

Imperial College Operatic Society

Silver Jubilee



**Budleigh Salterton
2 August 1992**

Imperial College Operatic Society

celebrates 25 years of visiting
Budleigh Salterton

**H. M. S. Pattigore
Sails Again**

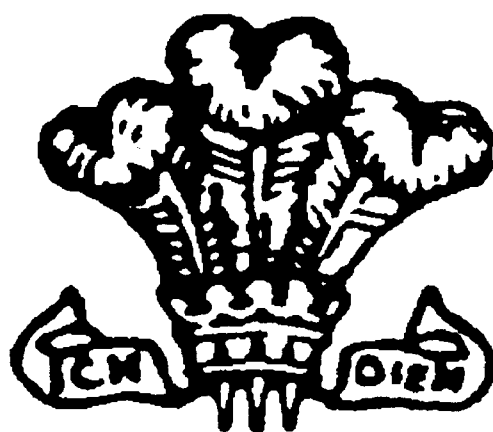
**conducted by Stuart Allen
written and directed by Ian Gledhill**

based on the operas of Gilbert and Sullivan

**The Public Hall, Budleigh Salterton
2 August 1992**

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The Other Opsoc

To many people in Budleigh Salterton, Opsoc is synonymous with Gilbert and Sullivan every summer, but this is only half the story.

In London, Opsoc performs two shows each year, one in February and one at Easter. The February show is a large scale production similar to Tour. The Easter show, having less rehearsal time, has a more flexible format. Every five years the society performs The Marathon, a continuous performance of all thirteen G&S shows. It lasts some twenty eight hours including time off for meals and good behavior.

The Easter show is a chance for new conductors and directors to gain experience before tackling a main show. It is also a risk-free opportunity to try out new ideas. Several years ago a group of Opsoc enthusiasts wanted to put on an American Musical. In 1991, after three successful Broadway-style reviews (Sondheim, Bernstein and Porter) at Easter, the society took the plunge and staged Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* as its main London show. It was a great success and pointed the way forward for future London shows.

This year saw the welcome return of an old tradition: a collaboration with the college dramatic society (Dramsoc). The two groups pooled resources to stage *Grease*, and were rewarded with the biggest London audiences ever. The collaboration was so successful that at the end of Opsoc's tour, several joint members will be going directly to Edinburgh where Dramsoc spends four weeks running a theatre as part of the Fringe Festival.

Opsoc attracts great loyalty from both its audience and its members, many of whom come back year after year. There is a special award for long serving performers and crew: anyone who has completed 100 performances with Opsoc is presented with an engraved tankard. This allows them to get drunk in style (they also have to buy everyone who has completed 50 performances a drink). There are now several people who have been awarded tankards for 200 shows and it will not be long before someone reaches 300!

While the award of tankards is a public ceremony, Opsoc also has a secret award, not seen by the audience. At the post-show party the most prominent member of the chorus is presented with the coveted "ham of the show" award. Several of this years principals and chorus (even the musical director) can claim the unofficial title of Opsoc Ham.

Long service with the society is reaching new heights. Many of the Gala cast joined Opsoc before some of the present Mikado cast were born! It won't be long before the children of the numerous 'Opsoc marriages' start treading the boards. In the mean time, both the new babes and the old lags look forward to another twenty five years of summer 'holidays' in Budleigh Salterton.

Ed Mulligan

Congratulations Opsoc (and thank you Budleigh Salterton!)

Imperial Opera is delighted to be sharing Imperial College Operatic Society's celebrations this year - because without Imperial College Operatic Society (or Opsoc, as it is affectionately known) Imperial Opera would never have existed.

Imperial Opera was founded in 1979, but I believe its story really started in the early 1970s when Imperial College Operatic Society was enjoying a particularly successful period.

Imperial College is, strictly speaking, a college of science, technology and medicine. You might expect its 'arts' side would be restricted. Not so. Situated in South Kensington, an area full of educational establishments including the Royal College of Art, the Royal College of Music, and the Institut Francais, the college is able to muster a wide variety of musical activities.

Opsoc must have had an especially good intake around 1971 because, by the time I first saw them in 1972, their standards were very high. Under their musical director, Stuart Allen, they took their music seriously. With their producer Ian Gledhill, they took their drama even more seriously.

With Ian and some of the other producers who followed him, many of the founder members of Imperial Opera got their first, lasting taste of the adventure of exploring outside the 'usual' operatic society repertoire. Between 1975 and 1979, Opsoc tackled Offenbach, Purcell, John Blow and many others.

