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presents

# *Iolanthe*



**Dewsbury Arts Centre  
6th - 11th April, 1992**

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



## IOLANTHE

or

**The Peer and The Peri**

*by William S. Gilbert & Arthur S. Sullivan*



at

**DEWSBURY ARTS CENTRE**  
**6th to 11th April, 1992**

### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Dewsbury Arts Centre and the Society's 43rd annual production - "Iolanthe".

In choosing the show some months ago, we had little idea of how topical the production would be. I hope that after the many weeks of party political broadcasts, the evening will relieve the strains of high pressure electioneering.

We have been delighted to work once again with our Producer, David Fletcher, and thank him, our Musical Director, David Wilkinson and our indefatigable accompanist, Alan Rothwell, for the work they have put into this show.

It is a wonderful comment on the abilities of two Victorian gentlemen - Gilbert & Sullivan - that their works continue to give so much pleasure and entertainment to so many.

We have been pleased to welcome many new members to our ranks over the past couple of years and are always happy for people to join us at our rehearsals in St. Andrews Parochial Hall in Batley every Wednesday evening.

In closing, may I thank all the people in front of, behind and on the stage, for all their hard work and you, our audience, for your support.

So, off we go to fairyland. . . .

**C. ROBERT THURMAN -President**

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## IOLANTHE or The Peer and the Peri

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE LORD CHANCELLOR  
EARL OF MOUNTARARAT  
EARL TOLLLOLLER  
PRIVATE WILLIS (of the Grenadier Guards)  
STREPHON (an Arcadian Shepherd)  
QUEEN OF THE FAIRIES  
IOLANTHE (a Fairy, Strephon's Mother)  
CELIA )  
LEILA ) Fairies  
FLETA )  
PHYLLIS (an Arcadian Shepherdess and Ward in Chancery)  
Lord Chancellor's Attendants

Chorus of Dukes, Marquises, Earls, Viscounts, Barons and Fairies:

Sunflower  
Dragonfly  
Petunia  
Cyclamen  
Forget-Me-Not  
Marigold  
Ladybird  
Fuschia  
Lilac  
Nasturtium

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Kathryn Thurman  
Dorothy Whitworth*

*Neil Bird  
Ian Castle  
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**ACT I:** An Arcadian Landscape  
**ACT II:** Palace of Westminster

★ ★ ★ ★

NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY DURING THE PERFORMANCE

★ ★ ★ ★

**WINE BAR:** open before, during the interval and after each performance  
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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.  
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## IOLANTHE The Story

### Act One

The curtain rises on an Arcadian landscape where a chorus of fairies tell of their sorrow that Iolanthe, one of their number, has been banished by the Fairy Queen for over twenty-five years. She was sentenced to this terrible exile for marrying a mortal. By fairy law a fairy who marries a mortal should die but, because of her great love for Iolanthe, the Fairy Queen commuted her sentence to penal servitude on the condition that she left her husband and vowed never to speak to him again. The fairies persuade the Queen to summon Iolanthe and forgive her. She has been working off her sentence at the bottom of a stream so as to be near her son Strephon, an Arcadian shepherd who loves Phyllis a Ward in Chancery. Strephon now enters and tells his mother that he plans to marry Phyllis right away even without the Lord Chancellor's consent. Iolanthe points out that the penalty for marrying a Ward of Court without the Lord Chancellor's consent is penal servitude for life. This poses something of a problem as Strephon is only a fairy down to the waist - his legs are mortal. The Fairy Queen is intrigued by Strephon's unusual case and promises him her special protection. As she has a borough or two at her disposal she decides that he shall go into Parliament as a Liberal-Conservative! The fairies go off leaving Phyllis and Strephon alone to declare their love for each other. When they in turn leave, the House of Peers, en masse, march in. The Lord Chancellor has assembled them so that Phyllis may give her hand in marriage to whichever of them she may think proper to select. The Chancellor himself has "the misfortune to be singularly attracted" to Phyllis but the legal complexities involved in his marrying one of his own wards are so great that he has decided to waive his claim. Phyllis appears and tells the Peers that her heart is already given to Strephon. The noblemen angrily depart leaving the Lord Chancellor alone with Strephon. He tells Strephon that he still withholds his consent to the marriage and in despair the broken-hearted shepherd turns to his mother for help. While they are talking, Phyllis returns with the Peers. Phyllis naturally assumes that Strephon is being unfaithful and decides to marry either Lord Tolloller or Lord Mountararat — she doesn't care which! Strephon calls on the Fairy Queen to help and she soon appears along with the rest of the fairies. Much to the consternation of the peers she declares that she will send Strephon into Parliament where he will pass every bill he wishes.

