

# Precious Nonsense

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDWESTERN GILBERT AND SULLIVAN SOCIETY

May 1992 -- Issue 34



These are the sad results proceeding

From his affable ways and his easy breeding!

For some reason, it seems like every May **Nonsense** ends up being thrown together. Maybe the day will come when this is not the case, but for 1992, anyway, we are following the pattern. In any event, the news and information here couldn't wait for a better presentation, so here it is. The rest of it should be coming out in a Summer issue sometime in July (unless the computer has another head crash). This time around, in addition to the Big Quiz and the long-awaited review of the new Benford G&S Lexicon, we have some more about the logic of Iolanthe's plot, And the Present Details of the MGS Annual Outing, Scheduled for the Evening of August 28, 1992. On top of that, May has been a big month for S/A Cole: she finally got a word-processing mail merge to work. She has therefore been trying to correct the information the MGS has on its members. For this reason, the loose sheet is included with this issue.

We're going to try to get triple mileage out of that sheet, so here's the explanation. First of all, the "Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society Information Check" reflects all the information the MGS has about you, and due to S/A Cole's falling down on the job lately, that information is frequently pretty sketchy. Make sure the information on the sheet is correct, and as complete as you want it to be. If it's correct, great. If it's wrong, please correct it. That's Mileage One. Then, write down on the sheet whether you are going to be coming to the Annual Outing, and mail back the completed sheet by August 1, 1992. That's Mileage Two, so we know what to tell the restaurant when we make seating arrangements. Mileage Three is that we're going to use this sheet like a postcard drawing. One of the returned sheets will be selected at random to receive a nice prize. So, be sure and straighten out S/A Cole before August 1. She'll try and straighten up, and get the Summer **Nonsense** out soon. In the meantime, let's see what's new.



## What Cheer! What Cheer! {Midwestern}

Ohio Light Opera's 1992 season is about to begin, and this year, they are presenting: Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Magdalena*, Romberg's *The Student Prince*, Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Offenbach's **The Brigands** (in the W.S. Gilbert translation!), and Edward German's *Tom Jones*. The schedule is *Magdalena* (June 10, 13 {matinee}, 25, July 3, 11, 19 {mat.} 29 {mat} and August 8 {mat.}); *The Student Prince* (June 11, 13, 14 {mat.}, 17 {mat.}, 18, 20 {mat.}, 28 {mat.}, July 4 {mat.}, 10, 14 {mat.}, 22, 28 {mat.}, August 2, and 7); The Gondoliers (June 12, 20, 23 {mat.}, 27 {mat.}, July 1 {mat.} 26 {mat.}, 31, and August 6); *Die Fledermaus* (June 16 {mat.}, 19, 21 {mat.}, 27, 30 {mat.}, July 2, 18 {mat.}, 26, 29, and August 9); The Mikado (June 26, July 5, 8 {mat.}, 11 {mat.}, 16, 21 {mat.}, 25, 30, August 2 {mat.}, 5, and 8); **The Brigands** (July 7 {mat.}, 9, 12 (mat.), 18, 24, August 1 {mat.}, 5 {mat.}, and *Tom Jones* (July 17, 22 {mat.}, 23, 25 {mat.}, August 1, 4 {mat.}, and

9). Evening performances begin at 8:00, while Matinees begin at 2:00 pm. Individual ticket prices are \$21.00, but Ohio Light Opera has several matinee specials and such that might be helpful. For more information, call the box office at (216) 263-2345 or 263-2329, or write the company at The College of Wooster; Wooster, OH 44691.

According to an article in the March 12, 1992 *Chicago Sun-Times*, sent in by Norman Vogt, the Grant Park Symphony Concert series (held out-of-doors in Grant Park in Chicago), is going to include a set of four "pops" concerts. One of those pops concerts is going to be (probably a concert version of) The Mikado June 26-27, conducted by James Paul. That ought to be something to look forward to.

According to their newsletter *Savoyardage*, the Madison Savoyards are expecting to give Sorcerer this summer, July 24-25 and July 31-August 1. At this point they don't seem to have worked out the details, but more information can be obtained from the company at P.O. Box 1612, Madison, WI

53701.

