

# THE TRUMPET BRAY

NEGASS

The New England Gilbert and Sullivan Society  
P.O. Box 367, Arlington, MA 02476-0004

Vol. XXVI No. 3

- It was really a remarkable scene -

**FALL PERFORMANCE ISSUE:**  
Local G&S Performances/Auditions

**FALL PERFORMANCE ISSUE:** NEGASS is not planning another formal meeting until January – but the coming months will feature a plethora of local performances, AND one audition - and NEGASS plans to be there! (*Please note the important dates in G&S history, garnered by Don Smith, interspersed among these performance dates.*)

## ♫ AUDITIONS ♫

♫ The Sudbury Savoyards will hold auditions for a most unusual production of **SORCERER** at 7:30 pm, **November 11-12** at the Sudbury United Methodist Church; 251 Old Sudbury Rd (Route 27), in Sudbury, MA. The opera, as we all know, ends with the characters on stage distinguishing and condemning the one guilty of the chaos which has overwhelmed the town of Ploverleigh. As Gilbert wrote the story – well, you know which character accepts blame and punishment. In this production, however, it will be up to members of the audience to decide. Two separate endings will be rehearsed.

As always, no audition is required to sing in the chorus. Stage direction by **Kathy Lague** and Music Direction by **Steve Malioneck**. Performances will be February 22, 23, 24, 28 and March 1-2, 2002 at the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School in Sudbury, MA. For more



information, call (978) 443-8811 or check out their website at [www.sudburysavoyards.org](http://www.sudburysavoyards.org).

## ♫ PERFORMANCES ♫

♫ The Sudbury (MA) Savoyards' **40th Anniversary Celebration**, featuring performances of **TRIAL** and of **Benjamin Keaton's** G&S potpourri, **Places Please**, will take place **October 26 - 27** at 8:00 PM at the Curtis Middle School, 22 Pratts Mill Road, Sudbury, MA. (Conductor **Alan Yost** told Us recently that he could still use more altos and basses, even from among non-Sudbury NEGASSers.) Tickets (available at the door) are \$8. Proceeds will be donated to a relief fund for victims of the "September 11th tragedies and their aftermath." For more info, visit [www.sudburysavoyards.org](http://www.sudburysavoyards.org) or call 978-443-8811.

♫ The G&S Society of Hancock County, ME's **RUDDIGORE** will be performed **February 1-3 and 8-10** at The Grand Theater, Main Street, Ellsworth, ME.. E-mail **Irv Hodgkin** at [IHodgkin@acadia.net](mailto:IHodgkin@acadia.net) or visit <http://ellsworthme.org/gsshc/> for more info. (Box office telephone: 207- 667-9500)

♫ **Valley Light Opera** of Amherst, MA's fall **DUKE** (in a version "honed" by **Jonathan Strong** and **Jim Ellis**) will be **Nov. 2, 3, 9, and 10 at 8 pm, and Nov. 4 at 2 pm**. Visit their web site at <http://www.vlo.org>, or send a letter to Valley Light Opera, Inc., PO Box 2143, Amherst, MA 01004-2143 for more info [**Jonathan Strong** will be travelling to Amherst to see the show on Saturday, November 3. Who else in

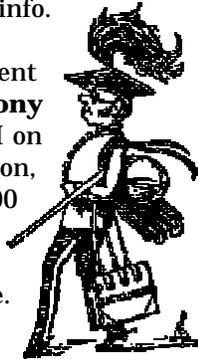
NEGASS would like to carpool that day? Contact Program Chair **Carl Weggel** - [Carl.Weggel@Juno.com](mailto:Carl.Weggel@Juno.com) or phone him at 978-474-0396 for more info!

☺ In case you have to miss VLO's production - catch the **UMGASS** one instead! **U. Michigan G&S Soc.** of Ann Arbor, MI plans **DUKE** for **December 6-9**. Visit <http://www.umgass.org> or phone 734-647-8436 for more info.