A key date for Imperial Opera was probably 1977 and a memorable production of *The Yeomen of the Guard* on one of Opsoc's regular 'tours' to Budleigh Salterton. Many of us who were involved still hold it as one of our treasured memories, and I believe it helped create the spirit that was to lead to Imperial Opera.

The story of the birth of Imperial Opera is now part of its folklore. In one of Imperial College's student bars, absorbing alcohol to combat post-rehearsal fatigue, Jane Turner and Debbie Johnson decided to visit the loo. By the time they returned they had had a conversation that was to affect us all for many years to come. They told us that they had decided we should form a new opera company.

The idea was that we should form an independent opera group. We - those of us who had been occupied so long with Opsoc - would form the nucleus and first committee. We would continue to perform in London but we would attempt to steer clear of the Gilbert and Sullivan repertoire which we regarded as being Opsoc's preserve.

We believed that the formation of a new group would benefit Opsoc in that there would be somewhere for well-seasoned Opsoc performers to move to when their student days were over. Opsoc could quite properly become a student society again. Those of us gathered in the bar were convinced. The new society would be formed. Steve Bodle was elected chairman then and there. Various other volunteers gathered other tasks

about them, and plans had to be made for the development of the idea with fund raising and performances.

We put our plans into action as quickly as possible, and we all felt that it was entirely appropriate that our first performances should take place in Budleigh Salterton. We were all tremendously keen. It seemed to us that we would be recapturing our youths. We had all spent time 'on tour' so we would rehearse a Victorian musical evening specially for Budleigh Salterton. We would all gather there on Friday Night. We would spend all Saturday morning rehearsing. We would do a matinee and an evening performance. We would relax on the Saturday night. We would go home on the Sunday.


Simple, we thought, and enjoyable. Like Tour but in miniature.

It worked!

From there we shared a February double bill with Opsoc (*Cox and Box* with Colin Davis, John Foster and Roger Woodward), and then proceeded to carve a path through the repertoire of light opera that was not on the current repertoire but was still worth performing. The twelve years that followed saw us tackling scores as diverse as *The Devil and Kate* by Dvůřák, *Robinson Crusoe* by Offenbach, and *The Perfect Fool* by Holst. We managed to get several reviews in the national press and have, over the years, succeeded in maintaining a very high musical and dramatic standard.

Our London performing venues have changed over the years, but we have been constant to one of our main aims - every Christmas we have returned to perform in Budleigh Salterton. And Budleigh Salterton must accept at least part of the responsibility for the existence and success of Imperial Opera. Thank You.

Michael Withers

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Budleigh Salterton

The Early Tours

The Imperial College Operatic Society was formed thirty six years ago in 1956 as a section of the Imperial College Music Society, which then included the choir and orchestra. Their first production was a Victorian Melodrama.

After nine years of performing shows at college a two week tour was arranged to Folkstone and Bristol. The audience numbers in Bristol were disappointingly small, but after a successful week at Folkstone, the society returned for two weeks the following year. Accommodation was in a group of caravans on the Happy Day Caravan Site! Audience numbers were not sufficient to warrant shows for two weeks, so the following year the Society stayed "at home" and staged a concert performance in the Royal College of Music. In the same year the Society became independent from the Music Society.

Eager to venture further afield again, the Society arranged a tour to Salisbury and Lyme Regis, but at the last moment the Lyme Regis arrangement fell through due to the theatre being booked for bingo! Fortunately the Public Hall at Budleigh Salterton was available and so the first of the now famous 'Budleigh' tours took place. Although enthusiastically received at Salisbury, audiences were small; the week at Budleigh, however, was such a success that the Society has returned ever since.

One major problem of organizing tours is the provision of accommodation for the company. At Salisbury, an old, disused boys' boarding school eight miles away at Cholderton was available. Although in a dilapidated condition, the school was one of the most enjoyable forms of accommodation, with not only numerous pianos, but even an old London Transport bus which was repaired (by I.C. engineers, of course) and driven round the grounds! After a mid-tour party, during which several people decided to visit Stonehenge at midnight, the cast moved to the church hall in Salterton. This was very convenient for the Public Hall, but with the large numbers in the company, by now around seventy, it was quite a squeeze to fit everyone in. For the next and subsequent tour, the A.T.C. and Guide huts solved the accommodation problem. In 1977 however, the company moved to the adjacent Primary School. In those days the society was fortunate enough to be able to use the shower facilities of the Football and Tennis clubs, and many local residents made kind offers of baths which were gratefully accepted by the cast. As showering grew in popularity so we turned to Rolle College in Exmouth, and a minibus full of people with soap and towels was a regular sight. In the last few years, however, we have lived in luxury since the school now has showers with wonderful amounts of hot water. Over the years, one can be sure that if nothing else, the cleanliness of the cast has improved!

