

**GILBERT AND SULLIVAN PAMPHLETS**

**Number 3**

**D'OYLY CARTE IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

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For many years the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company regularly visited Belfast, but their visits to other parts of the province were confined to four short tours in the 1880s when they visited Londonderry (otherwise referred to as Derry). During some of these tours they also visited other towns in the area, and this paper is an investigation of those tours.

According to Rollins and Witts (*The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in Gilbert and Sullivan Operas*), the first visit consisted of a tour of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance* for part of two weeks at the end of January and beginning of February 1882. During the week beginning 30 January, the Company visited Drogheda (two days), Dundalk (two days) and Omagh (one day). The following week (February 6) three performances were given in Derry. The second tour was brief, the Company gave two performances only of *Patience* on 1 & 2 January 1883 in Derry. In 1885 they returned to the province for several weeks, presenting *Patience* and *Iolanthe*, visiting Drogheda, Dundalk and Armagh in the week commencing February 2, Derry, Enniskillen and Omagh the following week (Feb 9) and Larne the week following that. That was almost the end of the tours; they returned only for four days to Derry in December 1889 (the week commencing 15th.) during which time *The Yeomen of the Guard* and *The Mikado* were performed. A few adjustments have had to be made to this scenario as a result of my examination of the local newspapers, which indicate that there were other D'Oyly Carte visits to Northern Ireland than those given by Rollins and Witts. I cannot claim to have found all of these, and more work remains to be done. These reports proved to be of such interest, not only in their comments on the performances, but also in the views of the period on the operas themselves, that I have reproduced many of them in full.

I cannot say with any certainty whether the opening of the Opera House in Londonderry was in any way connected with the decision of the D'Oyly Carte management to extend their tours to include that city on their schedules, but I like to think it had. The Opera House opened on Friday 10th August 1877 with a performance of Bulwer Lytton's *The Lady of Lyons*, and Mr. J.F. Warden, of the Theatre Royal, Belfast, made an inaugural speech. The *Londonderry Sentinel* of Saturday 11th printed a lengthy notice about the play. The *Derry Journal* of Monday 13th printed a similar treatise, again saying a great deal about the play, but very little about the theatre. Both printed Mr. Warden's speech. The *Derry Journal* also reprinted a piece from the *Belfast Newsletter* commenting upon the event. Earlier, however, on 4 August, the *Londonderry Standard* had discussed the new building at some length:

Externally, the new building is a handsome one, and a decided acquisition to the public buildings of the city. Built of red brick, and ornamented with moulded stone and brick, the facade presents a chaste, handsome appearance. There are three large entrance doorways on the street level, surmounted with circular arched heads, and giving access respectively to the pit, balcony, boxes and gallery. On the first floor is an arcade of five circular-headed windows, while topping the whole is a mansard roof, with a centre brick dormer. Entering the principal doorway, the visitor finds himself in the vestibule, from which he passes - through a pair of swing doors - to the grand staircase leading to the balcony and upper circle. The pit is approached through a doorway at the town side of the facade, and is on a level with the footway, while the entrance to the gallery is at the upper side of the frontage. Means of internal communication between all these various divisions are afforded, so that easy access may be had from one part of the house to another. Internally, the theatre is remarkably elegant and compact, being constructed on the model of the best metropolitan houses of the kind. The pit, which has twenty-two rows of comfortable seats, is capable of accommodating from 600 to 700 persons. The first tier above is furnished with four rows of luxurious fauteils stuffed in crimson velvet. Behind these are five rows of seats with stuffed backs, while further back room is found in the corridor for about 100 persons. The corridor, it should be mentioned, opens out into a refreshment-room and retiring rooms for ladies and gentlemen. The gallery, on the second tier, only projects to the circular line of the upper circles, and is supported by ornamental iron columns. It is seated for 700 persons, each one of whom may have from this portion of the house, as clear a view of the stage as from any other part of the theatre. The stage is a very spacious one, being capable of receiving, we are informed, the scenery from the Belfast, Dublin Gaiety, and other principal theatres, so that all the effects produced in the theatres of the larger towns may easily be transferred hither. The act drop and scenery, always a conspicuous feature in a theatre, are done in magnificent style, having been painted expressly by Mr. Thomas Gilmore, Belfast, who, of course, had numerous assistants. The general decorations of the theatre, which are of an elaborate description, are the work of Mr. Edward Bell of London, a gentleman of eminence as a decorative artist... The general tone of the decorations is a light cream-coloured ground, upon which is painted Renaissance ornament in gold and colours. The ornamental wire railing to the balcony is richly gilded, as also the proscenium pilasters. The walls are papered a warm sage green, relieved with gold ornament, while the hangings and curtains, supplied by Mr. Robert Campbell, Bishop Street, are of a delicate crimson - the whole producing an effect rarely to be witnessed in a provincial theatre.

But the sumptuousness of the Derry Opera House proved to be somewhat misplaced. Alas, opera was rarely performed there. The construction was by McClelland & Co., Londonderry, who built it between January and August 1877, and the gas work was by Mr. Baxter, Londonderry. There is no mention of electricity, so one must suppose it was gas lit. The *Irish Builder* of August 15th, carried a brief notice indicating that the seating was 1500 and that the architect was Mr. Phipps; presumably this was C.J. Phipps, but I have been unable to find this anywhere stated. However, the opening of the new theatre was not without opposition. In the *Londonderry Sentinel* of 11th August had appeared a diatribe by the Rev. Mr. Craig. In the *Derry Journal*, "a citizen" replied describing Craig's sermon in the following words:

it has been designated by almost the entire people of this city as the most flagrant attempt of a single individual to cast reproach upon a gentleman whose character is as unassailable as it is possible for any individual to be; nay, more, it is calculated to injure the prospects of a man who has invested about five thousand pounds in order to supply a want that has long been felt in Derry, a place of public amusement, conducted on the most stringent principles of strict morality.

The correspondent went on to defend Mr. Warden's character, and added that the new opera house deserved to be supported.

Michael McGuinness of the Derry Community History and Heritage Project, very kindly provided me with copies of extracts from a couple of books on Derry which give passing mention to the Opera House and its context. Sam Hughes in *City on the Foyle* (1984) commented (pp. 45-6, 49, 50, 51):

Pantomimes were the greatest draw in Derry's old theatre, the Opera House, Carlisle Road. Supposedly for the entertainment of children, they were a lavish mixture of everything - drama, variety, burlesque - that had appeared during the year, plus all the

Christmas trimmings. The best were English companies which appeared in January after they had finished their Belfast run. These brought the big names and the latest hits, as the music publishers depended on them to market their wares and, though they cost more, the town savoured once in a year the cream of the professionals. The smaller companies appeared at Christmas and relied heavily on local talent. With a thinner story line and fewer stock ingredients, they struck the right blend for Derry audiences - spectacle and novelty from the visitors while the locals provided laughs and swipes at the sacred cows. The comics on the big shows were also briefed on our idiosyncrasies, but sometimes their inability to pronounce local names or their travesty of our accent turned the joke on themselves ... These part-timers or bit players were an indispensable prop of the theatre in Derry: besides their stage appearances, they played a major part in its running as ticket sellers, scene shifters, dressers, propmen or even chuckers-out. The opening years of the [20th] century were their heyday when audiences were slowly evolving from Victorian melodrama through the impetus of the new Irish theatre movement inspired by the founding of the Abbey in Dublin ... Amateur companies of a hitherto unsuspected competence also appeared. Yet, even at the best of times, Derry was always a theatrical risk: a small population and a Philistine tradition entered into it, and only the resource and versatility of managers such as Mr. Barney Armstrong and his band of gifted enthusiasts kept things going for so long ...

In 1912, Derry got its first picture house - The Palace, Shipquay Street - and the following year St. Columb's Hall became one. The Opera House fare of mainly Victorian melodrama or revues, with their English-oriented humour, could not rival the gripping new Westerns or the uproarious two-reel Chaplins. Even Shakespeare, with his conscripted audience of half-price school parties, was becoming a drag. The "Hall" also introduced a variety of turns, which further weaned the Opera House faithful ...

Not that the Opera House had lowered its standards. The name was always a misnomer. It started life in 1876 as the Royal Opera House, then dropped the "Royal" and was briefly "The Empire", but was still "The Opera" in its last ten years when it showed only films. Opera companies came once or twice a year, notably the Carl Rosa and Boyer Westwood, but its backbone was variety and melodrama. Plays with patriotic undertones had the widest appeal, also singers like Mary Connelly, Walter McNally, Chris O'Brien and Cathal McGarvey; the drama renaissance at the turn of the century brought the Irish (or Ulster) players with productions of far greater finesse than old stand-bys like *The Colleen Bawn* and *The Shaughran*.

A few weeks after the outbreak of World War II, the Opera House was burned down. Except for its frontage, it had remained unchanged for sixty-three years, its period flavour intact except in the boxes, once the preserve of the "gentry", which now housed former galleryites.

