8.12.1986

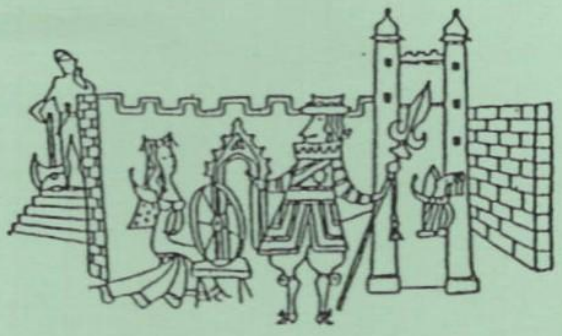
DEC 8

7.30

FENTHAM HALL



GILBERT AND SULLIVAN





THE HAMPTON SINGERS

ADMISSION £1.50 by programme or at the door

PROGRAMME

Saturday 8th December

Fentham Hall, Hampton-in-Arden at 7.30 pm

THE HAMPTON SINGERS

Conductor: Andrew Dicks

Soprano: Frances Hook

Contralto: Sara Clethero

Baritone: Darren Moore

Bass: Robert Turner

Piano: Richard Silk

AN EVENING OF GILBERT & SULLIVAN

Excerpts from Yeomen of the Guard

Excerpts from Iolanthe, Act I

Interval - 15 minutes

Excerpts from Iolanthe, Act II

Excerpts from Mikado

Frances Hook, Darren Moore and Robert Turner appear by kind permission of the Head of the Birmingham School of Music.

Programme: £1.50

Excerpts from The Yeomen of the Guard

Song: When maiden loves she sits and sighs
Chorus: Tower warders under orders
Song with chorus: When our gallant Norman foes
Chorus: Here's a man of jollity
Duet: I have a song to sing, O
Song: Were I thy bride
Finale Act I: To thy fraternal care
Chorus: Night has spread her pall once more
Ballad: Free from his fetters grim
Quartet: Strange adventure!
Finale Act II: With happiness my soul is cloyed

After the massive success of the Mikado (672 consecutive performances at the Savoy) Gilbert and Sullivan produced Ruddigore, and it was perhaps the success of the more serious scene in this - the splendid 'Ghosts' High Noon - that encouraged them to try a rather more serious type of piece to follow it: The Yeomen of the Guard (subtitled the Merryman and his Maid), produced in October 1888.

The opera begins with an impressive overture setting the scene at the Tower of London. There we hear Phoebe (daughter of yeoman Sergeant Meryll) singing of a maiden's unrequited love. Acrowd of people at the tower introduce the 'Tower warders, Under orders, Gallant pikemen, Valiant sworders!' In fact the yeomen are proud of their past but are now battle weary and are happy to be pensioned off at the Tower. Dame Carruthers (housekeeper to the Tower) keeps a matronly eye on them. The story centres around a prisoner (Colonel Fairfax) who, held under sentence of death mysteriously escapes from under the nose of the warders. Dame Carruthers for one is not pleased by this. Two other leading characters are introduced in our extracts: Jack Point(a strolling jester), who the crowd introduce as a 'man of jollity'; and Elsie Maynard, a singer who accompanies him. It is Elsie who sets her hopes on marrying Fairfax and Point who sees Phoebe as his bride. The intracaies of the plot are resolved in the finale where a happy ending ensures that Fairfax is found free to marry Elsie, Point marries Phoebe and even Dame Carruthers and Sergeant Meryll are brought together.

Excerpts from Iolanthe

Chorus: Tripping Hither, tripping thither
Entrance of Strephon and exit of fairies
Entrance and March of the Peers
Finale Act I: With Strephon for your foe
Song: When all night long a chap remains
Song: Oh foolish fay
Duet: If we're weak enough to tarry
Finale Act II: Soon as we may, off and away!

Iolanthe, or The Peer and the Peri made its first appearance at The Savoy on 25th November 1882. Gilbert generally found one principal target for his wit, in each libretto: in Trial it was the law, in Pinafore the Navy, in Patience the Oscar Wilde set. In Iolanthe he threw his net wider, not only taking another crack at the law (in the Lord Chancellor's songs) but lampooning the then-popular Arcadian Style and both Houses of Parliament! In our excerpts we meet the aimless fairies 'tripping hither, tripping thither'. The Peers make their splendid entrance (Bow, bow ye lower middle classes!) and are confronted by the Fairies in the Act I finale (whose plot would take several pages to explain!) Strephon has been elected into Parliament with unopposeable Fairy Powers and is running amok through both their Houses ('You shall sit, if he sees reason, Through the grouse and salmon season!' Peers:'Oh, Horror!). Act II opens with a sentry outside the Houses of Parliament, during his song he reflects on the fact that "every boy and every girl that's born into the world alive is either a little liberal or else a little conservative". After another jolly duet from Phyllis and Strephon the chorus bring the opera to its breezy conclusion.

Excerpts from The Mikado

Chorus: If you want to know who we are
Song with chorus: Young man despair
Song with chorus: As some day it amy happen
Finale Act I: With aspect stern
Solo & chorus: Braid the raven hair
Song: The sun, whose rays
Madrigal (Chorus): Brightly dawns our wedding day
Chorus: Mi-ya-sa-ma, mi-ya-sa-ma
Solo: A more humane Mikado never did in Japan exist
Song: On a tree by a river, a little tom-tit sang
Finale Act II: For he's gone and married Yum-Yum

When the emissaries of the Imperial Court of Japan expressed outrage at seeing their Divine Mikado lampooned on the stage of the Savoy Theatre, everyone in Britain thought it a huge joke, proving that 'Those foreigners have no sense of humour'. The fact that, had Queen Victoria been made a figure of fun in a Tokyo theatre, the gun-boats would have been despatched at once to avenge the insult, did not seem to occur to them!

Mikado, first heard on 14 March 1885, soon became Top of the G & S Pops and has remained so ever since. The book is witty, the tunes catchy lots of colourful costumes ('full of Eastern Promise') and an absolute natural for impecunious amateur companies (three Japanese screens and an overgrown Bonsai-tree and the set's made!)

If you don't know the plot already, don't let it worry you overmuch - just sit back and enjoy the music! Handsome Nanki-Poo, Mikado's long-lost son disguised as Second Trombone (a fate worse than death), loves beautiful Yum-Yum, Ward of court betrothed unwittingly to Ko-Ko, Lord High Executioner, but is loved in return by unbecoming Katisha, Mikado's Daughter-in-Law Elect. Advice (invariably bad) is proffered by Pooh-Bah (Lord High Everything Else), another hanger-on called Pish-Tush and Yum-Yum's friend Pitti-Sing (another of the 'Three little maids from school'). More than that you really don't need to know!

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