Precious Nonsense

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Sir Roderic: This is a strange meeting after so many years
Dame Hannah: Very. I thought you were dead.

If Sir Roderic were being played by John Wayne, he might answer "Not hardly," as he did in *Big Jake*. As we say at the office, the urgent has been getting in the way of the important, but we're here now and hoping this last hiatus will not be repeated.

There are no production dates listed, mainly because I didn't want the newsletter to be delayed any longer than it has been already. If you have something coming up, though, e-mail me at MidwestGS@SBCGlobal.net (any surprise in that address?) with the opera's name, the company's name, the dates, locations, prices, and contact information. It'll save retyping, and may speed the production of another *Nonsense*.

In the meantime, a great big special thanks to Arthur Robinson, who has been doing most of the "heavy lifting" for the past several years. LaGrange College should be proud of having someone on staff as reliable as he is. He is also responsible for the answers to the last Big Quiz, and for compiling the latest one (several years ago!) So let us be grateful, and see what he have!

The 2002 MGS Big Quiz (Good grief! has it been that long?)

1. ***Katisha*** observes that "volcanoes have a splendour that is grim".
2. **Baptisto Palmieri**, the father of either Marco or Giuseppe Palmieri, had "a terrible taste for tippling".
3. ***Wilfred Shadbolt*** claims to have "a light, airy, joysome wit".
4. And Mount Vesuvius is mentioned in ***The Gondoliers***
5. There are three references to Christmas in the G&S opera *Thespis*. The only other opera with even one reference to Christmas is The Sorcerer.
6. ***Frederic Sullivan*** created the role of Apollo in Thespis.
7. The line "Fairy Queen's no longer young" appears in ***Utopia Limited***, as a comment on how even sweet young brides soon get old and crabby.
8. ***The Duke of Plaza-Toro's*** "temper was volcanic".
9. In Patience, ***The Duke of Dunstable*** is described as "a great matrimonial fish".
10. The foster brother of Robin Oakapple was ***Richard Dauntless***, and Leonard Meryll's was ***Colonel Fairfax***.
11. In the film Raiders of the Lost Ark, one of Indiana Jones' friends has a tendency to sing G&S songs when he is happy. ***John Rhyes-Davies*** plays that friend, and for what it's worth, the songs he sings (or tries to, anyway) are "I am the Monarch of the Sea" and "A British Tar is a Soaring Soul".
12. According to Mr Goldbury (Utopia Ltd.), the ideal height and weight for an English Girl is ***Five foot ten (in her dancing shoe) and Eleven stone two (about 156 pounds)***
13. ***Pooh-Bah (of Mikado fame) was born sneering.***
14. In the film Foul Play, ***The Pope*** is supposed to be assassinated during a production of The Mikado. He wasn't, of course, and, incidentally, he seemed to be enjoying the presentation.
15. ***Little Buttercup (or Mrs. Cripps)*** is described as "A plump and pleasing person".
16. The Yeomen of the Guard take place in the month of ***July***. In the song "Is Life a Boon", Col. Fairfax sings about having to die in July rather than June. Someone pointed out that the month is never actually specified, so a case could be made that Fairfax is singing about the "July" of his life, and not the calendar month. At the same time, a July setting would account for Phoebe's sitting outside spinning, and there still being sunlight at 7:30 pm. But that's for the director to decide, I suppose. In any event, and without doubt, Yeomen takes place in Fairfax's July, take it as you will.
17. Princesses appear in three of the operas: **Princess Ida** (with Princess Ida), **Utopia Limited** (with the princesses Zara, Nekaya, and Kalyba), and **The Grand Duke** (with the Princess of Monte Carlo). Actually, if you want to get picky, only one opera has princesses (as in "more than one") in it, and that's *Utopia Limited*, but we weren't that picky.
18. The title of Gilbert's last play was **The Hooligan**, produced in 1911.
19. Tarara, who otherwise speaks English, uses the Utopian language when he swears **because he has heard that profanity does not exist in the English Language.**
20. According to "Counsel for the Plaintiff" in *Trial by Jury*, **to marry two wives at a time** was reckoned as a serious crime in the reign of James II.
21. Josephine knows that Sir Joseph Porter is "a truly great and good man" **Because he told her so himself**.
22. Robin Oakapple's profession (before he is forced to become a Bad Baronet) is that of **A Farmer**.
23. Mystical Germans" preach their sermons, Nekaya and Kalyba show themselves to loud applause,

and the "professional bridesmaids" of *Ruddigore* are bound to be on duty the same time: **From ten to four**.

