

Recitative in the Savoy Operas

James Brooks Kuykendall

In the early 1870s, London music publisher Boosey & Co. launched a new venture to widen its potential market. Boosey's repertoire had been domestic music for amateur vocalists and pianists: drawing-room ballads and both piano/vocal and solo piano scores across the range of standard operatic repertory of the day, published always with a singing translation in English and often substituting Italian texts for works originally in French or German. Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, and Verdi, Auber, Meyerbeer, Gounod, and Lecocq, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and Wagner all appeared in Boosey's Royal Edition of Operas series, together with a handful of "English" operas by Michael William Balfe and Julius Benedict. The new effort supplemented this domestic repertory with one aimed at amateur theatricals: "Boosey & Co.'s Comic Operas and Musical Farces." The cartouche for this series is reproduced in figure 1, shown here on the title page of Arthur Sullivan's 1867 collaboration with Francis C. Burnand, *The Contrabandista*.

Seven works are listed as part of the new imprint, although three of these (Gounod, Lecocq, and Offenbach's *Grand Duchess*) had been issued as part of the Royal Edition. Albert Lortzing's 1837 *Zar und Zimmermann* masquerades as *Peter the Shipwright*, and it appeared with an English text only. The new series may well have been the idea of Sullivan himself. He had been retained by Boosey since the late 1860s as one of the general editors for the Royal Edition. *Cox and Box* and *The Contrabandista*, the new light entertainments he had written with Burnand, found a place (albeit somewhat contrived) among semi-respectable Continental neighbors.

Boosey's venture into light operatic entertainment was short-lived, but Sullivan's interest in developing a popular musical theater genre did not wane. Over the next twenty-five years, he collaborated with librettist W. S. Gilbert on fourteen works (listed in Table 1)¹ that represent a new hybrid genre clearly influenced by Continental models both low and high, but distinctly English and intentionally operatic.² There has never been any universal agreement on a convincing generic designation for



Figure 1. Arthur Sullivan, *The Contrabandista* (1867, lib. F. C. Burnand), vocal score front cover; Boosey & Co., c. 1870. Reproduced by permission of the Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

these works. They emerged in a milieu characterized by a wide variety of musical theater pieces aimed at a middle class ready to spend money on an evening's diversion, and to spend further to enjoy musical selections from the theater in the domestic sphere. Boosey's short-lived enterprise was eclipsed by the success of Chappell & Co., who from 1880 took

Table 1. Theatrical Collaborations of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan

<i>Thespis</i> (Gaiety, 26 December 1871)
“an entirely Original Grotesque Opera, in Two Acts”
<i>Trial by Jury</i> (Royalty, 25 March 1875)
“a novel and entirely [<i>sic</i>] original Dramatic Cantata”
<i>The Sorcerer</i> (Opera Comique, 17 November 1877)
“an entirely New and Original Modern Comic Opera, in Two Acts”
<i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i> (Opera Comique, 25 May 1878)
“An Entirely Original Nautical Comic Opera, in Two Acts”
<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i>
“AN ENTIRELY NEW AND ORIGINAL OPERA” (Royal Bijou, Paignton, 30 December 1879)
“The New Melo-dramatic Opera, in Two Acts” (Fifth Avenue, New York, 31 December 1879)
“A New and Original Melo-Dramatic Opera, In Two Acts” (Opera Comique, 1880)
<i>Patience</i> (Opera Comique, 23 April 1881)
“An entirely New and Original Æsthetic Opera, in Two Acts”
<i>Iolanthe</i> (Savoy, 25 November 1882)
“FAIRY OPERA”
<i>Princess Ida</i> (Savoy, 5 January 1884)
“A respectful Operatic Perversion of TENNYSON’s ‘Princess,’ in a Prologue and Two Acts”
<i>The Mikado</i> (Savoy, 14 March 1885)
“An entirely original JAPANESE OPERA, IN TWO ACTS”
<i>Ruddygore</i> [subsequently <i>Ruddigore</i>] (Savoy, 22 January 1887)
“A New and Original SUPERNATURAL OPERA, IN TWO ACTS”
<i>The Yeomen of the Guard</i> (Savoy, 3 October 1888)
“A New and Original Opera, in Two Acts”
<i>The Gondoliers</i> (Savoy, 7 December 1889)
“An entirely Original Comic Opera, in Two Acts”
<i>Utopia Limited</i> (Savoy, 7 October 1893)
“An Original Comic Opera, in Two Acts”
<i>The Grand Duke</i> (Savoy, 7 May 1896)
“A NEW AND ORIGINAL COMIC OPERA”