November 17, 1877: **SORCERER** opens  
November 18, 1836: **W. S. Gilbert** is born

☺ **The Savoyard Light Opera Co (SLOC)** plans **Kiss Me Kate** [yes, We know it isn't] **November 9-18**. Phone 978-371-SLOC (7562) or visit <http://www.tiac.net/users/sloc/> for more info.

☺ **The Bay Players** will present **PIRATES** (starring NEGASSer **Tony Parkes** as the Major General) at 8 PM on **Nov. 9, 10, 16, and 17** at the Kingston, MA Intermediate School. \$10.00 students/seniors, \$13.00 general admission. To reserve tickets call 1-800-290-6825. Wheelchair accessible. Directions: [www.bayplayers.org](http://www.bayplayers.org)



☺ **MITG&SP** will perform **PINAFORE**. **Nov. 9, 10, 16 & 17** at 8 PM, and **Nov. 11, 17 & 18** at 8 PM. For more info, e-mail [savoyards-request@mit.edu](mailto:savoyards-request@mit.edu), visit <http://web.mit.edu/gsp/www/>, or phone (617) 253-0190.

☺ **The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of New York** have returned to CAMI Hall. Doors open at 7:30; the meeting starts at 7:45, and the Inner Brotherhood go out for coffee afterwards. Plans for this year: **Fri. Nov. 9: Regina Opera** (of Brooklyn): **MIKADO**. Sat. 12/15, Tues. 1/15/02, Tues. 2/12, Tues. 3/19, Mon. 4/15, Thurs. 5/16: **TBA**. **Sat. June 15: Proposed New England/New York coalition IDA, with Sam Silvers as Gama, Dennis Blackwell as Hildebrand, Rebecca Consentino Hains as Psyche and mlc as Ida - more news as it breaks!**

☺ **The Conn. G&S Society** will perform **PRINCESS IDA**, staged by **Bob Cumming** and conducted by **John Dreslin**, on **Nov. 16 and 17** at 8 PM and **Nov. 18** at 2PM, at Middletown High School auditorium. [Bob tells Us that CG&SS is the first company to utilize NEGASSer **David Leigh's** attractively published version, complete with dialogue - they are beta-testing it, and sending Dave corrections as they rehearse!] For further info call 1-800-866-1606, or write to CG&SS, PO Box 2152, Middletown, CT 06457.

**Tentative Meeting Schedule, 2001-2002**

Jan 27 (or 20 -tba)	Video of <b>PIRATES</b> at Newton Free Library
March 24	<b>Last Minute Light Opera/ Orchestra MIKADO</b>
April 28 or May 5	Master Class
June 9	Elections/Fantasy Day

**NEXT BRAY COPY DEADLINE: December 30, 2001**

**Next Bray Stuffing: Sunday, January 6, 2002 at 3:00 PM.** Call Us at (781) 646-9115 evenings and weekends, or send email to [marion@leedscarroll.com](mailto:marion@leedscarroll.com), for directions to Our easy-to-get-to Arlington home.

☺

**Welcome, Welcome, Welcome We New Member Rebecca Burstein.** Wait! - you say - Hasn't she been a member for years? Well, yes, but as part of the Burstein Family. Having left her ancestral home, Rebecca now seeks membership As One Individual - - Tell Us, Tell Us All About It! **Hearty Greeting Offer We!** —mlc

☺

☺ **NEGASS Charter Member Juliet Cunningham's** production of **The Importance of Being Earnest** [...yes, We know it isn't] will be performed at 8 PM on **Nov 16-18** at the **Boston Church of the New Jerusalem**, 140 Bowdoin St., on Beacon Hill in Boston, MA. Phone Juliet at (617) 436-3767 for more info.