24. There are references to guinea pigs in the operas *The Sorcerer* (Aline is afraid J.W. Wells will turn her and Alexis into guinea pigs) and *The Mikado* (Ko-Ko was going to practice executions on one). At one time, Ruddigore included a reference, in the original version of Robin/Ruthven's second-act solo about being a bad baronet, but that song was cut and replaced many years ago.
25. **Reginald Bunthorne**'s poem "Oh, Hollow! Hollow! Hollow!" is described as "precious nonsense"?
26. Major-General Stanley refers to **Pinafore** "that infernal nonsense"?
27. In *The Palace of Truth*, what is the magical property of that palace? **In the Palace of Truth, all the occupants had to speak the absolute truth, without realizing they were doing so; unless one was protected by some talisman that allowed them to continue saying what one *wanted* people to think was true. Sometimes, as Elizabeth Bennet exclaims in *Pride and Prejudice*, and the courtiers visiting The Palace of Truth learn, Honesty is a greatly overrated virtue. (By the way, she exclaims it in the movie: I couldn't find it in the book.)**
28. Name an incident that you experienced, or that you heard of, that reminded you of an incident in a Gilbert and Sullivan opera.
29. Dream Cast: We all have ideas of how we would like to see certain operas presented, or wondered how a role if it had been played by a a particular actor or singer (or combination). To that end, pick one of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, and list the cast *you* would like to see in these roles. Or, if you can't cast a whole production, name an actor/actress you would like to see in a particular role. Anachronisms, or performers who could never have performed together, are acceptable. Explain the reasoning behind your choice of cast. (*I* find these answers very interesting: that's why it keeps turning up.)
30 Name someone you know (or know of) who reminds you of a G&S character, and explain why.
31. Name your favorite G&S opera. **Answers included *Patience*, *Ruddigore*, *Yeomen of the Guard*, and two for *Iolanthe*.**
32. Find an allusion to a G&S opera in another literary work, and cite it. Musical allusions count, too.
33. Describe an instance in which you learned something (that you wouldn't have learned otherwise) because of a reference in a G&S opera.
34. *Frederic Clay* introduced Gilbert and Sullivan to each other.
35. Aristophanes mentioned in *The Pirates of Penzance* (Major General Stanley talks about knowing the Croaking Chorus from his Frogs), and *Princess Ida* (he is one of the authors the girl graduates should read in order to succeed in Classics).
36. The secret sign of the conspiracy to overthrow Grand Duke Rudolf of Pfennig Halbpfennig was ***To eat a Sausage Roll***.
37. Beer is mentioned in ***Patience*** ("When I Go Out of Door"), ***Ruddigore*** (Old Adam/Gideon Crawle suggests to Sir Ruthven to poison his visitors' beer), and ***The Gondoliers*** (twice: "Rising Early in the Morning" and "There Lived a King").
38. Fireworks are mentioned in 3 G&S operas: ***Mikado*** (the festivities surrounding Nanki-Poo's beheading would include "A display of fireworks in the evening."), ***Gondoliers*** (one of the things the Palmieri Brothers' ideal king would do was "let of fireworks on the grand Canal, and engage all the gondolas for the occasion"), and ***Grand Duke*** (while Duke Rudolf is statutorially dead, he asks Ludwig not to squander his "little savings in fireworks, or any nonsense of that sort").
39. Friday the 13ths may be considered to be inauspicious days, but it has been a great day for us: Sullivan was born on ***Friday***, May 13, 1842.
40. ***Two*** of the G&S operas have plots that hinge upon the switching of children in infancy: H.M.S. Pinafore and The Gondoliers.
41. Gilbert was called to the bar **in 1863**.
42. What was the first ship Sir Joseph Porter ever saw? ***A Junior PartnerSHIP***.
43. In the G&S/*Star Wars* parody *HMS Death Star*, from which operas are the parodied songs taken? ***From* HMS Pinafore *and* The Pirates of Penzance**.
44. What was the first English opera known to be presented in Russia? ***I lost the answer to this one. let me know when you find out.***
45. The title of Gilbert's blank verse version of the Faust legend was *Gretchen*.
46. Cleena figures as a character in which work by Gilbert or Sullivan? In Sullivan's last work,
47. The composer Richard Wagner mentioned by name in *Princess Ida*.
48. Sir Ruthven's line in Ruddigore, "Alas, poor ghost!" is a quotation from *Shakespeare*: Hamlet, Act I, scene 5, in which Hamlet addresses it to his late father.
49. Hamlet is mentioned by name in ***Patience*** (in "If you want a receipt", along with just about every other important character anyone can think of offhand).
50. The Grand Duke Rudolph and his fiancée, the Baroness, plan to keep themselves warm during "the long, cold, dark December evenings" by *Sitting Close Together and Singing Impassioned Duets*.

Bonus Question: According to the September 1962 (our quizmaster Arthur Robinson thought it was about then) Gilbert & Sullivan Journal, at one time Gilbert thought of writing a comic opera, based on something by Shelley. What was it? be set by Sullivan, based on Frankenstein. He is supposed to have had ***Rutland Barrington*** in mind to play the Monster.

Mikado, Version 2.005,
as rendered by Noble Fool Theatricals (www.noblefool.org)

When Paul Botts, executive director of Pheasant Run Resort's professional theatre company *Noble Fool Theatricals*, called to invite MGSsers to free previews of a new setting of *The Mikado*, I expressed some misgivings about such things being so kitschy that the plot gets lost. He said they weren't doing it like that.

He was right. It may not have been a perfect "translation" from the Japan of romance and travelogue to the modern day, but it was an excellent one.

Some of you may know that I realized I was a G&S enthusiast after seeing Joseph Papp's 1980s (Chicago) version of *Pirates* (which, from what I understand, was better than the New York production). For some time afterward, it generated a lot of discussion in G&S circles about the appropriateness of "messing" with the opera. Someone pointed out that, although it incorporated some trendy elements, as far as making the story clear, it was remarkably traditional. What had impressed me was that everything that happened on stage, however goofy it might have been, happened for a reason. On the other hand, also many years ago, one of the members of my theater party and I had seen the much-touted "updated" production of *Mikado* Peter Sellars designed for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. It was so busy being clever that it forgot to be funny, and was so busy with funny bits that it couldn't string the funny bits into a clear plot. As with Joseph Papp's *Pirates*, when goofy stuff happens in *Mikado 2.005*, and it does happen, it happens for a reason, and it was far more enjoyable for it.

