

Precious Nonsense

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDWESTERN GILBERT AND SULLIVAN SOCIETY
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THE FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN THE SPRING -- TRA LA -- BREATHE PROMISES OF MERRY SUNSHINE
-- THE MIKADO

(And about time, too.) Regardless of the groundhog's prediction, the signs of spring are popping up. The midwestern snow is melting, the rivers are getting high, and the announcements about local G&S productions are appearing in the mailboxes. I missed mentioning Opera A La Carte's tour of *the Mikado* (and their touring productions are unfailingly excellent!), but UMGASS is presenting *Pirates*, the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company (at the University of Chicago) is giving *Ruddigore*, and Light Opera Works will also be breathing a little spring into the winter solstice when they perform *Pirates* as their last show of the 2009 season. Also, we have an article on G&S and Dickens, plus the long-promised reports on Goldberg and Solomon's *The Tailors Poznance*. So let's bother these flowers that bloom in the spring, and see what they're up to.

Oh, Members, How Say You, What is it You've Done?

We were relieved to hear that Quentin Riggs' family made it through the recent Oklahoma tornadoes safely. We will also be thinking of those who were not so fortunate.

What Cheer! What Cheer! {Midwestern}

Now this is a first: there are four upcoming productions to report on, and only two operas: *Ruddigore* and *Pirates*. The Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company will be giving *Ruddigore* March 13-15, 2009, at Mandel Hall, on the University of Chicago campus (1131 E. 57th St. Chicago). Evening performances (March 13-14) begin at 8:00 pm, with a Sunday 2:00 pm matinee. Tickets are \$15.00. For more information or to order tickets, contact: G&S Tickets, UC Department of Music, 1010 E. 59th St., Chicago, IL 60637; or call 773-702-9075 Monday-Friday, 12:00-4:00 pm. Or consult <http://music.uchicago.edu/events/>.

Likewise, the Gilbert and Sullivan Very Light Opera Company, of Minneapolis, MN, will be giving *Ruddigore* from March 13 through April 5, 2009, at the Howard Conn Fine Arts center 91900 Nicollet Ave. South, in Minneapolis). Tickets are \$17.00, or \$8.00 for children under 12, and may be ordered through GSVLOC Tickets, 1412 W. 47th St., Minneapolis, MN 55419, or by visiting www.gsvloc.org (with a \$2.00 surcharge). You can also call (651) 255-6947, between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm weekdays. What makes this performance especially

interesting is that the March 28 matinee will be audio described for the visually impaired. If anyone attends this performance, please let us know, because I'd love to hear how they do it.

The University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society will be presenting *The Pirates of Penzance* April 2-5, 2009, at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater on the campus of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Evening performances are at 8:00 pm, and matinees at 2:00 pm. Tickets are \$20.00 (with a \$2.00 discount to senior citizens, and student prices \$10.00). Tickets can be purchased by phone (734-46764-2538), by mail (University Music Society, Burton Memorial Tower, 881 N. University Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1011). For more information, though, visit www.umgass.org.

Light Opera Works' 2009 season will include *A Little Night Music*, *My Fair Lady*, *C'est la Vie*, and, in December *The Pirates of Penzance*, from December 26, 2009 through January 3, 2010. Currently, the company is taking subscriptions (call 847-869-6300, or visit www.LightOperaWorks.com for complete information). Single tickets, however, will range from \$30-\$88, depending on seating preference. Except for *C'est la Vie*, performances will take place at Cahn Auditorium (corner of Sheridan and Emerson, in Evanston, IL).

And, of course, Ohio Light Opera's season begins in June. This year, their season includes *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and (was there a bargain on scores this year?) *Ruddigore*. The Performance Schedule for these productions can be found at <http://olo.wooster.edu/schedule.php> and is:
6/25: H.M.S. Pinafore (2 p.m. -- Opening Performance)
6/27: H.M.S. Pinafore (2 p.m.)
7/3: H.M.S. Pinafore (2 p.m.)