November 22, 1900: **A. S. Sullivan** dies

☺ **BAM** (the **Boston Academy of Music**) plans **MIKADO** for their annual **Thanksgiving weekend** G&S production: **Nov. 23 and 24** at 7:30, and 11/24 and 25 at 2:00 at the Emerson Majestic Theater in Boston, MA. For tix, call **Majestix** at (617) 824-8000; for other info, call **BAM** at (617) 242-0055, or visit <http://www.bostonacademy.org/>

November 25, 1882: **IOLANTHE** opens simultaneously in London and New York

☺ **Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert and Sullivan Players' YEOMEN** will take place **Nov. 29 & 30** and **Dec. 1 & 6-8** at 8:00 PM, and **Dec. 1, 2 & 8** at 2:00 PM. HRG&SP's opening night is always Black Tie, and closing night is Hack Night. **Dec. 1** features a special Children's Matinee. For more info, contact **Judith**

Scar1 at [scar1@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:scar1@fas.harvard.edu) or visit the HRG&SP Web page: <http://hcs.harvard.edu/~hrgps/>.

December 7, 1889: **GONDOLIERS** opens

December 23, 1871: **THESPIS** opens

December 31, 1879: **PIRATES** opens in New York

January 5, 1884: **IDA** opens

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**OCTOBER MEETING: COLLEGE FROSH MEET G&S: GRAND DUKE vs. Tabula Rasa.** Amherst's bad weather last Spring turned out to be our good fortune at the Society's October meeting, when **Jonathan Strong** delivered a talk he'd prepared for **Valley Light Opera's** Spring meeting that got snowed out. **NEGASS** happily fell heir to his efforts.



Jonathan Strong  
(photo by Ron Dallas)

Titled **Introducing College Students to G&S -- Experience From the Trenches** -- the trenches being a freshman seminar Jonathan conducted last year at **Tufts**

**University**-- his observations held out reasonable hope for the Canon's survival.

Succeeding generations, he notes, have less and less exposure to G&S, and for this latest group of 18-year-olds, their 13-week exposure to Gilbert's gentle cynicism, logical absurdities and topsy-turvydom, and to the delights of Sullivan's music, came as Total Revelation.

Prepared in anticipation of **VLO's** November, 2001 production of **DUKE**, Jonathan's remarks concentrated heavily on that work. Actually, it's as much or more a paean to the oft-dissed **DUKE** as it is a discussion of missionary work among the young, though strong exposure to **DUKE** -- in Jonathan's view the ultimate embodiment of Gilbert's genius -- played a prominent role in bringing his students to a perception of and appreciation for what G&S is about.

Clearly this approach had something going for it; "You'll be pleased to learn," he told us, "that I created a dozen new devoted Savoyards." Out of a class of twelve, that's a pretty good average.

Speaking personally, I've always felt that for all their faults, **DUKE** (and **UTOPIA**) have suffered a bum rap; that their virtues far outweigh their vices. So I'm

gratified to hear my opinion backed by a competent authority. For a first-rate opportunity to re-appraise **DUKE** with impunity, read Jonathan's remarks at Page 5 of this issue. -- **GAMAREX**

*[It must be added that Jonathan concluded his talk by presenting recordings of works by Sullivan without Gilbert -- and the audience didn't want to leave! -- what a fine meeting! -- mlc]*

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**JANUARY MEETING** The **Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company**, a relatively new professional group founded in connection with the **International G&S Festival**, performed **PIRATES** at the festival this past summer -- and left the world a fine videographic record of their production. This is the video we will enjoy in January in Newton-- more news next issue!



**ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SUGGESTIONS** Ideas for a suitable 25<sup>th</sup>-Anniversary celebration, to be held later this season, have slowed to a trickle -- but here's an interesting one:

**ALL - NEW ENGLAND G&S DAY!** The idea is to choose one day on which to invite **Sudbury, SLOC, MITG&SP, HRG&SP, VLO, CG&SS, Hancock County** and any other local G&S-performing organizations to present brief performances plus presentations describing their groups. A great chance to intermingle and share, and to discuss how **NEGASS** can do more to help local performing groups.