In parenthesis, the venue and date of premiere are given. The generic description is given as on the premiere program.

over the publication of the collaborations between Gilbert and Sullivan, and the bulk of the theater pieces that imitated them (for example, Alfred Cellier’s long-running *Dorothy* [1886] and Edward German’s *Merrie England* [1903]).

The reviews of the original productions refer frequently to *extravaganza*, *burlesque*, and *comic opera*, but the most common descriptor is

simply *opera*.³ Although in the twentieth century, *operetta* became a frequent choice, it is quite rare in these reviews; when used, it tends to refer to the shorter “curtain raiser” or afterpiece that shared the bill with the main work, and occurs more in the general press than in musical periodicals. More useful, perhaps, is the hybrid genre suggested by the name of the first company formed to perform their works, the Comedy Opera Company (1877–81), suggesting something of the “tragical–comical–historical–pastoral” of the players in *Hamlet*. In fact, the generic description “comedy opera” appeared only in 1886 with Chappell’s publication of *Dorothy* and a few subsequent works that tried to exploit some of the formulas that characterized the Gilbert and Sullivan shows.⁴

In any case, that reviewers should routinely describe these works simply as operas was a matter of convenience rather than an evaluation of their artistic merit. Nonetheless, such usage caused some critics some unease, as is evident in a review of *The Sorcerer*:

If the reader has had patience to follow these remarks thus far, he will probably be disposed to ask whether it be meet that the English opera of the future should be founded upon such a farrago of nonsense as this. Burlesque and opera are not synonymous terms, and if it be conceded that the former has a legitimate place in art, it should not come before us sailing under false colours. . . . In certain scenes in the new “opera” we seem to be assisting at a children’s pantomime rather than at an entertainment intended for those of riper years. . . . *The Sorcerer* may suit the popular palate, and thus prove of benefit to its authors; but as a step towards the dawn of a brighter era for English opera it is worse than valueless.⁵

The reference to “false colours” must surely refer to Gilbert’s own billing of *The Sorcerer* as “an entirely New and Original Modern Comic Opera.”⁶ Table 1 includes the description of each of the works as found on the program for the opening night. As demonstrated there, *opera* (almost always with at least one qualifying adjective) is Gilbert’s default term. Precisely what he intended it to mean is not clear, but starting in 1877 with *The Sorcerer*, the most significant structural innovation is the marked increase in recitative, a feature that was absent from his earlier libretti. The use of recitative in these works has attracted very little attention, but its role throughout the canon of the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations is not merely incidental. Recitative is essential to the style, as Gilbert considered it a peculiarly operatic mode of expression. This is particularly clear in his recitative prosody, which will be considered in detail during the course of this essay.

Savoy Opera as Genre

Taken as a whole, the fourteen Gilbert and Sullivan works do not evince anything like stylistic consistency. A generic label that fits well for one may be insufficient or absurd for another: *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1888) scarcely seems to have sprung from the same creative minds as *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878). The uncertainty and disagreement over what these works were supposed to be, exactly, has descended to the present day even from their creators. Complicating the matter further, their own views evolved (and evolved differently) during their twenty-five-year partnership. Risking oversimplification, however, it seems that at the heart of the collaboration between Gilbert and Sullivan was a fundamental inconsistency (never articulated or understood fully by the partners themselves) about what makes a work operatic. As an opera composer, Sullivan was most concerned with the characters—that they be allowed to speak with genuine human expression, regardless of the comic situations in which they might find themselves. As a librettist, Gilbert regarded his responsibility to the composer as concerning mainly the mechanics of supplying the characters with the appropriate amount of material for the musical fleshing-out of the story (regardless of whatever absurdities he might want to place in their mouths). Both of these are legitimate concerns—and indeed one might argue that Mozart and Da Ponte had similar views of their respective roles, and a mutual understanding. The extant correspondence between Gilbert and Sullivan demonstrates, however, that they labored under a mutual *misunderstanding*. They spent decades talking past each other, each constantly feeling that he was the one making all the concessions, and striving to recapture his ground in whatever way possible. This proved to be a remarkably creative tension, even if neither partner was completely satisfied with the results.

