

Volume XXXVI No.1 Issue 229 Summer 2005

Gasbag



Gilbert And Sullivan Boys And Girls

it's a
Savoyard



Summer

UMGASS presents "The Sorcerer", Decmber 8-11, 2005
at the Lydia Mendelssohn Thetere

Published by FUMGASS

Friends of the University of Michigan Gilbert And Sullivan Society

FUMGASS

**Friends of the
University of Michigan
Gilbert and Sullivan Society**

We are the supporters, friends and admirers of the University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

Our functions includes providing financial support for UMGASS, providing scholarships to deserving student members of the productions, hosting an afterglow party for our members, cast and crew one evening during each production, maintaining the Cozy Corner at which we provide information and memorabilia for sale, and publishing the GASBAG.

Benefits of membership, in addition to the personal satisfaction of encouraging the performing arts and congregating occasionally with one another, include high priority in ticket selection (second only to members of the cast) and a subscription to the GASBAG.

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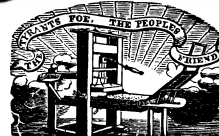
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Photo Credits for this issue:

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Gasbag



GASBAG is published four to six times a year. It is mailed to about 900 members of FUMGASS and other G&S societies who exchange newsletters with us. Copies are also distributed to UMGASS members and are available to interested attendees at UMGASS performances. Most copies are distributed in the U.S. Some are distributed to other countries: currently UK (22), Canada (12), and one each to Australia, Italy, and Japan.

GASBAG has four objectives:

1. Act as an official record of UMGASS activities.
2. Entertain Savoyards.
3. Publish scholarly articles on G&S..
4. Provide general information on G&S societies elsewhere.

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Deadline for Fall issue is October 10, 2005

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News & Notes

We Need Your Help!

The GASBAG is your journal, and I depend on your contributions to make up the bulk of the reading material you encounter in each issue. When I have to search out bits and pieces and write articles, re-run old GASBAG material, and write filler articles, it is because no one has submitted anything for publication, and that means that you could get thinner and fewer issue. Please, most of you are very talented and could contribute something to one issue a year, and we would still have plenty of surplus! So, here are some areas you could write about: reveiws of local shows, memoirs, is Gilbert better, is Sullivan better, the Gilbert without Sullivan shows, the Sullivan without Gilbert shows, Famous D'Oyly Carte singers, Video reviews, How G&S changed my life, Photos, producing G&S for kids, getting kids involved in G&S, interviews with directors of inovative production, and so forth! All very good topics, and all interesting to our whirled wide Audience. I look forward to being inundated by you fine contributions.

The Editor

Sorcerer 2005 Production Staff

Director	Jason Bitman
Musical Director	Clinton Smith
Set Designer	Laura Strowe
Graphic Designer	David Zinn
Technical Director	Jeff Spindler
Costume Designer	Marilyn Gouin
Seamstress	Tam Prentice
Makeup Designer	Daniel Florip
Videographer	Karl Zinn
Lighting Designer	Jeff Dine

The Mass Meeting for our Fall show, *The Sorcerer*, will be held on September 11 at 7:30 PM in the Michigan League.

The Sorcerer will be performed December 8-11 at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre



Magazine of interest to G&S folk

We have received an email from Roderick Murry, Publisher of the Gaiety magazine and Editor of the journal of British Musical Theatre of the Victorian and Edwardian Eras. The Gaiety also publishes a number of G&S related magazines and monographs, and he was wondering if I might pass along this information and how to get a hold of said materials.

So...

Full details on all publications are available on the Gaiety website, which can be accessed at www.geocities.com/the_gaiety

Mr Murry is also the publisher of the new autobiography of Muriel Dickson (edited by long time GASBAG contributor Michael Walters), of which a review can be found in this issue, contributed by Marc Shepherd.

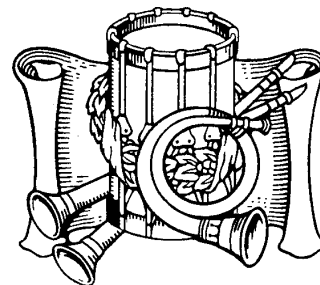
Errata...

People always keep an eye out for errors in publications, and always anxious to please our audience, you will always find a few sprinkled through-out issues of GASBAG. Please feel free to let us know of any that you may find, and yer 'umble Editor will pass them on. In the meanwhile, here are some favorites from issue #228:

- Page 4, column 1: should be February 10
- Page 16, coulmn 1: *Curfew* should be *Curlew*, haerens should be heavens, through should be throat.
- column 2: careflss should be careless, and it is Mrs. Billington.

Keep up the sharp eyes!

M.G.



ARTICLE

The Acting Requirments of the Operas

By D, Graham Davis

Editor of "The Gilbert and Sullivna Journal"

(From "Theatre And Stage" published by New Era)

Despite the greatly increased number of works available to amateur operatic societies, the Gilbert and Sullivan series still maintains a strong hold on the affections of the players and their audiences. The reason for this popularity may, on the face of it, appear to be obvious; the operas were written solely to charm and amuse — they contain no hidden "message." They came into being at a time when the jaded palate of the public had grown tired of the lighter musical works of the day, which, with jingling tunes and miserable books, relied for their attractiveness principally upon smart lines (not always in the best of taste), cleverly manipulated puns and plays upon words, and a galaxy of girls of more or less unnatural pulchritude.

On hearing and seeing such works played today, one is often amazed at the all-too-apparent futility of the lyrics, however tuneful the music may be. The Gilbert and Sullivan operas come to us always fresh and charming, though admittedly the librettos (as distinct from the lyrics) may be wearing a trifle thin in places. It is largely their freshness, melody, and wit—both in airs and lyrics—that have made them live, and he would be a rash man who would venture to prophesy the time when they will fail to maintain their hold on popular esteem. But, one might say, there have been other works possessing all these attributes that have passed into the limbo of forgot-



MR. D. GRAHAM DAVIS

ten things. Surely, then, there must be something else to account for the wonderful popularity the Gilbert and Sullivan operas continue to enjoy—more than fifty years after the first was written. We shall come to that directly.

It is frequently urged, in support of these works as productions for amateur societies, that the Savoy operas are easy to present. They require, it is claimed, little in the way of elaborate settings, properties, or stage effects. Nor is superlatively good singing or acting required. The production is stereotyped, and woe betide the producer who strays but a hair's breadth from the traditional usage.

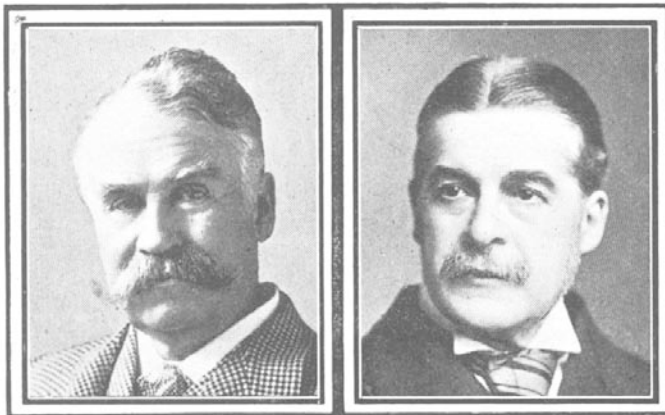
Like most half-truths, such reasoning is dangerous. And that brings us to this mysterious "something" to which reference has just been made. What it is that has helped to maintain the popularity of the operas, undimmed by time, is the necessary—and it cannot be too strongly stressed how necessary— atmosphere. Gilbert and Sullivan together make a perfect weld; to make so excellent a weld some other element is required beyond the metal. And this element, this flux as it were, is supplied in Gilbert and Sullivan opera by the traditional atmosphere that has become associated with the works.

Even to the most easily satisfied member of the audience, amateur performances of the operas frequently fall flat just because this all-important attribute is missing. The vitality and team work, born of perfect understanding of what is needed, and which together make the professional rendering so sparkling, are missing. Thus, however excellent the amateur company may be, the result is good neither for the complete enjoyment of the audience nor for the reputation of the society concerned.

The Savoy operas demand a style of singing, acting, and presentation that is in a distinct class of its own; a unique art that is not to be found in any other type of musical stage work. It can never be too strongly emphasized that nothing is further from the requirements of "G. & S." than the style of the musical comedy stage. Particularly is this true of the comedy characters (which are not "funny men") and

of the younger female characters. These soprano leads and soubrettes all belong to a past period; they have nothing in common, mentally and physically, with the heroines of the good old days of Daly's and the Gaiety. Their innate milk-and-watery niceness, and everything else about them, are poles asunder from the Edwardian and modern outlook.

