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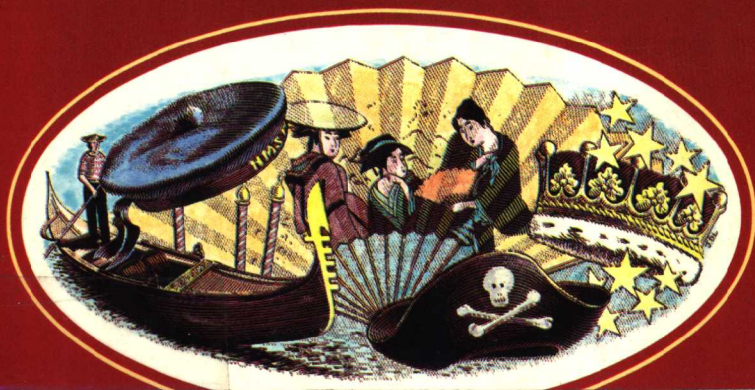


# THE ANNOTATED GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

H.M.S.  
PINAFORE  
THE MIKADO  
IOLANTHE

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THE PIRATES  
OF PENZANCE  
THE  
GONDOLIERS



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Their best-loved operas  
introduced and edited by Ian Bradley

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THE ANNOTATED  
GILBERT AND SULLIVAN: 1

Ian Bradley was born in 1950 in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, and educated at Tonbridge School and New College, Oxford, where he obtained a First Class Honours degree in modern history. He stayed on at Oxford University to complete a doctoral thesis on early nineteenth-century politics. After a brief period with the B.B.C., where he ended up producing 'Woman's Hour' from Manchester, he joined the staff of *The Times*. There he spent five years writing mostly on political, historical and social topics. He has since taught history at Sevenoaks School.

He is the author of five books, three of them on his favourite subject of Victorian history. His latest publications, which have taken him firmly into the twentieth century, are *Breaking the Mould? The Birth and Prospects of the Social Democratic Party* (1981) and *The English Middle Classes are Alive and Kicking* (1982). He is currently working on a book on the ideology of British Liberalism.

Ian Bradley has been a Gilbert and Sullivan addict ever since he was taken by his parents to the Savoy Theatre as a small boy to see a performance of *Iolanthe*. He sings G & S almost continually in private, and occasionally in public. Among his other loves are spa towns, revivalist hymns, the Liberal Party and walking in Scotland. He also loves writing.



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# PREFACE

Gilbert and Sullivan's operas exist to be sung, hummed, whistled, performed, watched, listened to, read and enjoyed, not to be annotated. The notes on the left-hand pages in this book are intended first and foremost to enhance the enjoyment of the lines opposite. They are not designed to provide an exhaustive record of every single textual change that has occurred in the last hundred or so years. This book is offered to its readers as a source of innocent merriment, and, I hope, of some interesting information, not as an academic treatise.

A word on the text is needed. There is, alas, no such thing as a definitive version of the Savoy Operas. In the case of every work, what was performed on the first night varied from what was printed in the original libretto sent to the Lord Chamberlain for licensing, and further, often substantial, alterations were made subsequently. Vocal scores differ in wording from libretti, both in manuscript and printed editions, and there are occasional discrepancies between British and American versions of the same work. 'Gags', both authorized and unauthorized, introduced by members of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company during performances, creep in and out of successive editions of the libretto. Mrs Helen D'Oyly Carte, who ran the company from 1901 to 1913, often asked Gilbert to authorize a correct version of the operas, but he never did so.

The texts which are printed in this volume are as accurate as I can make them. They broadly follow the versions contained in the current set of libretti published by Chappells, which are used by most amateur and professional companies performing the operas, and the two-volume edition of the Savoy Operas which was prepared by Dame Bridget D'Oyly Carte and Mr Colin Prestige and published by the Oxford University Press in 1962-3. Some slight differences will be found, however, where I have tried to bring the text into line with current practices in performance. Essentially, the version of the operas printed in this book is that in which they were most recently performed by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company before its sad demise in February 1982 and in which they are now generally performed by other amateur and professional societies. In that, it differs from the version contained in the paperback edition



of the Savoy Operas published by Macmillans, which is, generally speaking, that performed fifty or so years ago.

