

Batley Gilbert & Sullivan Society

presents



Yeomen of the Guard

DEWSBURY ARTS CENTRE

26th- 31st March 1990

Performance commences 7.30 p.m.

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BATLEY GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY
Affiliated to the National Operatic and Dramatic Association
Member of Yorkshire Arts Association
presents



YEOMEN OF THE GUARD

or

The Merryman and His Maid

by William S. Gilbert & Arthur S. Sullivan

at

DEWSBURY ARTS CENTRE
26th to 31st March, 1990

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

May I take this opportunity to welcome you to Yeomen of the Guard, our 41st Production.

The Society has been through many changes since its inception forty years ago and after several different venues ranging from church halls to town halls has finally come to rest in the more intimate surroundings of the Dewsbury Arts Centre, from which "Yeomen" will be its third production.

Yeomen of the Guard is, perhaps, not as well known as the "Greatest Hits" but in common with the other lesser known operettas, for example "The Sorcerer" and "Princess Ida" contains some of the best music ever to flow from Sullivan's pen. His aspirations to grand opera being clearly audible in both "Yeomen" and "Ida."

I trust you will enjoy this year's production and look forward to seeing you again at our future events, as it is you, the audience, which makes live theatre possible.

Chris Sowerby
President

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Introducing:

LORRAYNE HARROD - PRODUCER

Lorrayne made her first stage appearance at the tender age of three as a dancer. It was not until some time later that Lorrayne decided to pursue a career in the entertainment world. As a mature student she gained an honours degree in Music and Theatre Studies followed by a Professional Performers Course at the Royal Northern College of Music. As a full-time performer and teacher she has fulfilled contracts with BBC Northern Singers, Granada and Merseyside TV and Opera North, where she gained valuable experience working with professional directors. Lorrayne is in her second year with the Society having produced "The Pirates of Penzance" for us last year and we are very pleased to be working with her again.

DAVID WILKINSON, L.T.C.L. - MUSICAL DIRECTOR

We have much pleasure in introducing David Wilkinson who made his first appearance with the Society last November for our "Evening with Gilbert & Sullivan". David gained his musical qualifications at Huddersfield Technical College between 1980-1982. He was previously Musical Director for three years with Lindley Amateur Operatic Society, based in Huddersfield.

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- (a) The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exits and entrances and the door of such exits and entrances shall at that time be open.
(b) All gangways, passages and staircases shall be kept entirely free from chairs or any other obstructions."

YEOMEN OF THE GUARD or The Merryman And His Maid

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SIR RICHARD CHOLMONDLEY (Lieutenant of the Tower)
COLONEL FAIRFAX (under sentence of death)
SERGEANT MERYLL (of the Yeomen of the Guard)
LEONARD MERYLL (his Son)
JACK POINT (a Strolling Jester)
WILFRED SHADBOLT (Head Jailer)
THE HEADSMAN
FIRST YEOMAN
SECOND YEOMAN
FIRST CITIZEN
SECOND CITIZEN
ELSIE MAYNARD (a Strolling Singer)
PHOEBE MERYLL (Sergeant Meryll's Daughter)
DAME CARRUTHERS (Housekeeper of the Tower)
KATE (her Niece)

David Adamson
Jim Cooper
Barrie Close
Ian Townend
Keith Horner
Robert Thurman
Andrew James
Ian Townend
Jeremy Haigh
George Chapman
Neil Bird
Pamela Brooke
Rita Browning
Margaret Lister
Karen Morton

STROLLING DANCERS: *Stephanie Roe & Andrew James*

CHORUS OF YEOMEN OF THE GUARD, CITIZENS & TOWNSFOLK:

Verity Bird, Marie Bullock, Tessa Chapman, Jill Haigh, Carol Parkinson, Sally Roberts, Rachel Roe, Stephanie Roe, Thelma Scott, Alison Sowerby, Debbie Stringer, Kathryn Thurman, Ruth Trout, Dorothy Whitworth.
Kavan Lund, Vernon Newman, Barry Pearson, Stephen Roe, Christopher Sowerby.