Vocally, the mincing and "refined" accents of musical comedy are completely out of place in any character. Any affectedness of speech (except where the part demands) is far worse than any native accent or brogue. While the ideal to be attained is that elusive "Standard English," one has heard naturally Cockney Nanki-Poos and Strephons redolent of the Yorkshire moors who have been far less offensive, and far more in keeping with Gilbert's intentions, than many a Josephine, who has imag-



SIR W. S. GILBERT

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN

ined that an Evelyn Laye voice and style (than which nothing can be more attractive in the proper place) would be an asset to the part.

An honest attempt is to be made here to help members of amateur societies—principals, choristers, and producers alike—to reach a better understanding of the vocal, acting, and staging requirements of the operas. Detailed directions of the "how" of the production are not furnished; marked scores and librettos, for what they are worth, are available to those who need them. Rather is the purpose to deal with the "why" of the collective and individual interpretations. A full appreciation of

what is required from actor and producer goes a long way towards making a good performance take on just that little extra intelligence that will lift it from being one in a hundred of good renderings into something fully worthy of standing comparison with the professional prototype.

Purposely is this treatment addressed to all who may be concerned with the production of these operas, for each one must equally exert himself for the good of the presentation. The root of the operas' success can be traced to two things, and the first of these is team work, based on loyalty to, and delight in, the works. The other is the fact that Gilbert chose, in the first place, what was practically a raw material that he could mould as he desired. The star system has been notably absent from the Savoy tradition. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company has, it is true, included (and still includes) many a famous name; but it must be remembered that these have achieved their stardom through their work in the operas. Attempts to import stellar attractions from other firmaments have proved disappointing and even displeasing. So, you successful Lurcher, about to attempt Sir Joseph Porter, and you, fair Bessie Throckmorton, now to make your Gilbert and Sullivan debut as Patience, please do not consider that your experience in these by no means easy, non-G. & S. parts exempts you from reading the advice tendered. You must come to your new parts as beginners. Believe me, a fascinating study lies before you.

And to all I would address three sentences, which should be constantly borne in mind while a Gilbert and Sullivan production is in contemplation, preparation, or being. Amateur societies have a great privilege, denied to all but one professional organization, in being allowed to perform these works. A trust is imposed on them by the terms of the acting rights—that nothing shall be altered or added, and that the model of the professional performances shall be followed. It behoves amateur societies, great or small, zealously to maintain this trust, and to present these immortal works in the manner and spirit that their creators saw to be the right ones.

ARTICLE

Gilbert and Sullivan's style in the evolution of the Musical Comedy

By Mitchell Gillett

In any overview of the development of the modern musical comedy, the works of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan must be considered to be foundation stones. Without the advent of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, it is very likely that such diverse shows as *Oklahoma!* or *The Producers* might not have come about. The lion's share of that influence belongs to Gilbert. As the librettist, and a seasoned dramatist, he shaped the Savoy Operas into such a workable and entertaining form that they were copied and parodied well through the first half of the Twentieth century.

While Arthur Sullivan set new standards in music quality, orchestration, and humor, it was Gilbert's touch that proved to be the longest lasting. At the time of their collaboration, most European operetta was written in one or three acts. Up to this time, it was only fully composed comic operas such as Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, or Donizetti's *Elixir of Love* or *The Daughter of the Regiment* that were in only two acts. This would change with the Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas. As noted by Stephen Citron in *The Musical: From The Inside Out*, "The most obvious difference in the realm of the contemporary lyric stage is that the musical is divided into two acts", and save for 2 of their 14 collaborations, Gilbert and Sullivan would pioneer the use of the 2 act operetta. Gilbert appears to have been the one who established the two-act structure as the norm, which has essentially been handed down to us today as the regulation Broadway musical. Stephen Citron, in discussing the characteristics of this form says: "The first act curtain.... ought to leave the plot partially resolved but with its final outcome still in doubt. This is the equivalent to the former third act curtain in a classic [five-act] play or the second act curtain in a contemporary three acter"

Andrew Crowther, in *Contradiction Contradicted*, finds that "Gilbert did not precisely conform to this structure: in his librettos the balance between the two acts is much more equal. Act 1 tends to consist of exposition, the first great push in the plot occurring about two thirds of the

way through it, leading to a crisis at the end of the first act finale; act 2 contains the bulk of the plot developments and a very brief resolution in the last few minutes". One of the best examples of this arrangement is *The Mikado*, first produced in 1888. This binary structure best allowed Gilbert to show up the contrasts and reversal of the show's plots and characters, to the point where the second act is an intended contrast to the first act. A good example is the second act taking place at night, as a deliberate contrast to the daylight world of the first act, a situation exploited to full effect in several of the G & S operettas, and even comes down to us in more recent shows, such as *The Fantasticks*.

Why did Gilbert, at the peak of his creative powers as a playwright, hitch his wagon to the star of operetta/musical comedy? Well, of course, he was working with England's most acclaimed composer, and wrote for what was virtually his own hand picked company of performers, but much of that happened latter on. But of the two, it is undoubted that Gilbert was in the driver's seat. To quote Alan Jay Lerner (*My Fair Lady, Camelot...*): "there is no doubt that Gilbert was the driving force. It was he and he alone that took operetta by the neck and raised lyric writing from a serviceable craft to a legitimate, popular art form. Andrew Crowther has developed a theory that accounts for his shift away from the straight "stage play" and toward the libretto form. He notes that Arthur Laurents, author of the books for *West Side Story* and *Gypsy*, strongly feels that the musical form requires total economy of dialogue: "Every line must make its point, or you don't have it. A musical calls for the most economical writing there is in the theater". This is considered a general principle in the world of twentieth century musicals. Crowther, after examining writing trends in the progression of Gilbert's works, noted that at the beginning of his collaboration with Sullivan, Gilbert's own style was tending towards exactly this same economy. This logically drove home the idea that the libretto was his most natural form of expression.

With Gilbert and Sullivan setting the bar for entertainments, they were bound to spawn imitators, ones who would re-mold, but not obliterate the Gilbertian structure of the libretto. While in England, operetta and musical comedies (*A Gaiety Girl, The Quaker Maid*) would spar on and off till the late 1920's, when revues and musical comedies won out, America would take the operetta and musical comedies and adapt them to their own uses. The three chief names that, through G & S, lead to the modern musical, are Reginald DeKoven, John Philip Sousa, and Victor Herbert.

American born, Oxford trained DeKoven and Harry B. Smith (Broadway's most prolific librettist) teamed to produce an unashamedly Gilbert and Sullivan style show, *The Begum* in 1887. In two acts, exotic locale (India), and humorous wordplay that was light and smiling, it was a *Mikado* in the British Raj. *The Begum*, while a modest success, led to their most successful production, *Robin Hood*, a step away from G & S and toward the less comic world of romantic operetta. While Smith's book stayed close to the economy of the Gilbertian style, it was in three acts, his patter lyrics were eliminated, paradoxical humor gave way to earthy comedy, and the music eschewed the previous flights of comic fancy. This shift of DeKoven's toward a more natural "romantic style" left the field open to the next team of G & S's American heirs.

John Philip Sousa, Washington D.C. born, U. S. Marine trained, found himself quickly rise through several orchestras to lead first violin in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Orchestra. It was here that he was introduced to Jacques Offenbach, and his music.

The theater called, and among his first jobs was to orchestrate and conduct the runaway English hit, *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Discovering Sullivan's orchestrations on his tour of the United States with the new *Pirates of Penzance*, he recognized their superiority and placed him with Offenbach in his private pantheon. They would provide his melodic and orchestral model when he embarked on his period of operetta composition. Of the handful of operettas that Sousa wrote and had performed, it was *El Capitan*, written in collaboration with Charles Klein, that achieved lasting success. That success was again, in part, due to a strong reliance on a portion of the structure laid down by Gilbert. Though in three acts, the show almost has a feel that it could be done in two. Klein, while not Gilbert's equal, still was able to write a sturdy, yet unexceptional book and lyrics. Klein devised a genuinely funny story with enough comic mix-ups to make up for the absence of any penetrating wit in its dialogue. Sousa also introduces a number of dance-based songs, a fine double chorus in the Sullivan style, and his exceptional martial music. The show included many of the traits, as shown, of the best of the Gilbert and Sullivan series, yet, it did not have as long a run as a Gilbert piece would. Part of this is because Klein was no Gilbert, but part of it is also due to Sousa's theatrical writing. Sousa could, like Sullivan, write with theatricality and dramatic tension, but often, with his disinterest in the human voice, this required tension often gave way to a problematic

tightness. This tightness was a formality that was achieved at the expense of melodic freedom. It is also interesting to note that all his operettas were written entirely before 1899, with nothing further during his lifetime.

