

THE ANNOTATED

# Mikado

*An Illustrated History of the Partnership of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan  
As Seen Through Their Masterwork Comic Opera*

by

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**Publisher's Note:** This digital publication of notes, anecdotes, contemporary illustrations and accounts of the day was scanned from an original, typed and manually designed manuscript consisting of researched annotations to the libretto of Gilbert and Sullivan's *THE MIKADO; or, The Town of Titipu*. Some typographical errors may be included, as final polishing and proofreading were incomplete at the time of the author's death in 2006.



THE MIKADO  
OR  
THE TOWN OF TITIPU

By William S. Gilbert  
Music by Sir Arthur Sullivan

First produced at the Savoy Theatre on  
March 14, 1885.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE: [1]

THE MIKADO OF JAPAN. [2]

NANKI-POO (his Son, disguised as a wandering  
minstrel, and in love with Yum-Yum). [3]

KO-KO (Lord High Executioner of Titipu). [4]

Masked stock characters, like the  
zany Cucurucu (right), from the  
commedia dell'arte are the ancestors  
of the leads in *The Mikado*. The line  
drawings of the Savoy cast are from  
the *Illustrated London News*.



Cucurucu.

**1 Dramatis Personae.** The traditions of the English Harlequinade and extravaganza are apparent in Gilbert's cast of characters for *The Mikado*. The names themselves form the "programme joke" of nineteenth-century pantomime where foreign characters, particularly Orientals, were christened with puns. Planché's *The Invisible Prince* (1846) featured a trio of Aztec sisters named Xquisitelittlepet, Toxalototittletattle, and Itzaprettipeticoatl. In H. J. Byron's original *Alladin* (1861), a Christmas standard for more than forty years, the Widow Twanky lived with her son Pekoe who was later renamed Souchong and then Ho-Fi and La-di-da.

In their first meeting over the scenario, Sullivan asked Gilbert why he hadn't used any authentic Japanese titles, and Gilbert is said to have explained that, during his research, he had learned that the aristocracy of Old Japan were called "samurais." The obvious English rhyme, "Damn your eyes," just wouldn't do.

Consequently, the nursery names and baby talk of Victorian English burlesque and pantomime are preserved in a purportedly Japanese musical.



**2 The Mikado of Japan.** Bass-baritone role originated by Richard Temple (1847-1912) who lived long enough to record the Mikado's famous second-act song on an early 78 rpm recording. The term "Mikado" combines the Japanese *mi* ("exalted") and *kado* ("gate") and conforms with the way the English translated the title of the Sultan of Turkey, "the sublime port." Although the Japanese use the word *Tenno* to refer to their emperor, "Mikado" was far more familiar to the English-speaking world in the nineteenth century. The character does not in the least attempt to resemble the Japanese emperor. As Gilbert himself acknowledged, he's no more (nor less) than a pantomime king.



**3 Nanki-Poo.** Tenor role originated by Durward Lely, a Scotsman who could act as well as sing and who was much admired by the entire company. As the guitar-strumming lead, Nanki-Poo is the Harlequin of the piece, differing in dramatic effect from his pantomime counterpart in being more interesting and witty. Like the word "Titti-Poo" (as originally spelled), the name "Nanki-Poo" is baby talk along the lines of "icky-poo," "puddy-cat," and "ducky-poo." Nanki-Poo has since become the prototype of the Wandering Minstrel.



**4 Ko-Ko.** Baritone role originated by the Savoy's chief comedian George Grossmith (1847-1912). There has been confusion over the origin of the name—some insisting that it is Japanese for "pickles." Actually, there had been a Kokliko in the 1870 production of *Alladin II*, but Ko-Ko's name and occupation were most likely suggested by a character in Halévy & Offenbach's Chinese opera bouffe *Ba-ta-clan* named Ko-ko-ri-ko, which is the way a rooster crows in French. He in turn had been derived from Cucurucu, a zany in the *commedia dell'arte*, named after the way a rooster crows in Italian.

Although his hairpiece, make-up, and "tool of harassment" give Ko-Ko a strong physical resemblance to the traditional pantomime clown, his humor is greatly refined and his character made more human by Gilbert, who was aided in this evolution by the verbal and physical talents of George Grossmith:

Anything more waspish than the thinness and fragility of Grossmith it is impossible to conceive. Perhaps it



POOH-BAH (Lord High Everything Else). [5]

PISH-TISH (a Noble Lord). [6]

Three Sisters--Wards of Ko-Ko:

YUM-YUM [7]

PITTI-SING [8]

PEEP-BO [9]

KATISHA [10] (an elderly Lady, in love with Nanki-Poo).

Chorus of School-girls, Nobles, Guards, and Coolies.

should be gnat-ish, rather than waspish. He did not suggest a creature with an envenomed sting, but rather a restless, buzzing thing, ever about your head, ever ready to give you pin-pricks. He would dart and dance around the stolid bulk of Barrington in all directions, bewilderingly agile; Barrington standing unmoved and unruffled the while. It was like the encounter of Dignity and Impudence (Hutchinson, 1920).

And not far removed from the traditional encounters between Clown and Pantaloon.

**5 Pooh-Bah and 6 Pish-Tush.** Baritone roles originated by Rutland Barrington (1853-1922) and Frederick



Bovill. The names are from Gilbert's Bab Ballad, "King Borria Bungalee Boo," which featured a cannibal named Pish-Tush-Pooh-Bah. For *The Mikado*, Gilbert divided the name between two different characters; likewise, much of Pish-Tush's role was created from material deleted from Pooh-Bah's.



Although Pooh-Bah's haughty pomposity is reminiscent of the Pedant of burlesque and "Il Dottore" from the *commedia dell'arte*, he is the most original character in the entire opera.

**7 Yum-Yum.** Lead soprano, originated by Leonora Braham (1853-1931). Miss Abraham dropped the "a" from her name to obscure her Jewish heritage—similarly to screen actor Lee Jacob who altered his name to Lee J. Cobb. The name Yum-Yum seems obvious today, but that may have come about after an American company introduced Yum-Yum Ice Cream in the wake of *The Mikado*'s popularity. Yum-Yum is Columbine to Nanki-Poo's Harlequin. In *The Story of the Mikado* (written for children), Gilbert offered this translation of her name:

'Yum-Yum' means, when translated, 'The full moon of delight which sheds her remarkable beams over a sea of infinite loveliness, thus indicating a glittering path by which she may be approached by those who are willing to brave the perils which necessarily await the daring adventurers who seek to reach her by those means,' which shows what a compact language the Japanese is when all these long words can be crammed into two syllables... (1921).



**8 Pitti-Sing.** Mezzo-soprano role originated by Jessie



Bond (1853-1942), the Savoy's principal soubrette. The name is baby talk for "pretty thing." There had been a Pet-ping-sing in William Brough's *Ching-Chow-Hi*, an English version of *Ba-ta-clan*. The role is traceable to the comic servant wench of the *commedia*. Like the other roles in the show, however, she owes much to the personality of Jessie Bond for whom the part was written.

**9 Peep-Bo.** Mezzo-soprano role originated by Sybil Grey who was elevated from the chorus for this part, because Gilbert definitely wanted *three* little maids—partly for the operatic tradition of trio groupings (the three boys in *The Magic Flute*, for example) and partly for the frequent appearance of sensual female trios in *ukiyo-e* prints, especially those of Utamaro. The name itself is a dyslexic version of the popular nursery rhyme.

**10 Katisha.** Contralto role, originated by Rosina Brandram (1846-1907), who was unquestionably the finest vocalist in the Savoy cast. The "cat" in her name emphasizes her tigress nature. On Gilbert's end, she evolved from the Dame of nineteenth-century burlesque, who in turn was descended from "Maymarions"—men





in women's clothing who engaged in rollicking, knockabout comedy in the May Games of early-English fairs and festivals. In Victorian burlesque, the Dame continued to be played by male low comedians in harridans' habit, a feature which rendered "her" acrobatic pratfalls comically incongruent. Gilbert complicated this stock character by casting a woman in the role, thus civilizing it, while retaining the puns and strident mockery of burlesque (see Stedman, 1970). Consequently, with her deep voice, this Savoy character has a pronounced masculine-bitchy aspect.

Further complications were added to the role by Sullivan. The composer's conception of the operatic contralto was influenced by the mythological diva of eighteenth-century opera, roles that had been frequently interpreted by *castrati* (see Heriot, 1956). Dramatically as well as musically, then, the Savoy contralto in general—and Katisha in particular—has an unsettled androgynous nature that would cause numerous conflicts between the two collaborators.

**11 Act I.** Although Sullivan lacked experience with the music of Japan, he did have first-hand contact with Arabic music. The swirling pentatonic introduction which raises the curtain on the first act of *The Mikado* follows the form of an Arabian *bécheraf*: a formal introduction to a song or chorus, comprised of a series of ascending and descending flourishes in the mode in which the song is to be sung. In a diary entry while in Egypt, Sullivan mentions his attending a performance of native songs given by a group of local musicians. Among these was one which he termed a "pescheveff" and which Henry Farmer in his notes to *The Music and Musical Instruments of the Arab* identifies as a *bécheraf*.

Sullivan's introduction is his most sustained pentatonic writing in the opera, immediately establishing its locale. Victorian music critics felt queasy when it came to Eastern musical modes, including this one. The critic for the *Monthly Musical Record* complained of its "barbaric harmony" and was relieved that "there is fortunately only little of this sort of music in the opera." Today it is one of the most famous operatic openings in the world. The rising and falling of its five-tone scale are like the flutter and sweep of Oriental fans:



**12 Native drawings.** On the premiere of *The Mikado*, the curtain opened on a living *ukiyo-e* print of authentically costumed Japanese noblemen, standing and sitting in the familiar bent, leaning and frozen postures that had captured the soul of Whistler and his comrades. Creating living pictures on stage was a favorite device of mid-nineteenth century theatre. Planché had launched the vogue in *The Brigand* by introducing three tableaux from Eastlake's paintings. In *Rent Day*, Douglas Jerrold had reproduced David Wilkie's famous "problem picture" in a comic context. In *Ages Ago*, Gilbert himself has presented a scene of living portraits (lifted from Tom Taylor), which he later refurbished in *Ruddygore*; and his arrangement of the twenty lovesick maidens in the opening scene of *Patience* was a visual parody of Burne-Jones's "Green Summer." But the opening tableaux of *The Mikado* was unique:



*Ukiyo-e triptych of typical postures featured in The Mikado's opening chorus*

Through its particular stage magic, *The Mikado* transported Gilbert & Sullivan's first-night audience into what Swinburne had called a "fairylane of fans, the limbo of blue china." The opening scene was a fitting glyph of the entire production, because—as G. K. Chesterton observed—the opera was "not a picture of Japan but a Japanese picture."

ACT I. [11]

SCENE.--Courtyard of Ko-Ko's Palace in Titipu.  
Japanese nobles discovered standing and sitting  
in attitudes suggested by native drawings. [12]



# THE MIKADO

or *The Town of Titipu*

## ACT I

*Courtyard of Ko-Ko's Palace in Titipu. Japanese nobles discovered standing and sitting in attitudes suggested by native drawings. 11*

No. 1. "IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO WE ARE" 12

Opening Chorus and Recitative  
NANKI-POO and MEN (Chorus of Nobles)

If you want to know who we are,  
We are gentlemen of Japan:  
On many a vase and jar,



Triptych

by

Utamaro

11 standing and sitting in attitudes suggested by native drawings. On the première of *The Mikado* the curtain opened on a living, ukiyo-e print of authentically costumed Japanese noblemen posed in the willowy, enigmatic attitudes which had captured the soul of the Aesthetic movement.

Creating living pictures on stage was a favorite device of mid-nineteenth century theatre. Planché had launched the vogue in *The Brigand* by introducing three tableaux from Eastlake's paintings. In *Rent Day* Douglas Jerrold reproduced David Wilkie's "problem picture" in a comic context. In *Ages Ago* Gilbert himself had presented a

scene of living portraits (lifted from Tom Taylor), which he later refurbished in *Ruddigore*, and his own arrangement of the twenty lovesick maidens in the opening scene of *Patience* had been a visual parody of Burne-Jones' idyll, "Green Summer."

True to Pre-Raphaelite technique, in which the artist's super-clarity and realistic detail promote a natural acceptance of the irrational, Gilbert's impeccable stagecraft easefully transported the first-night audience into an English dream of Japan, into what Swinburne had called a "fairylane of fans, the limbo of blue china." This first scene is a glyph of the entire opera which, as G. K. Chesterton observed, is not a picture of Japan but a Japanese picture.

12 "If you want to know who we are." As Gilbert fixes the visual imagery of this opening

scene, Sullivan steadily suffuses it with exotic color. The music of this chorus relies on more Eastern tonal idioms than any other piece in the opera. Fifth intervals and open octaves are liberally used, and pentatonic flutters from the orchestra surround a muezzin-like chant from the male chorus. Yet, after twentieth-century experiments in the twelve-tone scale, the orientalism of Sullivan's tonality seems tame by comparison and even in its own day was hardly more venturesome than Offenbach's "Krik-Krak" chorus for *Ba-ta-clan*. Sullivan was essentially a classicist as far as musical structure was concerned and felt little need to stretch the tonal framework on which the game of composition was played.

Nevertheless, something decidedly exotic comes through in this music and, as Louis Coerne has noted, it enters chiefly through Sullivan's



On many a screen and fan,<sup>13</sup>  
 We figure in lively paint:<sup>14</sup>  
 Out attitude's queer and quaint—  
 You're wrong if you think it ain't, oh!  
 If you think we are worked by strings  
 Like a Japanese marionette, <sup>15</sup>  
 You don't understand these things:  
 It is simply Court etiquette.  
 Perhaps you suppose this throng  
 Can't keep it up all day long?  
 If that's your idea, you're wrong, oh! <sup>16</sup>

(Enter NANKI-POO in great excitement. He carries a native guitar on his back and a bundle of ballads in his hand.) <sup>17</sup>  
<sup>18</sup>

RECITATIVE

NANKI: Gentlemen, I pray you tell me  
 Where a gentle maiden dwelleth,  
 Named Yum-Yum, the ward of  
 Ko-Ko:  
 In pity speak—oh, speak, I pray  
 you!

A NOBLE: Why, who are you who ask this  
 question?

NANKI: Come gather round me, and I'll tell  
 you.

orchestration. With Sullivan's musical experience in Egypt, it is understandable that his most striking orchestral effects in this chorus are characteristic of Arabian music--his use of the tympani, for example, but more particularly the cross-rhythms developed between contrasting groups of instruments.

<sup>13</sup>If you want to know who we are...on many a screen and fan. The final word of each of these first four lines are broadened by Sullivan, underlined with brass, and then punctuated with triple blows on the tympani.



"On many a  
 vase and jar..."

On many a  
 screen and fan"



<sup>14</sup>We figure in lively paint is enlivened by a chopping interplay between brass and woodwind.

<sup>15</sup>like a Japanese marionette...Gilbert's stage directions called for a succession of emotionless poses from his chorus of nobles--a visual parody of one of the "queer and quaint" aspects of Japanese art which had so impressed Whistler and Rossetti. After suffering the mawkish sentimentality of the English "problem picture," Whistler and his confrères had eagerly embraced the ricepaper prints of "black-haired dolls, posed inactive and expressionless in empty box-like rooms" (Gaunt, 1945). The influence is seen at its peak in the work of Beardsley, who began his career by copying Utamaro.

<sup>16</sup>If you think we are worked by strings... you're wrong, oh! Gilbert's first-draft lyrics for this verse can be found in Sullivan's autograph score:

"Polite etiquette demands  
 That persons of either sex  
 Shall suffer from cramp in the hands  
 And a crick in their outstretched necks.  
 When suffering from constraint  
 We're always allowed to faint.  
 You're wrong if you think we mayn't,  
 Oh!"

Gilbert would often supply a hasty lyric of correct metre and length and submit it to Sullivan, waiting to hear his collaborator's setting and musical idea before rewriting the lyric entirely.

At the end of the second verse Sullivan restates the first and at the word "many" creates a mantra with the chorus chanting a second interval while a polyrhythm is developed between the voices and the orchestra. While in Egypt, Sullivan spent an unforgettable evening in a tent with the dervishes, later relating,

"Over and over they sang the same monotonous phrase until they became maddened and fell to the ground, some senseless and some in furious fits."

He seems to draw from that experience in this passage:

Handwritten musical score for 'The Mikado'. The score is written on five staves. The top two staves are for vocal parts, with lyrics 'man-y, man-y, man-y, man-y, man-y, man-y' repeated. The bottom three staves are for piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'sf'.

17 native guitar. A three-stringed samisen, which reminded the first-night reviewer

for The Illustrated London News of a fire shovel.

18 a bundle of ballads: rolled-up, tied "broadsides." These first appeared in London in 1690, with Thomas Cross' engraved sheets with musical notation.



*Punch's review of The Mikado included this cartoon of Gilbert and Sullivan in their own Japanese attitudes*



"A WAND'RING MINSTREL I"  
Solo and Chorus 19  
NANKI-POO and MEN

NANKI: A wand'ring minstrel I—20  
A thing of shreds and patches,  
Of ballads, songs, and snatches,  
And dreamy lullaby!

My catalogue is long,  
Through every passion ranging,  
And to your humours changing  
I tune my supple song! 21

19 Solo and Chorus--Nanki-Poo. Gilbert may have created Nanki-Poo's song (a tour de force of then-popular balladry) especially to satisfy Sullivan, who had so recently demanded "a chance for the music... to intensify the emotional element, not only of the actual words but of the situation." The song follows the opening chorus without a break, and the two numbers together comprise the most dramatically varied opening the collaborators had thus far produced. Nanki-Poo's song was singled out for favorable review by critics on opening night.

Gilbert's fondness for older, French verse forms (witness Jack Point's list of them in The Yeomen of the Guard) can often be seen in his own lyrics--his feminine

rhymes, for example. Nanki-Poo's song is essentially a medieval, troubadour verse form, the Provençal descort, a poem in several stanzas of varied metrical scheme and thereby advantageous to a variety of musical settings. In emphasizing variety Gilbert played directly into Sullivan's greatest strength--versatility. Their collaborative effort in such instances could equal the stroke of a single genius.

20 A wand'ring minstrel I--. The immense popularity of this tenor aria has consigned it to a hundred years of popular mutilation, yet it has managed to retain its intrinsic appeal despite parodies, mechanical-instrument renderings, maudlin croonings and cinematic adaptations.

Gilbert's lyrics imitate the ballad-selling street-singer, who touted the quality of his merchandise melodically. An example survives from fourteenth-century France:

"L'aventure est et bone et bele,  
Et la rime fraiche et nouvele."

Sullivan treats "A wand'ring minstrel" as a canzonetta. Originally a common street-song in iambic metre and triple time featured in eighteenth-century Neopolitan opera, the canzonetta was sung by a menial or beggar to lute accompaniment; it provided a refreshing diversion for an audience of aristocrats--much in the way that Nanki-Poo entertains these Japanese noblemen. Canzonetti by virtue of their popularity even-



A Moscow ensemble for the Russian premiere of *The Mikado* in 1887. The central figure of Nanki-Poo is the celebrated stage director Konstantin Stanislavski.

tually found their way into other continental operas and then into English ballad-opera. Whereas Mozart and Balfé used lute and harp to accompany their canzonetti, Sullivan needs nothing more than the strummed strings of his pit orchestra to re-create Nanki-Poo's "native guitar." Sullivan's previous experiments with this form include "The Buttercup Song" from Cox and Box, "I loved her fondly" from The Zoo and "When first my old, old love" from Trial By Jury.

21 my supple song. In his repeat of this phrase Sullivan ornaments the word "supple" and vividly brings it to life.

Are you in sentimental mood? <sup>22</sup>  
 I'll sigh with you,  
 Oh, sorrow!  
 On maiden's coldness do you brood?  
 I'll do so, too—  
 Oh, sorrow, sorrow! <sup>23</sup>  
 I'll charm your willing ears  
 With songs of lovers' fears,  
 While sympathetic tears  
 My cheeks bedew— <sup>24</sup>  
 Oh, sorrow, sorrow!

<sup>22</sup> Are you in sentimental mood? The song changes to a sentimental, drawing-room ballad—a genre immensely popular with late Victorians and one which Sigmund Spaeth has dubbed "the lyric school of self-commiseration" (1927). The content of popular song, the concise framework of nineteenth-century German lieder, and the swoons of early Italian opera had all conjoined to create this uniquely Victorian amalgam of suffering in bliss. Even after a hundred years critical agreement on the artistic merit of the genre has not been reached.

In its day the sentimental ballad's persistent domination of middle-class musical taste was implemented by the ingenious merchandising of such firms as Boosey & Company and by the mass production of the upright piano (a process which, according to Shaw, "was to music what the invention of the printing press was to poetry"). Boosey solicited ballads directly from composers and then staged concerts where they would be premiered by leading vocalists, whose portraits on the published sheet music ("as sung by") greatly enhanced sales. Once taken home, the songs and their sentiments could be satisfactorily re-created on the upright piano, where even a novice could master the simple strumming accompaniments required by the modest vocal lines, and rudimentary technique could be redeemed by the instrument's capacity for sheer volume—a feature conveniently conducive to the ballad's climactic sighs.

Upon returning to London from Leipzig, Sullivan earned a substantial portion of his income by composing sentimental ballads. Occasionally his efforts reflect his youthful admiration of Schumann. More often they simply follow the convention of their day (Sullivan's 1870 piece "Looking Back" climaxes in three swoons of "O... my love" before succumbing in lachrymose rapture). Sullivan continued to write such pieces longer than financial necessity dictated, and they comprise a large portion of his entire output. As



"Are you in sentimental mood?"  
 (George DuMaurier)

a result they have proved embarrassing for the composer's more serious-minded admirers. Yet, his prolificness in these trifles cannot be easily dismissed. Sullivan held a genuine affection for the sentimental ballad as well as for other, popular song forms. Perhaps the last highly-skilled composer whose "pops" were as significant to his career as his serious compositions, Sullivan was attracted to the vulgar as well as the sublime, and neither aspect can be minimized in an integral assessment of him as man and musician.

<sup>23</sup> Oh, sorrow, sorrow! In early texts of the opera "Oh Willow" appears here instead of "Oh sorrow." The change was probably effected by Sullivan to conform with popular convention.

"Songs of  
 lovers' fears"  
 (A ballad cover)





But if patriotic sentiment is wanted, <sup>25</sup>  
 I've patriotic ballads cut and dried;  
 For where'er our country's banner may be  
 planted,  
 All other local banners are defied! <sup>26</sup>  
 Our warriors, in serried ranks assembled, <sup>27</sup>  
 Never quail—or they conceal it if they  
 do—  
 And I shouldn't be surprised if nations  
 trembled  
 Before the mighty troops of Titipu!

MEN: We shouldn't be surprised if nations  
 trembled with alarm  
 Before the mighty troops of Titipu!



<sup>25</sup> But if patriotic sentiment is wanted.  
 Nanki-Poo's song becomes a march and  
 Sullivan's facile scoring reminds us that his  
 father was a professor of military music. Tunes  
 like this were, quite literally, child's play  
 for him.

<sup>26</sup> All other local banners are defied!  
 Gilbert's line is a jibe at British imper-  
 ialism--a bone of contention between Whigs and  
 Tories from 1874 to 1900. The magnitude of  
 British expansion in the latter part of the  
 nineteenth century has known no equal. It has  
 been determined that during that time the Brit-  
 ish empire grew steadily at the rate of two acres  
 per second. In just six years' time Prime Min-  
 ister Disraeli had managed to annex Fiji and  
 Cyprus, conquer the Zulus, complete the purchase  
 of the Suez Canal shares, and proclaim Queen  
 Victoria Empress of India. At the end of the  
 century the Pall Mall Magazine would query:

How few of that great and motley  
 concourse would say 'no' to the  
 question, 'Has your land been the  
 better for British rule?' The  
 massed shout 'yes' would enter the  
 twentieth century acclaiming the  
 Queen, shoulder to shoulder.

At least one shout of "no" was heard and this

from a Briton. Shaw, who confessed that he had  
 often taken Gilbert's jests seriously, blasted  
 the hypocrisy of John Bull, who

conquers half the world and calls it  
 colonization. When he wants a new  
 market for his adulterated Manchester  
 goods, he sends a missionary to teach  
 the natives the gospel of peace. The  
 natives kill the missionary; he flies  
 to arms in defense of Christianity;  
 fights for it, conquers for it, and  
 takes the market as a reward from  
 heaven.

<sup>27</sup> serried ranks assembled. The line is  
 punctuated by the side drum.



"All other local banners are defied"  
 British imperialism in Africa

<sup>24</sup> sympathetic tears/My cheeks bedew.  
 Note the music's crescendo borne on  
 legato strings, and the tenor's esclamazio  
languida. In time the swoons of the senti-  
 mental ballad became its main attraction.  
 It was Sullivan's ability to apply polished,  
 classical forces to the simplest of ditties  
 that contributed to his widespread popu-  
 larity throughout England and the United  
 States in the last quarter of the nine-  
 teenth century.

28  
 NANKI: And if you call for a song of the sea,  
 We'll heave the capstan round,  
 With a yeo heave-ho, for the wind is  
 free,  
 Her anchor's a-trip and her helm's  
 a-lee,  
 Hurrah for the homeward bound!

MEN: Yeo-ho, heave-ho,  
 Hurrah for the homeward bound!

NANKI: To lay aloft in a howling breeze  
 May tickle a landsman's taste,  
 But the happiest hour a sailor sees  
 Is when he's down  
 At an inland town,  
 With his Nancy on his knees, yeo-ho!  
 And his arm around her waist!

MEN: Then man the capstan—off we go,  
 As the fiddler swings us round, 29  
 With a yeo heave-ho,  
 And a rum below, 30  
 Hurrah for the homeward bound!  
 Yeo-ho, heave ho,  
 Yeo-ho, heave ho, heave ho,  
 yeo-ho! 31

28 a song of the sea. The Victorian  
 nautical ballad evolved from the sea-  
 chantey, originally a naval work-song marked  
 by strong rhythms to facilitate teamwork  
 such as pulling on ropes. As shipping be-  
 came increasingly mechanized, the sea-  
 chantey lost its utility and entered the  
 popular-ballad market and the theatre,  
 where it became a showpiece glorifying the  
 British tar as a seafaring version of  
 Rousseau's "noble savage" (see Disher, 1949).

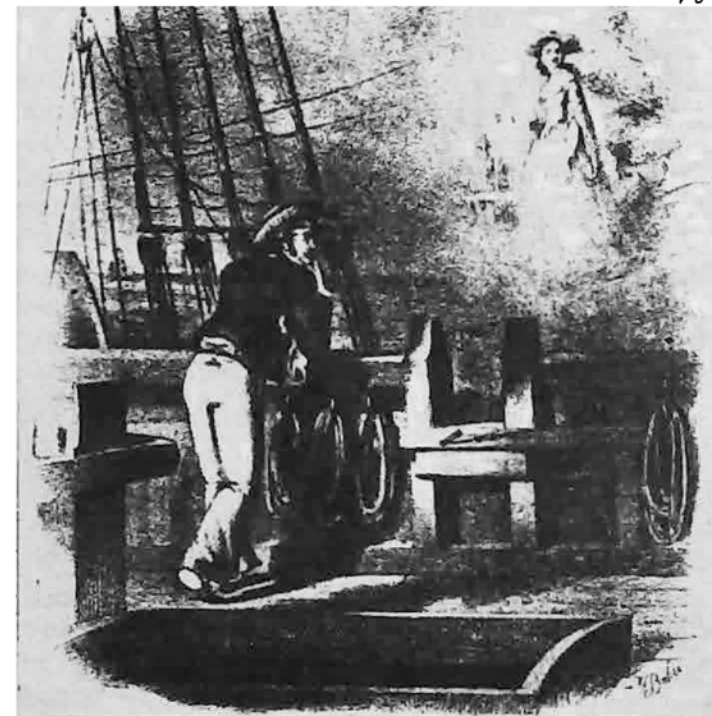
The evolution of the sea-chantey into  
 the nautical ballad was hastened by Charles  
 Dibdin (1745-1814), "the Tyrtæus of the  
 British Navy," whose nautical ballad-operas,  
 replete with songs and hornpipes, had such  
 an effect on encouraging recruits for the

Navy that he was ultimately rewarded with a  
 government pension. Other significant exploit-  
 ers of the soul and song of the British sailor  
 include Edward Fitzball and Douglas Jerrold  
 whose Black-Eyed Susan (1829) was one of the  
 first British shows to achieve over a hundred  
 consecutive performances. Gilbert and Sullivan  
 are the ultimate heirs to the genre, for al-  
 though H.M.S. Pinafore was conceived as a bur-  
 lesque, it revived the old form with an inter-  
 continental frenzy.

As the frontier of the open sea became more  
 accessible and sea-travel more convenient, the  
 nautical ballad passed out of vogue. Gilbert's  
 American fellow humorist, Mark Twain, explained  
 why:

The dangers and uncertainties which  
 made sea life romantic have disappeared  
 and carried the poetic element along  
 with them. In our day, the passengers  
 never sing sea-songs on board a ship,  
 and the band never plays them...songs  
 about the wanderer in strange lands  
 far from home, once so popular and  
 contributing such fire and color to the  
 imagination by reason of the rarity of  
 that kind of wanderer, have lost their charm  
 and fallen silent, because every-  
 body is a wanderer in the far lands  
 now, and the interest in that detail  
 is dead (About All Kinds of Ships, 1893).

The nautical ballad's virility, its salty  
 metaphors and subtle arrogance were imminently  
 appealing to Gilbert's temperament. Some of the  
 metres of Gilbert's Savoy lyrics were suggested  
 by sea-chanteys ("I have a song to sing, O" from  
Yeomen of the Guard is the best-known example).  
 An enthusiastic if amateur yachtsman, Gilbert  
 declared himself a direct descendent of Sir  
 Humphrey Gilbert (1539-1583), the Elizabethan  
 navigator who founded one of the first English



"The happiest hour a sailor sees"  
 (a ballad cover)

colonies in America. There is no factual evi-  
 dence to substantiate Gilbert's genealogical  
 claim. Those interested in intuitive support,  
 however, may wish to read Sir Humphrey's re-  
 markable proposal to Queen Elizabeth entitled,  
 "How Her Majesty Might Annoy the King of Spain  
 by Fitting Out a Fleet of Warships Under Pre-  
 tense of a Voyage of Discovery, and So Fall  
 Upon the Enemy's Shipping, Destroying His Trade  
 in Newfoundland and the West Indies and possess  
 both regions" (1578).

29 Then man the capstan--off we go,/As the  
 fiddler swings us round. Note how Sullivan's  
 "fiddlers" break into an independent hornpipe

NANKI: A wand'ring minstrel I— 32  
 A thing of shreds and patches,  
 Of ballads, songs, and snatches,  
 And dreamy lullaby!  
 (Enter PISH-TUSH.)

PISH: And what may be your business with Yum-Yum?

NANKI: I'll tell you. A year ago I was a member of the Titipu town band. It was my duty to take the cap round for contributions. While discharging this delicate office, I saw Yum-Yum. We loved each other at once, but she was betrothed to her guardian, Ko-Ko, a cheap tailor, and I saw that my suit was hopeless. Overwhelmed with despair, I quitted the town. Judge of my delight when I heard, a month ago, that Ko-Ko had been condemned to death for flirting! I hurried back at once, in the hope of finding Yum-Yum at liberty to listen to my protestations. 33

PISH: It is true that Ko-Ko was condemned to death for flirting, but he was reprieved at the last moment, and raised to the exalted rank of Lord High Executioner under the following remarkable circumstances: 34

brightened by woodwinds while the other instruments support the vocal line.

30 and a rumbelow. Gilbert's verse is an impressive string of catchphrases from standard nautical ballads. "Homeward Bound" echoes a refrain from the popular chantey, "Homeward bound, homeward bound/From a foreign shore." If we are to believe Dibdin, every sailor's sweetheart was named Nancy (Gilbert used this convention in the ship that launched his literary career, the Nancy Belle). And the librettist himself addresses the subject of the "rumbelow":

I have no idea what a 'rumbelow' may be. No doubt it is some nautical article that is extremely useful on board ship, for it is so often alluded to in sea-songs. It seems to hold the same place in a sea-song that the 'old plantation' does in Negro minstrelsy" (The Story of the Mikado).



