

## HMS PINAFORE – Sydney Season 2019

“Under Kate Gaul’s direction ... the show is made new again, by her resolute queering of how the story is told.... Genderfucking is the order of the day in this interpretation of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. A doggedly heterosexual world is radically transformed into something much less binary, where we no longer have to care what’s between the legs, as long as we understand that the heart wants, what the heart wants. With extravagant makeup ... uniformly applied on all members of cast, everyone becomes sexually ambiguous. We are born naked and the rest is drag, as the saying goes, and the production is all the better for it. A modern sensibility permeates all of the show ... turned refreshing and quite entrancing. Its humour is rejuvenated, featuring a roster of performers that are all very keen, very able and impressively comical in their embrace of a newly mandated approach of subversiveness.

For centuries, we have thought of romantic love as splendid and almighty, yet societies everywhere have kept it a privilege only for those who fit the straight and narrow. What were once despicable perverts now take centre stage, as we learn to broaden every definition of who we are.” **Suzy Wrong**, [Suzygosee](#)

“It’s always fun to see an actor steal a production, as Thomas Campbell does in the opening scene a giddy and hilarious new production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*.... it’s a great moment when an audience collectively thinks, You know, I didn’t know until right now that what I’ve always needed to see is *I’m Called Little Buttercup* sung by a hefty bald guy.

That might make it seem like this is a joke musical. It’s not. This production—a killer vision from director Kate Gaul—is an exuberantly gender-bending, stripped-down but highly musical reimagining of this classic tale. (Seafarers, lovers from different classes, family secrets, etc. etc.) The accompaniment is provided by two creative multi-instrumentalists, with incidental touches (acoustic guitar, harmonica) supplied by various members of the well-voiced cast.

And as for the staging—well, it’s at once traditional but insane; fetching sailor outfits a lot of the time, but there is plenty of room in Gaul’s imaginings for much of the second act to be staged as a drag floor show. Well, you’re going to have to go see for yourself...” **Bill Wyman**, [City Hub Sydney](#)

“Kate Gaul’s vivacious, witty and saucy production of *HMS Pinafore* is the perfect antidote to the daily news... If this *Pinafore* was available on Medicare we would all be a lot better off...In assembling her super-talented crew of singer-actors, director Kate Gaul proves herself to be an alchemist, fashioning an effervescent entertainment for audiences young and old from a creaky old warhorse. Recommended without reservation. ’ **Diana Simmonds**, [Stagenoise](#)

“Turning the topsy-turvy of W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan’s 1878 operetta inside out, this saucy staging of *H.M.S. Pinafore* is a delight from bowsprit to sternpost” **Jason Blake**, [Audrey Journal](#)

“Sticking faithfully to what G & S wrote (with the occasional trim, and witty lyric change), director Kate Gaul reinvigorates the comic operetta for an audience today, giving it a fabulous, fresh spin with her gloriously camp, glittery, cross-gender production.... The show ends with the cast signing a message with semaphore flags. Alas the semaphore that I once knew as a Girl Guide has long since deserted me and I don’t know what it said, but I suspect it relates to the glittery rainbow flag that descends at the back of the stage at the same time, and is a paean to love and be loved whatever your sexual persuasion.

Conservative, traditional G & S fans may find the production a tad too subversive to be their cup of tea. But most will be delighted by Gaul’s irreverent, camp approach that underlines the themes in the show, and gives the piece a contemporary, vibrant, deliciously saucy vibe. ’ **Jo Litson**, [Limelight Magazine](#)

‘...—the gentle boundary-pushing of the original text, our local tradition of sending up the classics, and the meta-textual, pop-culture referential riffing of *The Simpsons*. And (Kate Gaul) does it all through a confident, unapologetically queer lens.

We're talking queerness that's conceptually and systematically embedded in the work, too – Gaul hasn't just cast across traditional binary gender lines and called it a day. Camp is embedded in everything from Porter's glittery nipples and the sailors' droll semaphore choreography (by Ash Bee); Thomas Campbell's Little Buttercup is a rich study in queer performance art; and Palin and Allen are, now, the butch/femme lesbian power couple of light opera that we've all been waiting for. Everyone has a certain self-possessed swagger; every element is a little more playful than you would expect, even though there's great fondness behind the tongues in cheeks and twinkles in eyes

There's a sense of celebration here, of revelling in old comedy told through a knowing 2019 lens. And Gaul isn't afraid to take her time, building to a joke, letting a moment hang in the air. She keeps us connected to the story, and that means the comedy is even more effective.