The disappointment of Salisbury (1968) led to a decision to perform in Pinhoe near Exeter for the first week of the '69 tour. The company could thus live in Budleigh for the entire two weeks with just the scenery being moved during the middle weekend. It was during this tour that the first men landed on the moon. Thanks to the loan of a

television, a relay of watchers stayed up until 4am in order to alert the remainder of the company who wished to watch this historic event.

The following year it was decided to try a new venue for the first week - Street in Somerset - but plans fell through and the Society returned to Pinhoe. This year saw the first concert in St. Peter's Church during the middle weekend. It started as a concert for singers and piano, but has developed to include full scale choral excerpts, symphonies and concertos. Members are thus given a chance to perform in more unfamiliar roles. The collections from these concerts are given to various charities. A concert in the middle weekend inevitably created difficulties in transferring scenery, and much extra work for the stage crew in reassembling and relighting the set. The outcome was a decision to stay both weeks in Budleigh Salterton - a decision not regretted.

And so we began.

Peter Johnson

The Contributors

Peter Johnson is one of the early members of ICOS. He helped organize the first tours and performed with the society in a variety of baritone roles.

Ed Mulligan is a mere youth who has only been with the society eleven years. As well as performing, he has worked front of house and backstage (sometimes simultaneously). He edits ICOS programmes under the nom de plume of Daniel Glum.

Roger Nicholls has run the Imperial Male Voice Choir since it was formed in around 1977. He also performs with Imperial Opera and is currently directing *Sir John in Love* with them.

Michael Walters is a recognised authority on Gilbert and Sullivan. Apart from his work in natural history for the British Museum, he somehow finds time to review hundreds of G&S and other productions, publish a private periodical, play an active role in many learned societies, and sustain a correspondence with a huge network of Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiasts world-wide.

Michael Withers is a founder member of Imperial Opera. He has conducted numerous shows and now lives in Brighton where local operatic societies benefit from his talents.

Imperial Male Voice Choir

A lengthy association with ICOS not only imparts an encyclopedic knowledge of the G&S repertoire, such that one finds Gilbertian phrases infiltrating everyday speech, but it also gives one the opportunity to encounter young people with other musical and dramatic talents and enthusiasms. Over the years I can recall the formation of wind bands, barber shop quartets and recorder ensembles, while at the popular concert parties and barn dances, traditionally held in the scout hut, all manner of talents, from folk singing to hypnotism, are exposed to a receptive audience.

In my own case, an example of such a 'musical diversion' on the 1972 *Sorcerer* tour was to be the catalyst for an interest which is still going strong after 20 years. The then musical director of ICOS, Stuart Allen, asked me, then a 19 year old undergraduate, to fill a vacant second tenor place in a Male Voice Octet he was forming to sing at the Sunday Concert in St. Peter's Church. Our renditions of *The Long Day Closes*, *Sweet and Low*, and *All in the April Evening* made such a positive impression on me that I resolved to look for future opportunities to explore the male voice repertoire.

Two or three years later my father, who with *his* father had sung with a miners' choir in the Midlands, unearthed some male voice music in the loft. In London I tried it out with my flatmates who were so smitten with an arrangement of Ketelby's *In a Monastery Garden* that we must have driven the neighbours mad with our triple forte repetitions.

By 1978 we had eight or nine voices and enough music to enter some local music festivals, with considerable success, and take part in the St Peter's concert that year. One of the audience at that concert, Leslie Stubbs, was able to provide more music from his collection, and we quickly developed a liking for the arrangements that Doris Arnold made for the Kentucky Minstrels.

In 1980 we gave our first full concert in London, under the baton of Michael Withers. During the 1980s we averaged two or three events each year: charity concerts, weddings, carol singing and music festivals as far afield as Blackpool, Worcester, Bath and South Woodham Ferrers. Under our regular conductor, Debbie Johnson, we have won many trophies and awards, raised money for a variety of charities, and recorded a cassette of English Part Songs.

We now have a singing strength of twenty-something and an unusually low average age of thirty-something. Many members are also involved with Imperial Opera and other groups and it is never easy to get everyone together regularly, but 20 years on I look forward to singing some more TTBB in St Peter's this summer.