31 Then man the capstan...Yeo-ho! The Saturday Review commented on Gilbert's premier staging of this chorus: The rousing music "so carries away the Japanese nobility that they go through all the traditional gestures of the stage sailor [smacks and hitches], the effect of which in their flowing robes and hanging sleeves is singularly comic."

32 A wand'ring minstrel I--. In his repeat of the opening aria Sullivan's melody easefully evolves into an unexpected berceuse, and the song is concluded on a choral "lullabye" with support only from the cello.

33 the Titipu town band. When the seaside resorts began to flourish in England in the

mid-nineteenth century, they attracted itinerant and small-town bands. Later came the more spectacular bands--the Blue Viennese and the White Hungarian (in The Story of the Mikado Gilbert says that Nanki-Poo was a member of the "Purple Tartarian Band"). By 1861 Henry Mayhew reported that German bands "had possession" of the whole coast of Kent and Sussex. In Gilbert's day, these were all that was left of genuine, wandering minstrelsy (see Young, 1968).

34 condemned to death for flirting. As much satire as absurdity. See Note 97.



"OUR GREAT MIKADO, VIRTU-  
OUS MAN," 35

Solo and Chorus  
PISH-TUSH and MEN

PISH: Our great Mikado, virtuous man,  
When he to rule our land began,  
Resolved to try  
A plan whereby  
Young men might best be steadied.  
So he decreed, in words succinct,  
That all who flirted, leered, or winked  
(Unless connubially linked)  
Should forthwith be beheaded. 36

And I expect you'll all agree  
That he was right to so decree.  
And I am right,  
And you are right,  
And all is right as right can be! 37

MEN: And you are right, etc.

35 "Our great Mikado, virtuous man."

Pish-Tush's song is equivalent in dramatic function to an Aristophanic prologue which, according to Moses Hadas, "sets forth some fantastic scheme--a descent to hell, a sex strike, or the like--and the rest of the play is worked out on the assumption that the premises are the most commonplace in the world" (1962). Crucial to the plot, Pish-Tush's contortion of logic was most likely sketched out by Gilbert during the earliest drafts of the libretto--possibly before the character Pish-Tush was born. The song parades much of the sanguinary side of Gilbert's wit, a side which has distressed a number of critics. In addition to the visu-

al imagery of the words, Gilbert's legalistic sentence structure adds a peculiar grimness, and his strings of final plosives ("succinct," "winked," "linked") virtually "chop off" the lines which they terminate.

Sullivan chose to set these lyrics in one of his happiest moods, and the music sparkles merrily in an infernal marriage to Gilbert's words. Much of Sullivan's coruscation is achieved orchestrally. The fabric of pizzicato strings woven throughout the song is, in some places, divided into as many as seven parts; the triangle cheerily jingles at the end of each verse.

This preternatural hybrid of the gay and the gruesome is found throughout The Mikado. G. W. Knight commented on it in The Golden Labyrinth:

The Mikado is in substance the most horrible and in manner the gayest and most buoyant of the operas. Its costumed orientalism does much to subdue the horrors to a scintillating whole, and the bright music, though not the the humor, is our guide. The humor is itself macabre: we are not experiencing the purification of horror by humor, but rather the purification of a horrible humor by melody (1962).

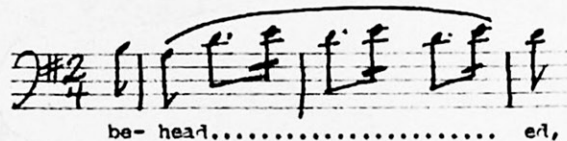
36 So he decreed...beheaded. Note Sullivan's orchestration of these four lines. The vocal melody is picked up by the bassoon, then passed from the clarinet, to the oboe, to the flute--almost like a conspiratorial conversation among the woodwinds. This is an example of those occasions when Sullivan's orchestration takes on, in the words of Cecil Forsyth, "a subordinate prominence" of its own (1937).

Sullivan startles us by embellishing the word "beheaded" with a florid melisma sung near the top of the baritone's range:



"And all is right as right can be"  
Sullivan, D'Oyly Carte and Gilbert

(Pall Mall Budget)



PISH: This stern decree, you'll understand,  
Caused great dismay throughout the  
land:

For young and old  
And shy and bold  
Were equally affected.

The youth who winked a roving eye,  
Or breathed a non-connubial sigh,  
Was thereupon condemned to die—  
He usually objected.

And you'll allow, as I expect,  
That he was right to so object.

And I am right,  
And you are right,  
And everything is quite correct!

MEN: And you are right, etc.

PISH: And so we straight let out on bail  
A convict from the county jail,  
Whose head was next,  
On some pretext,  
Condemned to be mown off,  
And made *him* Headsman, for we said,  
"Who's next to be decapited  
Cannot cut off another's head  
Until he's cut his own off."<sup>38</sup>

And we are right, I think you'll say,  
To argue in this kind of way.

And I am right,  
And you are right,  
And all is right—too-loo-ral-lay!

MEN: And you are right, etc.

In Victorian Song, Maurice Disher relates that "to startle, horrify, or terrorize the audience, with or without excuse, was the height of the Victorian baritone's ambition. And since people did not walk out on him, we must conclude that to be startled, horrified, and terrorized was the height of the audience's ambition."

The role of Pish-Tush was premiered by baritone Frederick Bovill, a newcomer to the Savoy, whose "fine, mellow voice" quite pleased the critical reviewers of the first night. Sullivan thought well enough of Bovill that he chose later to cast him as the squire in his only grand opera, Ivanhoe.

<sup>37</sup> And I am right...right can be! Sullivan sets these words quite effectively with undulating, whole-tone oscillations--an idiom characteristic of Eastern music. Henry Perry (1928) has offered this refrain as prototypical of Gilbert's attitude to the world, generally, and his Victorian complacency specifically.

<sup>38</sup> And so we straight...cut his own off. To emphasize this verse--so essential to an understanding of the plot and of Ko-Ko's predicament throughout the opera--Sullivan modulates the key from G major to E-flat major. Gilbert's superficially rigorous logic results in a completely preposterous conclusion. Such coups de logique are a mainstay of Gilbert's comic method.

The Titiputians' solution to their problem has on occasion been proffered as a remedy for

some of the world's most grievous problems. For example, during the unpopular Viet Nam War, the Chicago Daily News offered to President Nixon "The Mikado Plan" for his proposed system of inducting draftees by lottery: The man who did the drawing of the names would, of course, be the first to go.



(*Exeunt* CHORUS. *Enter* POOH-BAH.)<sup>39</sup>

NANKI: Ko-Ko, the cheap tailor, Lord High Executioner of Titipu! Why, that's the highest rank a citizen can attain!

POOH: It is. Our logical Mikado, seeing no moral difference between the dignified judge who condemns a criminal to die, and the industrious mechanic who carries out the sentence, has rolled the two offices into one, and every judge is now his own executioner.<sup>40</sup>

NANKI: But how good of you (for I see that you are a nobleman of the highest rank) to condescend to tell all this to me, a mere strolling minstrel!

POOH: Don't mention it. I am, in point of fact, a particularly haughty and exclusive person, of pre-Adamite ancestral descent. You<sup>41</sup>



Rutland  
Barrington  
as  
Pooh-Bah

<sup>39</sup>Enter Pooh-Bah, whom his own creator called "one of the most remarkable characters in ancient or modern history" and whose name can be found in most dictionaries as "the holder of many public offices simultaneously." Special attention to his contribution to the English language is given by Cecil Hunt in Word Origins.

In final form, Pooh-Bah contains distillations from Gilbert's personality as well as that of the actor who first portrayed him on stage. When Gilbert added Rutland Barrington to the Savoy company, he sized him up as "a staid, stolid swine" adding "and that's what I want!" The role of Pooh-Bah so consumed Barrington (as it does most actors who take the part) that gag lines issued spontaneously from him that were duly, though critically, incorporated by Gilbert into the final text. Barrington's own portliness also contributed to Gilbert's characterization. The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News commented, "The part and the actor fit one another to a nicety..."

Pooh-Bah's stilted language, on the other hand, is the offspring of Gilbert's style. It could be argued that the dialogue of all Gilbert's works for the stage suffers from periphrasis. Paul Kresh writes that Gilbert's "dialogue is so archaic in manner that it is difficult for the average member of a modern audience to know how much of it is seriously intended nineteenth-century rhetoric and how much is spoof" (1968; see also Beerbohm, 1930). Only in this entirely Gilbertian fairy-tale Japan could a character as implausible as Pooh-Bah arise--one who is capable of consuming the worst of his own creator's style and still have room for more. Through Pooh-Bah, Gilbert could fully exhaust his own pedantry, producing a character enormously successful in its comic impact. The other characters in the opera are consequently liberated and able to behave more humanly--a change in Gilbert's characterization that Sullivan had long been awaiting.

<sup>40</sup>every judge is now his own executioner; an amalgamation which amused the attorney in Gilbert. He cited it to the press when asked about the evolution of The Mikado:

It has seemed to us that to lay the scene in Japan afforded scope for picturesque treatment, scenery, and costumes, and I think that the idea of a chief magistrate who is king, judge, and actual executioner in one...may perhaps please the public.

<sup>41</sup>of pre-Adamite ancestral descent. Pooh-Bah is a vehicle for the best of Gilbert's satire on the decaying British aristocracy of whose plight Gillian Avery noted, "All influence except that which mere wealth could give him, and the deference that is paid to an ancient name, had vanished. The aristocrat was on his way to becoming that rather sad figure...reduced to conducting tourists round his house in order to keep death watch beetle out of its timbers" (1970). During his London tour Bret Harte was greatly amused by the aristocrats he met and by their fondness for referring to their ancestral heritage. To one lord he remarked, "You're just like a potato; the best part of you is underground."

Gilbert analyzed Pooh-Bah's aristocratic disdain (as well as his own identification with the character) in The Story of the Mikado:

Pooh-Bah was not a clever man--he was, in fact, an intolerably conceited donkey--but he was such a remarkable donkey that his very donkeydom entitled him to the affectionate respect of his fellow townsmen as being infinitely more remunerative than the

will understand this when I tell you that I can trace my ancestry back to a protoplasmal primordial atomic globule. Consequently, my family pride is something inconceivable. I can't help it. I was born sneering. But I struggle hard to overcome this defect. I mortify my pride continually. When all the great Officers of State resigned in a body because they were too proud to serve under an ex-tailor, did I not unhesitatingly accept all their posts at once? <sup>42</sup> <sup>43</sup>

PISH: And the salaries attached to them? You did.

POOH: It is consequently my degrading duty to serve this upstart as First Lord of the Treasury, Lord Chief Justice, Commander-in-Chief, Lord High Admiral, Master of the Buckhounds, Groom of the Back Stairs, Archbishop of Titipu, and Lord Mayor, both acting and elect, all rolled into one. And at a salary! A Pooh-Bah paid for his services! I a salaried minion! But I do it! It revolts me, but I do it. <sup>44</sup> <sup>45</sup>

very highest form of educated intelligence could possibly be. Personally I would rather be a very wise man than a stupid, but if I couldn't be a very wise man (I have tried and I find I can't) I would rather be so stupid as to excite wonder and admiration on account of the extraordinary and exceptional quality of my stupidity.

<sup>42</sup> a protoplasmal primordial atomic globule. A jibe at the aristocrat's pride in lineage as well as Darwin's Descent of Man, first published in 1871

and then yet a preoccupation of the British public. In the United States, H. L. Mencken reported that this line of Pooh-Bah's

engendered a public interest in biology and sent the common people to the pages of Darwin, then a mere heretic and the favorite butt of windy homiletics" (1910).

Sullivan must have appreciated Gilbert's jest. Darwin had observed that music is of no direct use to man in his continued existence. This irritated the musical evangelist in Sullivan, who retorted in a speech that "as soon as existence becomes life," Darwin's "statement is completely false."

<sup>43</sup> accept all their posts at once. Pooh-Bah has been singled out as a satire of pluralism. G. K. Chesterton writes,

Pooh-Bah is something more than a satire; he is the truth. It is true of British politics (probably not of Japanese) that we meet the same man twenty times as twenty different officials. There is a quarrel between a landlord, Lord Jones, and a railway company presided over by Lord Smith. Strong comments are made on the case by a newspaper (owned by Lord Brown), and after infinite litigation, it is sent up to the House of Lords, that is, Lords Jones, Smith, and Brown. Generally the characters are more mixed. The landlord cannot live by land, but does live as director of the railway. The railway lord is so rich that he buys up the newspaper. The general

result can be expressed only in two syllables (to be uttered with the utmost energy of the lungs): 'Pooh-Bah!' (1912)

Pluralism in Gilbert's day, however, was not as true of British politics as it was of the British clergy. As early as 1828 it was discovered that the Archbishop of Canterbury, in a seven-year period, had given sixteen "livings" and other ecclesiastic appointments to seven of his own family. Similar disclosures continued to appear throughout the nineteenth century in the British press. The sectarian component cannot be undervalued in a complete analysis of Pooh-Bah as a vehicle for satire. Again a debt is owed to Rutland Barrington, who had first been hired to play the vicar in The Sorcerer--a role he revived at the Savoy with great success immediately before The Mikado. The actor related,

...a fact that seemed to have a certain amount of weight with Gilbert was that my father was very nearly a clergyman; he was, in fact, brought up for the Church...I have no doubt that Gilbert reasoned that my inherited manner might be a valuable asset in the part of Doctor Daly (1908).

Gilbert also reasoned "no doubt" that the hypocritical and unctuous mannerisms of clergymen could be an ideal stage medium for some of his most trenchant witticisms. Barrington sang exactly like a mediocre, church-choir baritone.

<sup>44</sup> all rolled into one. Punch promptly pointed out that Pooh-Bah's pluralism wasn't original with Gilbert; it had been done







NANKI: And it does you credit.

POOH: But I don't stop at that. I go and dine with middle-class people on reasonable terms. I dance at cheap suburban parties for a moderate fee. I accept refreshment at any hands, however lowly. I also retail State secrets at a very low figure. For instance, any

further information about Yum-Yum would come under the head of a State secret. (NANKI-POO takes the hint, and gives him money.) (Aside) Another insult, and I think a light one!

"YOUNG MAN, DESPAIR" 47

Song

POOH-BAH, NANKI-POO, and PISH-TUSH

POOH: Young man, despair,  
Likewise go to,  
Yum-Yum the fair  
You must not woo.  
It will not do:  
I'm sorry for you,  
You very imperfect ablutioner! 48

46 cheap suburban parties for a moderate fee. The invitation and appearance of a member of the aristocracy added an atmosphere of nobility to many a middle-class social function in the late nineteenth century. If genuine aristocrats could not be found, the eager nouveau riche would settle for any number of titled officials or "important" personages to add distinction to their soirées. This could sometimes be taken to absurd lengths and is humorously noted by the Grossmiths in their novel, Diary of a Nobody; The gullible Mr. Pooter looks with awe upon the Lord High Sherriff as "a member of our aristocracy."



"I go and dine with middle-class people"  
(Punch)

Toward the end of the century these functions became increasingly important to the aristocrat who, through rising taxes and the decline of his political power through parliamentary reform, became more and more dependent upon the middle classes for his survival. Gilbert noted this trend again in the Duke and Duchess' song in the second act of The Gondoliers.

47 "young man, despair" Gilbert's three-syllable rhymes and Sullivan's tempo di minuetto combine effectively in this comic song of aristocratic pomposity. Barrington constantly tended to sing flat--a problem for which Sullivan regularly compensated. In this case the restricted range and repetitiveness of the main melody also help convey PooH-Bah's ponderousness.

48 You very imperfect ablutioner. An exigence of rhyme which Gilbert rational-

"I dance at  
cheap  
suburban  
parties"

(London  
Society)



ized in The Story of The Mikado:

The Japanese are an extremely clean people, and PooH-Bah was honestly shocked to find that Nanki-Poo's long march had left its traces on his person.

This very day  
From school Yum-Yum  
Will wend her way,  
And homeward come,  
With beat of drum,  
And a rum-tum-tum,  
To wed the Lord High Executioner! 49

And the brass will crash,  
And the trumpets bray,  
And they'll cut a dash  
On their wedding day. 50  
She'll toddle away, as all aver,  
With the Lord High Executioner!

NANKI and PISH: And the brass will crash, etc.

POOH: It's a hopeless case,  
As you may see,  
And in your place  
Away I'd flee;  
But don't blame me—  
I'm sorry to be  
Of your pleasure a diminutioner. 51

They'll vow their pact  
Extremely soon,  
In point of fact  
This afternoon  
Her honeymoon  
With that buffoon  
At seven commences, so *you* shun her!

ALL: And the brass will crash, etc.  
(Exit PISH-TISH.)

Recitative  
NANKI-POO and POOH-BAH

NANKI:  
And have I journeyed for a month, or nearly,  
To learn that Yum-Yum, whom I love so  
dearly,  
This day to Ko-Ko is to be united!

POOH:  
The fact appears to be as you've recited:  
But here he comes, equipped as suits his  
station;  
He'll give you any further information.

49 the Lord High Executioner. Sullivan introduces a sweeping orchestral glissando which bridges three octaves in only three beats. Its sudden realization of fortissimo and instantaneous retraction to piano leaves an endearing musical portrait of Rutland Barrington's stage presence.

50 And the brass will crash...wedding day. Note Sullivan's dainty obligato for two cornets--an ironic countersubject to Gilbert's description of crashing and braying brass.

51 But don't blame me...a diminutioner. Note, in apposition to these words, Sullivan's short passage for the bassoon. In this doleful little phrase, one actually hears the diminution of Nanki-Poo's pleasure. Sullivan's "bassoon jokes" have been discussed by J. A. Fuller Maitland (1901) and Sir Donald Tovey (1938). Tovey suggested that "the parent" of all of Sullivan's bassoon jokes was Beethoven's use of the instrument in his Eighth Symphony (fourth movement). This is unlikely; Sullivan's humorous use of the bassoon is more operatic than Beethoven's. The more probable "parent" of Sullivan's jokes is Mozart's bassoon-writing--that in the sham-poisoning scene from Cosi Fan Tutti, for example.

Sullivan's writing for the bassoon is not restricted to buffoonery. He handles double reeds with sensitive savoir-faire; this characteristic of Sullivan's orchestration is discussed in detail in Lyndesay Langwill's book The Bassoon and Contrabassoon. Double reeds were the only orchestral instruments Sullivan couldn't play.

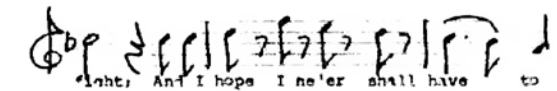
(*Exeunt POOH-BAH and NANKI-POO. Enter CHORUS OF NOBLES.*) 52

"BEHOLD THE LORD HIGH  
EXECUTIONER"  
Chorus and Solo  
Ko-Ko and MEN

CHORUS: Behold the Lord High Executioner!  
A personage of noble rank and title—  
A dignified and potent officer,  
Whose functions are particularly vital!  
Defer, defer,  
To the Lord High Executioner!  
(*Enter Ko-Ko, attended.*) 53



(left) George Grossmith as Ko-Ko;  
(above) The traditional clown of pantomime.



53 (*Enter Ko-Ko attended.*) Staggering under the weight of his executioner's sword, the diminutive Ko-Ko is comically anticlimactic to the fanfare that has announced him. Evolving from a lineage begun by Joseph Grimaldi, Ko-Ko is the quintessence of the English clown. Unlike the traditional clown of pantomime, however, he is touchingly human and is held unmercifully accountable for his wiles and connivery--an idea Gilbert first explored in "A Consistent Pantomime" (1875). Indeed, the machinations of the plot bear down more heavily upon Ko-Ko than any other character in the opera. The role requires the agility of a Chaplin, the high-strung timidity of a Stan Laurel, and the verbal timing of a Groucho Marx (who himself was fond

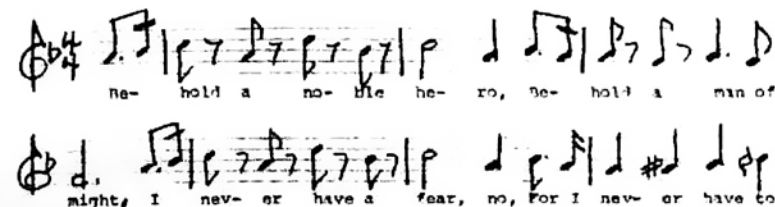
52 Enter Chorus of nobles. The operatic procession was one of the dearest vanities of the Georgian stage and a favorite target of Victorian burlesque. This procession begins with a flurry of pageantry and dissolves by the time Ko-Ko enters into one of the funniest anticlimaxes of comic opera. The scene has often been imitated on the musical stage and in the cinema (most notably in the Marx Brothers' Duck Soup.

Sullivan launches the joke with a fanfare of heroic proportions that parodies the operatic soldiers' choruses of Bellini and Donizetti. The polyrhythm developed between cornets and orchestra creates a comic shuffling and mirrors Gilbert's

"Japanglican" stage business. The chorus which then heralds the entrance of the Lord High Executioner is sung to a vulgar tune more fit for a music-hall entertainer. Critics thought Sullivan had parodied the popular ballad, "A Fine Old English Gentleman":



But a model closer to Gilbert's text as well as to Sullivan's tune is the music-hall favorite, "Behold the Noble Hero":





Ko: Taken from the county jail <sup>54</sup>  
 By a set of curious chances;  
 Liberated then on bail,  
 On my own recognizances;  
 Wafted by a favouring gale,  
 As one sometimes is in trances,  
 To a height that few can scale,  
 Save by long and weary dances;  
 Surely, never had a male  
 Under such like circumstances  
 So adventurous a tale,  
 Which may rank with most ro-  
 mances. <sup>55</sup>

Ko: Gentlemen, I'm much touched by this reception. I can only trust that by strict attention to duty I shall ensure a continuance of those favours which it will ever be my study to deserve. If I should ever be called upon to act professionally, I am happy to think that there will be no difficulty in finding plenty of people whose loss will be a distinct gain to society at large. <sup>56</sup>



of taking the part).

One in a long list of Gilbert's "self-made men," Ko-Ko and his bizarre predicament leans toward a satire of the late-nineteenth-century nouveau riche. Gilbert began this series of Savoy characters with the Judge in Trial By Jury. Sir Joseph Porter in Pinafore followed. All three have attained an exalted social position by fluke or cunning and are consequently unequal to the duties of their office, a situation fraught with possibilities for Gilbert's humorous development. The learned judge proves to be a judicial imbecile; the brave commander of the Navy is, in truth, a seasicknamby-pamby, constantly accompanied by all his female relatives; and the weighty responsibility of executioner is shouldered by a timid tailor--a juxtaposition probably suggested to Gilbert by the fairy tale.

<sup>54</sup> Taken from the county jail. This solo is one example of what Isaac Goldberg has called "the autobiographical song" (1928). In Gilbert's hands it constitutes a compressed confession enlivened by amusing rhymes. Tony Mayer, who translated Le Mikado in 1965, reported this particular verse of Gilbert's to be a decided challenge to his skills as a translator:

Par un hasard fabuleux  
 Tiré d'la prison centrale,  
 J' fus libéré fait heureux  
 De manière libérale.  
 Tel fut le début curieux  
 D'une carrière peu banale;  
 Sans a-coups et peu à peu  
 J'monte dans l'échell' sociale;  
 Puis mon ascension a lieu  
 De manière verticale...

Et d'un sort miraculeux  
 Voici l'issue triomphale.

<sup>55</sup> most romances. Ko-Ko's sensational rise from convict to king is in the same tradition as Hugo's The Man in the Iron Mask. Nineteenth-century French and English novels relied heavily upon such devices, and unexpected inheritances, awards of high office, calamity and other improbable strokes of luck were common. Though the convention may seem contrived by current standards of reality, it mirrored in its own day the phenomenally rapid rise of the middle-class through such expanded means as industry, increased access to public office and financial speculation (see Dalziel, 1957 and Reed, 1975).



<sup>56</sup> Gentlemen...my study to deserve. Ko-Ko's speech was modified by Gilbert after the première, when the song which follows occurred later in the act. Gilbert writes in The Story of The Mikado that Ko-Ko's speech here "was really an echo of one of his trade circulars."

"AS SOME DAY IT MAY  
HAPPEN" 57  
Solo and Chorus  
Ko-Ko and MEN

Ko: As some day it may happen that a victim  
must be found,  
I've got a little list—I've got a little  
list  
Of society offenders who might well be  
underground, 58  
And who never would be missed—who  
never would be missed!

57 "As some day it may happen." The "patter song" of the opera. The term "patter" originally referred to the rapid cant used by hucksters and mountebanks to spellbind their audiences. Parallels to Gilbert and Sullivan's patter-songs can be found in the operas of Mozart, Grétry, Rossini and in Aristophanes' gnigos ("choker"), but the English version of the song evolved primarily from the independent efforts of Theodore Hook (1788-1841) and James Smith (1775-1838). Smith's and Hook's songs featured long couplets with internal and double rhymes, a wide breadth of subject matter and many topical allusions. They were usually written to

existent airs, although Hook sometimes wrote his own tunes. Both Hook and Smith wrote some of their best patter songs for Charles Matthews, Sr. (1776-1835). Matthews was a rare comedian with a highly retentive memory and an uncanny gift for mimicry. His "At Homes" were unique entertainments featuring himself alone on stage in a multitude of male and female guises, and highlighted by his singing what Smith had dubbed "scrimble-scramble." Between each verse Matthews would stop the music and introject patter--in his case a jumble of mimicry, jokes, puns, and nonsense--and then return electrically to the next verse of the song. Due to its original context "scrimble-scramble" came to be called "patter-song."

Matthews' son, Charles the younger (1803-1878), continued his father's tradition; some of his patter songs were written by himself in imitation of Hook and some by Planché in imitation of Smith. Hook's The Invisible Prince was rewritten by Matthews the younger as Patter vs. Clatter and attained a great deal of popularity around mid-century. After Matthews Jr., these solo entertainments fell to Albert Smith, of whom Queen Victoria was quite fond, and Corney Grain. George Grossmith had just launched his career in these one-man shows when Gilbert hired him as a regular in the company.

The patter tradition reached its zenith with Gilbert and Sullivan. Isaac Goldberg noted, "There is something in the type--its appeal to dexterity, its unstemming flow of comment, its aliveness--that naturally appealed to Gilbert's electric temperament." It magnificently parades Gilbert's verbal virtuosity and, as Louis Untermeyer observed, has caused the delight and despair of a hundred imitators.

Although Sullivan's share in the song at first appears negligible, he lent the form his characteristic subtlety. Ernest Newman pointed



George Grossmith (1847-1912): "The fellow who played the comedy lead, Ko-Ko, and who managed to make up his eyes so that nothing was left but a couple of tiny crooked slits, seemed to have watch springs instead of joints" (Hanslick, 1886).

out that in Sullivan's best patter songs:

there is an extraordinary concord between the melody, the rhythm, and the verbal accentuation: examine any of them closely, and you will see how not only is the general rhythm of the verse most happily caught, but that the salient word or syllable invariably stands out coincidentally with the salient note of the phrase, so that in spite of the pace of the music everything is made ideally easy for the ear and the understanding. As with all good vocal

melodies, the words and the music seem not the ordinary chance rider planted on the back of a chance horse, but a centaur union" (1919).

Grossmith's talent for patter songs is said to have been formidable. Horace Hutchinson noted, "He could bring the words out, racing after one another with a most terrific speed, and yet each one vocalised so distinctly that even a deaf man could not miss it." Between the three of them, Gilbert, Sullivan and Grossmith made "scrimble-scramble" into an enduring song form.

58 society offenders who might well be underground. Most of Gilbert's targets are tried-and-true butts of the eighteen-eighties. Punch and other humorous weeklies had already proved the laughability of them. Arthur Liebman notes the similarity between Ko-Ko's patter and another "little list" song in Aristophanes' Frogs:

The knave who tries to procure supplies  
for the use of the enemy's armaments;  
The Cyclian singer who dares befoul  
the Lady Hecate's wayside shrine;  
The public speaker who once lampooned  
in our Bacchic feasts would, with  
/heart malign,  
Keep nibbling away the Comedians pay;--  
to these I utter my warning cry.





THE ONLY CORRECT &  
 AUTHORIZED EDITION  
 MUSIC OF THE  
**ETHIOPIAN SERENADERS**



(left) a ballad  
 cover; (right)  
 "the piano-  
 organist" (from  
Punch)



GREAT HANDLE FESTIVAL OF 1885.

Ko: There's the nigger serenader, and the 61  
 others of his race,  
 And the piano-organist—I've got him 62  
 on the list!  
 And the people who eat peppermint and  
 puff it in your face, 63  
 They never would be missed—they  
 never would be missed!

constant throughout the nineteenth century. Primarily a family entertainment, it consisted of a group of men in blackface, sitting in a semi-circle with banjos, tambourines, bones and one-string fiddles. After the stentorial pronouncement, "Gentlemen, be seated!" the stage was set for a series of Stephen Foster ballads, appalling choruses, soft-shoe dances and hackneyed playlets in Negro dialect. Periodic interruptions would occur when Mr. Interlocuter (middle-man) would exchange with Mr. Bones and Mr. Tambourine (end-men) the stalest jokes of the day (Gilbert parodies one of them in A Sensation Novel).

Even though Ruskin indicted the minstrel show as one of the factors in corrupting public musical taste, this did not keep Queen Victoria from requesting a command performance of White's Serenaders at Arundel Castle. She was "very much amused" and gave each member of the troupe a ring bearing the royal crest.

Sullivan directed the production of a minstrel

show when he was a student in Leipsig and recorded that the continental audience, who had never seen one before, was "ill with laughing." The serenaders eventually caught on in France and the music survives in some of Debussy's piano solos (see Paskman & Spaeth, 1928).

62 the piano-organist. The nineteenth century was the age of the mechanical musical instrument. These robot musicians were the forerunners of the phonograph. The piano-organ (or handle-piano or street-piano) was a mechanical pianoforte operated on the drum-and-pin principle of the barrel-organ and music box. Street beggars relied upon them and became objects of scathing criticism. The Illustrated London News rhetorically wondered how many suicides they had caused.

Gilbert loathed them, although a tone of jealousy creeps into an observation he once made that the organ-grinder has it "in his power to

61 nigger serenader was changed to "banjo serenader" when it became the onerous epithet for black people, which was not the case in the nineteenth century. In Gilbert's day it referred specifically to the minstrel craze. White's Ethiopian Serenaders, Christy's Nigger Serenaders, and countless street groups were all Caucasians in blackface. Christy's had opened in St. James' Hall in 1859, launching in England what had already been in vogue for years in the United States. The minstrel show had come to London from the States via the Great Exhibition of 1851; Berlioz had seen it there and was greatly impressed. The format of the minstrel show stayed



poison the atmosphere with his hideous music whenever he pleases." "Encouraging" organ-grinders is one of the unspeakable crimes of Gilbert's bad baronet in A Sensation Novel.

63 and puff it in your face. Gilbert acquired his aversion to peppermint drops during his early days in the theatre where the confection was the forerunner to modern-day popcorn. In one of his Thumbnail Sketches he wrote,

Then I take objection to people who  
crack nuts--to people who eat oranges  
and peppermint drops" ("Sitting at a  
Play," 1868).

Peppermint drops and the theatre came together at least as early as 1833, when London's Strand Theatre attempted to evade the licensing laws by granting free admission to purchasers of a half-ounce of peppermint drops for two shillings.

Then the idiot who praises, with enthusiastic tone,  
 All centuries but this, and every country but his own; <sup>64</sup>  
 And the lady from the provinces, who dresses like a guy; <sup>66</sup> 65  
 And "who doesn't think she dances, but would rather like to try";  
 And that singular anomaly, the lady novelist—<sup>67</sup>  
 I don't think she'd be missed—I'm sure she'd not be missed!

