

# Sir Arthur Sullivan Society



MISS LOUIE POUNDS, SWEET-VOICED MOLLY O'GRADY IN "THE EMERALD ISLE,"

THE SUCCESSFUL COMIC OPERA AT THE SAVOY THEATRE.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY ALFRED ELLIS AND WALTER, DAKER STREET, W.

Magazine No. 14

Spring 1983

SIR ARTHUR SULLIVAN SOCIETY

MAGAZINE No 14 SPRING 1983

Editorial: 55 Radwinter Rd, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 3HU.

Dear Member,

Since the last edition of the Magazine there have been a number of developments connected with the work of both Sullivan and Gilbert. In particular, the issue by Pearl Records of the Prince Consort's performance of THE EMERALD ISLE fills a significant gap in the recording of Sullivan's operas. Now only THE BEAUTY STONE is unrecorded in any form. At the same time, publishers have been busy with the texts of Gilbert's libretti, as the reviews below bear witness. Let us hope that the coming year will prove as fruitful as the last.

David Eden.

THE MARTYR OF ANTIOCH

Sullivan's MARTYR OF ANTIOCH will be performed jointly by Imperial Opera and Imperial College Operatic Society on March 26th at the church of St Mary-le-Bow, Cheapside, London, starting at 7.30pm. For details please send an SAE to our Chairman, Selwyn Tillett, at the address shown on the front cover. The performance will be recorded, and a cassette available in due course. The Society's AGM will be held on the same afternoon, March 26th, at St Mary-le-Bow, starting at 2.30 pm.

THE PRODIGAL SON

Sullivan's PRODIGAL SON will be performed by the Valley Light Opera on April 24th in the Bowker Auditorium on the campus of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, U.S.A. This performance owes its existence to the enterprise of the conductor, Mr Bill Venman, and to the extraordinary preservation of a set of orchestral parts for THE PRODIGAL SON at Schirmers Inc. American members who live within travelling distance of the performance may contact Mr Venman at 43 Ridgecrest Rd, Amherst, MA 01002. The performance will be recorded, and should be available in due course.

St PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

On the 82nd anniversary of Sullivan's death a few members of the Society met at St Paul's. We then went to the crypt, where Sullivan is buried; our Chairman, Rev Selwyn Tillett, conducted a short ceremony, and wreath was laid on the grave. The ceremony was as follows.

"On the feast of Saint Cecilia, patron of music and musicians, and on the anniversary of his death, we come to give thanks for the life and work of Arthur Seymour Sullivan and for the pleasure which his music continues to give, and to honour his memory by laying a wreath.

O God, who in the gift of music have given us a revelation of your divine beauty, teach us to love you in all your gifts, and so to devote ourselves in all our work to your glory, that we too may raise men from the sorrows of this world to the enjoyment of your divine loveliness; through your son our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

(Slightly adapted from a prayer of Canon Harold Anson, former Master of the Temple)

Brother, thou art gone before us, and thy saintly soul is flown  
Where tears are wiped from every eye, and sorrow is unknown.  
From the burden of the flesh, and from care and fear released,  
Where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

The toilsome way thou'st travelled o'er, and borne the heavy load,  
But Christ hath taught thy languid feet to reach his blest abode. - - -  
May each, like thee, depart in peace, to be a glorious guest,  
Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

(From THE MARTYR OF ANTIOCH, sung at his funeral by the Savoy company at Sullivan's own request)

A wreath of evergreens and red carnations, with a card reading 'IN MEMORIAM 22nd November 1962. The Sir Arthur Sullivan Society', was placed over the bronze lyre on the grave, and a few moments of silence followed.

"O God, the Lord of all mercy and forgiveness, grant to the soul of your servant Arthur Seymour Sullivan, the anniversary of whose death we remember today, a time of peace refreshment, a quiet resting place, and the glory of light everlasting. May he rest in peace."

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#### BOOK REVIEWS

IOLANTHE - A Commemorative Booklet for the Centenary of the First Production by Selwyn Tillet, Stephen Turnbull, and Michael Walters. Published by the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society @ £2.00 inc p&p. \$7.00 overseas airmail.

Having had nothing whatever to do with the writing and production of this booklet of 42 pages, I hope to produce the most objective possible review of it. The booklet is the first of what we hope will be a series commemorating the centenaries of the operas - including first revivals - as they come up. IOLANTHE is a praiseworthy first effort which we hope to surpass in future.

The booklet is divided into six well-written and scholarly sections as follows: 1) Introduction; 2) Iolanthe or Perola?; 3) The first night text; 4) First night press reports; 5) Iolanthe on tour; 6) Iolanthe and the gramophone. There are 11 illustrated pages, and a two-tone cover taken from the first night programme. Most of the illustrations, some previously unpublished, were supplied by Dr Terence Rees.

One of the most persistent canards concerning IOLANTHE is that throughout the period of dress rehearsal it was called PEROLA. There certainly was a popular impression to this effect in the press, but Selwyn Tillet shows beyond all doubt that Gilbert never seriously intended anything other than IOLANTHE. Michael Walters brings his vast knowledge to bear on the first night text, revealing, among much else, that Phyllis once had a song with the scintillating words 'I dislike you both extremely/Boo-hoo, Boo-hoo, Boo-hoo'. Stephen Turnbull writes a fascinating history of IOLANTHE on the gramophone - the earliest recording seems to date from 1902. A very full selection of first night press reports researched by Selwyn Tillet shows that IOLANTHE was not at all recognised as a masterpiece at its first appearance; there are, of course, those who have not realised this much even today.

All in all this booklet will prove an indispensable guide to anyone wishing to write about IOLANTHE, besides being an attractive souvenir of an important artistic centenary. The only serious criticism to be levelled at it is that the typing - done under difficult circumstances - contains a small number of errors, none of them affecting the reading of the text. The booklet is available either from Stephen Turnbull or from the Editor at the addresses shown.

The next booklet in the series will be PRINCESS IDA. All members are invited to contribute information and/or illustrations. In particular we are looking for information about the opera in the U.S.A and Australia. Please write to the Editor in the first instance.

David Eden.



The new edition of Audrey Williamson's classic survey of the operas (it is still the only book which critically analyses the content of the operas, as opposed to telling the story of the partnership) is stated to be completely revised and updated. One could have wished that Miss Williamson had not bothered, as in attempting to do so she has in fact only partially updated, and left a number of things misleadingly out of date. A straightforward reprint would have been preferable.