Light Opera Works' 1992 season is to consist of Oscar Strauss's **A Waltz Dream** (June 26-28), Gilbert and Sullivan's **The Grand Duke (August 28-30)**, and Kurt Weill's **Knickerbocker Holiday** (December 29-January 3). Since so few of the MGS members who were at the 1991 Annual Meeting had seen **Grand Duke**, we have decided to hold the 1992 Annual Outing in conjunction with that production. The details are described a little further along in the newsletter, but in the meantime, the MGS get-together will be on the evening of August 28th. Tickets, for MGS members for that evening, are \$17.25 (down from \$23.00, which S/A Cole thinks is tremendously kind of them!). The performance begins at 8:00 pm. For more information (on the production), and to order tickets, Light Opera Works can be reached at 927 Noyes St., Evanston, IL 60201-2799 {(708) 869-6300}. Be sure and tell them you are a member of the Mid-western Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

The Cleveland Opera (Suite 1052, 1422 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1901 / (216) 575-0903) is planning to give The Yeomen of the Guard November 20-22, 1992. These are all the details we have so far, but we'll pass on anything more we hear once we hear it.

The Whitewater Opera Co. (P.O. Box 633, Richmond, IN 47375) is planning on presenting Pirates April 23 and 24, 1993. This may be a little early to mention it, but at least we know what to keep an eye out for.



### What Cheer! What Cheer! {Elsewhere}

The Lamplighters (2350 Turk Blvd., San Francisco, CA 94118 / Box Office: (415) 752-7755) is going to present *My Fair Lady* June 20-August 2, and The Yeomen of the Guard September 26-November 1, on various Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays during those periods. Individual tickets are \$21.00 (\$24.00 for *My Fair Lady*), and performances begin at 8:30 pm (2:30 pm on Sundays). For more information, contact the company. We have heard nothing but good reports of this company's performances, so this season should be most entertaining. By the way, this year is their 40th anniversary, so if you call or write, be sure and

congratulate them.

In honor of the Sullivan Sesquicentennial, the Victorian Lyric Opera Company (P.O. Box 10391, Rockville, MD 20849) is planning a G&S weekend June 19-21, called **The Great Gilbert & Sullivan Sing-Out; A Musical Marathon**, Larry Garvin tells us. The fun begins at 7:00 pm at the Rockville Civic Center Mansion, with a dress-up reception and buffet, and really gets going on the 20th, at the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater of the Rockville Civic Center. The affair is called a "sing-out" because from 8:00 am to about midnight, participants will be able to participate in the singing of **all** the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. As the flyer says,

At the 'Sing-Out', the operettas will be presented in a concert format without spoken dialogue. Leading roles will be filled in advance through a process of sign-ups, and chorus roles will be available to all on a first-come basis. A theater company make ask to take charge of an entire opera and perhaps provide some staged musical numbers, although (stationary) chorus participation will remain open to all. The singers will be accompanied by pianists playing the vocal score and the accompaniment. For some of the operettas, a small ensemble of instruments may be used.

Sunday, the weekend will conclude with a brunch at Phineas Restaurant in Rockville. The fee for the whole event (except for the brunch, and lodging if you don't live locally) is only \$15.00. This is a new sort of event to S/A Cole, and it might be a lot of fun. For more information, get in touch with the Victorian Lyric Opera Co. S/A Cole has some flyers about it, too, so if you want one from her, just let her know. Before their Sing-Out, we learn from the Farron Family, the Victorian Lyric Opera Co. is going to be giving Mikado May 29-31 and June 5-7. Performances begin at 8:00 pm (with the May 31 and June 7 performances being 3:00 matinees), and tickets are \$8.00 (\$6.00 for students/children).

The Gilbert and Sullivan Festival at the University of Boulder, Colorado, is well-known for frequently having former D'Oyly Cart-er John Reed as artistic director. Rumor has it that they and he have been prevailed upon to present The Grand Duke in 1992. We should have more details soon. The group is also interested in hearing from other performing groups who have presented this rarity. If

you would like more information, or would like to give *them* some, do contact Dennis Jackson, College of Music, Box 301, University of Colorado/-Boulder, Boulder, CO 80309.

