



*Halifax Gilbert and
Sullivan Society
presents*

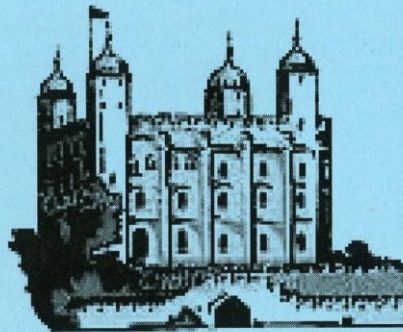


THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD

by W.S Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan

November 2 - 6, 2010

Programme 50p





A Message from the Chairman

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Society's fourth production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. First produced at the Savoy Theatre in October 1888, it is regarded as Gilbert and Sullivan's most serious opera, having more plausible characters and a less fantastical plot than the others.

It was immediately popular with the public, perhaps because it contained what Sullivan saw as some of his finest music. On the first day of publication of the score, almost a thousand parcels of the music were apparently despatched by rail to all corners of the country. The publishers had worked feverishly to satisfy the demand for the new G & S opera.

Many people have worked hard to get this production on to the stage, and they are mentioned later on in the programme. Particular thanks should go to Philip Sutcliffe, who has played for nearly all the rehearsals, as well as for our concerts and club nights earlier in the year. Tom Mills, for the West Yorkshire Savoyards, has once more not only supplied our set but given huge support in helping to put it up. John Trout, who helped us out in an emergency last year, returns as lighting director, and Richard Buxton once more occupies both director's chair and conductor's rostrum.

Finally, warm thanks to you, our audience, without whom the show would not happen. I hope you enjoy the evening, and that you will go home and tell your friends and neighbours to come along later in the week.

Trevor Roberts

This programme has been printed with the help of a bequest from Donald McLoughlin, a long-standing member and supporter of the Society, who died earlier this year.



A Tudor intrigue : the background to the story

Tudor England was a world of violence, superstition and intrigue, and life was held cheap. An inconvenient person could be disposed of by direct means, such as a swift dagger stroke, or by more devious means. A word in the ear of a Court contact and a man could be charged with treason, heresy or sorcery, and condemned to death or hidden away out of existence.

Sir Clarence Poltwhistle, one of the Secretaries of State, has a reason for desiring the disappearance of his kinsman, Colonel Fairfax. The Colonel's estate devolves to him provided there is no widow to succeed to it. At present the Colonel remains unmarried, but Sir Clarence is taking no chances. A charge of sorcery has put Colonel Fairfax in the Tower of London under sentence of death, to be carried out this day.

The various inhabitants of the Tower view this with mixed feelings. Sir Richard Cholmondeley, Lieutenant of the Tower, is reluctant to see the sentence carried out, but dare not be seen to challenge an order from a Secretary of State. Sergeant Meryll of the Yeomen of the Guard has been a fellow soldier with the Colonel, who has twice saved his life. His daughter Phoebe has admired Fairfax from a distance as he took his exercise in the prison yard, and she is appalled at the bloodthirsty atmosphere of the Tower, whereas Dame Carruthers, the Tower's housekeeper, looks upon it all as part of a noble and ongoing tradition. The only person who seems to welcome the forthcoming execution is Wilfred Shadbolt, Head Jailer and Assistant Tormentor, a simple soul to whom such preparations are simply part of his job.

We meet Colonel Fairfax as he is brought in under the Lieutenant's command to prepare for his execution. Once they are alone together, the Colonel explains his predicament and asks the Lieutenant to find him a woman that he can marry, if only for the remaining hour he has to live, thus thwarting Poltwhistle's designs on his inheritance. The Lieutenant agrees.

Three people now come into the story. First Leonard Meryll, the Sergeant's son, returns from brave deeds overseas to join the Yeomen of the Guard. Nobody has seen him save the Sergeant and Phoebe, the they concoct the idea of hiding Leonard away so that they can spirit Colonel Fairfax out of his cell and into Leonard's uniform and consequent safety.

Then Jack Point and Elsie Maynard, two strolling players, are chased on to Tower Green by a rough mob of townspeople. The Lieutenant clears the mob away and on questioning the pair finds out that Elsie is as yet unmarried (though Jack Point has hopes) and in desperate need of money. Could this be the bride for an hour that Fairfax had requested?