Irish born Victor Herbert, with his more than 18 operettas to his name, can be considered the king of twentieth century operetta. While hampered by mostly mediocre books, it was his music that made his operettas and musical comedies work, rather than the inherent two act format. One of the finest composers of the period, he was to be the exception for many years. In this period, musical comedies were beginning to be written by "songwriters" of less formal musical training, what critics branded "one-fingered composers, adequate melodists who often could not write a simple piano part, let alone orchestrate a work".

This led to a musical comedy that had dialogue there only to get you to the next song, which could be interchanged with another because they were not plot specific. (This is still a popular thing to do to early Gershwin shows, that is, mix and match his most popular songs into an existing show.) Herbert maintained the high quality of melody and orchestration set down by Sullivan, and thought he lacked his sense of humor, he could produce a fine comic song and develop comic situations musically. It was this quality that was passed on to his musical heirs: Kern, Rodgers, and Loewe.

Lost between the two great icons of the "book" musical, *Showboat* (a non-operetta musical on a serious subject) and *Oklahoma!*, Gershwin's trio of "political operettas", *Strike Up The Band*, *Of Thee I Sing*, and *Let Em Eat Cake*, were once again an unashamed borrowing of the total structure of Gilbert and Sullivan's identity, unashamed and with a loving pride. Unlike the "songwriter" musicals that had become prevalent, the song is not the important unit now, but the entire scene. Steve Schwartz notes about *Of Thee I Sing*: "Music moves the drama along, much as the Act I finales to Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* and *Iolanthe* do, both of which introduce important plot points". Also like G & S, the act one finale introduces the major complication (President Wintergreen's marriage), and the Act II finale resolves it. In their homage to G & S, Kaufman, Ryskind, and Ira Gershwin retained the recitatives and extended ensembles that so characterize Gilbert's best work, and allowed them to produce pointed political satire. This satire is on a skewed par with Gilbert's best, with intro-

ductory songs for the Supreme court (who decide that corn muffins are more important than Justice), and the spurned winner of a beauty contest for First Lady (who is “the illegitimate daughter of the illegitimate son, of an illegitimate nephew of Napoleon!”). All in all, a satire on politics without substance and by slogan. It is because of the quality of this Pulitzer Prize winning “Book” musical, that fine writers and playwrights came back to the musical fold.

Oscar Hammerstein’s influence in keeping literate and well-written librettos on the stage, from his work with Romberg in the 20’s through the 60’s with Rodgers, influenced others to delve into the art form. The last, self-proclaimed “operetta”, is Bernstein’s *Candide*, with a book by playwright Lillian Hellman, and a wealth of witty lyrics by John Latouche, Richard Wilbur, and the scintillating Dorothy Parker. It was Gilbertian in structure, with conflict ending the Act I, a thoughtful tying up of threads before the large Act II chorus, political and social satire, comedy and comic situation. Bernstein, like Sullivan before him, was a top flite composer, and introduced mazurkas, a schottische, and gavotte along with a waltz and tango to fill the dance requirements. Like Sullivan, Sousa, and Herbert before him, he orchestrated the score brilliantly, giving us an overture that is part of the standard orchestral repertoire. With all its advantages, it did have its faults, and has gone through 8 revisions since its premiere in the mid 50’s, yet, it has retained a place in the hearts of “die hard” musical fans.

From the 60’s on, the musical has gone through a period of flux, with influences ranging from jazz, rock, and opera, yet all along, little nods to G & S pop up in various shows. One of the most obvious is in Stephen Sondheim’s *Pacific Overtures*. Here, in a number called “Please, Hello”, several foreign Admirals are introduced, including a British one. His solo owes a great deal to the patter songs in general, and Sir Joseph’s in *H.M.S. Pinafore* in particular. While in interviews Sondheim has denied that he modeled it on G & S, and states that he dislikes the shows. Yet when heard, the family resemblance has been noticed by most fans.

We have just left the era of the “Mega Musical”, that is, productions like *Les Misérables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Miss Saigon*, that depend more on special effects than on content and owe more to the world of opera and romantic operetta than to *Oklahoma!*.

Still, we have the interchangeable showtune musicals, orchestrations done by people other than the composer,

and the advent of the corporate musical (i.e., Disney’s *fill in the blank*).

With the most recent musicals, *Titanic* (1997), *Urinetown* (2001), *The Producers* (2001), and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrals* (2005), we can still find the remnants of Gilbert’s contribution and sometimes Sullivan’s too. These shows are still are in the requisite two acts, most with overtures. The dialogue is economical as are the lyrics, and in the main, the songs or ensembles are not interchangeable. Most characters have a humorous moment or at least have the set up to a joke (unlike the romantic musicals/oprettas of the 20’s and 30’s, with the comic couple and the serious couple). Even with an older show, like *Sunday In The Park With George*, we find the use of major contrasts between Act I and II, in fact, almost 80 years pass in the case of this show. Quite a bit of contrast! At the same time, in shows like *Urinetown*, the author has the characters reference the audience, skewer the conventions of the musical, and generally break the fourth wall. While Gilbert was a keen satirist, and radical in his way, his librettos never step beyond the proscenium, at least those of his mature Savoy style. Still, modern musicals tend to concentrate more on dance and choreography than on classically trained voice. Good lyrics will still help sell a show, but today, it will be the big dance number that can make it a blockbuster. We are lucky that there are a select number of orchestrators working on Broadway today that uphold the fine work of Sullivan and Herbert. Many shows have a range of classic or progressive scores, but the sound is not thin, saccharine, or tending toward Muzak. Some even add to the existing humor that the book implies. All together, W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan could still recognize today’s Broadway musical as descendents of their offspring.

To put Gilbert in perspective with modern musical writers, I’ll let Andrew Crowther have the last word: “An interesting light can be shed on him (Gilbert) by comparing him with his successors in that most twentieth-century of genres, the musical. He was considered “the Adam of modern lyric writing. P.G. Wodehouse, Lorenz Hart, Cole Porter, Ira Gershwin, Oscar Hammerstein and their contemporaries and descendants all owe their lineal, genetic beginnings to W. S. Gilbert”. (Alan Jay Lerner).” This influence on the development of the musical comedy and the musical is still felt today.

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NOTE

Gilbert & Sullivan in the World of Bridge

by Paul McShane (adapted from the introduction)

“Sing Hearts and Diamonds, Spades and Clubs!” - *The Grand Duke*

In the cut and thrust world of tournament Contract Bridge, many bidding situations call for considerable thought, analysis and sometimes guesswork before the best bid can be determined. In fact, the “best bid” is never guaranteed to be the most successful - it is just the one with the most probability of success. The uncertainty of these bidding situations help to make Bridge the great game that it is.

Many national bridge magazines exploit the difficulties of finding the best bid by reserving space in their publications for a regular “Bidding Forum”, in which the reader is shown a set of bridge hands and the associated bidding to date, then asked to consider the best bids. Typically, in the following issue of the magazine, the previous issue’s bidding problems are discussed by a panel of eminent bridge experts, and a consensus reached (not necessarily without heated argument!) regarding the best bid.

A good friend of mine, who was a regular panellist in “Australian Bridge” for many years, introduced a trademark of accompanying his comments on each bidding problem with an literary quotation appropriate to the

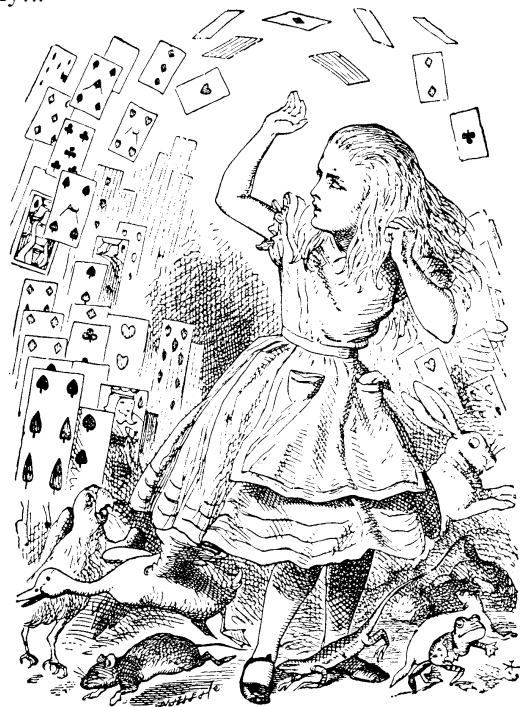
occasion, and this gimmick became very popular. This led me to consider the possibility of using the G&S libretti as a source of quotations that could be applied to bridge bidding situations.

A search of the G&S operas resulted in a compilation of no less than 216 different Gilbertian quotes, each of which could be applied to one or more scenarios confronting the bridge bidder.