Why stage *HMS Pinafore* at the end of 2019? Because it can be a celebration of living outside your expected social role. It can be a queer party. It can be funny and sweet, and clever. " **Cassie Tongue**, [Timeout](#)

"Director extraordinaire, Kate Gaul is at the helm of this stellar production. The binary is binned, spoiled rags are traded up for stunning drag and the typical turns atypical in this superbly flamboyant show that spectacularly fuses the original libretto and score with relatable elements of 21st century life. Winks to the audience are abundant as are nods to the volatility of the current political climate which collides remarkably with the one being ridiculed over a century ago...

For centuries we have lived and breathed in a world where convention- particularly social convention - has dictated our behavior, our actions, our choices and even the freedom of our heart. Through the dynamic shift in societal opinion and acceptance, most notably in the last decade, those who would have been deemed the most heinous breakers of convention are the characters now being glorified in this particular production. The theme of acceptance runs deep throughout as each element attempts (and succeeds beautifully) to subvert every aspect of perceived normalcy so we recognize that we need to open our minds and our hearts in order to embrace our truest selves and find a harmonious state in which every one of us deserves to live. " **Jessie Tromp**, [A Millennial with an Opinion](#)

" Kate Gaul's direction lends itself to a glitzy comedy so masterful, you long for an extended show. Instead, the classic feels swift, this sweet spot thanks to masterful set changes and exuberant visuals everywhere. If you blink, you'll miss it - *H.M.S. Pinafore* is easily a production that can be watched twice with more optical details gleaned the second time round.

Gaul's *H.M.S. Pinafore* is dazzling and oozing with personality, a smaller cast allowing for a delicious assortment of captivating talents. Cast and music director Zara Stanton alike picking up different instruments throughout the wonderfully unsupplemented soundscape of the show. It truly feels like a party, with so much attention to detail. Ash Bee's choreography within the small space of the Hayes is precise, whilst charismatic, adding to the visual feast on board this nautical extravaganza. Melanie Liertz' set sees flags (rainbow and otherwise), pink shimmery curtains, beach balls galore, string lights, and more, adorn the ship. Nate Edmondson's sound and Fausto Brusamolino's lighting add to the unapologetically camp production, tight and bright." **Flick Flick City**, [Twenty Odd Reviewer](#)

"Oh give three cheers and one cheer more for the cast and crew of this *HMS Pinafore*. This wonderful, exuberant gender-bending production, directed by Kate Gaul, is not a 'traditional' version of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operetta but joyously updated with a twist. Things are seldom what they seem." **Lynn Lancaster**, [Arts Hub](#)

"Director Kate Gaul, brings this Victorian work onto its 2019 stage with an hilarious cultural wink of high flown 'campy' that has a decidedly contemporary heritage intravenously channelled from the Ru Paul phenomenon, (and from other Sydney icons such as, perhaps, Betty Blokk Buster ...Fun. Cute. Cheeky. Camp. Nostalgic. Worth a visit." **Kevin Jackson**, [KJTheatredairy](#)

Director Kate Gaul presents a delightfully camp queer interpretation of the classic comic opera *H.M.S. PINAFORE*. Drawing on old theatrical traditions of cross gender casting, lines are blurred as this amusing and absurd tale of challenging class boundaries is presented with a liberal dose of glitter eyeshadow and sequins. **Jade Kops**, [Broadway World](#)

## **HMS PINAFORE – on Tour 2020**

“Under director Kate Gaul’s command, this Gilbert and Sullivan classic finds new vigour as genderfuck carnival.

If the class plot is unrelatable, the norm-busting use of gender scrapes off the Pinafore’s barnacles. The actors channel this energy into Sullivan’s blissful music and Gilbert’s manic eloquence.

With wit, style and thrill, the production is relentlessly entertaining. “Love can level ranks” - and this revel ranks high.” **John Lombard**, [Rock City Jester](#)

“Kate Gaul’s imaginative concept respects the original, but embraces contemporary sensibilities regarding gender and inclusiveness in a riotously refreshing production, stylishly performed by the multi-talented ensemble cast of twelve engaging performers.” **Bill Stephens**, [City News](#)

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