CHORUS: He's got her on the list—he's got her on the list;  
 And I don't think she'll be missed—I'm sure she'll not be missed!



(left) "Every country but his own" - Whistler and Ruskin (by Max Beerbohm);

(right) "The lady from the provinces" (Punch)



A Disenchantment.

VERY UNSOPHISTICATED OLD LADY (from the extremely remote country). "Dear me! He's a very different-looking Person from what I had always imagined!"

<sup>64</sup> all centuries...every country but his own: a reference to the Aesthetic movement. The year before The Mikado had witnessed the publication of Huysman's Au Rebus, the novel celebrating the unnatural and which instantly caught the fancy of Oscar Wilde and other Aesthetes (it inspired Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Grey). Wilde later wrote almost a paraphrase of Gilbert's jibe:

The two things that every artist should avoid are modernity of form and modernity of subject-matter. To us who live in the nineteenth century, any century is a suitable subject for art

except our own (The Decay of Lying).

And just three weeks before the première of The Mikado, Helen D'Oyly Carte had arranged James McNeill Whistler's famous art lecture, "The Ten O'Clock," at Prince's Hall. Whistler (an American residing in England and enamored of France and Japan) laid down several dictums in his lecture, one of which was that art should be totally free from the influence of any one country's national character. On the première of The Mikado Whistler was one of the more prominent members of the audience.

<sup>65</sup> lady from the provinces. The exodus from country to city reached its zenith in the 'eighties, and the naiveté of the ubiquitous countryfolk provided a new source of amusement to sophisticated London. The lady from the provinces was a recurrent joke in Du Maurier's cartoons from Punch.

<sup>66</sup> like a guy: grotesque, like an effigy.

67 that singular anomaly, the lady novelist.

In 1856, an unsigned letter to the Westminster Review condemned the "silly novels by lady novelists"; the author of the letter was George Eliot. Clearly, the "lady novelist" did not include such figures as Eliot, Austen, or the Brontës. Gilbert is specifically jibing writers of the "ladies' novel," a relatively new form which appeared about mid-century. In her incisive study of the genre, The Singular Anomaly, Vineta Colby states that the original ladies' novel was distinguished by its ethical and didactic purpose. Secondly, it was characterized by flexibility, simultaneously serving the purposes of art, entertainment, education, propaganda, and polemics. Some of the most notable authors were Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Eliza Linton, Olive Schreiner and Amelie Opie. As the century moved on the form became increasingly devoted to emotionalism. Forest Reid (1930) noted that the lady novelists "weren't afraid to gush." The gushing was carried on to the end of the century by Rhoda Broughton and others, and culminated with Ouida's "silver-fork" novels with their occasionally ludicrous descriptions of foxhunts and cavalry charges. With the flourishing of the women's movement after the turn of the century, the ladies' novel subsided and Gilbert's joke lost its topical appeal. In modern performances of The Mikado this line is often updated.



*"That singular anomaly, the lady novelist"*

*Amelie Opie (1769-1853)*



Ko: And that *Nisi Prius* nuisance, who just  
 now is rather rife, 68  
 The Judicial humorist—I've got him  
 on the list!  
 All funny fellows, comic men, and clowns  
 of private life— 69  
 They'd none of 'em be missed—they'd  
 none of 'em be missed!  
 And apologetic statesmen of a compro-  
 mising kind, 70  
 Such as—what d'ye call him—Thing-'em-  
 bob, and likewise—never mind,  
 And 'St—'st—'st— and What's-his-  
 name, and also You-know-  
 who—  
 The task of filling up the blanks I'd  
 rather leave to you.  
 But it really doesn't matter whom you  
 put upon the list,  
 For they'd none of 'em be missed—  
 they'd none of 'em be missed!  
 CHORUS: You may put 'em on the list, etc. 71

68 Nisi Prius--literally, "unless before."  
 This legal term alludes to provincial  
 cases which were supposed to be heard in  
 London with a jury selected from the towns  
 from which they arose, unless they had been  
 heard before the London date by the High  
 Court on circuit. To save expense, officials  
 arranged the date of the London trial after  
 the scheduled Assize Sessions (circuit  
 court). The cases were then tried by the  
 Assize Judge, called also a Nisi Prius  
 Judge. Gilbert, who as a barrister had  
 traveled with the Assize Sessions, is spe-  
 cifically attacking the tendency of such  
 judges to flaunt their wit before a cap-  
 tive audience. By the turn of the century,  
 Mr. Justice Darling had made this tendency

notorious.

In his record of a day at the Assize Sessions,  
 Gilbert observed:

In the present day, communication  
 with assize towns is so easy, that a  
 judge travels with little more pomp  
 than an ordinary mortal; he is accom-  
 panied by his marshals, generally  
 young gentlemen known in the clubs,  
 and a footman who carries the wig  
 and robes, without which wisdom is  
 supposed to be wanting even in a  
 judge. ("Honors of the Shrievalty,"  
 1865).

69 clowns of private life. In its original  
 run this line was sung by one of its own  
 targets, George Grossmith, whose autobiography  
 is entitled A Society Clown (1888).

70 apologetic statesmen of a compromising  
kind. Little more than a month before  
 the première, Prime Minister Gladstone had  
 suffered the most humiliating event of his  
 political career, one which led to the defeat  
 of his government four months later: Because  
 he felt that General Gordon's stand in the  
 Sudan had misrepresented his original orders,  
 the Prime Minister had refused to send troops  
 to the popular military leader, who was meet-  
 ing the Mahdi and his own destiny at Khartoum.  
 News of Gordon's massacre reached London on  
 February 5, amid massive public outrage, and  
 for days afterward crowds gathered at West-  
 minster to hoot and jeer in protest. By way of  
 "apology," Gladstone was forced to reverse his  
 stand and announce that for reasons of national  
 prestige and peace and security in Egypt--



"That Nisi Prius nuisance"  
 (Sketch by Gilbert)



"Funny fellows,  
 comic men"  
 George  
 Grossmith  
 (Strand Magazine)

reasons he "detested"--, it would now be necessary to crush the Mahdi. The apology came too late and public vehemence did not abate for three more weeks, directly up through the première of The Mikado (see Magnus, 1964).

When Grossmith came to this last verse, Sullivan relaxed his beat, forcing the audience to the edge of their seats in anticipation. But Gilbert gave them one of his best jokes--nothing! The Daily News noted that "the outburst of merriment which followed on the conclusion of the lyric showed that the audience greatly enjoyed the joke of this evasion."

7 | You may put 'em on the list, etc. Ko-Ko's "little list" is the most topical song in the G&S series, and the verses are often altered to suit the current foibles of any particular day and locale. This is a practice that began with Gilbert, who throughout The Mikado's numerous revivals regularly updated the list. In one version he added:

The public curse, the Parliamentary obstructionist--  
The frothy Hyde Park ranter and the  
'scorching' bicyclist.

In the 1908 revival Gilbert wrote an entire encore-verse which included "All dramatic censors who to private rights are blind" (this was after the Lord Chamberlain's ban on The Mikado), "the lovely suffragist," and "the red-hot socialist" (see Allen, 1963 and Boyer, 1970). In The Story of the Mikado, written especially for children, Gilbert includes "all narrow-minded people who are stingy with their jam" and "the torture-dealing dentist with the forceps in his fist."



"Apologetic statesmen"  
(Punch, 1885)



(*Exeunt* CHORUS. *Enter* POOH-BAH.)

KO: Pooh-Bah, it seems that the festivities in connection with my approaching marriage must last a week. I should like to do it handsomely, and I want to consult you as to the amount I ought to spend upon them.

POOH: Certainly. In which of my capacities? As First Lord of the Treasury, Lord Chamberlain, Attorney-General, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Privy Purse, or Private Secretary? 72

KO: Suppose we say as Private Secretary.

POOH: Speaking as your Private Secretary, I should say that as the city will have to pay for it, don't stint yourself, do it well.

KO: Exactly—as the city will have to pay for it. That is your advice.

POOH: As Private Secretary. Of course you will understand that, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, I am bound to see that due economy is observed. 73

KO: Oh! But you said just now "don't stint yourself, do it well."

POOH: As Private Secretary.

KO: And now you say that due economy must be observed.

POOH: As Chancellor of the Exchequer.

KO: I see. Come over here, where the Chancellor can't hear us. (*They cross the*

72 Privy Purse. The treasurer of the British monarch's private income.

73 Of course you will understand... Pooh-Bah's conflict of interests is foreshadowed in the Lord Chancellor's first-act speech (Iolanthe). Some feel that it is foreshadowed much earlier in Dickens' Tale of Two Cities--the passage in which Mr. Stryker imagines himself in court:

[Stryker] argued with the jury on substantial grounds--the only grounds ever worth taking into account--it was a plain case and had not a weak spot in it. He called himself for the plaintiff, there was no getting over his evidence, the counsel for the defendant threw up his brief, and the jury did not even turn to consider.

stage.) Now, as my Solicitor, how do you advise me to deal with this difficulty?

POOH: Oh, as your Solicitor, I should have no hesitation in saying "chance it—"

KO: Thank you. (*Shaking his hand*) I will.

POOH: If it were not that, as Lord Chief Justice, I am bound to see that the law isn't violated.

KO: I see. Come over here, where the Chief Justice can't hear us. (*They cross the stage.*) Now, then, as First Lord of the Treasury?

POOH: Of course, as First Lord of the Treasury, I could propose a special vote that would cover all expenses, if it were not that, as Leader of the Opposition, it would be my duty to resist it, tooth and nail. Or, as Paymaster-General, I could so cook the accounts that, as Lord High Auditor, I should never discover the fraud. But then, as Archbishop of Titipu, it would be my duty to denounce my dishonesty and give myself into my own custody as First Commissioner of Police. 74

KO: That's extremely awkward.

POOH: I don't say that all these distinguished people couldn't be squared; but it is right to tell you that they wouldn't be sufficiently degraded in their own estimation unless they are insulted with a very considerable bribe. 75

KO: The matter shall have my careful consideration. But my bride and her sisters approach, and any little compliment on your part, such as an abject grovel in a characteristic Japanese attitude, would be esteemed a favour. 76

74 Archbishop of Titipu. PooH-Bah traditionally completes the sentence in the stilted monotone of the Anglican clergy.

75 very considerable bribe. Political graft had captured public attention ever since the passing of the "Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act" in 1983. In this Act the taking of monetary bribes by politicians was finally declared illegal, and maximum amounts for campaign expenditures were set.

76 a favour. Barrington added a gag here: "No money, no grovel." Gilbert tried to nip the gag from performances but later succumbed to it himself in The Story of The Mikado:

"No, no," said PooH-Bah, "grovels are extra. No money, no grovel." And as Ko-Ko had no more to give him, the grovel had to be dispensed with.



"A very considerable bribe"  
(Punch)

(*Exeunt together. Enter procession of YUM-YUM'S SCHOOLFELLOWS, heralding YUM-YUM, PEEP-BO, and PITTI-SING.*)

"COMES A TRAIN OF LITTLE LADIES" 77

Chorus  
GIRLS

Comes a train of little ladies  
From scholastic trammels free, 78  
Each a little bit afraid is,  
Wond'ring what the world can be!

Is it but a world of trouble—  
Sadness set to song? 79  
Is its beauty but a bubble  
Bound to break ere long?

Are its palaces and pleasures  
Fantasies that fade?  
And the glory of its treasures  
Shadow of a shade?

Schoolgirls we, eighteen and under,  
From scholastic trammels free,  
And we wonder—how we wonder!—  
What on earth the world can be!

77 "Comes a train of little ladies" is one of Gilbert and Sullivan's loveliest choruses. The zephyr-like string accompaniment was evolved from Sullivan's musings with a musical chuckle (see pp ). Gilbert's words show more than a passing familiarity with Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat. Words and music blend so well in this wistful song that Gervase Hughes called it "a supreme example of their happy collaboration in capturing an atmosphere of youthful femininity trembling deliciously on the threshold of womanhood" (1960).

78 From scholastic trammels free. Gilbert brought his "Japanese" schoolgirls onto the stage in the familiar "crocodile train" of the English ladies' seminary. These processions--two abreast, tallest to the shortest--through the public streets constituted the only physical exercise permitted to pupils of these strict and staid Victorian institutions. (Additional insight into the ladies' seminary can be found in Mrs. Ewing's novel Six to Sixteen and in Dickens' Edwin Drood.)

Gilbert delays the appearance of females on stage for nearly a full half-hour after the opening curtain. Their entry at this point, en masse with authentic costumes and a shuffling gait perfected under the tutelage of two Japanese tea-girls, electrified the first-night audience. Outfitting English schoolgirls with Japanese dress and manners was a genuine Gilbertian juxtaposition, and one that was a bit magical, unusually pretty, and quite unlike anything that had preceded it in the opera.

The scene had an explosive effect on the world of women's fashion. Liberty Fabrics, who supplied the Eastern material for the Savoy costumes, couldn't fill orders quickly enough.



"A train of little ladies" (Dubbaurier)

79 Is it but a world...set to song? Though one hesitates to single out any part of Sullivan's beautifully framed composition for this chorus, the orchestral pastels that tint the melody of these particular lines are characteristic of the whole. Gilbert's charming words seem almost breathed by the orchestra alone. The deeper resonance of the violas, slightly brightened by woodwinds, follow the sweeping curve of "Is it but a world of trouble." Then in the retraction to "Sadness set to song," only the plaintiveness of the oboe joins the violas.



"Schoolgirls we, eighteen and under"  
(D'Oyly Carte Company, 1970)



"THREE LITTLE MAIDS FROM  
SCHOOL ARE WE"<sup>80</sup>

Trio and Chorus

YUM-YUM, PEEP-BO, PITTI-SING, and GIRLS

TRIO: Three little maids from school are we,  
Pert as a school-girl well can be,  
Filled to the brim with girlish glee,<sup>81</sup>  
Three little maids from school!

YUM: Everything is a source of fun. (*Chuckle*)<sup>82</sup>

PEEP: Nobody's safe, for we care for none!  
(*Chuckle*)

PITTI: Life is a joke that's just begun!  
(*Chuckle*)

TRIO: Three little maids from school!  
(*Dancing*)

Three little maids who, all unwary,  
Come from a ladies' seminary,  
Freed from its genius tutelary—

(*Suddenly demure*)<sup>83</sup>  
Three little maids from school!



The original "Three little maids"  
Sybil Grey, Leonora Braham, and Jessie Bond

80 "Three little maids from school are we."

This celebrated trio is the first song Sullivan composed for The Mikado (four days before Christmas) and serves as the fulcrum of the first act. It is included in James Fuld's The Book of World Famous Music, which also traces the history of the song's astounding sales in sheet music. Wedded to some of Gilbert's happiest lyrics, the music contains more than a dash of the irrepressible French. Writing in 1942 Ian Parrott observed that "for faultless modulation, brilliant orchestration... together with the utmost vivacity, 'Three little maids from school' in 'The Mikado' is outstanding."

The trio was a coup de theatre for the first-night audience. In his autobiography Rutland Barrington wrote that it

was received with such enthusiasm and insistent encores as no musical numbers in my experience, or I believe in anyone else's, has ever equalled. It seemed as if we should never get on with the rest of the piece.

Beatty-Kingston noted for The Theatre that the first-night audience insisted on hearing it three times

and would gladly have listened to a fourth, had not their request been steadfastly declined. Nothing fresher, gayer, or more captivating has ever bid for public favour than this delightful composition.

In his diary Sullivan recorded his pleasure in the "treble encore" the trio received on its premier performance.

(From  
an  
18th-  
century  
Japanese  
print)



Although Gilbert was certainly aware of the Japanese artistic convention of grouping women in three's, the idea more likely came from a tradition of the English harlequinade. In his own Harlequin Cock Robin Gilbert had introduced "the Fairies Oak, Willow, and Fir--three fairy subordinates who are rooted to one spot but are never in want of change as they always have a little Sylva about them."

Gilbert claimed, however, that the idea of the Three Little Maids came from simply fitting the existing company with parts:

The accident that Miss Braham, Miss Jessie Bond, and Miss Sybil Grey, are short in stature and all of a height, suggested the advisability of grouping them as three Japanese schoolgirls who should work together throughout the piece.

The success of this "accident" can be weighed by the depth of its impact upon the dourest of continental music critics, Eduard Hanslick:



"Three Beauties"  
by  
Utamaro

The three pretty Japanese maids, giggling and laughing, forever putting their heads together, comprise a particularly original picture, one which impresses itself indelibly upon the memory. With their handling of the fans, their mercurial leaps and turns, they stir up a veritable whirlwind (1886).

Leonora Braham and Jessie Bond were the Savoy's two leading ladies. Their highly entertaining interaction throughout the opera was enhanced by the catalytic addition of Sybil Grey, until then a chorister and occasional minor soloist. By way of this magical trinity Gilbert's maids became a unified, composite character rivalling a similar dramatic device in The Magic Flute.

81 glee. Through the use of a simple portamento Sullivan transforms Gilbert's word "glee" into its emotional realization. Ingenious writing like this, regardless of its simplicity, has generated an opinion held in common by critics of divergent musical expertise:

You may examine number after number of his, and the more closely you examine the more will you be convinced that no composer ever lived with an exacter appreciation of words, their meaning, their due emphasis, their right articulation (Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1930).

Sullivan set our language to music with a skill and sensitiveness that have never been surpassed and very rarely equalled. There is no trace of that self-consciousness which sometimes obtrudes itself in the works

of Stanford or Parry, composers who both attached great importance to the proper setting of English words. Sullivan's settings always sound so natural as to be inevitable (Francis Toye, 1939).

82 (Chuckle). Sullivan eventually instrumented Gilbert's "chuckle" with flute, piccolo, and pizzicato strings. The tea-girls had taught that Japanese ladies laugh with a hissing sound. Since Sullivan always orchestrated his score after watching Gilbert's stage business, this hiss is an integral component of his instrumentation.

83 (Suddenly demure). In his original score Sullivan emphasized their sudden demureness with a whole-measure rest. During an orchestra rehearsal of the 1895 revival of The Mikado the composer added a "bassoon joke" (see score). Sullivan was pleased with the effect and confessed to the members of the orchestra that he had been waiting ten years to add that particular "gag." Thomas Dunhill, in his book on Sullivan's music (1928), singled out this "curling phrase" for the bassoon, calling it one of "the most delicious of afterthoughts."



YUM: One little maid is a bride, Yum-Yum—  
 PEEP: Two little maids in attendance come—  
 PITTI: Three little maids is the total sum.  
 TRIO: Three little maids from school!  
 YUM: From three little maids take one away—  
 PEEP: Two little maids remain, and they—  
 PITTI: Won't have to wait very long, they say—  
 TRIO: Three little maids from school!  
 CHORUS: Three little maids from school!  
 ALL: (*dancing*)  
 Three little maids who, all unwary,  
 Come from a ladies' seminary,  
 Freed from its genius tutelary—  
 TRIO: (*suddenly demure*)  
 Three little maids from school!  
 ALL: Three little maids from school! 84



"Life is a joke that's just begun"  
 (The Illustrated London News)

84 All: Three little maids from school. Ever since its première The Mikado has been popular in Germany, where it was translated by Camillo Walzel and Richard Genée, librettists for both Johann Strauss and von Suppé. In their hands the famous trio became:

Drei aus dem Pensionat sind wir,  
 Ganze ohne Argwohn stehn wir hier  
 Denn unser Herz hüpf't vor Plaisir--  
 Drei aus dem Pensionat!

ending--

Drei kleine Mädchen süsse, gute,  
 Aus einen Damen-Institute,  
 Glückliche entwischt sind wir der Rutte--  
 Drei aus dem Pensionat!

In lavish praise of the opera the North German Gazette wrote:

We are conscious of entertaining a very pronounced predilection for all our home products, but we scruple not to confess that that, as a performance, The Mikado surpassed all our operettas.

This response was evaluated by Hanslick:

I should hardly have thought that this comedy, so packed with local references and specifically English jokes, would go over with a German audience. The fact is that it did--which would indicate that there is a healthy root of real comedy in the music, the play, and the performance.

Only a single critical response to the German Mikado was one of "modified rapture" and this was Gilbert's, who wrote of the performance



he saw at Carlsbad:

...some of my own characters I hardly recognized, save for five minutes at a time, when off they would go into the adapter's bypath, and I became profoundly interested in what would happen next. Pooh-Bah, in fact, quite interested me.



(Enter KO-KO and POOH-BAH.)

KO: At last, my bride that is to be! (*About to embrace her*)

YUM: You're not going to kiss me before all these people!

KO: Well, that was the idea.

YUM: (*aside to PEEP-BO*) It seems odd, doesn't it?

PEEP: It's rather peculiar.

PITTI: Oh, I expect it's all right. Must have a beginning, you know.

YUM: Well, of course I know nothing about these things; but I've no objection if it's usual.

KO: Oh, it's quite usual, I think. Eh, Lord Chamberlain? (*Appealing to POOH-BAH*)

POOH: I have known it done. (*KO-KO embraces her.*)

YUM: Thank goodness that's over! (*Sees NANKI-POO and rushes to him*) Why, that's never you! (*The THREE GIRLS rush to him and shake his hands, all speaking at once.*) 85

YUM: Oh, I'm so glad! I haven't seen you for ever so long, and I'm right at the top of the school, and I've got three prizes, and I've come home for good, and I'm not going back any more!

PEEP: And have you got an engagement? Yum-Yum's got one, but she doesn't like it, and she'd ever so much rather it was you. I've come home for good, and I'm not going back any more!

PITTI: Now tell us all the news, because you go about everywhere, and we've been at school, but, thank goodness, that's all over now, and we've come home for good, and we're not going back any more!

(*These three speeches are spoken together in one breath.*)

KO: I beg your pardon. Will you present me?

YUM: Oh, this is the musician who used—

PEEP: Oh, this is the gentleman who used—

PITTI: Oh, it is only Nanki-Poo who used—

KO: One at a time, if you please.

85 all speaking at once. Note Gilbert's precise parallelism in the speeches that follow. He later remarked for a younger audience:

You can try if you like to say these three speeches at once as the three girls did. I should think it was difficult because I can't do it myself, and I know that anything that is too difficult for me to do must be very difficult indeed. But there's no reason why you shouldn't try--especially on a wet day, when you can't go out and find it rather dull at home (Story of The Mikado).

YUM: Oh, if you please, he's the gentleman who used to play so beautifully on the—on the—

PITTI: On the Marine Parade. <sup>86</sup>

YUM: Yes, I think that was the name of the instrument. <sup>87</sup>

NANKI: Sir, I have the misfortune to love your ward, Yum-Yum—oh, I know I deserve your anger!

KO: Anger! not a bit, my boy. Why, I love her myself. Charming little girl, isn't she? Pretty eyes, nice hair. Taking little thing, altogether. Very glad to hear my opinion backed by a competent authority. Thank you very much. Good-bye. (To PISH-TUSH) Take him away. (PISH-TUSH removes him.)

PITTI: (who has been examining POOH-BAH) I beg your pardon, but what is this? Customer come to try on? <sup>88</sup>

KO: That is a Tremendous Swell.

PITTI: Oh, it's alive. (She starts back in alarm.)

POOH: Go away, little girls. Can't talk to little girls like you. Go away, there's dears.

KO: Allow me to present you, Pooh-Bah. These are my three wards. The one in the middle is my bride-elect.

POOH: What do you want me to do to them? Mind, I will not kiss them.

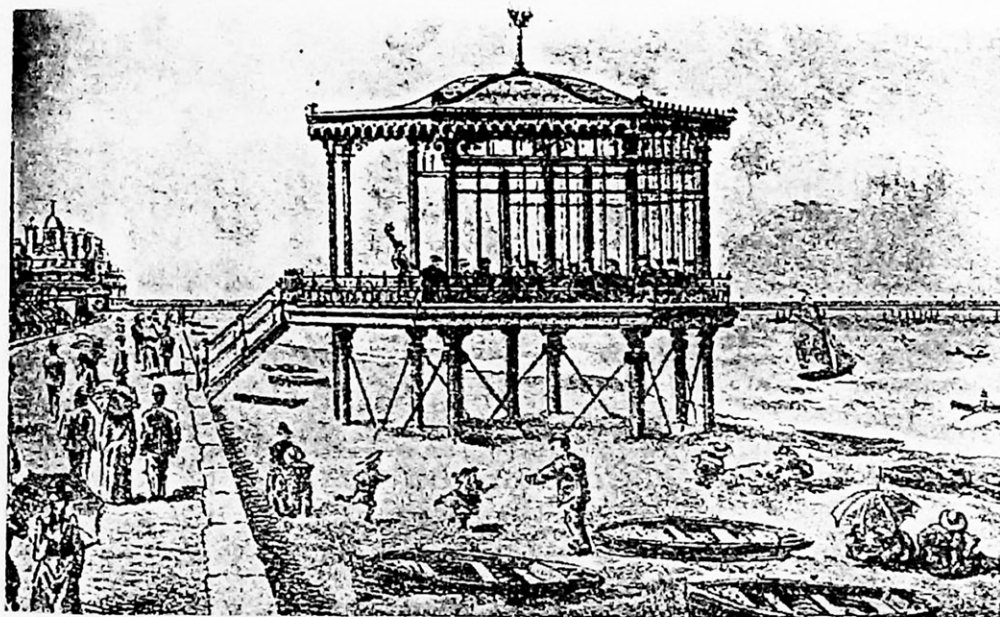
KO: No, no, you shan't kiss them: a little bow—a mere nothing—you needn't mean it, you know.

POOH: It goes against the grain. They are not young ladies, they are young persons.

KO: Come, come, make an effort, there's a good nobleman.

POOH: (aside to Ko-Ko) Well, I shan't mean it. (With a great effort) How de do, little girls, how de do? (Aside) Oh, my protoplasmal ancestor!

KO: That's very good. (Girls indulge in suppressed laughter.)



(left) The Eastbourne Grand Parade bandstand.

A critic complained that it resembled 'a bird-cage on stilts'

<sup>86</sup> On the Marine Parade. The bandstand at seaside resorts.

<sup>87</sup> the name of the instrument. A mediocre joke for which Gilbert maintained a father's affection. It was lifted almost intact from his 1877 adaptation On Bail:

Alfred: They exchanged vows of eternal fidelity; and, full of love and hope, he tore himself away from her to go to Brighton for six weeks during the season to play on--

Fanny: I know--the violin--

Alf: Wrong again--on the pier.

Fan: I don't know the instrument.

<sup>88</sup> Customer come to try on? A dig at Ko-Ko's former profession.



Poon: I see nothing to laugh at. It is very painful to me to have to say "How de do, little girls, how de do?" to young persons. I'm not in the habit of saying "How de do, little girls, how de do?" to anybody under the rank of a Stockbroker<sup>89</sup>

Ko: (*aside to girls*) Don't laugh at him, he can't help it—he's under treatment for it.<sup>90</sup> (*Aside to POOH-BAH*) Never mind them, they don't understand the delicacy of your position.

POOH: We know how delicate it is, don't we?

Ko: I should think we did! How a nobleman of your importance can do it at all is a thing I never can, never shall understand.

(Ko-Ko retires up and goes off.)

"SO PLEASE YOU, SIR, WE MUCH  
REGRET"<sup>91</sup>

Quartet and Chorus

YUM-YUM, PEEP-BO, PITTI-SING, POOH-BAH,  
and GIRLS

YUM, PEEP, and PITTI:

So please you, Sir, we much regret  
If we have failed in etiquette  
Towards a man of rank so high—  
We shall know better by and by.



<sup>89</sup>under the rank of stockbroker. Gilbert writes:

I don't know why he drew the line at a stockbroker, unless it is that when a member of the aristocracy is ruined he generally goes on the Stock Exchange (The Story of The Mikado).

<sup>90</sup>he's under treatment for it. Psychiatry, which would fully awaken ten years later with Freud, was just beginning to stir. In London, Henry Maudsley (1835-1918), a disciple of Darwin, had caused considerable public interest with his Physiology and Pathology of the Mind (1869). Public lectures on the treatment of insanity were common by the eighteen-eighties.

<sup>91</sup>"So please you, Sir, we much regret"

Gilbert originally conceived this captivating song as a quintet with a small part for Pish-Tush. Although Pish-Tush's lines survive in Sullivan's autograph score, Gilbert cut them during final rehearsals.

Sullivan's first draft of this number immediately follows that of "Three little maids" in his sketch-book, and the two songs are closely related in the Parisian flavor of their infectious gaiety. Comparison of Sullivan's first sketch with his finished composition shows few changes except for harmonic ones emphasizing the pentatonic mode (the idiom apparently gripped Sullivan more and more deeply as he became involved in the composition of this opera).

Sullivan's customary approach to setting Gilbert's verse began with a strict adherence

to the librettist's metre. This song, however, shows an exception to that practice. Sullivan's happy choice of dance rhythm creates a hypnotic catchiness; a slight variant of the rhythm of this chorus served as the accompaniment for one of Sullivan's most critically favored songs, "Were I they bride" from Yeomen of the Guard.



YUM:

But youth, of course, must have its fling,  
So pardon us,  
So pardon us,

PITTI:

And don't, in girlhood's happy spring,  
Be hard on us,  
Be hard on us,  
If we're inclined to dance and sing.  
Tra la la, etc. (*Dancing*)

CHORUS OF GIRLS:

But youth, of course, etc.

POOH:

I think you ought to recollect  
You cannot show too much respect  
Towards the highly titled few;  
But nobody does, and why should you!  
That youth at us should have its fling,  
Is hard on us,  
Is hard on us; <sup>92</sup>

To our prerogative we cling—  
So pardon us,  
So pardon us,  
If we decline to dance and sing.  
Tra la la, etc. (*Dancing*)

CHORUS OF GIRLS:

But youth, of course, etc.

(*Exeunt all but YUM-YUM. Enter NANKI-POO.*)

NANKI: Yum-Yum, at last we are alone! I have sought you night and day for three weeks, in the belief that your guardian was beheaded, and I find that you are about to be married to him this afternoon!

YUM: Alas, yes!

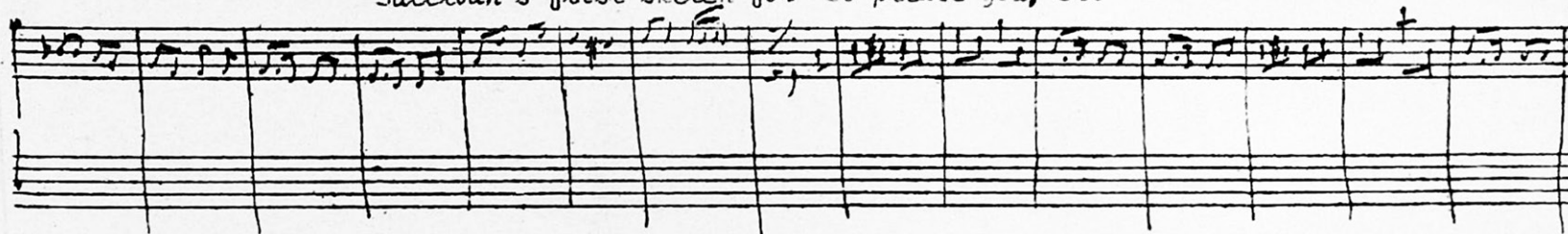
NANKI: But you do not love him?

YUM: Alas, no!

NANKI: Modified rapture! But why do you <sup>93</sup>  
not refuse him?



Sullivan's first sketch for "So please you, Sir"



<sup>92</sup> That youth...is hard on us appears to be the only line originally allotted to Pish-Tush. Even in Sullivan's autograph score, the line has been re-routed to Pooh-Bah's clef with Pish-Tush joining in only for the "Tra-la-las." Gilbert's elimination of Pish-Tush from the song altogether was a sound dramatic decision since it heightens the contrast between the merriment of the maids and the ponderousness of Pooh-Bah. (This is not the sole instance of Pish-Tush's elimination from a song; see Note 148.)