Iolanthe proved to be the most bridge-friendly opera, generating no less than 32 different quotes. Then follow *The Mikado* (22), *Patience* (20), *HMS Pinafore* and *Utopia Limited* (18 each), *The Sorcerer* (17), *The Gondoliers* (14), *The Pirates of Penzance* (13), *Thespis* and *Princess Ida* (12 each), *Ruddigore* (11), *Trial by Jury* (10) and *The Yeomen of the Guard* (9). *The Grand Duke*, despite its theme about a pack of cards, yielded only 8 quotations.

It is not claimed that this listing is completely exhaustive, but it will serve to show the diversity of application of Gilbert’s words. As an example of how unexpectedly appropriate the words from a G&S opera can be, just suppose your partner has made an “asking bid” primarily intending to find out if you have the ace of hearts - you don’t have the ace, but have been dealt the king, queen and jack. What better to illustrate the situation than Sir Despard’s line from *Ruddigore*:

“I have not a heart of that description, but I have a Picture Gallery?..”



REVIEWS

Ian Bradley's "Oh Joy! Oh Rapture!"

Reviewed by Marc Shepherd

Oh Joy! Oh Rapture!

The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan

By Ian Bradley

New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

xii + 220 pages

The English branch of Oxford University Press may have abandoned its critical edition of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas, but OUP New York continues its commitment to the subject with Ian Bradley's latest book. As Bradley explains:

This is not yet another book about Gilbert and Sullivan, their stormy collaboration, the genesis of the Savoy operas, and their early performance history. Rather it is about their continuing appeal today and the extraordinary enduring phenomenon that they have become.

It's likely that a 220-page book on the appeal of G&S will be read mainly by those who are already convinced, but Bradley isn't afraid to take a stand. He doesn't turn a blind eye to signs that the G&S operas aren't as popular as they once were (e.g., the decline of G&S in schools, the graying audience, the collapse of D'Oyly Carte (twice), and the ossifying branches of the London Gilbert & Sullivan Society).

Nevertheless, Bradley is an optimist, and he foretells a vibrant future for the G&S canon. He produces strong statistical evidence that amateur G&S performances are as plentiful as they always were, that a wide and impressive variety of professional productions has filled the void that D'Oyly Carte left behind, and that "[T]he last forty years have seen an explosion of serious and scholarly interest in the Savoy operas."

Along the way, Bradley fills us in on the pervasive references to G&S in popular culture, the amateur and professional performing scenes, G&S in schools and universities, G&S in academia and on the Internet, and the world of G&S spin-offs and parodies. The period of

his analysis is primarily 1961 to the present, dating from the expiry of the Gilbert copyrights. He gets two rather depressing chapters on the demise of both D'Oyly Carte companies out of the way early.

Bradley is ardently pro-Buxton (a view I share with him), and he believes it will be the G&S Mecca for many years to come. He suggests that the town would be the perfect place for a G&S museum: "Several significant collectors of G&S memorabilia who are now in their late middle age are beginning to wonder what to do with their collections and are looking for a permanent home to which they could bequeath them."

In his enthusiasm for the Festival, Bradley may have been a bit swayed by Ian and Neil Smith's marketing machine: "Each weekday evening there is a competitive adjudicated performance. . . . Societies from both sides of the Atlantic send in videos of past productions in the audition process for the coveted honour of appearing in the festival competition." He goes on to refer to the societies "who are lucky enough to be selected." I wonder just how "coveted" that honor is, given that there has never yet been a Festival without at least a night or two that was quite obviously "filler."

Bradley's demographic evidence is well-supported, and it may surprise some people. While performing societies have an easier time attracting women than men, he finds that the world of non-performing G&S appreciation is disproportionately male, middle-aged, and Methodist. A clergyman himself, Bradley meticulously traces the G&S-church connection. In Britain, G&S appeals across all social strata, while in America it is an educated taste. In America, one is far more likely to find G&S fans who are mathematicians, scientists, and engineers (a group that includes the present writer).

On the scholarly front, there is likewise a difference between the two countries. In Britain, Sullivan's music has made long strides on the road to rehabilitation, led by the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society, but Gilbert's reputation has suffered. With the exception of Andrew Crowther's *Contradiction Contradicted*, most of the recent scholarship taking Gilbert seriously has come from the U.S. Tellingly, an Englishman wrote the most recent Sullivan biography (Arthur Jacobs), but an American tackled Gilbert (Jane Stedman). Bradley finds that the attacks on Gilbert from David Eden, whether one agrees with them or not, typify (if in an exaggerated form) the British scholarly community's attitude towards the librettist.

As Bradley observes, “It is noticeable that most of the academic work on G&S has been done in the United States rather than in Britain.... Indeed, it is really interest in Gilbert rather than in Gilbert and Sullivan which accounts for most of the G&S-related academic literature in the United States. I have met several North American professors of English and theatre studies who rate him as second only to Shakespeare in the pantheon of English dramatists.... I have never encountered a British academic with anything approaching this level of admiration for Gilbert. Sullivan, however, has had a clutch of scholarly devotees in Britain, notably Arthur Jacobs, Nigel Burton, and David Russell Hulme.”

The book is told in the first-person, and much of the material comes from personal interviews (hundreds of them, I would guess). Some errors are to be expected, but there are a few too many of them. My own name is misspelled in the Acknowledgments section; later on, I am described as editor of *The Palace Peeper* (journal of the G&S Society of New York), a position I haven’t held since the early 1990s. The surname of David Lyle, who conducted the “Prince Consort” recordings of Sullivan’s 1890s operas, is given as “Lyll.”

Bradley says that Kenneth Sandford gave John Reed some back-stage help with one of the encores to “Never mind the why and wherefore.” I don’t know whether the memory lapse is Bradley’s or Reed’s, but this cannot be, as Kenneth Sandford never appeared in *Pinafore* during his D’Oyly Carte tenure.

Bradley covers the American G&S scene extensively, but as he doesn’t have the benefit of a lifetime of personal observation, he is dependent on the biases of those whom he happened to interview. A glaring example comes on p. 74, when he says, “The most significant event in terms of professional performance of G&S in the 1970s occurred in the United States. This was the foundation in 1974 by Albert Bergeret of the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players (NYGASP).” One cannot help concluding that Bergeret himself, or someone very close to him, was the source of the comment. Earlier major professional G&S companies in America, without which there probably could never have been a NYGASP, go unmentioned (e.g., American Savoyards, Light Opera of Manhattan).

Bradley observes that amateur G&S in America is far more likely to be a high-budget affair than in Britain. I think this is true to an extent, but Bradley’s view is a bit

skewed by disproportionate emphasis on societies that are decidedly atypical, such as Seattle, Lamplighters, and Philadelphia’s Savoy. (“The Savoy Company exemplifies many of the characteristics of the amateur G&S scene in the United States.”) Bradley credits just one annual production to UMGASS; in fact the Society invariably presents at least two. When it comes to amateur G&S in Britain, Bradley has first-hand knowledge. He covers church-hall productions done on a shoestring, probably because he is simply much more aware of them.

There are a few mistakes in the chapter on G&S scholarship. In a paragraph devoted to “new scholarly performing editions,” he lumps the decidedly non-scholarly Dover editions alongside those by Broude and Oxford. Incomprehensibly, he concludes the paragraph with a mention of James Newby’s arrangements for fifteen-piece orchestra. He credits Bruce Miller and Helga Perry with “a reconstructed version” of ‘De Belville’ from *Iolanthe*. Miller and Perry did no such thing; all they did was to publish a leader violin part (an important discovery, to be sure, but not what Bradley says).

Savoynet rates a mention, but not perhaps the most encouraging one. He warns the reader to expect “at least fifty e-mails a day,” and remarks that “I once switched on my computer on a Monday morning to find that 392 Savoynet messages had arrived in the space of one weekend.” Fifty Savoynet posts in a day are certainly possible, but that is nearer the high end than the low. I do not think there have ever been 392 Savoynet posts in a single weekend (indeed, the weekend volume is typically lower, as those who post only from work are not participating).

The book is liberally sprinkled with black-and-white illustrations. The one regrettable choice is a poorly reproduced photo on the dust-jacket of an obviously on-the-cheap amateur production of *Pirates*, with a faintly unbelievable pirate doing battle with a deer-in-the-headlights policeman. I’m afraid that dusky photo exemplifies all of the negative stereotypes of amateur G&S. Surely Bradley could have come up with something better? (After writing this, I learned that the photo was of Bradley himself as Sergeant of Police, which certainly explains why it is there, but I’m afraid it *still* isn’t the best selling point for the book.)