I have received much help in the preparation of this book. First and foremost I would like to thank Dame Bridget D'Oyly Carte, who placed her fascinating collection of letters and marked libretti at my disposal and allowed me to quote from copyright material. I would also like to thank her secretary, Mr Albert Truelove, and Mr Peter Riley, the last general manager of the D'Oyly Carte Company, for all their help and for sharing their knowledge of G & S.

My grateful thanks are also extended to the Royal General Theatrical Fund Association, 11 Garrick Street, London WC2, as owner of the subsisting copyright in Sir William S. Gilbert's unpublished writings, for allowing me to publish various lines which are in copyright to be found in the Lord Chamberlain's licence copies of the operas, and to publish extracts from various letters written by Sir William Gilbert which are still subject to copyright. I would also like to thank Mr Colin Prestige, the Association's solicitor and himself a leading authority on Gilbert and Sullivan.

Various people have helped me with specific queries. Dr Nicholas Ostler supplied me with translations and comments on Japanese phrases in *The Mikado*, and the staff of the historical section of the National Maritime Museum answered my questions about certain nautical expressions in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. The staffs of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, where Reginald Allen's splendid collection of Gilbert and Sullivan material is lodged, the music library of the Berkeley campus of the University of California, and the students' room of the manuscript department of the British Library have all been very helpful. Chappells were also kind enough to send me a reference copy of Reginald Allen's *The First Night Gilbert and Sullivan*, which is now, sadly, out of print.

I would also like to thank John Denny and Peter Carson of Penguin Books for their help and encouragement and Judith Wardman for her splendid copy-editing, which has prevented at least one or two howlers from getting into print. For those that remain, needless to say, I alone am responsible. My parents made many useful suggestions on the first draft of my typescript, and I owe a special debt of gratitude to my brother, whose early passion for Gilbert and Sullivan began to grip me just, I fear, as it was beginning to wane in him.

My final thanks must go to all the members of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, off-stage as well as on it, who have been chiefly responsible for my love of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, just as they must have been for countless thousands around the world. I dedicate this book to them, in gratitude for all the pleasure they have given me, and in the hope that before long they will be back again to perform the Savoy Operas – all of them – as only they know how.

Rather than give a lengthy bibliography at the end of this book, I list here the books (many of them, alas, now out of print) from which I have derived the greatest benefit, and the greatest amusement, in the task of preparing this volume:

Reginald Allen, *The Life and Work of Sir Arthur Sullivan* (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 1975).

Reginald Allen, *The First Night Gilbert and Sullivan* (Chappell & Co., London, 1958).

Leslie Ayre, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Companion* (Pan Books, London, 1974).

Leslie Baily, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Book* (Cassell, London, 1952).

Leslie Baily, *Gilbert and Sullivan and their World* (Thames & Hudson, London, 1973).

Harry Benford, *The Gilbert and Sullivan Lexicon* (Richards Rosen Press, New York, 1978).

Sidney Dark and Rowland Grey, *W. S. Gilbert: His Life and Letters* (Methuen, London, 1923).

W. A. Darlington, *The World of Gilbert and Sullivan* (Thomas Crowell, New York, 1950).

G. E. Dunn, *A Gilbert and Sullivan Dictionary* (Allen & Unwin, London, 1936, and Da Capo Press, New York, 1971).

James Ellis (editor), *The Bab Ballads by W. S. Gilbert* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970).

Isaac Goldberg, *The Story of Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York, 1928).

Martyn Green's *Treasury of Gilbert and Sullivan* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1961).

Michael Hardwick, *The Osprey Guide to Gilbert and Sullivan* (Osprey, London, 1972).

Hesketh Pearson, *Gilbert and Sullivan* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1950).

J. W. Steadman (editor), *Gilbert Before Sullivan* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1967).

I have taken advantage of a reprinting of this book to correct some mistakes which appeared in the first edition. For pointing out errors to me, I am extremely grateful to the Revd D. G. Bell of Blackpool, the Revd Arthur King of Harrogate, Keith Peterson of New York, Colin Prestige, Arthur Jacobs and, above all, Michael Walters, who found a distressingly large number of howlers in my notes. He also declared himself to be somewhat sceptical about the oft-repeated story of the sword falling from the wall in Gilbert's study (see page 257), but I have chosen to keep it in my notes until it is definitely proved apocryphal. It is too good to leave out. I hope he will forgive me.

I.C.B.