- 7/11: H.M.S. Pinafore (7:30 p.m. -- with a 7:00 pre-performance talk)
 7/17: H.M.S. Pinafore (7:30 p.m. -- 7:00 pre-performance talk)
 7/21: Ruddigore (2 p.m. -- Opening Performance)
 7/23: H.M.S. Pinafore (7:30 p.m.)
 7/25: Ruddigore (7:30 p.m. -- 7:00 pre-performance talk)
 7/29: Ruddigore (2 p.m.)
 7/31: H.M.S. Pinafore (2 p.m.)
 7/31: Ruddigore (7:30 p.m. -- 7:00 pre-performance talk)
 8/7: Ruddigore (7:30 p.m. -- 7:00 pre-performance talk)
 8/8: H.M.S. Pinafore (7:30 p.m. -- 7:00 pre-performance talk)

For more information, visit the OLO's website at www.olo.wooster.edu, or call (330) 263-2345, or e-mail Lohiolightopera@wooster.edu. Performances are at Freedlander Theatre, Wooster, Ohio.



Have You Heard The Tailors of Poznance?

We recently (March 2008) heard from Iain Kerr, one half of the legendary Goldberg & Solomon. He had noticed a promise in one of the back issues of the *Nonsense* to have a plot synopsis for their first collaboration *The Tailors of Poznance*, and wondered how it had come out. One of the reasons he was interested was because the recording is now downloadable on tunes, so readers might be interested.

The description still isn't done (though I have great hopes for the future), but I said I had liked it. He provided some background on it, that may add to its interest when the report is finally completed.

GILBERT & SULLIVAN GO KOSHER*

The celebrated double act of 'Goldberg and Solomon' was the brain-child of British writer/performers IAIN KERR and ROY COWEN who, after producing considerable material for radio, television, stage and cabaret, came up with the concept: What might have been the result had Gilbert and Sullivan been born Jewish? Their first recreation was 'THE TAILORS OF POZNANCE' or 'The Apprentice Lover should Never Press his Suit in the Firm's Time'. The vogue at that time - in the early 60's - was to write complete shows to fit on one 12" long playing recording. Sharing top billing with Kerr and Cowen was Miriam Karlin together with a full cast, chorus and orchestra directed and conducted by Kerr.

The LP recording was released internationally in 1967. Such was the immediate success in South Africa, a request came through to London from a professional production company in Johannesburg seeking the stage rights. This surprising development promoted Kerr and Cowen to take advice from their colleague Michael Sullivan, noted

theatrical agent with the Delfont-Grade Agency, who immediately advised Kerr and Cowen, he would inform the South African company that stage rights were not available as a two-man show was about to tour the Republic playing the material of 'Goldberg and Solomon'. To the astonished couple he said: "You have material for more recordings of 'Goldberg & Solomon' operettas? - why not do a Jewish 'Flanders & Swann'? Two men on a draped stage with just a grand piano is a management's dream!"

The world premiere of 'GILBERT & SULLIVAN GO KOSHER' took place on April 28, 1968 in the Bournemouth Pavilion Theatre and after playing several other UK cities, the show headed for South Africa - booked for 8 weeks. The reception was such that the tour lasted 8 months. This was the start of a successful 10 year international tour.

PROGRAMME CONTENT

The show commenced with 'How We Met' from 'TRIAL BY JEWRY' then five songs from 'The Tailors of Poznance': 'I am Morry King', 'The Oliver Shalom Psalm', 'She's Orthodox', 'A Shatchan's Lot' and 'A Double Mazeltov'. The first half closed with excerpts from 'THE THREE LITTLE MAIDS FROM SHULE': 'Chazersher's Song' (The Widow, the Widow, the Widow), 'Mao's Little List' and 'Little Maids from Shule'. The second half opened with 'MRS PINAFORE' (The story of Sarah Shmuttercup and her Wholesale Business with the Sailors in Portsmouth): 'I'm Called Sarah Schmuttercup' and 'Never Mind My Why and Wherefore' followed by a segment from 'THE CHANDALIERS' (The story of the Marco Applebaum and Giuseppe Googenheim, two gay interior decorators who travel from Venice to touch up a Duke's palace in Majorca) featuring: 'Take a Pair of Pizza Pies', 'The Duke Platz Oratorio' and 'The Decorator's Gavotte'. The show ended with the Goldbertian Anthem: 'A Pair of Grand Old Jewish Men'.

Aside from the *Tailors* and *The Chandeliers*, I hadn't heard any of this added material. If anyone has, please describe it for the benefit of the group. It sounds like a lot of fun! Int eh meantime, if you are interested in downloading the iTunes or MP3 files of *The Tailors of Poznance*, you can do it at these sites:

Amazon.com MP3:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001AZYX9I> (Total cost appears to be \$1.98*)

iTunes:

<http://www.songcastmusic.com/redirect2.php?id=270504364>

*But such purchases are limited to U.S. customers only, and you'll have to install Amazon.com's MP3 download software. I'm still learning how it all works together, but at least you know where it's available. I was able to purchase and download the music files without having my computer blow up, so the process should be fairly safe.