Together, Gilbert and Sullivan emerged triumphant within a theatrical milieu remarkable for the crossing of genres: A work was categorized more easily by the theater in which it was produced than by any specific aspect of its substance. The Savoy Theatre was built specifically for Gilbert and Sullivan works, constructed by the third partner in their collaboration—the impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte.⁷ The works presented there soon became known as the Savoy Operas, although this can mean variously the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations, including even the works produced before 1881, when the theater was constructed, and Burnand and Sullivan's 1867 *Cox and Box*, which Carte took into the Savoy repertory in 1894; or these pieces plus those by either Gilbert or Sullivan produced when the collaboration had

disintegrated (extending to Gilbert's *Fallen Fairies* in 1909); or all of these works plus others produced by Carte or his company before it relinquished its continuous hold on the Savoy Theatre in 1903; or even other works produced on the Savoy stage thereafter.⁸ In common usage "Savoy Opera" is merely an elegant synonym for the pieces of "G&S." These works are indeed the main focus of the present essay, but this is not because of their popular familiarity. Rather this focus is a consequence of the cultivation of recitative in the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations to a degree not seen in the other works. This was largely the work of the librettist, who seems to have regarded it as his duty to accommodate his highly accomplished partner by aspiring to make the works operatic. (When working with other collaborators on quasi-operatic works, the amount of recitative in Gilbert's libretti is significantly reduced.)

"Savoy pieces" was indeed the phrase Sullivan himself used—with evident distaste—when in 1884 he recorded in his diary a decision not to write any more of them.⁹ In subsequent months, he referred to "another piece of the character of those already written"¹⁰ or "that class of piece,"¹¹ but such circumlocutions do not suggest that the three partners had only vague ideas about the genre they were producing at the Savoy, nor that the audiences were not able to perceive distinctive characteristics of the series. Preeminent among these was the relative weight given to the words and to the music. In his 1894 book *The Savoy Operas*, Percy Fitzgerald comments on the works each partner produced independently after the 1890 "carpet quarrel":

Of course a certain amount of success attended these productions [Gilbert's *The Mountebanks* and Sullivan's *Haddon Hall*], owing to the traditional popularity of the authors and the handsome style in which they were brought forward, but it was felt that the result was rather a specimen of the regular conventional opera—a libretto set to music—than the favourite Savoy partnership, in which the share of each was equally prominent.¹²

For such a champion of the Savoy tradition, "regular conventional opera" was necessarily a lesser breed; for the unnamed critic of *The Athenæum* reviewing the initial run of *Iolanthe*, however, the topsy-turvy relationship of libretto and score had been a fundamental problem:

Utterly opposed as are the extravagant productions of Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan to the music dramas of Richard Wagner in spirit and intent, they are alike in this, that the literary element is of at least equal importance with the musical in their construction; and it is questionable

whether criticism of a new work should not rather come under the head of drama than of music.¹³

This was Sullivan's recurring complaint, preserved succinctly in a letter from Gilbert (and possibly rephrased by the librettist): "You say that our operas are 'Gilbert's pieces with music added by you.'" ¹⁴ Sullivan may have overstated the case in exasperation, but it is certain that even eighteen years into their partnership the composer was having to insist that "my judgment and opinion should have some weight with you in the laying out of the *musical situation*, even to making important alterations after the work has been framed."¹⁵ Although the nature of their collaboration changed over time, the libretti supply traces of evidence of "musical" decisions or suggestions made by Gilbert, sometimes overridden or ignored by the composer.