On the whole, the photographs are less well reproduced in the new edition than they were in the old. A few new ones have been added of the English National Opera productions, and a few of the original ones deleted. Surprisingly, I found one error of identification, which has apparently remained unchallenged since the first edition. Photo no 5 (both editions) is of Rutland Barrington - allegedly in the role of Pooh-Bah; however careful comparison of the costume and make up with that of other photographs of Barrington in this role will indicate that it is NOT Pooh-Bah, and seems most likely to be that of the actor in his other important Japanese role, the Marquis Imari in THE GEISHA.

The final chapter - allegedly rewritten - contains a number of factual errors, the most serious of which is the more unfortunate in that it was correct in the first edition. Rupert D'Oyly Carte died in 1948, of course, not 1928 as here stated. John Reed appears as John Reid; and for a chapter supposed to be updated, Miss Williamson says that the Sullivan manuscript scores are still all locked up in a cellar of Coutts' Bank in the Strand, whereas anyone with a knowledge of G&S affairs will realise that they came up for sale in 1966 and are now scattered in a number of locations. Many of them are available for study, in contradiction of Miss Williamson's claim. The comment on page 278 is unfounded:

It is true that actors have never been entirely trustworthy in keeping to the original text ("Rutland" Barrington, surely the ideal Gilbertian actor, said an astonishing number of things as Pooh-Bah that no text will warrant", wrote a middle-aged Savoyard in a Times article in 1930); . . .

Anyone who has examined Gilbert's prompt copies (now in the British Library) - which clearly Miss Williamson has not done - would know that the author wrote in a great many additional lines in manuscript, a good proportion of which have never been published in any text of the libretti, but which clearly were in use on the stage at the time. A lot of these lines were written for roles played by Barrington. I have already drawn attention to this fact in a short note in The Savoyard some years ago.

All in all, while the reprinting is welcome, and the book a necessary one to any serious student of G&S, I would not recommend anyone to purchase the new edition if they already possess the original one.

Michael Walters.

PLAYS BY W.S.GILBERT edited by George Rowell (British and American Playwrights Series) Cambridge University Press 1982. Hard and Soft Covers. Paperback £4.95 in U.K.

Academic recognition of Gilbert as a significant figure in the British theatre of the nineteenth century has been slow in coming. However, the recent proliferation of university schools of Victorian Studies has brought him to attention, and Engaged, at least, has been recognised at its worth. No more prestigious imprimatur than that of the Cambridge University Press could possibly be desired.

Faced with the difficult task of choosing a small number of works to represent Gilbert in this Series, George Rowell has selected THE PALACE OF TRUTH (1870), SWEETHEARTS (1874), PRINCESS TOTO (1876), ENGAGED (1877) and ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN (1891). With the exception of PRINCESS TOTO all of these plays are contained in the four series of his works published by Gilbert himself. PRINCESS TOTO, however, is an important gain, having been out of print for over a century. PRINCESS TOTO is one of Gilbert's most charmingly zany works - it makes the purchase price of the book more than worthwhile in itself. Any member of this Society who does not know this marvellous little piece should hasten to acquaint himself with it.

Rather less praise is due to George Rowell's Introduction, which brings forward such useful background information, but without critical acumen, in this respect bearing a strong resemblance to the work of Jane Stedman. However, there is a useful tabulated summary of Gilbert's life, and a list of his plays with dates of first performance in London. The illustrations include a splendid one of W.S.Penley in Red Indian costume for PRINCESS TOTO, and a reprint of the vocal line of 'The Pig With the Roman Nose' from the same work. All in all it is for its resuscitation of PRINCESS TOTO that the book is to be most valued.

David Eden.

GILBERT WITHOUT SULLIVAN; Libretti by W.S.Gilbert, Illustrations by L.B.Lubin. Viking Press, New York, 1981. \$14.95.

This book contains standard libretti of PINAFORE, PIRATES, MIKADO and GONDOLIERS (the four most popular operas in the U.S. I believe) illustrated with exquisitely detailed line and wash drawings by Mr Lubin. It is of little interest to the student, but is a pretty picture book of interest to the collector of Geeandesserie. I purchased a copy in Foyles, London, but have no information as to its general availability in the U.K.

Michael Walters.

ARTHUR AND THE GREAT DETECTIVE by Alan Coren. Puffin Books 1981. 80 pence.

This is a short children's story book which introduces both Gilbert and Sullivan into the narrative. The Arthur of the title is a boy detective who outwits Sherlock Holmes in tracing the manuscript of Patience stolen on board ship while G&S were returning from producing the Pirates in America. Unusually for a work of fiction the story contains no positive factual errors. It is a useful titbit for the gargantuan collector who has swallowed everything else.

David Eden.

A review of Ian Bradley's annotated edition of Gilbert's libretti, recently published by Penguin Books, will appear in the next Magazine. D.E.

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#### THE SAVOYARD

Brian Jones, Editor of The Savoyard, has written to me to ask me to correct the impression that the proposed 'pop' production of UTOPIA LTD is in some way connected with or approved of by The Savoyard. This was done unintentionally in the last Magazine (page 5). While there was undoubtedly an unspecified connection between D'Oyly Carte and the proposed production, I am happy to rescind the suggestion that The Savoyard as such was involved. At the time of going to press I have no further news of UTOPIA LTD. The national press report that the D'Oyly Carte Trust has given £23,000 towards the forthcoming Sadlers Wells production of THE MIKADO. (D.E.)

#### ON SHORE AND SEA

Mr Walter Hurst, a Society member living on Merseyside, has kindly donated 14 scores of ON SHORE AND SEA and 20 scores of the FESTIVAL TE DEUM to the Society. These scores will be added to our growing performing archive, and will be used in due course for performance. We are most grateful to Mr Hurst for his generosity towards the Society.

Many copies of Sullivan's music are to be found in the cupboards of local churches. All members are hereby encouraged to approach the local choirmaster and ask him to turn out his cupboards on our behalf. Sets of anthems are particularly needed.

#### THE GOLDEN LEGEND

As the centenary of the first performance of THE GOLDEN LEGEND approaches, we are hoping to persuade the committee of the Leeds Festival to arrange a performance. To this end a mass lobby by Society members will help to remind the committee of their duty towards a composer who did as much as anyone to establish the Festival on a secure artistic footing. Please write to John Warrack, Artistic Director, Leeds Festival Office, 40 Park Lane, Leeds 1.





MISS LOUIE POUNDS AS MOLLY O'GRADY IN "THE EMERALD ISLE," AT THE SAVOY.

## THE EMERALD ISLE

Complete recording without dialogue by the Prince Consort with the Chorus of the Edinburgh Gilbert & Sullivan Society, conducted by David Lyle. SHE 574/5. Available from Pearl Records Ltd, 48 High St, Pembury, Kent, TN2 4NU. Price £11.00 (U.K.); Europe £12.00; U.S.A. & Canada \$31.00 Airmail; Aust £15.50 Air.