As I suggested in my opening, I suspect Bradley is preaching to the converted in this book. But whatever the level of your interest in G&S, you’ll learn something. The

sweep and thoroughness of the analysis is impressive. I also see the book as something of a time capsule. It captures the “state of the art” in 2005 and makes some optimistic predictions about where we’ll be in another decade or two. In 2025, will we be praising Bradley’s prescience, or lamenting what went wrong? Stay tuned!



REVIEWS

Three Gilbert Plays in New Editions

Reviewed by Mark Shepherd

Over the last three years, David Trutt has published ambitious new editions of three Gilbert plays: *Ought We To Visit Her?* (2003), *The Princess* (2004), and *An Old Score* (2005). The first and third of these will be unfamiliar to most readers, as they are not in Chatto & Windus *Original Plays*, or indeed in any source readily available. Trutt’s edition of *The Princess* is a comparative text, showing the relationships between the two main editions of the play and the two main versions of the opera libretto derived from it.

Ought We To Visit Her? was first performed at the Royalty Theatre in January 1874. It was based on an 1871 novel by Annie Edwards. Gilbert’s play followed the novel rather closely, adopting much of Edwards’s dialogue directly or with very slight alterations. Perhaps this is why Gilbert left the work out of *Original Plays*: more than half of it consists of nearly verbatim quotes from Edwards

To show the relationship between novel and play, Trutt prints Gilbert’s contributions in a normal typeface and Mrs. Edwards’s in bold. Where Gilbert altered the original dialogue, Mrs. Edwards’s version is shown in [brackets], with Gilbert’s wording immediately after it. Even in passages that are taken largely from the novel, the dialogue usually doesn’t go more than a few lines without Gilbert putting his own stamp on it somehow

The story concerns two families, the Crosbys and the Theobalds. Francis Theobald’s new wife, Jane, is a former dancer. This fact alone makes her faintly disreputable, and hence Mrs. Crosbie wonders, “Ought we to

visit her?” Her son Rawdon has no doubts about the matter, and he commences a flirtation with Jane, putting in jeopardy his engagement to Emma Marsland. All is set right in the end: the characters’ unfaithful dalliances are forgiven. The ending is a bit sanctimonious, but otherwise *Ought We To Visit Her?* has a good deal of charm. It is full of striking, clearly drawn characters, with Gilbert’s strong sense of pacing. I think it would play well today.

Trutt’s next project, *The Princess*, is far more ambitious, but regrettably much less successful. Trutt’s aim is to compare four different versions of the text:

- The play as originally published in 1870
- The play as it appeared in *Original Plays* in 1876
- The *Princess Ida* libretto published in America
- The *Princess Ida* libretto published in *Original Plays* in 1884

This is a laudable idea, but taken to a ridiculous extent. For instance, Trutt finds that the direction for the luncheon bell is printed as:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| (bell) | in the 1870 edition of <i>The Princess</i> |
| (Bell.) | in the 1876 edition of <i>The Princess</i> |
| (bell.) | in the American libretto of <i>Princess Ida</i> |
| (bell). | in the English libretto of <i>Princess Ida</i> |

Trutt’s passion for detail includes even character captions. Speeches for Florian are introduced as:

- | | |
|---------|---|
| FLORIAN | in the 1870 edition of <i>The Princess</i> |
| FLORI. | in the 1876 edition of <i>The Princess</i> |
| FLO. | in the American libretto of <i>Princess Ida</i> |
| FLOR. | in the English libretto of <i>Princess Ida</i> |

I am not sure how many works there are for which it is vital to know this sort of thing—the Bible perhaps?—but I am quite sure *The Princess* isn’t one of them. If these minutiae were important at all, surely they could have been explained in a general note, or itemized in an appendix. Instead, Trutt decides he must give us all of these variants “in-line,” which he can do only with a notational scheme of byzantine complexity.

Readers of Trutt’s *Princess* must cope with four different species of superscript, bolded text, text printed in different font sizes, underlined text, and four different kinds of brackets—often, all of these at once. I wonder who would be sufficiently motivated to decipher many of the more

cryptic pages, where these notational elements cascade upon each other in an avalanche of obtrusive detail. At times, Gilbert is completely obscured. Trutt is to be commended for his industry, but he has created a monstrosity that cannot be read with pleasure. After several attempts, I gave up.

In a post to Savoy.net, Trutt said that he wanted to show “how Gilbert evolved (or not) over four iterations of the same idea.” If this was the objective, I think there were better ways to get there. The evolution from “(bell)” to “(Bell.)” to “(bell.)” to “(bell).” does not show Gilbert changing his mind. It shows four different printers applying their house styles to an idea that had remained identical in the four versions. By trying to portray *everything*, however minute, on the same page, the edition somewhat defeats itself—making it extraordinarily difficult for all but the most determined reader to pick out what is really important: the progression of Gilbert’s thoughts across the four versions.

Perhaps Trutt realized he’d created too much of a good thing, so his edition of *The Princess* comes with a second volume, which he calls the Overview. In this volume, he compares the 1870 play text to the opera libretto published in England. With just two texts to compare, much of the cumbersome notation is jettisoned. I still don’t understand the value of emboldening the first three letters of the caption “BLANCHE,” to indicate that one source abbreviated it “BLA” and the other did not. It is an irritating distraction, but still this version is at least readable.

Both versions (the Overview and the impenetrable Textual Companion) include useful footnotes explaining obscure terms and pointing out textual anomalies.

On a happier note, Trutt’s most recent edition, *An Old Score*, is a success. Perhaps Gilbert left this play out of *Original Plays* because it failed in its original incarnation at the Gaiety Theatre in 1869. An 1872 revival under the title *Quits* did no better. I agree with Andrew Crowther (who wrote the introduction to Trutt’s edition) that *An Old Score* deserves a better fate. According to Crowther:

It is certainly not a perfect play. It was Gilbert’s first comedy, and in some respects it is derivative.... Some of the drama creaks, and today we can only wish with all our hearts that Gilbert had *not* decided to include a comic Jewish money-lender. And yet... I think that even today, and even bearing in mind these real faults, we can

judge *An Old Score* to be a genuinely powerful drama. There are scenes in this play which are so powerful that they knock the reader back in his seat. There is a “shooting-from-the-hip” quality about some of the scenes which is exhilarating and even just a little bit shocking.... [The play] shows us a very different Gilbert from the one we think we know—a Gilbert who is just as worth listening to as the one who wrote for Sullivan.

The story concerns a Colonel Calthorpe, who was formerly well-to-do, but has fallen on hard times. He has arranged a marriage between his cousin Ethel Barrington and James Casby, a wealthy Bombay merchant who owes his start in life to Calthorpe’s generosity many years ago. By bringing Casby into the family, Calthorpe hopes to relieve himself of crushing debts, but Casby shows no sign of repaying the generosity Calthorpe had shown him in his youth. Casby says he intends to repay his debt to Calthorpe, but not the way Calthorpe has in mind. This cryptic promise hangs over the play till the very end.

Along the way, several of Calthorpe’s distant relatives die in a boating accident, and quite suddenly he inherits a peerage. Now wealthy once more, he encourages Casby to break off his engagement to Ethel, which he does. Casby then reveals that, during Calthorpe’s period of indebtedness, he (now Lord Ovington) had forged Casby’s name as guarantor to several loans. Casby says:

Lord Ovington, you are a wealthy man, and a peer of the realm. It is in my power to take you from the brilliant position you occupy; to clothe you in a felon’s dress; feed you on felon’s food, and set you to felon’s work for many, many years to come. Oblige me by supposing, if you please, that I have exercised that power—that you are now occupying a cell in Pentonville, and moreover that you have (say) fourteen years of convict labour to work out. Good. (*placing the [forged] bills in candle, and allowing them to burn slowly*) I take you from your cell; I restore you to your position in society; I restore to you your ample fortune; I take you from an infinitely lower depth than I ever descended to, and I place you on an infinitely higher social pedestal than I can ever hope to occupy—and we are quits!

That is, Casby has settled his “Old Score” with Calthorpe. Ethel decides Casby is a fine man after all, and they resume their engagement. There is a sub-plot with

Calthorpe's son Harold and a nursery governess named Mary Waters, and a largely irrelevant middle act covering Harold's adventures as editor of a scurrilous newspaper. That and the incident of the Jewish money-lender are the play's problematic passages. I am not sure if *An Old Score* is playable today, but it makes fascinating reading.

In a second volume labeled *Commentary*, Trutt presents a cornucopia of additional material. There is W. S. Gilbert's own dramatic parody of his play that appeared in *Fun*, another parody by Gilbert a Becket from the *Tomohawk*, reviews from both the *Tmes* and the *Sunday Times*, recollections by both John Hollingshead and Gilbert himself, and several other items.

There are two different early editions of *An Old Score*, just as there are with *The Princess*. But in this case, Trutt uses "his independent judgment" in creating a reading text. He doesn't burden us with every comma where the two may differ. I don't know what project Trutt has in mind for next year, but let's hope he uses *An Old Score* as the model, and not *The Princess*.