And if you'd like to know more about Iain Kerr's activities, his website is www.kerroy.com.

I noticed no one has reviewed it on the Amazon.com site. If you're feeling ambitious, it might be fun to be the first reviewer. One thing I can say about the MP3 files is that the Act I file leaves out the introductory patter, in which the members of the cast exchange some silly jokes that I greatly enjoy. It's too bad, because they add balance and explanation to the first act. But the 'opera' itself is intact.

The discography, along with the cast list, is available at: "G&S Discography: The Tailors of Poznance." [<http://www.cris.com/~oakapple/gasdisc/mdtailrs.htm>]. Accessed 27 July 2008, which lists the primary cast members as:

William Goldberg: Roy Cowen
Arthur Solomon: Iain Kerr
Shmule, the Satchan: Alister Williams
Mrs Ruth Mindel: Miriam Karlin (She appeared as Goldie in the 1967 London production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Incidentally, she also voiced Little Buttercup in that strange Gilbert and Sullivan-related animated feature *Dick Dead eye*. Thanks to the internet and the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com)).
Mervyn Mindel; Matt Zimmerman
Morry King: Roy Cowen
Sheila Shalom: Toni Raingold (Gorgeous voice!)
Sir Oliver Shalom: Iain Kerr.

Now that you know about it. What about the Plot? Here it is: The Plot of The Tailors of Poznance

The first time I heard this clever parody of *The Pirates of Penzance* was through the kindness of the late Warren Colson, who had one of the most delightfully extensive collection of G&S-related recordings I can think of. As far as being a parody of *Pirates*, it bears little resemblance to that work; but what it *does* do is use parodies of its major songs to tell the romantic adventures of a handsome schmo and his mother. I believe remarks on the Gilbert and Sullivan Archives describe it as not an especially funny story. It doesn't need to be: it's the comparison of the new songs with the original ones that makes the work funny. On that level, *the Tailors of poznance* does well. It reminds me of the 1930s-40s radio comedian Fred Allen's skit *The Hollywood Mikado*, in which a movie studio tries to save itself from ruin by promoting Bing Crosby as a cowboy star. The plot isn't much, but the songs are delightful.

Another thing to keep in mind about this work is that part of the joke is its "Jewishness." Therefore, Yiddish terms and phrases pop up regularly. Another person instrumental to the understanding and appreciation of this work is Ronald Lewis, who provided a copy of the record's

program notes. I had enjoyed the recording before, but seeing what the mysterious foreign terms mean makes the story even funnier.

So, now that you know how to appreciate this work, here's the plot. The recording opens with the Goldberg & Solomon Opera Company getting ready to present its show to some producers.* One of the cast exclaims that she wishes her talented son David was there. She predicts that someday someone will make a star of David. Mr. Goldberg reminds her that they already have a Star of David. Mr. Solomon shows up late, explaining that a terrible thing had delayed him: he had been doing his deep-breathing exercises in front of an open upper story window, and had fallen out. Unimpressed, Mr. Goldberg asks if that took him an hour. Once they get that straightened out, they start the show (and this is where the MP3 version begins).

The scene is the town of Poznance, somewhere in Cornwall. The townspeople are gathered in the tailor shop of Morry King, to celebrate the completion of the apprenticeship of Mervyn Mindel. He is apparently something of the Li'l Abner sort: good looking, but thick as a plank. It took him until he was thirty-one to finish his apprenticeship. In any event, the townspeople, led by Mervyn's mother Ruth Mindel, sing "Pour the drink, yes pour out the liquor" (Pour, O Pour the Pirate Sherry). Once the cast is feeling happy, someone asks Ruth Mindel how this event came about, so she explains Mervyn's and her past history: "When Mervyn Was a Little Chap" (When Frederic Was a Little Lad). From her song, we learn that Mervyn's father (Boris**) left home one day twenty years earlier, and never returned (it was determined that he had "convenient amnesia"). Although without Boris, her mother-in-law told her she "had mazel" (she's lucky), she needed to do something to support the boy. She therefore learned to be a shneider (tailor). Mervyn, who took after his box-of-rocks father, presented a problem. Morry King, who owned the shop, offered to take him on as an apprentice. As the song concludes, she regrets that, now that he's thirty-two, he'll probably start to date.

