

Precious Nonsense

NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDWESTERN GILBERT AND SULLIVAN SOCIETY

March 1996 -- Issue 48



I recommend acres of clumsy dressmakers-- Their fit and their finishing touches--

Or clumsy newsletter-makers, perhaps. Yes, this is not one of our better issues, but we expect to do better next time. S/A Cole has been reorganizing the *Nonsense* work area, to make it more ergonomic, and has begun sorting through the collected newsletters and so forth that we *haven't* been quoting. But we'll get there. In the meantime, maybe this will tide us over until late April or May. There is a play synopsis by Arthur Robinson, another postcard drawing, and a letter drawing, too. Also enclosed is a little card about getting on SavoyNet (if you are on line, or thinking about it. If not, you can always give it to someone, or pass it on to one of your local theater groups. The SavoyNet is a pretty good place to advertise productions these days). So, let's see how far we get.



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

We were sorry to learn recently of the passing of member *Robert Burton*. He and Patricia Burton were longtime members of the MGS, and made annual visits to UMGASS productions. Both we and the University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society will miss Mr. Burton.



What Cheer! What Cheer! {Midwestern}

The *University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society* is going to present *Iolanthe* April 11-14 at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Performances are at 8:00 pm (April 11-13), plus matinees on April 13 and 14 at 2:00 pm. Tickets cost \$11.00 and \$13.00 (April 12 and 13 (both matinee and evening)) and \$9.00 and \$11.00 (April 11 and 14). For more information, call (313) 761-7855, or write UMGASS Tickets; 911 North University; Ann Arbor, IL 48109.

The *Savoy-Aires* are also planning to stage *Iolanthe* during 1996. When we find out more, we'll let you know, but in the meantime, for more information, contact the company at P.O. Box 126, Evanston, IL 60204, or call David Craven at (312) 862-7781.

Also, *Light Opera Works* is scheduled to perform *Ruddigore* August 17-25, 1996. Other productions during the 1996 season include *The Chocolate Soldier* by Oscar Strauss (June 1-9) and *Wonderful Town* by Leonard Bernstein, Betty Comden and Adolph Green (December 26-31). A nice feature of the *Ruddigore* production is that

some kind of half-price discount for children will be available. Light Opera Works is currently taking series subscriptions, which run from \$47 to \$113. Individual tickets will range from \$21 to \$48 per show. For more information, to subscribe, or to find out what ages qualify for a children's discount, call Light Opera Works at (708) 869-6300.

Ohio Light Opera's repertory this year is to include: *The Merry Widow* (June 11 (8:00 pm), **12, 15, 16**, 20, 22, 28, July **9, 13**, 18, 21, 28, 31, August 7), *Song of Norway* (June 13, 15, 21, **29**, July **2, 4, 6, 13, 17, 24**, August **3, 4, 7**), *Robinson Crusoe* {It's Offenbach's version, and the score is charming} (June 14, **19, 23, 25**, July 11, 20, **28**, August **10**), *The Beggar Student* (June **18, 22, 26**, July 13, **21, 25**, August 3, 9), *Double Bill of Regrets Only and The Sorcerer* (June 27, 29, July **3, 6, 14, 26, 30**, August **6**), *The Gondoliers* (July 5, **7, 10, 19, 23, 27, 31**, August 1, 10), and a *Double Bill of Cox & Box and Thespis* {*Thespis* setting by Quade Winter -- how many settings does this make, anyway?} (July 16 (though it may be a matinee), **20, 24, 27**, August 2, **4, 8**). Individual ticket prices are \$25.00, though there are select subscriber packages, and Tuesday and Wednesday Matinee specials. For more information on them, or what have you, contact the Ohio Light Opera, The College of Wooster, Wooster, OH 44691 (or call (216) 263-2345).



Synopsis of Gilbert's Other Works:

Allow Me to Explain

Synopsis by Arthur Robinson

Gilbert's one-act farce *Allow Me to Explain*, his first "straight play," opened on 4 November 1867. The main characters are **Mr. Cadderby**; his wife **Mrs. Anna Maria**

Cadderby; his daughter by an earlier marriage, **Amelia Ann**; his nephew, **Ferdinand Boker**, who is engaged to Amelia Ann; and one **John Smith**. (There are actually three John Smiths, but only one figures in the plot.)