The first act setting was a Japanese train station. The Gentlemen of Japan – black-suited commuters – enter from the train gate and sing their opening chorus. When they finish, the audience's attention is drawn to bizarre-looking busker, dressed in leather, studs, plaid trousers, and crowned with a frizzy bleached dutch-boy (haircut) with black roots. He has a trombone, but carries a portable karaoke machine, and belts out "A Wand'ring Minstrel" with the verve of a hopeful amateur on a TV talent contest.

I thought it was hysterical, but mostly because, as some of you know, my sister-in-law is Japanese. She and my brother watch a fair amount of TV Japan (hurray for satellite TV), and I've seen contestants on the televised talent shows, celebrities on game shows, and others, with the dreadful clothing combinations and the blond hair with exceedingly dark roots. At our house, they are called "Fashion Victims". Evidently, Noble Fool Theatricals' director, Amy Binns-Calvey, must have seen a lot of TV Japan, because the female chorus were also hilariously costumed as "fashion victims", or were flouncing about in skimpy Sailor Moon-type schoolgirl uniforms. A lot of other current Japanese allusions appear to have been worked in, many of which I probably missed, but their "loss" was no loss to the integrity of the production.

Another bit of strangeness that ended up making sense was the combo scheduled to play at Yum-Yum's wedding. The second act is set, not in a garden, but the rice-papered interior of Ko-Ko's house. At the point when Ko-Ko has broken the news that the wives of executed men are buried alive, a Western trio (with trombone, I think guitar, accordion, and cowboy hats) knocks and says they're there for the wedding. They end up accompanying the group (really!) for "Here's a How-de-do", which, in this case, should probably have been "Howdy-do". Strange, but it fit. When Nanki-Poo's absence is questioned, Ko-Ko claims he has gone abroad to Arlington Heights. It got a big laugh, because it sounds almost as absurd as Berwyn would. In fact, my brother and sister-in-law make monthly pilgrimages to Arlington Heights, since that's where the area's most complete Japanese grocery store – Mitsuwa Market (http://www.mitsuwa.com) is located. Absurd on one level, but it makes sense on another.

Ko-Ko's character borrowed from the original concept of the Pirate King: he makes his entrance with "lunch boxes" (there's a name for these in Japanese, but I don't remember what it is) for the chorus, and afterwards dons his suit coat of office. The stage, I should mention, has video projection screens on each side. These were used cleverly to show train station advertisements, or emphasis to the stage action, or, most amusingly, as computer screens. Both Ko-Ko's "little list" and the Mikado's planned punishments were presented as PowerPoint presentations, which got big laughs. Unlike most such presentations, these were *good*, too, so the show is both entertaining and educational.

Speaking of music, the pit "orchestra" consisted of four people, and, especially considering its size, was remarkably good! The only thing I missed was some instrument playing the trumpet voluntary in "Young Man, Despair". But the run is professional-length: maybe they can work it back in. I also missed "See How the Fates Their Gifts Allot", but could understand why it was cut.

There were two plot devices that, although I understood the reasoning for them, I didn't care for much. As "I Am So Proud" is about to start, a kobi steak house grill (such as seen at Benihana restaurants) is wheeled in. As the song is sung, the chef pretends to artistically chop up the food as the chefs at kobi steak houses do, in time with the chippy-chopper part of the song. In principle, it's a rare inspiration, and I embarrassed my friends laughing. In fact, though, because the chopping distracts the audience from what the characters were singing, which is fairly important, it could prove a problem. On the other hand, if the audience is already familiar with the lyrics of *The Mikado* – and, chances are, they are – it wouldn't matter. The other part I didn't like was the SM overtones in "There is Beauty in the Bellow of the Blast". Katisha is costumed in a dowdy black dress and granny boots. Once she decides Ko-Ko is serious in his protestations of love, she strips it off, and is wearing a leather skirt and jerkin. She then proceeds to drag Ko-Ko through choreography that reminded me of Tom Lehrer's "Masochism Tango". I enjoy slapstick as much as anyone, and have laughed

at Ko-Ko getting beaten up unintentionally by Katisha's histrionics, but have never found anything funny about SM.

The singing was better than adequate, though generally rendered pop-style. The choreography included a lot of meaningless rushing around, but was not irritating. The ticket price ($27) is competitively low, and the theater is easy to find. Pheasant Run is just east of Kautz Rd. on Route 64 in St. Charles, IL. It could do with a little more parking, but be that as it may. The two ladies with me and I had a most enjoyable time, and hope the production has a successful run, because it deserves it

paul Botts had hinted that, if this show went well, the company might consider other G&S-related shows. Maybe this show's success will lead to a new dawn for some of Gilbert's comedies. Let us hope for the best.