H.M.S. PINAFORE

OR

THE LASS THAT LOVED A SAILOR

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE RT. HON. SIR JOSEPH PORTER, K.C.B. (*First Lord of the Admiralty*)  
CAPTAIN CORCORAN (*Commanding H.M.S. Pinafore*)  
TOM TUCKER (*Midshipmite*)  
RALPH RACKSTRAW (*Able Seaman*)  
DICK DEADEYE (*Able Seaman*)  
BILL BOBSTAY (*Boatswain*)  
BOB BECKET (*Boatswain's Mate – Carpenter*)  
JOSEPHINE (*the Captain's Daughter*)  
HEBE (*Sir Joseph's First Cousin*)  
MRS CRIPPS (*LITTLE BUTTERCUP*) (*a Portsmouth Bumboat Woman*)  
*First Lord's Sisters, his Cousins, his Aunts, Sailors, Marines, etc.*

SCENE. – Quarter-deck of H.M.S. *Pinafore*, off Portsmouth.

ACT I. – Noon.

ACT II. – Night.

# H.M.S. PINAFORE

*H.M.S. Pinafore* was the fourth work on which Gilbert and Sullivan collaborated and their first big success. First performed at the Opéra Comique theatre just off the Strand on 25 May 1878, it ran for a total of 571 performances. This equalled the record for an initial West End run, which was held by a farce called *Our Boys*.

The talents of William Schwenck Gilbert, the failed barrister who preferred writing plays, and Arthur Sullivan, the serious composer who always felt comic operas to be rather beneath him, had first been brought together in 1871 by John Hollingshead, owner and manager of the Gaiety Theatre. The opera which they wrote for him, *Thespis, or the Gods Grown Old*, was staged at the theatre at the end of that year without success. The dramatist and composer continued to work separately until they were brought together again in 1875 by Richard D'Oyly Carte, an enterprising young theatrical manager and entrepreneur. The first result of this new collaboration, *Trial by Jury*, opened at Carte's Royalty Theatre in Soho on 25 March 1875 and ran for 175 performances.

The relative success of *Trial by Jury* encouraged Richard D'Oyly Carte to commission further works from Gilbert and Sullivan and to establish his own permanent opera company to perform them. The Opéra Comique was leased as the base for the Comedy Opera Company. The first fruit of this new, more permanent arrangement between the three men was *The Sorcerer*, which opened on 17 November 1877 and ran for 175 performances. The next was *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

With *H.M.S. Pinafore* Gilbert and Sullivan found the magic touch which they were to apply to another eight operas over the next decade. The establishment of a permanent company enabled them to write parts which suited the particular talents of individual singers. The nautical theme of the opera appealed strongly to Gilbert, who had seafaring blood in his veins. His father had been a naval surgeon, and Gilbert liked to claim that a more distant ancestor was Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the Elizabethan navigator who landed at Newfoundland in 1583 and established the first English colony in North America. Jokes about the Navy had figured prominently in the *Bab*

*Ballads* which Gilbert had written for the humorous magazine *Fun* (a rival to the better-known *Punch*) in the 1860s. Indeed, the ballads supplied several of the ideas and characters on which the opera was based.

*H.M.S. Pinafore* also provided the perfect vehicle for Sullivan to display his gifts for melody and for evocative mood music. Amazingly, he struggled to compose the opera while wracked with pain as the result of a stone in his kidneys. He wrote later: 'It is, perhaps, rather a strange fact that the music of *Pinafore*, which was thought to be so merry and spontaneous, was written while I was suffering agonies from a cruel illness. I would compose a few bars, and then be almost insensible from pain. When the paroxysm was passed, I would write a little more, until the pain overwhelmed me again.'

Early on, it looked as though *H.M.S. Pinafore* might prove to be a flop. Partly because of a fierce June heatwave, the Opéra Comique was far from full, and by July nightly takings were down to less than £40. The cast took a voluntary cut of a third in their salaries, and there were constant threats that the show would have to close. However, Sullivan gave it a boost by conducting a selection of music from the opera at the summer promenade concerts at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. By the end of August the weather was cooler and the theatre was full. The music had caught on, and shops in London were inundated with requests for the piano score.

*H.M.S. Pinafore* had no such difficulties in establishing itself on the other side of the Atlantic. In the absence of international copyright agreements, the opera was first performed in the United States by a 'pirate' company in Boston on 25 November 1878. Within a few months *Pinafore* mania was sweeping the States and more than fifty unauthorized companies were playing the piece across the country. In New York alone the opera was at one stage being performed simultaneously in eight separate theatres within five blocks of each other. There were all-negro and all-Catholic productions and performances on canal boats and Mississippi paddle steamers. One enterprising pilot in Newport, Rhode Island, learning that *H.M.S. Pinafore* was shortly to arrive there, even rowed several miles out to sea so as to be sure of getting the job of piloting her into the harbour.