<sup>93</sup> Modified rapture! The original line was "Oh, rapture!" but Durward Lely, who premiered the role of Nanki-Poo, put too much emphasis on it for Gilbert. Consequently, during rehearsals the librettist had him repeat the line again and again, to the detriment of both men's good tempers. Finally Gilbert could contain himself no longer. "'Rapture,' yes, Mr. Lely, definitely 'rapture'--but modified rapture, please!"

The dialogue began again, and when his cue "Alas, no!" was spoken Lely blurted, "Oh, modified rapture!"

Gilbert first recovered and then agreed, "Modified rapture, indeed! Oh, very good. But don't speak the 'Oh,' Mr. Lely. Just leave it 'modified rapture.'"

YUM: What good would that do? He's my guardian, and he wouldn't let me marry you.

NANKI: But I would wait until you were of age!

YUM: You forget that in Japan girls do not arrive at years of discretion until they are fifty.

NANKI: True; from seventeen to forty-nine are considered years of indiscretion.

YUM: Besides—a wandering minstrel, who plays a wind instrument outside tea-houses, is hardly a fitting husband for the ward of a Lord High Executioner.

NANKI: But—(Aside) Shall I tell her? Yes! She will not betray me! (Aloud) What if it should prove that, after all, I am no musician!

YUM: There! I was certain of it, directly I heard you play!

NANKI: What if it should prove that I am no other than the son of his Majesty the Mikado?

YUM: The son of the Mikado! But why is your Highness disguised? And what has your Highness done? And will your Highness promise never to do it again? 94

NANKI: Some years ago I had the misfortune to captivate Katisha, an elderly lady of my father's Court. She misconstrued my customary affability into expressions of affection, and claimed me in marriage, under my father's law. My father, the Lucius Junius Brutus of his race, ordered me to marry her within a week, or perish ignominiously on the scaffold. That night I fled his Court, and, assuming the disguise of a Second Trombone, I joined the band in which you found me when I had the happiness of seeing you! (Approaching her) 95 96

YUM: (retreating) If you please, I think your Highness had better not come too near. The laws against flirting are excessively severe. 97

NANKI: But we are quite alone, and nobody can see us.

94 But why is your Highness disguised? From folk and fairy tales the prince or nobleman in disguise was transported via the dramas of Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) into plots of nineteenth-century opera and melodrama. Psychoanalyst Carl Jung was highly interested in the motif: A prince's magical invulnerability is dependent upon his assumption of a humble disguise, often that of a menial, and is relinquished upon the revelation of his true identity. When Freud wrote in Studies in Hysteria that the most important piece of a dream "is often announced as being a redundant accessory, like an opera prince disguised as a beggar," he is said to have had The Mikado in mind (see Feldman, 1958). Serious use of the motif is found in Balfé's Bohemian Girl, Wagner's Lohengrin and in Gozzi's Turandot--later a play by Schiller and then the opera by Puccini.

In the hands of the British blood-and-thunder melodramatists the theme became jaded through overuse. Gilbert burlesqued the convention in The Pirates of Penzance, all of whom are revealed to be noblemen in disguise. In The Mikado, however, his use of it is as genuinely dramatic as it is in Lohengrin and Turandot; in contrast to mere dénouement it is an essential aspect of the evolution of the plot. In his next opera Ruddigore, Gilbert returned to burlesque in the character of Robin Oakapple, a baronet in disguise. Later, the theme--a bit tired by this time--again recurred in His Excellency.

95 Lucius Junius Brutus--one of the first Roman consuls who, upon finding his two sons involved in an illegal conspiracy, promptly ordered their execution and witnessed the ceremony himself. Gilbert cribbed the line from Tennyson's The Princess, which



Durward Lely  
as  
Nanki-Poo

he had parodied in his "respectful perversion," Princess Ida. Tennyson's lines are:

She answer'd "Peace! And why should I  
not play  
The Spartan Mother with emotion, be  
The Lucius Junius Brutus of my kind?..."

96 a Second Trombone-- a peculiar disguise for a wandering minstrel-prince. George Baker offered a possible insight into Gilbert's choice of instrument in The Gilbert & Sullivan Journal: The Savoy orchestra, like other theatre orchestras, did not include a second trombone. Edward German and Charles Draper, both of whom had played in the Savoy pit, told Baker that Sullivan constantly complained about this restriction and that, as a private joke, Gilbert worked it into the libretto of The Mikado. (Sullivan finally got his second trombone two operas later for The Yeomen of the Guard.)

97 laws against flirting are excessively severe. Gilbert became a keen student



YUM: Still, that doesn't make it right. To flirt is capital.

NANKI: It is capital! 98

YUM: And we must obey the law.

NANKI: Deuce take the law! 99

YUM: I wish it would, but it won't!

NANKI: If it were not for that, how happy we might be!

YUM: Happy indeed!

NANKI: If it were not for the law, we should now be sitting side by side, like that. (*Sits by her*)

YUM: Instead of being obliged to sit half a mile off, like that. (*Crosses and sits at other side of stage*)

NANKI: We should be gazing into each other's eyes, like that. (*Approaching and gazing at her sentimentally*)

YUM: Breathing sighs of unutterable love—like that. (*Sighing and gazing lovingly at him*)

NANKI: With our arms round each other's waists, like that. (*Embracing her*)

YUM: Yes, if it wasn't for the law.

NANKI: If it wasn't for the law.

YUM: As it is, of course we couldn't do anything of the kind.

NANKI: Not for worlds!

YUM: Being engaged to Ko-Ko, you know!

NANKI: Being engaged to Ko-Ko!

of history and culture when he began plotting any of his works for the stage. Preposterous as it may seem, Gilbert may have based his law against flirting on actual nineteenth-century, Japanese social custom. A consultant to the original production of The Mikado later recorded:

Amateur flirting does not exist in Japanese social life. The accomplishments that ensure a woman's social success in the Occident are relegated, in the Far East, to those who are paid to entertain the men...I fancy I hear my fair Readers exclaim: "Not the least little bit of innocent flirtation! What a stupid country to live in!" Certainly, the absence of that freedom in the relations of young people of different sex, which is usual with the English-speaking nations, deprives the young Japanese of much harmless pleasure, but it is not, as might be thought, a hindrance to marriage, for, in Japan, everybody's betrothal is arranged through the intermediary of the Makodo, or "Go-between," who negotiates with the parents on both sides (Arthur Dlosy, The New Far East).

If Gilbert had discovered this characteristic of nineteenth-century Japanese society (he became quite absorbed in the "natives" at Knightsbridge), his dramatic injunction against flirting represents nothing more preposterous than legislating the improper into the illegal. And as an observant Victorian barrister, Gilbert had known countless such occurrences.

98 It is capital! An interpolated gag from Durward Lely. Yum-Yum's original speech was, "To flirt is capital and we must obey the law."

99 Deuce take the law! The letter of the law provides a foil for the dramatic tension which is developed in a number of Savoy operas. This came naturally to one of Gilbert's legal training and is discussed by attorney Weston Hatfield in his article published in the American Bar Association Journal (1960).

"WERE YOU NOT TO KO-KO  
PLIGHTED"<sup>100</sup>

Duet

YUM-YUM and NANKI-POO

NANKI: Were you not to Ko-Ko plighted,  
I would say in tender tone,  
"Loved one, let us be united—  
Let us be each other's own!"  
I would merge all rank and station,  
Worldly sneers are naught to us,  
And, to mark my admiration,  
I would kiss you fondly thus—

(Kissing her)

{ YUM: He would kiss me fondly thus } (Kiss)  
{ NANKI: I would kiss you fondly thus }

YUM: But as I'm engaged to Ko-Ko,  
To embrace you thus, *con fuoco*,  
Would distinctly be no *gioco*,<sup>101</sup>  
And for ~~you~~ I should get *toco*,<sup>102</sup>

BOTH: Toco, toco, toco, toco!

NANKI: So, in spite of all temptation,  
Such a theme I'll not discuss,  
And on no consideration  
Will I kiss you fondly thus—

(Kissing her)

Let me make it clear to you,  
This is what I'll never do,  
This, oh, this—oh, this—oh, this—<sup>103</sup>

(Kissing her)

BOTH: This, oh, this—etc.

(*Exeunt in opposite directions. Enter Ko-Ko.*)

<sup>100</sup>"Were you not to Ko-Ko plighted" Beatty-Kingston wrote that "the duet between Yum-Yum and Nanki-Poo is simply charming. There is no prettier number in the opera than this." The Saturday Review called the lyric "a hypothetical love song" since, in Lady Blanche's words, it dwells on the "Might be" rather than the "Is."

The love scene was obligatory as far as the audience was concerned, and both author and composer gave it its due with little personal interest. Gilbert was best in love scenes that allowed him to be clever and common-sensical rather than tender, such as in this one; Edmund Wilson suggests that the common-sense motivation, rather than the expected romantic, of Shaw's Arms and The Man and You Never Can Tell is a debt to Gilbert. On Sullivan's part, Ernest Newman observed that in most of the Savoy's love lyrics the composer fails to rise "even to the height of Gilbert's pedestrian muse...At the best he is merely sentimental in the British ballad style: at the worst he is intolerably dull." The music of this particular duet hovers precariously somewhere in between.

<sup>101</sup>con fuoco and giuoco: musical terms; the former means fiery and spirited, the latter indicates a playful manner. Sullivan's setting for this stanza is both.

<sup>102</sup>toco. Victorian schoolboy slang for punishment. Gilbert's entire verse is a crib from J. R. Planché's The Discrete Princess (1855):

Let him appear, oh  
Shan't he get toco



For yam as surely  
As I stand here!  
On his base marrow-bones  
I with this cleaver  
Will 'con fuoco'  
Play without fear!

<sup>103</sup>This, oh, this--oh, this--oh this--  
Sullivan phrases this line with pauses  
for kisses which are punctuated by the French  
horn.



Ko: (looking after YUM-YUM) There she goes! To think how entirely my future happiness is wrapped up in that little parcel! Really, it hardly seems worth while! Oh, matrimony!—(Enter POOH-BAH and PISH-TUSH.) Now then, what is it? Can't you see I'm soliloquizing? You have interrupted an apostrophe, sir!

PISH: I am the bearer of a letter from his Majesty, the Mikado.

Ko: (taking it from him reverentially) A letter from the Mikado! What in the world can he have to say to me? (Reads letter) Ah, here it is at last! I thought it would come sooner or later! The Mikado is struck by the fact that no executions have taken place in Titipu for a year, and decrees that unless somebody is beheaded within one month, the post of Lord High Executioner shall be abolished, and the city reduced to the rank of a village! 104

104 The Mikado is struck...and the city reduced to the rank of a village!

The cruelty of the Japanese emperor is established relatively early in the opera, an aspect of The Mikado that aggravated a diplomatically anxious Britain and led to the brief ban of the opera in 1907. Gilbert's Story of The Mikado begins with his perceptive analysis of the British government's reasons for the ban as well as a politically delicate explanation for his characterization of the Japanese emperor:

...our Government being (in their heart of hearts) a little afraid of the Japanese, are extremely

anxious not to irritate or offend them in any way lest they should come over here and give us just such a lesson as they gave the Russians a few years ago. My readers will understand that this fear is not entertained by the generality of inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland who, as a body, are not much afraid of any nation; it is confined mainly to the good and wise gentlemen who rule us, just now, and whose wishes should consequently be respected.

Many years ago (I won't say how many because I don't know), Japan was ruled by a great and powerful Mikado, and a Mikado in those days was regarded as four-fifths a King and one-fifth a god. It has recently been decided that there is less of the god in him than people originally supposed, and he is now regarded simply as an absolute monarch; but at the time of my story the mistake that his subjects made as to how he was put together had not been discovered.

If the existing Mikado had one fault (mind, I don't say that he had), it was a habit of punishing every mistake, however, insignificant, with death, and this caused him to be regarded with a kind of respectful horror by his subjects at large. But it must be remembered that he lived a long time ago, and no Mikado of the present day would ever think of doing anything of the kind [our italics].

The excuse in Gilbert's last sentence is lifted from one of his own Bab Ballads, "Little Annie Protheroe," in which an executioner's violence is rationalized:



THE MIKADO ON HIS THRONE, SEVENTH TO TWELFTH CENTURY.

I think I hear you say, 'A dreadful subject for your rhymes!' O reader, do not shrink--he didn't live in modern times! He lived so long ago (the sketch will show it at a glance) That all his actions glitter with the limelight of Romance.

Gilbert's mention of the deific component of the Japanese ruler is historically accurate. He may have culled his facts from William Griffis' The Mikado's Empire, which had undergone its fifth printing by the time of Gilbert's libretto and in which one finds:

In Japanese mythology the universe is Japan. All the deities, with

PISH: But that will involve us all in irretrievable ruin! 105

KO: Yes. There is no help for it, I shall have to execute somebody at once. The only question is, who shall it be? 106

POOH: Well, it seems unkind to say so, but as you're already under sentence of death for flirting, everything seems to point to you.

KO: To me? What are you talking about? I can't execute myself.

POOH: Why not?

KO: Why not? Because, in the first place, self-decapitation is an extremely difficult, not to say dangerous, thing to attempt; and, in the second, it's suicide, and suicide is a capital offence. 107

POOH: That is so, no doubt.

PISH: We might reserve that point.

POOH: True, it could be argued six months hence, before the full Court.

perhaps a few exceptions, are historical personages, and the conclusion of the whole matter of cosmogony and celestial genealogy is that the Mikado is the descendant and representative of the gods who created the heavens and Japan. Hence the imperative duty of all Japanese is to obey him. Its principles, as summed up by the Department of Religion and promulgated throughout the empire as late as 1872, are expressed in the following commandments: 1. Thou shalt honor the gods, and love thy country. 2. Thou shalt clearly understand the principles of heaven and the duty of man. 3. Thou shalt revere the Mikado as thy sovereign, and obey the will of his court.'

This aspect of the Japanese emperor had excited all Europe.

they've brought it on themselves, and the only question is, who shall it be? Fortunately there will be no difficulty in pitching upon somebody whose death will be a distinct gain to society.

The "Little list" song then followed with the first line, "As it seems to be essential that a victim must be found..." instead of "As some day it may happen, etc..."

107 suicide is a capital offence. Gilbert had to try a case of suicide during his later years when he sat as a magistrate on the Uxbridge bench. He let the defendant off without penalty but admonished:

If you attempt suicide again, you will be brought before us to be punished for both offences; if you succeed, you will be beyond our jurisdiction.

105 irretrievable ruin! Gilbert explains in The Story of The Mikado that Pish-Tush's remark was prompted by the fact that he held "a quantity of tramway shares..."

106 who shall it be? Gilbert originally presented Ko-Ko's "Little list" song at this point in the opera. Following Pish-Tush's line Ko-Ko's first-night speech was:

Yes, somebody will have to suffer.  
Send the recorder to me (Exit Pish).  
I expected something of this sort!  
I knew it couldn't go on. Well,



The D'Oyly Carte Company, 1970



KO: Besides, I don't see how a man *can* cut off his own head. 108

POOH: A man might try. 109

PISH: Even if you only succeeded in cutting it half off, that would be something.

POOH: It would be taken as an earnest of your desire to comply with the Imperial will.

KO: No. Pardon me, but there I am adamant. As official Headsman, my reputation is at stake, and I can't consent to embark on a professional operation unless I see my way to a successful result.

POOH: This professional conscientiousness is highly creditable to *you*, but it places us in a very awkward position.

KO: My good sir, the awkwardness of your position is grace itself compared with that of a man engaged in the act of cutting off his own head.

PISH: I am afraid that, unless you can obtain a substitute—

KO: A substitute? Oh, certainly—nothing easier. (To POOH-BAH) Pooh-Bah, I appoint you Lord High Substitute. 110

POOH: I should be delighted. Such an appointment would realize my fondest dreams. But no, at any sacrifice, I must set bounds to my insatiable ambition!

108 how a man can cut off his own head. Ko-Ko as both executioner and victim is a special instance of the Victorian theme of "the divided man." Much of Gilbert's comic method relies upon physical representations of internal psychological conflicts. In *Iolanthe*, for example, ambivalence is revealed in Strephon's condition of being a fairy down to the waist while his legs are mortal. This feature of Gilbert's writing is assessed from a Freudian perspective by Dr. Leon Berman (1976).

109 A man might try and even succeeds in self-decapitation in Gilbert's German Reed burletta, *A Sensation Novel*, which concludes with a parody of the sensational dénouements popularized by M. E. Braddon's novels:

...he swung the ponderous axe three times round his head and towards the middle of the third swing the blade shot like lightning through the thickest part of the bad man's neck. The head bounded into the air and fell heavily on the floor. The lips still moved spasmodically. With a frightful effort, they managed to hiss out the dreadful words 'a very neat blow' when the jaw fell, and the vital spark departed never to return.

This rare event is precursory to Pooh-Bah's tall tale in the Melodrama Trio of the second act (see Note 190).

110 Lord High Substitute. The line originally read, "I appoint you my substitute," but it evolved to its present state during the provincial tours, and Gilbert eventually approved it.

"I AM SO PROUD" III

Trio

POOH-BAH, KO-KO, and PISH-TUSH

POOH: I am so proud,  
If I allowed  
My family pride  
To be my guide,  
I'd volunteer  
To quit this sphere,  
Instead of you,  
In a minute or two.  
But family pride  
Must be denied,  
And set aside,  
And mortified.

KO: My brain it teems  
With endless schemes,  
Both good and new,  
For Titipu;  
But if I flit,  
The benefit  
That I'd diffuse  
The town would lose!  
Now every man  
To aid his clan  
Should plot and plan  
As best he can.

PISH: I heard one day  
A gentleman say  
That criminals who  
Are cut in two  
Can hardly feel  
The fatal steel,  
And so are slain  
Without much pain.  
If this is true,  
It's jolly for you;  
Your courage screw  
To bid us adieu.

{POOH: I am so proud, etc.

{KO: My brain it teems, etc.

{PISH: I heard one day, etc.

III "I am so proud" When he mailed the lyrics of this trio to Sullivan, Gilbert enclosed a note:

Dear Sullivan--

I send a trio for KO-KO, POOH-BAH, and PISH-TUSH. I think it ought to be quaint and effective.

I have put the three verses side by side for convenience' sake, but of course they will be sung separately.

I fancy the metre admits of each verse being set differently from the others, but I may be wrong in this.

Gilbert was right about the metre but underestimated Sullivan's interest in setting the words simultaneously. Sullivan's final composition includes three different melodies (POOH-BAH and KO-KO's in B minor and 2/4 time, PISH-TUSH's in D major and 12/8 time), all sung separately and then successively combined in counterpoint.

Triple fugues, double choruses and quodlibets--so-called "manifold fugues" of two or more entirely different subjects--are a mainstay of Sullivan's composition. When a student in Leipzig, he studied counterpoint with Moritz Hauptmann, author of The Nature of Harmony and Metre (1853), from whom he obtained a solid grounding in the old traditions of academic polyphony--the works of Senfl, for example. Hauptmann had been strongly influenced by Hegel's philosophy, and he employed the concepts of thesis and antithesis in teaching counterpoint. It is easy to see how Hauptmann's Hegelian illustrations of polyphony impressed themselves upon Sullivan so that he eventually came to regard the technique as a dramatic one.

In comic opera Sullivan's ventures into manifold fugue are consistently amusing, often

delightful, and proved immensely popular with audiences (Shaw scoffed at those Philistines who considered them "miracles of counterpoint"). But Sullivan employs the technique in his serious compositions as well, where it is inevitably less than satisfactory (the finale of his Festival Te Deum or the prologue to The Golden Legend, for example). The problem with Sullivan's serious use of manifold fugue is that the form itself tends to speak louder than the content and the separate themes never arrive at a satisfactory unity.

In comic opera, however, the form is laughed at, and the parody happily fuses with the humor of the text and achieves unity. This is only one instance in which Sullivan's collaboration with Gilbert resuscitated his classical education and rescued him from it as well. The present trio is about as fascinating and effective example of manifold fugue as can be found in the composer's writing and has come to be regarded as particularly "Sullivan-esque".



Ko: And so,  
Although  
I'm ready to go, 112  
Yet recollect  
'Twere disrespect  
Did I neglect  
To thus effect  
This aim direct,  
So I object—

Pooh: And so,  
Although  
I wish to go,  
And greatly pine  
To brightly shine, 113  
And take the line  
Of a hero fine,  
With grief condign  
I must decline—

Pish: And go  
And show  
Both friend and foe  
How much you dare.  
I'm quite aware  
It's your affair,  
Yet I declare  
I'd take your share,  
But I don't much care—

Ko: So I object—

Pooh: I must decline—

Pish: I'd take your share,  
But I don't much care—

TRIO: To sit in solemn silence in a dull, dark  
dock,  
In a pestilential prison, with a life-long  
lock,  
Awaiting the sensation of a short, sharp  
shock,  
From a cheap and chippy chopper on a  
big black block! 114

112 And so, / Although / I'm ready to go. A number of musicians have noted how closely Sullivan's writing for the strings in this passage resembles Bach. Ian Parrott suggests that this may be due to the chance that Sullivan was already at work editing Bach's B minor Mass for the 1886 Leeds Festival. Since facts contradict Parrott's suggestion, Sullivan's music is more likely deliberate, baroque pastiche.

113 To brightly shine. Gilbert writes, "This is called a 'split infinitive' and is never used by well-educated people. But some allowance should be made for a gentleman who is extemporising beautiful poetry" (Story of The Mikado).

114 To sit in solemn silence...big black block. The alliterative pairs and triplets of this famous chorus are discussed linguistically by Charles N. Coe in his article published in Word Study (1962).

As G. W. Knight has noted, the chorus relies upon a peculiar identification of fun and fear. Gilbert's stage directions required the trio to use their fans as choppers for each "big black block." Causing delight as well as distaste among critical reviewers, the chorus offended Quiller-Couch:

Gilbert was essentially cruel and delighted in cruelty...On this cheap and chippy chopper business, I merely observe that Gilbert reveled in it [no mention of Sullivan--who appears to have reveled no less in it]; as anyone else may, so long as I am not asked to join the party."

Louis Kronenberger was even more explicit, arguing that Gilbert's libretti

have the really bad taste that comes from a lack of heart; they suggest the kind of man who was not simply cruel in order to be funny, but who was almost funny in order to be cruel (1952; see Note 116).

Isaac Goldberg first noted the similarity between this chorus and one written by Gilbert and Frederick Clay for Princess Toto (1876):

With feath-ers paint and patches and a tom, tom, tom, That

*f Maggiore*

with our col-our match-es With a tom, tom, tom, With a etc.

etc.

Sullivan and Clay were very close, and an observation made by Ernest De Glehn is relevant

(*Exeunt POOH-BAH and PISH-TUSH.*)

KO: This is simply appalling! I, who allowed myself to be respited at the last moment, simply in order to benefit my native town, am now required to die within a month, and that by a man whom I have loaded with honours! Is this public gratitude? Is this—(*Enter NANKI-POO, with a rope in his hands.*) Go away, sir! How dare you? Am I never to be permitted to soliloquize?

NANKI: Oh, go on—don't mind me.

KO: What are you going to do with that rope?

NANKI: I'm about to terminate an unendurable existence.

KO: Terminate your existence? Oh, nonsense! What for?

NANKI: Because you are going to marry the girl I adore.

KO: Nonsense, sir. I won't permit it. I am a humane man; and if you attempt anything of the kind, I shall order your instant arrest. Come, sir, desist at once, or I summon my guard. 115

NANKI: That's absurd. If you attempt to raise an alarm, I instantly perform the Happy Despatch with this dagger. 115a

KO: No, no, don't do that. This is horrible! (*Suddenly*) Why, you cold-blooded scoundrel, are you aware that, in taking your life, you are committing a crime which—which—which is—Oh! (*Struck by an idea*) Substitute!

NANKI: What's the matter?

KO: Is it *absolutely certain* that you are resolved to die?

NANKI: Absolutely!

KO: Will *nothing* shake your resolution?

NANKI: Nothing.

KO: Threats, entreaties, prayers—all useless?

NANKI: All! My mind is made up.

to the similarity between Sullivan's and Clay's music:

Clay and Sullivan were great friends, and it was a delight to us to get the two of them to the piano, and set to improvising 'à quatre mains'--this they could do with something like reciprocal intuition, as if the four hands were worked by a single brain" (in Wyndham, 1926).

115 or I summon my guard. Ko-Ko and Nanki-poo's quibble over suicide is reminiscent of a scene from Engaged, Gilbert's best play and perhaps the best nineteenth-century play before The Importance of Being Earnest:

Cheviot. [Tragically.] Belvawney, I'm going to try another world! [Drawing a pistol from his pocket.]

Belvawney. [Alarmed.] What do you mean?

Chev. In two minutes I die!

Bel. You're joking, of course?

Chev. Do I look like a man who jokes?  
Is my frame of mind one in which a man indulges in trivialities?

Bel. [In great terror.] But my dear Cheviot, reflect--

Chev. Why should it concern you? You will be happy with Belinda. You will not be well off, but Symperson will, and I dare say he will give you a meal now and then. It will not be a nice meal, but still it will be a meal.

Bel. Cheviot, you mustn't do this; pray reflect; there are interests of magnitude depending on your existence.

Chev. My mind is made up. [Cocking the pistol.]

Bel. [Wildly.] But I shall be ruined!

Chev. There is Belinda's fortune.

Bel. She won't have me if I'm ruined! Dear Cheviot, don't do it--it's culpable--it's wrong!

Chev. Life is valueless to me without Belinda. [Pointing the pistol to his head.]

115a Happy Despatch. The English of harakiri.



KO: Then, if you really mean what you say, and if you are absolutely resolved to die, and if nothing whatever will shake your determination—don't spoil yourself by committing suicide, but be beheaded handsomely at the hands of the Public Executioner!

NANKI: I don't see how that would benefit me.

KO: You don't? Observe: you'll have a month to live, and you'll live like a fighting cock at my expense. When the day comes, there'll be a grand public ceremonial—you'll be the central figure—no one will attempt to deprive you of that distinction. There'll be a procession—bands—dead-march—bells tolling—all the girls in tears—Yum-Yum distracted—then, when it's all over, general rejoicings, and a display of fireworks in the evening. You won't see them, but they'll be there all the same. 116

NANKI: Do you think Yum-Yum would really be distracted at my death?

KO: I am convinced of it. Bless you, she's the most tender-hearted little creature alive.



"A grand public ceremonial" - Outside Newgate Prison, 1848

of its catastrophe, and the grandeur of its object. The Preparation for it...cannot be too carefully selected...the tribunal, the scaffold, the dresses of the officers of justice, the religious service, the procession, every kind of accompaniment, ought to bear a grave and melancholy character.

Even after the abolishment, crowds still gathered outside Newgate and Calton Gaol to hoot and cheer as soon as the black flag was raised. Broad-sides and The Illustrated Police News provided all the details of the prisoner's state of mind and the courses of his last meal.

The private lives of executioners became a source of special curiosity for late Victorians. As late as the 1890's James Berry, in a highly successful lecture series, circuited the music halls billed as "The Late Hangman--the Man Who Will Entertain You With Exciting Episodes."

The best available substitute, though, for vicarious violence was to be found in the theatre. Although virtue continued to triumph on the stage, after 1868 crime and villainy exulted, making their ultimate, horrific punishment especially satisfying. With the help of more sophisticated stage machinery, catastrophic trainwrecks and a host of other grim "disaster spectacles" hit the boards.

116 Observe...You won't see them, but they'll be there all the same. Like the "cheap and chippy chopper," Gilbert's description of Nanki-Poo's execution has been taken to task by certain critics. Northrop Frye notes, however, that playing at human sacrifice is an important theme of ironic comedy where "murderous violence is less an attack on a virtuous society by a malignant individual than a symptom of that society's own viciousness" (1973). Throughout The Mikado, Gilbert's gallows humor reflects, as well as capitalizes upon, a popular enthusiasm for legitimate bloodlust.

Public executions in England were abolished only seventeen years before The Mikado.

The last public victim had been the Fenian conspirator Michael Barrett, executed in 1868. By then the rite had already become a public spectacle, a form of free, sensational entertainment enjoyed by upper and lower classes alike, and an opportunity for refreshment and memento-hawkers to fill their tills.

Prior to its abolishment, Jeremy Bentham had attempted to curtail the spectacle of the event with pleas for public sobriety. In one address--of which Gilbert's dialogue is almost a parody--Bentham queried:

What is a public execution? It is a solemn tragedy, which the legislator presents before an assembled people--a tragedy truly important, truly pathetic, by the sad reality

NANKI: I should be sorry to cause her pain. Perhaps, after all, if I were to withdraw from Japan, and travel in Europe for a couple of years, I might contrive to forget her. 117

KO: Oh, I don't think you could forget Yum-Yum so easily; and, after all, what is more miserable than a love-blighted life?

NANKI: True.

KO: Life without Yum-Yum—why, it seems absurd!

NANKI: And yet there are a good many people in the world who have to endure it.

KO: Poor devils, yes! You are quite right not to be of their number.

NANKI: (*suddenly*) I *won't* be of their number!

KO: Noble fellow!

NANKI: I'll tell you how we'll manage it. Let me marry Yum-Yum to-morrow, and in a month you may behead me.

KO: No, no. I draw the line at Yum-Yum.

NANKI: Very good. If you can draw the line, so can I. (*Preparing rope*)

KO: Stop, stop—listen one moment—be reasonable. How can I consent to your marrying Yum-Yum if I'm going to marry her myself?

NANKI: My good friend, she'll be a widow in a month, and you can marry her then.

KO: That's true, of course. I quite see that. But, dear me! my position during the next month will be most unpleasant—most unpleasant.

NANKI: Not half so unpleasant as my position at the end of it.

KO: But—dear me!—well—I agree—after all, it's only putting off my wedding for a month. But you won't prejudice her against me, will you? You see, I've educated her to be my wife; she's been taught to regard me as a wise and good man. Now I shouldn't like her views on that point disturbed.

NANKI: Trust me, she shall never learn the truth from me.

117 travel in Europe for a couple of years.  
The standard Victorian remedy for heart-break among people of means.

118 she's been taught to regard me as a wise and good man. Ko-Ko's chicanery is ultimately punished when he is joined to a spouse who practices a similar deception (see Note 213).



(Enter CHORUS, POOH-BAH, and PISH-TUSH.) 119

"WITH ASPECT STERN AND GLOOMY STRIDE"  
Finale of Act I 120

CHORUS: With aspect stern 121  
And gloomy stride,  
We come to learn  
How you decide.

Don't hesitate  
Your choice to name,  
A dreadful fate  
You'll suffer all the same.

POOH: To ask you what you mean to do,  
we punctually appear.

KO: Congratulate me, gentlemen, I've  
found a Volunteer!

CHORUS: The Japanese equivalent for Hear,  
Hear, Hear! 122

KO: (presenting him) 'Tis Nanki-Poo!

CHORUS: Hail, Nanki-Poo!

KO: I think he'll do?

CHORUS: Yes, yes, he'll do!

KO: He yields his life if I'll Yum-Yum sur-  
render;

Now I adore that girl with passion  
tender,

And could not yield her with a ready will,  
Or her allot,  
If I did not

Adore myself with passion tenderer still! 123

(Enter YUM-YUM, PEEP-BO, and PITTI-SING.)

CHORUS: Ah, yes,  
He loves himself with passion tenderer  
still!

KO: (to NANKI-POO) Take her—she's yours! 124  
(Exit Ko-Ko.)

119 (Enter Chorus, Pooh-Bah, and Pish-Tush.)  
The chorus is brought onto stage with the  
"Miya sama" theme (see Note 166), quaintly scored  
with bass drum and cymbal accompaniment.

120 Finale of Act I. The first-act finale of  
a Savoy opera was often the last piece  
completed by Sullivan, who frequently worked it  
out in final form with complete orchestration  
during a single sitting. After writing and  
fully orchestrating this particular finale,  
Sullivan wrote--still in a steady hand:

5.8 a.m. 3rd March. 1885  
(14 hours scoring in Finale).

The première was eleven days away.