Mervyn assures his mama that he would never leave her, and then announces the arrival of his boss, Morry King. Morry introduces himself in song: "I Am Morry King" (I Am a Pirate King). In it, he explains that, now that Mervyn can take care of himself, he can now reveal his real plan; to marry Ruth Mindel. He is a well-to-do man, and, as the chorus sings, "She'll have gelt (wealth) and

*This part is not on the MP3 recording available through Amazon.com, but is on the album, if you ever get a chance to hear it.

**Not that it's that important. He is only mentioned by name, I think, twice, so if you want to forget about him, it's okay with me.

everything / Hurrah for Morry King.” But listeners recognize that there might be a problem: his main interest in her appears to be her cooking ability. “And like the schmaltz that floats on the soup / I’ll cling to Mrs. King.”

Ruth, however, wants to be loved for herself. She tells him, in a song based on “Climbing Over Rocky Mountain,” (I Must Tell You, my Dear Morry), that she’s been an essential widow for twenty years, and wants some affection. As she sings, “You don’t make me yearn or quiver / All you want is my chopped liver . . . Now it’s really time I had some love.” Morrie reminds her that he’s been working all his life, and never had time for romance, but Ruth has no interest in bringing him up to speed. The courts observes “Ruth has passion and it’s hot / All that Morry wants is in a pot.” Oy, Vay!

The assembled group comments on these happenings, and then notice that Mervyn is not there. They see him in in the garden, in the moonlight, with a *Somebody*. They make remarks about the action in the garden, as Mervyn and a girl (whose name, we soon learn, is Sheila Sholem) sing about their new-found love. This song is clever. The original song is “How Beautiful Blue the Sky / Did Ever Maiden Wake from Dream”, and, as the lovers emote “Although a short time has past, I feel I am destined for you,” the chorus mutters “Just have a look what we have found,” and comment on the “action.” Upon realizing that Mervyn has finally discovered girls, Ruth faints.

The chorus rounds up the medicinal brandy, and gets Ruth back to the house. The remaining chorus goes to tell Mervyn of his mother’s collapse, and to investigate this unfamiliar young woman. However, they seem more interested in filling her in on the scandal involving Mervyn’s father, who went out to post a letter and was never seen again. And, what’s more, Mervyn seems inclined to take after him. As someone points out, “the apple doesn’t fall far from the cherrossis.*” Sheila, however, has a plan to handle her “Poor Wand’ring One” (to the tune of “Poor Wand’ring One, of course); “I’ll tie you to me with a chain!” The chorus approves of this shayne (beautiful) girl, who goes with Mervyn like fried fish and chrayne (horseradish sauce mixed with beetroot), and end the song with the exclamation “Shekoyach” (May you have strength). That exclamation also concludes the first act.

Act II opens in the village square, where Morry King encounters a visitor to the town. He introduces himself as a professional man: an industrial psychologist. He might as well be a modern industrial psychologist, because he explains his accomplishments much as Major General Stanley does. We learn that he runs a London school for big industrial psychologists (it’s deadly scientific, like the

study of pathologists), where they learn things like how to insult customers without giving apology. He relates an anecdote of how a rabbi with an empty synagogue applied his principles, and now “his schule’s so packed on Shabbas that there isn’t any room to pray.’ He attracts students from all over the world, though he started from one small store, and concludes “I may be a meshuginar (a nut) according to phrenology, but I’ve made gelt from teaching this industrial psychology.” (I love that line. As a matter of fact, I like all of this song: the rhymes are delightful).

Before he can give his name, Ruth and her friends enter, and Morry King makes a fast retreat. The stranger is quite taken with Ruth, and upon questioning, explains that he is there from London to consult Schmule the Shatchan (meaning matchmaker, and pronounced SHAT-kan) on behalf of his daughter. He adds, though, that it might not be necessary, because she had fallen in love with a fellow named Mindel the night before. Ruth is delighted, and introduces herself as his mother. He then introduces himself as Sir Oliver Sholom. She inquires if he is Jewish, adding that, with a name like “Oliver Sholom” he could be a Spiritualist. The glossary explains, when spelled differently, that phrase can mean “May he rest in peace.” They then proceed to praise the virtues of their respective children, showing that each is a “first rate opportunity” (to the tune of “Here’s a First Rate Opportunity”). Incidentally, we learn during this song that he is a recent widower. Ruth’s friends remind her that she is going to be late for her own appointment with Schmule. Sir Oliver inquires if he might call on her, in about half an hour, and she hesitates only briefly before giving him her address. She and the women then head to Schmule’s office to see what – or, more accurately, who – he has available.