What the Japanese REALLY Think of The Mikado

(And I'm not smart enough to make this up)

Those of you who know my family know that my brother was one of the rarities in the Marine Corps: he *liked* being stationed on The Rock (Okinawa). He liked it so much, in fact, that he took some of it home with him; and he and Megumi (nee Karamata) have been married thirteen years this April [It's 16 now. SLC]. Incidentally, if anyone asks you, Okinawa does not look the way it is made to appear in whichever *Karate Kid* film is set there: it is mostly urban, paved, and quite modern. (That's a little housekeeping message: Megumi gets peeved with the idea people have that it's rural and primitive.)

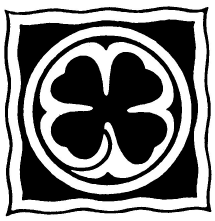
Another thing those of you who know my family know is that we share a house. It can sometimes lead to some tension, especially as far as decorating goes. They prefer Japanese austerity, and I go in for High Victorian Clutter. But we work it out, and we're still speaking. Here in the land of gyoza*, *Our Neighbor Totoro*, and Dagiemo Otamasan**, though, one thing that has remained on the living room wall is a framed tea towel, featuring characters from the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. It was on the wall two years before they moved in, so it has seniority.

It's funny about things that have "always been there": you can look at them for years without seeing them. That happened to my sister-in-law recently. After all this time, she took a good look at that tea towel. She noticed that some of the characters appeared to be dressed in Asian outfits (Ko-Ko and the Three Little Maids are featured prominently on the towel), but couldn't figure out what a mikado was.

Now, maybe things are different on Mainland Japan, but in the twenty-seven years she had spent growing up on Okinawa, she had never heard the term. As for me, after reading over and over how revered the Emperor was in Japanese culture, and how naming an opera after the Emperor would have the same effect that naming an opera "The Pope in Rome" would on Roman Catholics; and after listening to her and my brother translate Japanese dates, based on the ascendancy of particular emperors, into Gregorian calendar dates, this came as a surprise all around! Even my brother, whose idea of a really great *Mikado* would be a refurbished Mikado-type locomotive***, was startled. I said "Mikado" was supposed to be another name for the Emperor of Japan. She looked puzzled, whipped out her electronic translator, and reported that the word meant something about "heavenly gate" but had never heard it used in relation to the Emperor before.

I told her a little about the opera's plot and how it came to be written; and how it really didn't have much to do with Japan, aside from just being an exotic setting for a story that could be set anywhere. I went on to add that I had a video, if she wanted to see what the opera looked like.

She did, and I got out my video of the 1939 film with Martyn Green. I can hear the groan coming up from some readers. Well, it was the first one I could lay my hands on! It may not be the best production, but it does give viewers a general idea of the plot and music. I'm not sure Megumi was particularly interested in the plot, or the music: what really held her attention were the costumes. She reported that they appeared to be based on ancient Chinese models, rather than anything worn in Japan. She remarked several times on the excessive "topknot" the Mikado wore. I commented that it was a fantasy, and so the outfits were made to look like what the audience thought Japanese people might wear, rather than what they actually would.



What perplexed her was Ko-Ko's costume: she wondered why he was made to look like a "cheeken". If you've seen Martyn Green's outfit, you'll know what she means. When he walks, he makes the back of it bounce like a tail. I suggested he was because he acted like a little rooster, but that man who looked like a chicken is still a source of amusement. The names amused her, too. Ko-Ko and Yum-Yum sounded too much like Ling-Ling, the panda, to be taken seriously. Like the costumes, they were too Chinese.

She did, however, sympathize with Katisha. We have had many discussions over the years about ugly people with good hearts, like the Grinch and Herman Munster. Katisha has joined this group of social victims, by appearing more ill-used than villainous.

So, the moral of the story is that, it appears, the modern Japanese don't remember what "Mikado" once meant, and will no longer be offended by a Western opera by that name. It also means that I'm

*Japanese perogis.

**"Dagaimo", and I probably spelled that wrong, means "potato", "Otama" means "head" and "San" is an honorific. So that's the Cole-Karamata translation of "Mr. Potatohead".

*** A mikado is a locomotive with a 282 wheel placement that was frequently used in Illinois strip mines in the early 1900s is meant. Oh, that brother of mine: he doesn't know *Pinafore* from *Ruddigore*, but he does know a mikado from a camel.

on the lookout for a *traditional* performance of *Mikado*, so Megumi can see the whole thing done straight, instead of the 1939 "Viewers Digest" version. And it'll be even better if it comes with subtitles!

An Opinionated Description of The Emerald Isle

The Emerald Isle, or The Caves of Carrig-Cleena
Libretto by Basil Hood
Score by Arthur Sullivan and Edward German

Arthur Robinson offered to do this eight years ago, and I probably should have taken him up on it. Anyhow, this is my impression of it. Sarah Cole

Last year was the 30th anniversary of the release of the film *Star Wars*. Those of you who know me know that I like *Star Wars*. A Lot! I have to admit, though, that the plot is hackneyed, the script overflows with ringing inanities, and, if you recall the Academy Awards ceremony for 1977, it wasn't the acting that won the film's awards. What put that film over, as far as I'm concerned, were 1.) the character See-Threepio*, whose anxiety provided a means for the audience to feel the real danger of the situation that the rest of the cast seemed oblivious to; and 2.) one of the finest film scores since Erich Korngold's setting for *The Sea Hawk*. I bring this up because what John Williams did for *Star Wars*, Arthur Sullivan and Edward German did for *The Emerald Isle*. The characters are deliberately stereotyped, the plot is inconsequential and uneven, and the libretto is too punny to be funny. But the score includes some memorable melodies, ranging from the lovely, to the haunting, to the eerie. Most of the melodies were by Arthur Sullivan, but Edward German's work is pleasant. The opera might not be strong enough to endure a full production, but the music might certainly merit a concert performance. In any event, when you read the description of the plot, you may understand my impatience with it. Maybe I'm wrong and it would sound a lot better as a full production, but, no offense to Basil Hood, when the libretto is read, one gains a greater appreciation for W.S. Gilbert's talents.