Roger Nicholls

For the Company

Designer Adam Craske
Lighting Designers.....Roland Trice
Darren Holmes
Stage ManagerJohn Dickinson
Construction Manager..... Ian Cairns
Stage crew Steven Cann
Ken Haley
Paul Jarvis
Ian Lacey
Mylan Lester
Andy Potter
Roger Serpall
Mike Town

Set construction by members of ICDS and ICOS

Costume Manager Irianwen Rees
Front of house manager.....Jayne Franks
Front of House Julie Gillespie
Christina Hunter
Fiona Miller
Peter Mills
Sue Parker
Marion Rosenberg
Band Fixer..... Barbara Steel
AccompanistsJohn Eleanor
Cecily Nicholls
Wendy Norman
Programme Editor Daniel Glum
Gala organisers Jan Mills
Cathy Kelleher
Debbie Johnson

Orchestra

Violins Barbara Steel
Jim Norris
Tessa Ash
Barbara Large
Lionel Vipray
Alfred de Crisp
Violas..... Jo Smith
Rachel Larkins
'Cellos..... Sarah Blott
Jonathan Ayeling
Hannah Lynes
Double BassMaureen Stevens
Flutes Michael Copperwhite
Marie McCaffrey
Oboe.....Barry Addison
Clarinets Andrew Power
Caroline Webster
BassoonTanya Weekes
Trumpets..... Cliff Parker
Gary Jones
Trombones Colin Parker
Helen Vaughn
Horn Tim Jones
Percussion Brian Steel

H. M. S. Pattigore Sails Again

Dick Deadeye Max Taylor
Boatswain Roger Nicholls
Ralph Rackstraw Tim Johnson
Captain Corcoran William White
Sir Joseph Porter, KCB Roger Woodward
Dick Dauntless MAC Newton

Lady Angela Cathy Kelleher
Lady Ella Bethan Jackson
Lady Saphir Barbara Tansey
Lady Margaret Susan Wright
Lady Jane Debbie Johnson
Rose Maybud Jane Johnson
Hebe Jan Mills
Josephine Robina Vallance
Patience Sally Donegani

Chorus of sailors and love sick maidens

Eileen Allen, Alan Attwood, Audrey Caldeira Hankey, Steve Chaytow, Sarah Corin Mills, Andrew Goodall, Janina Kaminska, Beckie Mills, Brendon Peilow, Mark Pettler, Ellis C. Pike, Tim Sawers, Sarah White

The action takes place outside the home of Sir Joseph Porter, KCB and will probably be familiar to you.

There will be a short interval between parts 1 and 2.



H. M. S. Pattigore Sails Again is based on *H. M. S. Pattigore Limited* which was first performed on 6th August 1977 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of ICOS's first visit to Budleigh Salterton.

This production is supported by Normans Superstores and Budleigh Salterton Town Council.

Gala Cast Biographies

Stuart Allen (1971-75) Musical Director

Stuart is a freelance clarinettist with almost all the major London orchestras. His work has taken him to Australia, Venezuela, Japan, Hong Kong, all the European countries, Scandinavia, and **BUDLEIGH SALTERTON**, where he conducted four very happy summer seasons from 1971-75. He married a love sick maiden from the Opsoc chorus and they have a highly musical son (aged 11) who will be singing in a televised Promenade concert on August 2nd.

Sally Donegani (1977-89) Patience

During her time with ICOS, Sally took part in all the Gilbert & Sullivan Operettas, usually on stage but sometimes in the orchestra, back stage or front of house. Past roles have included Lady Jane, Mad Margaret, Phoebe, the princesses Nekaya and Kalyba and Edith. With Imperial Opera, of which she was a founder member and chairman from 1986-1989, many of the audiences may remember her as Madame Dubonnet in *The Boyfriend*. Sally also sings with the BBC Symphony Chorus and other choral groups, and works in the field of business support for the arts.

Ian Gledhill (1972-79) Director

It is twenty years since Ian first produced a show for ICOS and he is very happy to be back. During the 70's he produced many shows with Opsoc, and although he started working as an engineer, he is now a professional opera producer and stage manager. He is currently directing *Albert Herring* in Holland Park with Regency Opera.

Bethan Jackson (1976-80) Lady Ella

Bethan's first tour was *Pirates* '76. She joined to find a husband which she did during *Mikado* tour '80. She now has three children and is happily married living in Guilford. Her principal parts were Phyllis (*Iolanthe* '78) and Lady Psyche (*Princess Ida* '79).