Schmule tells them, to the tune of “When the Foeman Bares his Steel” about the good qualities of the eligible men that might suit Ruth, as the women proceed to berate them, and advise her on what she needs in a man. She agrees with her friends. Because “[her] first marriage turned out schlecht (bad), she “must have at all cost / a first-class Bulla Boss” (man of the house). Morry, however, is not to be overlooked. He enters the scene and repeats his offer of marriage. He admits he isn’t romantic, but he is direct “I’m no Romeo – I’m fat – Plainly speaking, come to that, / You’re no blooming Juliet.” (You’ve got to like someone as no-nonsense as that.) Ruth figures that, after twenty lonely years, she deserves some nonsense, and tells him to go. He wants to stay. Schmule suggests they leave. Ruth and the chorus scorn Morry again. Schmule finally exclaims (in Yiddish) “Are you coming or going?” And they all decide to go.

As they do, Mervyn approaches, greatly agitated. Schmule and Ruth ask him the reason, and he reveals that he had just found out something startling about Sheila: she’s Orthodox! (Yes, Sheila Sholom’s Orthodox! Oy,

*The glossary says it’s a traditional Passover dish that contains apples.

oy, oy, oy, oy, oy, oy, oy, oy, she's Orthodox!) Schmule remarks that he doesn't see a problem, because she won't be serving anything non-kosher. The cuisine isn't troubling that eager young man, but the condition described in Leviticus : "She's so froom (Orthodox) she thinks it rude to have a double bed!" Schmule tells him that he's better off marrying her than becoming an old bachelor.

Because of her own imminent rendezvous, Ruth hasn't much sympathy to spare for Mervyn. She excuses herself, leaving Schmule to advise Mervyn about married life: that the trouble you start with only gets worse. (We find out later that Schmule is a bachelor.) A messenger enters with a special-delivery letter for him, from Zsa Zsa Cohen [I love that name], of the Marriage Guidance Council. Instead of an expected commendation, it is a report that all his recent matches have been domestic disasters. He is asked to be more careful in the future. He explains, in song, that he is doing the best he can with what he's got. "A Shatchan's Lot Is not a Happy One."

This is one of the best conceived songs of the recording. In it, Schmule explains that a matchmaker's main problem are his clients. the poor men want to marry a rich girl, not realizing that such girls are "no painting," and he'll end up working for his father-in-law. On the other hand, when a rich fellow has trouble finding a partner, he wants "a lovely cultured pearl." If he's "lacking in education, and they've nothing in common to discuss / Then the office is only consolation, / While through boredom she gets fatter than a bus!" As he concludes, "When a matchmaker looks back on what he's done (what he's done), a shatchan's lot is not a happy one!"

But the joint announcement the Mindel make cheers up everyone. Mazel Tov! A Double Mazel Tov! (With Catlike Tread) because Sheila and Mervyn are going to book the rov (rabbi), and Ruth will become Lady Sholom (though the crowd is a little taken aback at her plan to be married in white. But they let it go). Only Morry King is unhappy; not only has he lost out on Ruth, but, now that his apprentice Mervyn is finally worth something to employ, he's leaving him. But Morry did not become prosperous by neglecting opportunities. He presents a proposition to Schmule, a fellow bachelor who isn't doing too well with his matchmaking business. They would both like to know a hot meal was waiting for them, so why don't they open a kosher restaurant, that specializes in catering weddings. To the tune of 'Poor Wand'ring One,' he sings of how they'll call the restaurant "Cupid, Hazen and Nosh" where Morry can have his tailor business, and Schmule can serve lutkas (potato pancakes). Mervyn adds that they can cater the Mindel/Sholom double wedding. The song describes the wedding feast's menu: melon, and fish, and chicken soup, and a meat course, and a fruity dessert, which they will call "Peche Ruthie." The chorus pronounces the plans "Nice," and agrees that this is an joyous occasion they can

join in, "and Shoyne!" (And that's that!) And it is: two happy couples, and no need of a shatchan wedding.