The story is set in early 19th century Ireland, near the gates of the country residence of Ireland's Lord Lieutenant [governor]. The chorus of villagers gathers, and they explain, in song, that they are waiting for the arrival of a champion of Irish nationalism: Terence O'Brian. At the end of the song, he arrives. Much to everyone's surprise, however, he is very English. He explains (in recitative) that he grew up and was educated in England, but is determined to liberate Ireland from the English serpent (". . .only lately has that Andromeda [Erin] come to regard me as her Perseus!" Well, it is prettily put.) He goes on to sing about his descent from the legendary Irish king Brian Boru, and is therefore not about to cheer for any Saxon [English] governor, though he would be delighted to help old King Brian rout the Saxons from the territory. The villagers are much pleased.

Now that they are all friends, Terence describes his grievances against the English: how the Lord Lieutenant had enticed his father with wealth to sell his dilapidated estate, which had since been extensively remodeled into the Governor's summer residence; how the sale of the estate had forced his family to live in luxury in London, where Terence was forced to speak tyrant English instead of his native brogue. One of the villagers point out that they all suffer that indignity: the Governor has provided free classes in elocution and deportment, and cash prizes for excellent work so not only do they all speak clear and plain English, but they can read, write, and add, besides. Terence is horrified to find that his countrymen have forgotten their rustic, picturesque ways.

A remedy to the situation presents himself. Professor Bunn, an itinerant entertainer, arrives on the scene. Although he had originally intended to apply to the Governor to teach elocution to the children, he offers his services to this collection of Irish patriots, to instruct them in how to be a typical Irishman, in song. This cheerful tune, by Sullivan, has about the same rhythm as someone skipping, and is one of the more memorable melodies of the score. Terence may have some prejudicial notions about the Irish national character, but even *he* is unimpressed with the stereotype the Professor describes. However, Mr. Bunn now knows of their secret organization of rebels, and is forced to become a member of the group. He is to be initiated that evening at their hideout in the caves of Carrie-Cleena. The chorus goes off to make preparations.

Although he does not trust him, Terence confides to Mr. Bunn that he is engaged to the daughter of the Governor, Lady Rosie Pippin, and he is about to have a secret meeting with her. In order to insure the Professor doesn't run away, Terence ties him, and entrusts the cord to Pat Murphy, the blind fiddler. As soon as Terence disappears, Bunn attempts to cut his bonds, only to find that Murphy's eyesight is good enough to see the knife. Murphy now confides in Bunn that his father had been a blind fiddler, and had taught him the trade, although he lacked that key qualification of being blind. He wishes to regain his sight professionally, though, because he is in love with one of the local girls (Molly O'Grady), and can't very well tell her how pretty she is if he isn't supposed to be able to see her. He enlists Bunn's help in staging a public cure of his blindness.

Molly joins the men. When Murphy asks what she would think of the man who could cure his blindness, she exclaims that she would marry him if he could do it. Such a prospect suddenly appeals to Bunn, and dismays Murphy. The return of Terence prevents any altercation. He had been unable to get past the sentry, so he sends Bunn on a mission to deliver a note to Lady Rosie's maid. Bunn easily mesmerizes the sentry and proceeds toward the residence.

Now Molly confides in Terence. Molly confesses that she has been taking care of Blind Murphy's shack, and telling him the fairies have done it. And speaking of fairies, she informs Terence that the rebels' hideout is said to be haunted by the queen of the fairies, Cleena. She sings a song about her, and the lure of the fairy voices (another Sullivan one: a haunting, dreamy sort of tune, much like the haunted, dreamy existence of one captured by the fairies the song describes). Ant the end, she leads Murphy away.

*Evidently, I'm not alone in this opinion: Threepio is the only character performed by a live person to appear in all of the *Star Wars* films.

Lady Rosie evidently got Terence's note, and has come out to meet him. She is, however, accompanied by her maid Susan; and you know what they say about three being a crowd. Rosie tries to interest Susan in flirting with the Sentry, but, when she tries, he doesn't appear interested, due to the effects of Bunn's trance. Speaking of Mr. Bunn, he turns up just then, and flirts with Susan long enough for Rosie and Terence to have a brief tete a tete. When Susan expresses some concern about being watched by the sentry, Bunn releases him from the trance; which enables Susan to stroll away with him instead. Terence is once again left needing someone to watch the opportunistic Mr. Bunn. Susan returns, explaining that the sentry had just been arrested by the corporal for talking to her. (Evidently, she is also particularly good friends with the Corporal, who is particular with whom his presumed girlfriend goes walking.) She gets to watch Mr. Bunn, and the four sing a song about the mathematics of dividing three apples evenly. Instead of dividing, they sing, one more should be added, so the unhappy apples become happy pairs. (I told you this libretto overflows with puns and double meanings. It's a Sullivan quartet, and the tune is pleasant, if not especially memorable.) Susan and Bunn are left alone again. He tries to impress her by saying he is a detective. She loses interest, and he goes into Murphy's cabin to disguise himself as an old man. (I think the idea is that he will use that disguise to escape, but that point isn't entirely clear.)

