

## **The Mandarin's Dilemma - Synopsis**

Subtitled 'Made Knaves by Duty', in a nod to Gilbert and Sullivan, this musical black comedy in two acts is Joe St.Johanser's sixth full length stage work. The plot and witty dialogue, which is best summarised as 'Dr.Strangelove meets Yes Minister', is decorated by 30 intriguing but accessible musical and dance numbers, like plums in a pudding. Joe has a way with melody and, be sure, some of the tunes will stay with you (in a good way!).

The story is set in the United Kingdom of the near future. Senior civil servants (the 'mandarins' of the title) and the top army brass are wrestling with a peculiarly tricky military crisis. Their attempts to handle it with time honoured diplomatic subtleties ('a place at Benenden for the daughter of the Great Leader's third and youngest wife') are frustrated by a messianic Prime Minister who refuses to kowtow to the wily foreign dictator, and wishes to make use of Britains' nuclear capability ('merely a demonstration off the coast - poof to a few sardines').

The heroine of the story is an attractive and ambitious Under-Secretary. Together with her nerdy boyfriend and the rabidly ambitious vamp who is big in the opposition party, she manages to resolve the crisis - but her career, her relationships and the House of Commons are much affected.

The music is arranged for a nine piece chamber orchestra. No microphones or loudspeakers will be used for the performances as the intimate Nomads Theatre is an ideal setting for beautiful voices and instrumental sounds.