Let the story unfold ...



Musical numbers

Act One

- When maiden loves, she sits and sighs (*Phoebe*)
- Tower warders, under orders (*Chorus, with Second Yeoman*)
- When our gallant Norman foes (*Dame Carruthers, with Men's Chorus*)
- Alas! I waver to and fro (*Phoebe, Leonard Meryll, Sergeant Meryll*)
- Is life a boon? (*Fairfax*)
- Here's a man of jollity (*Chorus*)
- I have a song to sing, O! (*Point, Elsie, Chorus*)
- How say you, maiden, will you wed (*Lieutenant, Elsie, Point*)
- I've jibe and joke, and quip and crank (*Point*)
- 'Tis done! I am a bride! (*Elsie*)
- Were I thy bride (*Phoebe*)

- Finale to Act One : Oh, Sergeant Meryll, is it true? ... Forbear, my friends, and spare me this ovation ... Didst thou not, oh, Leonard Meryll ... Leonard, don't you know me? ... To thy fraternal care thy sister I commend ... The prisoner comes to meet his doom ... My Lord! My Lord! I know not how to tell the news I bear ... All frenzied, frenzied with despair they rave

Act Two

- Night has spread her pall once more (*Chorus, Dame Carruthers*)
- Oh! A private buffoon is a light-hearted loon (*Point*)
- Hereupon we're both agreed (*Point, Wilfred*)
- Free from his fetters grim (*Fairfax*)
- Strange adventure! (*Kate, Dame Carruthers, Fairfax, Sergeant Meryll*)
- Hark! What was that, sir? ... Now what can that have been? ... Who fired that shot? ... Like a ghost his vigil keeping (*Sergeant Meryll, Fairfax, Lieutenant, Wilfred, Point, Chorus*)
- A man who would woo a fair maid (*Fairfax, Elsie, Phoebe*)
- When a wooer goes a-wooing (*Elsie, Fairfax, Phoebe, Point*)
- Rapture, rapture! (*Dame Carruthers, Sergeant Meryll*)
- Finale to Act Two : Comes the pretty young bride ... 'Tis said that joy in full perfection ... Hold, pretty one! ... All thought of Leonard Meryll set aside ... Leonard, my loved one, come to me ... With happiness my soul is cloyed ... Oh thoughtless crew, ye know not what ye do! ... I have a song to sing, O!

Our thanks to the
Colne Valley Museum
for loan of spinning wheel





The characters in the story

Sir Richard Cholmondeley,
Lieutenant of the Tower

Colin Fine

Colonel Fairfax,
under sentence of death

Steven Greenwood

Sergeant Meryll,
of the Yeomen of the Guard

Trevor Roberts

Leonard Meryll, *his son*

Jaijai Rider-Ekins

Jack Point, *a strolling jester*

Leon Waksberg

Wilfred Shadbolt,
Head Jailer and Assistant Tormentor

Martin Whitaker

Elsie Maynard, *a strolling singer*

Anna Trent

Phoebe Meryll,
Sergeant Meryll's daughter

Christine Roberts

Dame Carruthers,
Housekeeper to the Tower

Penny McGoverin

Kate, *her niece*

Rachel Prosser

Yeomen of the Guard and townspeople

Stephanie Bolton

Carlton Mellor

Jean Greenwood

Judith Mills

Deborah Hammond

Leyland Smith (Second Yeoman)

Margaret Holliss

Peter Sugden

Helen Matthews

Kelvyn Waites (First Yeoman)

Paul Matthews

Tim Widdop



*A peacock popinjay,
bravely born*



Were I thy bride



Production team

MUSICAL DIRECTOR and
STAGE DIRECTOR Richard Buxton

PRINCIPAL REHEARSAL PIANIST
Philip Sutcliffe

REHEARSAL PIANISTS
Barbara Thompson, Martin Whitaker

Members of the WEST YORKSHIRE ORCHESTRA,
SQUARE CHAPEL ORCHESTRA and FRIENDS

STAGE MANAGER
SET PROVIDED BY

Andrew Stopford
West Yorkshire Savoyards Appreciation
Society

ASSISTANCE WITH SET
LIGHTING
COSTUMES

Joseph Wood
John Trout
Ian Stead Theatrical Costumes and West
Yorkshire Savoyards