Now we meet Rosie's parents. They are the Earl of Newtown, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, his wife the Countess, and their personal chaplain, Dr. Fiddle, D.D.. They introduce them selves in song (by Sullivan), and then the Lord Lieutenant goes on to explain, also in song, how he happened to marry the Countess. The upshot is that it took him forty-three years of hunting to find a woman dignified enough to be his wife. This couple is so dignified that they only speak in blank verse. After sending Dr. Fiddle off to learn if Professor Bunn the elocutionist has arrived in the village yet, the noble couple discuss graceful, dignified poses. The Countess sings a song (by Edward German) about undignified things previous kings of England had done that she would never do (for instance, bake or climb trees). The song isn't bad, but it does little to develop the plot*. In any event, as she finishes, Dr. Fiddle turns up with the news that Professor Bunn hasn't arrived yet, but the Lord Lieutenant has received an anonymous note, saying that the rebel Terence O'Brian is in the area. The unknown writer confesses that he has been forced against his will to join the rebels, and reveals that their hideout is in the Caves of Carrie-Cleena. He implores the Lord Lieutenant to exterminate the rebel society as quickly as possible. The Lord Lieutenant decides to send for extra troops to exterminate them.

Molly, who has been leading Murphy, overhears their conversation. When Murphy is offered a paying position as the Governor's bagpiper (to play whenever he is out walking, to add to his dignity), Molly assumes that *he* is the one who sent the note. Rosie had come back earlier (to help with the Countess's song, and is trying to think of a way to warn Terence about the upcoming raid. She sings a song (by Edward German), comparing her despair to the setting song, but rouses herself in the second verse by recalling that the sun will rise the next morning. (For what it's worth, the song is pretty, without being catchy. If you ever hear it, see what you think.) Terence, though, has not left, learns of the betrayal, but believes it came at the hand of Mr. Bunn, who then appears, dressed as an old man. Terence threatens to shoot him, but is stopped by Rosie's and Susan's terror of firearms and the reappearance of Molly, who suggests the traitor might be someone else. She has an idea to thwart the soldiers. They are from Devonshire, and it is common knowledge that the men of Devonshire are afraid of fairies. She proposes to frighten them with the information that fairies haunt the caves of Carrie-Cleena, and then confirm it by appearing as the fairy Cleena. Bunn seizes this idea, proclaiming that he was in disguise in order to impersonate a man recently escaped from the fairies' fifty-year imprisonment. They sing a (Sullivan) song about their plot.

The soldiers march in, and sing a counterpoint chorus with the village girls about the soldiers' county of origin. Their sergeant then sings a (German) song (in English–ha ha!) about the girls the soldiers had left behind. The chorus consists of lists of names. Terence approaches him, and begins to plant fears in his mind about the fairies in the Caves of Carrie-Cleena. Once the soldiers are feeling a little uneasy, Rosie enters to announce that she had just met an old man who claimed to have just escaped from those fairies. Mr. Bunn, in the old-man disguise, totters in, to sing of his captivity. Now this part of the opera, which is all by Sullivan, is good! Bunn's song tells of how he had doubted the stories of the fairies, but, at the age of twenty-six had made the mistake of falling asleep where they hold their revels. From that time until the present, he had been forced to dance around the fairy ring and sing the fairy song. The song itself is only two lines long, ranging up and down the Aeolian scale, yet is a haunting, melody that manages to be eerie without being frightening**. A female voice then takes up this melody: it is Molly, disguised as Cleena. She sings what amounts to a siren

*I am probably being too hard on musical comedies. I recently heard a radio version of the musical *Hit the Deck*, and was surprised at how much pointless action goes on merely to make a setting for the songs. That's a standard technique for this kind of entertainment, but it's a condition that is seldom found in the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. If you think about what you're hearing, you find, with few exceptions, that each song serves a purpose to further the plot. It spoils you for other librettists' less-disciplined work.

**Arthur Robinson told me this once, but I had forgotten until just now when I looked it up (Hurray for the internet!). The song the fairies sing is "Da luan da mort, Da luan da mort, Angus dardine." One of the Irish fairy tale tells of a poor humpback who falls asleep by a fairy mound. He wakes and hears them singing "Da luan da mort", which apparently means "Monday, Tuesday" in Gaelic. After listening to them repeat that half-tune for a while, he sings 'Augus Dardeen" [sic], or 'Wednesday, too," which completes the song. The fairies are so delighted that they take away his hump. His story gets around, and a cranky man with a hump hears it. He goes to the fairy mound himself, and, as the fairies sing their complete song, tries to add some words. (If you're curious, he throws in "da huan," which means "Thursday.") The fairies are greatly displeased at his distracting interference with their song, and add the first man's hump to his own. I guess the Lord Chancellor got off easy when it came to interfering with influential fairies. For documentation, see *"Fairy Gifts: Folktales of Type 503." [http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0503.html]. Visited 18 June 2008.* In any event, the song Cleena's fairy band sing here is an authentic fairy lyric.

song, calling listeners to the Caves of Carrie-Cleena ("Come away, sighs the fairy voice"). This tune is another eerie, haunting melody that sounds the way a summer sunset over a calm sea looks. (When you hear it, see if you don't think of sunsets.)