### Review by Stephen Turnbull

The last ten years or so have seen a number of praiseworthy revivals by amateurs of the less frequently heard of Sullivan's operas, and recordings of several of these have been issued to the public. Whilst it is gratifying to be able to hear these rare works, not even the best of these issues (the Pearl GRAND DUKE and HADDON HALL sets) have been of a standard to permit appraisal of the work without having to make allowances for the shortcomings of the performance. The great advantage of this recording of THE EMERALD ISLE is that it is a performance up to professional standards in all respects, and it is possible to make an appraisal of the opera on the strength of it without any qualms whatever, because no allowances need to be made.

The recording came about largely as the result of the enterprise of Sullivan Society member Alan Borthwick, who organised a concert performance of THE EMERALD ISLE with full chorus and orchestra in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, on 12 June 1982. This was a sellout, and was recorded. The performers were the Prince Consort, a group founded ten years ago and now the most consistently sold out musical event of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The soloists are all semi-professional singers, with established reputations throughout Scotland. The chorus is selected from the Edinburgh G&S Society, and many of the orchestral musicians are professionals. Hence high standards of performance are assured.

Most people know that THE EMERALD ISLE was left incomplete by Sullivan at his death and was completed by Edward German, and tend to dismiss the work as a hotch-potch. This is unfortunate, for its importance is considerable: it introduced Edward German to comic opera, and, had he not completed THE EMERALD ISLE he might never have composed MERRIE ENGLAND, his greatest work. It also gives the lie to the myth that Sullivan's gifts deserted him towards the end of his life, as his contribution is as good as all but the very best of his popular Savoy music. German's contribution, too, has much to recommend it, and it is possible to compare how the greatest composer of comic opera (a man with Irish blood) and his one natural successor (a Welshman) handle Irish themes.

Sullivan completed and scored only two numbers (Nos 1 & 2 of Act 1), but he had composed but not orchestrated a number of others. These were scored by German, who composed in their entirety the remaining numbers, marked by asterisks in the list on the sleeve. All Sullivan's old mastery is there; there is a double chorus reminiscent of RUDDIGORE, a splendid patter song (The typical Irish Pat), a mock-pompous entry for the Lord Lieutenant and his entourage, and much more. German's music is in his familiar style, and the listener will recognise in THE EMERALD ISLE a number of seeds which-came to fruit in MERRIE ENGLAND, notably the Countess' song which grew into 'O Peaceful England', and the 'Imitation' patter song, which is itself imitated by 'Imagination'. There are also jigs in the style of his well-known Nell Gwynn and Henry VIII dances.

The entire company gives a first class account of the work. All the chorus of course have Scots accents, so the transition from one Celtic nation to another poses no problems. Terence O'Brian, the hero, is supposed to have an English accent, and this Alan Borthwick manages effortlessly. He sings the part with great flair and ease. The Lord Lieutenant and his Countess (not forgetting Dr Fiddle, D.D., his Chaplain) all sing with appropriate 'educated' accents. The only problem is Professor Bunn, who is supposed to come from Bath, but who sings with an Irish accent. This is fine when he sings about the typical Irish Pat, but elsewhere we must allow that he is a Scot, and



therefore comes from Bathgate! Winton Thomson sings the part of "blind" Pat Murphy quite beautifully, but Richard Bourjo has the most fun, as he doubles the part of Bunn (the Passmore part) with that of Sergeant Pincher. He therefore gets German's rousing Song of the Devonshire Men as well as the patter songs. Chorus singing throughout is excellent, and the orchestral playing without flaw. Diction on the part of principals and chorus is first class; there is a thorough and accurate synopsis of the plot by Charles Haynes, and this is more than necessary to follow the story.

Although the recording is of the actual Usher Hall performance, the sound and editing are of such high quality as to give the impression of a studio performance. All applause has been edited out, and there are VERY few coughs (so often the bane of live recordings). Unfortunately two elementary splicing errors have allowed two fragments of the linking narration to remain on the discs, and there is a tiny pressing flaw present in all copies on the first side. But these are the only flaws in an otherwise splendid release.

G&S "spotters" will find this work more akin to G&S than any of Sullivan's 90s operas, and such delights as Terence's 'Oh have you met a man in debt' will be siezed upon. Buy in the confidence of hearing a first class performance of a first class work.

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#### EMERALD ISLE LIBRETTO

To accompany the new recording, the Sullivan Society have republished the libretto of THE EMERALD ISLE (by Basil Hood). The libretto is in the same format as this Magazine. It is available from the Editor @ £2.00 inc p&p; £7.00 Airmail. Cheques to Sullivan Society. Editor's address on p 1.

The photographs of the original EMERALD ISLE cast, taken from The Sketch 29 May 1901, were kindly made available to the Society by Dr Terence Rees. The photo on the front cover shows Louie Pounds as the Fairy Cleena, ie as Molly O'grady pretending to be the Fairy Cleena.

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#### 1918 MIKADO

The 1918 HMV recording of THE MIKADO is now available from the Sullivan Society on a single C90 cassette with a sleeve note by Michael Walters. This is an important recording, which has not so far been reissued. The singers include John Harrison, George Baker, Robert Radford, Violet Essex, Violet Oppenshaw, Edna Thornton, Bessie Jones and Ernest Pike. A collector's item available now from David Lisle, 28 Cator Rd, Sydenham, London SE26 5DS. Price U.K. £3.50 inc p&p. Overseas £7.20. Cheques to Sullivan Society. The tape was kindly made available by Mr Chris Orr.

#### DOROTHY

Available from the Editor, a cassette recording of Cellier's DOROTHY, the work which ran longer than THE MIKADO. This is a performance which owes its existence to the enterprise of Robin Patterson, a Canadian member of the Society. The performance is played by Carol Otto and John Wetherill of Edmonton Alabama, on a Kimball Theatre Organ. The work is played complete (except for a small part of the ballet music). Each song is played through once, and all recitatives and chorus parts are included. The music is in Cellier's attractive graceful vein, and the recording is bright and clear in stereo. A sound performance gives a very good idea of a work whose success upset Sullivan so much that he contemplated abandoning comic opera altogether. Price in U.K. £3.50 inc p&p. Overseas £7.20. Cheques to Sullivan Society.

#### LIGHT OF THE WORLD

All members who ordered it should now have received the LIGHT OF THE WORLD cassette from Southwark Music. Any queries should be addressed to Southwark Music, not the Sullivan Society.