Debbie Johnson (1972-79 and 1985-86) Lady Jane

It was all because of Stuart Allen that Debbie ever sang at all. In 1972 he gave her the part of Lady Sangazure, her first ever appearance on stage. From these humble beginnings, Debbie went on to play most of the G&S contralto roles during the 1970s, and returned to Salterton in the '80s to conduct two shows. By that time she had become a professional singer, joined the BBC singers in 1983 and is now enjoying a successful career as a soloist.

Jane Johnson (née Turner) (1976-1983) Rose Maybud

Jane served I.C.O.S. in various capacities: minor principal, first lady tour chairman, choreographer and barn dance caller to name but a few. She is a founder member of Imperial Opera. In 1988 she married Tim, and they are the proud parents of a 10 month old Stella.

Tim Johnson (1972-1978) Ralph Rackstraw

Tim started off singing as a chorus second bass, but quickly discovered that the high notes were not quite as difficult to get as he had first thought! He has managed to avoid most of the G&S principal tenor roles, mainly through his commitment to Imperial Opera. Roles have included Robinson (*Robinson Crusoe*/Offenbach), Lotteringhi (*Boccaccio/Suppée*), Jirka (*Devil and Kate*/Dvůrák) and Fritz (*Grand Duchess*/Offenbach). Tim makes life easier for himself and his family working for one of the big UK banks.

Cathy Kelleher (1986-92) Lady Angela

Cathy's first ICOS show was *Mikado* '86. Since then she has played Phoebe (*Yeomen* '87), Phyllis (*Iolanthe* '89) and Rose Maybud (*Ruddygore* '90).

Jan Mills (1970-76 and 1987-88) Hebe

Jan's first show was *Pirates of Penzance* in 1970 and she has been coming to Budleigh Salterton nearly every year since, either as performer or audience member. She was Hebe in the 1975 production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and in *H.M.S. Pinnacore's* first outing (1977). She is a college lecturer and lives in Hertfordshire.

MAC Newton (1979-88) Dick Dauntless

MAC's first ever appearance in a fully staged show was in 1979 at Salterton. Since then he has taken part in over two hundred performances, either on stage or in the orchestra pit. In 1986 MAC became subscribing members' secretary, a role he finally handed on in 1991.

Roger Nicholls (1971-84) Boatswain

Roger's first visit to Salterton was in 1972 (*Sorcerer*), and as a 'utility baritone' took several roles in subsequent years (Counsel, Thomas Brown, Major, Jack Point, Private Willis). He later directed *Princess Ida*, *Utopia Limited*, *Gondoliers* and *Pirates*, also doubling as percussionist and emergency second trumpet. Roger is a maths teacher in London and is still involved with Imperial Opera and the Male Voice Choir. He remembers organizing the Anniversary Concert for the tenth visit to Salterton!

Barbara Tansey (1974-87) Lady Saphyr

Barbie is very happy to be appearing on stage today, along side the many friends made during her twenty years of tours in Budleigh Salterton. Between her first appearance, as one Sir Joseph's youngest cousins in 1974, her last principal role as Lady Saphyr in 1987, and today's Gala, Barbie has clocked up 246 performances. Here's to the next twenty five years.

Max Taylor (1971-76) Dick Deadeye

Max first performed for ICOS in the chorus of *Patience* in 1971. Between then and 1976 he took part in 100 performances, taking the parts of Francesco, Second Yeoman, Strephon, Old Adam, Arac, Counsel for the Plaintiff, Dick Deadeye, Colonel Calverly and Frederic. He came back to play Dick Deadeye in *H.M.S. Pattigore Limited* in 1977. He still performs Gilbert and Sullivan in Chesterfield.

Robina Vallance (1972-73) Josephine

Robina appeared here as Aline in *The Sorcerer* and Josephine in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. She has since followed a professional career in Britain and Europe, singing principal roles with many touring companies including Opera 80, Opera Players and Kent Opera. She lives with her husband and two sons near Saffron Walden.

William White (1980-89) Captain Corcoran

Bill's first show with I.C.O.S. was the *Mikado* tour of 1980. He performed with them fairly consistently until 1989, portraying the roles of the Learned Judge, Ko-ko, Bunthorne, Jack Point and the Lord Chancellor. He also appeared in several of the Imperial Opera Christmas productions, notably *Silver Bells* which he jointly choreographed. His last appearance on the Salterton stage was in last year's *Trial By Jury* where he was called upon to understudy The Counsel for the Plaintiff at an afternoon's notice. He lives with Sarah, his wife of 10 months, and his two cats, Mungo and Teazer, in Epsom. Bill is the I.C.O.S. subscribing membership secretary.