Text Prototype

Despite Gilbert's lasting popularity for the century since his death, our knowledge of the textual history of his libretti is still quite limited. The most substantial work of Gilbertian scholarship of the mid-twentieth century was Reginald Allen's *The First Night Gilbert and Sullivan*; its aim was "to present the texts as actually performed on the first nights."¹⁶ Allen's concise description of Gilbert's working method seems to square with all available evidence, and is worth quoting at length:

First the author described to the composer his idea for a plot, or he read him a plot outline. Then, if Sullivan responded with enthusiasm, Gilbert wrote out a complete story-line, without dialog and without lyrics. . . . Next, working painstakingly through trial and error on scores of copy-book pages, he roughed out his libretto, including the lyrics, which he sent to Sullivan for setting as fast as they were finished. Sequence was of no concern to either collaborator. . . . As soon as he completed a manuscript libretto, it was invariably set in type. From then on, author's alterations involved endless resetting. In other words, there were many different proof-copies pulled by the printer for the author's and company's use before the eventual publication day. . . . He never kept any of his preliminary material once a new production was launched. Except for his early trial jottings preserved in a number of copybooks, his own archive, now in the British Museum [now the British Library], does not contain pre-publication proof copies or in most instances even the earliest issues of first editions of his opera librettos.¹⁷

Allen regarded Gilbert's meticulous attention to detail as virtually infallible. It is little exaggeration to say that for Allen establishing the text

was merely a matter of identifying the printing of the libretto of each opera that was available for sale to the audience at the premiere, under the assumption that what was printed exactly reflected what was performed. He made minimal effort to consult the early vocal scores—Sullivan's autograph scores were not available to him—and the musical sources in some cases fail to support his hypothetical postpremiere revisions to the text. Moreover, minor textual changes made as the music was composed did not always attract Gilbert's attention, and in such instances, the printed libretto and the sung text had already diverged on the first night.¹⁸

Despite such limitations, Allen's labor has naturally served as the foundation for subsequent work. His planned comprehensive bibliography of the printed libretti remained incomplete and unpublished at his death in 1988. Since that time, the readings of a number of printed libretti of the operas have been examined. This has been largely the work of dedicated amateurs linked by the internet, tackling the project without any systematic governance and with little attempt at rigorous collation. In some cases, identifying the print run of a given exemplar can now be accomplished without much difficulty.¹⁹ The first effort to establish critical texts of both the libretto and the score of these works is Broude Brothers' still ongoing *Gilbert & Sullivan: The Operas*.²⁰ The critical and bibliographic documentation in this edition is exhaustive.

If bibliographic control of the printed libretti is at least tangible (albeit sketchy), much less is known about Gilbert's manuscripts. With the sole exception of *Utopia (Limited)*, no complete autograph manuscript libretto of any of the Savoy Operas exists. The license copies deposited with the Lord Chamberlain's office were generally prepublication prints; those few to be submitted in manuscript were prepared by copyists. Even the extent to which Gilbert's libretti ever existed in manuscript as coherent documents for anyone other than the typesetter is speculative. When interviewed about his working methods late in his career, Gilbert indicates as much, writing that once the collaborators had agreed on the subject,

I begin the numbers of the first act, and send him two or three of them at a time until the first act is completed. In this way he becomes familiar with it by slow degrees. The manuscript I send him contains none of the spoken dialogue, but only those words that are to be sung. I, however, insert between each number an outline of the dialogue that is to connect them, so that he may follow the exact drift of the plot, and fully understand how the musical situations are arrived at.²¹

In an 1891 profile in *The Strand Magazine*, Gilbert is depicted dispatching a complete manuscript:

It is post time, and on the day of my visit he had just finished the libretto of his new comic opera. He weighs the great blue envelope in his hand, and, after the servant has left the room, he flings himself into his favourite chair, and suggestively remarks, "There goes something that will either bring me in twenty thousand pounds or twenty thousand pence!"²²