All three editions are published as booklets bound with staples at the center seam. The binding is stiff and a bit awkward to handle, and the printing is too muddy. There are some minor typographical infelicities, particularly in Trutt's use of the "en" dash where Gilbert used the "em" dash. The two volumes of *An Old Score* are just 90 pages total, making one wonder why the edition needed to be two volumes at all. When the research is as solid as Trutt's is, it deserves a better presentation.

Those caveats aside, anyone serious about Gilbert should have Trutt's editions of *Ought We To Visit Her?* and *An Old Score*. They are important landmarks in Gilbert scholarship, and I hope we will see more from Mr. Trutt over the coming years.

Trutt's editions are \$20 (£12) per title, or \$40 (£24) for all three. Prices include air mail postage, and there is no extra charge for paying in Sterling. Write to David Trutt at davettt@aol.com, or to David Trutt, 3711 North Round Rock Drive, Tucson, Arizona 85750.



REVIEWS

Muriel Dickson: "There and Back"

Reviewed by Marc Shepherd

The Gaiety, a small publishing company devoted to Victorian and Edwardian Musical Theatre, has published the autobiography of Muriel Dickson (1903-1990). She was a D'Oyly Carte chorister and principal soprano from 1928-35, and a principal with the Metropolitan Opera in New York from 1935-1940.



The 63-page book is called *Muriel Dickson: There And Back*. The subtitle is "A light-hearted, sentimental autobiography." I am assuming that the title is Miss Dickson's, and the subtitle that of the publisher (Savoynetter Roderick Murray) or the editor (Savoynetter Michael Walters).

In any event, "light-hearted and sentimental" are exactly what it is. In a brief introduction, Michael Walters concedes that Dickson "was not a very good writer...but one does not read a person's memoirs to read a well-written book, but to learn about the person in question." That we do. Dickson led a remarkably full life that included several careers. She writes in a pleasant, if not particularly witty or insightful style.

Dickson made wonderful friends, and seems never to have had a quarrel, or even a bone to pick, with anybody. Of course, this can hardly be possible, but happiness and sunshine are what Dickson was willing to put on paper. She seems to have faced very little adversity, and any disappointments are treated only briefly. The death of her beloved husband, for instance, merits only half a sentence. On the book's last page, Dickson says that "I consider myself one of the luckiest women I know." After all that she tells us, and the WAY that she tells it, we are certainly not surprised to find that she thinks so.

Dickson's singing career may be briefly told. She joined the D'Oyly Carte chorus in 1928, playing small parts and deputising occasionally in leading roles. She was promoted to principal soprano by 1932, recording several of her roles, before leaving for the Metropolitan Opera in

1935.

Her Met career, it must be said, was more interesting. She was there for five years, during which she created the title role in Menotti's *AMEILA GOES TO THE BALL*. Her debut was as Marenka in *THE BARTERED BRIDE*, in a new English translation which she helped to write (after the cast rejected the one the company had provided). Other roles included Carolina in the company premiere of Cimarosa's *IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO*, and Musetta in *LA BOHEME*.

In 1945, after the death of her housemate, she took what was intended to be a brief holiday back in the U.K. There she met up with an old boyfriend, fell in love again, and got married. That turned out to be the end of her professional singing career. She was offered the role of Octavian in *DER ROSENKAVALIER* for Covent Garden, which she declined, and she never sang in public again. In 1955, after a decade out of music (during which she worked as an antiques dealer), she joined the staff of the Royal Academy of Music in Glasgow, where she taught successfully for some 21 years before retiring in the mid-seventies.

The book was obviously completed late in life, although the amount of time she took in writing it is not specified. Understandably, there are some inconsistencies and a few significant lapses in her memory. The editor, Michael Walters, points these out gently via in-line comments in brackets. Perhaps Dickson's oddest lapse is a practically unexplained five-year gap in her career. According to the Metropolitan Opera database, her last performance with the Company was on January 15, 1940. She says she returned to the U.K. in June of 1945, leaving a 5 1/2 year gap about which she says very little, except to suggest that she gave recitals. Considering that this period was more than 1/3rd of her career as a principal singer, it is strange that she has so little to say about it.

There are a couple of small mistakes in Dickson's account of New York that elude Walters's keen eye. She says the Empire State Building is on 23rd Street (it's 34th Street), and she says the new Metropolitan Opera House is at 59th Street (it's at 64th Street). Walters says he can find no record of a tenor who figures prominently in her Met career: George Rasely. In fact, Rasely made his debut in *THE BARTERED BRIDE* the same day Dickson did, and he went on to appear there some 76 times between 1936 and 1944. Dickson appeared at the Met only 30 times (in New York—the company also toured extensively in those days, and the tour performances aren't in the online

database).

Dickson's autobiography rambles a bit. It is mainly chronological, but many of the anecdotes appear out of order. It is not clear what were her intentions in writing these memoirs, but it was her estate that granted permission for them to be published. Had she lived to see them through to publication, perhaps she would have re-arranged the material in a more sensible order.

As I have said, Dickson's professional singing career was relatively short: about 17 years, but only about 13 as a principal, and five of which (her recital career) she practically ignores. At least half the book is devoted to other events in her life that are at best tangential to her singing career, or not related to it at all. I did not mind this, as the book is so short, but those looking for 63 pages packed full of D'Oyly Carte anecdotes would be disappointed.

Muriel Dickson's, "There and Back," made for a delightful few hours' worth of reading. The window she provides to a lost era, particularly in pre-war period, makes engaging reading. The book includes a number of attractive photos of Dickson, both in her operatic roles and in private life.

The Muriel Dickson memoirs are only available via mail order from the publisher, Roderick Murray. The cost is £5.00, plus £1 p&p UK. Please ask Mr. Murray for a p&p quote to other destinations. Direct any e-mail queries to:

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REVIEWS

West Michigan Savoyards'

The Sorcerer

May 1, 2005

Reviewed by Senex Senior

The West Michigan Savoyards were formed seven years ago in Grand Rapids, Mi., by Gary Hicks, one of the original founders of The University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society. It was originally an outlet for older and retired community members with an interest in G&S, but has over its life drawn younger performers and families into the fold.

The Ladies' Literary Club theater is very shallow, and with little or no wing space, so this limits the set design and in some situations, the blocking of the show. But this group uses tidy set design and energy to make the best of these shortcomings.

The overture was played with much energy by the reduced (14 piece) orchestra, but tempos tended to be on the slow side. The curtain opened on a simple setting of the outside of Sir Marmaduke's mansion, mostly a garden with a very small tent, with the chorus entering from the wings. The opening chorus was sung well, but with a minimum of choreography, which may have been the result of the set.

Constance and Mrs. Partlet (Carol Grady and Deborah Schrouder) conversed in a rather slow recitative, which lead into a fine "when he is here". Constance seemed a little more overwrought than I have seen, and seemed to dressed for a garden party, rather than a charity girl or servant that she usually is.

Dr. Daly (George Lanning) entered, and again the recitative was on the slow side, but tempos picked up in the following song. Mr. Lanning was one of the highlights of the show. He was fully immersed in his character, and never for a moment dropped out of it. He also sang with a very fine baritone, which wasn't distorted with his character, overall, well sung and acted. He did at

times in the show seem a little over the top, more fitting to the aesthetic Grosvenor in *PATIENCE* than a country vicar. It was particularly noticeably in those dialogues where some of the other performers didn't play up to his level. The clerical aspect of his costume seemed to be a little underplayed, and also made-up a little older than I have seen in the past.

The entrance of Alexis and Sir Marmaduke (Nick VanderPol, Jim Marfia) lead to one of the few surprises, the cutting of the Minuet under Dr Daly's "may fortune bless you!" speech. Most of the humor of the speech comes from the archaic compliment underlined by the equally old-fashioned music, all done in utter seriousness.

But Alexis and Marmaduke's reactions were quite good, and in the following dialogue Marmaduke maintained a befuddled condescension that became a hallmark of his character.



The women's chorus, heralding the entrance of Aline (Mary Jo Dievendorf) was quite well sung,

but with limited movement. Aline was a vision in pink, and possessor of a lovely voice, who carried off her aria with limited involvement of the onstage chorus. Lady Sangazure (Carrie Sikkenga) entered for her short recitative (slow again) and gave a hint of a fine mezzo soprano/alto we would hear in the second act. Unfortunately, her costume didn't make her stand out from the chorus, an important point since she is on a level, or even above, Sir Marmaduke!