Charlie Gallaher in *Acorns and Oak Leaves* (?date) recalled the old theatre with nostalgia:

It was a lovely old theatre, similar in design and style to the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin but with two tiers of boxes instead of three. Seats in the Upper Circle and the Stalls were upholstered in red plush, but the Gallery patrons sat on wooden benches, and were known as the "gods" - whether by tradition, or by reason of their proximity to heaven, I don't know. [Obviously he knew nothing about theatrical traditions!] The Manager used to greet the customers to the Circle and Stalls in the foyer, resplendent in crisp white shirt, bow tie and dinner jacket. The Gods used a different entrance and after paying their admission - about 4d or 6d - they received a metal token with a hole punched in it, which came hurtling down a chute beside the cashier ... Eventually, in the hard times of the 20's, audiences fell off, expenses grew, the proprietors found more and more difficulty in booking suitable acts, and the Opera House became a cinema. In the late 1930s the entire inside of this lovely old building was torn down, and it was refurbished. In 1940, it was completely gutted by fire.

So it can be seen that the history of this lovely old theatre was a sad one, and it was probably quite remarkable that the D'Oyly Carte ever went there at all. I recall well the burnt out shell, which remained into the late forties or early fifties. As a child on visits to Derry from my native Portrush, I was usually taken to lunch at a restaurant immediately opposite. The idea that real opera could formerly have been seen as close as Derry whereas at the (then) present time one had to travel to London to see it, was something that fired my imagination. How little did I realise how far this was from the real truth. It is interesting, too, to note that the two accounts differ as to whether it was the inside or outside of the theatre which was altered.

### 1882 Tour

The casts on this first of the D'Oyly Carte tours to Derry were as follows:

John Le Hay: Sir Joseph; General Stanley  
 Fred Billington: Captain Corcoran; Pirate King  
 Jack Leumane: Ralph; Frederic  
 Leonard Roche: Deadeye; Samuel  
 G.J. Lackner: Bosun; Sergeant of Police  
 C[hables] M. Blythe: Carpenter's Mate  
 Mr. Fitzaltamont, jr.: Tom Tucker  
 Louise Henschel: Josephine; Mabel  
 Beatrix Young: Hebe; Edith  
 Bessie Armytage: Buttercup; Ruth  
 Lottie Carlotta: Kate  
 Florence Harcourt: Isabel

John Le Hay and Fred Billington need no introduction, and their careers in the D'Oyly Carte are too extensive to summarise here. Of the lesser known performers, Jack Leumane was in the touring company from November 1881 to October 1882, playing Alexis (for less than a month), Ralph and Frederic. I know nothing else about him. Florence Harcourt toured from 1881 to 1884, playing Isabel for the whole of that time. During 1881 she also played Mrs. Partlett, and, in 1883-4, Saphir. Lottie Carlotta toured during 1880 and 1882, playing Kate in *The Pirates of Penzance* during the latter year. No part is indicated for her in 1880 by Rollins and Witts. Beatrix Young toured during 1881-82 as Constance, Hebe and Edith. From 1883 to 1886, she toured as Melissa, Iolanthe and Pitti-Sing (but not all these roles for the entire period). Bessie Armytage toured from 1879 to 1883 and again in 1885 in contralto roles, and also as Mrs. Partlett. Louise Henschel toured from 1881 to May 1882 as Mabel and Josephine. Leonard Roche toured from 1878 to 1886, not always in named roles, but often in such parts as the Bosun, the Sergeant of Police, Deadeye, Samuel and the Notary. G.J. Lackner toured from 1879 to August 1882, apparently alternating in the same roles as Roche (except Deadeye). Charles M. Blythe toured from 1879 to 1883 as the Carpenter's Mate only.

Drogheda was but mildly interested in the arrival of the Company, the only brief comment in the *Drogheda Conservative* was on Saturday 28 January 1882, and this was merely a notice that the company were due. It, however, recounted an incident from the previous week when the Company were at the Theatre Royal, Waterford. In the middle of the first act an alarm of fire was raised. But it proved to be a false alarm and the performance proceeded. The *Drogheda Argus* of 28 January printed an advertisement announcing the cast of *H.M.S. Pinafore* as John Le Hay, Fred Billington, Mr. [i.e. Jack] Leumane, Leonard Roche, George Lackner, Charles Blythe, Mr. Fitzaltamont jr., Bessie Armitage, "Beatrice" [= Beatrice] Young and Louise Henschel. The conductor was Ralph Horner, the Manager (for Mr. J.F. Warden) was Mr. Fred W. Warden. (J.F. Warden was the manager and proprietor of both the New Theatre Royal, Belfast, and the Opera House, Londonderry). *In the Sulks* was announced to precede each performance. No cast was announced for this companion piece, nor do any of the reviews mention a cast. According to George Low the scanty information available on its casting between 1880 and 1882 was: John Le Hay (to August 1881), John Wilkinson (August to December 1881), Florence Harcourt, Edgar Johnson (to April) and Edgar Manning (from April). [Low, in Low and Walters, "Curtain Raisers", p. 6]. On Saturday 4th February, the *Drogheda Argus* printed a brief review:

On Monday and Tuesday evenings, as announced, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company appeared in the Whitworth Hall. The house on each evening was crowded, and the entertainment was decidedly one of the best ever given here. On Monday evening the *Pinafore* [sic] was put on the stage in admirable style, every one of the characters being well sustained. On Tuesday evening the *Pirates of Penzance* was equally well put upon the boards. The house was crowded. The boarders of the Grammar School - which certainly under its present able management has made remarkable progress - were treated to a visit to the opera, and in the eagerness of boyhood were early on the scene, and boarded the gallery, like pirates, with a rush. They soon settled down in absorbed attention at the performance of the *Pirates of Penzance*.

We do not of course know, and probably never will, to what this mention of the Grammar School actually refers. The Whitworth Hall, which still stands, is a Victorian edifice described by an untitled Drogheda Tourist Trail Publication as "of little architectural merit". It was erected in 1865 by a local philanthropist, Benjamin Whitworth, as a cultural centre. For a long time it served as the town's ballroom, later as a cinema and theatre, but subsequently fell into repair and disuse. It has now been restored as an entertainment centre.

The *Dundalk Democrat* said nothing, but the *Dundalk Herald* of Saturday 28th January was considerably more enthusiastic than the Drogheda press at the prospect of the august Company visiting its town:

An entertainment superior to anything yet seen in Dundalk will take place in the Town Hall on the evenings of Wednesday and Thursday next - we allude to the intended performance of the D'Oyley [sic] Carte Opera Company. We have had English opera companies here before but the number of performances was limited, and so was their repertoire. A company of the eminence of D'Oyley Carte's has never previously visited the Irish provinces, and we cannot but think that we are indebted to their visit now, owing to the fact that nearly every theatre in the kingdom is occupied by Christmas Pantomime. The expense attending the moving about of such a company must be very large, and it will take the large hall to be crowded in every part to prevent the visit being a financial loss. The company will appear in the celebrated "Pinafore" on Wednesday evening, and in the "Pirates of Penzance" on the following night. The names of both operas have become "household words" even where not performed, owing to the popularity of Sullivan's music. [Although Dundalk had apparently never seen a Gilbert and Sullivan opera performed before, the music was familiar to them, presumably through the availability of scores and sheet music]. It should also be stated that no purer performances have ever been put on stage than the operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. They are full of quiet humour, and the satire is light and in no way hurtful. There are no ballet girls in them, nor no ballet dresses, or French dresses. The success of these operas depend entirely on their music and refined wit. There is nothing in them to offend the most fastidious, and those most opposed to theatrical performances have waived their dislike to witness operas in which the brightest gems of music and wit are incorporated. We hope Messrs Carte and Warden's provincial tour may be a success, their enterprise deserves it.

After its excellent piece of puff, the *Dundalk Herald* published no subsequent review of the performance. However, the *Dundalk Examiner* of Saturday 6th February wrote as follows:

This talented company appeared in the Exchange on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, in the comic operas "Her Majesty's Pinafore" [sic] and "the Pirates of Penzance" respectively. The Large Hall was filled on both nights, and the entertainment was excellent, the different characters being admirably represented. We were glad to recognise among the artistes a gentleman who is not altogether unknown in Dundalk. We allude to Mr. C.M. Blythe, who impersonated Bob Beckett, the carpenter's mate, in "H.M.S. Pinafore" in which character he sustained the reputation he earned when last in Dundalk with Mr. Walsham's Company, about eight or nine years ago, as an accomplished actor and powerful vocalist. The pieces were interspersed with humorous songs, which frequently elicited applause, and we may expect to hear the airs, which were lively and new, reverberating through the streets for some time to come.