Roger Woodward (1973-88) Sir Joseph Porter, KCB

Roger's first show was *Ruddigore* and since then he has played the Judge, Gosvenor, Cox, Major General, Lord Chancellor and an Ugly Sister in the pantomime he wrote for Imperial Opera. His London solos include Pooh Bah, Duke of Plaza Toro, Scaphio, Jupiter (*Orpheus in the Underworld*). He has been twice Tour Chairman and has directed six shows for I.C.O.S. Now a science teacher and Director of the Sevenoaks Summer Festival, he rarely finds time to get on stage.

Susan Wright (1990-91) Mad Margaret

Susan is delighted to be involved with the Silver Jubilee Gala, having performed in the 1990 tour as Zorah and as Angelina in *Trial by Jury* in 1991. She has also performed in Imperial Opera's 1989 *Cowardy Custard* and played Poly in *The Boyfriend* in 1990.

Some Early Reviews

Written at time of first Budleigh show (*Iolanthe*, 1968)

When D'Oyly Carte really ruled the waves
 (in Henry Lytton's time)
I.C. did then make no pretence
To musical pre-eminence
Or scholarship sublime
Yet D'Oyly saw her proudest days
 Beneath Sir Henry's golden rays.

When Johnny Reed took up the score
 Then I.C.'s task did swell
As D'Oyly's star sank more and more
And amateurs came to the fore
 I.C. did very well.
Chris Hocking saw its finest days
Nor yearned for Fancourt's zealous praise.

And while I.C. their hearts unite
 In full and faithful band
And strange producers do not itch
To interfere in matters which
They do not understand
 As bright will shine bold I.C.'s rays
 As in Dick Watts's glorious days.

Imperial College (London) Operatic Society 1971

Of all the A.O.S.s which have come within the scope of my knowledge I.C. is certainly the most interesting, and one of the best. Its very existence is an anachronism. Imperial College of Science and Technology is an all male scientific college of London University, the last place one would expect to find an operatic society. The college stands in South Kensington backing onto the Museums of Science and Natural History and facing the Albert Hall. Its buildings have grown around and almost engulfed those of the Royal College of Music - and thereby hangs the key to the mystery. A great many of the female singers are students of the Royal College, and indeed, two present members of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company - Frances Gregory and Susan Minshull - began their stage careers as principal sopranos with the I.C. G&S Soc.

The origin of the Society lies vanished beneath the sands of time. It is a fact that scientists are the worlds worst documentors of themselves, and no information further back than about 7 years can be traced. We know that a society existed in the College before the last war, but nothing about it survives, except presumably in the bottom drawers of those students who were in it then but whose whereabouts are not known.

My first introduction to the Society was in spring 1968 when I saw a production of *Pirates* with Susan Minshull as a very fetching Mabel. Catherine Robinson, who played Ruth is now a freelance singer, and

singing teacher, and also produces the Society's shows. She was recently offered the position of Principal Contralto in the D'Oyly Carte (to succeed Christine Palmer) but had to decline owing to other commitments. This first *Pirates* struck me as competent, but no more, so it has been a great pleasure to see the Society gradually improving its standard over the years (two performances per year) till now it must rank as a very fine Company indeed. This improvement is mainly due to one man - the M.D. Robin White, who was just the man the society needed during those years. Without his guidance the Society would certainly not have achieved the musical standard which it now has. Robin White has now left London and his successor, Stuart Allen, a very fine musician who was trained by Adrian Boult, seems set to more than maintain the standards already set.

With the 1970 production of *Pirates*, the wheel came, as it were, full circle. The summer production is performed out of London in the little town of Budleigh Salterton in County Devon, a charming dreamy little seaside town. The success of the production was due chiefly to the musical directorship of Robin White, who kept the piece going at a spanking pace; and to the presence in the cast of a young man named Colin Davis as the Pirate King. I had seen him before as Deadeye and was not impressed, but after seeing a rehearsal for *Pirates* I was expecting a fine performance, but nothing like the performance we were treated to in that sultry Friday night in Budleigh Salterton.

**The Zoo and The Pirates of Penzance, Imperial College O.S.,
Budleigh Salterton 29 - 30 July 1976.**

I attended two performances of this double bill, Friday and Saturday of the first week. Friday was good, though all the Company were bitterly disappointed by it - when I saw the Saturday performance I knew why - truly a transformation of a remarkable kind.