All the men entered with Alexis during their chorus, and then everyone left at the finish, leaving Lady Sangazure and Sir Marmaduke. I'm not sure if this was due to the small stage, but usually the chorus remains during the "Welcome joy" duet and succeeding ensembles. Not much was made of the passionate asides during the duet, particularly no freezes or sudden changes of mood before "irresistible incentive". There was a long pause before the introduction (for comic effect?) of "All is prepared" as the Notary got on stage. Oddly enough, it was at this point that I noticed that Alexis's Grenadier guard coat didn't have a belt. Why it took till this point, I'm not sure. It did give it a bit of an unfinished look to it, though. "All is prepared" was sung quite well, though with no small table on stage, it was rather difficult for Alexis, Aline, and the Notary to sign the marriage contract. Also, with no seal or stamp, there was nothing to do

during the final pause before the last “as their act and deed!”

The dialogue for Aline and Alexis, following the general exit, was some of the best in the show so far. Alexis made the best of his preaching in beerhalls and lunatic asylums, and got several good laughs. His aria was above average, fine diction, and had good interaction with Aline. Their following dialogue was good, but the line to and for Hercules were tossed away with no business or stunt casting (usually Hercules is a small boy or a small/skinny man- a visual joke).

With the entrance of J.W. Wells, its usually the cue for the show to take off, and this production was no different. A choice was made to have Wells (Bill McAndrew) in a small top hat and a sorcerer’s robe. This was a change from the usual of having Wells dressed as a middle class tradesman (a commonplace man selling the uncommon as you would brushes or fine wines), but Mr. McAndrews carried it off. His dialogue was methodical and not the fast paced banter of the used car salesman, and this led into a fine rendition of “My name is John Wellington Wells.”

Another fine dialogue scene with Mr. Wells lead to the incantation scene, which was played simply and effectively with special lighting on the teapot and the chorus singing the spirits from the back of the house. No other special effect were needed as the singers carried the day.

The Finale was staged quite conventionally, with the tea cups handed around, polite listening during the duet (I think I detected some changes in the voice lines) leading into the “oh marvelous illusion” section. There was really no action during this last portion, and again I believe I detected some switching of voice lines. All collapsed as the final curtain closed.

Oddly, the Minuet from the first act was now used as an Entr’acte. This was rather jarring, as it is in a totally different style than the opening of Act two. The opening trio was performed rather traditionally, and led into a simple but very nicely staged chorus of “If you marry me.”

The introduction to “dear friends have pity” was vamped several times as a gag for a delayed entrance of the Notary (Jason Warners). Constance was suitably happy

and aghast at her situation, madly in love with the Notary, and pining for her true love, Dr. Daly. Because of the low vocal line, the Notary was force to sing his “deaf old man” lines an octave up. Once again, possible because of the size of the stage, the “Oh Joy, Oh Joy” ensemble was rather statically choreographed and had little dance. The chorus exit seem a little odd, as it seem a majority exited into Sir Marmaduke’s house(!). The dialogue for Alexis and Aline that followed was good, but it seemed that very often Alexis was talking near Aline, and not at her. It was a shame that they lost the eye contact that they had in act one. Alexis’s pique leading up to his aria was well handled, but “Thou hast the power” was too slow to maintain the anger that leads to his final “it is not love!”

The Partlet/Marmaduke/Alexis/Aline/Dr. Daly dialogue was rather evenly paced, which pointed out even more Dr. Daly’s humorous interjections. This lead to a well sung “she will tend him”, but too busily choreographed in the ensemble portion to the point that most attention was drawn from what they were singing.

Well’s “Oh I have wrought” was very contrite, though more could have been made of Sangazure’s fascination with him, and his horror at the prospect. Once they got into the meat of the “Family Vault” portion of the duet, both really let go and had fun, though it was odd that Wells wasn’t running away from Sangazure at the end, but when off with her of his own choice.

Aline’s aria, followed by Dr. Daly’s was a treat, a double helping of fine singing and good stage sense. The rapture they expressed in “Oh Joyous boon!” was almost, *almost*, to the point of parody, but saved by their earnestness. Alexis’s entrance only added to the tension and maintained the pace right up to and through the chorus’s entrance.



The dialogue before the finale felt natural, save Dr. Daly’s sacrifice speech, which over shadowed Alexis’s response. The finale started appropriately somber, but won me with it’s very clever decent into hell (mostly lighting and a little special effects, because of the limits of the stage) and the very sweet restoration of the original couples.

Overall, a good effort presenting this lesser done show, and a very enjoyable afternoon

Alumni News

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 Lexicon*

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Awards given to retiring UMGASS board members Elizabeth Crabtree, Amanda Steinhoff, James Allan and Michael Borysow

June brought COG's first Jerome Kern festival, and in the ranks could be spotted UMGASSers **Lynn Bishop** (nee Bennett), **Katie Cilluffo**, **Milena Grubor**, **Bob Douglas**, **David Troiano**, **Tom & Pat Petiet**, and your diligent Editor. Six shows in six days, and all recordings going to the Library of Congress!

In June and July, **Matt Ray** and **Katie Hoag** appeared in *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Ruddigore*, at College Light Opera in Falmouth, MA.

July in Dexter found **Jason Smith** (director of the last Ruddigore) directing Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, *The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* for Dexter Community Players. Not only was it a family affair (**Jennifer, Joshua**, and Jason's wife **Stacey Smith**), but included **Lawrence Bryk** as the Beadle, **Megan Hemstra** lending some prop assistance, and yer umble Editor as Pirelli, a rival barber.

July brought in the 2005 Victor Herbert festival, presented by The Comic Opera Guild, at the Residential College Theatre at the university. Performers included **Matt Grace**, **Kara Alfano**, **Marla Bentley** (nee Beider), **Elizabeth Mihalo**, **Don Regan**, **David Troiano**, **Tom Petiet**, and **Mitch Gillett**. **Harry Benford** made a point of seeing most of the shows.

Harry also forwarded us an article from the University publication *Leaders Best*, about the late UM-Flint staff member **Frances Frazier**. "Friends describe her as quirky and idiosyncratic, passionate about literature, and a Gilbert and Sullivan devotee." A new faculty member remembered the first time meeting the departmental secretary who "joyfully" introduced her to Gilbert and Sullivan. "She loved seeing someone experience that for the first time." May we all share that joy.

ODE TO COLLECTORS

(with apologies to W.S. Gilbert !)

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NOTE

Gilbert's Stark Realism

There's been some loose talk over the years—beginning, perhaps, with Sullivan's kvetching about that darned ol' Lozenge Plot—about the lack of human interest in Gilbert's work. Yesterday, I had a wee epiphany that all such talk is absolute bosh, and the circs were these—and forgive me if this is a bit wordy:

I work in a law office that deals in estates. We deal in ancient history and emotional baggage, in consequence. About a year ago, we were retained in an estate in which the deceased, having quitted this earth without chick or child, had made a will leaving her entire estate to her nieces, who were also her intestate heirs (meaning that they'd scoop the pot anyway, in the absence of a will). The will contained one wrinkle: every niece got a nice chunk of change, except one, who was short-changed. Apparently, she'd done something in the past to tick the old girl off.

Here in New York, given the identity of heirs and legatees, one customarily probates a will on the written consent of all of the intestate heirs. In this case, though, the short-changed niece ignored our request to sign the consent. Letters, messages on her machine, all useless. Finally, this niece called, and I happened to field the call. I must say, a summer's afternoon spent listening to ancient grievances from a person who has apparently abused steroids at some point in her life is a perfectly lovely way to spend time, though I rather wish that I'd been a trick cyclist, so that I could have been paid into the bargain. Of course, I pegged this niece as a boat-rocker (though my epithet was a bit more canine) pretty quickly. Eventually, the niece *did* sign her consent, but only after being served with judicial process, the will was probated, and administration of the estate got underway. But mark the sequel:

We've now reached the end of the case, it's time to distribute the net estate to the nieces, and (again) the final accounting is usually done on written consent, to save everyone time and money. I'll give you one guess which niece, out of all of them, has failed to return her consent. Yep: Ms. Boatrocker. What's more, all of the other nieces (who are waiting for their money) are calling

us, demanding to know what the hold-up is and—get this—expressing **surprise** that Ms. Boatrocker is delaying matters, though they've all known her for years and years and years, and must certainly remember the reason for the delay in the probate proceeding.

My point—and I do have one—is that people really ARE like little clockwork toys, as Gilbert makes them out to be in (say) "The Mountebanks." They really DO live their lives in predestinate grooves, acting out the mad little routines they've always acted out, and thinking the same mad thoughts they've always thought, over and over and over again. Ms. Boatrocker will be forever rocking the boat; and her nearest and dearest will be forever feeling a tad queasy, and wondering why, when the sea is as smooth as glass.