**THE BRAY ON CD-ROM?** *Here's another idea:* I noticed how **MANY** pages of material have been published since volume 1. Being a **Charter Member**, I have all those pages, at least in theory, and I thought of how many members must not have access to them. So I thought it might be nice to scan the whole thing and make it available on CD-ROM as part of the **NEGASS Anniversary Observations**. At this point I've not confirmed I can actually put my hands on all the published pages I ought to have, I've not given any thought to the most suitable file format, how it might be indexed, or even whether it could be made to fit on a single CD. I merely content myself with pointing out to you ... a possibility.

I have a small, slow scanner at home and access to a more sophisticated one at work, but such a project may turn into a daunting task so I pose it as a suggestion only, without actually volunteering to attempt it on my own just yet. Is the Board interested? Are there

members who would be interested in having such a thing? Are there others who could help?

-- PETER ZAVON

[We have a decent scanner, and OCR software to boot – but that really **does** sound like a daunting task! Are there any volunteers for what would turn into, at a guess, a several-months-long scanning and editing project (OCR software makes some strange mistakes!), followed by another CD-burning project... ? – mlc]

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**HARVARD YEOMEN SEEKS COSTUMES** Hello – I'm on the board of the **Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players**, and I am costuming our fall production of **YEOMEN**, opening Nov. 29. We're looking to borrow/rent a set of 9-10 complete Yeomen costumes. I would love to put out an announcement to all of the groups in NEGASS; how do I go about doing so? Thanks very much.

-- ABIGAIL JOSEPH

<akjoseph@fas.harvard.edu>

[We've passed the word to **Janice Dallas** – any other ideas? -- mlc]

~ ~ ~ CHARTER MEMBER NEWS ~ ~ ~

**LES MOORE'S 100<sup>TH</sup>** *His birthday celebration has changed its date several times. Nancy Moore writes: The final date, come what may, is October 27 (Sat.) ... Dad had his 100th last Friday and seemed to enjoy the cake especially, exclaiming "That damn thing has my name on it!" She adds: If anyone should be able to make the new date, please put them in touch with us. Nancy can be reached at [ride8908@ride.ri.net](mailto:ride8908@ride.ri.net)*

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**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?** NEGASSer **Bob Weingart** [The creator, with **Mary Finn**, of the G&S parody **The Foundling** (which really ought to be revived!)] writes, "I'm packing up and leaving Japan and moving to Auckland, New Zealand." He will still be teaching English as a Second Language – but he'll get to practice English as a First Language in his daily life, for a change!

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**HIS EXCELLENCY RE-SET:** Gilbert's forgotten libretto of 1894, set to music by **Terry Hawes**, was featured (apparently successfully!) at the 1999 **International G&S Festival** in Buxton, England, and has since been performed on British radio's **Classic FM**. The work is now available on CD, with full cast, chorus and orchestra directed by the composer.

Presented in a souvenir digi-pack with full set of lyrics and synopsis.

For more details and to order, visit: <http://www.hisexcellency.co.uk> or phone 0044 (0) 20 8360 1410

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**SUDBURY SAVOYARDS' 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**



Rehearsing for their celebratory concerts on October 26 – 27 are **Ellen Spear, Beth Fowler, Jim Parmentier, Eric Schwartz, Janice Dallas, and Randi Kestin**



**Alan Yost**, Music Director for the Sudbury concert. (Photos by **Paula Moravek**)

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**AS FAR AWAY AS YESTERDAY...** **Eva Cady Schafer**, 83, of Bedford, who played violin with the **Concord Symphony, Arlington Symphony, Waltham Symphony, Sudbury Savoyards**, many chamber music groups and contra dance bands, and for hundreds of local musical productions, died Oct. 4 after fighting cancer for two years. She was the wife of **Tillman Schafer**.

A memorial gathering and concert was held on Oct. 20 in Bedford, MA. Contributions in Mrs. Schafer's memory may be made to the First Parish Memorial Garden Fund, 75 The Great Road, Bedford, MA 01730.

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**CLIPPING CORRECTION:** In noting **Connie Thompson's** passing, you mentioned parenthetically that she was "one of the initiators," with me, of the **Harvard G&S clipping collection**. I would say simply, "Oh, dear, no!" except that I can't seem to recall the place that quote comes from. (Oh, yes, it comes

from the Phoebe's heart/Phoebe's hand dialogue in **YEOMEN**.)