The play is set in a hotel corridor, where three men are living: John Smith, John Smith and John Smith. Mr. Cadderby arrives with his wife, daughter, and nephew, looking for John Smith, and is pleased to find that he has his choice of three. It seems that James Smith, a distant relative of Cadderby, has settled property worth £300 a year on him for as long as James Smith's nephew, John, lives; and Mr. Cadderby wants to check up on this nephew, since his income depends on John Smith's remaining alive.

After getting kicked out by the first two John Smiths, Cadderby bumps into a young man and challenges him to a duel--but proposes his nephew, Boker, to fight in his place. Boker is at first strangely reluctant to risk his life defending his uncle's honor, but Cadderby offers to plant a willow on Boker's grave and water it with his tears. Moved by this, Boker agrees to a duel with the stranger, suggesting that they fight with pistols at a hundred paces--or at twenty paces with swords.

But the situation soon changes soon changes. The stranger saves Cadderby from a runaway cab (off stage), and turns out to be none other than the John Smith on whose life his income depends. First Cadderby must forestall the impending duel. Then he discovers, to his horror, that Smith is determined to die because of his hopeless passion for a married woman--a certain Anna Maria Cadderby.

Cadderby questions his wife and learns that John Smith has been writing to her and she has been rejecting him. He tried to talk her into giving Smith some encouragement--just enough to keep him from committing suicide. Mrs. Cadderby meets with Smith and informs him that "your infatuation has conquered my resolution," that she will elope with him abroad, and that her love is "resistless, overwhelming." Smith is overwhelmed swiftly (for one thing, he doesn't want to go abroad), and his ardor for the Amazonian Mrs. Cadderby wanes.

He then encounters Amelia Ann, Cadderby's daughter (remember her?), whom he had once met at a ball, and decides to marry her instead. Cadderby has no objection and breaks off his daughter's engagement to Boker, but the latter threatens to shoot his rival, which would bring Cadderby's income to an end. Just then a letter arrives for Cadderby: James Smith, John's uncle (remember *him*?), has changed his mind: Cadderby's income will depend not on John Smith's life but on Amelia Ann's. So Cadderby breaks off his daughter's new engagement and restores her to Boker--whereupon Amelia threatens to drown herself, so he recants and gives her back to John Smith. Boker insists that he will expire from grief if he is deprived of Amelia Ann, but Cadderby repeats his promise to plant a tree on his tomb and water it with his tears. Boker declares that this "more than reconciles me to my fate," so all ends happily.



Where Can it Be?

(There will be more later, but I still have to straighten out the list of items.)

We recently heard from **Byron G. Hathaway, Jr.** (#AM6661, Housing Unit D; Drawer K; Dallas PA 18612-0286). Due to retirement constraints, he is forced to sell part of his collection of G&S memorabilia. He has the 1974 D'Oyly Carte-Sullivan-Gilbert 100th Anniversary Spode plate, and what he believes is a statuette of The Pirate King which dates from the 1920s. If you are interested in these items, please do contact him.

On the musical/performance side of G&S, a couple of dandy things either are or are about to be made available. William V. Dorwart, Jr., Ph.D., had played in enough pit orchestras for G&S operas to understand how garbled some of the orchestra scores are. With Theodore Presser Company, he has typeset (on computer) scores for *Iolanthe* and *Trial By Jury*. His goals in doing so were:

- 1.) Make the new materials legible and put page turns at convenient places wherever possible. . .
- 2.) Rationalize the relationships of the key signatures for the A, Bb, and F instruments and have all instruments change keys at the same time. In the existing materials key changes were omitted for some instruments, extra accidentals being thrown in instead. If, during a rehearsal, the conductor says, "Let's take it from the key change," chaos would result.
- 3.) Give all instruments the same repeats and first and second endings, etc. I found these scattered all over. Again, if the conductor wants to take it from the repeat, chaos would result.
- 4.) Provide abundant cues. This would enable substitution of alternative solo instruments when the orchestra is incomplete, relieve players of counting long sections of tacet measures, and indicate what the singers are doing around trouble spots such as fermatas.
- 5.) Provide the same dynamics and articulations for all parts. There was a huge variation both between and within them. The parts were not consistent with the conductor's scores.

The letter we have from him is dated June, so there may be more. In any event, the sample pages of score are quite legible, and appear to be an improvement over some of the orchestra scores for the operas. For more information, contact Dr. Dorwart at 124 Maple Ave., Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004 {(610) 667-3849 / Fax (610) 667-3590}. Or, you could also try calling Theodore Presser and see what happens: (610) 527-4242 / Presser Place and Lancaster Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010.