That Gilbert perceived this Great Truth and wrote of it is a tribute to his artistry. And folks more learned in the history of the Stage might go further—and I put it to this crowd to say whether this is just—and say that Gilbert was the first to do it. We sometimes speak of the inevitability of Greek tragedy, or the certainty with which a tragic Shakespearean hero goes to his doom; but is it really the same thing? Were not Sophocles and Shakespeare writing of single, climactic events in human lives, and not the little hamster-in-the-wheel sort of stuff that constitutes the lives of most of us, and that Gilbert wrote about? What's the consensus, folks?

Keith H. Peterson
Jersey City, New Jersey
(Savoynet, 10/24/04)



G & S Menu

By date, US followed by International productions

September

NY, New York

Patience New York City Opera September 10th to October 5th (8 performances)

IL, Chicago

The Sorcerer The Savoyaires Friday and Saturday, September 30 and October 1, 7:30 p.m. Sunday, October 2, 3 p.m. Friday and Saturday, October 7 and 8, 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, October 9, 3 p.m

UK, Chichester

Patience Chichester Festival Theatre, 4th September 2005 - 16

UK, London

HMS Pinafore The Open Air Theatre - Regents Park 5th - 10th September

UK, Staveley

The Yeomen of the Guard Staveley Amateur Operatic Society 12th - 17th September 2005, Staveley Village Hall

UK, Penzance

Iolanthe Minack Theatre, Penzance 12th September 2005 to 17th September 2005

UK, Cardiff

The Mikado New Theatre, Cardiff 20th September 2005 to 24th September 2005 - 19:30. Thu, Sat Mats 14:30

UK, Christchurch

HMS Pinafore Christchurch Gilbert and Sullivan Society 21st - 24th September, 2005
Regent Centre, Christchurch

UK, Marton

The Sorcerer Marton Operatic Society Tuesday 27th Sept to Sat 1st Oct 2005 Lowther Pavilion, Lytham.

Australia, Perth

Patience Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Western Australia

Dates in Sept 2005 to be confirmed

New Zealand, Wellington

The Gondoliers Wellington Gilbert & Sullivan Various between 1st & 25th Sept

New Zealand, Dunedin

Iolanthe The Really Authentic Gilbert and Sullivan Performance Trust 10-17 September 2005 in Dunedin

October

CA, San Jose

Ruddigore Lyric Theatre of San Jose Mayer Theatre, Santa Clara Univ. October 1-9
www.lyrictheatre.org

CA, San Francisco

Pinafore sing along The Lamplighters October 1, 2005 8 PM
Herbst Theatre, Box Office: 415-392-4400
October 2, 2005 2 PM Del Valle Theatre, Box Office: 925-943-7469

VA, Piedmont

Iolanthe New Lyric Theatre Piedmont Virginia October 7, 8, 13, 14, & 15, 2005

UK, St. Andrews

Iolanthe St. Andrews Gilbert & Sullivan Society 4th - 8th October 2005

UK, Peterborough

The Pirates of Penzance Peterborough Gilbert & Sullivan Players 3rd - 8th October 2005 (Also Matinee on 8th)
Key Theatre in Peterborough

UK, Oldham

Utopia Greenacres Operatic Society, Oldham 5th - 8th October 2005

UK, Burgess Hill

The Pirates of Penzance Burgess Hill Operatic Society 4th - 8th October e-mail honsec@bhos.info

UK, Barnsley

A Source of Innocent Merriment (The Works of Gilbert & Sullivan 1871-1896) Barnsley G & S Society The Academy Theatre, Birdwell, Barnsley, 5th - 16th

OCTOBER 2005 at 2.30 and 7.30

UK, The Isle of Mann

The Mikado Manx Gilbert & Sullivan Society October 18th - 22nd 2005 - Gaiety Theatre

UK, Bournemouth

The Pirates of Penzance Bournemouth G&S Operatic Society 25th Oct 2005 to Sat 29th Oct 2005.
Lighthouse, Poole's Centre for the Arts

UK, Kington

Princess Ida Kington & District Amateur Operatic Society

The Pavilion, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, on 25th and 26th October.

Lady Hawkins' School, Kington, Herefordshire, on 28th and 29th October.

Australia, Melbourne

The Gondoliers The Savoy Opera Company Inc. - Melbourne Saturday 9th and 17th October. 2005

Australia, Tasmania

The Mikado The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Tasmania 17 October - 6 November 2005

Germany, Berlin

Pirates of Penzance Vocal-Concertisten Berlin October 14, 15, 16, 21, 22 and 23

November

NY, Rochester

The Off-Monroe Players **Utopia Limited!**
Performances will be November 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19.

MA, Amherst

VLO's 31st fall production, **The Merry Widow**
November 4, 5, 6, 11, and 12 at Amherst Regional High School

CA, Palo Alto

Mikado Stanford Savoyards. Dinkelspiel Auditorium on Stanford Campus on:

November 11th, 12th, 18th and 19th at 8pm, Sunday,
November 20th at 2:30pm

MA, Carlisle

H.M.S. Pinafore. The Savoyard Light Opera Company
Performances: November 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20
Corey Auditorium, Church Street, Carlisle, MA

Washington D. C.

The Mikado Washington Savoyards
November 3-6, 2005, directed by Cindy Oxberry

PA, West Chester

HMS. Pinafore /Cox and Box Rose valley chorus
November 11, 12, 18, & 19, 2005 <http://www.rvco.org/>

PA, West Chester

Grand Duke The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Chester county Nov 17-20

Canada, Mississauga, Ontario

The Mikado Clarkson Music Theatre, Mississauga, Ontario 25th of November for two weekends

Canada, Halifax, Nova Scotia

The Grand Duke Halifax G&S Society November 1st - 5th 2005 at Halifax Playhouse

UK, Maidenhead

Princess Ida Maidenhead Operatic Society November 22nd - 26th 2005
Maidenhead Town Hall, St Ive's Road, Maidenhead, Berks., England

UK, Blackheath

Iolanthe The Centenary Company 23rd -26th November 2005
Blackheath Halls, Blackheath SE3

UK, Rhos on Sea

"**A Gilbert and Sullivan Christmas Carol**" Rhos on Sea Savoyards 8th, 9th & 10th November 2005 Theatre Colwyn, Colwyn Bay
11th & 12th November 2005 Theatr Gwynedd, Bangor



Savoynet

Many of our reviews and some articles of interest are collected from **Savonet**, an internet email Listserv. **Savonet** is an international community of scholars, performers, and just plain folks who like G&S. Members are found in Australia, Italy, Belgium, South Africa, Canada, the UK, and of course, the US.

If you would like to subscribe, just send a plain text email to listserv@bridgewater.edu with the subject line blank and **SUBSCRIBE SAVOYNET** *Your Name* as the message. As this is an older system, please do not send "rich text" or "HTML formatted" emails, as this will generate an error message in reply.

Since 1997 **Savoynet** has put together a complete G&S show, cast with its international membership, to take to the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival in Buxton, England. Though the festival runs for 3 weeks (end of July thru mid-August), the members of **Savoynet** meet and rehearse for only 10 days before the show is mounted at the Buxton Opera House. This unique production, at this most unique of festivals, has never failed to reach the expectations that we would have of a show that has been cast and rehearsed for 6-8 weeks. The directors have had the choice pick of some of the best performers from the top production societies around the globe, an opportunity most directors would sell their mothers for!

This year, the production was *Iolanthe*, directed by Diane Burleigh, and music director Richard Stockton.

The cast included:

Charlotte Eriksson,	Iolanthe
Rebecca Hains,	Phyllis
Ian Henderson,	Mountararat
Deborah Jacobson,	Fleta
Karen Ann Loxley,	Celia
Gary Stuart Maslen,	Strephon
Julie May,	Queen of the Fairies
Richard Miller,	Tolloller
Ron Pidcock,	The Lord Chancellor
Amy Rauch,	Leila
Tony Smith,	Private Willis
Jonathan Ichikawa,	Gentleman Usher
George R. Miller,	Train Bearer to the Lord Chancellor

CHORUS:
 Anne Allwright
 Angie Arnell
 Philip Barton
 Stuart Bull
 Carol Davis
 Christopher Diffey
 Jo Dunbar
 Paul Ensell
 Kimmo Eriksson
 Mary Finn
 Chris Hall
 Lauren Holmes
 Arthur Kincaid
 Deirdre Kincaid
 Claire Little
 Lauren Miller
 Annette Nichol
 John Penn
 Richard Pennicard
 Robyn Pidcock
 Sarah-Jane Read
 Nick Revels
 William Revels
 Jane Richardson
 Les Richardson
 John Sabberton
 Marc Shepherd
 David Stieber
 Kelsey Thornton
 Sarah Vamplew
 Chris Wain
 Sandra Wain
 Laurence Weissbrot
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