The Clipping Collection existed for decades before Connie drew my attention to it. Connie introduced me to it through her bibliography project. As part of my effort to make the clippings more available to her for use in that project, we created the microfilms that are now also available from the Harvard College Library. [Er - We meant, the G&S part of it - oh, never, never mind! - We wildly misspoke, and apologize! - mlc]

-- PETER ZAVON

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## REVIEWS

**NEW YORK CITY OPERA'S PRODUCTION OF JONATHAN MILLER'S ENO [English National Opera] MIKADO** [Excerpted from a review originally prepared for **SavoyNet**] The house was nearly full for this **City Opera** matinee, and clearly the audiences are back in the theater, which was very good to see.

My own impressions of the show... were that, while the white "seaside resort" set was fun, the production was very uneven. The lighting was excellent, but the miking was, as always, distracting at times. Costumes were generally very good (mixing some '20s and '30s styles, though) although my girlfriend did not like the Act 2 wedding outfits for the female leads.

The Mikado himself was excellent, as were the Pitti-Sing and Pooh Bah. The Yum-Yum had a lovely voice, but she oversang *The Sun Whose Rays*, which was disappointing, as the oboist played it beautifully in the overture. The tempi, by the way, seemed generally right, and the City Opera orchestra played very well. The chorus, too, sang well (much better than in previous **MIKADOs** that I had seen at Citi, when I recall thinking that they sounded very underrehearsed).

**Richard Suart** was, well, Richard Suart, which is to say that he did not move particularly well, and his delivery of the dialogue was competent but not engaging, but he generally sang well.

No one in the cast sang badly, though the Katisha did not really have the low firepower. **Mr. Miller**, however, badly sabotaged several of the characters. During Katisha's first solo, for instance, there was much funny business that detracted from the pathos and sentiment of her lovely music. I feel that it is important to let Katisha create real emotion in her two soli without interrupting the sentiment with unnecessary funny business. Also in *Brightly Dawns*, there was so much

funny business involving the "staff" of the "resort," that the beauty of the music was almost lost.

Worst of all, however, was the characterization of Nanki Poo. The poor tenor had obviously been directed to speak (and often sing) in a fey, affected, lower class accent and to prance around like Charlie Chaplin, or some other silly person. He certainly did not seem like the son of the Mikado, nor did he have any "heroic" OR "villainous" side. And, clearly, he was not interested in a romantic relationship with Yum Yum or any other woman. At times, Yum Yum sort of imitated Nanki Poo's foppish dialogue delivery, which was even worse, and I think they missed most of the opportunities for humor in their dialogue scenes.

The chorus, by the way, barely moved. Instead, nearly all the choreography was performed by City Opera's dancers, and their choreography was generally very good, except for some distracting tap dancing during the Act I finale. It is quite a luxury to be able to just stand there and sing, while the dancers dance, but somehow it did not seem like G&S to me. I can see giving the chorus easier choreography than the dancers, but I really think they should be participating in the stage movement more.

I thought that generally the chorus diction was pretty good, especially considering the size of the house, and the leads' diction was also generally good, except for Suart, who sometimes ran words together in his dialogue. By the way, several minor dialogue cuts and interpolations were made, and I can't think why.

All in all, the Miller **MIKADO** was fun to watch (except for the Nanki-Poo scenes), but I would not want to see many of its innovations perpetuated.