The Sir Arthur Sullivan Society is hosting a Sullivan Festival October 23-25, 1992, at the Forte Crest Hotel, Hull, England. The Program is to be; Friday, Oct. 23: Welcome and sherry reception at 9:00 pm, with a grand auction of Sullivan/G&S memorabilia at 9:30 Saturday, Oct. 24: In the morning, participants can either see a program of films, videos and tapes (including a 1926 newsreel of the new Ricketts costumes for *Mikado*, and an American radio program offering an entertaining explanation of Elgar's Enigma) or take a walking tour of historic buildings in the center of Hull. In the afternoon, there are illustrated talks on Sullivan, and Victorian popular song. At 5:00 is tea, and at 7:00 is the Gala Concert at the Hull City Hall, conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras. It is to feature the **Thespis** ballet music, Festival Te Deum, Sullivan's Cello Concerto, and a concert performance of *Trial by Jury*. A Gala Banquet at the City Hall follows. Sunday, Oct. 25: A service of Matins will be at 11:00, using music exclusively by Sullivan (including the Jubilate Deo of 1868 and the Boer War Te Deum). After lunch, a song and instrumental recital by musicians from Hymers College will feature "The Window" song cycle, the Idyll and Duo Concertante, among other things. Afterward, there will be an illustrated talk about early recordings of Sullivan's work. The weekend concludes with afternoon tea, and a vocal recital.

Add-ons are a Do-It-Yourself concert at 9:00 pm on Sunday (in which you can perform your favorite item from Sullivan's output), and a chance to see a dress rehearsal of the centenary revival of *Haddon Hill* on Monday. The basic cost for the festival is £148-50, which includes accommodations for the nights of October 23 and 24. It may cost more (or less), depending on how much you want to participate in. In any event, a £30 deposit is required to hold you reservation, and for more information, do get in touch with Stephen Turnbull; Sullivan Festival 1992; Cockfield House; 48 Front Street; Cockfield, Bishop Auckland; Co. Durham DL13 5DS England (or call 01-0388-710308) before August 31, 1992.

The Austin (TX) Gilbert and Sullivan Society is planning to give Mikado sometime during June,

1992. At this point, they're expecting to give it at the Zachary Scott Theatre Center. For more information, the company can be reached via Reba Gillman, Secretary; 1606 The High Road; Austin, TX 78748.

The Portsmouth Festival is going to be presenting 25 Son et Lumiere performances of Pinafore, from July 18-August 15 every evening but Mondays. What makes this run especially interesting is that the performance will be given on board the HMS Victory in the Portsmouth Naval Dockyard. The orchestra will be under the direction of David Mackie, and the cast are expected to have been hand-picked from top British opera companies. Tickets are £10.50 and £15.00. For more information, write HMS Pinafore, City Arts, The Guildhall, Portsmouth, England, PO1 2AD, U.K., or call {01} 0705-834182.

We hear from the Farrons that the Aldersgate Church Community Theater (Aldersgate United Methodist Church, 1301 Collingwood Road; Alexandria, VA/(703) 780-1377) is planning to give *Pirates* October 23-25, and 30-31 (with a children's matinee on Halloween). If anybody can make it, we'd love to hear how it goes.

Speaking of big G&S events, The Mansion House at Grim's Dyke (Old Redding, Harrow Weald, Middlesex HA3 6SH, England / Tel.: (081-954-4227)) is planning a number of special events to commemorate the upcoming centenary of *Utopia Limited* in 1993. Details should be forthcoming as the management (of Grim's Dyke, that is) makes them available.



### The 1992 MGS Big Quiz

It's that time of the year again! As always, the rules are very simple. The member who answers the most questions correctly wins a prize. You can refer to any reference sources you like, but all responses must be received by the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society by **August 15, 1992**. The answers will be checked and winners will be notified. In case of a tie, the response received first will take precedence, and decisions of the quiz correcters are final. This year's big prize winner will receive copies of Godfrey Cave Associates' reproduction of the libretti of The Mikado and The Yeomen of the Guard, illustrated by W. Russell Flint and Charles E. Brock, R.I. They were provided by member Norman

Vogt and the late Warren Colson, and we certainly appreciated their kindness in donating them.