Æ Glossary for The Tailors of Poznance

(This information has been taken from the libretto/glossary that accompanied the original LP for *The Tailors of Poznance*. Since its completion, a PDF version of that original libretto has become available. I just heard from Iain Kerr, who says: "If anyone would like to have the complete lyrics and glossary, it would be my pleasure to personally send them the pdf by email as soon as I get a request. . ." Do ask for one: the songs are even funnier when you can see what is being sung. Mr. Kerr can be reached through his website at www.kerroy.com, or e-mail "info@kerroy.com". The libretto is worth having!)

Introductory material (which isn't included in the MP3 version)

Oy, Nicht dog-geducht : "Oh, it shouldn't happen here."

Oy, Nicht hynte-geducht : "Oh, it shouldn't happen today."

Yomtov : Any Jewish holiday.

O-Mayne : Amen.

Chochmas : Wisecracks.

Umbershreer ; "May nothing evil ever happen."

Biz a hundert and swanzig : "May he live to a hundred and twenty years."

The Celebration Song, and following dialogue

Mench : A responsible person.

Shicker : Topsy.

Schnapps : A type of gin. [This is news! I had thought it was just peppermint-flavored liquor! SLC]

Mazeltov : "Good luck."

Barmitzvah : The celebration of a boy's reaching 13 and, according to Jewish traditon, manhood.

Oh, nebuch : "Oh, poor thing"

Bromfen : An alcoholic drink.

Ginza myser : The whole story.

When Mervyn Was a Little Chap

Mazel : Luck

Schneider : Tailor.

Schmice : To conveniently disappear.

Hazen : Trousers.

I Am Morrie King

Gelt : Money

Gefulter fish : (the glossary says "You don't know what gefulter fish is?" Well, I didn't. Hurray for Wikipedia, though, because it says that gefilte fish means "stuffed fish", and refers to poached fish (carp) patties or meatballs (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gefilte_fish). The entry explains that one way of making it is to stuff the mixture

of ground fish, eggs, onions, and flour back into the fish skin, and then poach it with carrots and onions. That's where the "stuffed" part of its name comes from. The resulting remolded fish is served in slices. I guess we showed the smart guy who compiled the glossary a thing or two! SLC]

Lokshen soup : Chicken noodle soup.

Borscht : Beetroot soup.

Worscht : "A Yiddisher salami."

Shmaltz : Chicken fat [it's usually spelled "schmaltz": I just had a wrestling match with the spellcheck to get it to accept the spelling in the libretto.

I Must Tell You, My Dear Morrie

Bulla Boster : A thoroughly domesticated woman.

Alte bock : Old goat, usually applied to bachelors.

Treife : Anything that isn't kosher.

[Mary Quant : A fashion designer most prominent during the 1960s (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Quant for more information). SLC, because I wasn't sure.]

Essen : Food.

"Tucker, she's a little old to make another briss" : "Really, she's past childbearing." A Briss, we learn later, is a circumcision celebration.

Zimmas : Carrot pudding.

Just Have a Look What We Have Found, and following dialogue

Ponim : Face

Shule : Synagogue

Stickle gornisht : A little bit of nothing.

Ken zyne : Could be.

Gezoont and shtark : Healthy and strong.

Cult : Cold.

Oy givult : What a catastrophe.

Lobbos : "Lay-about"

Shobbos : Sabbath.

Chossen Kulla : Groom and bride.

Zol zine : Let it be so.

Pesach : Passover.

And shoyne : "And that's that."

Cherrossis : A traditional Passover dish in which apples are a main ingredient.

Sheila Shalom Song

Oy, Nebuch: Oh, poor thing.

Shayne: Beautiful.

Chrayne: Horseradish sauce mixed with beetroot.

Shekoyach: "May you have strength!"

Act II: Introduction

loolov: "Space does not permit an explanation here – if you really want to know, ask someone of the faith. Thank you."

[If anyone feels like filling us in, please do. SLC]

Voo den?: What then?

Shtettle: Village.

Zog mir eppes: Tell me something.

Fershtate a Krunk: A doctor.

Tucker: Really – Is that so?

Oliver Shalom's Psalm (and following dialogue)

Shtrop: White elephant.

Mitseerable: Bargain.

Shule; Synagogue.

Gunneff: Thief.

Klubyush; A card game (also spelled "clobyosh."