For singers in choral groups, Lee Hecht of Musical Score Distributors has announced the availability of a Gilbert and Sullivan choral series, including *Though P'raps I may Include Your Blame* (SATB) *I'm Called Little Buttercup* (SA, SSA, and SSAA), *I Am the Monarch of the Sea* (SAB and SATB), *Silvered is the Raven Hair* (SA and

SSA), and *Now to the Banquet We Press* (SA and SSA), all arranged by A. Paltrowitz. In preparation are "O, Gentlemen Listen" (TTBB and SATB), "Time Was When Love and I" (TTBB and SATB), "My Name is John Wellington Wells" (TTBB), "There Grew a Little Flower" (SSAA and SATB), "When Maiden Loves" (SSAA), "Is Life a Boon?" (TTBB), and "I Have a Song to Sing-O" (SATB), to be arranged by J.E. Suben. They are published by HLH Music Publications, but are available from Musical Score Distributors, 625 Broadway, Suite 7A, New York, NY 10012 {(212) 475-0270 / FAX (212) 473-7971}. Contact them for more information.

We also noticed on the back page of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin (Texas)'s newsletter a notice about the availability of a video of their March 1995 production of **Gondoliers**. The cost is \$25.00, which includes postage and handling. Send the check, along with your request, to The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin, 2026 Guadalupe, Suite 309, Austin, TX 78705.



Another Postcard Drawing

Along with the MGS holiday greetings, you probably noticed a flyer from Theatre Chicago, explaining what it does; and on the back of the *Little Nonsense* was a handbill about a trip being planned to see the Skylight Opera's G&S potpourri *Over the Moon*. Chuck Sussman, who plans the trips for Theatre Chicago was rather dismayed when he got no response to either the flyer or the handbill. Now, of course there are all kinds of factors involved in the success or failure of a mailing or a trip, but even S/A Cole was surprised that he got *no* response. So, this is the topic of the drawing:

- 1.) (For Chicago-area members) What aspect appealed (or did not appeal) to you about Theatre Chicago's *Over the Moon* trip?
- 2.) (For Members *outside* of the Chicago area) What appealed (or did not appeal) to you about the flyer and handbill?
- and 3.) (For *Everybody*) What are the main things you look for (or would look for) from a theater outing?

The answers to that last question will be especially helpful, both to Theatre Chicago, any group interested in organizing a theater outing, and to the MGS. We do want these annual outings of ours to be something members want to go to, so the more we know about what members want, the more likely it is that we can accommodate them. Cutoff for the drawing will be the end of May, 1996. I don't know what the prize will be, but we'll make sure it's something nice.

In the meantime, just so we all know what to expect from the MGS mailing list, these have been the conditions for outside use of the list

:

Since we [the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society] advertise G&S-related products and productions anyway, mailing something already prepared (instead of having to type up an announcement about it in the *Nonsense*) would save us some work, but then again, people don't join the MGS to get junk mail. After much discussion, the approved policy regarding the use of the MGS mailing list is:

1. The list is not for sale, and does not leave the control of the Society.
2. Use of the list is open to anyone or any organization, so long as the material they want mailed meets the criteria of MGS mailings (see item 4) and they pay the cost of the 1st class (or 3d or 4th class, if applicable) mailing, plus the processing fee.
3. The Society would do the processing and mailing of the items to be mailed, and a set processing fee of the cost of two single memberships {that's presently \$12.00} would be assessed.
4. Acceptable mailings must be Gilbert and Sullivan-related, the product described must be guaranteed (if applicable, since it's difficult to guarantee a show), and the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society must be *asked* to mail the item (that is, we do not advertise the availability of the mailing list. If an individual or group asks *us*, though, we might consider mailing something for them). In addition, the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society reserves the right to refuse to mail any material.



Results of the LP Drawing

(Yes, we actually completed a drawing!) In the last issue, we mentioned a number of LP recordings we couldn't donate to libraries, since they don't generally collect them any more. Happily, we got as many responses as we had LPs to unload. Recordings went to Lorrill Buyens (who got *The Zoo*), Teresa Lindsey (*Pirates of Penzance*, Ed Morris (*Yeomen of the Guard*), Darlene Fiske (*Sousa's Marches V. 10*, which included a recording of his *Mikado* march), Robert Dalby (*The Gilbert and Sullivan Album*, which featured Thomas Round and Donald Adams talking about Gilbert and Sullivan, and some of their lesser-known works), and Corisande Anderson (the *Greatest Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan* set). We hope they will enjoy them.