After leaving Dundalk, the company gave a single performance at Omagh, but the only local paper which commented on it does not indicate which of the two operas was performed! However, if the pattern followed in Derry was applied here, *In the Sulks* should have accompanied *H.M.S. Pinafore* and not *The Pirates of Penzance*, so it was probably the former opera which was performed in Omagh. The critic of this paper, the *Tyrone Constitution*, was less than enchanted by the performance, his review appeared on Friday 10 February:

A very crowded house witnessed the performance of this company in the Royal Assembly Hall, Omagh, on Friday evening last and although to those who heard for the first time the clever compositions of Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan, the performance proved entertaining, it fell far short of the expectations entertained by the many present who had seen the same opera before. The vocal powers of some of the principal artistes were not at all calculated to shed lustre on the performance, and a very weak orchestra but faintly reproduced the orchestral beauties of the music. The opera also suffered a very serious condensation, so that the whole performance did not run for even two hours. [This is actually not an unreasonably short running time for H.M.S. Pinafore, so it may not have been condensed much, if at all]. To cut the evening's amusement still shorter the operetta *In the Sulks* which was announced to precede the performance proper, was omitted, the reason assigned being the non-arrival of the necessary scenery, this excuse was generally taken *cum grano salis*. Perhaps the public expected too much, but at any rate they are justified in complaining of the abbreviation of the opera, and the total omission of a part of the published programme.

Finally, on Saturday the Company reached the Opera House, Londonderry, where it played that night and part of the following week (i.e. Saturday, Monday and Tuesday, not quite as claimed by Rollins and Witts, who indicate three performances in the same week, i.e., presumably Monday to Wednesday). Poor old Omagh was evidently no more than a whistle-stop on the way to this main venue. The following Monday (6th February) the *Derry Journal* carried the headline "H.M.S. Pinafore at the Opera House" and continued:

On Saturday night, as previously announced, Mr. D'Oyly Carte's company performed *H.M.S. Pinafore* at the Opera House, Carlisle Road. The representation was on the whole highly gratifying, although it must at the same time be admitted that a marked drawback was manifest from the absence of a full orchestral accompaniment. The mere assistance of a piano or harmonium cannot be deemed sufficient aid in operatic performances. In other respects, the acting was praiseworthy. The audience recognised and welcomed old friends, such as Mr. Billington, who took with much competency the part of the Captain; and Miss Armytage, who gracefully

sustained the role of Buttercup. Miss Henschell, as Josephine, was decidedly clever and effective; and Mr. Le Hay, as the Admiral, showed he thoroughly understood and was able to faithfully represent the character. The minor parts were all creditably filled. The introductory piece *In the Sulks* was eminently amusing, and evoked continued laughter. Both pieces will be reproduced to-morrow (Tuesday) evening, and to-night (Monday) the *Pirates of Penzance* is to be put on the boards, when, as the drama is most enjoyable and in the hands of a generally capable troupe, a crowded house may be expected.

The comments about the "orchestra" are puzzling, as we must infer that a small band was present for the Omagh performance, but only a piano and harmonium could be provided in the much more salubrious surroundings of the Opera House in Derry. The critics of Drogheda and Dundalk, alas, were silent on this point. (Perhaps it was conditions such as these which later caused the Duke of Plaza Toro to remark on the necessity of travelling with a full band!) George Low, having seen a draft of this paper, commented:

It is not necessarily anomalous that a band could be drummed up in such a small place as Omagh but not in larger places. Maybe there was something like an amateur chamber orchestra in Omagh; maybe there were alternative attractions in Derry who had prior (or better-paid) claims on local musicians. Certainly the D'Oyly Carte touring companies relied totally on picking up local musicians in the early days; if they could get some, great - if not, then the conductor played the piano or harmonium.

The *Londonderry Sentinel* attended both the Saturday and Monday performances (on the latter day *The Pirates of Penzance* was performed), and its report on both operas appeared on Tuesday 7th, under the title "Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company":

The above company opened a short engagement at the Opera House on Saturday evening, with the nautical comedie *H.M.S. Pinafore*. The great popularity which this opera attained on its first appearance simultaneously in London and New York [sic] seems never to be on the wane, its simple plot, sparkling dialogues, and charming music, always making its reproduction most agreeable to the lovers of lyric drama, and so it was on Saturday night. Preceded by the operetta *In the Sulks*, in which the performers gave promise of good work, the "Pinafore" was hailed with delight by the audience, and throughout the representation was most satisfactory and pleasing. The caste was highly effective, and throughout all the parts were evenly balanced, there being no endeavour to give undue prominence to any role at the expense of the efficiency of the minor characters. We regret, however, that a better orchestral accompaniment was not provided, and this statement is to be taken without meaning any disparagement to the efficient musician who so ably presided at the piano and harmonium, and whose excellent leadership contributes in no small degree to the success of the opera. The principal characters who sing the solo and duet music were as perfect as could be desired, while the very popular and harmonious choruses were rendered with the finest effect. Captain Corcoran found a good interpretation in Mr. F. Billington, who, from his first appearance in the "Captain's Song" created a most favourable impression, his pleasing and resonant voice being distinctly heard in all parts of the building, and his faultless singing in the trio with Josephine and Sir Joseph Porter towards the close of the second act, being loudly applauded. Josephine (Miss Henschel) was a fair soprano, and was altogether a success. Little Buttercup was personated by Miss Bessie Armytage, a strong contralto, who made herself heard everywhere. [*I think this comment was meant to be complimentary!*] Sir Joseph Porter K.C.B., as performed by Mr. Le Hay, was rather light in physique and voice, but nevertheless a fair representation of the officious and self-important "first lord". Mr. Leumane, who performed the part of Ralph Rackstraw, is a pleasing tenor, and was quite at home in the part assigned him. Dick Deadeye [Leonard Roche] who might be described as a disabled seaman, whose crooked form and crooked opinions get him into difficulties with the crew is a good bass, and in the duet with the Captain makes the part effective. Altogether a better representation of the "Pinafore" musically or dramatically, could not be desired than that given by this company.

On last night (Monday) the curtain rose on, we believe, the largest audience ever gathered in the Opera House, which was crowded in every part, to witness the first representation in Derry of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Although not so brimful of sweet and pleasing airs as the "Pinafore" it yet contains several fine dramatic situations, and abounds with many good and telling choruses. As on the preceding evening, the parts were well selected, Mr. Billington making an imposing Pirate King, and being in good voice, was able to take in spirited style the several songs which fell to his lot. Miss Henschel, as Mabel, was most pleasing in appearance and capably sustained the role, her singing, we think, being better than on the previous evening. In the duet with Frederick [sic] and the song "Poor Wandering One" she was heard to great advantage, and heartily applauded. The part of Frederick received every justice from Mr. Le Hay, and General Stanley by Mr. Wilkinson, was a clever burlesque of the new class of Commanders, created by that wondrous process of military alchemy "Competitive Examination". The other parts were fairly sustained, Mr. Lackner in the Sergeant's Song, with chorus, bringing down the house repeatedly. As Ruth, the enunciation of Miss Bessie Armytage was clear and telling. The choruses were throughout well rendered, "Hail Poetry" being the best of the concerted pieces. *H.M.S. Pinafore* will be again repeated to-night when a large house is anticipated.

There is a distinct confusion as to who actually did play what that night; as given above, John Le Hay sang Frederic, and John Wilkinson, General Stanley. However, the *Londonderry Standard*, which only attended the Monday night, came to a different conclusion, as reported on the following day (Tuesday 7th):

The large and fashionable audience which crowded the Opera House last evening is a healthy sign of the development of a love of operatic music in the city, though it is to be regretted the character of the programme was scarcely commensurate with the requirements of what must be regarded as a fairly critical auditorium. The opera is one which, having a successful run in London and the larger provincial towns, was calculated - perhaps more from "the itching curiosity bred of praise" than a profound appreciation of the brilliancy of the libretto or the original nature of the music - to draw an interesting audience. Let it at once be pointed out that the idea of representing an operatic work minus an orchestra was not more absurd on the part of the management than it was discouraging, if not discourteous, to the hearers. The vamping of a piano, with an occasional "thrum" upon a harmonium, do not give anyone very exalted notions of the sublimity of Sullivan's popular melo-dramatic opera, and it was tedious, often painful, to detect the presence of the discordant element which, under a fully equipped orchestra, would have been minimised to a bagatelle. The piece requires little mounting; there are some telling situations, sprightly choruses; an occasional weird and wailing melody, and a strong dash of the ludicrous - so much so, indeed, that sometimes one is at a loss to know whither everything is tending. If there is nothing that is very striking in point of merit, there is equally little demanding wholesale condemnation. The costumes were rich and gorgeous, and the variegated hues of those of the General's daughters stood out in pleasing contrast to the rough uncouth-looking savagery of the formidable-looking pirates.