Wikipedia describes it as a trick-taking card game played in Jewish communities

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clobyosh>). If you read any Damon Runyon stories, occasionally characters are described as playing "clob.")

Meshuginar: madman.

Dorton: There.

Booch-vaytik; Stomach ache.

Cop-vaytik: headache.

Leyvoyer: Funeral

Briss: Circumcision celebration.

Entre Nous: The glossary says, "So what do you want? A French glossary as well?" Well, just in case, it means "Between us."

Oliver Sholom: "Oliver Sholom" spelt a different way means "May they rest in peace."

It's a Pleasure to Be Meeting You

Besser: Better.

Maydle kriching: A Girl chaser.

Merchutan: A father's relationship with his offspring's parents-in-law.

Machataynister: A mother's relationship with her offspring's parents-in-law.

If You're Looking for a Man

Aych mir a man: You call that a man?

Bissle: Little

Bench: Lead the prayers [at first, I thought he was a body builder. SLC]

Orrontlucha mensch: A responsible person of the finest type.

Krunk: In this case, a professional army.

Hace: In this case, hot stuff.

Schlecht: Bad.

Gerrecht: Right and correct.

Tucker gerrecht: Really right and correct.

Koyach; Strength.

Gehuckter tsorros: Terrible troubles.

Bulla boss: The perfect man-of-the-house.

Oy, givult: Oh, catastrophe!

Du Kommst oer du Gehst!: Are you coming or are you going?

She's Orthodox

Grace: Big.

Sheitled locks: A wig as worn by orthodox Jewish women.

Treife: Non-kosher food (see above).

Froom: Orthodox.

Alte Box: Old bachelors.

A Shatchan's Lot

(No unfamiliar words in this song!)

A Double Mazeltov

Mazeltov: Good luck.

Rov; Rabbi.

Nudden: Dowry.

Glick: Also means "luck."

Metzaveh: Tombstone setting.

Bychle: Stomach.

Effsha; Perhaps.

Chutzpah: A downright cheek.

Oysgeputst: All dolled up.

And shoyne

Hazen: Trousers.

Gutkas: Long woolen combinations.

Lutkas: Potato pancakes.

Gesheft: Business.

Shule: Synagogue (see above).

Nicht: Not.

Farfel and lokshen: Two ingredients often found in chicken soup.

Chayshick; Desire.

Flayshick; having partaken of meat, milk is forbidden.

Motza klise; A dumpling often found in chicken soup (must be a motzah ball)

Simcha: A joyous occasion.

Shoyne: And that's that.

Again, Iain Kerr is making a PDF version of the libretto available to anyone who requests one. Visit his website at www.kerroy.com, or e-mail info@kerroy.com. He'll be pleased to hear from you!



Dickens and W. S. Gilbert: Two Points of Contact

Recently (December 2008), we received -- unsolicited yet -- a submission for the *Nonsense*. These things don't happen all that often, so it was a very flattering offer. The author, it turns out, is a lecturer on English literature at the University of Cape Town, who evidently liked the content of *Precious Nonsense*. Dr. Rodney Stenning Edgecombe is a literary scholar by training, but occasionally strays into musicology. We are pleased to give him an opportunity to share this recent foray.

Dickens and W. S. Gilbert: Two Points of Contact
Rodney Stenning Edgecombe

While the comic genius of Dickens influenced Gilbert in, amongst other things, the frantic pace of his patter arias, which seem to have been begotten by Rossini's specimens upon the *currente calamo* utterance of Flora Finching in

Little Dorrit, I should like to draw attention in this note to two nodes of contact that are more easily overlooked.

In order to smuggle a female chorus (de rigueur in musical comedy) into the male world of the British Navy, Gilbert peoples the deck of the *H.M.S. Pinafore* with the cousins and aunts of Sir Joseph Porter:

And so do his sisters, and his cousins and
/his aunts!

His sisters and his cousins,
Whom he reckons up by dozens,
And his aunts! (68)

This zany solution would seem to derive from Part Three of Dickens's "Holiday Romance" (*Reprinted Pieces*), a spoof pirate yarn narrated by a schoolboy. As Captain Boldheart, he encounters a ship on his way back to Britain:

The boat came back with a present of greens and fresh meat, and reported that the stranger was "The Family," of twelve hundred tons, and had not only the captain's father on board, but also his mother, with the majority of his aunts and uncles, and all his cousins. It was further reported to Boldheart that the whole of these relations had expressed themselves in the a becoming manner, and were anxious to embrace him and thank him for the glorious credit he had done them. (715)

Not only does the astonishing multiplicity of these relations anticipate the chorus in *H.M.S. Pinafore* but the apparent unison in which they sing Boldheart's praises ("the whole of these relations") also looks forward to the paean of Sir Joseph's sisters, cousins and aunts to "The ruler of the Queen's Navee, / Whose praise Great Britain loudly chants" (68).