The manuscript in question is presumably *The Mountebanks*, on which Gilbert collaborated with Alfred Cellier (based on an idea turned down by Sullivan before *The Mikado*). As the visit must have been no earlier than the summer of 1891 (for an interview appearing in October) and Cellier had received the lyrics several months before, this "great blue envelope" was surely addressed to the printer rather than the composer. This document is apparently no longer extant, but the surviving holograph of *Utopia (Limited)* in the British Library seems to be a copy intended for Chappell's compositor, and preserved with it is the initial printed proof of the libretto.²³ These documents transmit the state of Gilbert's text as of July 1893. In any case, the composer probably never saw it; he had received lyrics a few at a time since at least early March (even if he did not begin composition until 19 June).²⁴

The most substantial extant single document in Gilbert's hand prepared for Sullivan's use is a libretto of the first act of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Sullivan composed the work in December 1879 in New York, where he had gone with Gilbert in an attempt to thwart pirated productions of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Although he had made sketches for act 1 while still in London during the autumn, he discovered that these had been left behind. Gilbert's manuscript libretto of act 1 was evidently produced to assist the composer as he assembled it anew.²⁵ Significantly, this document contains marginal notes in Sullivan's hand—including indications of key areas and melodic fragments. It remained among Sullivan's papers and in 1964 was acquired by the Pierpont Morgan Library.²⁶

The only other documented instance of Sullivan receiving from Gilbert a completed manuscript is his later recollection of the genesis of *Trial by Jury*:

He had called to read over to me the MS. of "Trial by Jury." He read it through, and it seemed to me, in a perturbed sort of way, with a gradual crescendo of indignation, in the manner of a man considerably disappointed with what he had written. As soon as he had come to the last word he closed up the manuscript violently, apparently unconscious of

the fact that he had achieved his purpose so far as I was concerned, inasmuch as I was screaming with laughter the whole time. The words and music were written, and all rehearsals completed within the space of three weeks.²⁷

Trial by Jury is an exceptional work among the Savoy Operas, not only because of its brevity (c. forty minutes), but also because of the total absence of spoken dialogue; if there had been any, Gilbert's regular working method would have made it the last stage of his labor. Moreover, Gilbert had prepared the libretto of *Trial by Jury*, which was a direct expansion of an existing work, more than a year before for Carl Rosa as a vehicle for Rosa's wife.²⁸ He was thus in a position to have a complete text in hand when he approached Sullivan. He had only worked with the composer once before, so there was no established working relationship. Sullivan could agree to set the work as it was, or Gilbert would look for another collaborator.²⁹

Steven Ledbetter gives a reasonable summary of the textual situation in this case:

We do not know how L3 [the third London edition of the libretto] is descended from what Gilbert originally wrote or what Sullivan set—not, it should be observed, [that these are] necessarily the same thing. L3 is presumably descended, through earlier editions of the printed libretto, from a Gilbert holograph, but we do not know whether that holograph represents what Sullivan set. It is possible that composer and librettist at one point agreed upon what the former would set but that subsequently, either deliberately or inadvertently, either with or without Gilbert's knowledge, Sullivan may have set something other than what he and Gilbert had agreed upon. . . . It would be helpful if we knew more about the ways in [which] Gilbert and Sullivan worked; it is certainly possible that Gilbert prepared a text for the printer and that some of the changes made in rehearsal or early in a run never reached the compositor. Besides, the printed libretto may to some extent be a text presented as a "literary" entity—with the adjustments in form attendant thereupon.³⁰

Ledbetter is right to emphasize the many gaps in our knowledge of the collaborators' working methods for any particular case, but looking across the span of their partnership the extant documents accord with the way each partner described their working method in interviews: Gilbert's prose drafts and sketched lyrics; Sullivan's rhythmic sketches, continuity drafts and layers of work evident in the autograph scores. Nonetheless, whatever version of the text Sullivan had before him as he composed often cannot be ascertained with certainty. (The significance

of this—namely, determining where Gilbert planned for recitative—will be demonstrated presently.) Judging from Gilbert's papers preserved in the British Library, at least by the second half of Gilbert's collaboration with Sullivan the composer was in the habit of returning Gilbert's manuscripts once he no longer needed them. Figure 2 is a leaf from the trove of lyrics preserved for *The Yeomen of the Guard*. The crease halfway down the sheet is not conclusive, but it is at least consistent with Gilbert's stated practice of sending a few lyrics at a time through the