Now, if you feel intimidated, you need not. The Society's founding fathers, in their wisdom, knew that many members would be novices in matters G&S-ical, so they saw to it that the member who makes an honest effort to answer the questions correctly and answers the fewest correctly will also win a nice prize. Last year's big winners, Constance Thompson and Carol Cole, are disqualified from winning a big prize this year, but all are welcome to participate. We'll look forward to hearing from you (before August 15, don't forget). Any Questions?

*Then let the Revels Commence!*

1. 1992 marks not only the 150th anniversary of Sullivan's birth, but the centennial of two operas that Gilbert and Sullivan wrote separately: Haddon Hall and The Mountebanks. Who wrote the libretto for Haddon Hall and who composed the music for The Mountebanks?
  2. Who created the role of Rupert Vernon in Haddon Hall at the Savoy?
  3. What music critic called Haddon Hall a "huge success" and wrote "I contend that Savoy opera is a genre in itself; and that Haddon Hall is the highest and most consistent expression it has yet attained"?
  4. Bartolo, a character in The Mountebanks, is a former would-be tragedian who was laughed off the stage for his performance as Hamlet. What did he do to ensure that nobody would ever laugh at him again?
  5. 1992 is also the centennial of another operetta with a libretto by Gilbert, this one with music by George Grossmith. What was the title of this work?
  6. What two G&S characters are Grenadier Guards?
  7. who created the role of Apollo in Thespis?
  8. Trial by Jury was originally produced together on a bill with what other opera by Offenbach?
  9. How old is Constance Partlett during the unfolding of the plot of the opera in which she appears?
  10. What was the first ship that Sir Joseph Porter, first Lord of the Admiralty, ever saw?
  11. At what time does Major-General Stanley usually go to bed?
  12. What is the cost of a raffle ticket for the chance of becoming Bunthorne's Bride?
  13. What was Captain Shaw's full name?
  14. In which opera is the Roman poet Juvenal mentioned?
  15. What were the last words of the suicidal tom-tit?
  16. What are Rose Maybud's gifts for pretty little Ruth Rowbottom and the poor orphan girl on the hill?
  17. In which opera is someone named Warren mentioned, and what is Mr. Warren's profession?
  18. How much time elapses between Acts I and ii of The Gondoliers?
  19. In which opera does this line appear: "Fairy Queen's no longer young:|"?
    20. what is the secret sign of the conspiracy to overthrow the Grand Duke?
    21. In which two G&S operas is coffee mentioned?
    22. In which three G&S operas is beer mentioned?
    23. In which opera is asparagus mentioned?
    24. In which three operas are fireworks mentioned?
    25. Whose "temper was volcanic"?
    26. Who observes that "volcanoes have a splendour that is grim"?
    27. While we're on the subject of volcanoes, in which opera is Mount Vesuvius mentioned?
    28. Who, "to benefit humanity", compares everybody's income with the income tax returns?
    29. Who claims to have made a false income tax return in one of the G&S operas?
    30. Who, on the other hand, pays his taxes and cherishes the receipts?
    31. Who is described as "a great matrimonial fish"?
    32. In which G&S opera is Hamlet mentioned by name?
    33. Who has "grammar and spelling for two"?
    34. who was the illustrator for Gilbert's "Bab Ballads"?
    35. What is the name of the cook in the Bab Ballad "The Yarn of the Nancy Bell"?
    36. Name the foster brothers of (a) Robin Oakapple and (b) Leonard Meryll.
    37. Who claims to have "a light, airy, joysome wit"?
    38. Who "drinketh strong waters which do bemuse a man, and make him even as the wild beasts of the desert"?
    39. Who punched his poor little sisters' heads?
    40. Who is the only judge "whose decrees have received the honour of a double encore"?
    41. Who claims to have "a pretty taste for paradox," although a paradox later nearly causes his death?
    42. Who gave whom an Italian glance (not in **The Gondoliers**).
    43. which G&S characters state that they come "from a ladies' seminary"?
    44. Which G&S character is taken for "The proprietor of a Ladies' Seminary"?
    45. What is Old Adam's last name?
    46. Who is described as having "a caricature of a face"?
    47. Who observes that "virtue is triumphant only in theatrical performances"?
    48. What was Sir Rupert Murgatroyd's hobby?
    49. According to Ko-Ko, by the Mikado's law, "when a married man is beheaded, his wife is buried alive. Why (again, according to Ko-Ko) has this law never been put into force?"
    50. 1992 is not only Sullivan's 150th birthday, but the 200th anniversary of the birth of Rossini (1792-1868), whom Sullivan met in his youth (Sullivan's, not Rossini's). What is Rossini's birthday, and with what G&S character does he share it?
- Bonus question:  
Sullivan was born May 13, 1852. On what day of the week was he born?