The drama opens on a bleak patch of seashore on the coast of Cornwall, the incidents in connection with which are fully relished by the audience. Mr. Le Hay, as Major-General Stanley, was simply inimitable, the vapid pomposity being equally as well conveyed as the turgid eloquence. The success of the character, however, depends more upon dramatic than musical effect. The "Pirate King" had a good exponent in Mr. Fred Billington, who possesses a rarely rich voice, which he used with tolerable power. The character of the pirate apprentice was to have been assumed by Mr. Leumane, the leading tenor; but in consequence of a severe cold, he was unable to appear, and his place was assumed by one of the chorus party, who, everything considered, acquitted himself tolerably well, though his voice is scarcely suited to the part. Of the ladies - and the galaxy presents all the requisites of attraction - Miss Louise Henschel

pleased us best, though it would not be a matter of very great difficulty to eclipse her by some of our local amateurs. The parting scene with her lover was the most effective piece of duet-singing in the number; but, even in that, it would not be difficult to point out discrepancies in time and tune. Miss Bessie Armytage, as Ruth, looked the part of a piratical maid of all work, though we were not enamoured of her voice, which seems to have lost much of its flexibility and sweetness. The most popular chorus was that by a *possé* of policemen, the tale of whose woes were recited in a rollicking piece of music, which certainly had the attraction of being absurdly amusing; and one could detect in the plaintive refrain the deep bass voice of Mr. George Lackner, whom opera-goers will recognise as a former member of Walsham's company.

It is to be regretted, as already hinted, that the absence of a full band detracted from the enjoyableness of the performance, and we trust that, on the occasion of future visits of this or other opera companies, that complete equipment will take the place of piecemeal representation.

The most reasonable explanation I can offer of the anomaly is that John Le Hay, who probably had a higher voice than Wilkinson (who was in the chorus and the cast of *In the Sulks*) took over Frederic, leaving the Major-General to Wilkinson. There was probably an announcement to this effect, which one of the critics failed to hear properly, or remembered only to the effect that the tenor was indisposed. Referring to his programme he assumed that Le Hay was playing his proper role, and that Frederic was an understudy. Yet there is evidence that in 1881 both Wilkinson and Le Hay had played both Ralph and Sir Joseph in *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

The last Derry paper, the *Derry Journal*, attended the final performance, that of *H.M.S. Pinafore* on Tuesday, its report appearing on Wednesday February 8th. Unfortunately, it gives no indication as to whether Leumane had recovered and was able to play Ralph:

Last evening this company concluded a brief engagement in the sprightly nautical opera, *H.M.S. Pinafore* which everywhere seemed to maintain the great popularity which marked its first season. This opera was given in Derry some time ago, but on this, its second introduction here - a fact that speaks for the merit of the performances - it has been received with greater acceptance. The company has been carefully selected. The leader has managed to secure a good deal of quality as well in the vocal powers of the artistes as in the dramatic excellence they display. The solos are well sung, and in the concerted parts the effect is very harmonious. The mounting of the piece is attractive, and on the whole *Pinafore* need not have a much better representation. On Monday night *The Pirates of Penzance* (first time in Derry) brought out one of the largest and most select audiences yet seen in the Opera House, many having to be content with standing room in the passages leading to the dress circle. The performance was excellent, as the applause of the assemblage frequently attested. It is a matter of regret that the Company's stay has been so short. With the verdict of the citizens so strongly marked in their favour they might well have ventured on a run of a week, did other engagements permit it. At all events they leave behind impressions very creditable to their characters as public entertainers, and it is gratifying their merits have been rewarded by so warm a support.

I am unable to trace any previous visit by the D'Oyly Carte to Derry as stated by the critic above, but *H.M.S. Pinafore* had previously been given by the Company in Belfast, so perhaps the critic was confused.

### 1883 Tour

As previously mentioned, this tour gave two performances only of *Patience* on Monday and Tuesday, 1 and 2 January at the Derry Opera House, and supposedly visited nowhere else in the area. However, I have ascertained that en route from Cork where they had played prior to Christmas 1882, they called at Dundalk on Wednesday 27th, Armagh on 28th, Enniskillen on 29th and Omagh on 30th December. There were no proper reviews from these visits, but the *Dundalk Examiner* noted that the piece had been produced:

before a crowded and fashionable audience. In the performance of the piece much more musical and histrionic talent combined was displayed by Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Company than is usual in artistes travelling in the provinces ...

Previously it had announced that the performance would commence at 8.00, carriages at the remarkably precise time of 10.16. The *Impartial Reporter* (Enniskillen) printed the following week a parody on the Heavy Dragoon song, using the names of local and topical politicians and dignitaries, no doubt highly entertaining at the time, but quite meaningless now.

I have found two press reports of the first night in Derry, the *Londonderry Sentinel* reported the following day, the *Derry Journal* on the 3rd. The *Londonderry Standard* did not report on the visit.

Last night a crowded house in every part bespoke the firm hold which this light and pleasing opera still keeps in the popular estimation. Long before the curtain rose the spacious building was completely filled, visitors from Strabane and many parts of the surrounding counties being observed in the house. Of an opera, the libretto and music of which are well known "all round the world", it is needless to say anything in its favour. The clever hitting and the pointed satire of the aesthetic craze which for some time reigned dominant in fashionable circles, the light and catching airs with which the piece abounds, seem never to tire or weary, and always strike freshly on the ear. The company which performed last night is carefully selected and well balanced. The orchestra, although not strong in point of numbers, plays pleasingly and harmoniously. The scenery is complete, and the dresses are a wondrous combination of "aesthetic" colours. The choruses were all carefully given, and the various solos and part songs capitally rendered. The *Patience* of Miss Marion Grahame was a good piece of acting throughout. Both in her amusement at the love making of Bunthorne, and her re-meeting with Grosvenor, this young actress was equally agreeable. The several songs which fell to her lot were finely rendered, the best being perhaps the madrigal "Prithee pretty maiden" and the ballad "Love is a plaintive song", in both of which she was loudly encored. Mr. Richard Purdon was successful in his delineation of the fleshly poet Reginald Bunthorne, and in a part which is often over-acted played carefully, and with much discernment. In the duet with Lady Jane "Hey to you" he scored heavily in public estimation, and was loudly applauded [sic]. The idyllic [sic] poet Grosvenor, found a good exponent in the person of Mr. Allen Morris, the principal song which fell to his lot, "The Magnet and the Churn", being well sung, while in the duet with Bunthorne, "Conceive me if you can" he earned the applause bestowed on him. As Lady Jane, a most exacting part, Miss Madge Inglis was most happy in its delineation, the ditty of "Silvered is the raven hair" being pleasantly sung, while the duet with Bunthorne fairly brought down the house. The remaining parts of the Duke of Mr. Lucas, the Colonel of Mr. Federici [Federici], and the Major of Mr. Clowes, were admirably enacted, these three representatives of tyros in Aestheticism fairly convulsing the house with their attitudinising in the well-known trio. The three principal love-sick damozels, Ladies Angela, Saphir and Ella, were capitally given by the Misses De Lacy, Cobbe and Dysart. Mr. T. Silver made a good conductor, and altogether the representation worked as a success. The piece will be again performed tonight. (*Londonderry Sentinel*)

On Monday evening ... [*Patience*] ... was presented in Derry for the first time, and with a rare measure of success. The house was crowded in every part, and the performance was praiseworthy throughout. The opera is well described by a high authority in such matters [*who?*] as "a piece full of pungent humour, sweet allusions, grotesque rhymes, and playful ridicule of the aesthetic school,

whilst throughout there is the reflection of literary culture with the absence of anything approaching coarseness or vulgarity". The main idea is said to derive from Mr. Gilbert's Bab Ballads, rival poets being substituted for rival curates. The libretto is a cleverly woven satire on aestheticism viewed in the craze aspect. There is a rich vein of humour underlying the whole, and the piece sparkles with witticisms and palpable hits. The music has all the lightness and pleasing movements which Mr. Sullivan can so gracefully impart. On all grounds the extraordinary run of the Opera on the Metropolitan Stage was well deserved, and the favourable impression made in this city on Monday evening by Mr. D'Oyly Carte's company is open to the same remark.

