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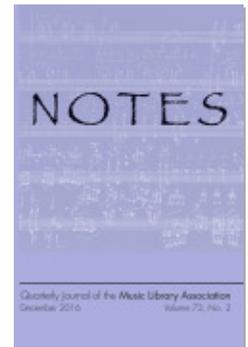
*Savoy Curtain-Raisers* ed. by Christopher O'Brien (review)

James Brooks Kuykendall

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dandy returning to his native Calabria from Paris where he has indulged in partying, gambling, dancing, and philandering. In his entrance aria he tries out the different languages of which he has learned snippets, considering whether to present himself to his father in Spanish, English, German, or French. Later forced to pass himself off as a marchese, in his second aria included in the volume he addresses his fiancée with Parisian mawkishness in broad legato phrases while communicating in the buffo style with his father and the real marchese under his breath.

Link devotes a large part of her introduction to a discussion of Mandini's voice type and dramatic *Fach*. As the term "baritone" had not gained currency in the 1780s and 1790s, he was often referred to as a *mezzo carattere*, whereas Benucci was sometimes described as a *buffo caricato*. Having emerged with Goldoni's reform, these terms roughly correspond to the modern distinction between baritone and bass: whereas the singing style of the *mezzo carattere* was largely lyrical (as distinct from the more embellished style of the high tenor), the style of the *buffo caricato* was more speech-like, and often involved a disjunct line, shorter phrases, and repeated notes. The designations were primarily dramatic, however. Traditionally, the *mezzo carattere* roles were relatively serious: they were often lovers or intriguers lacking the exalted heroism and tenderness of the tenor roles, while the roles of the *buffo caricato* were more straightforwardly ridiculous and caricatured.

In my view, one of the problems of applying these labels to the two stars of Joseph's company is that they are almost exclusively found in librettos printed in Italy: none of

the Viennese librettos include such designations, and the roles Da Ponte wrote for Mandini and Benucci indeed refuse to fit into the dramatic categories associated with them. In none of his dramas can Benucci's role be described as more ridiculous than Mandini's, and even if we find remnants of the traditional types in the distinction between the "serious" aristocrat Count Almaviva and the "comical" servant Figaro, this distribution of roles was reversed in *Axur, re d'Ormus*, in which Benucci sang the entirely serious role of King Axur, while Mandini took the role of the buffoon Biscroma. In *Il burbero di buon cuore* and *Una cosa rara* their characters belong to the same social class, and Mandini sang a low-class character in *L'arbore di Diana* (Benucci did not sing in this opera), whereas Benucci appeared as a gentlemanly officer in *Così fan tutte*. Therefore, I find it difficult to agree with Link when she associates the *buffo caricato* and the *mezzo carattere* with the social class of the characters, and then applies the terms to Mozart's operas (p. xiv). We do no service to Mozart and Da Ponte, I think, when we try to fit their operas into the very categories against which they reacted. Like the rejection of the old stock characters, the rejection of the traditional *Fächer* was a central part of Da Ponte's reform, again in line with Diderot's and Lessing's rejection of similar categories. Ultimately, this had ideological reasons: Figaro and Leporello are not caricatures but highly nuanced individuals who may provoke laughter but also inspire sympathy, just like their masters.

MAGNUS TESSING SCHNEIDER  
Stockholm University

### MUSIC FROM THE SAVOY THEATRE

**Savoy Curtain-Raisers.** Edited by Christopher O'Brien. (Musica Britannica, 99.) London: Stainer and Bell, 2015. [Table of contents, p. xv–xvi; pref. in Eng., Fr., Ger., p. xvii–xix; introd. in Eng., p. xxi–xxxiii; the sources, p. xxxiv–xxxix; editorial notes, p. xl–xlii; select bibliog., p. xliii–xliv; acknowledgments, p. xlv; facsimils, p. xlvi–li; score (with *dramatis personae* and synopses), p. 2–191; appendices, p. 192–97; list of sources, p. 198; notes on the textual commentary, p. 199–200; textual commentary, p. 201–4. Cloth. ISMN 979-0-2202-2431-7; ISBN 978-0-85249-943-6. £100.]