PROPERTIES
ORCHESTRAL PARTS

Nancy Kirby, Christine Johnson
James Newby Music

TICKET SALES
FRONT OF HOUSE

Stephanie Bolton
Kathryn Buxton

PUBLICITY
FOYER DISPLAY

Peter Sugden
Kathryn Buxton

FOYER PHOTOGRAPHS
PROGRAMME

Andrew Stopford, Kelvyn Waites
Richard Buxton

Friday, December 10, 2010 at 7.45

Christmas Pot-Pourri

At All Saints Church Hall, Godfrey Road, Skircoat Green
A mixture of songs, recitations and choruses with a seasonal flavour
Come along to listen or to contribute to the entertainment
Details from the Secretary (see inside back cover)



Who were the Yeomen?

The Queen's Body Guard of the Yeomen of the Guard are a bodyguard of the British Monarch. The oldest British military corps still in existence, it was created by Henry VII in 1485 at the Battle of Bosworth Field.

Today they have a purely ceremonial role, accompanying the Sovereign at the annual Royal Maundy Service, investitures and summer Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace, and so on. However, their most famous duty is to 'ceremonially' search the cellars of the Palace of Westminster prior to the State Opening of Parliament, a tradition that dates back to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, when Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up Parliament. They are not, however, the Yeomen who appear in Gilbert and Sullivan's opera.

The Yeoman Warders of Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress the Tower of London, and Members of the Sovereign's Body Guard of the Yeoman Guard Extraordinary, popularly known as the Beefeaters, are ceremonial guardians of the Tower of London. In principle they are responsible for looking after any prisoners at the Tower and safeguarding the British crown jewels, but in practice they act as tour guides and are a tourist attraction in their own right.

The name Beefeater is of uncertain origin, with various proposed derivations. The most likely is considered to be the Warders' payment in rations that included beef, as well as mutton and veal, and various historical commentators have noted a preference for beef among the Warders and the Yeomen of the Guard. It is theoretically possible that these professions also enjoyed rich, hearty broths as well. Count Cosimo, grand duke of Tuscany, visited the Tower in 1669 and commented "A very large ration of beef is given to them daily at court...that they might be called Beef-eaters". It has been suggested that beefeaters were privileged with a ration of beef from the King's table. (Conjectures that derive the name from the French "buffetier" [waiter] are, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, historically baseless)

Muscular elite troops would benefit more from a high-protein diet than other soldiers. Retiring as a Yeoman Warder and continuing to eat beef

rations would have been seen as a generous reward in a society that may not otherwise have cared for their ageing population. Beefeater may once have been a nickname applied to all such elite troops, or it may have been a nickname applied to only those lucky enough to continue their meat ration in retirement.

Yeoman Warders began guarding the Tower in 1485; today there are 35 Yeomen Warders and one Chief Warder. All warders are retired from the Armed Forces of Commonwealth realms and must be former senior non-commissioned officers with at least 22 years of service. They must also hold the Long Service and Good Conduct medal. NCOs from the Army, Royal Marines and Royal Air Force are eligible to apply, but members of the Royal Navy are not, because while members of the other services take oaths to the Crown, members of the Navy take an oath to the Admiralty.

The Yeoman Warders and their families live in tied accommodation inside the fortress paying council taxes and a portion of their salaries for rent. They must own a home outside of the fortress to go to when they retire. The community of the Tower of London is made up of these Yeoman Warders and their families, the Resident Governor and officers, a chaplain and a doctor.



A Gilbertian jester

Jack Point boasts to the Lieutenant that he can convulse him with quip and conundrum from dawn of day to set of sun. He has a predecessor in one of Gilbert's

Bab Ballads:

In all the merry land that spreads from Humber to the Thames,
You couldn't find a jester who could rival Jester James;
His antic jokes were modelled on severely classic rules,
And all his quips passed muster at the strictest ladies' schools.



Sir Hugh de Barbican unwisely engages James on a seven-year contract, and all goes well for six months or so –

But, ah! There came a day when it was patent to Sir Hugh
That James had uttered nearly all the decent jests he knew.
He doled them out at intervals, and much impaired their strength,
By dwelling on their merits at unnecessary length.