Sullivan's compressed, last-minute approach  
to Savoy composition could, as some critics  
feel, reflect a lack of artistic purpose; if  
so, it also maximized his artistic integrity.  
He was a race-horse owner as well as an  
inveterate gambler and could summon his best  
when a deadline pressed hard upon him. The  
pressure of his approach to composing for the  
Savoy led to optimal spontaneity and original-  
ity--traits that are lacking in many of his  
"grand," serious works, which often sound  
brain-spun and where the styles of other com-  
posers often intrude as well.

121 With aspect stern. Different verses are  
found at this same point in The Story of  
The Mikado. They were probably saved by  
Gilbert from one of the eleven earlier drafts  
of the libretto:

What are you going to do, good sir,  
Come tell us quickly pray--

The programme rests with you, good sir,  
And must be settled today.

Are you going to cut off your head, good sir,  
Or does anyone, right away,  
Consent to be killed in your stead, good sir,  
Come tell us quickly, pray.

122 The Japanese equivalent for Hear, Hear,  
Hear! An earlier variation of this  
Gilbertian quip appears in the Bab Ballad,  
"Thomas Winterbottom Hance":

"The French for 'Poo!' " our Tommy cried.  
"L'anglais pour 'Va!' " the Frenchman crowed.

123 Adore myself with passion tenderer still!  
On "passion," Sullivan's treatment mater-  
izes the innuendo of Ko-Ko's narcissism:



## ENSEMBLE 125

NANKI: The threatened cloud has passed  
away,  
YUM: And brightly shines the dawning  
day;  
NANKI: What though the night may come  
too soon,  
YUM: There's yet a month of afternoon!  
NANKI-POO, POOH-BAH, PISH-TUSH, YUM-  
YUM, PITTI-SING, and PEEP-BO  
Then let the throng  
Our joy advance,  
With laughing song  
And merry dance,  
ALL: With joyous shout and ringing cheer,  
Inaugurate their brief career! 126  
PITTI: A day, a week, a month, a year—  
YUM: Or far or near, or far or near,  
POOH: Life's eventide comes much too soon,  
PITTI: You'll live at least a honeymoon! 127

## SOLO

POOH: As in a month you've got to die,  
If Ko-Ko tells us true,  
"Twere empty compliment to cry,  
"Long life to Nanki-Poo!"  
But as one month you have to live  
As fellow-citizen,  
This toast with three times three we'll  
give:  
"Long life to you—till then!" 128  
(Exit POOH-BAH.)

CHORUS: May all good fortune prosper you,  
May you have health and riches,  
too,  
May you succeed in all you do!  
Long life to you—till then!  
(Dance)

125 Ensemble. During the conflict with Gilbert prior to The Mikado, Sullivan had complained that his "concerted movements" for the Savoy were all "beginning to bear a strong family likeness" and held Gilbert's strict metre and rhymed couplets responsible. Gilbert modified neither his rhymes nor his rhythms for the finale of The Mikado, but he did provide a finale with greater dramatic contrasts which, combined with the novelty of a Japanese setting, provided all the new stimuli Sullivan needed.

Although Sullivan develops this ensemble in the Italian manner, the pentatonic melody from the vocalists and the undulating thirds from the orchestra lend an oriental suggestion which is all the more appealing in its vagueness. Note the happy touches in the triangle's small part.

126 with joyous shout...their brief career. A Rossini crescendo soars and dives into this spirited refrain for full chorus, splendidly capping the ensemble.

Stanislavski achieved a novel effect in his staging of this chorus for his Russian Mikado:

Each of the singers was given his own series of gestures and movements with the fan for each accented musical note, bar and passage. The poses with the fan depended on the arrangement of the groups, or rather on a kaleidoscope of continually changing and moving groups. While some swept their fans upward, others lowered and opened theirs near their very feet; others did the same to the right, still others to the left, and so on.

When this kaleidoscope came into action...and fans of every size, color and description swept through the air,

the soul was in ecstasy from the theatrical effect. (1948).

127 You'll live at least a honeymoon! A month was the customary length of honeymoons for well-to-do Victorians, though as Du Maurier observed, this amount of time was sometimes unnecessary:



The Waning of the Honeymoon

Angelina (suppressing an inclination to yawn):  
"How nice it would be if some friend  
were to turn up; wouldn't it, Edwin?"

Edwin (after yawning elaborately): "Ve-e-s--  
or even some enemy!"

Cartoon by Du Maurier. One of a series he drew for Punch, featuring Edwin and Angelina. The names of his unfortunate couple--incorporated by Gilbert in Trial by Jury--are from the 1764 ballad by Oliver Goldsmith.

128 "Long life to you--till then!" On these words Sullivan awarded Pooh-Bah a ten-measure cadenza which entirely interrupts the proceedings. Barrington must have been challenged by this florid passage. When someone once remarked that for a wonder Barrington had sung all his numbers on tune, Gilbert quipped, "Oh, I know that first-night nervousness; it'll wear off soon."



(Enter KATISHA, melodramatically.) |29

RECITATIVE

KAT.: Your revels cease! Assist me, all of you!

CHORUS: Why, who is this whose evil eyes  
Rain blight on our festivities?

KAT.: I claim my perjured lover, Nanki-Poo!  
Oh, fool! to shun delights that never  
cloy!

CHORUS: Go, leave thy deadly work undone!

KAT.: Come back, oh, shallow fool, come back  
to joy!

CHORUS: Away! away! ill-favoured one!

NANKI: (*aside to YUM-YUM*)

Ah! 'Tis Katisha,  
The maid of whom I told you.

(*About to go*)

KAT.: (*detaining him*)

No! You shall not go,  
These arms shall thus enfold you!



Rosina Brandram  
as  
Katisha.

She wore a  
two-hundred-year-old,  
authentic Japanese  
gown  
for the  
original production.

|29 Enter Katisha, whose entrance Gilbert may have intended to be melodramatic but which, when joined with Sullivan's imagination, becomes one of the most dramatic moments in Gilbert & Sullivan opera. Michael Todd's production of The Hot Mikado included a Mt. Fujiyama that erupted when she entered. A. H. Godwin has characterized her as a "man-eating tigress after her prey with the jealousy of a cat and the spite of a viper" (1926).

Historically, Katisha is one in a long line of Gilbert and Sullivan's clutching "elderly, ugly ladies"--a type which has generated more critical controversy than any other aspect of Savoy opera. Among the appreciative evaluations of the type is Herbert Weisinger's analysis of Katisha as an embodiment of the Jungian archetype, the "great-and-terrible Mother" (1970). Likewise, Jane Stedman considers her Gilbert's "greatest comic female figure" (1967; see also Stedman, 1970).

A list of unfriendly assessments is longer. Quiller-Couch called Gilbert's treatment of the Savoy contralto "an incurable and unforgivable vice." Shaw complained that the "Gilbertian opera" was sometimes "vulgar, as in the case of the inevitable old woman brought on to be jeered at simply because she was old." Twentieth-century critic Louis Kronenberger added a new twist in The Thread of Laughter:

At its worst, Gilbert's want of feeling smacks less of satire than of sadism; and most notoriously in the case of the unattractive women--Ruth, Katisha, Lady Jane, and how many others--who are one of the mainstays of his writing. Their existence is depressing enough, but Gilbert's worst jibes at them seem, not only what the Victorians would have called caddish, but what later generations might suspect of being faintly pathological" (1952).

The most recent charges of cruelty brought against Gilbert and his treatment of the Savoy contralto include those by Leslie Ayre and even Frederick Lloyd, past General Manager and later Secretary of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Trust Company. And here it should be noted that the negative criticism has been consistently leveled at Gilbert alone, even though it is the divergence between each collaborator's approach to the contralto part--and the attendant schism in audience response--that appears to generate the distress and controversy (see Wade & Wade, 1976).

Katisha can be viewed as a manifestation of the personality clash between Gilbert and Sullivan immediately prior to The Mikado. In her, Gilbert is content to evolve the stock, nineteenth-century-burlesque formula for "the Dame," a characterization which also capitalized on the popularity of the fat, overbearing harridans that peopled the cartoons of the weeklies.

This caricature annoyed Sullivan, who found it emotionally and musically impossible to sympathize with a puppet. His conception of a contralto was more of a mildly exalted, yet flesh-and-blood woman. Some of Sullivan's music for the Savoy contralto is similar in tone and treatment to his religious compositions for the same voice (critic William Littler declared the role of Katisha none too good for Dame Clara Butt), and it is on occasion similar in melody and modality as well. (Compare "Silvered is the raven hair" from Patience with "God shall wipe away all tears" from The Light of the World.) This serious approach annoyed Gilbert, who complained to Sullivan that too often his music was "fitted more for the Cathedral than the Comic Opera stage."

It is her creators' interpersonal struggle between caricature vs. exaltation and burlesque vs. piety that has subjected Katisha to critical controversy. It is the same struggle that affords her unusual dramatic vitality and grants her archetypal stature as "the great-and-terrible Mother."

## SONG 130

KAT.: (*addressing NANKI-POO*)

Oh fool, that fleest  
 My hallowed joys!  
 Oh blind, that seest  
 No equipoise!  
 Oh rash, that judgest  
 From half, the whole!  
 Oh base, that grudgest  
 Love's lightest dole!  
 Thy heart unbind,  
 Oh fool, oh blind!  
 Give me my place,  
 Oh rash, oh base!

ALL: If she's thy bride, restore her place,  
 Oh fool, oh blind, oh rash, oh base!

KAT.: (*addressing YUM-YUM*)

Pink cheek, that rulest  
 Where wisdom serves!  
 Bright eye, that fooldest  
 Heroic nerves!  
 Rose lip, that scornest  
 Lore-laden years!  
 Smooth tongue, that warnest  
 Who rightly hears!

Thy doom is nigh,  
 Pink cheek, bright eye!  
 Thy knell is rung,  
 Rose lip, smooth tongue!

ALL: If true her tale, thy knell is rung,  
 Pink cheek, bright eye, rose lip, smooth  
 tongue!

130 SONG. Gervase Hughes has called "Oh fool, that fleest" one of Sullivan's few "really satisfying pieces wholly in the minor...the harmonic interest is splendidly maintained and this scene would not be out of place in *Aida*." Unlike previous, Savoy contralto parts, which had been written for Alice Barnett, Sullivan's music for *Katisha* owes much of its decidedly more operatic quality to the premiering performer, Rosina Brandram.

As a child Miss Brandram astonished everyone by the extraordinarily deep voice in which she sang her nursery songs. Her vocal study eventually took her to Milan where she studied under Gaetano Nava, teacher of the celebrated baritone, Charles Santley. At the première of *The Mikado*, Beatty-Kingston noted that Miss Brandram's singing

was of such excellent quality, that it constituted the most striking executant feature of the evening's performance. There are so few English contraltos who combine the capacities, musical and dramatic, united in Miss Brandram's person, that Mr. Carte is to be sincerely congratulated upon having secured the services of so thorough an artist.

Although she suited Sullivan's contralto conception better than she did Gilbert's, the librettist thought well of "Rosina of the voice that rolled out as full-bodied Burgundy rolls down." He remarked to the press, "Miss Brandram is a personable young lady who has no objection to 'make-up' old and ugly--and of her good-natured readiness to sacrifice her own personal attractions to the exigencies of the plot we have, perhaps, taken an undue advantage." Sullivan undoubtedly agreed.



Rosina Brandram (1846-1907)  
 (*Strand Magazine*)



131 PITT: Away, nor prosecute your quest—  
From our intention, well expressed,  
You cannot turn us!  
The state of your connubial views  
Towards the person you accuse  
Does not concern us! 132  
For he's going to marry Yum-Yum— 133  
ALL: Yum-Yum!  
PITT: Your anger pray bury,  
For all will be merry,  
I think you had better succumb—  
ALL: Cumb—cumb!  
PITT: And join our expressions of glee.  
On this subject I pray you be dumb—  
ALL: Dumb—dumb!  
PITT: You'll find there are many  
Who'll wed for a penny—  
The word for your guidance is "Mum"—  
ALL: Mum—mum!  
PITT: There's lots of good fish in the sea!  
ALL: On this subject we pray you be dumb,  
etc.

131 Pitti. In this brief scene Gilbert pits the power of Pitti-Sing's beauty and youth against Katisha's aging ugliness, a juxtaposition that was regularly exploited by Du Maurier as well.

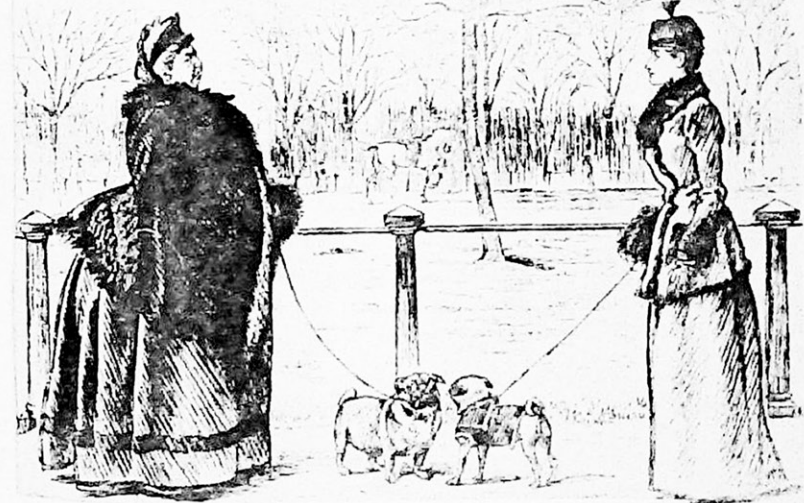
Pitti-Sing was premiered by Jessie Bond, the Savoy's principal soubrette, who was so charmingly competent that Gilbert was led to confide to her that as Pitti-Sing she was "the life and soul of the piece." The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* noted that Jessie "shines conspicuous by her marked adherence in every detail of gesture and bearing to the example set" by the Japanese ladies of Knightsbridge, and the *Saturday Review* commented, "The sense of enjoyment of her work which Miss Jessie Bond conveys makes her performance very winning."

She could, however, occasionally pique Gilbert with her overindividualized touches (as well as her requests for salary increases). She related in her autobiography:

There was nothing much to single me out from the three little maids from school, so I persuaded the wardrobe mistress to give me a big obi, twice as big as any of the others'. She did...and I made the most of my big, big bow, turning my back to the audience whenever I got a chance, and wagging it. The gallery was delighted, but I nearly got the sack for that prank!" (1930) ✓

132 Away, nor prosecute your quest--...does not concern us. Maurice Baring cites this verse as an example of Sullivan's "gift of discretion, of leading up to an effect in such a way that the effect when it comes seems as sudden as an April shower and yet as inevitable as a flower opening" (1922).

133 For he's going to marry Yum-Yum. Jessie



Examples of Du Maurier's elderly ugly ladies, drawn for *Punch*. As an object of satiric ridicule, the unattractive old maid or dam dates back to Aristophanes and Horace; she can be traced through Moliere, Congreve, Gay, and Sheridan to Gilbert and his contemporaries. Her descendants are still encountered in the more farcical "situation comedies" of twentieth-century film and television.

Bond's personal captivation of both author and composer is evident in their writing for her. The consistently charming fusion of words and music in her solos is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in this song and chorus.



"I think you had better succumb"  
(D'Oyly Carte company, 1970)

SOLO 134

KAT.: The hour of gladness  
Is dead and gone;  
In silent sadness  
I live alone!  
The hope I cherished  
All lifeless lies,  
And all has perished  
Save love, which never dies!  
Oh, faithless one, this insult you shall rue!  
In vain for mercy on your knees you'll sue.  
I'll tear the mask from your disguising! 135

NANKI: (*aside*) Now comes the blow!  
KAT.: Prepare yourselves for news surprising!  
NANKI: (*aside*) How foil my foe?  
KAT.: No minstrel he, despite bravado!  
YUM: (*aside, struck by an idea*)  
Ha! ha! I know!  
KAT.: He is the son of your—  
(NANKI-POO, YUM-YUM, and CHORUS, interrupting, sing Japanese words, to drown her voice.)  
O ni! bikkuri shakkuri to! 136

KAT.: In vain you interrupt with this tornado!  
He is the only son of your—  
CHORUS: O ni! bikkuri shakkuri to!  
KAT.: I'll spoil—  
CHORUS: O ni! bikkuri shakkuri to!  
KAT.: —your gay gambado!  
He is the son—  
CHORUS: O ni! bikkuri shakkuri to!  
KAT.: —of your—  
CHORUS: O ni! bikkuri shakkuri to!  
KAT.: —the son of your— 137  
CHORUS: O ni! bikkuri shakkuri to!  
Oya, Oya!

134 SOLO. Later in their partnership, Gilbert and Sullivan ran into pointed conflict over the nature of the contralto role in Utopia Limited. Sullivan wrote to Gilbert then:

The elderly spinster, unattractive and grotesque, either bemoaning her faded charms, or calling attention to what is still left of them, and unable to conceal her passionate longing for love, is a character which appeals to me vainly, and I cannot do anything with it" (cited by Pearson, 1957). ✓

In the same letter Sullivan recalls Gilbert's revisions of *Katisha*, made at his own request. The composer's own concept of the contralto role required what he called "pathetic interest," and this song reflects a concession on Gilbert's part to Sullivan's bias.

As a concession the verse is, understandably, doggerel, but it was sufficient for Sullivan's needs, and from it the composer proceeded to fashion a cameo of a lyrical contralto aria. The expressive phrasing of this song and its inherent elasticity has permitted its successful interpretation as a passionate torch-song in the three, all-black productions of the opera. In the song's twelve bars Sullivan forces audience-identification with this creature which, from here on in, can be seriously jarred by Gilbert's treatment of the role.

135 I'll tear the mask from your disguising!  
*Katisha* is about to reveal Nanki-Poo's true identity, which--as in Lohengrin, Turandot, and even the fairy-tale "Rumpelstiltskin"--divests the disguised nobleman of his magical protection and power. See Note 94.

136 O ni! bikkuri shakkuri to! In The Story of The Mikado Gilbert "explains" that these are "the last words of a humorous song." Conflicting translations have been offered: Frank Halton suggests that the line refers to a Japanese game in which one child attempts to tag others with a reed; if he fails, the other children greet him with cries of "O ni bikkuri..." ("O tagger! How you have surprised me!") Other translations include, "Oh, no-such-thing, what a surprise and shock!"

137--the son of your--. Gilbert writes:

I should have thought that as it was quite clear that the "missing word" rhymed with "bravado," "tornado," and "gambado," the crowd might have guessed that it was "Mikado." But people who are quite intelligent as individuals are sometimes extraordinarily dense when they are acting in a mob. This is the only way in which I can explain it (Story of The Mikado).



KAT.: Ye torrents roar!  
 Ye tempests howl!  
 Your wrath outpour  
 With angry growl!  
 Do ye your worst, my vengeance-call  
 Shall rise triumphant over all!

ALL: We'll hear no more,  
 Ill-omened owl,  
 To joy we soar,  
 Despite your scowl;  
 The echoes of our festival  
 Shall rise triumphant over all!

KAT. Prepare for woe,  
 Ye haughty lords,  
 At once I go  
 Mikado-wards. 138

ALL: Away you go,  
 Collect your hordes;  
 Proclaim your woe  
 In dismal chords.

YUM: We do not heed their dismal sound.

NANKI: For joy reigns everywhere around.

BOTH: The echoes of our festival  
 Shall rise triumphant over all!

CHORUS: We'll hear no more,  
 Ill-omened owl,  
 To joy we soar,  
 Despite your scowl!

KAT.: My wrongs with vengeance shall be  
 crowned!

ALL: We do not heed their dismal sound,  
 For joy reigns everywhere around!

(KATISHA rushes furiously up-stage, clearing  
 the crowd away right and left, finishing on steps  
 at the back of stage.)

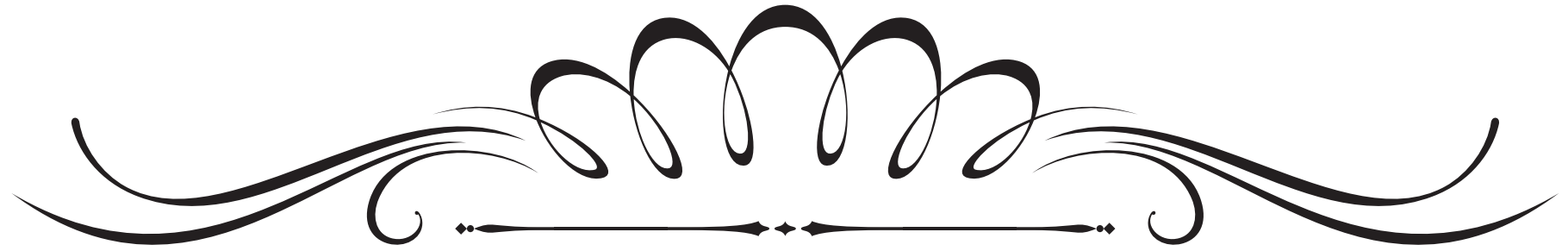
END OF ACT I

138 At once I go/Mikado-wards. Gilbert originally  
 had additional lines here:

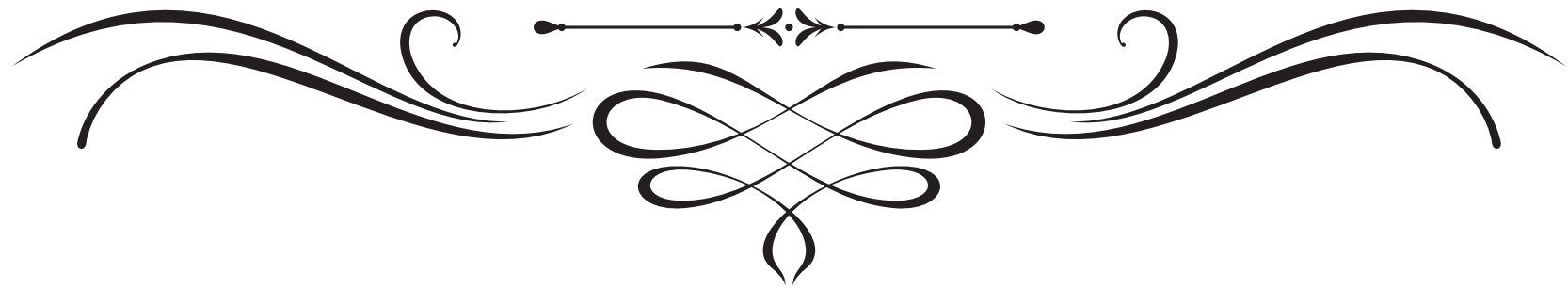
And when he learns his son is found,  
 My wrongs with vengeance shall be crowned!

Sullivan altered the lines for musically dramatic  
 reasons.





*Act 2*





SCENE: KO-KO's Garden. YUM-YUM discovered seated at her boudoir table, surrounded by maidens, who are dressing her hair and painting her face and lips, as she judges the effect in a mirror. 139

"BRAID THE RAVEN HAIR" 140  
Opening Chorus and Solo  
PITTI-SING and GIRLS

CHORUS: Braid the raven hair—  
Weave the supple tress—  
Deck the maiden fair  
In her loveliness—  
Paint the pretty face—  
Dye the coral lip—  
Emphasize the grace  
Of her ladyship!  
Art and nature, thus allied,  
Go to make a pretty bride. 141

139 painting her face and lips, as she judges of the effect in a mirror. The ladies of the Savoy chorus had been taught the art of Japanese make-up by two tea-girls from the Knightsbridge exhibition and were enthralled by the novelty of the process. Although this sort of scene was often encountered in ukiyo-e prints (most notably in those of Utamaro), its presentation *in vivo* was rather bold in its day when painting the face was still the mark of the demi-monde. Gautier had already published his infamous "Defense of Cosmetics" and reform was in the wind, but nine years after *The Mikado* when Max Beerbohm wrote in imitation of Gautier--

Artifice is the strength of the world, and in the same mask of paint and powder, shadowed with vermeil tint and most trimly pencilled, is woman's strength"--

the *Westminster Gazette* clamored for "an act of Parliament to make this kind of thing illegal." Even after the turn of the century Gilbert felt the need to explain. In *The Story of The Mikado*, he appended the following to this scene:

Japanese young ladies consider this to be quite correct, although English ladies would rather look as yellow as frogs than consent to do anything so shocking.

140 "Braid the raven hair." This chorus contains some of Gilbert's prettiest verses, and Sullivan's melody is graced with a Schubertian sweetness most apparent in phrases such as:



The delicacy that Sullivan achieved here with cello pizzicato is praised by Cecil Forsyth in his book *Orchestration*. The idyllic mood set in this scene is sustained throughout the two musical numbers which follow and does not break entirely until the entrance of the Mikado.

141 a pretty bride. Sullivan uses an octave-leap in this phrase, giving poignant expression to the word "pretty."



"Girl rouging her lips"  
by  
Utamaro

PITTI-SING: Sit with downcast eye—  
 Let it brim with dew—  
 Try if you can cry—  
 We will do so, too.  
 When you're summoned, start 142  
 Like a frightened roe—  
 Flutter, little heart, 143  
 Colour, come and go!  
 Modesty at marriage-tide  
 Well becomes a pretty bride.

CHORUS: Braid the raven hair, etc.  
 (Exeunt PITTI-SING, PEEP-BO, and CHORUS.)

YUM: Yes, I am indeed beautiful! Some-  
 times I sit and wonder, in my artless Japanese  
 way, why it is that I am so much more attrac-  
 tive than anybody else in the whole world.  
 Can this be vanity? No! Nature is lovely  
 and rejoices in her loveliness. I am a child of  
 Nature, and take after my mother. 144

142 When you're summoned, start... Sullivan  
 illuminates this line with a quiver from  
 the flutes:

When you're sum- moned, start  
 2. Like a fright- ened roe- [flts.]

Strings

143 Flutter, little heart. "Flutters" are  
 provided by the flutes and oboe:

Flut-ter lit-tle heart,  
 [flts. & oboe.....]

144 I am a child of Nature, and take after my  
 mother. On the first night Yum-Yum's  
 speech and song occurred in the first act. It  
 was immediately transposed to the second, for  
 reasons given by Leonora Braham, who premiered  
 the role:

The morning after the production of  
The Mikado at a rehearsal just to pick  
 up some loose ends in the performance, I  
 told Sir Arthur Sullivan that I had found  
 much difficulty in giving a good interpre-  
 tation of my song, 'The Moon and I' (it  
 then came immediately after the 'Three  
 Little Maids' trio and the quintette [sic]  
 'So please you, Sir,' with just a few  
 lines spoken before it, which left me  
 breathless) (cited by Allen, 1958).

Yum-Yum's original first-act speech went:

How pitiable is the condition of a  
 young and innocent child brought  
 from the gloom of a ladies' academy  
 into the full blown blaze of her own  
 matrimonial ceremony; and with a man  
 for whom I care nothing! True, he  
 loves me, but everybody does that.  
 Sometimes I sit and wonder, in my  
 artless Japanese way...

The Saturday Review was quick to recall that  
 Yum-Yum's "innocent egoism" had been foreshadowed  
 in a passage from Gilbert's play Engaged, in  
 which Maggie MacFarlane, a humble but attractive  
 Scotch cottager, muses:

We see the rose on the tree, and we say  
 that it is fair; we see the silver moon  
 sailing in the braw blue heavens, and  
 we say that she is bright; we see the  
 brawling stream purling over the smooth  
 stanes i' the burn, and we say that it  
 is beautiful; and shall we close our  
 een to the fairest of nature's works--  
 a pure and beautiful woman? Why, sir,  
 it wad just be base ingratitude! No,  
 it's best to tell the truth about a'  
 things: I am a varra, varra, beautiful  
 girl!





"THE SUN, WHOSE RAYS ARE  
ALL ABLAZE"

Song  
YUM-YUM 145

The sun, whose rays  
Are all ablaze  
With ever-living glory,  
Does not deny  
His majesty—  
He scorns to tell a story!

He don't exclaim,  
"I blush for shame,  
So kindly be indulgent";  
But, fierce and bold,  
In fiery gold,  
He glories all effulgent.

I mean to rule the earth,  
As he the sky—  
We really know our worth,  
The sun and I!

Observe his flame,  
That placid dame,  
The moon's Celestial Highness;  
There's not a trace  
Upon her face  
Of diffidence or shyness:  
She borrows light  
That, through the night,  
Mankind may all acclaim her!  
And, truth to tell,  
She lights up well;  
So I, for one, don't blame her.

Ah, pray make no mistake,  
We are not shy;  
We're very wide awake,  
The moon and I! 146

145 Song. Yum-Yum. Dame Marie Tempest claimed to have been the first to sing Yum-Yum's famous song; Sullivan first played it to her in his rooms on Victoria Street shortly after completing it.

Sullivan chose to overlook the irony in Gilbert's verses. Intrigued by their metre and metaphor instead, he managed to create the most uniquely beautiful song of his career. Even in the years immediately after his death when scholarly critics took such peculiar relish in disparaging his artistic stature, the London University professor, Sir Percy Buck, wrote,

The writing of a learned eight-part fugue is within the power of any musician who cares to waste his time in learning how to do it; but if he tries to reset 'The Moon and I' and then compares his music with Sullivan's, he will have no doubts as to which is the more serious task (cited by Dunhill, 1928).

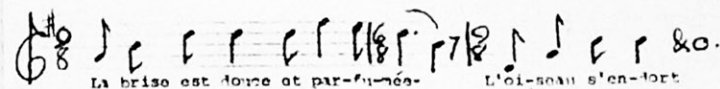
Gervase Hughes called this song a "locus classicus of Sullivan's skill in combining melodic charm with rhythmic originality...every bar of this song shows the hand of a talented craftsman, but it could only have been conceived by a true artist. It is in fact a little gem."

The song's artless simplicity owes much to the pentatonic mode. After the première, the critic for the Graphic opined that it had been inspired by Wagner's "Song of the Bird" from Siegfried:

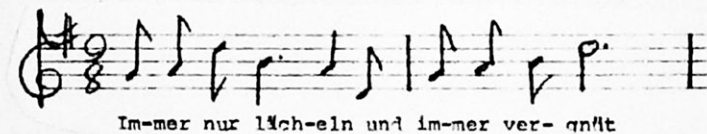


Eric W. White (1951) said the song was derived from "The Cup Is Oak, the Wine Is Gold" from Edward Loder's obscure opera, The Night Dancers.

And Dennis Arundel (1957) felt that the song was influenced by the "Dawn Song" from Gounod's Mireille:



On the opposite side, Hedy and George Jellinek (1968) have suggested that Franz Lehar's "Immer nur lücheln" (from The Land of Smiles) owes a debt to Sullivan:



The pentatonic mode is a haunting one to Western ears, and a song which truly owns the idiom, as this one does, will very likely send listeners searching for the "original." It is this elusive familiarity that gives "The Moon and I" its perennial charm.

146 Ah, pray make no mistake...The moon and I This refrain is accompanied by a winding arabesque for woodwinds that softly changes color as it traverses oboe, clarinet, and flute. Sullivan was conscientious about his instrumentation of this song and, during one of the first orchestra rehearsals, he deleted the brightness of the piccolo from the clarinets' bridge between verse and refrain.

(Enter PITTI-SING and PEEP-BO.)

YUM: Yes, everything seems to smile upon me. I am to be married to-day to the man I love best, and I believe I am the very happiest girl in Japan!

PEEP: The happiest girl indeed, for she is indeed to be envied who has attained happiness in all but perfection.

YUM: In "all but" perfection?

PEEP: Well, dear, it can't be denied that the fact that your husband is to be beheaded in a month is, in its way, a drawback. It does seem to take the top off it, you know. 147

PITTI: I don't know about that. It all depends!

PEEP: At all events, *he* will find it a drawback.

PITTI: Not necessarily. Bless you, it all depends!

YUM: (*in tears*) I think it very indelicate of you to refer to such a subject on such a day. If my married happiness is to be—to be—

PEEP: Cut short.

YUM: Well, cut short—in a month, can't you let me forget it? (*Weeping*)

(Enter NANKI-POO, followed by PISH-TUSH.) 148

NANKI: Yum-Yum in tears—and on her wedding-morn!