## More of *Iolanthe* On its Head

In the last *Nonsense*, it was speculated that S/A Cole would probably have more to say about the organization of the plot of *Iolanthe*. And so she does. This time, she examines the nature of the marriage relationship when one partner will greatly outlive the other.

### Fairy Marriage Part II: Living with an Immortal

Last time around, we looked at fairy law regarding marriage, and established that the Queen of the Fairies had not broken fairy law when she married Private Willis. She married a mortal, though she was married to a fairy (Private Willis became a fairy after their marriage). This time, let's look at the necessity of fairies being married to fairies.

According to Leslie Ayers [Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan, V. 1](#) (the annotations for *Iolanthe*), in an early stage of the opera, Celia had been given a song during the first scene, explaining *Iolanthe's* banishment. In that song, she calls the law about not marrying mortals "arbitrary". If you've seen the song, you'll know the main reason the law is referred to as arbitrary is probably because Gilbert was running out of that rhymes for "fairy", and it's a good one. In fact, (if you can call an analysis of *fairy tales* something based in fact), both fiction and folklore give good reasons for immortals pairing off with immortals, rather than with mortals.

One of the best reasons *I've* run across is the idea that, since one partner is going to age at a slower rate and will greatly outlive the other, the decrepit partner is likely to become jealous. A good example of such a mis-match is the hero of Mary Shelley's story "The Mortal Immortal" and his wife. For the curious, it can be found in the collection, (Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft.) [Tales and Stories](#) (Rept. of the 1891 text. Boston: Gregg Press, 1975), and probably in others as well. I don't know when this story was written, but since she died in 1851, "The Mortal Immortal" predates *Iolanthe* by at least thirty years. In any event, the story is set in late medieval Germany and goes something like this:

The hero is a poor student in love with a local beauty. In order to make ends meet, he has become an assistant to an alchemist. His lady-love, in the meantime, has been more or less adopted by a rich old woman. The girl, unhappily, is aware of her charms, and likes flirting with handsome men. The hero can't spend much time with her (since he's stirring concoctions for the alchemist), and her behavior is driving him to distraction. One day, after the alchemist had been working on a potion for a number of days without rest, he puts the hero to watching it while he sleeps. When the potion in the vial changes color, the hero is supposed to

wake the alchemist, who instructs him not to drink any of it, because it will cure him of his love. The hero watches the brew and broods about his faithless lover. He finally decides that he wants to be cured of his love, and when the potion does change color, he starts to drink it. The alchemist catches him just as the vial explodes in the hero's hand. He doesn't realize the hero drank any of it, though. The hero finds that his love has *not* diminished, but the brew has instead made him bold enough to claim his lover's hand. He gets to the old woman's chateau just as she is about to force the beauty to marry someone else. He takes her home when the old woman throws her out of her house. They marry, the hero quits his alchemist job to run the farm, and the future seems rosy.

A few years later, the hero learns that the alchemist is dying. He goes to visit him, and finds he's working on that same potion the hero had drunk. The alchemist reveals that the stuff was not a love cure after all, but was actually an elixir of immortality. He dies before it can do him any good.

The hero is understandably incredulous at this revelation, but as time goes on, he realizes that, while his beautiful wife is getting stout and grey, he hasn't changed a bit. His condition is not lost on his wife, who becomes jealous of the attention the young girls of the village pay him, and angry with him for not helping her stay young, too. The neighbors are uneasy about his not aging, too, and end up shunning the couple. They are finally forced from the village. They go to live in a foreign country, where the hero's wife finally dies of old age.

The hero spends the end of the story talking about the drawbacks of immortality for a mortal (and you can read the story for more information on those drawbacks).