The second is more serious in nature. Toward the end of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, the narrator visits St Paul's in London, and studies the clock of the west front:

I sat down opposite to it, and hearing its regular and never-changing voice, that one deep constant note, uppermost amongst all the noise and clatter in the streets below,--marking that, let that tumult rise or fall, go on or stop,--let it be night or noon, to-morrow or to-day, this year or next,--it still performed its functions with the same dull constancy, and regulated the progress of the life around, the fancy came upon me that this was London's Heart, and that when it should cease to beat, the City would be no more. (107)

The passage of time is as imperturbable as it is relentless, a pulse commensurate with the city's own life. Its imperturbability extends to huge antitheses of wealth and poverty stretched out within sight it, and to which it

silently witnesses, the common denominator of a fragmented society but unmoved by its fragmentation:

In that close corner where the roofs shrink down and cower together as if to hide their secrets from the handsome street hard by, there are such dark crimes, such miseries and horrors, as could hardly be told in whispers. In the handsome street, there are folks asleep who have dwelt there all their lives, and have no more knowledge of these things than if they had never been, or were transacted at the remotest limits of the world,--who, if they were hinted at, would shake their heads, look wise, and frown, and say they were impossible, and out of Nature,--as if all great towns were not. Does not this Heart of London, that nothing moves, nor stops, nor quickens,--that goes on the same let what will be done,--does it not express the City's character well? (108)

Master Humphrey draws an antithetic moral from this inhuman indifference, which impresses him in its own right, but which prompts him to a greater effort of compassion toward his fellow humans--an effort underscored by glancing allusion to Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode" in "the meanest wretch" ("the meanest flower that blows"--462) and even, possibly, to Milton's *Tetrachordon* ("the lowest slavery that a human shape can be put to"--www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room):

Heart of London, there is a moral in they every stroke! As I look on at thy indomitable working, which neither death, nor press of life, nor grief, nor gladness out of doors will influence one jot, I seem to hear a voice within thee which sinks into my heart, bidding me, as I elbow my way among the crowd, have some thought for the meanest wretch that passes, and, being a man, to turn away with scorn and pride from none that bear the human shape. (109)

When he came to write *The Yeomen of the Guard* in 1888, W. S. Gilbert seems to have gone to school on these passages, transferring the attributes of the clock to the Tower of London, and making that, too, an outward and visible sign of the city's genius loci:

When our gallant Norman foes
Made this merry land their own,
And the Saxons from the Conqueror were
At his bidding it arose,
In its panoply of stone,
A sentinel unliving and undying.
Insensible, I trow,
As a sentinel should be,
Though a queen to save her head should come a-suing,
There's a legend on its brow
That is eloquent to me,

And it tells of duty done and duty doing.

'The screw may twist and the rack may turn,
And men may bleed and men may burn,
O'er London town and its golden hoard
I keep my silent watch and ward.' (389)

This strikes the same note as Master Humphrey's essay, not least because of a shared sense of continuity through time and the indifference of structures to the transient suffering that they insensibly observe. Just as in the second strophe of Gilbert's song, "the grim old fortalice / Takes little heed of aught / That comes not in the measure of its duty" (389) as it keeps its watch over the city, so too the clock of St Paul's, an object that "nothing moves, nor stops, nor quickens" and which "goes on the same let what will be done," also expresses the character of the place.

Works Cited

- Dickens, Charles. *Master Humphrey's Clock and A Child's History of England*. Intro. Derek Hudson. London: Oxford UP, 1958.
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- Gilbert, Sir W. S. *The Savoy Operas Being the Complete Text of the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas as Originally Produced in the Years 1875-1896*. London: Macmillan, 1962.

I'm recruiting illustrations, as well as material for the next issue, which I certainly hope will come out faster than this one. The next issue should include another of Arthur Robinson's Big Quizzes, maybe an opinion piece or two, so we'll see what comes along. If you have any news, information, or such, please do pass it along. We'll be looking forward to hearing from you!



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