Martin Yates' fine recording of songs by Sullivan and Somervell continues to be available from David Lisle. Sullivan's Shakespeare songs and 'Tears Idle Tears' with 'O Swallow' are included, together with 'Will he come?' sung by Bridget Lucking, and 'Fold your flapping wings' (IOLANTHE) sung by Selwyn Tillet. Somervell is represented by his SHROPSHIRE LAD cycle. £3.25 U.K. £7.50 Airmail.



## THE IRISH BACKGROUND TO THE EMERALD ISLE

by David Eden

Much of the plot of THE EMERALD ISLE is based in the type of Irish play made popular by Boucicault. Even if this were not the case the conflict between native Irish and occupying English is so much part of the history of Ireland - where everything is determined by history - that it would be hard to exclude from any supposedly characteristic opera set in the country. Stanford's SHAMUS O'BRIEN (1896) has much conventional Irishry in common with THE EMERALD ISLE, but this does not mean to say that one is an imitation or parody of the other - it is simply that both draw on a common idea of what a proper Irish opera should be about. Nevertheless, there are certain features of THE EMERALD ISLE which are not simply conventional, but have what one might call a genuine Irish content.

One of the oddest features of the EMERALD ISLE libretto is that it can be performed throughout in standard English. This paradoxical state of affairs is achieved by an apparently thin device of the plot by which the Lord Lieutenant forces all the Irish peasantry to speak with an English accent. He has set up nursery schools for the purpose, as a result of which 'there's not a man nor a colleen here that could dance an Irish jig correctly, and say "Begorra" at the end of it with any conviction'.

It is generally assumed that the Lord Lieutenant's educational activities have been introduced simply to save English actors the trouble of doing the brogue badly. This may well be so, but in fact there was a longstanding policy of the English in Ireland to replace the native Gaelic with English. As early as 1366 the Statutes of Kilkenny had forbidden the English in Ireland to use Gaelic on pain of forfeiting their lands, but for the purposes of THE EMERALD ISLE the significant legislation was a system of National Education introduced by Chief Secretary Stanley in 1831. This legislation established schools for elementary education throughout Ireland making sole use of the English language as the medium of instruction. One of the methods used against Irish was the talley stick, which was hung about the child's neck. His parents were meant to put notches on it whenever he spoke his native tongue, and he would then be punished in school accordingly. So effective was this system of education that - with the not always unwilling cooperation of the Irish - it replaced Gaelic with English as the main speech of the nation during the course of the nineteenth century. Basil Hood, the librettist of THE EMERALD ISLE, spent the early years of his army service in Ireland; it is not unreasonable to suppose that he learned about the working of the elementary schools at first hand.

Terence O'Brian, the rebel leader of THE EMERALD ISLE, is in the unfortunate position, for an Irishman, of being thoroughly English. We learn that he was taken to England as a baby, 'brought up and educated there - at Eton and Oxford University'. Moreover, he has loved (since babyhood) an Englishwoman, none other than the Lord Lieutenant's own daughter. His position seems to be a straightforward imitation of Gilbert on the part of Hood, but it is in fact not unlike that of the great Irish leader Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91). Parnell was a member of the Protestant Anglo-Irish aristocracy. To all outward appearances he was a perfect English gentleman, but he was nevertheless one of the most outstanding of all Irish patriots, an adored leader of a Catholic nation. The 'Uncrowned King of Ireland', Parnell fell from grace because of his secret love for the English wife of one of his own party. He was cited as co-respondent in an action for divorce brought by the lady's husband, Captain O'Shea, and in the prevailing moral climate found it impossible to continue his career. The fate of Parnell gives an indication of what might have happened if Sullivan had tried to marry Mrs Ronalds. The scandal of Parnell's marriage to Mrs O'Shea (1891) would have been fresh in the minds of EMERALD ISLE audiences in 1901.

The turning point of the plot of THE EMERALD ISLE is the attempt made by the peasants to frighten the English soldiers with tales of the Fairy Cleena. Professor Bunn dresses up as someone who has been enticed by Cleena to her cave and kept there for a period of years which, like the number of Falstaff's men in buckram, increases with the telling:

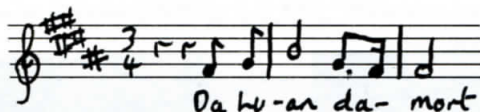
Round and round the fairy ring,  
All that time I had to sing.

The Fairy Cleena (Gaelic Cliodhna) is a genuine part of Irish folk lore. In some accounts she is said to be a wave fairy, but according to W.B. Yeats she was first an Irish Princess, then a Munster Goddess, and finally a Sheoque. He describes the Sheoques as spirits who haunt the sacred thorn bushes and raths (fortifications). They entice mortals to their world by means of fairy music, keeping one young woman for seven years. When she returned she had no toes, for she had danced them off. While we may suspect a certain borrowing from Washington Irving's RIP VAN WINKLE in Hood's treatment of Cleena, it is apparent that he has based her on an authentic piece of folk lore. However, as far as I know there is no mountain in Ireland called Carrig-Cleena.

Sullivan's own association with Ireland was not that of a patriot. His early connections were with middle class families in Belfast, and there is nothing to suggest that he saw life except as an Englishman. Even so, there is one moment in the EMERALD ISLE music which suggests that his amazing musical intelligence may have caught an echo of Irish folk tradition. In his FAIRY AND FOLK TALES OF IRELAND, Yeats prints a small fragment of music, which is said to be the cry of a banshee taken down with the help of a fiddler:



The important interval in this fragment is the rising minor third in the first bar. Whether by coincidence or otherwise, Sullivan repeats this interval as the most significant part of the song which Professor Bunn says he heard the fairies sing:



It is impossible to say whether Sullivan might have heard someone make a banshee cry on one of his visits to Ireland, but it is certain that if he had done so he would not have forgotten it, or failed to use it when the opportunity arose. Incidentally I am informed, how reliably I cannot say, that the words 'Da Luan da mort, Angus da Dardine' mean 'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday'. It sounds just the sort of elementary Gaelic a soldier might have picked up on duty in Ireland.

Other references in THE EMERALD ISLE, such as those to Brian Boru (940-1014) and Botany Bay, are part of Irish history, but have been absorbed into the general body of Paddyspeak. What distinguishes the work is the fact that its apparently most unreal English elements go beyond convention into the real paradoxes of the past.

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SUSAN (MISS GASTON-MURRAY), AND PROFESSOR BUNN  
(MR. WALTER PASSMORE).

*"Three apples glum at once become contented, happy pairs!"*



KATHLEEN (MISS AGNES FRASER), AND SERGEANT PINCHER  
(MR. R. CROMPTON).

*"Won't ye come with us and search for muskrooms, Sergeant darlin'?"*



MOLLY O'GRADY (MISS LOUIE POUNDS), AND PAT MURPHY  
(MR. HENRY LYTTON).