Miss Marion Grahame is a good Patience and admirably interprets the bright, riant [sic] character, who is placed in so taking a manner, in contrast with the severer modes of the aesthetic maidens. The "Reginald Bunthorne" of Mr. Richard Purdon was clever, and had the merit of not being overdone. With Miss Inglis ("Lady Jane") in the duet "Hey to you" he caught the approval of the audience in all parts of the house and both artists were warmly applauded. Mr. Allen Morris, who has a very pleasing baritone voice, succeeded greatly in singing and acting. Mr. Lucas "The Duke", Mr. Frederici "The Colonel" and Mr. Clowes "The Major" well sustained their parts, as did also the Misses de Lacy, Cobbe and Dysart, as the principal love-sick maidens. The leading artists were encored, and the choruses, some of which went delightfully, were favoured with a similar mark of approbation. The orchestra was effective. Mr. T. Silver filled the position of conductor with credit and capacity. It only remains to say that the piece is splendidly mounted. The performance was again repeated last night to a full house, the thronged attendance being an evidence of what we have often observed, that the people of Derry and district will always accord warm patronage to an entertainment worthy of it. (*Derry Journal*)

The full cast for the tour was as follows: F. Federici (Colonel), Edward Clowes (Major), Harvey Lucas (Duke), Richard Purdon (Bunthorne), Allen Morris (Grosvenor), W.T. Wright (Solicitor), Marion Grahame (Patience), Madge Inglis (Jane), Marie de Lacy (Angela), Charlotte Cobbe (Saphir), Florence Dysart (Ella). Little seems to be known about Richard Purdon who toured as Bunthorne from December 1881 to February 1883. He played nothing else for D'Oyly Carte. Allen Morris was a long timer with the company, from 1882 to 1923. He spent a considerable time in the chorus, but also played a number of baritone parts, including Grosvenor and The Mikado. Harvey Lucas toured from 1882 to 1890, mainly in the chorus, though from 1882 to 1884 he was the Duke in *Patience*. In 1885 he took over Nanki-Poo for a month, and in 1890 was Annibale. Edward Clowes toured from 1879 to 1893 in baritone roles. From 1879 to 1880 he appeared only in *In the Sulks*, in 1881 he was Major Murgatroyd and General Stanley, continuing in the former role till 1885 in which year he also played Pooh-Bah. He continued to play Pooh-Bah until 1891, as well as (intermittently) Sir Despard, Shadbolt and Giuseppe. In 1892 he played Shadbolt and Don Alhambra, and in 1893 toured in *Haddon Hall*. Marion Grahame toured in 1881 as Constance and Hebe, and later as Aline and Josephine. From December 1881, through 1882 and 1883 she played Patience, and in 1884, Phyllis. She then left the company. Madge Inglis toured in 1883 as Jane, in 1884 as Lady Blanche and Jane, and in 1885 as Mrs. Partlett, Lady Sangazure, Lady Blanche and Buttercup. This appearance at Derry was her debut with the company. Charlotte Cobbe's only appearances with the company were as Saphir from October 1882 to December 1883. Marie de Lacy played Angela intermittently through 1883, and more regularly through 1884. During August 1885 she stood in as Lady Blanche. Florence Dysart toured as Ella from December 1881 to March 1883 and from February to September 1884 as Princess Ida. She was then transferred to the Savoy where she played the Plaintiff in *Trial by Jury* during 1884-5. She did not play again with the D'Oyly Carte, but appeared on the London stage in revivals of *Dorothy* and in such operas as *Morocco Bound* and *My Girl*.

### 1885 Tour

This was the most entended tour which the D'Oyly Carte ever attempted in Northern Ireland, but it was probably not a financial success, as the company never repeated the experiment. The casts, as given by Rollins and Witts, were as follows:

Albert Christian: Calverley; Strephon  
 F. Landor Scates: Major Murgatroyd  
 J. Duncan Young: Duke; Tolloller  
 Albert James: Bunthorne; Lord Chancellor  
 Robert Fairbanks: Grosvenor; Mountararat  
 Ferdinand Thielor: Private Willis  
 Jesse Smith: Solicitor  
 Millie Vere: Angela; Iolanthe  
 Kate Kavanagh: Saphir  
 Lucy Carr-Shaw: Ella; Celia  
 Edith Blair: Jane  
 Bessie Wilkinson: Patience; Phyllis  
 Freda Bevan: Leila  
 Helen Kinnaird: Queen of the Fairies

Albert Christian toured with the company from 1883-1885, playing Colonel Calverley in the first of these years; in 1884, he also played Strephon. In 1885 he played Calverley, Pooh-Bah and Strephon from January to May, and from September to December, the roles of Deadeye, Sergeant of Police, Grosvenor and Dr. Daly. A curious assortment of parts; so much for the supposed rigidity of D'Oyly Carte casting! F. Landor Scates toured from 1883 to 1886, in the first and last of these years he seems to have been a chorister. During 1884 and 1885 he played Major Murgatroyd, and also understudied the Lord Chancellor, playing this role in July 1884 and May 1885. J. Duncan Young toured from 1881 to 1885, partly in the chorus, but also playing Tolloller and the Duke of Dunstable for parts of those years. Albert James toured intermittently from 1881 to 1902 in various patter-baritone roles. He was also Stage Manager till 1909, including the London Repertory Seasons of 1906 to 1909. Robert Fairbanks toured from 1883 to 1887, singing in the chorus during his first year, in 1884 and 1885 playing Grosvenor and Mountararat, in 1886 and 1887 as the Mikado. He reappeared in 1903, touring as the Bosun, the Mikado, the Lieutenant of the Tower and Giuseppe. Ferdinand Thielor toured from 1882 to 1887, playing Grosvenor in September 1882, Private Willis in 1884 and 1885, and Go-To in 1886 and 1887. Jesse Smith toured during 1884-5 as chorus and Solicitor, except during September to December 1885 when he played Usher, Notary and Bosun.

Millie Vere toured from 1879 to 1881 and from 1883-7, in her first two years playing Hebe. In 1881 she played Kate and Edith, in 1883 Iolanthe and Leila, in 1884 and 1885 Iolanthe and Angela, and in 1885-7 Katisha. Kate Kavanagh toured widely from 1883 to 1899, firstly in the minor soprano roles, and later in the leading soubrette and contralto roles. Lucy Carr-Shaw toured during 1884 to March 1885 as Celia and Ella, and from March to December 1885 as Aline, Princess Ida and Josephine. Edith Blair and Helen Kinnaird both toured during 1884 and 1885, apparently alternating in the roles of Lady Jane and the Queen of the Fairies. However, contra the claims of Rollins &

Witts, it appears from the press reviews quoted below, Helen Kinnaird was playing both roles on this tour. Bessie Wilkinson toured during 1884 and 1885 as *Patience* and *Phyllis*, and during 1886 and 1887 as *Yum-Yum*. Freda Bevan toured from 1882-5; in 1882 as *Kate (Pirates)*, in 1883 as *Kate* and *Celia*, in 1884 and 1885 as *Leila* (playing the Queen of the Fairies during May 1885).

On the opening of this tour in Drogheda, the press were even more disinterested than they had been in 1882. Neither the *Drogheda Conservative* nor the *Drogheda Argus* mentioned the visit at all. *The Dundalk Democrat*, which had not mentioned the 1882 visit, carried a brief note on Saturday 31 January, merely noting that *Iolanthe* would be performed the following Wednesday, and *Patience* on Thursday. The *Dundalk Examiner* reported briefly on Saturday 31 January that the D'Oyly Carte company would visit Dundalk on the following Wednesday and produce *Patience* and a "new opera", remarking that it was "upwards of two years" (ie. 1883) since the Company had last visited Dundalk and produced *Patience* for the first time. It published no review of the performance. Even more brief was the *Dundalk Herald* which, on Saturday 7th February, said simply that:

The D'Oyly [sic] Carte Opera Company performed *Iolanthe* and *Patience* to good houses on the evenings of Wednesday and Thursday ...

The next stop was Armagh, where the *Armagh Standard* announced on Friday 6th February, that the D'Oyly Carte would appear at the Tontine Rooms that night in *Iolanthe*, and on Saturday 7th in *Patience*. The following week, (Friday 13th February), in a splendid "gossip column" one of *Armagh Standard's* reporters, one "Spaeman", who seems to have been the contributor of a regular feature called "Armagh echoes", told his readers exactly what he thought of the event:

"Spaeman" invested two bob [i.e. 10p] in going to see *Iolanthe* on Friday night, and was greatly pleased with it. The performance was "up to the knocker" in every respect, and "Spaeman" thinks that no person could condemn it from end to end as regards the acting. He thinks, however, that the singing was pitched rather too high for the size of the room. Most of the local celebrities were present. Colonel Crusher in his rather horsey suit, gave vent to his displeasure at not being able to pick up the choruses, and "Spaeman" would advise him next time D'Oyly Carte comes to town to invest a bob *moore* and take a "masher" ticket, and so hear everything. *Patience* was equally well performed, and "Spaeman" hopes Mr. D'Oyly Carte realised enough to insure his sending at some future time one of his companies to give the Armagh people value for their money.

We shall probably never know the point of the various "in" jokes made by "Spaeman" in this column. (It should be noted that many modern reviews contain oblique references which will probably be equally obscure in years to come). A more sensible review appeared in the *Ulster Gazette* on Saturday 14 February:

Last Friday and Saturday evenings, Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company gave two performances at the Tontine Rooms. The comic opera *Iolanthe* was produced on Friday evening, and in spite of the severe inclemency of the weather, the Hall was filled by a large and fashionable audience. The title role was sung by Miss Millie Vere and it would not have been possible to place the part in better hands. Miss Helen Kinnaird, was a charming Fairy Queen; her handsome presence and clever acting established her as a general favourite with the audience. Mr. Albert Christian, was quite at home in the part of Strephon, which gave him an opportunity of displaying the fine baritone voice, of which he is the possessor.