The rhythm of the musical numbers is interrupted by some dialogue between Murphy, who now appears, and various other characters. Murphy (still feigning blindness) recognizes Molly's voice, and has to be assured by Terence, Rosie, the village girls (who are in on the plot) and "Cleena" that he hears the Queen of the Fairies. Murphy announces that he plans to go to her cave that evening and have his blindness cured. "Cleena" informs him that fairies don't cure blindness, and he will be disappointed, but Murphy is certain he will see by morning. "Cleena" exits, and Murphy goes off to pack a bag for what might be a fifty year absence.

By now, the soldiers are unnerved, and as the finale begins, Mr. Bunn sings to that effect as Terence and Rosie bid a fond farewell. The Lord Lieutenant and the Countess arrive to send off the troops properly, and are greatly surprised to find them so rudely unwilling to deal with the rebels. Rosie, however, introduces them to the 'Old Man" who had been a victim of the fairies' shenanigans. Dr. Fiddle doesn't believe him, but the noble couple are certain that no one would dare lie to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Molly's voice is then heard, again singing the call to come to Carrie-Cleena. As the First Act ends, the soldiers disperse in a panic, the noble couple depart in genuine amazement (while the village girls merely feign it); and Murphy sets out for the caves.

Act II is set in front of the Caves of Carrig-Cleena that evening. The rebels are there waiting for their leader, and working themselves into a state of nervous collapse about the possibility of being caught. They sing a song to that effect. Terence arrives with the good news that Dr. Bunn's plan to scare off the soldiers had frightened off the soldiers. The rebels are pleased, and even more pleased when the village girls turn up. They dance a jig in celebration. The celebration is short-lived, because the girls bring news that the soldiers have changed their minds, and are on their way now to exterminate the rebels. The assembly condemn Mr. Bunn (in song), and the men decide they are lost. But, as Molly replies when one of them concludes the Book of Fate is written against them, "It's the Book of Fate wants rewritin'". An Irishman doesn't surrender to such a foe. Terence then reinforces the thought with a heroic song (by Sullivan) about the Irish character: essentially that of a gallant rogue

Once the men are encouraged, and have started trying to figure out who in their midst is a likely spy, Lady Rosie and Susan turn up. The rebels are suspicious upon learning that their leader is engaged to the daughter of their chief enemy, but he explains they fell in love as babies, before they understood the enmity between their races. The lovers sing two cute verses about this childish affection, which grew to adult romance. In the first verse, Terence sings of how she was one, and he was two when they first met in the park. In the second, Rosie sings how they later met at a ball, where she confessed to him that she was won when he was two when they first met in the park. The waltz melody, by Sullivan, is charming, even if the puns get a little thick.

Mr. Bunn finally arrives at the hideout, where he is again condemned in song for his failure to scare off the soldiers. He is given a second chance to drive them off, but threatened with death if he fails: because he'll be executed along with the rebels if the soldiers catch them. He has an idea to use one of his devices to make Molly appear (as Cleena) in the cave, and thus scare the soldiers, but Molly is uncooperative when she learns she would be expected to address passers-by affectionately, as legend says the Fairy Queen. Molly can't tell someone she loves him if she doesn't. With the help of Edward German, the chorus agrees with her. They then step out briefly so Mr. Bunn can discuss the current society's penchant for falsehood. This slow-paced patter song, by German, is punny, but, because of the topic ("Oh, the age in which we're living strikes a man of any sense / As an age of make-believe and imitation and pretense. .."), they aren't oppressive. The tune isn't much, but it doesn't distract listeners from the lyrics. After Mr. Bunn finishes his observations, Terence and Rosie return. She had an idea: that, instead of Molly masquerading as a fairy, Mr. Bunn pretend to be a goblin. He doesn't care much for the, because goblins are said to be insignificant, grotesque creatures (though his listeners see no obstacles). He states that he *would* consent to be a goblin if Susan would impersonate a fairy that he would pursue. He goes on to explain (in a song by Sullivan) the precedent; how in olden days the fairies wanted nothing to do with goblins, in spite of their gold; and now the fashion is for "goblins' to use their gold to lure "fairies" to their underground homes. The number is cute, even if the mercenary inclinations of the "modern girl' are distasteful. It is also, incidentally, my father's favorite tune from the opera. The chorus then dances away.

The principal characters notice someone approaching the caves. It's "Blind" Murphy, so the goblin plan is out. Mr. Bunn does manage to persuade Molly to impersonate Cleena again, but silently. He proposes to use his illusion-creating device to make her seem unearthly. Rosie is then asked to sing a cheerful love song (and provide the voice for Cleena), but she points out that ladies only know sad love songs. Terence reminds her of some lyrics he had send her, and would stand out of view so she could sing them to *him*, to assuage any pangs of conscience. Bunn will signal her when to begin. By this time, Murphy has reached the caves. He tells Bunn he knew Molly was impersonating Cleena in the village earlier, but plans to tell people he had met the real Cleena that night, and that she had restored his sight. He is genuinely alarmed when Mr. Bunn points out the ghostly image standing in the cave. After some confusion of signals (which appears to ruin the rhythm of the scene), Rosie begins to sing the "cheerful" love song, scored by Edward German.

