

Theatre review – Miss Saigon, Festival Theatre ****

☒ In these post-modern troubled times of Trump, Weinstein #MeToo and Brexit political turmoil tonight's escapist delight with Miss Saigon might well have been compromised by the Morality Police handing out foyer fliers denouncing the show as a politically incorrect anachronistic orgy of sanitised Imperialist ethno-denial/sexual hegemony where Madam Butterfly meets Apocalypse Now.

Fortunately not – (spoiler alert ahead) though the show does has controversial previous with both issues of authentic racial casting, and the misogynist moral ambivalence of Fate conveniently providing protagonist, Chris a 'get-out-of-guilt card' with the desolate 'victim' trope of Kim's suicide.

The thought hangs in the air like the iconic images of desperate stragglers clinging to the very last overladen US Army helicopter evacuating the Saigon embassy roof. Not that any of this agenda would be wise to bring up at the interval with an audience intimately familiar with the plot and lyrics. They have a smile of certainty on their faces like the one hidden behind the pictogram helicopter on the ubiquitous Miss Saigon setting sun poster.

But let not contemporary themes of American conciliation, resolution and homecoming plurality get in the way too early of thoroughly relishing the ultra-venal, olegeneous wide boy pimp, The Engineer, played with delicious conviction by Bond villain waiting in the wings, Red Conception. What a disgusting Fagin meets Joel Grey the MCee in *Cabaret* you would ever fear to meet. He is perfectly vile. A product of the slimes.

Technical production is breathlessly overwhelming with

spectacular theatric set pieces including the fearsomely facist Ho Chi Minh parade and a climatic helicopter rescue. Take dollops of ersatz Meatloaf/Jim Steinway operatic bombast meets cliché with a conscience in a sleaze club neon nightmare. Add the kitsch knight in amour coming to the rescue and a well meaning but questionably valid war orphan video clip, this revamped Vietnamese piggy wearing lipstick still knows how to run to the market selling a tear jerk certainty to the punters with unabashed panache.

Unmissable, as was Hanoi from a B Fifty Two bomber in 1972.