Clearly, Gilbert, Sullivan and D'Oyly Carte could not let the pirates have a monopoly of performing, and reaping the profits from their own work. In the autumn of 1879 the three men sailed across the Atlantic with a cast drawn from the Comedy Opera Company. The first authorized performance of *H.M.S. Pinafore* in the United States opened at the Fifth Avenue Theater, New York, on 1 December 1879.

*H.M.S. Pinafore* has had a particularly illustrious set of fans. Crown Prince William of Prussia, later Kaiser William II, greeted Sullivan on a visit to Kiel in 1881 with a rendering of 'He polished up the handle of the big front door'. Like many leading figures in the Navy, Admiral Lord Fisher, First Sea Lord at the beginning of the 1914-18 war, loved the opera and was frequently in the audience of D'Oyly Carte Company performances. Sir Harold Wilson,

British Prime Minister from 1964 to 1970 and 1974 to 1976, first developed his life-long love of Gilbert and Sullivan when he played the part of a midshipman when a boy. On 16 June 1977 the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company performed *H.M.S. Pinafore* before the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and other members of the Royal Family at Windsor Castle. It was the first Royal Command performance of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera there since *The Gondoliers* had been performed for Queen Victoria in 1891.

*Pinafore* has also long been a special favourite of schools and amateur operatic societies. Appropriately, it was the first Gilbert and Sullivan opera to be performed by amateurs when the Harmonists' Choral Society staged it at the Kingston upon Thames Drill Hall on 30 April 1879. Since then there can have been few evenings when the 'airs from that infernal nonsense *Pinafore*' could not have been heard wafting from some school hall or church room.



1-2 *Scene*: The stage set for *H.M.S. Pinafore* was based on the quarter-deck of Lord Nelson's famous flagship *H.M.S. Victory*, which is still preserved in dry dock at Portsmouth. Gilbert visited Portsmouth with Sullivan six weeks before *Pinafore* was due to open and made a careful inspection of the *Victory* and other ships there. From the many sketches he made he designed the set for the opera.

In the copy of the libretto sent to the Lord Chamberlain for licensing purposes in May 1878, Gilbert specified that the set should show 'an old-fashioned three decker' with a raised poop, the deck on stage right and the mainmast on stage left. He also dated the action of the opera as 1840.

Gilbert took great care to ensure that every detail of the set was correct. It was a source of great pride to him when he was complimented by senior naval officers who came to see *Pinafore* on the accuracy of the ship's furnishings. He even had the sailors' costumes made by official Navy tailors in Portsmouth to ensure their authenticity.

### 3-12 *We sail the ocean blue*

This rollicking opening chorus establishes the location of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, riding at anchor outside Portsmouth. In his original note on the set for Act I, Gilbert had written 'View of Portsmouth in distance'. This town in Hampshire on the south coast of England was the site of the first ever naval dockyard in Britain, built by King Henry VIII in 1540, and has been one of the country's major naval bases ever since.

12 *plenty of time for play*: The phrase appears in this form in the original manuscript score of the opera and in the first published edition of the libretto. It appears in some editions of the libretto as 'plenty of time to play', but this seems to have been a printing error which got perpetuated.

### 18-33 *I'm called Little Buttercup*

The famous waltz song in which Little Buttercup (real name, as we learn from the list of *Dramatis personæ*, Mrs Cripps) introduces herself to the crew of *H.M.S. Pinafore* originally began 'For I'm called Little Buttercup' and is used again in the entr'acte played as the curtain rises on Act II. Sullivan had a pet parrot, Polly, to whom he taught the tune. 'It might not be quite a perfect rendering of the music', the composer remarked, 'but it was certainly quite as good as Gilbert's attempts.'

Little Buttercup herself was an importation from one of the *Bab Ballads* which Gilbert wrote during the 1860s. Under a different name, she is the central character in a ballad entitled 'The Bumboat Woman's Story', which anticipates one of the sub-plots in *H.M.S. Pinafore* in telling of the love between Poll Pineapple and a naval officer, Lieutenant Belaye.