As the Lord Chancellor, Mr. Albert James showed much quaint humour, and sang his difficult songs remarkably well. Lord Solloler [sic] was admirably played by Mr. Duncan Young, a promising young tenor, whose voice would be more pleasing without that soupcon of throatiness which was apparent. More than a word of praise is due to Mr. F. Thieler, as Private Willis. We have never heard the Sentry's Song sung with better effect.

The performance of the aesthetic Opera *Patience* on Saturday night, was as good a representation of the opera as we have seen by any of Mr. Carte's larger companies, [*Does this mean that larger D'Oyly Carte companies had visited Armagh or that the critic had seen such companies elsewhere?*] and it was rather improved by the free manner in which the artists acted. Mr. Albert James as Bunthorne, was on the whole, very good, but rather too animated. Miss Bessie Wilkinson's musical soprano voice was heard to advantage in the title role of the milkmaid, and when she has overcome the difficulty of vocalisation in the florid passages of her first song, we will have no fault to find with her *Patience*. Her acting was all that could be desired. The "not pretty" Lady Jane was acted by Miss Kinnaird. We scarcely think this lady looked the part. Mr. R. Fairbanks was a graceful Grosvenor and showed much ability in his acting and singing. The onerous duties of conductor were ably performed by Mr. W. Robinson, to whose careful training is due the perfection which characterised the choruses throughout.

The *Armagh Guardian* said nothing. The company's venue in Armagh, the Tontine Rooms, were demolished only in 1908 but no photograph or drawing of them is known to exist. They were built in 1794: the building was said to consist of Tea, Card and Coffee Rooms of elegant design". William Stuart (*Memoirs of Armagh*, 1819, p. 544) described the Tontine building as "a spacious and handsome building situate in English Street". It contained a large ballroom, a "News Room" (presumably a reading room), which was well supported by subscribers. At this time there was no theatre in Armagh, but players often visited the town and performed where they could, being given every encouragement and support.

From Armagh the Company proceeded to Enniskillen, where neither the *Fermanagh Mail* nor the *Fermanagh Times*, both Enniskillen papers, made any mention of the visit. The *Impartial Reporter* reported on the 5th February (Thursday):

On Monday and Tuesday night one of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's travelling companies, numbering 35, will present *Iolanthe* and *Patience* in Enniskillen Townhall. The charming music of these comic operas is well known and the humour of the words is sustained throughout. Mr. Carte's last company we had here gave a very enjoyable representation [ie. in 1883]; and we are satisfied Monday and Tuesday nights will prove no exception to the reputation of the companies. Prices are lower on this occasion. Tickets can be secured and plan seen at the Reporter Office.

It continued:

#### *Madame Rose Hersee*

On this evening Karl Winter's Company will appear in the Townhall. Such a musical treat has seldom been offered the Enniskillen public. No one ever dreamed of hearing Rose Hersee on our local boards. She has gained a reputation that has the world for its bounds. Her laurels have been won at Italian opera, English opera, Her Majesty's concerts, and the Philharmonic Society's concerts, and she is one of the finest singers of the age. Want of space alone prevents us giving a sketch of this distinguished artiste. It is the greatest good fortune to hear this lady and the others who will accompany her tonight.

Rose Hersee was a brilliant vocalist, the daughter of the well-known singing teacher and music critic, Henry Hersee. Madame Hersee studied with her father, with Garcia, Arditti and Madame Rudersdorff, and made her debut at the age of eleven as a mermaid in Weber's *Oberon*. Her daughter, Miss Howell-Hersee, at the age of seventeen, sang Phylla on the first night of *Utopia Ltd*, owing to the indisposition of Florence Easton. No doubt, to hear Madame Hersee singing in Enniskillen was a bit like hearing Pavarotti in a village hall in Stornoway. After the performance, the *Impartial Reporter*, on Thursday 12th February, noted:

One of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's opera companies played *Iolanthe* on Monday and *Patience* on Tuesday, evening, in the Townhall, Enniskillen, to flowing houses. As might be expected the stage arrangements and the setting of the operas were as good as the limited space at the disposal of the company would allow. The public do not look for fine singing in comic operas. The music or the words seldom admit of it, [sic] and the acting of the performance is often of more consequence than the voice. With this exception, the performances were excellent. Mr. James was capital both as the Lord Chancellor and Bunthorne, and was the best actor of the Company. He elicited loud applause. Miss Alice Barnett can no longer claim Lady Jane's part as peculiarly her own. [*The casualness of this statement implies that the writer assumes his readers will know who Miss Barnett was. She had, in fact, toured in this role in Ireland, to Belfast, Dublin, Waterford, Limerick and Cork, but not, as far as I am aware, to Enniskillen.*] Miss Kinnaird was exceptionally good in this representation and also of the Fairy Queen. Mr. Christian made a good Strephon and a better Colonel; [*Both "Richard Temple" parts, but what singer combines these roles today?*] Archd. Grosvenor and Private Willis had excellent representatives, and the other ladies and gentlemen acquitted themselves admirably. Notwithstanding the numerous claims on the play-going community lately, [*Interesting, but who has the time or interest to research this point?*] the hall was packed on both nights. Another company may shortly be expected, we understand, with *Princess Ida* and *The Sorcerer*. [*I have no evidence of this company ever arriving. George Low thinks the Company would probably have been the "A" company.*] These will be some relief from the Radicalism of *Pinafore*, the Stronger Radicalism of *The Pirates of Penzance* and the double-distilled Radicalism of *Iolanthe*.

The performances took place in the old Town Hall, which was built between 1807 and 1812. It was demolished in the 1890s to make way for the present building, the foundation stone of which was laid in May 1898. Photographs exist of the old Town Hall, but I have not seen them, probably there are none of the room in which the Company played.

The Company then moved on to Omagh, where the *Tyrone Constitution* had reported, on Friday 6 February:

*Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company*

It will be seen by advertisement that this talented Company will perform at the Royal Assembly Hall, Omagh, on Wednesday and Thursday next. On the first evening will be given the fairy opera *Iolanthe* and on Thursday evening the celebrated aesthetic opera *Patience*. To those who had the pleasure of hearing *Patience* the last time this company visited Omagh, [ie. 1883] it will be unnecessary to say one word in commendation. It is very seldom that residents of Omagh and neighbourhood have the opportunity of enjoying so much a treat as will be afforded on Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

A week later, on Friday 13th, the same paper reported:

The Fairy Opera *Iolanthe* produced on Wednesday night in the Royal Assembly Hall, was, as might be expected from the name, a scene of enchantment. The spectacular effect was very fine, and the singing and acting good. All the performers acquitted themselves admirably, but the palm must be given to the Lord Chancellor. The audience were highly pleased, and thought the time all too short, though fully two hours were occupied. As we go to press *Patience* is being given by the same company, and we have no doubt will be equally enjoyed by those present.

Four days were spent in Derry, and the press were pleased by what they saw. *Iolanthe* was given on Friday 13th and Saturday 14th February, *Patience* on Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th. The Derry Opera House proudly announced:

Doors open 7.30, commence at 8.00. Carriages at 10.20. Prices: Balcony stalls 4s, Upper Circle 2s, Pit 1s, Gallery 6d. Boxes (6) 24s, Boxes (4) 16s. Children under 12, 2s, 1s, 6d. No half-price to Gallery. Balcony Stalls and Private Boxes can be secured daily from 10 till 3, at Box Office, under the direction of Mr. Sadleir, Business Manager.

The *Londonderry Sentinel* of Saturday 14th:

A crowded house last night attested to the great popularity of Messrs Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera among all classes of the musical community, every seat, with the exception of some rows in the stalls, doubtless emptied by a counter attraction in the Boating Club, being occupied by lovers of music, anxious to witness the production, we believe for the first time in Derry, of the fairy opera of *Iolanthe* by one of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's companies. If applause, often bestowed, is to be taken as the measure of success, the company are to be congratulated on the favourable impression which they created, the applause being warm and the welcome hearty. The selection of the Company has been judicious, an effort seemingly having been made to fill each part with capable artists, and to abolish the too prevalent practice of sacrificing the lesser luminaries, so that a few of the greater operatic "stars" may shine with increased brilliancy. The opera was capitally enacted. The orchestra was stronger and better than we are accustomed to hear. The costumes were taking and effective. The choruses were fairly and evenly sung, and above all the members of the company tried to do their best, so that all went smoothly and pleasantly. We are unable, owing to the exigencies of space, to note the programme in detail, but indeed that is scarcely necessary.