THE MIKADO

of various kinds by Carol Lee Cole

In October of 1995 THE SAVOY-AIRES presented their "Thirty-First Anniversary Production" at the Chute Auditorium in Evanston, Illinois. It was Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, THE MIKADO. When the curtain opened the scene was set at a railway station with a huge old-time steam engine painted as part of the background. During Act II the Mikado arrived by train - or so thought this member of the audience. This interesting staging effect was discussed as our group returned home and reviewed the entertainment of the afternoon.

One of the group recalled that train buffs would know about the MIKADO STEAM ENGINE. We wondered if the Savoy-Aires were giving us a little humorous history lesson with their backdrop. Back home, we turned to a book on trains and discovered that on page 64 in Trains by Robert Selph Henry (Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., New York, 1934 - 1957) was a bit of information about the "Mikados". Here is what it says:

The older engines lacked somewhat this sustained steaming power. Their fire-boxes were narrow and deep, carried between the last pair of drivers. The fire was a thick bed of coal, and the best fireman was the one who could throw in the most coal and get out the most smoke. It was found, however, that a thinner fire, spread over a larger grate surface, would burn more air and less coal, and would make a better and more efficient engine. To make fireboxes larger and wider, they had to be taken out from between the last pair of drivers and carried over a low axle, with small trailing-wheels.

This produced a new sort of wheel arrangement among freight engines, the 2-8-2. The first of these engines was built by Baldwin in 1897 for the Japanese Railways, from which circumstance they have been called "Mikados," sometimes shortened to "Mike." The addition of a fifth pair of drivers to the "Mikado" made the 2-10-2, called the "Santa Fe type." from the railroad for which it was first built in 1903

So, there you are. Next time I see a steam engine from the turn of the century I will count the wheels to see if there are two little ones, eight large ones, and two more little ones. It will then be classed as a "Mikado" engine. Do you think that was what the Savoy-Aires had in mind?

(As an aside, the book belongs to my son, who doesn't care much for Gilbert and Sullivan. He may not know a *Pinafore* from a *Ruddigore*, but he sure knows a Mikado from a Camel. A little railroad joke for locomotive buffs.)

The MIKADO GAME

A company called **BITS & PIECES** - The Great International Puzzle Collection located at 1 PUZZLE PLACE - B8016 - Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481-7199 has offered a game for sale called "The Mikado Rules." The advertize-

ment says, "Here's a venerable challenge that could humble even a Japanese emperor." It is a wooden rectangle frame with a slippery white floor. In grooves along the long sides of the frame a bar is able to slide up and down. There is a spring attached which exerts a pressure downward. Fifty or so round-shaped wooden pieces of various sizes and colors are pushed together by the spring bar. Each piece has a knob for lifting it off the board. "The object of MIKADO is to remove the pieces one by one without the spring-loaded arm sending the other pieces flying."

The game may be played solo or in competition with other players. "It's tougher than parking in Tokyo."

There is an 800 # - 800-JIGSAWS. The order number is #09-B7602 and the game costs \$14.95 plus \$4.75 for shipping and handling.



Well, this is all S/A Cole could get in the issue this time. We'll try and get some more old business cleaned up in time for the next issue.

We had mentioned a **Letter** drawing. Since some parts of the *Nonsense*, last we heard, appear on the Internet, and since a lot of students are evidently on the Internet, too, this idea seemed like it might end up being a service to students. Students, both high school and college students, often have to think up ideas for research papers and research essays. Remember what a time you had doing it when *you* were in school.

Why don't we help them out with suggestions for topics (and bibliographies of sources for finding the information they would need, or research plans, to complete the paper)? So that's the project: What topics can you think of, relating to Gilbert and Sullivan, that would be appropriate for students to write about, and what (available) sources would they need to complete the project? One topic *I'd* like to see done would be a comparison of Charles Dickens' matrons and Gilbert's matrons. The Dickens matrons I've read about are about as "unsympathetically" as Gilbert's are said to be, yet I've yet to hear anyone criticize Dickens for doing it. Or, a comparison of Gilbert's method of presenting ideas to George Bernard Shaw's. I still have nightmares about the paper *I* had to write about George Bernard Shaw's works when I was in high school. Anyhow, those are starts.

We'll have a drawing among the received practical ideas every couple of months: this project could be an ongoing thing. In any event, let's see how it goes. Please do drop the MGS a line with your ideas. In the meantime, Do keep in touch!

Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society
c/o Miss Sarah Cole -- 613 W. State St.
North Aurora, IL 60542-1538

(708) 859-2918 Work: (708) 896-8860 Fax: (708)
896-4422