A very large part of the credit for the magnificence of Saturday's performance must go to the conductor, Michael Withers, who cast a spell over the house that night with the love, care and passion with which he guided the orchestra. His tempi were fast, on the whole, comparable in speed to Robin White's, but whereas with Robin the fast sections often sounded merely rushed, with Michael speed seemed to produce an almost Tschaiakowskian passion and intensity.

Both productions were superb in their way, though different. Roger Woodward's whimsically idiosyncratic production of *The Zoo* (epitomised by his own fleeting appearance as the Sea-Lion keeper - doing a Hitchcock here I fancy!) convinced me at last that the piece really is fun in spite of the libretto. The production had been given one previous production in the Great Hall, Imperial College a few months previously, and it was on the whole similar. There was one change of cast (Carboy). The production whipped along with tremendous gusto - but with natural comedians like Pete Totterdell in the front line of the chorus it could have hardly have done otherwise, and the addition of the "lost" song for Letitia, with new words by Roger Woodward, and a superb "cod" cadenza, almost brought the house down. One point I

noticed was that Eliza's "I go I fly" seemed to work less well here than it had before, owing to the smaller available space.

The Zoo is not a great piece, but in I.C.'s hands it came truly alive, as I have not seen it do before. One could believe that it was a new show being performed for the first time, and that the cast were creating their respective roles. Richard Wilson (Carboy) was doing his first reasonable sized part, something I have been waiting for for many years. He imbued the part with a delightful quaintness. Tim Johnson played the part in the Great Hall performance, and although he has a bigger and firmer voice, Richard gave more of a performance.

The performance of the evening was Roger Nicholls as the Duke of Islington. His exuberance was a joy to behold, and his natural sense of comedy stood him in good stead in the fainting scene and in the way he chucked himself around the stage, which was really excruciatingly funny. His entrance as the Duke after removing his disguise was also tremendous - he seemed to have the knack of just walking onto the stage and making the audience eat out of his hand without doing anything.

Delith Brook (Letitia) was in superb voice, and gave a brilliant rendering of the "lost" song. She had grace, charm and style, which I found quite irresistible. Denise Clarke (Eliza) was good, but not as good as some of the others, though admittedly she is not helped by having some of the least interesting music to sing. Grinder is not much of a part but to John Barratt's credit, he got about as much out of it as one could; a solid reliable performance this was (as also was his Samuel), by someone who, I felt, could always be relied upon to do any part justice.

Pirates was altogether more intense and dramatic - Peter Mills (changing his role from that of performer for that of Producer) seemed to be relying more on passion and deep emotion, and sensibly kept movement down to a minimum at the peak emotional moments so that when he let himself go - as in the brilliantly humorous setting of "Softly Sighing", there was all the more impact.

I was particularly impressed with the way the Fred - Mabel love duet in Act 2 was handled, the passionate hopelessness of the lovers' situation was brought out to the full and became quite heartrending - so often this scene can become prissy or twee. It says much for the producer, MD, and singers that they managed to create such an aura of tension that the audience was not tempted to violate the flow and continuity of the music by applauding "Ah leave me not to pine". The moment when Frederic tried to kiss Mabel's hand in parting and she restrained him (I think it was just before "Stay, Frederic stay") was particularly beautiful. Another delightful moment was the bringing on of the Doctor of Divinity at the end of Act 1, something I cannot remember ever having seen before - though, thinking it over it seems surprising if no-one had ever thought of doing it before.

The antics of the Pirates during the opening chorus, pushing each other on and off the plank seemed a trifle fussy and unnecessary. Steve Bodle as the deaf pirate was rather endearing, but I wish he could have been a little less vague and not so much in the background. Several times he did things which I missed because the centre of action was focussed

elsewhere. Steve seems to have a real talent for eccentric, elderly characterisation which has not been really exploited.

Roger Woodward made an excellent General, taking the patter-song with superb crispness and speed and the send up of "softly sighing" with mock-lyrical actions for the police, removed any necessity for this number to be sung lyrically. Roger's characterisation was, as usual, impeccable. One particularly delightful moment was when captured by the Pirates in Act 2, the General automatically went to draw his sword, only to find there was no sword since he was in his dressing gown. David Pollard, changing his role of conductor for performer, gave a very interesting and unusual interpretation of the Pirate King. He was rather too diffident to have become a leader of men by force, so he must have been the highest ranking of them when they were all noblemen. The interpretation worked well in the Gilbertian context though, as the most reluctant leader of the reluctant pirates; he seemed to be a perfect projection of his progenitor, Captain Bang in *Our Island Home*. His "light-weight" acting made for a delightfully whimsical interpretation which I, saturated by watching hundreds of burly, blustering PKs found very refreshing. The way he delivered "For some ridiculous reason" with spoken asides, was a masterpiece.