Now, while the hero's troubles with immortality would not be those of one born an immortal, the hero's *wife's* problems *would* be an issue during the term of such a marriage. The mortal spouse would resent the immortal's apparent youth and vigor, the tempting attentions that youth would be likely to bring, and the faithlessness his or her easy (and impending) liberation from the marriage would imply. Like this wife, that mortal spouse would be likely to become abusive, and, if British folk tales are accurate, fairies will not tolerate abuse. (Most of the stories about men marrying water fairies, for example, end this way: the wife has told the husband that he must not do something to her, such as strike or swear at her. He does that thing, and she leave him in a flash. The legend of Melusine is another good example. Regardless of folklore, though, an accusation of faithlessness is an insult to a Gilbertian fairy. In the

short-story version of "Fallen Fairies", for instance, two of the fairies marry mortals, who remain mortals, and lived happily with them until they (the men) died. The story concludes with the comment that they wore widow's weeds afterward, and doing so became quite the style in Fairyland.)

In any event, the point should be clear: if both partners are immortal, neither will grow old or bitter, and therefore the motivation for such domestic tensions is eliminated. A fairy law prohibiting fairies from marrying mortals would therefore make a lot of sense.

Knowing S/A Cole, unless something more interesting comes up, she will probably have more to say on this subject in the next issue. For the time being, though, let's leave it at that.



### Let the Welkin Ring with the News

We were very sorry to learn of the passing of member E.G. Evans, one of our Florida members. She had grown up in Aurora (Illinois), and S/A Cole remembers her best for remembering those glory days of Aurora High School Education, in which the high schools gave shows like **Iolanthe** and **The Gondoliers**. She will certainly be missed by her family, as well as the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society.

We also noticed that long-time NYGASS member Isaac Asimov died April 6th. He was a tremendously prolific writer on virtually all subjects, including G&S, though he is no doubt best known for his science fiction stories. His contributions, to literature and G&S, will be missed as well.

Member David Stone seems to have cleared up the mystery of the Missing "Swing Mikado". Apparently, the Ford Theater in Washington (DC) had been considering reviving their 1986 **Hot Mikado** (not the "Hot Mikado"), but at this time the management has decided to continue the theater's current show rather than spend a lot of money reviving the **Hot Mikado**. On the other hand, though, the Virginia Opera is expected to present a "Swing Mikado" at the George Mason University Center for the Arts January 29-30, 1993. I expect we will all get clearer details as they become available. In the meantime, the article about the Virginia Opera that David Stone sent concludes by saying: "A summer workshop and performance, titled 'Swinging "The Mikado"' and tied in with the company's upcoming production, will be given at George Mason [University, probably] June 24-27." If anybody gets a chance to go, please do let us know how things went. It sounds like it'll be a lot of fun.

According to a flyer from the British Philatelic Bureau (FREEPOST, Edinburgh EH3 0HN / Tel. 031-550-8900 {and you'll probably have to put an international code on the front of that}), that the Gibbons of Coventry and the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society sent along, *The British commemorative stamp for the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sir Arthur Sullivan will be released July 21, 1992*. Incidentally, one commemorating the centenary of the death of Lord Tennyson was released March 10th, but anyway. Apparently, First Day Covers, Presentation Packs (which includes "a full set of stamps mounted on card and protected by a transparent sleeve, . . . [which] opens up to reveal a wealth of information, accompanied by full-colour illustrations"), and Stamp Cards ("enlarged to postcard size, to show in full their colourful and intricate detail) will be available. The flyer doesn't say anything about just ordering the Sullivan commemorative, but the Bureau should be able to give you further information and prices.

Lilias Circle, one of the prime movers with the Savoy-Aires' recently dropped us a note to say that the Savoy-Aires are looking to host the Chicago G&S Weekend, sometime in May, 1993. We'll pass on whatever details we hear as we hear them.