YUM: (*sobbing*) They've been reminding me that in a month you're to be beheaded! (*Bursts into tears*)

147 take the top off it, you know. This short scene belongs to Peep-Bo, whose humor arises from a compulsion to be an objective, if punning, narrator of reality. Deems Taylor writes that Gilbert knew

that a world in which there is nothing but the letter of the law, and the logical conclusion, and the inevitable deduction, and the axiomatic fact, and the rational course of conduct, is, in the last account, a ridiculous one (1932).

148 followed by Pish-Tush. Contrary to the instructions of most printed libretti and vocal scores, Pish-Tush is traditionally replaced in this scene by an entirely different character whom Gilbert named "Go-To" and who customarily takes the line, "Why, who are you who ask this question?" in the beginning of Act One. Pish-Tush's replacement by Go-To has long puzzled G&S afficiandos and has perpetrated a few errors.

For some time it has been assumed that the baritone, Frederick Bovill (see Note 36), was unable to plummet to the low F in the last measure of the Madrigal, necessitating the introduction of a bass to sing the part (see Allen, 1958; Green, 1961; and Jones, 1967). This explanation appears to have been prompted by a statement made by Helen D'Oyly Carte in 1905:

Go-To is a member of the chorus with a heavy bass voice, to whom is given the music written for Pish-Tush in the quartette in Act II, 'Brightly dawns our wedding day,' when, as frequently happens, the baritone playing Pish-Tush

has not a sufficiently heavy voice effectively to sing that number. This diversion of the music was not made on the first production of The Mikado, but when it was found desirable on a later reproduction of the opera, Mr. Gilbert was asked kindly to christen the new character, and he christened him Go-To" (our italics; cited by Fitz-Gerald, 1924).

Mrs. Carte was incorrect about Pish-Tush's replacement occurring after "the first production." The Pierpont Morgan Library's collection of original G&S programmes documents the appearance at the Savoy of Go-To, played by Rudolph Lewis, as early as May 18, 1885 (D'Luhy, 1975). In the March 28, 1885, issue of Entr'acte, the reviewer alludes to

...another serviceable gentleman [other than Bovill] who sings the basso music in the Madrigal. So serviceable is he that it would be only an act of justice to give his name in the programme.

Go-To, then, was appearing at least as early as two weeks after the première, even though his printed name does not appear until nearly two months later.

At any rate, the replacement of Pish-Tush was not necessitated by Bovill's alleged inability to reach to low F. In the first place there is no low F in the final measure of the Madrigal in Sullivan's autograph score: Pish-Tush's part takes the F above, and the low F is supplied by the cello. Secondly, even if Sullivan changed this to its present condition (low F, no cello) in final rehearsals, it would not have justified replacing Bovill: The low F is not really outside the range of a good baritone, as Mrs. Carte implied, and Bovill had already proven he was equal to the note in the first act of



PITTI: Yes, we've been reminding her that you're to be beheaded. (*Bursts into tears*)

PEEP: It's quite true, you know, you *are* to be beheaded! (*Bursts into tears*)

NANKI: (*aside*) Humph! How some bridegrooms would be depressed by this sort of thing! (*Aloud*) A month? Well, what's a month? Bah! These divisions of time are purely arbitrary. Who says twenty-four hours make a day?

PITTI: There's a popular impression to that effect.

NANKI: Then we'll efface it. We'll call each second a minute—each minute an hour—each hour a day—and each day a year. At that rate we've about thirty years of married happiness before us!

PEEP: And, at that rate, this interview has already lasted four hours and three-quarters! (*Exit PEEP-BO.*)

YUM: (*still sobbing*) Yes. How time flies when one is thoroughly enjoying oneself!

NANKI: That's the way to look at it! Don't let's be downhearted! There's a silver lining to every cloud.

YUM: Certainly. Let's—let's be perfectly happy! (*Almost in tears*)

PISH: By all means. Let's—let's thoroughly enjoy ourselves.

PITTI: It's—it's absurd to cry! (*Trying to force a laugh*)

YUM: Quite ridiculous! (*Trying to laugh*) (*All break into a forced and melancholy laugh.*)

Ivanhoe, where the low F in question is conspicuous in the Squire's part.

Why his replacement? Possibly, along the lines suggested by Mrs. Carte, the less proficient baritones of the touring companies were unable to meet the low F, which Sullivan perhaps inserted at the last minute. The change then might have been made at the Savoy to conform with the practice in the provinces. On dramatic grounds alone, however, the replacement of Pish-Tush in the "Madrigal" makes sense, for in Act I Pish-Tush is closely identified with the conniving of Pooh-Bah and Ko-Ko, and it is inconsistent for him to enter Act II sympathizing with the plight of Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum.

Did Gilbert effect the replacement for the sake of dramatic consistency? When did Sullivan change the final bass note in the "Madrigal" to the low F? Were the provincial baritones unable to meet Sullivan's requirement and was a change made at the Savoy for the sake of consistency among the companies? Or did Go-To appear even in the première performance? This mix-up of identities is the most Gilbertian puzzle in the evolution of The Mikado.

"BRIGHTLY DAWNS OUR  
WEDDING DAY" 149

Madrigal  
YUM-YUM, PITTI-SING, NANKI-POO, and  
PISH-TUSH

Brightly dawns our wedding day;  
Joyous hour, we give thee greeting!  
Whither, whither art thou fleeting?  
Fickle moment, prithee stay!  
What though mortal joys be hollow?  
Pleasures come, if sorrows follow:  
Though the tocsin sound, ere long,  
Ding dong! Ding dong!  
Yet until the shadows fall  
Over one and over all,  
Sing a merry madrigal:  
Fa la, Fa la, etc.

149 "Brightly dawns our wedding day" One of the many Anglicisms that continually break through the surface of The Mikado's Japanaiserie, this one is perhaps the most internationally appreciated. Originally staged as a formal concert piece, it may have been another attempt on Gilbert's part to appease Sullivan's ever-increasing concern over the frivolity of his Savoy music.

Neither collaborator quite expected the enthusiastic response it received on opening night from stalls and gallery alike. Serious critics and musicians were unanimous in their approval, feeling that their faith in Sullivan as "England's musical hope" had not been entirely misplaced. The Graphic called it "one of the most charming

specimens of four-part writing which Sir Arthur Sullivan has given us." Beatty-Kingston praised its "extraordinary beauty, written in the fine old scholarly fashion that comes to Sullivan as easily nowadays as it came of yore to Wilbye and Battishill." Even in the dark episode of Sullivan-criticism that followed the composer's death, Ernest Walker was forced to admit that, in this Madrigal, "we have something which in its trifling way is the work of a genuine and delicate-handed artist" (1924).

The pure and simple melodic lines of the sixteenth-century madrigal were especially appealing to Sullivan, who in his 1888 Birmingham speech eulogized "the illustrious names of Morley, Weekes, Wilbye, Ford, Dowland, and Orlando Gibbons." Martin Cooper (1963) declared that the "madrigal" from The Mikado "has all the easy grace and flow that no academic training alone can achieve." Sullivan himself, though, gave credit to his teacher at the Royal Academy, John Goss, once remarking of him, "He had a wonderful gift of part-writing and whatever facility I possess in this respect I owe entirely to his teaching and influence." Goss' once-esteemed part-songs have now fallen into oblivion, except for their unwitting service to Savoy opera.

Gilbert was never one to quibble with success, and he included "madrigals" in the two operas succeeding The Mikado. His personal opinion, however, of such "high-class music" crept into his narrative of later years:

So to cheer themselves up they sang what is called a 'glee' [Gilbert uses the critically approved term] and a glee is generally as doleful a piece of music as one would find in a long summer's day march" (The Story of The Mikado).

In the twentieth century this "madrigal" is



SIR JOHN GOSS, 1800-80

In 1838 he succeeded Thomas Attwood as organist at St. Paul's Cathedral. After he had held this position for a third of a century he was knighted (1872) and shortly afterwards retired.

rarely mentioned in print without the qualifying quotation marks due to the insistence of many British musicologists that Sullivan's quartet does not satisfy the technical criteria of a madrigal; they prefer it to be called a glee. However, according to standards set in the nineteenth century by The Madrigal Society (the oldest musical association in London and of which Sullivan had once served briefly as President), Sullivan's quartet fits neither the definition of a madrigal nor that of a glee. It is not a glee, because it is as contrapuntal as it is harmonic in emphasis; and, since it possesses independent instrumental parts, it is not a madrigal. (Perhaps the song is a "glee".) At any rate, Arthur Jacobs evaluated it most objectively by observing that Sullivan's quartet pays "vague homage to an older form without reviving it" (1967).



Let us dry the ready tear,  
 Though the hours are surely creeping,  
 Little need for woeful weeping,  
 Till the sad sundown is near.  
 All must sip the cup of sorrow—  
 I to-day, and thou to-morrow:  
 This the close of every song,  
 Ding dong! Ding dong! 150  
 What though solemn shadows fall,  
 Sooner, later, over all,  
 Sing a merry madrigal:  
 Fa la, Fa la, etc. (*Ending in tears*) 151

(*Exit* PITTI-SING and PISH-TUSH.)

(NANKI-POO embraces YUM-YUM. *Enter* KO-KO. NANKI-POO releases YUM-YUM.)

KO: Go on—don't mind me.

NANKI: I'm afraid we're distressing you.

KO: Never mind, I must get used to it. Only please do it by degrees. Begin by putting your arm around her waist. (NANKI-POO does so.) There! let me get used to that first.

YUM: Oh, wouldn't you like to retire? It must pain you to see us so affectionate together!

KO: No, I must learn to bear it! Now oblige me by allowing her head to rest on your shoulder.

NANKI: Like that? (*He does so. Ko-Ko is much affected.*)

KO: I am much obliged to you. Now—kiss her! (*He does so. Ko-Ko writhes with anguish.*) Thank you—it's simple torture! 152

YUM: Come, come, bear up. After all, it's only for a month.

KO: No. It's no use deluding oneself with false hopes.

NANKI and YUM: What do you mean?

KO: (*to YUM-YUM*) My child—my poor child! (*Aside*) How shall I break it to her? (*Aloud*) My little bride that was to have been—

150 Ding dong. After a contrapuntal development of this burden, Sullivan expands the note values into a majestic tolling. The tenor's entrance, delayed by a quarter-rest, simulates the percussive stroke of a bell's clapper.

151 Fa la, Fa la, etc. Edmund Fellowes writes in The English Madrigal Composers:

A large number of English people at the present day regard the Fa-la refrain as the distinguishing feature of the Madrigal. Sullivan's part-song or so-called 'Madrigal' in The Mikado has done much to perpetrate this error in modern days" (1950). ✓

152 it's simple torture! Ko-Ko's masochism, although original with Gilbert, is not original with The Mikado. Gilbert borrowed it from one of his earlier musical plays, Foggerty's Fairy:

Walkinshaw: No--I must learn to bear it.

Go on; but do it by degrees.

Put your arm around her waist, Foggerty.

There--let me get used to that first.

(Writhes in anguish)... Foggerty, oblige me by allowing Miss Talbot to rest her head on your shoulder.

Foggerty: Do you mean it? (She does so.)

Walkinshaw: Oh, it is hard to bear!--it is hard to bear! (Writhing.) Now kiss her. (Foggerty does so.) Oh!!! (Writhing.)

Systematic desensitization, a current vogue in the psychotherapeutic treatment of anxiety, is actually based on a technique consistent with this Gilbertian absurdity (see Wolpe & Lazarus, 1966).

YUM: (*delighted*) Was to have been?

KO: Yes, you never can be mine!

NANKI: } (*in ecstasy*) { What!  
YUM: } { I'm so glad!

KO: I've just ascertained that, by the Mikado's law, when a married man is beheaded his wife is buried alive.

NANKI and YUM: Buried alive!

KO: Buried alive. It's a most unpleasant death.

NANKI: But whom did you get that from?

KO: Oh, from Pooh-Bah. He's my solicitor.

YUM: But he may be mistaken!

KO: So I thought; so I consulted the Attorney-General, the Lord Chief Justice, the Master of the Rolls, the Judge Ordinary, and the Lord Chancellor. They're all of the same opinion. Never knew such unanimity on a point of law in my life!

NANKI: But stop a bit! This law has never been put in force.

KO: Not yet. You see, flirting is the only crime punishable with decapitation, and married men never flirt. 153

NANKI: Of course, they don't. I quite forgot that! Well, I suppose I may take it that my dream of happiness is at an end!

YUM: Darling—I don't want to appear selfish, and I love you with all my heart—I don't suppose I shall ever love anybody else half as much—but when I agreed to marry you—my own—I had no idea—pet—that I should have to be buried alive in a month! 154

NANKI: Nor I! It's the very first I've heard of it!

YUM: It—it makes a difference, doesn't it?

NANKI: It *does* make a difference, of course.

YUM: You see—burial alive—it's such a stuffy death.

153 married men never flirt. Gilbert's joke is a wry comment on a favorite pastime; he had named a parlor in his home "The Flirtorium."

154 buried alive in a month! The ease with which Yum-Yum cancels her wedding in the face of adverse circumstances shocked reviewers such as Beatty-Kingston, even though it is a much diluted version of a comic situation that runs rampant in Gilbert's Engaged.



NANKI: I call it a beast of a death.

YUM: You see my difficulty, don't you?

NANKI: Yes, and I see my own. If I insist on your carrying out your promise, I doom you to a hideous death; if I release you, you marry Ko-Ko at once.

"HERE'S A HOW-DE-DO!" 155

Trio

YUM-YUM, NANKI-POO, and KO-KO

YUM: Here's a how-de-do!  
If I marry you,  
When your time has come to perish,  
Then the maiden whom you cherish  
Must be slaughtered, too! 156  
Here's a how-de-do!

NANKI: Here's a pretty mess!  
In a month, or less,  
I must die without a wedding!  
Let the bitter tears I'm shedding  
Witness my distress,  
Here's a pretty mess!

KO: Here's a state of things!  
To her life she clings!

Matrimonial devotion  
Doesn't seem to suit her notion—  
Burial it brings!  
Here's a state of things!

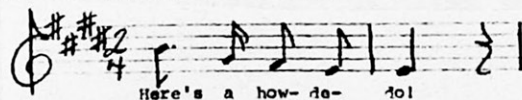
TRIO: With a passion that's intense  
I } worship and adore,  
You }  
But the laws of common sense  
We } oughtn't to ignore.  
You }  
If what { he says } is true,  
I say }  
'Tis death to marry you!  
Here's a pretty state of things!  
Here's a pretty how-de-do! 157

155 "Here's a how-de-do!" The preceding scene, replete with premature burial and death by suffocation, is followed by the merriest sprint in the opera--seventy-five seconds in duration.

Mimicking the "ensembles of perplexity" begun by Scarlatti's operas and popularized by French light-opera, "Here's a how-de-do" is the most encored number in the entire Gilbert & Sullivan series. After seeing a performance during the original run of The Mikado, Hanslick observed:

The brilliant climax of this oddly heterogeneous achievement, this harmonious collaboration of musical, choreographic, and theatrical elements and devices, was the rhymed-song of the second act. It was encored twice; Makart is said to have seen it ten times.

Sullivan's pentatonic taunt is a virtual translation of Gilbert's words--



--and the phrase has since become a musical cliché in motion-picture soundtracks.

In the hands of translators Walzel and Genée, Gilbert's verses became:

Wirklich sehr fatal!  
Ich begreif' die Qual:  
Doch es muss dagei bewenden  
Dass auch sie dolllt' grausam enden  
Ungemein fatal!

156 Must be slaughtered, too! Gilbert's use of hyperbole to achieve his comic effect has been analyzed by Charles N. Coe: A shock-effect is often produced by one line of a verse, purposely out of harmony with the others. Another example comparable to this one occurs in

The Pirates of Penzance:

Mabel: Go, ye heroes, go to glory,  
Though you die in combat gory,  
Ye shall live in song and story.

157 Here's a pretty how-de-do! Sullivan ends with the exclamation spoken rather than sung.

*bring up the  
play  
audience with*

(Exit YUM-YUM.)

KO: (going up to NANKI-POO) My poor boy, I'm really very sorry for you.

NANKI: Thanks, old fellow. I'm sure you are.

KO: You see I'm quite helpless.

NANKI: I quite see that.

KO: I can't conceive anything more distressing than to have one's marriage broken off at the last moment. But you shan't be disappointed of a wedding—you shall come to mine.

NANKI: It's awfully kind of you, but that impossible.

KO: Why so?

NANKI: To-day I die.

KO: What do you mean?

NANKI: I can't live without Yum-Yum. This afternoon I perform the Happy Despatch. 158

KO: No, no—pardon me—I can't allow that.

NANKI: Why not?

KO: Why, hang it all, you're under contract to die by the hand of the Public Executioner in a month's time! If you kill yourself, what's to become of me? Why, I shall have to be executed in your place!

NANKI: It would certainly seem so!

(Enter POOH-BAH.)

KO: Now then, Lord Mayor, what is it?

POOH: The Mikado and his suite are approaching the city, and will be here in ten minutes.

KO: The Mikado! He's coming to see whether his orders have been carried out! (To NANKI-POO) Now look here, you know—this is getting serious—a bargain's a bargain, and you really mustn't frustrate the ends of justice by committing suicide. As a man of honour and a gentleman, you are bound to die ignominiously by the hands of the Public Executioner.

NANKI: Very well, then—behead me.

KO: What, now?

158 Happy Despatch. Gilbert continues to allude only subtly to the Japanese practice then so fascinating to Europeans and a recurring topic in contemporary periodicals (see Mitford's, "The Execution by Hara Kiri," Cornhill). Hanslick expressed his thanks that Gilbert "spared us, at least, the gory business of hara kiri, for which the Japanese entertain a famous affection." Gilbert provided more details twenty years later:

The 'Happy Despatch' is the reassuring name given by the gentle Japanese to the painful operation of cutting oneself open. Suicide used to be extremely popular with these sensible people. If a gentleman left home and found that he had forgotten his umbrella, he would say, 'Oh, I can't be bothered to go back and fetch it, so here goes!' and off he popped (Story of The Mikado).



NANKI: Certainly; at once.

POOH: Chop it off! Chop it off! 159

KO: My good sir, I don't go about prepared to execute gentlemen at a moment's notice. Why, I never even killed a blue-bottle! 160

POOH: Still, as Lord High Executioner—

KO: My good sir, as Lord High Executioner I've got to behead him in a month. I'm not ready yet. I don't know how it's done. I'm going to take lessons. I mean to begin

with a guinea pig, and work my way through the animal kingdom till I come to a Second Trombone. Why, you don't suppose that, as a humane man, I'd have accepted the post of Lord High Executioner if I hadn't thought the duties purely nominal? I can't kill you—I can't kill anything! I can't kill anybody! (Weeps)

NANKI: Come, my poor fellow, we all have unpleasant duties to discharge at times; after all, what is it? If I don't mind, why should you? Remember, sooner or later it must be done.

KO: (springing up suddenly) Must it? I'm not so sure about that!

NANKI: What do you mean?

KO: Why should I kill you when making an affidavit that you've been executed will do just as well? Here are plenty of witnesses—the Lord Chief Justice, Lord High Admiral, Commander-in-Chief, Secretary of State for the Home Department, First Lord of the Treasury, and Chief Commissioner of Police.

NANKI: But where are they?

KO: There they are. They'll all swear to it—won't you? (To POOH-BAH)

159 Chop it off! Barrington's gag--since expanded to "Chop it off, Ko-Ko, chop it off!" In a list of gags submitted for his scrutiny by Helen D'Oyly Carte at the turn of the century, Gilbert disapproved and scribbled "Not authorised. Please omit" next to it. In Barrington's defense, however, the line is enormously successful. See Note 224.

160 blue-bottle: Calliphora vicina, a widely distributed blowfly whose abdomen or entire body is an iridescent blue.

161 I mean to begin with a guinea pig... In promoting assertive behavior, the same system of psychotherapy mentioned in Note 152 employs techniques that are similar to, though somewhat less outrageous than, Gilbert's.

162 I can't kill anybody! Jane Stedman has called Ko-Ko one in "a long Gilbertian line of inadequately ruthless characters" and cites "the sentimental pirates of Penzance, Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, and even the Fairy Queen, who cannot bring herself to enforce the stern letter of fairy law" (1967). In Ko-Ko's case, Gilbert's characterization may have been partially autobiographical. The gruff librettist admitted to William Archer that he had

"a constitutional objection to taking life in any form. I don't think I ever wittingly killed a black beetle...the mechanism of life is so wonderful that I shrink from stopping its action"(1901).

In 1891, Freud wrote to Wilhelm Fliess about



"I never even killed a blue-bottle"  
George Grossmith (D'Oyly Carte archives)

the obsessional neurosis of the young Czar who "like Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner in The Mikado, is unable to bear the sight of bloodshed."

POOH: Am I to understand that all of us high Officers of State are required to perjure ourselves to ensure your safety!

KO: Why not? You'll be grossly insulted, as usual.

POOH: Will the insult be cash down, or at a date?

KO: It will be a ready-money transaction.

POOH: (*aside*) Well, it will be a useful discipline. (*Aloud*) Very good. Choose your fiction, and I'll endorse it! (*Aside*) Ha! ha! Family Pride, how do you like *that*, my buck? 163

NANKI: But I tell you that life without Yum-Yum—

KO: Oh, Yum-Yum, Yum-Yum! Bother Yum-Yum! Here, Commissionaire (*to* POOH-BAH), go and fetch Yum-Yum. (*Exit* POOH-BAH.) Take Yum-Yum and marry Yum-Yum, only go away and never come back again. (*Enter* POOH-BAH *with* YUM-YUM.) Here she is. Yum-Yum, are you particularly busy?

YUM: Not particularly.

KO: You've five minutes to spare?

YUM: Yes.

KO: Then go along with his Grace the Archbishop of Titipu; he'll marry you at once.

YUM: But if I'm to be buried alive?

KO: Now, don't ask any questions, but do as I tell you, and Nanki-Poo will explain all. 164

NANKI: But one moment—

KO: Not for worlds. Here comes the Mikado, no doubt to ascertain whether I've obeyed his decree; and if he finds you alive I shall have the greatest difficulty in persuading him that I've beheaded you. (*Exeunt* NANKI-POO and YUM-YUM, *followed by* POOH-BAH.) Close thing that, for here he comes!

163 how do you like that, my buck?—pronounced "me buck" and one of Pooh-Bah's best drolleries.

164 and Nanki-Poo will explain all. The "March of the Mikado's Troops" begins at this point.



(Exit Ko-Ko.  
Enter procession, heralding MIKADO, with  
KATISHA.) 165

"MI-YA SA-MA" 166  
March of the Mikado's Troops, Chorus, and  
Duet

MIKADO, KATISHA, GIRLS, and MEN

CHORUS: Mi-ya sa-ma, mi-ya sa-ma,  
On n'm-ma no mayé ni  
Pira Pira suru no wa  
Nan gia na  
Toko tonyaré tonyaré na!



165 Enter proces-  
sion, herald-

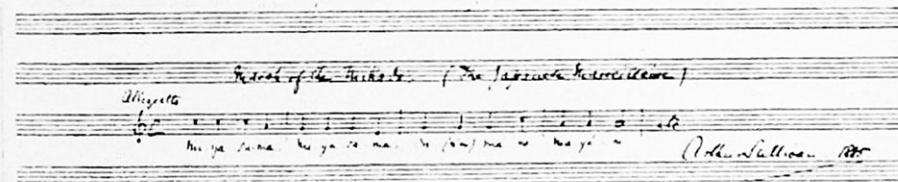
ing Mikado, with  
Katisha. The

sombre exoticism  
of the procession  
changes the mood  
of the opera dra-

partially achieved by the precision of Gilbert's  
stagecraft. In the margin of his promptbook  
he added the following instructions for the  
course of the procession:

As procession enters, Ko-Ko goes off  
RLE. Chorus enters L3E, four deep and  
march to the footlights...then line  
the Right and Back of the stage. The  
Coolies (six) then enter, march down  
to the footlights, the six soldiers  
enter, and march in like manner...The  
Mikado and Katisha enter with umbrella  
carried by Chorister--the entire  
chorus kneel as they enter with heads  
on ground--as he begins "From every  
kind of man" they raise their heads.

166 "Mi-ya sa-ma" Words and music of this  
march are from an authentic Japanese  
folk-tune. Gilbert related to Mrs. Alec-  
Tweedie the circumstances surrounding the  
origin of the interpolation: During a rehearsal  
of The Mikado, Gilbert felt dissatisfied with  
the music Sullivan had written for the ruler's  
entrance. Attending the rehearsal was Arthur  
Diósy--a friend of Richard Temple's, a member  
of the English Legation at Yokohama, and future  
author of The New Far East; Gilbert had in-  
vited him to judge the authenticity of the show.  
When none of Sullivan's variations captured what



Autograph souvenir of Arthur Sullivan;  
he subtitles "Miya sama," "The Japanese Marseillaise."

Gilbert had in mind,  
the librettist final-  
ly turned to Diósy  
and asked, "Can't you  
hum the Japanese na-  
tional anthem?" "Oh  
yes," Diósy replied  
cheerily, and he did.  
"Capital!" exclaimed

Gilbert, "it'll just do." And Sullivan sketched  
it out on the spot.

Several years later rumor intimated that this  
tune was not the Japanese national anthem at all  
but a bawdy, teahouse ditty. The rumor was dis-  
pelled during the ban of The Mikado in 1907, when  
it was learned that the song was merely a common-  
place marching-tune. It is translated:

Oh, my Prince, oh, my Prince,  
What is that fluttering in the wind  
Before your imperial charger?

The second verse replies:

Know ye not it is the imperial banner  
Of silken brocade,  
The signal for chastisement of the rebels?

Seventeen years later the same tune was included  
in a collection of Japanese folksongs given to  
Puccini by Madame Ohyama, wife of the Japanese  
ambassador to Italy. Puccini wanted authentic  
Japanese melodies to work into the connective  
passages in Madama Butterfly and "Miya sama" is  
found in Act II of his opera where his interpre-  
tation of it is as pert as Sullivan's is ominous.  
Puccini had studied the music of The Mikado prior  
to composing Madama Butterfly. Found among his  
effects were a vocal score of The Mikado in which  
he had made notations and Italian translations  
of two songs that particularly interested him:  
"A more humane Mikado" and "Tit-Willow" (Marek, 1951)

## DUET

MIK.: From every kind of man  
Obedience I expect;  
I'm the Emperor of Japan— 167

KAT.: And I'm his daughter-in-law elect!  
He'll marry his son  
(He's only got one)  
To his daughter-in-law elect.

MIK.: My morals have been declared  
Particularly correct;

KAT.: But they're nothing at all, compared  
With those of his daughter-in-law  
elect.  
Bow—Bow—  
To his daughter-in-law elect.

CHORUS: Bow—Bow—  
To his daughter-in-law elect.

MIK.: In a fatherly kind of way  
I govern each tribe and sect,  
All cheerfully own my sway—

KAT.: Except his daughter-in-law elect!  
As tough as a bone,  
With a will of her own,  
Is his daughter-in-law elect.

MIK.: My nature is love and light—  
My freedom from all defect—

KAT.: Is insignificant quite,  
Compared with his daughter-in-  
law elect!  
Bow—Bow—  
To his daughter-in-law elect.

CHORUS: Bow—Bow—  
To his daughter-in-law elect.



*D'Oyly Carte company, 1970*

**167** the Emperor of Japan. The entrance of the Mikado rekindles any audience-interest which may have flagged as a function of time. Like Ko-Ko's entrance, the first appearance of the Emperor of Japan is a comic anti-climax, which mocks the religious awe with which he is greeted. During the original production, Hanslick remarked:

...I was immediately consumed with curiosity actually to see the ruler of this empire, the Mikado, whose most remarkable singularity is precisely the fact that nobody may lay his eyes upon him. Elevated to a sort of divinity through the policies of certain of these rulers of rulers, the Mikado is, throughout his life, denied any

contact with the people. He may not show himself to anyone; none but his court has access to him...

Like Japanese porcelain, so is the entire nimbus of the Mikado shattered in the irreverent hands of W. S. Gilbert, the librettist, and his composer-colleague, Sir Arthur Sullivan. They bring this exalted, invisible presence most visibly and mortally before our eyes, talking nonsense and indulging in the drollest capers.

Like Pooh-Bah, the personage of the Mikado permitted Gilbert to externalize a distinct side of himself with superb comic effect. Not since the Turks and cannibals of his Bab-Ballad days did Gilbert have the opportunity to indulge his predilection for the comic side of mayhem—an indispensable aspect of the "Gilbertian." The Emperor of Japan may have represented Absolute Authority to Victorian Europe, but to Gilbert's mind such a distinction easily inverted into the Ultimate Buffoon. Gilbert likened his Mikado to "the King in a pantomime," and never did an English pantomime King find himself in a fairyland so congenial to comic development as this Gilbertian Japan.



"A MORE HUMANE MIKADO" 168

Solo and Chorus  
MIKADO, GIRLS, and MEN

MIK.: A more humane Mikado never  
Did in Japan exist,  
To nobody second,  
I'm certainly reckoned  
A true philanthropist.  
It is my very humane endeavour  
To make, to some extent,  
Each evil liver  
A running river  
Of harmless merriment.  
My object all sublime  
I shall achieve in time—  
To let the punishment fit the  
crime, 169  
The punishment fit the crime;  
And make each prisoner pent  
Unwillingly represent  
A source of innocent merriment,  
Of innocent merriment!

168 "A more humane Mikado." This is one of Gilbert's most quoted songs, yet

...Gilbert decided at the dress rehearsal that it would not go, and had better be cut. Cut it was, there and then, much to Temple's chagrin [Richard Temple premiered the role of the Mikado]; but when the choristers heard the news, they went in a body to Gilbert and implored him to reinstate it. This was done, with what success we know (Barrington, 1909).

The song is frequently included in English-poetry anthologies--a fact which would have amazed Gilbert. "Innocent merriment" has



(left) Richard Temple as the Mikado; his costume was modeled on a shogun's (right) to avoid offending the true emperor of Japan



become a byword and served as the title of a book of light verse, edited by Franklin P. Adams. In the cinema, Sullivan's melody has almost become a leitmotif for crime and punishment.

169 To let the punishment fit the crime "gave the common speech a new phrase," wrote Mencken in 1910. In the Mikado's song, Gilbert's preparation for the bar served him well. A standard text of mid-nineteenth-century, British legal study was Jeremy Bentham's Rationale of Punishment (1830), which attempted to apply the principles of Utilitarianism to the relationship of punishment to crime:

The value of punishment must not be less, in any case, than what is sufficient to outweigh that of the profit of the offense... that the value of the punishment may outweigh

the profit of the offence, it must be increased in point of magnitude, in proportion as it falls short of certainty.

In the most significant section of his tract, "Of Analogy Between Crime and Punishment," Bentham establishes the rules for letting the "punishment fit the crime":

1. The same instrument used in the crime might be used in the punishment (poisoning the poisoner);
2. The same corporal injury might be inflicted on the offender (an eye for an eye);
3. Punishment could be meted out on the offending member (the hand or tongue);
4. Punishment may reflect the modus operandi of the offender (a criminal using a

All prosy dull society sinners,  
 Who chatter and bleat and bore,  
 Are sent to hear sermons  
 From mystical Germans 170  
 Who preach from ten till four.  
 The amateur tenor, whose vocal 171  
 villainies  
 All desire to shirk,  
 Shall, during off-hours,  
 Exhibit his powers  
 To Madame Tussaud's waxwork. 172  
 The lady who dyes a chemical yellow,  
 Or stains her grey hair puce,  
 Or pinches her figger, 173  
 Is blacked like a nigger  
 With permanent walnut juice.  
 The idiot who, in railway carriages,



"The amateur tenor"  
 (DuMaurier, Punch)

one of the most popular forms of entertainment. Lectures were available on every conceivable subject, and Gilbert's reference is to a series given by a group of German Lutheran evangelists, on tour in the wave of Darwinism, who preached against the literal interpretation of the Bible (see Avery, 1970).