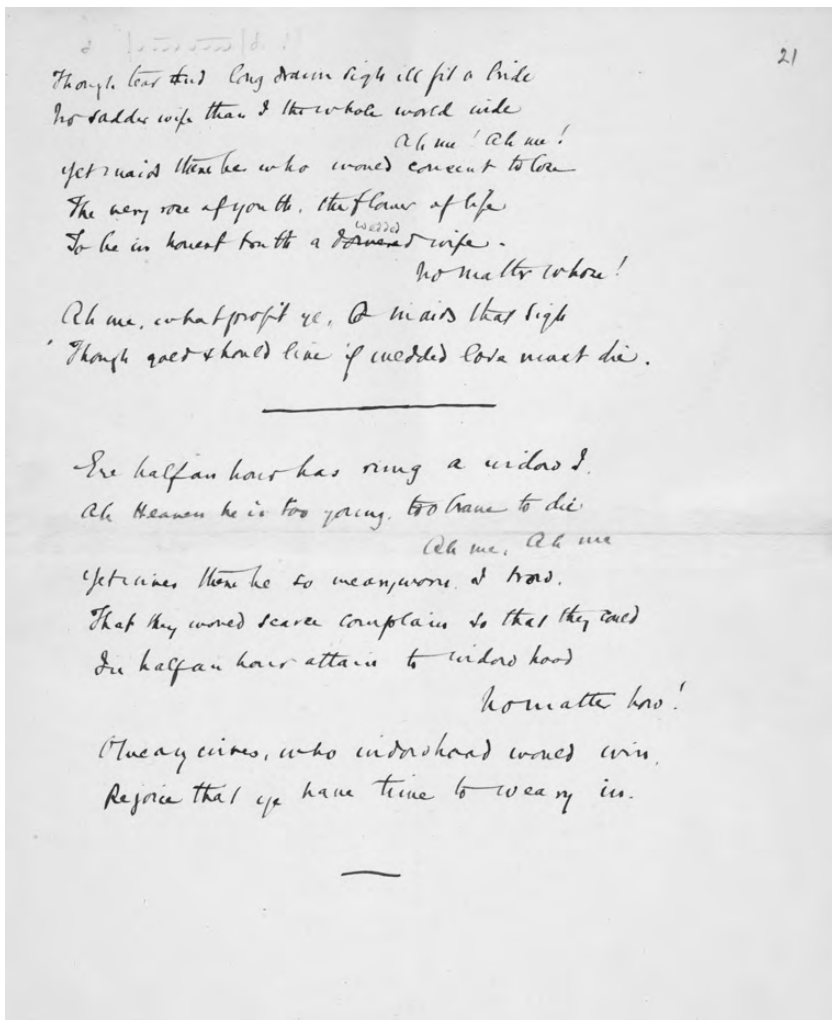


Figure 2. W. S. Gilbert, *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1879), autograph manuscript of lyric from act I. © British Library Board (Add. Ms. 49298 f. 21).

post (that is, not in a single flat sheaf in a “great blue envelope”). In several cases, Gilbert attempts the same song in different metrical structures. The page reproduced here gives Elsie’s song near the end of act 1, and includes an emendation by Gilbert: “wedded” for “dowered” in the sixth line. Gayden Wren has written perceptively about Sullivan’s setting of this text, which seems to disregard Gilbert’s prosody.³¹ Published libretti consistently print this song in shorter lines—“Though tear and long-drawn sigh / Ill fit a bride, / No sadder wife than I / The whole world wide! / Ah me! Ah me!”—and although it appears in that form in Gilbert’s manuscript on the previous folio, this leaf gives the text mainly in long lines (fifteen syllables) with internal rhymes.