-- SAM SILVERS

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**JONATHAN STRONG'S VLO DUKE TALK** [As **Gamarex** explained above, **Jonathan Strong's** remarks at our last meeting were for the most part based upon a talk he had planned to give at a **Valley Light Opera** gathering - which, in the event, was snowed out. Still, what he had to say is certainly worth hearing! - sorry We could not share with you all his vial of **Opoponax**, a very pleasant eau de toilet... - mlc]

**THE GRAND DUKE** is the only Gilbert and Sullivan opera to have its origins in the very valley from which this company takes its name. It seems that a certain Bertram Ellis -- no relation as far as we know to **Jim Ellis** of VLO -- was editor of the Keene (NH) *Sentinel*, and he wrote an editorial on the recently invented

electric chair called "Dead, Yet Alive." At the thought of a criminal declared dead through electrical execution -- and then resuscitated (for after all, the technique was still in its infancy) -- Mr. Ellis saw "a theme worthy the pen of the wittiest, most talented, librettist. The legal, financial, and social situations and predicaments," he went on, "are complex enough to tax the ingenuity of the most cunning." And he sent of a copy of his editorial to the most cunning librettist of all, who pasted it on the first page of the notebook of what was to become **DUKE**. Gilbert must have particularly relished *this* passage: "The executed man would be dead. His wife . . . would logically be a widow. Could she marry another man without committing bigamy? Would she be obliged. to marry him again in order to be his wife? The man's position would be equally puzzling. His children would be orphans and his wife would be a widow, but he would not be a widower. For his wife would not be dead. He therefore could not marry again. "

Nothing delighted Gilbert more than legal absurdities. He saw in them a perfect emblem of human behavior in all its comic predictability. I had the pleasure, last semester, of teaching a freshman seminar [at **Tufts University**] on the operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. You'll be pleased to learn that I created a dozen new devoted Savoyards. At first, they were rather disturbed by Gilbert's cynical view of life. These are kids, bear in mind, who have seen every horror imaginable on their TV screens, and yet when it came to **PATIENCE**, they were profoundly upset. "He's making fun of love!" they said. "He's making fun of poetry!" Scratch a hip eighteen-year-old and you'll find a squishy sentimentalist. But slowly, over the course of thirteen weeks, they began to take pleasure in Gilbert's logical extensions of what seem at first to be rational propositions. I mixed up the chronology, to remove the inevitable historical narrative of Rise and Fall, and so we came to **DUKE** rather early. Bear in mind that almost none of my students had known any of the operas before, so they approached **DUKE** without preconceptions, without the notion that it was the least known, the least frequently revived, the most problematic. The opera turned out to be their key to understanding what Gilbert was up to throughout the series, and we had good reason to return to it in later discussions.

**DUKE** is the ultimate Gilbert and Sullivan opera-ultimate in that it's the last, but also ultimate in that it embodies Gilbert's organizing principles in one cornucopia of logical absurdity all engendered by his two beloved professions: the Law and the Stage. Before

I proceed, let me say that I will discuss Sullivan's part in all of this--and it's considerable--but let me stick to Gilbert for starters. **DUKE**, written when he was only fifty-nine, represents his last major dramatic effort. It was followed a year later by **The Fortune Hunter** (a prose drama that never made it to the London stage) and in the early twentieth century by three final curiosities: a satire on the old pantomime harlequinade (called **The Fairy's Dilemma**), an operatic treatment of his 1873 play **The Wicked World**, now known as **Fallen Fairies**, and a grim one-acter, **The Hooligan**, set in a condemned cell. But **DUKE** is the last of the great Gilbert, and in its sometimes over-reaching complexity, one feels he put everything he had ever thought about a comic opera plot into it. Rather than see this as a liability, I'd like to look at this superabundance as the driving force behind the opera.

**DUKE** does overflow, and if you try to perform it with high-style **D'Oyly Carte** propriety, it may miss its mark. Gilbert himself, in 1896, may not have known how to bring across his own work effectively, and surely the Savoy audience was hoping for something simpler and less subconsciously complex. But if the opera, now, is played *for* its complexity, *for* its over-the-top exuberance--in short, if it's played fast, faster, and finally hysterically fast, it may reveal itself as the brilliantly multi-layered comic extravaganza I believe it to be. Here's what my wide-eyed students had to say at the moment when Gilbertian topsyturvydom began to make its own crazy sense to them.