ACT I Tower Green

ACT II The Same - Moonlight

Time - Sixteenth Century

NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY DURING THE PERFORMANCE !

YEOMEN OF THE GUARD

The Story

The scene opens within the Tower with Phoebe moping as Wilfred Shadbolt enters. She admits that she is attracted to Colonel Fairfax who is to be beheaded that day on a charge of sorcery. Wilfred departs grumbling jealously.

In an outburst to Dame Carruthers, Phoebe insists that Fairfax is innocent. Her tirade against the bloodthirstiness of the Tower brings Dame Carruthers to its defence at once.

Sergeant Meryll awaits the arrival of his son Leonard who has been appointed a Yeoman of the Guard. When he arrives without a reprieve for the Colonel, he and his father and sister Phoebe conspire to help the Colonel to escape. Clean-shaven he will take Leonard's place among the Tower Warders.

Fairfax meanwhile asks for the Lieutenant's help in outwitting his kinsmen who will inherit his estates if he dies unmarried. But who will be his bride? By chance, two strolling players, Jack Point and Elsie Maynard arrive on the scene. As they are unmarried, the Lieutenant persuades Elsie to marry Fairfax for a hundred crowns - money she needs to nurse her sick mother. Blindfolded she is led away while Point discusses the possibility of employment.

The time arrives to put the escape plot into operation. Phoebe flirts with Wilfred while stealing the keys to the Colonel's cell so that her father can free him. A quick change and Fairfax reappears clad in Yeoman's uniform ready to be welcomed into the corps as Leonard.

The bell tolls to announce the execution. Chaos breaks out as the empty cell is discovered. Wilfred is arrested and a reward offered for the prisoner's recapture - dead or alive. The crowd rush off in pursuit leaving Elsie to faint in Fairfax's arms.

★ ★ ★

It is now late evening and no sign of the Colonel! Shadbolt and Point enter both in low spirits. Wilfred is convinced that he would make a good jester and Jack Point gives him advice on the hazards of the profession.

Another plot is hatched. In return for lessons in jesting, Wilfred will swear that he has shot Fairfax while escaping thus leaving Elsie free again to marry Point.

Elsie has meanwhile been recovering in the care of Dame Carruthers. The Dame's niece Kate has overheard Elsie moaning in her sleep about marrying a man she has never seen. Dame Carruthers deduces that the bridegroom is none other than Colonel Fairfax and confides her secret to Sergeant Meryll and his son.

While Fairfax is testing out his bride's loyalty a shot is heard. Enter Wilfred and Point to claim Fairfax's despatch. Point reminds Elsie that she is now free to choose again. Fairfax demonstrates the art of wooing to Point and succeeds in winning Elsie for himself.

Wilfred discovers Phoebe heartbroken. In a fit of temper she declares her jealousy for her "brother". Realising her mistake at once she agrees to marry Wilfred to guarantee his silence. The real Leonard now arrives with the reprieve. Phoebe tells her father of her accidental revelation to Wilfred. Dame Carruthers overhears the conversation and siezes her advantage to blackmail the Sergeant into marrying her. He reluctantly agrees.

The opera moves swiftly to its close with Elsie at last realising that the man she loves is the man to whom she is married. But all is not joyful. Jack Point enters dejectedly. As Fairfax and Elsie embrace, Points falls insensible at their feet.

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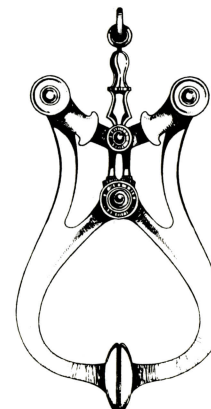
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HISTORICAL NOTES

"Yeomen of the Guard" was first performed at the Savoy Theatre on 3rd October, 1888 and was regarded by Gilbert & Sullivan as their favourite. It was the nearest they got to a grand opera.