Now this song is remarkable, though cheerful is not an adjective I would use to describe it! It is the most tempestuous, despairing, terrifying love song I have ever heard. Admittedly, the lyrics sound like they were addressed to a mail carrier ("Nor land, nor tide, Nor hail, nor rain, nor thunder!"[will separate us]), but the tune sounds like a storm at sea. The tune is magnificent. What irritates me, though, is that it should be introduced so shabbily. The silly argument that precedes it

diminishes the impact it might have had. If you ever write an opera, don't do that to a tune like this one. At the end of it, Murphy understandably faints.

The morning dawns, and the chorus discovers him inert. Mr. Bunn is again in trouble: the plan was for the apparition to have frightened Murphy away, so that his terror would frighten away the soldiers. No one counted on his fainting. Murphy awakens, still "blind', and is accused of being a spy for the Lord Lieutenant. Molly persuades the rebels to try him instead of lynching him. As the evidence is presented, the rebels are nearly convinced of his innocence until he is forced to confess that he is not blind. The rebels banish him from the town, and leave him alone with a hurt Molly. He sings a good-bye to his home (another pleasing German setting, as will be the next one), but , when he asks if she won't bid him good-bye, she confesses that she can't. In song, she confesses that she loves him, and would go with him.

They leave together, as the Sergeant (remember the Devonshire soldiers?) enters, with his regiment. Some of the village girls and Terence confront him. They remind him of the presence of the fairies, and the Governor is using him and the other soldiers as one would play with wooden soldiers: wear them out and throw them away. Terence sings a (memorable martial Sullivan) song about the fate of a dutiful wooden soldier to illustrate. They don't stay to see if he understands their point.

The Sergeant isn't impressed. The Lord Lieutenant and the Countess arrive, in the Lord Lieutenant's estimation, before the rebels. The Countess proposes to dignify the proceedings by kissing each of the soldiers, starting with the Sergeant. Mr. Bunn, who has entered unnoticed, takes pity on him, and tells him to recite a bucolic poem in dialect to avoid the Countess's mark of esteem. As the Sergeant blathers, he introduces himself to the noble couple as a 'Member of the Society for Psychological Research," who has discovered the caves near where they stand are full of them. The Lord Lieutenant does not believe in fairies, thanks to Dr. Fiddle, who goes on at length about how they couldn't exist. The Governor is still perplexed by the anonymous letter, and offers a thousand guineas to learn the name of the author. Mr. Bunn promptly confesses, expecting to receive the cash. The governor agrees he should receive it, but doesn't believe Mr. Bunn will be able to enjoy it; the letter proved he was a rebel, and so he will be shot with the rest. He is removed as Molly and Murphy enter.

Molly wants to vindicate Murphy, so, in the presence of the Lord Lieutenant, she summons the rebels to hear Murphy acknowledge that he could not have written the fatal letter because he can't write. The rebels are delighted, but are also promptly arrested. Terence steps forward to claim to be their leader. As the Governor orders him to be shot, Susan throws herself across him, as a proxy for Lady Rosie. She enters, and promptly takes Susan's place. The noble couple is horrified to learn their daughter is in love with an Irish rebel, even if he is descended from Irish nobility. Mr. Bunn, however, is finally able to save the day. He points out that a noble collection of American aristocracy feature in his lineage, such as Railway Kings and Copper Queens. The Irish would never have rebelled if they had known how closely related he was to their friends the Americans. He, and the rest of the modern English nobility, are more than half American, so they should all be friends. And, with a reprise of Bunn's first act song about the Irish national character, and the second act's reassuring jig, they do.

Now, if you want to read the libretto for yourself, it is available here:
http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/other_sullivan/emerald_isle/emerald_home.html , or
http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/other_sullivan/emerald_isle/emerald_libretto.txt .
If you would like to hear the recording, there is one available on CD:

Sullivan, Arthur, Basil Hood, Edward German, David Lyle, and Arthur Sullivan. 2003. ***The rose of Persia The Emerald Isle.*** *Wadhurst, E. Sussex, England: Pearl.*

which is available from these libraries:
http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/70052129 (Hurray for WorldCat.org!) If nothing else, you can show the information to your reference librarian, which might speed up the searching for a borrowable copy.
If you're convinced, and would like to buy one, much to my surprise, it is still available through Amazon.com (and a link is available from the Worldcat.org website}. It's a little pricey, but I was able to get a satisfactory used copy this way. The recording itself is of a live performance, with an audience, so there are a number of coughs and rattles, as well as an occasional squeak or disunity in the orchestra. The performers are enthusiastic and professional, so the flaws in the performance do not overwhelm the production. The recording includes *The Rose of Persia*. If you borrow or buy the CDs, maybe you could be persuaded to write a description of that later effort of Sullivan's.

And that's what we have so far. By all means let us hear from you! I think part of the reason for these several years of mental block has been the number of people we have been losing. If you have a contribution (literary, i mean, not monetary) to make, we'd love to hear from you. On those same lines, if you would like an assignment (something to write about), let me know. i have some entertaining ideas, and no energy to carry them out. whichever you prefer, you can still reach the Midwestern Gilbert and Sullivan Society right here:

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