"They're all *actors*!" they exclaimed. "So you can't tell, and maybe *they* can't tell, when they're acting or when they're being themselves !" (They aren't the post-modern generation for nothing!) And someone came up with this: "And when they're told the law says *this*, they're all, like, whatever; but when the law says *that*, it's like they switch and go with that!" This arbitrariness they were soon able to enjoy in **IOLANTHE** and **MIKADO** and all the others, but it most pervades **DUKE** precisely because the opera is a satire on the contrivances of theater, both on the stage and in the courtroom.

Hasn't Gilbert always seen the Law as a kind of theater? And beginning with **THESPIS**, didn't he play with the notion of actors running the world, *enacting* new laws, "experimenting" -- *playing*? The notion of a man legally dead but *actually* alive, and, thus able to interact with the living, is merely one premise for

playing, for games. **DUKE** is full of such games and plays. When onstage, no one is ever off stage, if you see what I mean. One way of looking at the opera is as a series of performances by "real" people. Let me try to explain that. Of course, the Valley Light Opera Company is made up of real people. But what I mean is that Gilbert is writing about a theatrical troupe, a subset of humanity he happens to know rather well, in this instance played by real people such as Rutland Barrington and Ilka Von Palmay and the other Savoyards of 1896, but *also*, within the play, we see the "real" members of the Dummkopf Theatrical Company sticking to their assigned *roles* without allowing their "real" selves to show too obviously.

Let's take Lisa, the sweet young thing. Or is she? She appears to be totally in love with Ludwig, the comedian, and they are about to be married (at *both* opening and closing curtains!); Ludwig has hoped to stage their marriage by using the company's costumes for an upcoming production of **Troilus and Cressida**, surely Shakespeare's most cynical and manipulative play as **DUKE** may be Gilbert's. Disallowed the costumes, Ludwig still manages, in the opening duet, to "stage" Lisa's devotion to him. "Shut your eyes, and love him blindly," the Chorus sings, and Lisa, in her role as the company's soubrette, coquettishly complies. Can she be that malleable, or is the actress Lisa playing her appropriate role, the part she's trained for, just as she later enacts the "jilted bride?" And how about Ernest Dummkopf himself, the only other character who appears to have a genuine romantic emotion: he's desperately in love with Julia, the leading lady, and throughout the opera pursues her, alive or dead as *he* may be. We may begin to suspect that, as the company's Troilus, *his* role is that of hapless suitor and that, in fact, he's more comfortable as such: he knows all the speeches; it's his *shtick*.

Even the non-actors are theatrical. Duke Rudolph stages his own wedding preparations, including his tête-à-tête with the Baroness in the market place, in whose surrounding windows sit people (the audience at the Amherst High School auditorium!) who have bought their opera glasses from his Grand Ducal monopoly. He is *never* without an audience. His duel with Ludwig is a staged event; so is his melodramatic exit and his raging return to life. Equally theatrical are the Monte Carlos, the Prince with his retinue of supernumeraries barely getting their parts right, the young Princess with her stagey indignation, her sense of the part she was rightly contracted for. But most important are Ludwig and Julia. We are most aware of their double natures because they take the lion's shares of the dramatizing. Ludwig, like any good comic, knows how to hold the limelight. He does everything in excess: he eats too

much, talks too much, falls into conjugal bliss far too often; he is always on *the* verge of panic but also always ready to improvise his way out, to *play*. As Professor **Max Keith Sutton** of **Kansas University** has pointed out in his important article "The Significance of **The Grand Duke**," Ludwig is the Dionysian lord of misrule. He upsets the old order, and by combining the costume of King Agamemnon with a Louis Quatorze wig, he is the absurd epitome of arbitrary, whimsical power and, as well, the victim of it, the butt of all the jokes he sets in motion. It may be hard to separate Ludwig, the actor in the Dummkopf Troupe, with his tried and true stage bits, from Ludwig, the character in Gilbert's libretto. In performing **DUKE**, one should think always on two simultaneous levels: think of the real people who are actors AND of the parts they are enthusiastically enacting. Do not think of these people as pure caricatures, the way we might think of Patience or Richard Dauntless or Frederic, to name a few more extreme examples. Rather think of them as real actors *playing* caricatures. They become more interesting that way--and I believe that's how Gilbert intended them.