*"It's only you and I that have to say good-bye:  
Ah! won't you heave one sigh when I depart?"*



LADY ROSIE PIPPIN (MISS ISABEL JAY), AND TERENCE O'BRIEN  
(MR. ROBERT EVETT).

*"Sweetheart, betake thyself to bed:  
Lie not awake with aching heart or head."*



THE EARL OF NEWTOWN (MR. JONES HEWSON), AND THE COUNTESS OF NEWTOWN (MISS ROSINA BRANDRAM).

*"She walks through life with a stately air,  
As though her life were a minuet!"*



A PEASANT GIRL (MISS ETHEL BEACH), PROFESSOR BUNN (MR. WALTER PASSMORE), AND NORA (MISS LULU EVANS).

*"It's used you 'll get to the strict etiquette of a typical Irish ball!"*



## HIS EXCELLENCY

Gilbert's HIS EXCELLENCY with new music by Terry Hawes, performed by Southgate College Opera Group in the Gladys Child Theatre, 23-27 November 1982.

### Review by Victor Golding

Though D'Oyly Carte may have disappeared for the time being, we have certainly had no diminution of interest in Gilbert and/or Sullivan. In professional circles there are currently full houses at Drury Lane for THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE, THE MIKADO is coming to Sadlers Wells, there is a projected revival of UTOPIA LTD, and H.M.S. PINAFORE has been sailing merrily in many waters.

In the amateur world, too, performances of all the G&S canon abound, and there is increasing interest in the comic operas that the two men wrote in collaboration with others. We have recently seen Sullivan's THE ZOO, HADDON HALL, ROSE OF PERSIA, THE EMERALD ISLE, and CHIEFTAIN; there is a performance of THE BEAUTY STONE in the offing, besides a greatly revived interest in his non-stage music stimulated by the sterling work of the S.A.S.S. Gilbert has been represented by HASTE TO THE WEDDING, AGES AGO, OUR ISLAND HOME, EYES AND NO EYES, HAPPY ARCADIA, THE MOUNTBANKS, ENGAGED, TOM COBB, THE BRIGANDS, AND ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN.

Latest in the list of revivals is Southgate Opera Group's HIS EXCELLENCY, with a sparkling new score by their M.D. Terry Hawes, which replaces Osmond Carr's music but retains most of Gilbert's libretto and lyrics. The exciting production was presented with several parts double cast, is played by different performers on alternate nights.

The single set, showing a square near the Governor's Palace at Elsinore in 1801, was absolutely spectacular, and used the smallest stage to the most advantage, (as usual in Southgate's productions). Looking like an illustration for a Hans Christian Andersen tale, the attention to detail was masterly, and the opening to the second act, where lights (and stars) gradually came on in windows far and near, and gas gas lamps were lit, was quite stunning. Costumes, too, were correctly in period and added to the colourful effect.

The rather thin Gilbertian plot, concerning the eventual turning of the tables on an inveterate practical joker, the Governor of Elsinore, is reminiscent of THE GONDOLIERS. Particularly in the scene where the Governor instructs the Prince Regent (who is in disguise as a strolling player) in etiquette, there is "a good deal of this sort of thing", as also where the Regent's fiancée, a ballad singer, instructs the Governor's two daughters in deportment. This latter scene is not in the printed libretto; it was taken from the pre-production copy of the libretto in the Lord Chamberlain's archives.

Where I think there is a weakness in the libretto is in the lack of any real depth or warmth in the character drawing. We have met these stereotypes - patter comedian, heavy contralto, arch soubrette (two here for good measure) and lovelorn hero and heroine - so often in Gilbert's work. In most of his output there is satire to provide drive and bite, but here it is lacking, except for the mocking of the pretensions of people unexpectedly brought to fame and fortune.

However, this show was so well produced, acted and sung, particularly on the last night by the 'A' cast, that all reservations were swept aside, and we gave ourselves up to sheer enjoyment. One of Gilbert's funnier notions is to have the Governor make his army drill to ballet steps, and this was used to great comic effect in the Ballet of Hussars in Act 2, quite the funniest and slickest tongue-in-cheek parody I have ever seen. The corporal (later colonel - shades of Offenbach's GRAND DUCHESS!) was played with dead-pan aplomb by Allen Girdlestone, aided by a saucy performance from his girl-friend, Bianca (Julia Popple).

The Governor Griffenfeld - an irritating and spiteful cross between King Gama and Grand Duke Rudolph - was superbly characterised by Stan Wilson, with faultless diction and style. His daughters, also addicted to April-fooling, Thora (Joy Mather) and

Nanna (Faith Stretton 'A', Pat Eliot 'B') were a delight, especially Faith Stretton's effervescent charm and singing. As the duped sculptor and Nanna's much put-upon suitor, Erling Sykke, Philip Golding (no relation) gave another of his splendid and athletic performances, and as his counterpart, the young doctor and lovelorn suitor of Thora, Ernest Tortensson, Barrie Golding (his brother) 'B' and Guy Shirm 'A' were pleasing, though both sounded somewhat subdued in their singing.

That explosive contralto, Dame Hecla Cortlandt, was played by Ros McCutcheon 'B' and Felicity Golding 'A'. In this rather laboured role Ros McCutcheon's sudden rages and arch coyness, combined with her ample proportions, huge feathered hat and magnificent voice, made for a hilarious and memorable performance. Her business with an ornamental stone ball as a missile and a bench as a battering ram was a stroke of comic genius. Felicity Golding's characterisation (in her best Margaret Rutherford manner) was more low-key, but nevertheless enjoyable. As the statue-struck ballad singer, Christina, Sue Barnes 'B' brought a competent manner and good acting to the part, but was exceeded in all departments by the brilliance of her alter-ego, Jean Aird 'A'.

David Waters, portraying the Prince Regent, gave a nicely underplayed performance to one of the few sympathetic characters in the opera. He was under-used in his singing, however - what happened to his solo, the National Anthem song, which is probably the best written number? To use over-running as an excuse (as I heard rumoured) hardly seems correct, as we finished at 10 pm. Another criticism here must be the cutting of a few lines at his first entrance with two of his officers, which gives us the reason for his being disguised as a strolling player.

The Syndic, Mats Munck, was well played with a suitably dry voice by Maurice Bentley, and the small role of the Sentry was taken with much rifle twirling dexterity by Derek Chandler. The chorus was uniformly excellent, with very clear diction, secure harmony, well-focused sound and, above all, a good collective sense of humour.