171 The amateur tenor. Neither Gilbert nor Sullivan had much affection for tenors; the vanity of the average nineteenth-century English tenor was antithetical to the methods of both men. Once, after a tenor lingered too long on a high note, Sullivan stopped the orchestra, removed his monacle, paused and, with a smile, addressed the vocalist, "Yes, that's a fine note--a very fine note. But don't mistake your voice for my composition." Gilbert once growled, "[Tenors] never can act and they are more trouble than all the members of the company put together. The tenor has been the curse of every piece I have written." Du Maurier made regular fun of "the amateur tenor."

(right)  
 "Madame  
 Tussaud's  
 waxworks"  
 in the  
 1870's



172 Madame Tussaud's waxworks. Marie Tussaud (1760-1850), the Swiss sculptress, established her celebrated museum in London in 1802. In the eighteen-forties Punch spoke dismally about the "Chamber of Horrors" and likened Madame to the witches who made wax envoutements of their victims. By the 'eighties, however, the museum was one of the most popular haunts in London. A year before the premier of The Mikado, the exhibition had moved to expanded quarters at its present site on Marylebone Road. Sullivan once described Tussaud's as "glorious dullness."

173 blacked like a nigger. See Note 61. During the nineteen-thirties Rupert D'Oyly Carte enlisted the aid of Sir Alan P. Herbert to alter the line. Herbert's revision is:

Or pinches her figger  
 Is painted with vigour  
 And permanent walnut juice.

black mask might be "black-washed")-- possibly "with permanent walnut juice." By taking Bentham's propositions to their most literal extremes and applying them to the harmless, social butts of the day, Gilbert turns ephemeral parody into enduring satire. Isaac Goldberg remarked that not even Dante could have imagined "penances more symbolically fitting than the sadistic pleasantries of Gilbert's potentate."

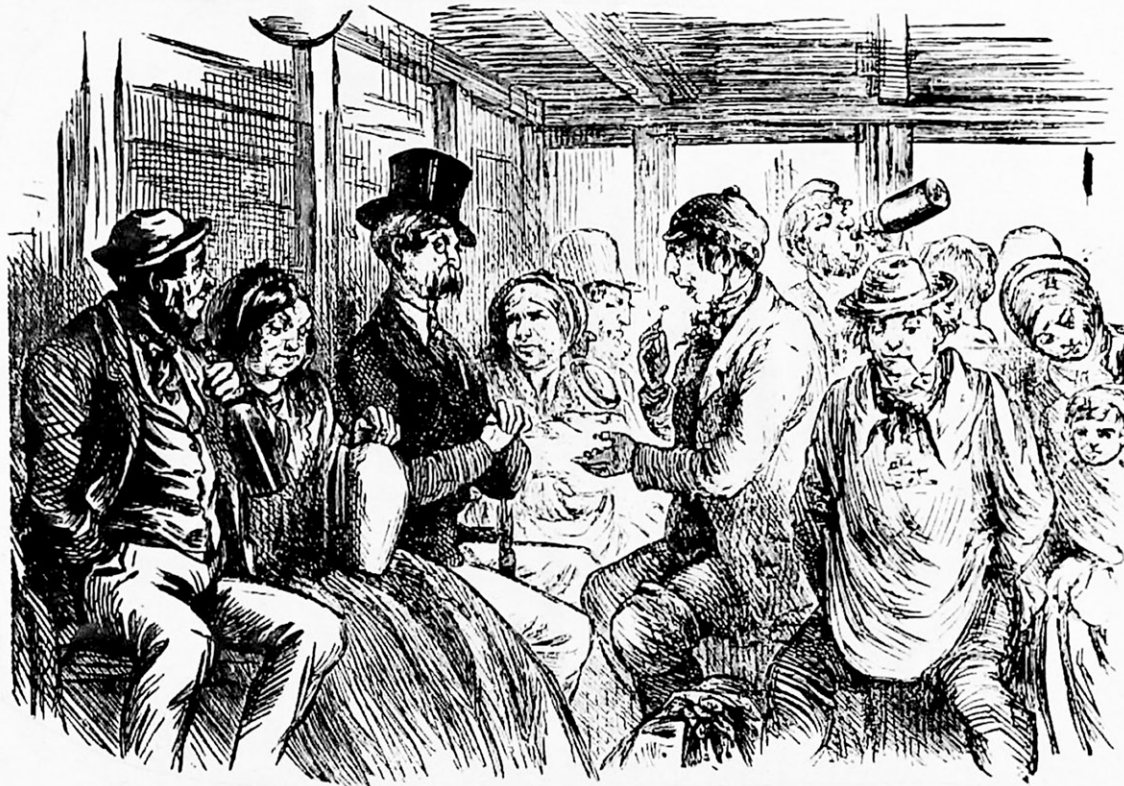
170 sermons/ From mystical Germans. Largely subsumed by twentieth-century media, the Victorian "public lecture" was



Scribbles on window-panes,  
 We only suffer  
 To ride on a buffer <sup>174</sup>  
 In Parliamentary trains. <sup>175</sup>  
 My object all sublime, etc. <sup>176</sup>

CHORUS: His object all sublime, etc.

MIK.: The advertising quack who wearies  
 With tales of countless cures,  
 His teeth, I've enacted,  
 Shall all be extracted  
 By terrified amateurs.



(above) A ride on "a Parliamentary train" (Judy)  
 (right) Don Adams as the Mikado (1970)



<sup>174</sup>buffer: the elastic, projecting bar at the end of a railroad car to absorb the shock of coupling cars.

<sup>175</sup>parliamentary trains. A popular name for transportation created by Parliament's Railway Act of 1844. The Act especially benefited third-class passengers by requiring that each railway company operate at least one train a day that stopped at every station. It further specified that all cars that held passengers be covered with a roof and that fares were to be restricted to a penny a mile. These "parliamentary trains" were uncomfortably

crowded, tedious, and unsanitary.

<sup>176</sup>My object all sublime. It has become tradition for the Mikado to pause before beginning the refrain and introject some sort of laugh. This apparently began around 1908 with a malicious chuckle from D'Oyly-Carte baritone, Leicester Tunks, which was transmuted into a remarkable sequence of guffaws and gasps by Darrell Fancourt (1888-1953). When Donald Adams inherited the role in the 1950's, it became a breathtaking cadenza of ghoulish

atonality. The original Mikado, Richard Temple, made a primitive phonograph recording of the song shortly before he died. There is no evidence of the laugh in it.

Temple seemed to rely more upon subtlety to achieve his effects. The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News observed

the marked power of facial expression by which he not only emphasized his own lines, but clearly reflects the impression produced, or supposed to be produced, upon his mind by those addressed to him. His air of easy-going geniality, tempered by a suspicion of

The music-hall singer attends a series  
Of masses and fugues and "ops"  
By Bach, interwoven 177  
With Spohr and Beethoven, 178  
At classical Monday Pops. 179

native pomposity is admirable, and  
his gait and bearing in thorough keep-  
ing with it.

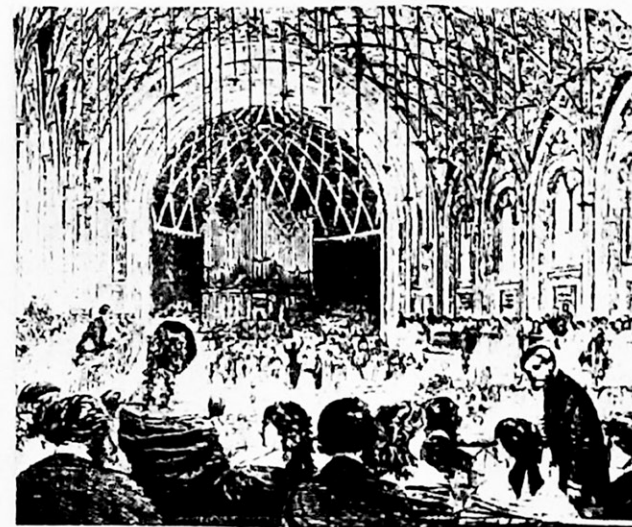


177 By Bach, interwoven.  
Here Sullivan's score  
introjects a direct quo-  
tation from Bach's Organ  
Fugue #12 in G minor.  
Sullivan had committed  
to memory many of Bach's  
works for the organ;  
shortly after Leipzig,  
he had won the position



(left) Louis Spohr  
(1784-1859);

(right)  
"Classical  
Monday pops"  
at St. James' Hall  
(Graphic)



of Organist at St. Michael's, Chester Square,  
a post he held for 6 years.

By Bach, inter-woven with Spohr & Beethoven, at classi-cal Monday Pops

*Allegro vivace P*

(Alt & Bass - - -)

178 With Spohr. Louis Spohr (1784-1859) was  
a darling of early nineteenth-century  
London. His oratorios, Calvary and The Fall of  
Babylon, set a vogue which was long in breaking.  
"Spohr-mania" was eventually replaced by "Mendels-  
sohn-mania," but his compositions were still  
popular at the time of The Mikado. Spohr had

found the theme of the first movement of Beet-  
hoven's Fifth Symphony "wanting in dignity,"  
the trio of the scherzo "grotesque," and the  
last movement an "incomprehensible babel."  
His own compositions have not survived well  
(see Dorothy Mayer's The Forgotten Master).

179 classical Monday Pops. were concerts held  
from 1859-1901 at the St. James' Hall,  
Piccadilly. Sponsored by Chappell and Co.,  
they did much to popularize classical music  
in their forty-two years of existence. The  
history of the Pops is recorded by Klein  
(1925).



The billiard-sharp whom anyone 180  
catches,  
His doom's extremely hard—  
He's made to dwell  
In a dungeon cell  
On a spot that's always barred.  
And there he plays extravagant  
matches  
In fitless finger-stalls, 181  
On a cloth untrue,  
With a twisted cue  
And elliptical billiard balls. 182  
My object all sublime, etc. 183

CHORUS: His object all sublime, etc.

(Enter POOH-BAH, KO-KO, and PITTI-SING.  
All kneel. POOH-BAH hands a paper to KO-KO.)

KO: I am honoured in being permitted to  
welcome your Majesty. I guess the object of  
your Majesty's visit—your wishes have been  
attended to. The execution has taken place.

MIK.: Oh, you've had an execution, have  
you?

KO: Yes. The Coroner has just handed me  
his certificate.

POOH: I am the Coroner. (Ko-Ko hands  
certificate to MIKADO.)

MIK.: And this is the certificate of his  
death. (Reads) "At Titipu, in the presence  
of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Chief Justice,  
Attorney General, Secretary of State for the  
Home Department, Lord Mayor, and Groom  
of the Second Floor Front—"

POOH: They were all present, your Majesty.  
I counted them myself.

MIK.: Very good house. I wish I'd been  
in time for the performance.

KO: A tough fellow he was, too—a man of  
gigantic strength. His struggles were terrific.  
It was really a remarkable scene.

MIK.: Describe it.

180 billiard-sharp. A "billiard-sharp" himself,  
Gilbert teased Sullivan in a letter of the  
'nineties:

...I send you Cook on Billiards--the  
study of that work has made me what  
I am in Billiards, and if you devote  
six or eight hours a day at it regu-  
larly, you may hope to play up to my  
form when you return.

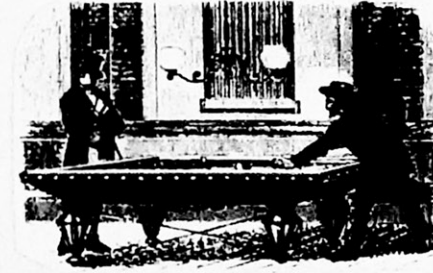
181 finger-stalls: notches for the cue in  
the end-piece of the old-style billiard  
rest.

182 elliptical billiard balls. These final  
lines are quoted by James Joyce in his  
Portrait of An Artist As A Young Man (1916).  
In a college-classroom scene a physics pro-  
fessor gives a deadly-dull lecture on the  
difference between elliptical and ellipsoidal  
and concludes that Gilbert's terminology is  
incorrect:

'He means a ball having the form of  
the ellipsoid of the principal axes  
of which I spoke a moment ago.'

Moynihan leaned down toward  
Stephen's ear and murmured: 'What  
price ellipsoidal balls! Chase me,  
ladies, I'm in the cavalry!'

183 My object all sublime. The laugh is again  
interjected (see Note 176). Sullivan's  
autograph score reveals Gilbert's first-draft  
lyrics for this song:



All men who give indifferent dinners,  
And poison their friends and mine,  
With two shilling sillery  
Stand in a pillory  
Every day at nine...

And ev'ry big and bulky fellow  
Of elephantine weights  
Is made to run races  
On gravelly places  
In eighteen penny skates.

"THE CRIMINAL CRIED AS HE  
DROPPED HIM DOWN" 184

Trio and Chorus

KO-KO, PITTI-SING, POOH-BAH, GIRLS, and  
MEN

KO: The criminal cried, as he dropped him  
down,

In a state of wild alarm—  
With a frightful, frantic, fearful frown,  
I bared my big right arm.

I seized him by his little pig-tail,  
And on his knees fell he, 185  
As he squirmed and struggled,  
And gurgled and guggled, 186

I drew my snickersnee!  
Oh, never shall I  
Forget the cry,  
Or the shriek that shriekèd he, 187

As I gnashed my teeth,  
When from its sheath  
I drew my snickersnee!

CHORUS: We know him well,  
He cannot tell  
Untrue or groundless tales—  
He always tries  
To utter lies,  
And every time he fails. 188



"A state of wild alarm"  
Three scenes from Victorian melodrama

are each of these three that, for compressed comic impact, their dramatic coalescence has no equal in any of Gilbert's other works for the stage. Sullivan's setting is founded on the reiterated minor thirds that musically spelled "suspense" at Drury Lane and the Surrey, and his clever "tone painting" is a particular wink at Jimmy Glover.

James Glover (1861-1931) was composer and conductor for the Drury Lane theatre orchestra and was winning increasing public favor for his effective musical translations of the murders, trainwrecks and skirmishes with mythical giant birds that regularly occurred on the Drury Lane stage. Shaw declared.

If you want to know who was the greatest master of the orchestra in London in the days when I was a critic of music, I can tell you at once. It was Mr. James Glover, of Drury Lane Theatre. I tried to induce him once to write a treatise on orchestration for the benefit of those who have to arrange full concert scores for small theatre bands..." (1910).

Sullivan was interested in Glover's techniques

and regularly patronized Drury Lane. Once, when Glover had achieved an astonishing effect using twelve trumpets fitted with specially built valves, Sullivan was compelled to meet with him between acts to find out how he had done it.

185 seized him...And on his knees fell he.

Sullivan's cornets and trombones engage in hand-to-hand combat during these lines.

186 gurgled and guggled. These sounds are provided by the lower registers of the clarinet and bassoon. The phrase is quoted by Ernest Walker in the third edition of his History of Music in England.

187 the shriek that shrieked he is screamed by flute, clarinet and piccolo. Carl Van Vechten (1926) claims this as the parent of a similar effect in Richard Strauss' Till Eulenspiegel. Sullivan's frequent use of flute and piccolo to simulate fiendish revelry is discussed in detail by H. M. Fitzgibbon in The Story of the Flute.

184 The criminal cried as he dropped him down" G. W. Knight flinched from citing this trio in The Golden Labyrinth, because of its "grotesquerie too horrible for cold quotation." Even so, it represents one of Gilbert and Sullivan's more subtle bits of interplay. The librettist wanders unwittingly and outrageously into the realm of projective psychology, while the composer parodies the "blood-tub orchestral accompaniments of popular melodrama. Gilbert forces a conspiracy among Ko-Ko, PooH-Bah, and Pitti-Sing and, as in most conspiracies, the individual characters (as well as the players) fuse into a composite. So winning



PITTI: He shivered and shook as he gave the sign  
 For the stroke he didn't deserve;  
 When all of a sudden his eye met mine,  
 And it seemed to brace his nerve;  
 For he nodded his head and kissed his hand,  
 And he whistled an air, did he, 189  
 As the sabre true  
 Cut cleanly through  
 His cervical vertebrae!  
 When a man's afraid,  
 A beautiful maid  
 Is a cheering sight to see;  
 And it's oh, I'm glad  
 That moment sad  
 Was soothed by sight of me!

CHORUS: Her terrible tale  
 You can't assail,  
 With truth it quite agrees;  
 Her taste exact  
 For faultless fact  
 Amounts to a disease.

POOH: Now though you'd have said that head  
 was dead  
 (For its owner dead was he), 190  
 It stood on its neck, with a smile well  
 bred,  
 And bowed three time to me!  
 It was none of your impudent off-hand  
 nods,  
 But as humble as could be;  
 For it clearly knew  
 The deference due  
 To a man of pedigree!  
 And it's oh, I vow,  
 This deathly bow  
 Was a touching sight to see;  
 Though trunkless, yet  
 It couldn't forget  
 The deference due to me!

CHORUS: This haughty youth,  
 He speaks the truth  
 Whenever he finds it pays;  
 And in this case  
 It all took place  
 Exactly as he says!

188 We know him well...every time he fails.

G. K. Chesterton liked this chorus, believing it to be "a pure piece of logical analysis and exposure, a great deal more philosophical than many that are quoted among the epigrams of Voltaire" (1930).

189 nodded his head and...whistled an air, did he. Courtly etiquette is reflected in a

bit of dainty elegance from the oboe, and the air, "The Girl I Left Behind Me" is whistled by the piccolo. This is not the same "air" as the one in Sullivan's autograph manuscript and was probably amended during an orchestral rehearsal.

nod-ded his head and kissed his hand, And he

Oboe

Strings

whist-led an air, did he, As the sa- bre

...Oboe

Piccolo....

Strings



"A cheering sight to see"  
 Jessie Bond (1853-1942) as Pitti-Sing

190 owner dead was he. Here and later in PooH-Bah's verse, deathly bows are executed *pianissimo* on the bass drum. Animate, disembodied heads are foreshadowed in Gilbert's Bab Ballad, "The Phantom Head." See also Note 109.



(*Exeunt* CHORUS.)

MIK.: All this is very interesting, and I should like to have seen it. But we came about a totally different matter. A year ago my son, the heir to the throne of Japan, bolted from our Imperial Court.

KO: Indeed! Had he any reason to be dissatisfied with his position?

KAT.: None whatever. On the contrary, I was going to marry him—yet he fled!

POOH: I am surprised that he should have fled from one so lovely!

KAT.: That's not true.

POOH: No!

KAT.: You hold that I am not beautiful because my face is plain. But you know nothing; you are still unenlightened. Learn, then, that it is not in the face alone that beauty is to be sought. My face is unattractive! 191

POOH: It is.

KAT.: But I have a left shoulder-blade that is a miracle of loveliness. People come miles to see it. My right elbow has a fascination that few can resist.

POOH: Allow me! 192

KAT.: It is on view Tuesdays and Fridays, on presentation of visiting card. As for my circulation, it is the largest in the world. 193

KO: And yet he fled!

MIK.: And is now masquerading in this town, disguised as a Second Trombone.

KO, POOH, and PITTI: A Second Trombone!

MIK.: Yes; would it be troubling you too much if I asked you to produce him? He goes by the name of—

KAT.: Nanki-Poo.

MIK.: Nanki-Poo.

KO: It's quite easy—that is, it's rather difficult. In point of fact, he's gone abroad!

191 My face is unattractive! In this scene Gilbert follows the stock, nineteenth-century, extravaganza formula for the Dame—a treatment that is most obvious in the punning jibes at Katisha's physiognomy. Sullivan asked that this scene be cut and Gilbert obliged, reducing it by one third. There was still too much left to suit the Saturday Review, however, which in its review of the première traced Gilbert's operatic exploitation of the stock character and expressed dismay:

Katisha's remarks about her left shoulder blade being a miracle of loveliness, and her right elbow possessing extraordinary fascination, strike us as being simply silly, and therefore totally unworthy of Mr. Gilbert...It is a pity that this was ever written and a wonder that it ever came to be printed and spoken.

On the subject of Gilbert's elderly, ugly ladies, Quiller-Couch became a virtual knight-errant:

What disgusts one in Gilbert, from the beginning to the end, is his insistence on the physical odiousness of any woman growing old. As though, great Heaven! they themselves did not find it tragic enough—the very and necessary tragedy of their lives! Gilbert shouts it, mocks it, apes with it, spits upon it.

192 It is and Allow me. Gags from Barrington.

193 As for my circulation, it is the largest in the world. The same boast was being

made by the Daily Telegraph. Katisha's original lines were cut at this point:

Kat: ...in the world. Observe this ear.

Ko.: Large.

Kat: Large? Enormous! But think of its delicate internal mechanism. It is fraught with beauty! As for this tooth, it almost stands alone. Many have tried to draw it, but in vain.

Gilbert restored these lines in The Story of The Mikado and also clarified the last pun to "Many artists have tried to draw it, but in vain."



MIK.: Gone abroad? His address!

KO: Knightsbridge! 194

KAT.: (*who is reading certificate of death*)  
Ha!

MIK.: What's the matter?

KAT.: See here—his name—Nanki-Poo—  
beheaded this morning. Oh, where shall I  
find another! Where shall I find another!

(KO-KO, POOH-BAH, and PITTI-SING fall on  
their knees.)

MIK.: (*looking at paper*) Dear, dear, dear!  
this is very tiresome. (*To Ko-Ko*) My poor  
fellow, in your anxiety to carry out my wishes  
you have beheaded the heir to the throne of  
Japan!

KO: I beg to offer an unqualified apology.

POOH: I desire to associate myself with  
that expression of regret.

PITTI: We really hadn't the least notion—

MIK.: Of course you hadn't. How could  
you? Come, come, my good fellow, don't dis-  
tress yourself—it was no fault of yours. If a  
man of exalted rank chooses to disguise him-  
self as a Second Trombone, he must take the  
consequences. It really distresses me to see  
you take on so. I've no doubt he thoroughly  
deserved all he got. (*They rise.*)

KO: We are infinitely obliged to your  
Majesty—

PITTI: Much obliged, your Majesty.

POOH: Very much obliged, your Majesty.

MIK.: Obligated? not a bit. Don't mention  
it. How *could* you tell?

POOH: No, of course we couldn't tell who  
the gentleman really was.

194 Knightsbridge. A suburban area outside  
London and site of the Japanese-village  
exhibition which was drawing Londoners by  
the droves and providing a new source of  
lampoon material for Punch. The "Knights-  
bridge" joke is the most topical one in the  
opera and in 1908, Gilbert specified that  
"the locality can be varied according to  
circumstances." This rare ad libitum line  
is left to the director's discretion but,  
like the original gag, the more current and  
topical it can be made, the better.

195 I beg to offer an unqualified apology...  
In Gilbert's original staging, these  
three lines were spoken in unison.



JAPAN IN LONDON.

UNDER ROYAL PATRONAGE.

Allen Lane, Hyde Park (Near Top of Shang Street).  
SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS FOR THE EASTER HOLIDAYS.

250,000 persons have already visited.  
TANNAKER'S JAPANESE VILLAGE.  
Fresh Arrivals from Japan. Five Streets of Houses and Shops constructed and  
peopled by the Japanese, who may be seen engaged at their various occupations as  
in their own Country. Daily (Good Friday excepted). Eleven o'clock to ten p.m.  
ONE SHILLING. Children Sixpence. Wednesdays Half a Crown. Children  
One Shilling. Japanese Entertainments at Twelve, Three, and Eight (five)  
Military Band.

The Knightsbridge Exhibition  
(Graphic, 1885)

PITTI: It wasn't written on his forehead, you know.

KO: It might have been on his pocket-handkerchief, but Japanese don't use pocket-handkerchiefs! Ha! ha! ha! 196

MIK.: Ha! ha! ha! (To KATISHA) I forget the punishment for compassing the death of the Heir Apparent.

KO, POOH, and PITTI: Punishment! (They drop down on their knees again.) 197

MIK.: Yes. Something lingering, with boiling oil in it, I fancy. Something of that sort. I think boiling oil occurs in it, but I'm not sure. I know it's something humorous, but lingering, with either boiling oil or melted lead. Come, come, don't fret—I'm not a bit angry. 198

KO: (in abject terror) If your Majesty will accept our assurance, we had no idea—

MIK.: Of course—

PITTI: I knew nothing about it.

POOH: I wasn't there. 199

196 Japanese don't use pocket-handkerchiefs.  
Using the fact as a joke, Gilbert refers

to one of the many interesting customs Londoners learned from the Knightsbridge exhibition. Arthur Diósy writes about the

squares of soft, but tough, paper that have been in use in Japan, from time immemorial, for the purposes for which we carry a pocket-handkerchief. These squares of paper, folded into a flattened roll, were formerly carried in the wallet...the masses still use "nose-paper," hana-gami, the squares that have done duty being folded up small and deposited in

the sleeve, which is the real Japanese pocket, until, on reaching home, they are thrown into the receptacle for waste paper" (1898).

Gilbert's use of a pocket-handkerchief as a carte de visite appeared in his play, Tom Cobb.

197 (They drop down on their knees again.)  
George Grossmith recalled a confrontation with Gilbert over this scene:

Gilbert: I am told, Mr. Grossmith, that in last night's performance when you and Miss Bond were kneeling before the Mikado, she gave you a push and you rolled completely over on the floor.

Gross.: Yes. You see, in my interpretation of Ko-Ko...

Gil.: Whatever your interpretation, please omit that in the future.

Gross: Certainly, if you wish it, but I got a big laugh by it.

Gil: So you would if you sat on a pork pie.

198 either boiling oil or melted lead: more medieval European, than Eastern, modes of execution. Queen Victoria eventually "commanded" a royal performance of The Mikado by its original cast and reportedly "shook with laughter" over these lines. The entire scene represents the best of Gilbert's comic writing. The Saturday



Review liked the dialogue of this scene so much that it included an extensive quotation from it in its review of the first production. H. L. Mencken remarked that "the great quality of Gilbert's humor was in its undying freshness, an apparent spontaneity which familiarity could not stale."

199 I wasn't there. A gag from Barrington.



MIK.: That's the pathetic part of it. Unfortunately, the fool of an Act says "compassing the death of the Heir Apparent". There's not a word about a mistake—

KO, POOH, and PITTI: No!

MIK.: Or not knowing—

KO: No!

MIK.: Or having no notion—

PITTI: No!

MIK.: Or not being there—

POOH: No!

MIK.: There should be, of course—

KO, POOH, and PITTI: Yes!

MIK.: But there isn't.

KO, POOH, and PITTI: Oh!

Mik.: That's the slovenly way in which these Acts are always drawn. However, cheer up, it'll be all right. I'll have it altered next session. Now, let's see about your execution—will after luncheon suit you? Can you wait till then? 200

KO, POOH, and PITTI: Oh, yes—we can wait till then!

MIK.: Then we'll make it after luncheon.

POOH: I don't want any lunch. 201

MIK.: I'm really very sorry for you all, but it's an unjust world, and virtue is triumphant only in theatrical performances. 202

**200** the slovenly way in which these Acts are always drawn up. For centuries, legislation had been just one of several functions performed by Parliament, but by the end of the nineteenth it seemed to be its only one. In the eighteen-eighties, under Gladstone and Salisbury, a vast number of Public General Acts were being passed. So rapidly was legislation enacted that the final form of most Acts was often "slovenly," their inconsistent language fostering complications for legal implementation and causing much bewilderment at the local level (see Ausubel, 1955).

**201** I don't want any lunch. Another gag from Barrington.

**202** virtue is triumphant only in theatrical performances, specifically, in nineteenth-century melodrama, which neatly divided human nature into a dichotomy of good and evil and then identified the lowly-born with the former and aristocrats, e.g., "bad baronets," with the latter:

In virtue's eyes

The good are great--the great not always good. (From The Forty Thieves.)

English melodrama was dominated by translations from the French (William Archer declared that anyone who could buy, borrow, or steal a French dictionary could set up in business as a playwright). The sentiments of the genre sprang from Rousseau's Romanticism as well as from post-Revolutionary prejudices of such authors as Pixérécourt and Bernadine St. Pierre (see Howarth, 1975). The persis-

tent theme was Nature's preference for virtue:

Ye tyrants hear it,  
And learn, that while your cruelty prepares  
Unheard-of torture, virtue can keep pace  
With your worst efforts, and can try new  
      modes  
To bid men grow enamour'd of her charms  
      (from The Grecian Daughter).

Over time this theme became a fixed rule in the office of the Lord Chamberlain, the "licenser of plays," so that a dramatist was bound to stay within the theme if he wanted his play produced--a restriction most vexing to Gilbert. In The Triumph of Vice, a curious burlesque of a Gothic tale featuring a giant maiden and a shrinking prince, Gilbert twisted the formula and concluded with this:

Moral.

Thus, notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary, vice is sometimes triumphant. Cunning, malice, and imposture may not flourish immediately they are practised, but depend upon it, my dear children, that they will assert their own in the end (1867).

"SEE HOW THE FATES THEIR  
GIFTS ALLOT" 203

Glee

MIKADO, PITTI-SING, POOH-BAH, KO-KO, and  
KATISHA

MIK.: See how the Fates their gifts allot,  
For A is happy, B is not.  
Yet B is worthy, I dare say,  
Of more prosperity than A.

KO, POOH, and PITTI:  
*Is B more worthy?*

KAT.: I should say  
He's worth a great deal more than A.

QUINTET: Yet A is happy!  
Oh, so happy!  
Laughing, Ha! ha!  
Chaffing, Ha! ha!  
Nectar quaffing, Ha! ha! ha!  
Ever joyous, ever gay,  
Happy, undeserving A!

KO, POOH, and PITTI:  
If I were Fortune—which I'm not—  
B should enjoy A's happy lot,  
And A should die in miserie—  
That is, assuming I am B. 204

MIK. and KAT.: But *should* A perish?

KO, POOH, and PITTI:  
That should he,  
(Of course, assuming I am B.)

QUINTET: B should be happy!  
Oh, so happy!  
Laughing, Ha! ha!  
Chaffing, Ha! ha!  
Nectar quaffing, Ha! ha! ha!  
But condemned to die is he,  
Wretched meritorious B!

203 "See how the Fates their Gifts allot"

This glee--without the quotation marks--  
recalls Gilbert's own description of the form  
(see Note 149). Gilbert used an alphabetical  
designation for characters more happily in  
his Bab Ballads, and the device itself comes  
from Planché:

Medea: To draw a parallel--should Fate  
decree

As A to B, so C would be to D.

Jason: If I be C, and D my friend in  
need,

When C proved false to D,  
may C be d----d!

In Sullivan's setting, harmonic structure  
is predominant and the song is scored for  
strings only. Herbert Klein offers some  
insight into the popularity of the song in  
its day; he reports that, for many, the  
chief glory of the Savoy scores was found in

the concerted vocal part-writing,  
especially those eagerly awaited  
unaccompanied bits, with their  
naive semi-ecclesiastical cadences,  
their welcome echoes of a then half-  
forgotten Elizabethan idiom, the  
secret of the halcyon days of  
English music to which Arthur Sul-  
livan then almost alone possessed  
the key (1925).

204 If I were Fortune...assuming I am B.  
This verse is sung a cappella.



(*Exeunt MIKADO and KATISHA.*)

KO: Well, a nice mess you've got us into, with your nodding head and the deference due to a man of pedigree!

POOH: Merely corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative. 205

PITTI: Corroborative detail indeed! Corroborative fiddlestick!

KO: And you're just as bad as he is with your cock-and-a-bull stories about catching his eye and his whistling an air. But that's so like you! You must put in your oar!

POOH: But how about your big right arm?

PITTI: Yes, and your snickersnee!

KO: Well, well, never mind that now. There's only one thing to be done. Nanki-Poo hasn't started yet—he must come to life again at once. (*Enter NANKI-POO and YUM-YUM, prepared for journey.*) Here he comes. Here, Nanki-Poo, I've good news for you—you're reprieved.

NANKI: Oh, but it's too late. I'm a dead man, and I'm off for my honeymoon. 206

KO: Nonsense! A terrible thing has just happened. It seems you're the son of the Mikado.

NANKI: Yes, but that happened some time ago.

KO: Is this a time for airy persiflage? Your father is here, and with Katisha!

NANKI: My father! And with Katisha!

KO: Yes, he wants you particularly.

POOH: So does she.

YUM: Oh, but he's married now.

KO: But, bless my heart! what has that to do with it?