### Two G&S Books Compared Book Review of:

|                                      |     |                              |
|--------------------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Hear Ye! Hear Ye!                    |     | Hear Ye! Hear Ye!            |
| The First Lexicon                    | vs. | The Second Lexicon           |
| <u>Gilbert and Sullivan Lexicon</u>  |     | Gilbert and Sullivan Lexicon |
| <u>In which is gilded the Philo-</u> |     | By Harry Benford             |
| <u>sophic Pill</u>                   |     | Major illustrator:           |
| By Harry Benford                     |     | Geoffrey Shovelton           |
| Illus. Geoffrey Shovelton            |     | Pub. 1991                    |
| Pub. 1978                            |     |                              |

(Admittedly, The Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society spends a good deal of time playing catch-up. It has taken us some time to find a reviewer for this book, but one of our Florida members, A.G. Thurston, offered to write a review, so we took him up on it. Better late than never, here it is:)

When a book reviewer examines and writes about one book, the reviewer can travel an open highway picking the destination and stopovers at the reviewer's discretion. However, when two books are examined, if the books are somewhat similar, the routes to travel are restricted to comparison and contrast. Well, that's true, sort of. A reviewer can take fascinating side trips to add visual and auditory experiences as a book review is not intended to be a charge down a superhighway with only road signs to view.

The first book, a hardback, printed in 1978, served as the foundation for the latest one, a softcover book,

printed in 1991. As the author explains in his 1991 prologue, the first book contained several errors pointed out by his reading public. It was during this awareness period that Harry Benford noticed the illustrations needed to be more into the in quantity. In addition, Benford also included the almost-forgotten libretto to The Zoo. So, that was it: he corrected, he added, and he enlarged the original edition.

Both books are laid out in the same manner. A foreword by the late Isaac Asimov is followed by the dictionary entries from the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas in chronological order of usage for each opera. Moderns here in the fifty states must bridge a great pond and a different culture. Some of the words and phrases are more familiar to those living near the Strand; thus the need for a lexicon arose.

A comparison of the entries reveals that the author deleted some of his humorous asides for the latest edition, in order not to detract from the semantics under discussion. Fortunately, Benford's light touch appears in enough entries to make the reading a smile awhile reading, but most entries are straightforward attempts to classify the use of a word or a phrase. Oftentimes, the author gives several options from which the reader can discover which is the best option and can discover which is the one favored by Benford.

As the lexicon is read and as Gilbert is explained, the genius of Gilbert shines through the words and phrases to overwhelm the reader with Gilbert's eruditeness and with his unique word use. Call him, if you will, a wordsmith, a phraseologist, or a master metaphorist; his semantics reflect the right word to fit the right situation in his writing. Add to these so-excellent word choices the rhythm of prosody and a pungent sense of humor that can parody, can illuminate, and can entertain, and you have Gilbert, the writer.

The second and newer lexicon is a worthwhile addition to anyone's library except those whom Gilbert called "Canaille" (the following definition is from the second lexicon: "Canaille: the scum of the earth, those hating Gilbert and Sullivan operas").

I must admit that I failed to find one single error in the first lexicon.

In truth, Harry Benford and Geoffrey shovelton in this second edition have discovered new ways to "Gild the Philosophic Pill".

(SAY! No doubt such a book already exists, but has anyone put together a book about the gags Sullivan slipped into the music of the operas? Many years ago, it has been said, someone gave a talk at a New England Gilbert and Sullivan Society meeting about musical jokes in the G&S operas, and I would bet a book or article on the subject would show Sullivan to be as erudite as Gilbert in his use of music. Oh, well, it's just a thought. In any event, Harry Benford's revised **Gilbert and Sullivan Lexicon** is available from Sarah Jennings Press (2222 Fuller Rd.; Ann Arbor, MI 48105-

2313 / (313) 665-7410) for \$20.00. For Canadian addresses, it's \$25.00 Canadian, and for the U.K, £11. All prices include shipping, handling, and sales tax. (If you live somewhere else, the price of the book is US\$19.00, and shipping and all will be billed. Discounts are also available on orders of five or more). It's a nice, yellow, trade-size paperback (7" x 10", 270 pages) with lots of pictures and an index, a bibliography, and, as pointed out in the review, the libretto of *The Zoo*.)



### Where Can it Be?

We learn from new member Stephen Sullivan that The Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera Company gave a very successful run of **The Grand Duke**. The company is very kindly making the dialogue and cuts they made to the production available for the cost of photocopying and postage (that's \$5.00) for anyone who would like to see them. He said the dialogue and cuts have been updated to include corrections for errors discovered during the rehearsals and run of the show, so this sounds like quite a comprehensive (not to mention useful) thing to have. Since, as Stephen Sullivan points out, **Grand Duke** has more chorus than any other G&S opera, it is one that community groups might have fun putting on, which would make these corrections especially useful. Copies can be requested from: The Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera Company; P.O. Box 580172; Minneapolis, MN 554580-1072 / (612) 925-9159 (answering machine).