The orchestra, conducted with great élan by the composer, was, as usual, quite splendid. The tunes had great verve, showing originality while still sounding Sullivanesque, as was the intention. Missed musical numbers were two patter trios for the Governor and daughters, Erling's 1st act song, Christina's 'Hive of bees' song, and the aforementioned 'National Anthem' song. However, we were rewarded by a good female trio (Gilbert's lyric, but not used in the original version) and a better lovers' quartet, replacing one of the originals, plus a partly rewritten version of the other. Comparing the two scores is difficult, as I only know Carr's music from the vocal score, but I personally preferred the new version while retaining a liking for many of the original numbers, and actively preferring Harold's 1st act solo 'Though I'm a soldier', and the 2nd act quartet 'One day the Syndic' in the older version. Some of the patter numbers, especially the duet 'Now what would you do', are so difficult to set it is a miracle we heard any words at all.

\* \* \* \* \*

The illustrations of HIS EXCELLENCY were kindly made available by Mr Terry Hawes. That on p14 shows Allen Girdlestone (centre) as Harold with Stan Wilson (right) as Griffenfeld. This is not the ballet of Hussars, but the entrance of the soldiers in Act 1. The illustration on page 17 shows Joy Mather (left) as Thora, Faith Stretton, (centre) as Nanna, with Jean Aird (right) as Christina. This is the scene from the Lord Chamberlain's copy in which Christina instructs Thora and Nanna in etiquette. (Ed).

\* \* \* \* \*

#### THE GRAND DUKE

THE GRAND DUKE will be presented by the Northampton G&S Group at the Theatre Royal and Opera House, Guildhall Rd, Northampton, from Monday 21st to Saturday 26th March 1983. Saturday Matinee on 26th. Prices £3.00, £2.50, £2.70, £1.70. Details from Clifford Tremaine, 6 Moorland Close, Westone, Northampton. Please send sae.

\* \* \* \* \*





HIS EXCELLENCY - Act 1

HIS EXCELLENCY - A MIKADO THAT WASN'T

By Derrick McClure

"If it had had the advantage of your expensive friend Sullivan's music, it would have been a second MIKADO". This was Gilbert's judgement, expressed in a letter to Helen D'Oyly Carte, on HIS EXCELLENCY, one of the doomed Gilbert or Sullivan ephemera of the post-carpet period. He was very probably right.

Whereas in THE MOUNTBANKS Gilbert was frankly taking advantage of his estrangement from Sullivan to write the opera which his old partner had persistently refused, HIS EXCELLENCY was almost certainly written with Sullivan in mind. However, Sullivan was occupied at the time (1894) with Burnand's THE CHIEFTAIN, and the opportunity of setting Gilbert's new piece was given to Osmond Carr. I know nothing of Carr's contribution, but since music by Sullivan had more than once made successes of weaker Gilbertian libretti than this, the harsh verdict must be that responsibility for the failure of HIS EXCELLENCY rests firmly with the composer. The opera shows Gilbert's humour, his verbal inventiveness, and his skill in dramatic construction at their best; and though differing in some respects from the familiar pattern of the main Savoy series (notably in having an outright comedy part for the female lead), its format suggests, not, like THE MOUNTBANKS, a new and rather unsuccessful experiment, but a logical and skilful development of his established technique.

The story centres on the misdeeds of an irrepressible trickster, Governor George Griffenfeld of Elsinore. As one of his two admiring daughters says, "Dear Papa is never so happy as when he is making dignified people ridiculous" - by such means, for example, as smearing butter on the Syndic's doorstep and having his tough soldiers perform their drill to ballet music. His propensity for joking stands him in good stead when two low-born young men, sculptor Erling Sykke and physician Dr Tortenssen, presume to pay court to his daughters Nanna and Thora. To punish their audacity he tricks them into believing that they are to be ennobled and promoted to personal attendance on the king - a hoax to which his daughters enthusiastically contribute by promising to wed their suitors if this promotion should indeed take place.

It is true that one of Griffenfeld's pranks has placed him in a slightly awkward position: some mock advances which he has made to the elderly and ferocious Dame Hecla Cortlandt have been taken more seriously by her than he intended. However, he has no doubt of his ability to escape from this embarrassment by palming her off on the Syndic, Mats Munck. Even when Erling and Tortenssen discover that they have been deluded, and, failing signally to see the joke, arouse the townspeople to appeal for justice to the Prince Regent, Griffenfeld still retains control of the situation. A strolling player named Nils Egilsson, obediently following the Governor's orders, assumes the guise of the Prince, and in that character confirms the promotion of Erling and Tortenssen and degrades Griffenfeld to the ranks. The humorous Governor and his daughters eagerly anticipate a grand climax to this joke in the eventual revelation that the Prince whose judgements have brought such general satisfaction is a mere impostor - though Nanna and Thora, rather to their own surprise, find the prospect of disappointing their handsome and affectionate lovers somewhat less agreeable than they expected.

Just when Griffenfeld has triumphantly presented Nils Egilsson in his vagabond attire, however, two officers appear and respectfully address the strolling player with the news that his presence is urgently required in Copenhagen. Nils Egilsson is the real Prince Regent, visiting Elsinore incognito on purpose to investigate complaints against Griffenfeld's pranks! All the judgements which the Governor instructed him to pass therefore take effect immediately. Nanna and Thora accept the suits of Count Erling and Baron Tortenssen; Mats Munck assumes Griffenfeld's place as Governor (and, less



fortunately for him, as Dame Cortlandt's bridegroom), and all rejoice in the spectacle of Griffenfeld, permanently demoted, standing as sentry.

In writing HIS EXCELLENCY, Gilbert appears to have been guided - consciously or no - by the advice offered to him by D'Oyly Carte after the failure of UTOPIA LTD: "There is no doubt in my mind that what the people want now is simply 'fun', and little else". Certainly HIS EXCELLENCY is one of the most sheerly comic of all Gilbert's libretti. Except for the well known lyric about the National Anthem there is little satire of any kind (unless, as John Wolfson suggests in Final Curtain, the concept of the disguised Prince Regent is a humorous tilt at the Prince of Wales, who was also known to travel incognito). Certainly there is nothing of the savage mockery which had been so conspicuous in UTOPIA LTD. Nor, indeed, is there much of the typical Gilbertian fondness for tricks of logic.

However, one fine example occurs in a short scene in the second act, where the old topsy-turvy vein emerges in a question of identity. Mats Munck, as the Syndic, had proposed to the wealthy Dame Cortlandt, who was at that time betrothed to Griffenfeld; but Munck is now Governor (and no longer in need of the lady's wealth):- is the Governor bound to honour a proposal made by the Syndic, or does a betrothal to the Governor apply when the Governorship changes hands? Apart from this, however, the humour of HIS EXCELLENCY resembles the straightforward situation comedy of THE GONDOLIERS rather than the more paradoxical vein of the earlier libretti. Even romance and sentiment are lacking. The only love duet, 'There was once a corporal bold', is sung by minor characters, and is playful in tone. Erling's song is a laughable parody of the lover's preoccupation with his lady:

As all men must my rivals be,  
When Nanna gives her heart to me.  
All men must broken-hearted, sigh,  
Or we fall out, all men and I.

