

GILBERT, SULLIVAN, and "THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE"

(Supplement # 1 for Otterbein's LLC on June 30, 2022)

- I) The Principals William Schwenck Gilbert (1836-1911)
Arthur Seymour Sullivan (1842-1900)
Richard D'Oyly Carte (1844-1901)

II) Selected Works of Gilbert without Sullivan

Bab Ballads (1860s on): humorous verses, often illustrated by Gilbert, which first appeared in magazines and eventually were published as a collection
About 65 plays, burlesques, pantomimes, and various other musical productions

III) Selected Works of Sullivan without Gilbert

Cox and Box (1866): Sullivan's first comic opera, still performed today
Nine other operas, including one so-called romantic (or "grand") opera:
Ivanhoe (1891; after Sir Walter Scott)
Two ballets
Incidental music for seven plays, mostly Shakespeare's
Ten choral pieces with orchestra
Eleven other orchestral pieces, including one symphony and one 'cello concerto
A large quantity of instrumental and vocal religious music
Many hymns and songs, the most famous of which are, respectively, "Onward, Christian Soldiers" and "The Lost Chord"

IV) Bibliography

There is an extensive and still-growing literature on G & S, far too much to list here. Some of it includes reminiscences by those involved with Gilbert, Sullivan, D'Oyly Carte and his various enterprises, and productions of the operas over the years. Recommended is one particularly useful publication:

Allen, Reginald. *The First Night Gilbert and Sullivan*. New York: The Heritage Press, 1958.

This book contains the original texts for the fourteen operas, some information about their backgrounds, as well as the critical receptions for all of the premieres. And there is a separate and fascinating facsimile collection of opening-night programs and other related documents.

Piano-vocal (reduced; also called "vocal") scores exist for all of the operas except *Thespis*. In the U.K. Chappell was the original publisher, and their editions are still available. But the G. Schirmer editions (U.S.) are much preferable, for they contain all of the spoken dialogue between musical numbers as well as plot synopses ("arguments") and often a useful descriptive essay.

V) Audio Recordings

Many partial and full recordings of the operas have existed since 1898 and, again, there are too many to list here. Those by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company through the years are of particular historical interest.

VI) Films and DVDs

In addition to the numerous filmed versions of the operas available today on DVD, there are two full-length movies about G & S: *The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan* (1953; hard to find in the U.S. [VHS format], but available on YouTube), and *Topsy-Turvy* (1999). The former takes a number of liberties about the partnership ("poetic license"), while the excellent latter one is concerned with the original making of *The Mikado*. It also includes some brief scenes from *The Sorcerer* and *Princess Ida*, as well as a performance of Sullivan's song "The Lost Chord."

For a modern and imaginative take on *The Pirates of Penzance*, recommended is a film by that title made in 1982. This movie cleverly incorporates elements of Elvis Presley, Walt Disney, the Broadway musical *A Chorus Line*, and even a little bit of *H.M.S. Pinafore!* The film is not to be confused with a similar (and inferior) production of *The Pirates of Penzance* recorded live at New York City's Central Park in 1980 at the outdoor Delacorte Theater, also available on DVD and the basis for the 1982 cinematic rendition mentioned just above. Both star most of the same leads, including Kevin Kline as an over-the-top Pirate King, George Rose as Major-General Stanley singing incredible patter, and Linda Ronstadt (unfortunately!) as Mabel. Angela Lansbury is Ruth in the 1982 movie; Patricia Routledge does the role in the 1980 stage version.

Although all of the G & S operas on DVD cannot be enumerated here, those by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and Opera Australia are generally worthwhile, as is a "Master Collection" (distributed by PBS and the BBC) of ten of the fourteen works in a boxed set.