Most significant about figure 2 is the penciled musical notation at the very top of the sheet, in which the composer explored a rhythmic pattern for the text—not, ultimately, the one he settled on.³² This is sufficient to confirm that the sheet was in Sullivan’s hand at some point before the composition of the song; many of the others preserved in the Gilbert papers have similar marks, and must have served the same function.

In a letter to Sullivan that touched off the feud that almost ended their working relationship after *Princess Ida*, Gilbert remarks: “During your absence I have busied myself with constructing a libretto; I have even gone so far as to write some of the numbers and to sketch out portions of the dialogue.”³³ By “even gone so far,” Gilbert seems to mean merely that he has gone beyond working out the plot into musical elements that would be subject to the composers’ approval. A few weeks into this same feud, Gilbert made his views clear on the respective authority of the two partners:

The plot of the piece, for which you must remember *I alone am responsible to the public*, I take to be a matter in which I am entitled to a casting vote: the subjects of the lyrics—questions of metre and rhythm—construction of duets, trios, and concerted music, and, in short, all points bearing on the musical requirements of the pieces are matters in which I hold that your decision is final.³⁴

In the same letter, he reminded Sullivan that the partners were not free agents, but were bound by their contract with Carte to produce a work at six months notice; moreover, Gilbert wrote, Sullivan was not in the position of a “grand opera” composer, remarking on “the subordinate position which the librettist of such an opera must necessarily occupy.”³⁵ The implication is that such a position would require the “subordinate” librettist to provide the composer with a complete libretto before

composition began, and the decisions thereafter would be wholly in the hands of the composer.³⁶

One consequence of this significant difference between the collaborative accommodations that produced the Savoy Operas and those of many other operatic composers is an inconsistency in the tone of the pieces. Increasingly in these pieces, there is a marked difference between the character of the lyrics, that is, the portion of the libretto that the composer saw as he began his work, and the dialogue, which the composer heard only in the final stages of the rehearsal process. Earlier in this 1884 feud, Sullivan had asked “to set a story of human interest and probability, where the humorous words would come in a humorous (not serious) situation, and where, if the situation were a tender or dramatic one, the words would be of a similar character.”³⁷ With rare exceptions, Gilbert’s solution was to move the burlesque into the dialogue, leaving Sullivan unaware of the total effect until a late stage in the process. In the middle of the first act of *The Gondoliers*, for example, Gilbert reveals the surprise love interest between Casilda (daughter of the Duke of Plaza-Toro) and her father’s attendant Luiz. Hitherto, her interactions with him have displayed contempt. Then, after a rather perfunctory patter-song in which her father describes how he heroically “led his regiment from behind,” the parents depart, and Luiz and Casilda reveal their true feelings. An early version sent to Sullivan is preserved in Gilbert’s papers:

RECITATIVE

Luiz. Star of my soul! My loved one—my adored—
Sweet girl that makest life one golden song,
We are once more alone!

Carlotta O my beloved!
[sic; later Prince of my life—sole fount of earthly joy
renamed Pardon, oh pardon for the cruel disdain
Casilda]. That at the call of prudence I have heaped
Upon thy noble soul.

Luiz. Hush, hush, my own!
I can bear all and more for thy sweet sake.
Each word of scorn that hisses from thy lips
Is but another bandage on the eyes
Of thy most haughty but most hoodwinked parents.

BALLAD—LUIZ.

Thy wintry scorn I dearly prize,
 Thy mocking pride I bless;
 Thy scorn is love in deep disguise,
 Thy pride is lowliness.
 Thy cold disdain,
 It gives no pain—
 'Tis mercy, played
 In masquerade.
 Thine angry frown
 Is but a gown
 That serves to dress
 Thy gentleness!

If angry frown and deep disdain
 Be love in masked array,
 So much the bitterer their arraign,
 So much the sweeter they!
 With mocking smile
 My love beguile;
 With idle jest
 Appease my breast;
 With angry voice
 My soul rejoice;
 Beguile with scorn
 My heart forlorn!