Most interesting is Julia Jellicoe. She is the one who most lets us in on her art, or artifice. She can comment to Ernest or Ludwig or to us, the audience, on her ability to submerge personal feelings and dedicate herself to her role. If she is forced to bear a child, she will simulate maternal care; to make her role as Grand Duchess more interesting, she will contrive a mad scene; even when all is lost, she will take the most theatrical way out by staging a grandiose diva event. And yet throughout these calculated displays, the woman *never* loses sight of her own centrality to the universe! *This* is Julia Jellicoe, played originally by the Hungarian Countess Von Palmay with her central European accent, which was supposed to stand for an English accent amongst this troupe of perfect-English-speaking Germans -- but one more twist to Gilbert's play within a play within a play.

If Ludwig, the comedian, can't help but put himself across as funny, then Julia, the prima donna, can't help but put herself across as a drama queen. There is only one character in the libretto who remains cool as a cucumber, and that is Gilbert's convenient *deus ex machina*, Dr. Tannhauser, the notary. Aside from making a swipe at Wagnerian seriousness, using the name of an operatic hero torn between Lust and Purity is as pointed a Gilbertian choice as is the use of "Troilus." For the Bacchanale with which Wagner's opera *begins* is the way Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *ends*. As this Dionysian rite reaches its climax--with champagne flowing hard on the Lesbian wine and gaming tables set up when the can-can has worn everyone out, and with Ludwig running through no

fewer than four wives, it is the arbitrary re-reading of the Law, as offered by the never-to-be-ruffled notary, that flips everything back to where it started. If the insertion of a single word was all that was required to save a fairy band, then here it is that perennial fine point of gambling, *which* card counts as lowest, that brings on the denouement. But it is *not* a transformation scene, as in *IOLANTHE*. In *DUKE* it is merely a return to the *status quo*, and indeed this opera is the only one of the fourteen to close with the same music with which it opened.

It should be noted--and it has *not* generally been--that Grand Duke Rudolph isn't one of Gilbert's funny old men. Of all the comic baritones, he is decidedly the youngest. Ruthven Murgatroyd is explicitly thirty-five, but if Rudolph and the Princess were betrothed in infancy and she has just turned twenty-one, then he certainly can't yet be more than twenty-two. His sickliness, his finicky, stingy soul-- these are not the result of age but of his petty-principality fin-de-siecle effeteness. And if he has been drawn to the enormously wealthy Baroness Von Krakenfeldt (or perhaps simply the *enormous* Baroness Von Krakenfeldt) it is because he has felt mothered by her, safe with her--and she with him, because for all her wealth, she is no sensualist, at least when she's paying for it. She is as theatrical as all the rest; you might even see her as "the Gilbertian contralto" having had it with all those cruel jokes at her expense, back for a final tipsy triumphal turn, and even winning a rich Prince in the end, a touch that Gilbert may have managed through pantomime but which **Jim Ellis** is supplying a few extra lines for.

-- **JONATHAN STRONG**

[To be continued next issue -- along-side a rave review of the *VLO* production, We hope! - mlc]

The **9th Annual Gilbert and Sullivan Festival** will again take place in two locations:

**Sunday, July 28 - Sunday, August 4, 2002** at the Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne. This part of the Festival will comprise only Professional Performances or Non-adjudicated amateur performances.

**Saturday, August 3 - Sunday, August 18, 2002** at the Opera House and Pavillion Gardens in Buxton. The second and third weekends in Buxton will contain the professional performances; all other dates in Buxton will comprise the competitive part of the Festival.

There may be an extension the following week for a separate competitive festival of Children's Productions.

-- **DON SMITH**

Visit the Festival web site at <http://www.gs-festival.co.uk> for more information about last summer's 8th Festival, and for more details about next summer.

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