The mood of 'Ah leave me not to pine alone' or 'There was a time' is entirely absent. Gilbert's attempt to provide a serious love interest in the character of Christina, the ballad singer who falls in love first with the Regent's statue and then with the Regent himself, merely results in a totally unnecessary addition to the cast list, though her song about the bee who tries to swarm alone is certainly one of the cleverest of Gilbert's 'fables'. Presumably the explanation for Christina's presence is that Gilbert wanted to provide a straight part for his protégée Nancy McIntosh. The best that can be said for his judgement is that Nancy's presence in HIS EXCELLENCY at least resulted only in an irrelevance, not, as in UTOPIA LTD, in a disaster.

The figure of the joker whose tricks recoil on himself is of course as old as comedy; but the skill with which Gilbert renews the humour of this time-honoured theme is remarkable. Firstly, the very extravagance of Griffenfeld's comic inventiveness cannot but arouse our admiration - he is truly a prince among pranksters. While we laugh at his ingenuity, however, Gilbert ensures that we will enjoy rather than regret his downfall by making it clear that his humour contains a strong element of cruelty. Tricks played on grotesque characters like Mats Munck and Dame Cortlandt are one thing, but when the sympathetic Erling and Tortenssen face real financial ruin as a result of his schemes, our amusement at their gullibility is tempered by a desire to see their tormentor punished. And a trio for Griffenfeld and his daughters shows that their idea of fun extends to tricks which, from the victim's point of view, are nasty in the extreme:

A good spring gun breeds endless fun, and makes men jump like rockets -  
And turnip-heads on posts / Make very decent ghosts.  
Then hornets sting like anything when placed in waistcoat pockets -  
Burnt cork and walnut juice / Are not without their use.  
No fun compares with easy chairs whose seats are stuffed with needles -  
Live shrimps their patience tax / When put down people's backs -  
Surprising, too, what one can do with a pint of fat black beetles -  
Then treacle on a chair / Will make a Quaker swear! skirts -  
Then sharp tin tacks / And pocket squirts / And cobblers wax / For ladies'  
And slimy slugs / On bedroom floors / And water jugs / On open doors -  
Prepared with these cheap properties, amusing tricks to play,  
Upon a friend a man may spend a most delightful day!

Griffenfeld's daughters appear to have mended their ways by the end of the opera - a



HIS EXCELLENCY - Act 2



development which Gilbert shows in an unusually charming and delicate scene. Erling and Tortenssen, entering in high dudgeon at the girls' treatment of them, are met with fake tears from Nanna and Thora. They respond ardently: "Now, my darling child - Nanna - dearest - don't cry like that! I can't bear it! See, on my knees I swear to you that I will always - always love you as I love you now! Oh, don't cry like that - you'll break my heart - indeed you will!". After a dancing quartet the men leave, and the girls reflect:

NANNA: Poor bridegrooms. It's - it's a capital joke! (About to cry)

THORA: Capital! (Looking at NANNA'S face) Why, a real tear, I do believe!

NANNA: (Holding it on her finger) Yes, it's real this time.

THORA: (Examining it) Funny, isn't it?

NANNA: Very amusing.

THORA: Put it back. (NANNA does so) All right now?

NANNA: (Brightly) All right now!

But while his daughters thus redeem themselves, and therefore escape punishment, Griffenfeld remains impenitent to the end. If a remote comparison is permissible, he is a farcical counterpart of Richard III or Volpone: even as we acknowledge his skill in manipulating the other characters, we look forward to the point at which he will overreach himself.

Secondly - again like his classical predecessors - the effect of Griffenfeld's downfall is heightened by its occurring when he is seemingly at the peak of his success. The sub-plot of the Syndic and the Dame not only provides an excellent comic scene of cross-purpose talk in Act 1 - when Dame Cortlandt attempts to discuss with Munck the arrangements for her marriage to Griffenfeld and Munck's replies are given in the belief that she wishes to marry him - it also leads to a genuine triumph for Griffenfeld, who shortly before the denouement neatly escapes from his entanglement with the lady by proving conclusively that she really is betrothed to Munck. His delight at this is exceeded only by his anticipation of his immediate plan to produce the false Regent - a move which, of course, has an effect exactly the opposite to what he intended.

Most noteworthy of all is the comic capital which Gilbert makes by ensuring that the audience is aware of 'Nils Egilsson's' identity from his first appearance. A surprise ending, with the arrival of the Prince in propria persona, flabbergasting the audience as it does the characters, would have been effective enough, and a less ingenious dramatist would surely have been content with it; but Gilbert, by sacrificing this particular opportunity, is able to extract far more humour from the situation. The first conversation between Griffenfeld and the supposed strolling player is one of the wittiest scenes in the Gilbertian canon:

REGENT: Surely you're not the Governor?

GRIF: Yes, sir, I am the Governor of this Province.

REG: A thousand pardons! I took you for the borough constable. A hasty conclusion based upon a commendable absence of that superficial polish which the vulgar are but too apt to associate with the conception of a gentleman. The Governor! (Bowing) A worshipful gentleman, I'll be sworn, appearances notwithstanding. A thousand pardons! - - -

GRIF: - - - By the way, have you ever heard it remarked that you bear a close resemblance to a very dignified personage?

REG: Eh? Oh, you mean the man who mends boots on the quay. That's very likely - he's my aunt.

GRIF: The man who mends fiddlesticks!

REG: I don't think I know him.

GRIF: No, sir - not the man who mends boots - to no less a person than the Prince Regent of Denmark.

REG: The Prince Regent?

GRIF: There he is. He's a common-looking fellow, and you are singularly like him. (Pointing to statue) - - - He's an ugly fellow sir, and so are you.

A similar and equally good piece of dialogue occurs in the second act, following a big musical scene in which the Regent, prompted by Griffenfeld, metes out punishment to him and rewards to the other characters. This scene ends with a mild suggestion from 'Nils' that such practical joking may be risky, which Griffenfeld complacently dismisses: "What does he mean about practical jokes recolling on their perpetrators?". This leads to the song 'The played-out Humorist', Griffenfeld's explanation of his preference for practical over verbal humour.

Throughout the opera we are thus treated to the spectacle of Griffenfeld unwittingly engineering his own downfall. In no other libretto does Gilbert make such extensive and effective use of the dramatic device of allowing the audience to share a secret concealed from most of the characters.