Max Taylor scored his greatest triumph as Frederic, in spite of not being vocally the sort of Frederic one expects. He was at his best in the intense scenes, where he could open his throat and pour out his passion; on both nights I was there the duet with Ruth was quite electric, and the passion and intensity of the love scene with Mabel brought tears to my eyes. He was perhaps a little less happy in the lighter lyrical moments.

Dick Stockton made the Sergeant of Police into a typical country "bobby", slow witted and slow moving, well meaning but ineffective. His eyes, however, were capable of registering quick changes of feeling. It was a low-key, restrained and lovable performance, and such a change from the exuberant, over-acted SPs one so often sees.

Teresa Quinn was an exquisitely beautiful Mabel, what her voice might lack in volume it more than made up for in delicacy and purity of tone. "Poor wandering one" was a joy - the row of top notes all perfectly placed, glowed like a necklace of pearls. Deborah Kemp was just so utterly "right" as Ruth, that one wonders what one can possibly say. She is about the only person I can think of who can make Ruth's rather dull opening song sound really interesting and exciting.

Michael Walters

The ICOS Shows

- 1956 Victorian Melorama
- 1957 Trial by Jury
- 1958 The Mikado
- 1959 Iolanthe
- 1960 H.M.S. Pinafore
- 1961 The Yeomen of the Guard
- 1962 Trial by Jury, Bastien and Bastienne (Mozart)
- 1963 The Pirates of Penzance
- 1964 The Gondoliers
- 1965 Iolanthe, The Mikado
- 1966 H.M.S. Pinafore, Trial By Jury, The Gondoliers
- 1967 Ruddigore, Carmen (Bizet) -concert version, G&S Highlights
- 1968 The Pirate of Penzance, *Iolanthe
- 1969 The Yeomen of the Guard, *The Mikado
- 1970 H.M.S. Pinafore, *The Pirates of Penzance
- 1971 Patience, *The Gondoliers
- 1972 The Yeomen of the Guard, Trial by Jury, *The Sorcerer
- 1973 Iolanthe, The Zoo, *Ruddigore
- 1974 Princess Ida, *H.M.S. Pinafore, *Trial by Jury
- 1975 The Mikado, G&S Highlights, *Patience
- 1976 Utopia Limited, *The Pirates of Penzance, *The Zoo
- 1977 Orpheus in the Underworld (Offenbach), Venus and Adonis (Blow), The Marathon, *The Yeomen of the Guard
- 1978 The Gondoliers, Tales of Hoffmann Act 2 (Offenbach), *Iolanthe
- 1979 The Grand Duchess (Offenbach), Trial by Jury, *Princess Ida
- 1980 The Sorcerer, The Zoo, *The Mikado
- 1981 Ruddigore, Fiddler on the Roof (abridged), The Zoo, *H.M.S. Pinafore, *Trial by Jury
- 1982 Patience, The Marathon, Trial by Jury, *Utopia Limited
- 1983 The Yeomen of the Guard, The Martyr of Antioch (Sullivan), *The Gondoliers
- 1984 Iolanthe, Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo (Horovitz), *The Pirates of Penzance, *The Zoo
- 1985 The Grand Duke, Horrortorio (Horovitz), *The Sorcerer
- 1986 Princess Ida, Bessie's Dilema (Foister), Widgets PLC (Mulligan & Sturke), *The Mikado
- 1987 The Zoo, H.M.S. Pinafore, The Marathon, *Patience
- 1988 The Gondoliers, Side by Side by Sondheim (Sondheim), *Saint George and the Dragon (Gledhill), *The Yeomen of the Guard
- 1989 The Pirates of Penzance, Bernstein on Broadway (Bernstein), *Iolanthe
- 1990 Utopia Limited, The Songs of Cole Porter (Porter), *Ruddigore
- 1991 Kiss Me Kate (Porter), *H.M.S. Pinafore, *Trial by Jury
- 1992 Grease, The Marathon, *The Mikado

* denotes a show which was performed in Budleigh Salterton

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