Although the Gilbert and Sullivan canon has received substantial attention in the secondary literature (not only the occasional scholarly study, but also an astounding number of specialist treatments produced by the most diligent of the innumerable devotees), many aspects of the immediate periphery of Gilbert and Sullivan have remained less examined—in particular their impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte, his production companies, and his Savoy Theatre and Hotel. The most brilliant exploration of the economic forces driving the Savoy complex is Regina Oost's *Gilbert and Sullivan: Class and the Savoy Tradition, 1875–1896* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), a monograph deserving much wider attention than it has yet received. Oost uncovers audience expectations for a night (or afternoon) at the Savoy, and scrutinizes Carte's attempts to anticipate his audience's desires and spending habits. While hardly one of Carte's significant innovations, his use of companion pieces—either a “curtain-raiser” before the feature presentation, or an “after piece” to follow it—is noteworthy because of the creators he secured to write them. Alfred Cellier, Harry Greenbank, George Grossmith, Basil Hood, and Edward Solomon each made his name in more substantial ways than writing companion pieces, but their careers owed something to Carte's investment in their creative capacities.

While the companion pieces sometimes enjoyed revivals (i.e., an old curtain-raiser brought back in a pairing with a new larger work), they were not expected to be anything more than ephemeral, and they have all but disappeared from the stage. Some indeed have virtually ceased to exist, with perhaps only a printed libretto extant. Sometimes vocal scores were published, or a few songs issued individually, which suggests that they held some market share in the glut of Victorian music publishing. Chappell & Co. had the monopoly on publishing most of the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations, and it may be significant that the companion pieces were often issued by more marginal publishers—an indication, perhaps, that Chappell did not think them a worthwhile investment. In any case, the known surviving materials can but offer an incomplete picture of a complex theatrical milieu.

The editorial committee of *Musica Britannica* is therefore to be commended for backing Christopher O'Brien's edition of Savoy curtain-raisers, even if this volume's main accomplishment is to give us an impression of the amount of material that has been lost. O'Brien has selected two works, each by a composer who had served as one of Sullivan's assistants: François Cellier's *Captain Billy* (1891), and Ernest Ford's *Mr Jericho* (1893), both with librettos by Harry Greenbank (whose most memorable works were the musical comedies *A Gaiety Girl* and *The Geisha*, collaborations with Sidney Jones). To a certain extent O'Brien's selection is dictated by source situation. In this respect *Captain Billy* is an obvious choice: O'Brien had access not only to the autograph full score, but also three distinct sets of orchestral parts, as well as two “editions” (or, to be more accurate, issues) of the contemporaneous vocal score as published by Chappell & Co; moreover, a prompt book from the Savoy Theatre and the proof copy of the libretto submitted to the Lord Chamberlain's office for licensing round out a nearly comprehensive set of sources. *Mr Jericho* is a very different matter: no full score (neither autograph nor manuscript copy) is known; a complete set of orchestral parts exists, although it is split between two different owners; the published vocal score is the sole source for the vocal parts, and includes also the full libretto; the license copy of the play is reported to be a typescript rather than a proof of the published libretto. The edition does not list a separate published libretto among the sources, although there is at least one extant copy (held by the Harvard Theatre Collection).

Why was *Mr Jericho* selected, given the less-than-ideal source situation? This question is not addressed, and I found myself wishing that in place of *Mr Jericho* were examples from the earlier companion-piece repertory, such as *After All* (1878) by Alfred Cellier with words by Frank Desprez. (Alfred was François's brother, and was his predecessor as Sullivan's assistant; moreover, he was later to compose the 1886 smash hit show *Dorothy*—a significant work that deserves an edition in its own right, if sufficient source material is extant.) *After All* first appeared as an afterpiece in the original run of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and was re-

vived a few times thereafter. While the autograph score is lost, the original performing parts survive, as well as the published vocal score and libretto, so that its source situation is rather similar to *Mr Jericho*, and it is only about half the length. That would leave room for another worthy inclusion, *Mock Turtles* (premiered alongside *Patience* at the second night of operation of the Savoy Theatre, 11 October 1881) by Eaton Fanning with words by Desprez. For this work the autograph full score is extant together with a set of orchestral parts; the Chappell vocal score seems to be the sole surviving source for the dialogue. The full scores to these early works would broaden our understanding of Carte's theatrical project rather more than *Mr Jericho* can when put alongside its near contemporary *Captain Billy*.