With music by 'your expensive friend Sullivan' - how incredibly mean Gilbert could be on occasion! - might HIS EXCELLENCY indeed have repeated the success of THE MIKADO? The libretto is in all respects a first rate piece of work, excelled by few if any of the earlier operas, and far better than the other libretti of the nineties - the overwritten MOUNTEBANKS, the confused GRAND DUKE, or the frankly botched UTOPIA LTD. And there is much in it that would have appealed to Sullivan strongly. The humorous plot, lacking in any of the magical and fantastic elements to which he had objected in the past, would surely have pleased him. The musical numbers allow for a wide range of styles and effects. Sullivan would have provided a magnificent setting for the joyous opening chorus, and a neatly contrasting mood in the romantic ballad for the lovelorn Christina which immediately follows. He would have applied his gift for evocative parody to the National Anthem song, made of Griffenfeld's ballet-dancing soldiers one of the most effective chorus scenes since the entrance of the Penzance policemen, and risen to the challenge of the judgement scene, in which five verses, in the same metre and rhyme scheme, expressing the sentiments of various characters, have to be sung as an ensemble. If there is a weakness in the musical construction it is that so many numbers seem to call for lively and cheerful settings. But Sullivan's ingenuity, aided by the unending variety of Gilbert's verse forms, would have enabled him to avoid monotony. And after all, the music of THE GONDOLIERS, which is always rated highly, is gay almost from beginning to end.

The character of Dame Cortlandt, the most outlandish of all Gilbert's elderly ladies, might have elicited some protests from Sullivan, but Gilbert could have pointed out that she is a purely comic figure. The unease which had resulted from his allowing some touches of sympathy to Lady Jane and Katisha, and presenting Dame Hannah and Dame Carruthers as figures of dignity in their first acts and of comedy in their second, is entirely absent. And though Dame Cortlandt is sixty and wears a wig, the audience's laughter is directed not primarily at her, but at Griffenfeld's and Munck's reactions to their entanglements with her. More relevant, from Sullivan's point of view, would have been the fact that she has two excellent and strongly contrasted comic duets. In the first of these, she meditates in response to a question tentatively put by Griffenfeld: 'What would you do if I proved untrue - - - and if marry your darling you couldn't?'. She works herself up into a fearful passion before giving her truly appalling answer. It is easy to imagine the mock-melodramatic music which Sullivan would have lavished on this! The second is with Mats Munck, and follows on their cross-purpose conversation already mentioned. His ill-timed playfulness ('You little roguery-poguey you!) and her rising indignation could have been splendidly evoked in music.

Though of course no certainty is possible, it is surely likely that the libretto of HIS EXCELLENCY would have evoked a superb response from Sullivan, and that, with author and composer again at their best, its reception would have been enthusiastic. And - to continue to speculate - who can say but that a major success, immediately after UTOPIA LTD, would not only have saved the partnership but launched it into an Indian summer in which a new sequence of brilliant operas would have continued until Sullivan's death? In such a context UTOPIA LTD would now be seen not as a penultimate flicker of a dying collaboration, but, like PRINCESS IDA and RUDDIGORE, merely as a temporary lapse from which the writers recovered to produce work as good as or better than before. Alas, it was not to be. But HIS EXCELLENCY must at least be honoured with a Gilbertian title: the greatest might-have-been in the history of Gilbert and Sullivan.



## THE PIRATE MOVIE

From time to time members are kind enough to write either to the Editor or to the Committee complimenting them on one or other aspect of the Society's activities. Much more rarely do we receive letters of complaint, but the cover of Magazine No 13 has caused several members to write expressing their views. The cover showed a publicity illustration for a film called THE PIRATE MOVIE, and a brief paragraph in the body of the Magazine explained that the film was a 'pirated' version of THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE. The gist of the criticisms received was that the S.A.S.S. should not lower itself to give space to such vulgar rubbish as pirate productions, and that in doing so we diminished our standing. One must demur. Pirated productions of THE PIRATES in the 1980s are as much a part of the history of G&S as are pirated productions of H.M.S. PINAFORE in the 1870s, and as such - whatever their artistic merits or lack of them - they warrant our consideration. These things are entitled to their small niche in history, and were we to overlook them, they might pass into oblivion undocumented. Finally, by merely recording the existence of THE PIRATE MOVIE we do not imply approval for the project.

In the light of these comments, members may be interested to know that THE PIRATE MOVIE is now on general release in the U.K. It is an Australian film, clearly based on the Broadway/Drury Lane production of THE PIRATES, but whereas the latter succeeds gloriously, THE PIRATE MOVIE is an embarrassing disaster. The bare bones of Gilbert's plot remain, together with (in name at least) all his characters. Five of Sullivan's songs survive: 'O better far'; 'Climbing over rocky mountain'; 'I am the very model'; 'When the foeman bares'; 'With cat like tread'. All have their words butchered, but the musical tampering with them is less than one might expect. The new songs - mostly given to Frederick and Mabel and the work of a team of four - are mostly starry-eyed mush; the pirates have an opening chorus of incredible banality, 'We are the pirates/ beastly men are we'. The dialogue, alternating between scatology and obscenity, is completely rewritten to include a number of plot changes and diversions, such as Mabel and Frederick diving in search of the Stanley's lost treasure.

The singing, acting and production are all very poor; the only member of the cast of whom I had ever heard was Bill Kerr (Major-General), late of HANCOCK'S HALF HOUR. He overacted. The only creditable performance was that of Ted Hamilton (Pirate King) - a middle-aged silver-haired lecher. Mabel was played as a wisecracking superbrat (very irritating). Frederick remained the prize drip he always is, and there were a number of the currently very popular side-swipes at Hollywood and its institutions. The introduction of an Inspector Clouseau lookalike and a large scale fight involving the throwing of pizzas were pointless. In short, a very cheap and nasty film - whether you like G&S or not.

Stephen Turnbull

(In this connection we record without regret the passing of THE MIKADO at the Cambridge Theatre, London. I am reliably informed that this production was the most vulgar and tasteless travesty of G&S ever perpetrated. The policy of the Magazine towards these trash productions is like that of Dr Johnson, who, when asked if he would stoop to write the biography of a dunce replied 'Yes, and say he was a dunce'. Ed)

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Pressure of space has prevented the continuation of David Lisle's valuable article on Sullivan and the Crystal Palace. It will be continued in the next Magazine, when I also hope to deal with Sullivan's affair with Violet Beddington, and to print a story discovered by John Gardner of how Sullivan bought a carpet.

Ed.



MISS ISABEL JAY AS LADY ROSIE PIPPIN IN "THE EMERALD ISLE," AT THE SAVOY.

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