Gilbert's inspiration for the plot came while waiting for a Metropolitan Line train at Uxbridge station. His eye was attracted to a poster advertising the "Tower Furnishing Company" and showed a beefeater against the background of the Tower of London. Gilbert liked colourful costumes and chose the beefeater as the central figure in a dramatic and romantic plot set in Elizabethan times. The choice of the Tudor period was probably influenced by the wave of patriotism and nostalgia which swept Britain in the wake of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

He based his plot on a French play, "Don César de Bazan", which told of a knight languishing in prison and condemned to die who married a gipsy dancer and, after escaping being shot, returned disguised as a monk.

The opera was composed and completed in a great rush. Sullivan wrote the overture in the auditorium during the final rehearsal. Tempers flared frequently between composer and librettist and they were still arguing about production problems an hour before the curtain went up on the first performance.

"Yeomen of the Guard" is the only Gilbert & Sullivan opera to begin with a solo. It also went through several changes of name - originally called "The Tower of London", later changed to "The Tower Warder", then to "The Beefeaters" before adopting its final name "The Yeomen of the Guard". Gilbert also used a little artistic licence in setting the opera in the Tower of London. To be strictly accurate, the Yeomen of the Guard, a different body of men from the Tower Warders, were established by Henry VII in 1485 as a personal bodyguard for the sovereign. There is no evidence that they undertook duties as custodians of the Tower and would more likely have been found at the monarch's residence at Windsor Castle. The Corps of Yeomen Warders of the Tower of London, known as Tower Warders, were established in 1548, i.e. four years after the death of Sir Richard Cholmondley and therefore after the period in which this opera is set.

Sir Richard Cholmondley, the Lieutenant of the Tower, is the one real historical figure to appear as a character in the Savoy Operas. He held the post of Lieutenant from 1513 to 1524.

About the songs . . .

Two songs were originally written but are now omitted from the performed score. The first was for Wilfred Shadbolt prior to his first exit at the beginning of Act I:-

When jealous torments reach my soul
My agonies I can't control;
Oh better sit on red-hot coal
Than love a heartless jade !

The second featured Sergeant Meryll prior to his son Leonard's first entrance:-

A laughing boy but yesterday,
A merry urchin, blithe and gay !
Whose joyous shout came ringing out
Unchecked by care or sorrow -

"I Have A Song To Sing O" Sullivan found more difficult to set than any other given to him by Gilbert. Gilbert finally came to the aid with the tune of an old sea shanty:

Come, and I will sing to you -
What will you sing me ?
I will sing you one, O !
What is your one, O !

"Is Life A Boon" underwent three changes before Gilbert was satisfied that Sullivan had it right. When Sullivan died in 1900, Gilbert chose the first four lines to be inscribed on Sullivan's memorial to be found in the Embankment Gardens between the Savoy Theatre and the River Thames.

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Saturday, 24th November - CONCERT featuring the Homecharm Brass Band & the Society - Dewsbury Town Hall
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Producer: Lorraine Harrod *Assistant Producer:* Stephanie Roe
Musical Director: David Wilkinson *Accompanist:* Alan Rothwell
Set designed by: Lorraine Harrod & Verity Bird
Set built by:
Neil Bird Verity Bird
Rachel Roe Andrew James
Dorothy Whitworth Debbie Stringer
Andrew Stringer Kavan Lund
Stephen Roe Keith Horner

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We apologise for missing out any names not available at time of going to press.

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Pirates of Penzance	1952	1961	1970	1981	
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Ruddigore	1954	1966	1974	1984	
H.M.S. Pinafore	1956	1964	1976	1982	
Princess Ida	1958	1971	1985		
Patience	1966	1974	1984		
Trial By Jury	1967	1980	1988		
The Sorcerer	1955	1965	1978	1990	
Yeomen of The Guard	1957				
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