The selection of repertoire notwithstanding, in very many respects this volume upholds the *Musica Britannica* standard. If I seem overly critical of it below, it is because it seems likely to me that this is the only such edition that this repertoire will ever get—from now until the end of time—and as such it should really be the most thorough it can possibly be. My first quibble is that the volume has reached print too soon. Many of its sources were held by the D'Oyly Carte Theatre Company, whose complete archive was acquired by the British Library in October 2015. Although in the front matter Mr. O'Brien refers to this acquisition (p. xxxiv n. 42), it is clear that his work was completed well before this time. (The introduction is dated October 2014.) What was the particular urgency to bring it to print? The archive is undergoing professional cataloging now (with a scheduled completion of spring 2017), and it is inevitable that in this process materials will come to light that no one knew were there. Such material may have eliminated several speculative suggestions. For example, for *Mr Jericho*—the orchestration for which, as noted above, survives only in a set of parts—some of the parts were available to the editor only as photocopies. The original parts were in the collection of the late renowned Savoy authority Frederic Woodbridge Wilson (whose estate supplied the photocopies), and these originals were already held by the British Library when O'Brien worked

on the edition. At that time, however, they were “not yet accessible” (p. xxxviii n. 45). At a few places the score requires two percussionists (exceptionally for the Savoy repertory); it is not clear from the source description whether the timpani and other percussion are divided into two parts or are contained in a single part. In any case, the timpani part has been struck-through in passages where the other percussion is also playing. O'Brien notes “these deletions may date from the 1989 Glimmerglass Festival performances” (p. 202). An examination of the originals would yield vital evidence on this point: is the deletion in the original part, or is it on an intervening photocopy—so that O'Brien's source was a copy of a (marked) copy? For an edition in a series of this caliber, such a speculative shortcut is unacceptable. That this should slip by the *Musica Britannica* committee suggests that they might not have valued this volume as much as the others in this distinguished series. This might also explain a small number of details that are confused in the introduction and description of sources, which should have been caught in a diligent copy-editing process. (The grammar and syntax are fine; a few problems of content confusion remain—for example, the attempt to line up inconsistent accounts of the size of the Savoy orchestra with the surviving parts; this is a gratuitous task in any case, as such performance sets may be either incomplete or contain extra copies for one reason or another.)

Among the facsimiles are two playbills (one for each show); even if the exact dates during which these were used is not known, the captions should have listed the narrow window in which each of these would have appeared. For that of *Captain Billy*, the cast-list limits it to between November 1891 and mid-January 1892; for *Mr Jericho*, the playbill illustrated must have appeared between 28 May and 1 July 1893. Determining these dates took a good bit of paging around in the volume and consulting a few other sources, but there is nothing speculative about it, and so it seems reasonable to expect that information to appear here.

This volume does not advance any critical assessment of the works themselves, and perhaps an edition is not really the place for that. In my own opinion—and it is one predisposed to champion this sort of

neglected repertoire—I found the book, lyrics, and music of both works undistinguished throughout, and never more than adequate. These works are clearly products of the Savoy machine, and Greenbank's situations and dialogue (but not lyrics) sound familiarly Gilbertian. In *Captain Billy*, for example, the foundling Christopher Jolly is in search of any documentation of his birth, as he has no idea how old he is. Jolly, in love at first sight with the school teacher Polly Jackson, realizes the potential impropriety of their relationship:

I fear you have not given the matter sufficient consideration, Polly. How would you feel if the certificate were found, and showed that you had married a man old enough to be your grandfather? Or, possibly, I might turn out to be years younger than you are. Would you like to have it said that you had entrapped a mere boy into marriage? (p. 63)

This is vaguely reminiscent of Gilbert's Frederic in *The Pirates of Penzance*, who has never seen a woman other than his nursemaid Ruth, and is thus doubtful about whether she is indeed beautiful. Later in the show Frederic has a similar problem concerning his age: although aged twenty-one years, being born on leap year he is really "only five and a little bit over." Greenbank also uses the same "gyrate/pirate" rhyme that Gilbert had employed (pp. 51–52).