The MGS has some G&S scratch pads to get rid of. For those of us who haven't seen them yet, they are 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", with a Bab illustration and quotation from either a G&S opera libretto or a Bab Ballad. The designs repeat after 28 pages, so there are about 108 sheets per pad. The pages are in a variety of colors. They are US\$5.00 each, and the price includes a package of Sullivan postcards (those cards with the picture by Anne Stanyon, of Sullivan admiring his Christmas tree, and a package of G&S-related notecards (again, illustrations by Anne Stanyon), and shipping. If you want any, just drop S/A Cole a note (and a check, if you don't mind), and she'll get some out to you ASAP. The money, of course, is used to buy G&S items to donate to libraries and such.



The Plans for the 1992 Annual Outing, to see **The Grand Duke** at Light Opera Works August 28, 1992

As mentioned earlier, the consensus of the membership at the 1991 Annual Outing was to attend Light Opera Works' production of **The Grand Duke**. Also, since many members are busy on Sunday afternoons, they thought the MGS ought to go to an evening performance rather than the matinee. So, that's what we're going to do. Bridget McDonough of Light Opera Works said that getting a block of seats for the Friday, August 28th, performance would probably be easiest all around, so that's why that date was picked. We hope the fact that the performance is on a Friday evening will not affect member attendance too much. Tickets, for MGS members for that evening, are \$17.25 (down from \$23.00, which S/A Cole thinks is tremendously kind of them!).

Now, to order tickets, this is what you do. When you call Light Opera Works to order tickets for that performance (the company is handling the ticket distribution, too, which S/A Cole thinks is really very kind of them, too!), tell them you are with the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society. They will give you the discount. If you prefer to order tickets by mail, mention in the note that you are with the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society when you send the check (though you will want to call beforehand to find out what their procedure is. I think Light Opera Works has a processing fee for tickets, and I can't remember if they prefer a self-address, stamped envelope, so you'd do well to make sure). Light Opera Works can be reached at 927 Noyes St., Evanston, IL 60201-2799 {(708) 869-6300}.

Since the performance begins at 8:00, it isn't likely to be finished before 11:00. That's a little late for an after-show dinner, so we thought a pre-show get-together would be more appropriate. A site has not definitely been selected, but Bridget McDonough suggested a place called *Coyote Bill's*, which specializes in South-west style food. I know it doesn't have much connection with the Duchy of Pfennig Halbpennig, but the restaurant is within walking distance of Cahn Auditorium, and should have a section where we won't have to shout above the crowd. Once we have finalized arrangements, we'll let you know.

In the meantime, we'll look forward to seeing each other at the Annual Outing, which promises to be a most interesting evening!



### Welcome New Members

**Stephen, Rhea, Brianna, and Jack Sullivan** (Minneapolis, MN): They are indeed a G&Ssy family. Stephen and Rhea met while performing **Trial by Jury** with the Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera

Company, fell in love during **Ruddigore**, and all the music in their wedding was from the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. In addition, their son Jack is named after their grandfathers and Jack Point and Frederic.

**Marge Drevalas** (Cicero, IL): who likes to keep up with the local G&S productions.

**Jay, Carol, Alex, and Megan Fayer** (Algonquin, IL): Jay is an avid collector of recorded D'Oyly Carte performances, and is especially interested in getting a copy of the 1966 film of **The Mikado** (By the way, who is handling that film these days?)

and **Dennis Jackson** (Boulder, CO): who has worked for ten years with John Reed in the producing of the Colorado Gilbert and Sullivan Festival.



And that ought to about do it for May. The Summer **Nonsense**, barring any other disasters, should be fairly substantial. S/A Cole presently has two big boxes of stuff to winnow for the next issue, along with the results from the postcard survey on what G&S enthusiasts prefer to be called, and what interesting things people have done to celebrate Frederic's Birthday. In the meantime, do keep in touch, and we'll look forward to hearing from you soon, with news, comments, and definitely with corrected Update Forms.



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