The *Londonderry Standard* of 16th February:

Messrs Gilbert and Sullivan's fairy opera *Iolanthe*, or *The Peer and the Peri* received two representations in the Derry Opera House by Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company, and on each evening the house was well filled. Being one of the newest and most popular specimens of comic opera, *Iolanthe* is always received with great favour by the lovers of the lyric drama, especially when presented by an efficient orchestra and company of artistes as was the case on Friday and Saturday evenings. The cast was most judicious and effective, each artiste being *au fait* in his or her own part, and the orchestra was equally well selected. The warmest applause of the audience, given when opportunity occurred, testified to the delight with which the opera was heard. We have no doubt it will be regretted by many that *Iolanthe* has been withdrawn so soon, but the short engagement, in which two operas have been arranged for, could not be prolonged. *Patience* which is to be put upon the boards this evening, though not for the first time in Derry, will be invested with great interest by the very competent company now at the Opera House, and we have reason to believe will be as well received and enjoyed as was to [sic] its predecessor. Tickets may be had at the Box Office of the Opera House during the day.

There was no review of *Patience* in this paper.

The *Derry Journal* of Monday 16th February:

On Friday evening, Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company, commenced a four nights engagement in the Opera House, Derry. The announcement that this talented company were to occupy the boards, was sufficient to induce the lovers of music to pay a visit to the theatre, and the house was well-filled in every part. The piece selected for the first night was Gilbert and Sullivan's fairy opera *Iolanthe* or "The Peer and the Peri", which has had such a successful run in the English metropolis and the provinces. The plot of the piece is too well known to need any mention here. The company is an exceedingly strong one and the cast is most judicious. The music is excellent, some of the airs being particularly striking. The choruses especially went well. Miss Bessie Wilkinson made a charming Phyllis, her acting and singing being admirable. The same may also be said of Miss Helen Kinnaird, who took the part of the Queen of the Fairies. The part of Strephon found a capable exponent in Mr. Albert Christian, whose singing and acting merited the plaudits which were given by the audience. The part of the Lord Chancellor was filled by Mr. Albert James. This gentleman is a comedian of great ability, and his delineation of this character kept the house in good humour throughout the representation. His



singing of the song "Said I to myself said I" was vociferously encored. The parts of The Earl of Mountararat and the Earl of Tolloller were filled by Mr. Robert Fairbanks and Mr. J. Duncan Young, respectively, both of whom proved themselves to be careful actors and accomplished vocalists. The other artistes acquitted themselves very creditably. The scenery and dresses were very good, and the representation was most successful. On Saturday night, *Iolanthe* was again produced before a very large house.

The *Londonderry Sentinel* of Tuesday 17th February:

It is to be regretted that the present engagement of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company terminates tonight. It has been one of the greatest success. The performance of *Iolanthe* on Friday and Saturday night, and of *Patience* last evening, gave the utmost pleasure to crowded houses. The company is not particularly strong, but its inferiority can be judged rather by comparison with other *Patience* companies than by the detection of any shortcomings of its own. Its members are entirely new in the North of Ireland, with the exception of Mr. Albert Christian of Dublin, whose singing in Belfast a couple of years ago was greatly admired. Mr. Albert James, as Bunthorne, had a somewhat difficult part, his predecessor in Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Irish Company [Richard Purdon] having given the character much study. Mr. James is too demonstrative for the requirements of the part. Miss Helen Kinnaird made an imposing and thoroughly successful Lady Jane, and Mr. Robert Fairbanks, in appearance, acting and singing, filled with acceptance the part of Grosvenor. Miss Bessie Wilkinson, who appeared to such charming advantage as the Shepherdess in *Iolanthe* sang correctly and acted with taste as the Dairy Maid. *Patience* will be repeated this evening.

The *Derry Journal* returned to see the other opera, and reported on it on Wednesday 18th February, though it may be noted that the paper devoted ten times as much space to an amateur musical entertainment in Ballyshannon! It gave a full cast for the performance, presumably taken from the programme, this gives a couple of differences from the cast as given by Rollins and Witts:

On Monday evening and again last night ... There was a good house on both occasions.

Bunthorne	Albert James
Grosvenor	Robert Fairbanks
Solicitor	W.C. Mayo [ <i>not in Rollins &amp; Witts</i> ]
Colonel	Albert Christian
Major	F. Landor Scates
Duke	J. Duncan Young
Angela	Millie Vere
Saphir	Freda Bevan [ <i>Kate Kavanagh fide Rollins &amp; Witts</i> ]
Ella	Lucy Carr-Shaw
Jane	Helen Kinnaird [ <i>Edith Blair fide Rollins &amp; Witts</i> ]
Patience	Bessie Wilkinson

Albert James as Bunthorne was the life of the piece. The character is an exceedingly difficult one, and requires very skilful treatment. Mr. James, however, is an actor of no mean order, and in this part he certainly made a hit. Bunthorne is essentially a part which depends for its success in a greater measure than other characters on the deportment of the actor, and in some hands it might be marred in this respect. Mr. James knows how far to go, and he goes no farther. Without being too demonstrative he manages to present to the audience a true representation of the character so successfully drawn by the author. Miss Bessie Wilkinson as Patience acted with a naturalness that was really charming. This young lady has already shown herself to be possessed of considerable histrionic ability, and with care she promises to occupy a high position in the profession which she has selected. [*But it was not to be!*] Mr. Fairbanks as Archibald Grosvenor acted with great deal of cleverness. Miss Helen Kinnaird acquitted herself very creditably, as did all the artists who took part in the performance. The singing all round was very good; the choruses being well balanced. The dresses and scenery were good, and the production of the piece very successful. It should be added that Mr. W. Robinson, R.A.M., acted as musical conductor.

There is no mention of W.C. Mayo in Rollins and Witts, and I know nothing of him. Presumably he was a chorister.

The following week, the company made their one and only visit to Larne, where the *Larne Reporter* of Saturday 7th March, commented:

We have pleasure in announcing that the performances of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's celebrated London Opera Company have been given with immense success in many towns in Ireland during their brief tour in this country, and that the same unqualified success has followed them wherever they have gone throughout Scotland. In Paisley, their visit was hailed with delight, and crowded houses were gratified for seven successive evenings. The next towns to be visited are Montrose and Fraserburg, where preparations have been made to accord a right cordial welcome to the company. Those who had the opportunity of being present in the McGarel Hall, Larne, on 23rd and 24th ult, will easily understand why Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Operatic pieces, *Iolanthe* and *Patience*, have commanded universal approbation wherever they have been produced. There is real talent, and artistic skill and power, latent in each member of the company, and their respective roles are taken with an easy grace which ought to be the envy of less fortunate rivals. The charming representations given by Miss Millie Vere, Miss Louise Carr-Shaw, Miss Freda Bevan, and Miss Bessie Wilkinson, in the opera *Iolanthe* on Monday evening, have never been surpassed, and the admirable perfection attained by these ladies was even more happily illustrated in the parts sustained by them in the aesthetic opera *Patience* as given on Tuesday evening. The only regrettable circumstance was in the inability of Mrs. Helen Kinnaird [sic] owing to indisposition, to assume her characteristic role as Queen of the Fairies in *Iolanthe* and Lady Jane in *Patience* [but maddeningly, it does not say who played the roles in her place, presumably it was Edith Blair].

Mr. Albert James, Mr. Albert Christian, Mr. J. Duncan Young, and Mr. Ferdinand Thiel, deserve special recommendation for their clever representation and excellent vocalism in the several parts entrusted to their care. The successes achieved in Larne in the course of this visit must be qualified by the strain put upon the company to give adequate representations on a stage much too limited in scope for the exhibition of comic effects, and the highest praise is therefore due to the entire company for the admirable manner in which their duties were discharged. Owing to local reasons and the sad intervention of uncontrollable circumstances, many of the gentry in Larne and vicinity were unable to be present in the hall on either occasion, and to this may be attributed the paucity of the attendance in the reserved seats. The expenses attendant upon a tour in the Provinces of such a large and select company as that of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's, are so heavy that it must have been apparent there could be no inducement held out for the managers to repeat their visit to Larne. It is gratifying, however, to be informed that in Scotland the quality of the audiences have been such in every town that the enterprising proprietor has recouped the losses involved in favouring this town with a passing visit.

The McGarel Town Hall where the Company performed still stands on the corner of Cross Street and Main Street. It was built in 1869 at a cost of £6,000, the money provided by Charles McGarel. He owned an estate three miles from the town and a house in London. For this information I am grateful to Miss Jenny Brennan of Larne and District Historical Centre.

