast, gender swapping some roles and re-thinking how the music is delivered opened many creative doors to explore the collision of the 21st Century and the 19th Century in which the piece originated. I am also interested in theatre of the past and how it intersects with our feminism and gender politics. Its themes of social divide, obsession with social status, party politics and patriotism feel fresh today. Gilbert and Sullivan managed to put all sorts of messages thinly disguised behind light-heartedness. In the context of the changes to the Marriage Equality Act in Australia the production has a deeper resonance around the notion of love is love. The production reinforces that no struggle is ever entirely over. I like to think that the production sends a message to all those lost at sea.

Kate Gaul, January 2021