### Act Two

Act Two is set in the Palace of Westminster, at night. Private Willis of the Grenadier Guards is on sentry duty. He is ruminating on the political scene.

The peers are growing increasingly angry at Strephon's parliamentary success for being a parliamentary Pickford — he carries everything. The fairies admit that this is part of their system which is designed to shorten the debates. The peers leave angrily, much to the regret of the fairies who are becoming increasingly interested in them. The Fairy Queen severely rebukes them for their weakness.

Phyllis' two suitors the Lords Mountararat and Tolloller argue at great length over which one of them shall marry her. She stops their threatened duel by pointing out to them that "it's really not worthwhile". The lords agree that the "Sacred ties of friendship are paramount". The Lord Chancellor is finding that his unrequited love for Phyllis is becoming increasingly disturbing to him. Mountararat and Tolloller urge him to reconsider his decision and marry her.

Strephon at last gets a chance to explain the misunderstanding to Phyllis and they agree to marry as soon as possible. They ask Iolanthe to plead with the Lord Chancellor on their behalf. She is forced to reveal the identity of her husband to the young couple. He is the Lord Chancellor himself and as he believes her to be dead Iolanthe is bound under penalty of death not to undeceive him. The Lord Chancellor comes in. He has decided, after a severe struggle to marry Phyllis himself. Iolanthe covers her face with her veil and puts her son's case to him. He refuses to relent and so Iolanthe lifts her veil and confronts her husband. The Fairy Queen has no alternative but to condemn Iolanthe to death for once again breaking her vows. The fairies stop her as they have themselves all become married to the peers. She realises that she cannot slaughter the whole company and yet the law clearly states that every fairy shall die who marries a mortal. The Lord Chancellor's legal brain quickly sees a solution to the problem. He suggests that the law should be changed so that "every fairy shall die who *don't* marry a mortal". The Fairy Queen now has to marry to save her life and she proposes to Private Willis. He cheerfully accepts and they all fly away to fairyland.

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**HISTORICAL NOTES**

IOLANTHE was first performed at the Savoy Theatre, London on 25th November, 1882. It was the first Gilbert and Sullivan Opera to have its premiere at that theatre and is therefore, strictly speaking, the first of the "Savoy Operas". During the initial run of "Iolanthe" Richard D'Oyly Carte made the innovation of introducing for the first time in Britain the French system of queuing for people waiting outside the theatre for unreserved seats. The Savoy was also the first theatre in Britain to be lit by electricity.

"Iolanthe" ran initially at the Savoy for 398 performances. Right up until the final run-through on the eve of the opening night, both the opera and the character now known as 'Iolanthe' were called 'Perola'. This was an attempt to prevent pirated performances of the opera taking place such as had happened with some of the Gilbert and Sullivan's earlier works.

'Iolanthe' was not the only one to have a name change. Gilbert had originally intended calling his principal fairies "Lola, Astarte and Lettie" - now better known as "Leila, Celia and Fleta". Similarly, the Queen should have been named "Varine" and Strephon was to have been called "Corydon".

Several songs have been cut from the original copy of the libretto sent to the Lord Chancellor for licensing. No less than five soli for Leila, Phyllis, Earl of Mountararat, Strephon and Perola, were cut as well as couplets and a trio from Phyllis, Earl of Tolloller and Earl of Mountararat, not to mention considerable alteration or reduction to the original text.

There are also one or two inaccuracies or variations from the truth in "Iolanthe". Take for example the "cherished rights . . . . on Friday nights" as referred to by the Fairy Queen. When Gilbert originally wrote these lines, the cherished rights were enjoyed on Wednesday, not Friday. Between 1852 and 1902 that was the so-called short sitting day in Parliament, when the Commons sat from 12 noon to 6 p.m. instead of its usual time of from 3 p.m. until late in the evening. The Lords very seldom sat at all on Wednesdays during this period, and if they did it was only for judicial business.

A more serious inaccuracy in the setting of Act II of "Iolanthe" was overlooked by many reviewers. The Houses of Parliament are not guarded by soldiers, but rather by policemen. Private Willis does however make a more colourful figure for the setting.



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*Musical Director:* Mr. David Wilkinson

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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MUSICAL DIRECTOR:	-	David Wilkinson
ACCOMPANIST:	-	Alan Rothwell
CHOREOGRAPHER:	-	Jacky Fletcher
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