### 1889 Tour

#### Casts:

Tom Redmond: Lieutenant; Mikado  
 W.R. Shirley: Fairfax; Nanki Poo  
 Herbert Marchmont: Meryll; Pish Tush  
 J.H. Jupp: Leonard  
 Cairns James: Jack Point; KoKo  
 Cecil Barnard: Headsman  
 Edward Clowes: Shadbolt; Pooh-Bah  
 Jessie Moore: Elsie; Yum-Yum  
 Kate Forster: Dame Carruthers; Katisha  
 Adeline Vaudrey: Phoebe; Pitti-Sing  
 Rose Stewart: Kate; Peep-bo

Tom Redmond created the 1st Citizen, and played Shadbolt in the first revival of the opera in 1897. He toured from 1883 to 1907 in a variety of baritone and bass-baritone roles. W.R. Shirley had created Leonard Meryll. He toured between 1887 and 1890 in both patter and tenor roles. Herbert Marchmont understudied Pish-Tush in the original production of *The Mikado*. He toured from 1887 to 1904 in straight and supporting baritone parts. J.H. Jupp toured at least from 1884 to 1889 in the chorus, and occasionally played Leonard Meryll. Cairns James toured from 1887 to 1891 in comic baritone roles. He left the company to become a professor of speech-training. Cecil Barnard understudied the Duke of Plaza Toro in the original production at the Savoy. He toured in 1889 as the Headsman, with occasional performances as Point. Jessie Moore toured in soprano roles from 1889 to 1891 travelling with her husband, Cairns James. Kate Forster had begun in the chorus at the Savoy around the time of the first production of *Patience*, and probably as contralto understudy. She gave some performances as the Duchess in the original production of *The Gondoliers*. She toured from 1883 to 1902 firstly in soubrette and later in leading contralto roles. Rose Stewart played minor soprano roles from November 1889 to March 1890. Adeline Vaudrey joined in 1889, playing soubrette roles for her first two seasons. She then disappeared till 1896, reappearing in leading soprano roles. She continued till 1901, by which time she had returned to soubrette roles. She left in May 1902.

The last visit to Derry consisted of 4 days commencing Monday 16 December. The *Londonderry Sentinel* of Tuesday 17th:

It has been for many years a matter of comment that Mr. D'Oyly Carte never permits his name to appear in association with a second-rate, much less an inferior company. A large audience last evening had ample opportunity of proving the accuracy of the statement, for *The Yeomen of the Guard* was presented by a splendid company, supported by really magnificent scenic and excellent musical accessories. The company has been in full working order for a twelvemonth past, touring in the English and Irish provinces, and it is rather by a stroke of good fortune that Londonderry has secured a visit even for only four nights. The scenery which is of a character and extent that are rarely seen in the city, arrived during the week direct from the Savoy Theatre, the nursery of the famous operas of the princes of English opera - Mr. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan. The costumes are on a par in point of splendour with the other appointments, and when it is added that the company is upwards of forty strong, and that the voices bear evidence of the most careful selection, it will be seen that the treat is an exceptional one. *The Yeomen of the Guard* is a composition in which the genius of both composer and playwright are revealed. In it the melodies are as fresh and humorous as in the earlier operas, and the orchestration as fanciful and charming. Mr. Gilbert with his well-known felicity, deals in the work with the ribbeties of the English tongue in providing quaint rhythms and droll concerts for the comic characters, and for the serious personages there are speeches and verses which are in the highest degree poetical. There is also more than a suggestion of tragedy in the fate of the poor jester, Jack Point. The plot need not be recapitulated; [implying that the opera was well-known even if not previously seen on stage in Derry] its likeness in the main incident to *Don Caesar de Bazan* and *Maritana* is far from being a drawback, particularly when Elsie Maynard, the ballad singer, who weds Colonel Fairfax, is a young lady of the gracefulness and ability of Miss Jessie Moore, and when the gallant officer is the owner of so reliable a tenor as Mr. W.R. Shirley. This artiste was the original Leonard in the Savoy. As the jester, Mr. Cairns James realised a high degree of dramatic intensity. Miss Kate Forster was a very fascinating Dame Carruthers, and her contralto music was of the finest description. The baritones of Sir Richard Cholmondely (Mr. Thomas Redmond) and of Sergeant Meryll (Mr. Herbert Marchmont) were all that could be desired. The artistic groupings contributed much to the success of the piece. In the absence of space for a more lengthened reference to the performance we must be taken as expressing the hope that *The Yeomen of the Guard* will again be largely patronised tonight and *The Mikado* which is down for tomorrow and Thursday evenings, will also find a large amount of public favour.

The same paper noted briefly on Thursday 19th, that *The Mikado*:

was represented by Mr. D'Oyly Carte's excellent company on a scale of splendour which has been lamentably strange to Derry for a long time. The performance was even more successful than that of *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

On Wednesday 18th, the *Derry Standard* reported that:

The performances of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's company in the Opera House on the last two evenings in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Yeomen of the Guard* were witnessed by crowded houses, and the general opinion of those present was that seldom has Derry been visited by a company of so much merit. The artists number over forty, and the costumes and scenery and other appointments are of the choicest kind. All round the performers deserve praise, those specially worthy being -

The paper specified W.R. Shirley (Fairfax) Edward Clowes (Shadbolt) Cairns James (Point) T. Redmond (Lieutenant) Jessie Moore (Elsie), Adeline Vaudrey (Phoebe) Kate Forster (Dame) and Rose Ewart [= Stewart!] (Kate). It continued:

Tonight and tomorrow night we hope the production of *The Mikado* the celebrated Japanese opera, will be equally well favoured by the public. It is, if anything, more captivating than *The Yeomen of the Guard* and will be certain to delight all who attend...

There appeared to be no review of *The Mikado* in this paper.

The *Derry Journal* reported twice, firstly on *The Yeomen of the Guard* (review published Wednesday 18th December) and on *The Mikado* (review on Friday 20th December):

On Monday evening *The Yeomen of the Guard*, one of Gilbert and Sullivan's best comic operas, was produced with admirable effect in the Opera House. The enterprising proprietor of the company never allows an inferior combination of artistes to be associated with his name, and the admirable manner in which the company at present at the Opera House acquitted themselves on Monday night was a proof of the accuracy of that statement. The acting throughout was admirable, and both solos and choruses were charmingly rendered. *The Yeomen of the Guard* was admirably staged, the scenery and stage effects having been sent direct from the Savoy

Theatre, London, where the Opera has just been withdrawn after an unprecedentedly successful run. It is unnecessary to refer to the piece itself. The plot and libretto, as well as the music, are known by almost everybody, and are universally admired. The cast on Monday was a remarkably strong one, and from the rise to the fall of the curtain a crowded house was kept intensely interested or heartily amused by the admirable manner in which the piece was presented to them. The quaint rhymes, the clever sayings, and the touchy [sic] pathos of Mr. Gilbert were given in a manner that brought out the full force of their intrinsic merit, and the beautiful music to which they have been wedded by Sir Arthur Sullivan was rendered in a manner that left nothing to be desired. The best performances of the evening were undoubtedly those of Mr. Cairns James and Miss Jessie Moore as Jack Point and Elsie Maynard. Their singing was much and deservedly admired. The duet "I have a song to sing O" received a very warm encore, to which the artists gracefully responded. Mr. James acted throughout with much power. Mr. Shirley, as Colonel Fairfax, acquitted himself with great success, and his cultured tenor was heard to much advantage. This gentleman, it is worthy of mention, was the original Leonard at the Savoy. Miss Kate Forester [sic] as Dame Carruthers treated the audience to some beautiful contralto music. The baritones Sir Richard Cholmondeley [Thomas Redmond] and Sergeant Meryll [Herbert Marchmont] were also very effective.

It is rarely that so brilliant a Company occupies the boards in the Opera House as that which has been delighting overflowing houses during the past four nights. The only regret is that their stay in Derry was so short. On Wednesday and last evenings *The Mikado* was performed in a manner that left nothing to be desired. The solos and the choruses were admirably rendered, and the keen witticisms in which Mr. Gilbert's charming opera abounds were enhanced by the capable members of Mr. D'Oyly Carte's Company. The audiences each evening were enthusiastic in a manner rarely seen in Derry, and the opera fully merited the plaudits bestowed upon it. Nearly every solo was encored, and some of the items, notably Ko-Ko's songs "Tit Willow" and "The Flowers that bloom in the Spring" were encored last evening no less than four times. All of the artists acquitted themselves with the greatest possible credit, but it is only fair to say that Mr. Cairns James, as "Ko-Ko" was the life and soul of the performance. He was simply immitable, [sic] and if he always succeeds as well as he has done in Derry, there is a big future before him in comic opera. [*But there wasn't!*] The Nanki-Poo of Mr. W.R. Shirley was a capable performance, and Mr. Edward Clowes' personation of the oddities of Pooh-Bah, the mild oriental who holds such a plurality of official appointments, was one of the greatest mirth-provoking items of the piece. Miss Moore as Yum-Yum, Miss Vaudrey as Pitti-Sing and Miss Ewart as Peep-bo achieved success in their singing and acting. The two first mentioned were repeatedly and deservedly encored. Mr. Redmond's *Mikado* and Miss Forster's *Katisha* were also first-rate.

And on that note the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company left Londonderry. They never went back.