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<i>TITLE</i>	<i>PREMIERE</i> <i>(all in London, except as noted)</i>	<i>INITIAL RUN</i>	<i>NOTES</i>
THESPIS or, The Gods Grown Old	12/26/1871	63	"An Entirely Original Grotesque Opera" Most of the music is lost, but one mixed chorus entitled "Climbing over rocky mountain" appears as a female chorus in <i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> .
TRIAL BY JURY	3/25/75	131	"A Novel and Entirely Original Dramatic Cantata" The only one-act, and with no spoken dialogue.
THE SORCERER	11/17/77	178	"An Entirely New and Original Modern Comic Opera"
H.M.S. PINAFORE or, The Lass That Loved a Sailor	5/25/78	571	"An Entirely Original Nautical Comic Opera" The first of the "Big Three."
THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE or, The Slave of Duty	12/30/79 (Paignton) 12/31/79 (New York) 4/3/80 (London)	1 100 363	"A New and Original Melo-Dramatic Opera" The second of the "Big Three."
PATIENCE or, Bunthorne's Bride	4/23/81	578	"An Entirely New and Original Aesthetic Opera" First work to appear at the new Savoy Theatre, transferring there about six months after its premiere elsewhere. The character of

Bunthorne is a thinly-disguised poke at Oscar Wilde and other contemporary "aesthetics."

IOLANTHE or, The Peer and the Peri	11/25/82	398	"An Entirely Original Fairy Opera" "Peri" is a fairy or elf in Persian mythology.
PRINCESS IDA or, Castle Adamant	1/5/84	246	"A Respectful Operatic Per-Version of Tennyson's <i>Princess</i> " The only work in three acts; all others, except <i>Trial by Jury</i> , are in two.
THE MIKADO or, The Town of Titipu	3/14/85	672	"An Entirely New and Original Japanese Opera" The third of the "Big Three."
RUDDIGORE or, The Witch's Curse!	1/22/87	288	"An Entirely Original Supernatural Opera" Originally entitled <i>Ruddygore</i> .
THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD or, The Merryman and His Maid	10/3/88	423	"A New and Original Opera" The most "operatic" of the works.
THE GONDOLIERS or, The King of Barataria	12/7/89	554	"An Entirely Original Comic Opera" The last undisputed success.
UTOPIA, LIMITED or, The Flowers of Progress	10/7/93	245	"An Original Comic Opera" Originally entitled <i>Utopia (Limited)</i> .
THE GRAND DUKE or, The Statutory Duel	3/7/96	123	"A New and Original Comic Opera"

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE or, The Slave of Duty

(Supplement # 3 for Otterbein's LLC on June 30, 2022)

- Premieres** December 30, 1879 (Paignton, England)
December 31, 1879 (New York City)
April 3, 1880 (London)
- Cast** Frederic -- pirate apprentice, in love with Mabel (hero)
Major-General Stanley (1st comic)
Pirate King (2nd comic)
Sergeant of Police (3rd comic)
Samuel -- Pirate King's lieutenant
- Mabel -- Major-General Stanley's ward (heroine)
Ruth -- pirate maid-of-all-work (older woman)
Edith, Kate & Isabel -- Major-General Stanley's wards
- Men's Chorus -- pirates & policemen
Women's Chorus -- Major-General Stanley's wards
- Setting** Act I -- a rocky seashore on the coast of Cornwall
Act II -- a ruined chapel by moonlight
- Best-Known** "Pour, o pour the pirate sherry" -- pirates ("icebreaker")
Songs "Oh, better far to live and die" -- Pirate King & pirates
 (a.k.a. "For I am a Pirate King")
"Climbing over rocky mountain" -- women's chorus
 (originally in *Thespis* as a mixed chorus, with nearly identical lyrics)
"Poor wandering one" -- Mabel & women's chorus
"Here's a first-rate opportunity" -- pirates and women's chorus
"I am the very model of the modern Major-General" -- Major-General Stanley,
 pirates & women's chorus (patter song)
"When you had left our pirate fold" -- Ruth, Pirate King & Frederic
 (a.k.a. "A paradox, a paradox, a most ingenious paradox")
"When a felon's not engaged in his employment" -- Sergeant of Police &
 policemen
 (famous line: "A policeman's lot is not a happy one")
"With cat-like tread" -- pirates & policemen
 (a.k.a. [not G & S] "Hail, hail, the gang's all here")