This notwithstanding, the music of Cellier and Ford does not come as near to Sullivan as Greenbank does to Gilbert. Indeed, the overture to *Captain Billy* is just bad—a cut-and-paste medley that lacks coherence. The seam between the two sections joined at measure 8 is astonishingly clumsy, with a bizarre elided cadence in the wrong key. As only one set of parts includes the overture, O'Brien suggests that it may not have been used in performance—and I wonder if its loss might well be regarded as a distinct gain to the work. Perhaps it should have been relegated to an appendix in this volume rather than having pride of place as the first music the user encounters. Of the sources for *Captain Billy*, one set of parts (designated as OpA) was prepared by a copyist who seemed to have a better sense of what to do with the orchestra than

Cellier himself, as I often found the variant readings of OpA as reported in the textual commentary to be improvements in the scoring (for example the elimination of the horn in No. 4 at m. 32, or the use of A rather than B-flat clarinets in No. 8). O'Brien does not mention that a musical assistant at the Savoy at the time that *Captain Billy* was first produced was Henry J. Wood, later to come to prominence as the conductor of the Henry Wood Promenade Concerts. Might he have been the anonymous meddling copyist of OpA and OpB? The impending accessibility of the D'Oyly Carte archive may well shed light on Wood's activities at the Savoy in the early 1890s, so this volume might have been better if it had appeared in a few years' time.

Another problem occurs in the textual commentary with O'Brien's ambiguous use of "orig." Does this mean *originally in the source, but corrected in the source to the reading used here*, or *originally in the source, but editorially emended here*? With only one facsimile of a musical source to compare with the edition—and that only for five measures—I had no means of answering the question. I found that a few times I had to refer to the original vocal score of *Mr Jericho*, available as a scan online (on the Gilbert and Sullivan Archive, [http://www.gilbertandsullivanarchive.org/companions/jericho/jericho\\_vs.pdf](http://www.gilbertandsullivanarchive.org/companions/jericho/jericho_vs.pdf), accessed 31 August 2016), to confirm a reading (for example, *Mr Jericho*, No. 7, m. 23 [p. 177], Winifred's second note, which is at odds with all of the instruments doubling her part; O'Brien does not comment on this anomaly, but it might have been helpful for him to do so). Similarly, the OpB set of parts of *Captain Billy* is said to be in the same hand as OpA, and that it "must have been produced later as some additions attributable to players of the OpA set have been entered by the copyist" (p. xxxv). This sounds as if the new set was copied from the old—parts from parts. If this is so, then all of the variant readings of OpA would be found in OpB, but this does not appear to be the case, at least insofar as it can be determined by the textual commentary.

Naturally this volume will be of the most interest to those scholars who work on Gilbert, Sullivan, Carte, the Savoy, and late Victorian musical theater. For a treatment

of companion pieces, O'Brien's work currently has no rival. Even more useful in understanding the Gilbert and Sullivan works in context, of course, would be comparable editions of the "G&S" canon. As astonishing as it seems, to date there are still eight of that canon for which anything approaching a serious critical edition has yet to appear, and among these are such central works as *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Iolanthe*, and *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Scholarly editions of these last two are due to appear any day (from Broude Brothers and Oxford University Press, respectively). Perhaps the most significant editions in recent years have dealt primarily with the verbal rather than the musical text: Marc Shepherd's edition of *The Grand Duke* (as a vocal score [New York: Oakapple Press, 2009]) and the first volume of his *Variorum Gilbert & Sullivan*, a scholarly edition of Gilbert's librettos (coedited with Michael Walters [New York: Oakapple Press, 2015]) set a new standard of textual scholarship for the Gilbert and Sullivan canon.

Granted, the source situation of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas is considerably more complicated than that of the works in this volume: there are good reasons that the Broude complete edition is now in its fifth decade (the edition was begun in 1971, but the first volume, *Trial by Jury*, was not published until 1994). This notwithstanding, it is Gilbertian "topsy-turvydom" that *Mr Jericho* should find its way into Musica Britannica before *The Mikado* gets its philological due. As good as it is to have available a serious exploration of these marginal works, this volume is marred by too haphazard an approach to the editorial policy, and it does not measure up to its companions in this distinguished series. We may regret that it is not what it might have been, but at least it opens up an aspect of this very significant theatrical moment that has hitherto been a sealed book.

JAMES BROOKS KUYKENDALL  
*Erskine College*