His quips grew very feeble, and his puns fell flat and dead;
His riddles were so easy, you could do them on your head;
And though his imitations were by far the best of all,
Yet even imitations, all day long, are apt to pall.

Sir Hugh desperately attempts to cancel the contract, but James is adamant that it is his duty to quip for the whole seven years.

Sir Hugh gave in and tried another plan (for he was weak);
He spent his night inventing decent jokes for James to speak,
And each day at James's breakfast, with his rolls and Sally Lunns,
Came a batch of blameless riddles and of inoffensive puns.

And every morn, from eight to ten, they'd sit beneath a tree,
Rehearsing conversations that would lead to repartee,
Or planning little incidents and complicated larks,
On which this dismal jester might extemporise remarks.

For instance, Hugh would bid him sit, his head between his feet,
To justify his saying "I am making both ends meet"
On which a shout of merriment would echo through the hall,
Which must have been good nature, for the joke was very small.

And sometimes James was told to climb a venerable oak,
That he might say "I'm up a tree" - an irritating joke.
But still his audience wore a pleasant smile upon their lips,
For they saw the Dawn of Reason in these gruesome little quips.

To find out how Sir Hugh finally dealt with this persistent wag, you should go to a volume of *Bab Ballads* (also available online via the *Gilbert and Sullivan Archive*).



Halifax Gilbert and Sullivan Society

Halifax Gilbert and Sullivan Society was formed in 1968, and gave its first public full-dress performance three years later at Halifax Playhouse. The annual production in the late autumn, still at the Playhouse, remains the Society's major public appearance, but we also offer a series of public concerts in the spring, usually between February and April. We are always pleased to perform at new venues in and around Halifax or further afield, and anyone wishing to organise a concert should contact the Secretary (see below).

The Society meets to rehearse on Friday evenings throughout the year at All Saints Church Hall, Godfrey Road, Skircoat Green, Halifax. Three or four of these Friday evenings during the year are given over to informal concerts and Club Nights, where we will sing through a complete Gilbert and Sullivan opera, or perhaps another piece from the same period, with the audience providing the chorus. Members of the public are always welcome to join us (and sing with us, although that's not compulsory) on these occasions.

If you would like to sing with or support the Society yourself, you are very welcome to turn up at the rehearsal room on a Friday evening (7.45 onwards). Alternatively you may contact the Secretary, Kathryn Buxton, 34 Fir Road, Huddersfield, HD1 4JE (01484-301291). If you don't sing yourself, but can perhaps offer organisational or other practical skills, you will be equally welcome. We look forward to seeing you in the future!

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT www.halifaxgands.org.uk

THE COMMITTEE

Andrew Stopford (*President*), Trevor Roberts (*Chairman*), Sheila Simpson (*Vice-Chairman*), Kathryn Buxton (*Secretary*), Richard Buxton (*Treasurer*), Stephanie Bolton, Colin Fine, Christine Johnson, Paul Matthews, Peter Sugden, Kelvyn Waites.

Great Expectations

by Charles Dickens, adapted for the stage by Nick Ormerod
and Declan Donnellan

Directed by Gerard Marescaux

Tuesday 14th December to Saturday 18th December, 7:30 pm
Saturday Matinee - 2:30 pm

A terrifying encounter with an escaped convict in a graveyard on the wild Kent marshes; a summons to meet the bitter, decaying Miss Havisham and her beautiful, cold-hearted ward Estella; the sudden generosity of a mysterious benefactor - these form a series of events that change the orphaned Pip's life forever, and he eagerly abandons his humble origins to begin a new life as a gentleman. Great Expectations is one of Dickens' well known and best loved novels.



A Halifax Thespians production
Box Office 01422 365998

Coming soon locally :

Haworth West Lane A.O.S.

Iolanthe

Haworth West Lane
Baptist Chapel

November 15- 20 at 7.30 p.m.
Saturday matinee at 2.15 p.m.

£8.00. Children £5.00.
Over 60s £6.00 on Monday

Bookings : 01535 643425

Meltham Parish Church G & S

Patience

Church Hall
Meltham

November 23 - 27 at 7.30 p.m.
Saturday matinee at 2.15 p.m.

£8.00. Children £4.00.
Concessions £7.00 Tues, Wed,
Sat Mat.

Bookings : 01484 349037