

IMPERIAL COLLEGE OPERATIC SOCIETY

THE GONDOLIERS

BY W S GILBERT

+

A S SULLIVAN



Producer
Musical Director

Ian Gledhill
Michael Withers

"WORDS"

"On the first night of 'The Gondoliers' I was in a whirl. I walked on, took one look at the audience, and gulped. Then I saw Sullivan's face beaming up at me from the conductor's stand, and my confidence returned."

Those words were written by Decima Moore, who made her stage debut in "The Gondoliers", which opened at the Savoy Theatre on 7th December 1889. The opera was the last truly successful collaboration between Gilbert & Sullivan - it was an oasis of calculated calm in the midst of the disagreements that clouded their later years. Its style is different to that of the others, because the nature of their relationship was different when they wrote it. Gone is the biting sarcasm and satire which is a prominent feature of much of Gilbert's other work. Gondoliers is a gentle comedy, soft and refined - truly nearer to the style of English musical comedy than to light opera, and it may well be that "The Gondoliers" influenced the subsequent style and development of English musical comedy, more than any other single work.

Gilbert remarked of "The Gondoliers": "It gives one the chance of shining right through the twentieth century with a reflected light." In that he was right, and the popularity of the piece has never waned. Gilbert fussed a great deal over the writing of "The Gondoliers". He Sullivan had just patched up one quarrel and were being almost neurotically careful not to upset or offend each other. The child of their union turned out to be somewhat coddled and somewhat delicate, without the robustness of some of the earlier pieces. Gilbert would submit several versions of various songs and scenes to Sullivan and ask his opinion as to which was best - a thing he would never have done before. Much of the unused material still exists, not only alternative songs, but also extra ones which were subsequently deleted, probably before Sullivan had set them to music. In fact, "The Gondoliers" is an object lesson on how to build a rich musical fabric of graceful melodies around a rather thin and inconsequential plot - the essence of musical comedy.

The collaborators were determined to create a play with no star parts and so Gilbert made nearly all the main characters of equal size, even re-writing scenes originally allocated to one character and giving them to another, when he felt that one character had too much and another too little to do. This is good musical comedy, but not necessarily good drama. For instance the scene in which the Duke teaches Marco and Guiseppe to dance a gavotte was originally designed to be a scene in which Don Alhambra was to teach them a minuet. There was on hand to play the Duke a man (Frank Wyatt) who could not sing, but who was a good actor, so Sullivan arranged the music so that it could be spoken in tune, not sung. When the Duke has to sing in concerted numbers, Sullivan structured the music so that the essential harmony is contained in the other parts, and the Duke can be as off-key and as out-of-tune as he likes without doing any serious damage. This is not, of course, to cast any slight on the musical capabilities of the singer playing the Duke in this production; the part can and has been played equally successfully by baritones with fine voices. It may have been the instance of Frank Wyatt which prompted the impresario George Edwards to cast Joseph Coyne, a fine actor who couldn't sing either as Danilo in the first English production of "The Merry Widow". It worked, but when the composer, Lehar found out, he nearly had a heart attack.

In spite of the difference in Gilbert's approach to the writing of "The Gondoliers", he imbued it with all the familiar stock characters, and Sullivan characterised their music appropriately. In his early opera "The Sorcerer" there was little difference between the music of the village girl Constance and the young lady Aline. In "The Gondoliers" on the other hand, the simple melodies of Gianetta contrast with the more refined music of Casilda. Don Alhambra has suitably pompour music, the Duchess belligerently furious music, and so on.

MICHAEL WALTERS

THE GONDOLIERS
OR
THE KING OF BARATARIA

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE DUKE OF PLAZA TORO (A Grandee of Spain)		<i>ROGER WOODWARD</i>
LUIZ (his Attendant)		<i>RICHARD WILSON</i>
DON ALHAMBRA DEL BOLERO (the Grand Inquisitor)		<i>JOHN BARRATT</i>
MARCO PALMIERI	} (Venetian Gondoliers)	<i>ROGER NICHOLLS</i>
GIUSEPPE PALMIERI		<i>TIM JOHNSON</i>
ANTONIO		<i>ELLIS PIKE</i>
FRANCESCO		<i>STEVE BODLE</i>
GIORGIO		<i>MIKE TRIPP</i>
ANNIBALE		<i>JEFF JENKINS</i>
THE DUCHESS OF PLAZA TORO		<i>DEBBIE JOHNSON</i>
CASILDA (her daughter)		<i>SALLY HESLOP</i>
GIANETTA	} (Contadine)	<i>DELITH BROOK</i>
TESSA		<i>BETHAN HOWELLS</i>
FIAMETTA		<i>JANE CAPPER</i>
VITTORIA		<i>CATHERINE FETHERSTON</i>
GIULIA		<i>ANNE OTWOROWSKI</i>
INEZ (the King's foster mother)		<i>ALISON CARTER</i>

ORCHESTRA

LEADER: *David Bogle*

VIOLINS

Jane O'Connor
Teresa Smith
Janet Jordan

Joy Davis
Damian Falkowski

VIOLAS

Jon Reed
Anthony Ruston

CELLOS

Mike Barnes
Alan Lodge

BASS

Lynne Bryan

FLUTES

Virginia Brown
Wendy Norman

OBOE

George Brown

CLARINETS

David Johnson
Vicky Smith

BASSOONS

Liane Brisley
Mark O'Neal

HORNS

Fred Shaub
Cecily Woods

TRUMPETS

Wayne Plummer
David Burgess

TROMBONES

Richard Fairhead
Susan Dodd
Roger King

PERCUSSION

Brian Steele

FOR THE COMPANY

Stage Manager
Set Designers

*Andy Potter
Ian Gledhill
Andy Potter
Liz Christie
Bob Holland
Ian Lacey
Paul Jarvis
Steven Bartlett
Harvey Cobbold
Mary Erskine
Bryan Evans
Paul Flook
Ken Haley
Kathy Hamilton
Trevor Osborne
Neil Pielou
Walter Plinge
Nigel Stevens
Mike Town*

Wardrobe Mistress
Orchestra Arrangers

*Ann Alderson
David Bogle
Christine Barson*

House Manager
House Staff

*Dick Stockton
Denise Clark
Tim Frain
Keith McClurey
Tony Moorby
Pamela Rudge*

Rehearsal accompanists

*Tony Castro
Debbie Johnson
Pat Nuttall*

The Society extends its thanks to I.C. Dramatic Society for their invaluable help in the staging of this production.

THE COMMITTEE

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
Publicity Officer
Ticket Manager
Social Secretary

Jeff Jenkins
Graeme Dewart
Elizabeth Clark
Alan Crewe
Julian Radowicz
Karen Harget
Jane Turner

ON TOUR

IOLANTHE

to

**BUDLEIGH SALTERTON,
DEVON**

July/August

ERRATA

The part of Marco is played by Tim Johnson and the part of Giuseppe is played by Roger Nicholls.

The play is in two Acts and six Scenes:

ACT I VENICE

Scene 1 A Piazza

Scene 2 The Ducal Palace

Scene 3 Outside the Church

ACT II THE ROYAL PALACE, BARATARIA

Scene 1 The Garden

Scene 2 The Ante Room

Scene 3 The Throne Room