NANKI: Katisha claims me in marriage, but I can't marry her because I'm married already—consequently she will insist on my execution; and if I'm executed, my wife will have to be buried alive.

YUM: You see our difficulty.

205 Merely corroborative detail...unconvincing narrative: One of the most quoted lines of the opera. Ernest Newman remarked that, for the man in the street, Gilbert "is as full of quotations as Shakespeare is for the professedly literary person". Mencken noted of Pooh-Bah's line that it had become a catch-phrase in the United States and that "parlor wits repeated" it "with never-failing success" (1910).

206 I'm a dead man. Symbolic or "statutory" death is worked out in elaborate detail in Gilbert and Sullivan's last opera, The Grand Duke.



"Well, a nice mess you've got us into"  
(D'Oyly Carte company, 1970)

KO: Yes. I don't know what's to be done.

NANKI: There's one chance for you. If you could persuade Katisha to marry you, she would have no further claim on me, and in that case I could come to life without any fear of being put to death.

KO: I marry Katisha!

YUM: I really think it's the only course.

KO: But, my good girl, have you seen her? She's something appalling!

PITTI: Ah! that's only her face. She has a left elbow which people come miles to see!

POOH: I am told that her right heel is much admired by connoisseurs.

KO: My good sir, I decline to pin my heart upon any lady's right heel.

NANKI: It comes to this: while Katisha is single, I prefer to be a disembodied spirit. When Katisha is married, existence will be as welcome as the flowers in spring.

"THE FLOWERS THAT BLOOM  
IN THE SPRING" 207

Song

NANKI-POO, KO-KO, YUM-YUM, PITTI-SING,  
and POOH-BAH

NANKI: The flowers that bloom in the spring,  
Tra la,  
Breathe promise of merry sun-  
shine—

As we merrily dance and we sing,

Tra la,  
We welcome the hope that they bring,  
Tra la,

Of a summer of roses and wine.  
And that's what we mean when we say  
that a thing

Is welcome as flowers that bloom in  
the spring, 208

Tra la la la la, etc.

NANKI, YUM, POOH, and PITTI:  
Tra la la la la, etc.

207 "The flowers that bloom in the spring"

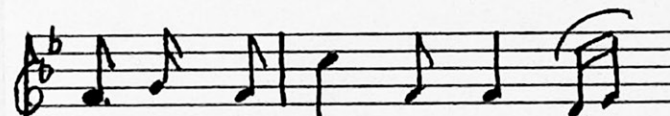
The words of this popular song might almost have come from The Triumphs of Oriana were it not for Ko-Ko's verse where the hand of the true author is unmistakable. Sullivan modeled his melody on the eighteenth-century tunes he so much admired. For example,



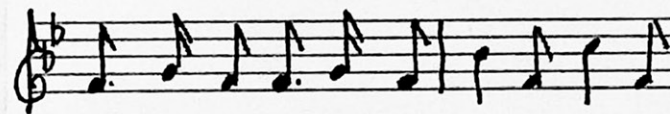
When you court a young virgin of



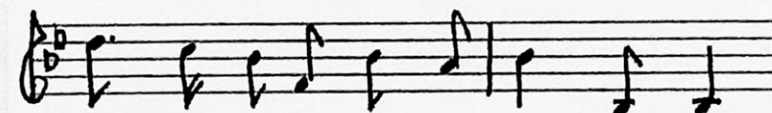
sixteen years, You may banish your



sorrows, your griefs & cares; Your



whining and pining will never, never



Steer you to harbour--Then cease your fears.

(1709)

The composer was sufficiently confident of the success of the number that he scored an encore setting--the only one in the opera--in which the bassoon grunts the melody and the "tra-las" are blasted fortissimo by full orchestra.

Ian Parrott has observed that "The flowers that bloom in the spring" has become so popular that it is almost impossible to cast aside associations and regard it purely as the particularly happy and characteristic melody that it is. Like "A wand'ring minstrel," this song enjoyed such instant and widespread popularity that it has been forced to withstand decades of hackneyed abuse, especially at the hands of advertisers. In the song's own day Lever Brothers of Warrington distributed an advertising leaflet entirely devoted to its own version of The Mikado; this number became:

Lever's Sunlight Soap's a thing,  
Tra la,  
That brings sunshine wherever it goes.  
If you ask us to which we should cling,  
Tra la,  
It won't be the flowers of spring,  
Tra la,  
For they're useless for washing of clothes.

Nearly a century later the practice continues with an American storefront proclaiming, "The flowers that bloom in the spring--tra la--pale beside our new collection of fall fashions."

208 And that's what we mean...that bloom in the spring. Sullivan specifies a rallentando on these lines, greatly enhancing the rhythm when it is resumed a tempo in the "tra las". This passage is cited by Harry Greene in his Interpretation In Song as an example of Sullivan's cunning and the sureness with which he felt the pulse of the public:

[Sullivan] knew that by holding these bars back, he held the breath and stopped the heart-beat, as it were, of the



Ko: The flowers that bloom in the spring,  
 Tra la,  
 Have nothing to do with the case. 209  
 I've got to take under my wing,  
 Tra la,  
 A most unattractive old thing,  
 Tra la,  
 With a caricature of a face.  
 And that's what I mean when I say, or  
 I sing,  
 "Oh, bother the flowers that bloom in  
 the spring",  
 Tra la la la la, etc.  
 (Dance and exeunt NANKI-POO, YUM-YUM,  
 POOH-BAH, PITTI-SING, and KO-KO.)

hearer, so that rhythm when it leapt  
 into his blood once more pulsed,  
 glowed and tingled to his very  
 finger tips.

The same effect is achieved through the  
fermata on one of the "tra las": *music*

209 Have nothing to do with the case. Gilbert  
 forces Ko-Ko to utter his despair in the  
 context of the most jubilant of songs, an irony  
 which amused the Saturday Review during the  
 original production of the opera:

Ko-Ko's perfunctory utterance of the  
 'Tra la's' has a comicality not to  
 be described. They are totally  
 foreign to the sentiment of his  
 verse, but the melody requires their  
 introduction, and he resents the  
 necessity of singing them.

Grossmith used one of his most successful  
 stunts during this song:

...he had developed the faculty of  
 sitting down into the cross-legged  
 tailor's attitude with a suddenness  
 that was scarcely human, and scarcely  
 like a living thing at all: more like  
 the action reversed of a Jack-in-the-  
 box, jumping down into his box in-  
 stead of up and out of it. And he  
 used at times to play this trick while  
 in perfectly serious conversation with  
 a friend, or even with a stranger, who  
 would, of course, be terribly disconcer-  
 ted. At one moment you found yourself  
 looking at George Grossmith's face, more  
 or less on a level with your own; the

next moment it had vanished, and,  
 going in search for it, you found it  
 away down looking up at you from a  
 figure in straddle-legged contortion  
 at your feet. It was the act of an  
 elf, and Grossmith really was most  
 delightfully elvish in his ways"  
 (Hutchinson, 1920).

Grossmith introduced this business into his  
 verse apparently by accident, and Gilbert  
 liked it and retained it after opening  
 night. Punch gave particular notice to "G.G.'s"  
 nimbleness:

It broke upon many of us there, as quite  
 a revelation, that our George Grossmith's  
 real humor had hitherto been less in his  
 face and voice than in his  
 legs. Throughout the First  
 Act his legs were invisible,  
 and the Audience felt that  
 something was wanting...  
 Suddenly, in the Second  
 Act, he gave a kick-up,  
 and showed a pair of white-  
 stocking'd legs under the  
 Japanese dress. It was an  
 inspiration. Forthwith,  
 the house felt a strong  
 sense of relief--it had  
 got what it wanted, it had  
 found but accidentally  
 what it had really missed, and at the first  
 glimpse of George Grossmith's legs there arose  
 a shout of long pent-up laughter."



Enter

KATISHA.)

"ALONE, AND YET ALIVE!" 210  
 Recitative and Song  
 KATISHA

Alone, and yet alive! Oh, sepulchre!  
 My soul is still my body's prisoner!  
 Remote the peace that Death alone can give—  
 My doom, to wait! my punishment, to live!

SONG 211

Hearts do not break!  
 They sting and ache  
 For old love's sake,  
 But do not die,  
 Though with each breath  
 They long for death,  
 As witnesseth  
 The living I.

Oh, living I!  
 Come, tell me why,  
 When hope is gone,  
 Dost thou stay on?  
 Why linger here,  
 Where all is drear?  
 Oh, living I!  
 Come, tell me why,  
 When hope is gone,  
 Dost thou stay on? 212  
 May not a cheated maiden die?

KO: (entering and approaching her timidly)  
 Katisha!

KAT.: The miscreant who robbed me of my  
 love! But vengeance pursues—they are heat-  
 ing the cauldron!

KO: Katisha—behold a suppliant at your  
 feet! Katisha—mercy!

KAT.: Mercy? Had you mercy on him?  
 See here, you! You have slain my love. He  
 did not love *me*, but he would have loved me in  
 time. I am an acquired taste—only the edu-  
 cated palate can appreciate *me*. I was educat-  
 ing *his* palate when he left *me*. Well, he is  
 dead, and where shall I find another? It takes

213

210 "Alone, and yet alive!" Like "The hour  
 of gladness" (see Note 134), Katisha's  
 song is a bow on Gilbert's part to Sulli-  
 van's conception of the contralto role.  
 Gilbert's singularly unremarkable lyric--  
 foreshadowed by "Come mighty Must" in  
Princess Ida--served his collaborator's  
 purpose completely. McKenzie Porter has  
 praised the song's effectiveness in that it  
 "resounds with the harrowing beauty of  
 ugliness in resolute pursuit of love, the  
 sort of beauty one divines in the spirit of  
 the hunchback of Notre Dame" (1976).

211 SONG. This song may represent the  
 best writing for contralto voice in  
 the composer's entire output. Sullivan had  
 spent his adolescence in Leipzig and, ever  
 after, German lieder form framed some of  
 his most passionate inspirations. Beatty-  
 Kingston recorded that on opening night this  
 solo

elicited a storm of applause from  
 as critical an audience as could  
 well be assembled within the walls  
 of a London theatre... [It] is  
 Handelian in its breadth, and  
 Schumannesque in its passionate  
 force.

212 When hope is gone, / Dost thou stay on. A  
 fine climax is achieved on these lines  
 with a striking effect in the sudden burst from  
 the orchestra as it supports the vocal line.



"Alone, and yet alive"  
 (D'Oyly Carte company, 1970)

213 I was educating his palate when he left  
 me. Thus Katisha and Ko-Ko have at  
 least one trait in common. See Note 118.



years to train a man to love me. Am I to go through the weary round again, and, at the same time, implore mercy for you who robbed me of my prey—I mean my pupil—just as his education was on the point of completion? Oh, where shall I find another?

KO: (*suddenly, and with great vehemence*) Here!—Here!

KAT.: What!!!

KO: (*with intense passion*) Katisha, for years I have loved you with a white-hot passion that is slowly but surely consuming my very vitals! Ah, shrink not from me! If there is aught of woman's mercy in your heart, turn not away from a love-sick suppliant whose every fibre thrills at your tiniest touch! True it is that, under a poor mask of disgust, I have endeavoured to conceal a passion whose inner fires are broiling the soul within me. But the fire will not be smothered—it defies all attempts at extinction, and, breaking forth, all the more eagerly for its long restraint, it declares itself in words that will not be weighed—that cannot be schooled—that should not be too severely criticised. Katisha, I dare not hope for your love—but I will not live without it! Darling!

KAT.: You, whose hands still reek with the blood of my betrothed, dare to address words of passion to the woman you have so foully wronged!

KO: I do—accept my love, or I perish on the spot!

KAT.: Go to! Who knows so well as I that no one ever yet died of a broken heart! 215

KO: You know not what you say. Listen!

214 Katisha, for years...Darling! Gilbert reveled in parodying the florid language and "thrilling," frank speeches of popular melodrama, of which this is a happy example. Maurice Disher (1954) noted that in 1885 Londoners could smile at these lines at the Savoy and weep at similar ones in playhouses on the "other side of town."

215 no one ever yet died of a broken heart! People do die of broken hearts in Gilbert's plays, Gretchen and Broken Hearts, which he earnestly believed to be the two best plays he ever wrote.



"Ah, shrink not from me"  
(Harper's)

214

"WILLOW, TIT-WILLOW" 216

Song  
Ko-Ko

On a tree by a river a little tom-tit 217  
Sang, "Willow, tit-willow, tit-willow!"  
And I said to him, "Dicky-bird, why do you  
sit

Singing 'Willow, tit-willow, tit-willow'?  
Is it weakness of intellect, birdie?" I cried,  
"Or a rather tough worm in your little inside?"  
With a shake of his poor little head he replied,  
"Oh, willow, tit-willow, tit-willow!"

216 "Willow, tit-willow". "Tit-willow"  
is included in many English anthologies as a consummate parody of the Elizabethan "Willow Song." Actually, it is a dainty burlesque of a dozen different ballad conventions. Its gentle irreverence of Desdemona's song in *Othello* (Act Four) is well known:

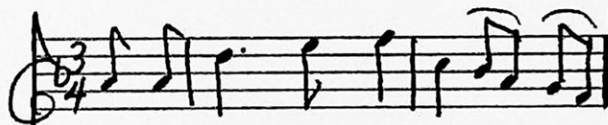
The poor soul sat sighing by a sycamore  
tree,

Sing all a green willow,  
Her hand on her bosom, her head upon her  
knee.

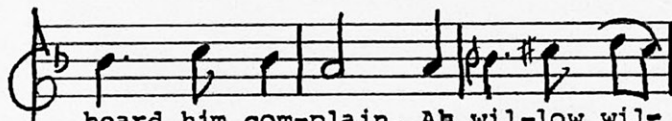
Sing willow, willow, willow.  
The fresh streams ran by her, and

murmur'd her moans,  
Sing willow, willow, willow;  
Her salt tears fell from her and soft'ned the  
stones;  
Sing willow, willow, willow &c.

"Tit-willow's" resemblance to Nicholas Rowe's  
"Ah Willow--To His Lady in Her Sickness" is  
equally acknowledged, but Gilbert's metrical  
similarity to Rowe has been exaggerated by some  
writers' failure to print Rowe's burdens in their  
entirety:



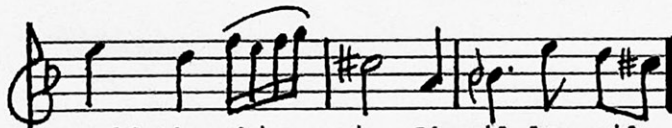
To the brook and the willow that



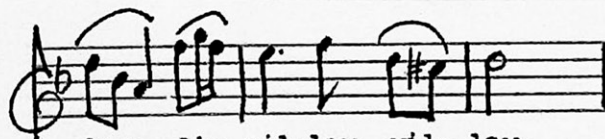
heard him com-plain, Ah wil-low wil-



low! Poor Col-in sat- weep-ing and



told them his- pain; Ah wil-low wil-



low- Ah- wil-low, wil- low.

Rowe's second verse is:

Sweet stream, he cry'd sadly,  
I'll teach thee to flow,  
Ah willow, willow,  
And the waters shall rise to thy  
Brink with my woe;  
Ah willow, willow; ah willow, willow &c.  
(from Ritson, 1783).

Sullivan had seriously set Desdemona's  
"Willow Song" in 1863. Though there is not  
a great deal of difference in the composer's  
approach to both Shakespeare's and Gilbert's  
lyrics, a whimsy pervades his setting of "Tit-  
willow"--a subtlety which at first escaped  
George Grossmith, who recorded his first im-  
pressions of the number:

At a private musical rehearsal of *The  
Mikado* at Sir Arthur's house (the princi-  
pal singers and actors only) I became  
depressed at the now-famous song 'Tit  
Willow.' I thought, as far as Gilbert  
was concerned, that the first verse was  
so much more taking than the last, which  
was reversing the order of things. When  
Sullivan played the tune on his piano,  
it sounded like 'Easy Pianoforte Pieces  
for Children.'

Seeing my abject look, Sullivan lighted  
another cigarette, and said: 'I see you  
don't care for it, but it is a question  
for the general public!'

He was quite right, and I never regret  
having sung 'Tit Willow,' which I must  
have done with encores about two thousand  
times at the Savoy Theatre (1901).



He slapped at his chest, as he sat on that  
bough,  
Singing, "Willow, tit-willow, tit-willow!"

And a cold perspiration bespangled his brow,  
Oh, willow, tit-willow, tit-willow!

He sobbed and he sighed, and a gurgle he gave, 218  
Then he plunged himself into the billowy  
wave,

And an echo arose from the suicide's grave—  
"Oh, willow, tit-willow, tit-willow!"

Now I feel just as sure as I'm sure that my  
name

Isn't Willow, tit-willow, tit-willow,  
That 'twas blighted affection that made him  
exclaim,

"Oh, willow, tit-willow, tit-willow!"  
And if you remain callous and obdurate, I  
Shall perish as he did, and you will know why, 219  
Though I probably shall not exclaim as I die,  
"Oh, willow, tit-willow, tit-willow!"

*(During this song KATISHA has been greatly  
affected, and at the end is almost in tears.)*

217 a little tom-tit. The term refers  
equally to the titmouse and the tit-  
lin (or hedge sparrow--a favorite bird in  
old English ballads). In the late nine-  
teenth century, the "pathetic ballad"  
fostered a fancy for songs about small  
birds and/or children meeting a tragic,  
martyred ending. In his book Victorian  
Conventions, John Reed relates this vogue  
to the loss of innocence that was occur-  
ring at an accelerated rate late in the  
century (see also Bratton, 1975, pp. 132-  
134). Evidence of this vogue survives  
in Oscar Wilde's fairy tales, "The Happy  
Prince" and "The Nightingale and the  
Rose."

218 He slapped at his chest...and a gurgle he  
gave. Gilbert's graphic description is  
a specific parody of the spasms that tradition-  
ally precede death in the eighteenth-century  
"tragic ballad," such as

'I feel, I feel this breaking heart  
Beating high against my side.'  
From her white arm down sunk her head;  
She shivering sigh'd and died.  
(From David Mallet's "Edwin and Emma")

or--

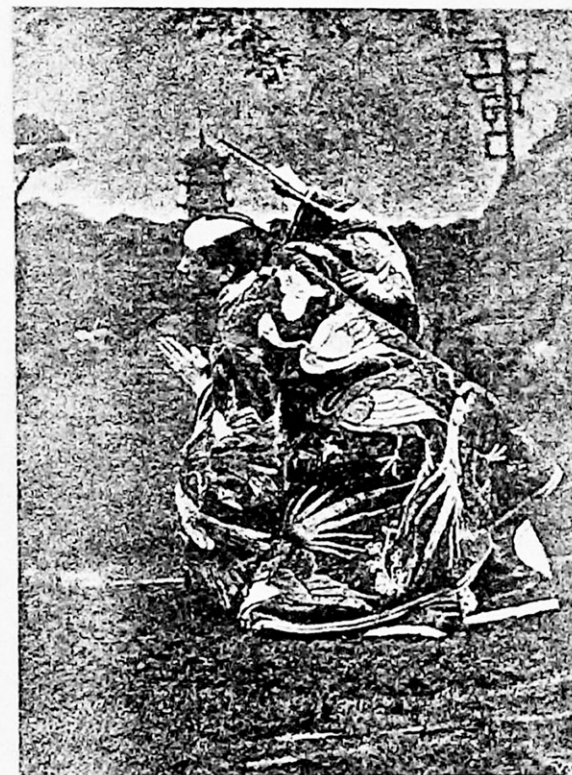
Compassion, shame, remorse, despair,  
At once his bosom swell,  
The damp of death bedew'd his brow,  
He groan'd, he shook, he fell.  
(From Thomas Tickell's "Colin and Lucy").

Thackeray had also parodied this convention--  
as well as the sentiments of Goethe--in his  
"The Sorrows of Werther":

So he sighed and pined and ogled,  
And his passion boiled and bubbled,  
Till he blew his silly brains out,  
And no more was by it troubled.

219 Though I probably shall not exclaim as I  
die. The forced ending is also a squib;  
compare with Rowe:

Then glide, gentle brook, and to lose thy-  
self haste;  
Ah willow, willow.  
Fade thou too my willow; this verse is my  
last:  
Ah willow, willow; ah willow, willow.



Grossmith in his 'Tit-willow' pose  
(Pall Mall Magazine)

KAT.: (*whimpering*) Did he really die of love?

KO: He really did.

KAT.: All on account of a cruel little hen?

KO: Yes.

KAT.: Poor little chap!

KO: It's an affecting tale, and quite true. I knew the bird intimately.

KAT.: Did you? He must have been very fond of her!

KO: His devotion was something extraordinary.

KAT.: (*still whimpering*) Poor little chap! And—and if I refuse you, will you go and do the same?

KO: At once.

KAT.: No, no—you mustn't! Anything but that! (*Falls on his breast.*) Oh, I'm a silly little goose!

KO: (*making a wry face*) You are!

KAT.: And you won't hate me because I'm just a little teeny weeny wee bit bloodthirsty, will you?

KO: Hate you? Oh, Katisha! is there not beauty even in bloodthirstiness?

KAT.: My idea exactly.

"THERE IS BEAUTY IN THE  
BELLOW OF THE BLAST" 220  
Duet

KATISHA and KO-KO

KAT.: There is beauty in the bellow of the  
blast,  
There is grandeur in the growling of the  
gale,  
There is eloquent outpouring  
When the lion is a-roaring,  
And the tiger is a-lashing of his tail. 221

KO: Yes, I like to see a tiger  
From the Congo or the Niger,  
And especially when lashing of his tail.

220 "There is beauty in the bellow of the  
blast" The Graphic observed that this  
duet "follows the Old English dance form." The  
descending series of whole- and semi-tone  
oscillations are peculiar, however, and  
through them Sullivan may have intended an  
oriental effect. Compare it with the follow-  
ing Arabian folk-song, a type Sullivan undoubt-  
edly heard during his trip to Egypt:

"ENTOUM CHEHOUDI."  
Allegro ♩ = 138

Melody

Drums, etc.

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Drums, etc.'. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 138. The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The drum part is written in a bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The melody features a descending series of whole and semi-tones, characteristic of an Old English dance form.

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Melody' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Drums, etc.'. The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The drum part is written in a bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The melody features a descending series of whole and semi-tones, characteristic of an Old English dance form.

(From Salvador-Daniel, p. 189)

221 There is beauty in...a-lashing of his tail!  
Jane Stedman (1968) has discovered that this  
verse incorporates discarded lyrics which Gilbert  
wrote for Patience.



KAT.: Volcanoes have a splendour that is grim,  
And earthquakes only terrify the dolts,  
But to him who's scientific  
There is nothing that's terrific  
In the falling of a flight of thunderbolts.

KO: Yes, in spite of all my meekness,  
If I have a little weakness,  
It's a passion for a flight of thunderbolts.

BOTH: If that is so,  
Sing derry down derry! 222  
It's evident, very,  
Our tastes are one.  
Away we'll go,  
And merrily marry,  
Nor tardily tarry  
Till day is done.

KO: There is beauty in extreme old age—  
Do you fancy you are elderly enough?  
Information I'm requesting  
On a subject interesting:  
Is a maiden all the better when she's tough?

KAT.: Throughout this wide dominion  
It's the general opinion  
That she'll last a good deal longer when  
she's tough.

KO: Are you old enough to marry, do you  
think?  
Won't you wait until you're eighty in the  
shade?

There's a fascination frantic  
In a ruin that's romantic;

Do you think you are sufficiently decayed? 223

KAT.: To the matter that you mention  
I have given some attention,  
And I think I am sufficiently decayed.

BOTH: If that is so,  
Sing derry down derry!  
It's evident, very,  
Our tastes are one.  
Away we'll go,  
And merrily marry,  
Nor tardily tarry  
Till day is done.  
(*Exeunt together.*)

222 Sing derry down derry! Edward Jones (1812)  
claimed that this burden, which occurs in  
many English ballads, derives from the cry of the  
Druid muezzin, "Hai, darro, darro down" ("Hi! Come  
to the oak grove!"). Jones' opinion is not  
shared by all ballad scholars.

223 Do you think you are sufficiently decayed?  
The reviewer for the Illustrated Sporting  
and Dramatic News alluded to these lines, noting  
that in Japan surely no one believes "that  
feminine loveliness ripens into decay like  
Stilton cheese." Gilbert was fond of the  
metaphor and had used it in other scenes with  
old ladies. In Engaged Mrs. Macfarlane is  
called "a majestic ruin; beautiful in decay."  
In Foggerty's Fairy Malvina is called "A  
splendid ruin--a sprig or two of ivy and an  
owl under your arm and you would be complete."  
To illustrate the fact that Gilbert had  
nothing personal against old ladies, it may be  
mentioned that, in a letter written during his  
own old age, he used the latter phrase to  
describe himself.

(*Flourish. Enter the MIKADO, attended by PISH-TUSH and Court.*)

MIK.: Now then, we've had a capital lunch, and we're quite ready. Have all the painful preparations been made?

PISH: Your Majesty, all is prepared.

MIK.: Then produce the unfortunate gentleman and his two well-meaning but misguided accomplices.

(*Enter KATISHA, KO-KO, PITTI-SING, and POOH-BAH. They throw themselves at the MIKADO'S feet.*)

KAT.: Mercy! Mercy for Ko-Ko! Mercy for Pitti-Sing! Mercy even for Pooh-Bah!

MIK.: I beg your pardon, I don't think I quite caught that remark.

POOH: Mercy even for Pooh-Bah. 224

KAT.: Mercy! My husband that was to have been is dead, and I have just married this miserable object.

MIK.: Oh! You've not been long about it!

KO: We were married before the Registrar.

POOH: I am the Registrar.

MIK.: I see. But my difficulty is that, as you have slain the Heir Apparent—

(*Enter NANKI-POO and YUM-YUM. They kneel.*)

NANKI: The Heir Apparent is *not* slain.

MIK.: Bless my heart, my son!

YUM: And your daughter-in-law elected!

KAT.: (*seizing KO-KO*) Traitor, you have deceived me!

MIK.: Yes, you are entitled to a little explanation, but I think he will give it better whole than in pieces.

KO: Your Majesty, it's like this: it is true that I stated that I had killed Nanki-Poo—

MIK.: Yes, with most affecting particulars.

POOH: Merely corroborative detail intended to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and—

KO: *Will* you refrain from putting in your oar? (*To MIKADO*) It's like this: when your Majesty says, "Let a thing be done", it's as good as done—practically, it *is* done—because your Majesty's will is law. Your Maj-

224 Mercy even for Pooh-Bah. A gag from Barrington.

Gilbert's concern over "gagging" was not mere directorial capriciousness but rather reflected his concern over its effect upon dramatic unity and timing. He explained,

With reference to gags, I am supposed to be adamantine, but this is not really so. I only require that when an actor proposes to introduce any words which are not in the authorized dialogue, those words should be submitted to me; and if there appears to be no good reason to the contrary, the words are duly incorporated with the text. I consider that as I am held by the audience to be responsible for all that is spoken on the stage, it is only right that nothing should be spoken that I have not authorized.



esty says, "Kill a gentleman", and a gentleman is told off to be killed. Consequently, that gentleman is as good as dead—practically, he is dead—and if he is dead, why not say so?

MIK.: I see. Nothing could possibly be more satisfactory!

"FOR HE'S GONE AND MARRIED  
YUM-YUM"

Finale of Act II

ENSEMBLE

PITTI: For he's gone and married Yum-Yum—

CHORUS: Yum-Yum!

PITTI: Your anger pray bury,  
For all will be merry,

I think you had better succumb—

CHORUS: Cumb—cumb!

PITTI: And join our expressions of glee!

KO: On this subject I pray you be dumb—

CHORUS: Dumb—dumb!

KO: Your notions, though many,  
Are not worth a penny,

The word for your guidance is "Mum"—

CHORUS: Mum—mum!

KO: You've a very good bargain in me.

ALL: On this subject we pray you be dumb—  
Dumb—dumb!

We think you had better succumb—  
Cumb—cumb!

You'll find there are many  
Who'll wed for a penny,

There are lots of good fish in the sea!

NANKI: The threatened cloud has passed away,

YUM: And fairly shines the dawning day;

NANKI: What though the night may come too  
soon,

YUM: We've years and years of afternoon!

ALL: Then let the throng

Our joy advance,

With laughing song

And merry dance,

With joyous shout and ringing cheer,

Inaugurate their new career!

Then let the throng, etc.

(Curtain)

END OF OPERA 227

225

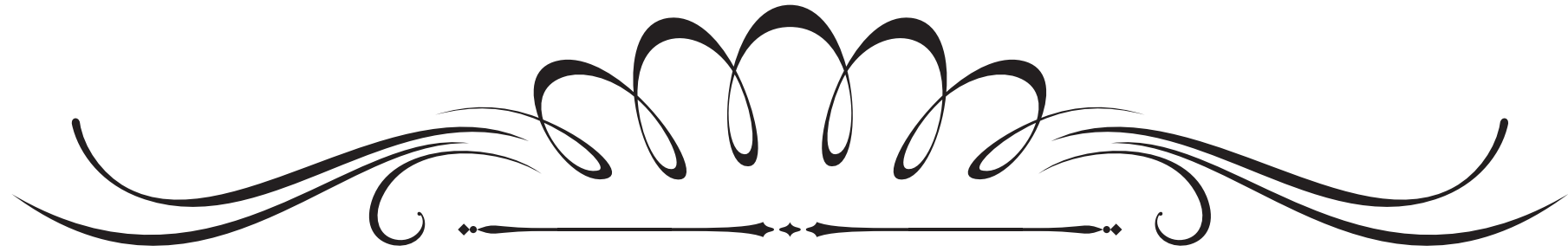
225 If he is dead, why not say so? Gilbert--  
like his Bab-Ballad ogre James--"could  
propose a fallacy with singular effect." Both  
The Mikado and Ruddigore achieve dénouements  
through logical fallacies. In Ko-Ko's case  
the twist is effected through a semantic  
"Fallacy of Accent." Gilbert's skill with  
these is such that the propositions flow so  
orderly and so swiftly, that the preposterous  
conclusion is reached before the audience  
has time to ponder what went wrong.

226 The threatened cloud has passed away, etc.  
The bright ensemble from the first-act  
finale was added here after opening night, in  
order to bring the opera to a more stirring  
conclusion.

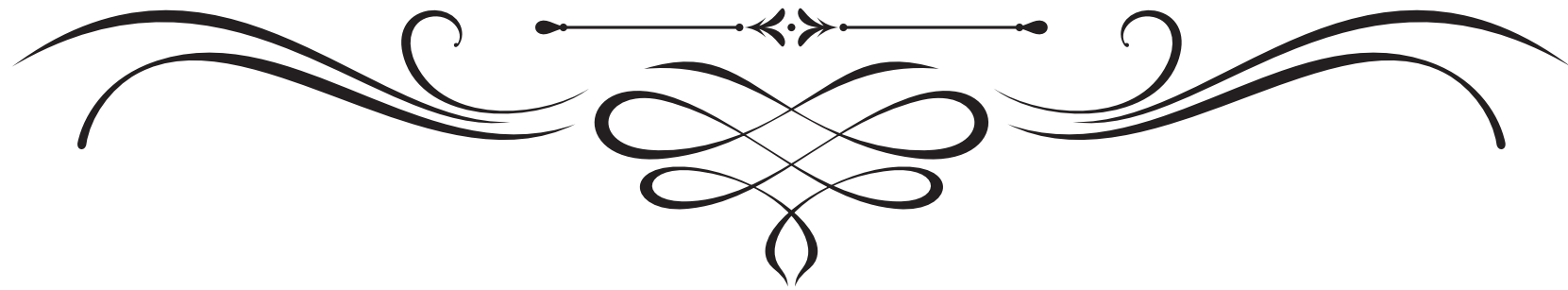
227 End of Opera. In Gilbert's words:

"So this exciting story, which is  
crammed full of thrilling incidents  
and hairbreadth escapes, ended quite  
happily and without any bloodshed  
after all!





# *Bibliography*





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