Oh happy he who is content to gain
 Thy scorn, thine angry frown, thy deep disdain!³⁸

The recitative was apparently never set; presumably either Sullivan or Gilbert recognized that at such a moment, an outburst by both characters ("O rapture!") would be more believable than a dialogue between them. Luiz's rather prosaic ballad was retained at least until the premiere, but soon replaced by a more concise duet that reuses many phrases of the original lyrics. The musical substance of the duet was probably entirely new, but the original song was removed from Sullivan's autograph and is lost.³⁹

There follows a dialogue in which Casilda confesses that she has just learned she was "wed in babyhood to the infant son of the King of Barataria." Her illicit romance with Luiz must therefore end. The text for the duet that follows is appropriately tender and wistful:

- DUET—CASILDA and LUIZ.
- LUIZ. There was a time—
 A time forever gone—ah, woe is me!
 It was no crime
 To love but thee alone—ah, woe is me!
 One heart, one life, one soul,
 One aim, one goal—
 Each in the other's thrall,
 Each all in all, ah, woe is me!
- ENSEMBLE. Oh, bury, bury—let the grave close o'er
 The days that were—that never will be more!
 Oh, bury, bury love that all condemn,
 And let the whirlwind mourn its requiem!
- CASILDA. Dead as the last year's leaves—
 As gathered flowers—ah, woe is me!
 Dead as the garnered sheaves,
 That love of ours—ah, woe is me!
 Born but to fade and die
 When hope was high,
 Dead and as far away
 As yesterday!—ah, woe is me!
- ENSEMBLE. Oh bury, bury, let the grave close o'er, &c.⁴⁰

The composer had agreed to the plot outline in a meeting in early June 1889. Throughout the late summer and autumn, he received the lyrics from Gilbert piecemeal, and Gilbert was willing to undertake a good bit of rewriting to satisfy the composer.⁴¹ The lyrics above were sent to Sullivan to be set, but he would not have heard dialogue until the rehearsals were well under way. The two lovers caught in a tragic situation indulge in a lengthy and tiresome joke:

- CASILDA. [. . .] Henceforth my life is another's.
 LUIZ. But stay—the present and the future—*they* are another's;
 but the past—that at least is ours, and none can take it from
 us. As we may revel in naught else, let us revel in that!
- CASILDA. I don't think I grasp your meaning.
 LUIZ. Yet it is logical enough. You say you cease to love me?
 CASILDA (*demurely*). I say I *may* not love you.
 LUIZ. But you do not say you *did* not love me?
 CASILDA. I loved you with a frenzy that words are powerless to
 express—and that but ten brief minutes since!
 LUIZ. Exactly. My own—that is, until ten minutes since, my

own—my lately loved, my recently adored—tell me that
until, say a quarter of an hour ago, I was all in all to thee!
(*Embracing her.*)

CASILDA. I see your idea. It's ingenious, but don't do that (*releasing herself*).

LUIZ. There can be no harm in reveling in the past.

CASILDA. None whatever, but an embrace cannot be taken to
act retrospectively.

LUIZ. Perhaps not!

CASILDA. We may recollect an embrace—I recollect many—but
we must not repeat them,

LUIZ. Then let us recollect a few!

(*A moment's pause, as they recollect, then both heave a deep sigh.*)

LUIZ. Ah, Casilda, you were to me as the sun is to the earth!

CASILDA. A quarter of an hour ago?

LUIZ. About that.

CASILDA. And to think that, but for this miserable discovery, you
would have been my own for life!

LUIZ. Through life to death—a quarter of an hour ago!

CASILDA. How greedily my thirsty ears would have drunk the
golden melody of those sweet words a quarter—well it's now
about twenty minutes since (*looking at her watch*).

LUIZ. About that. In such a matter one cannot be too
precise.[. . .]

This spoken dialogue does not fit the sung text on either side of it. There is no hint in the song that precedes it or in the duet that follows of the Gilbertian logical absurdity that characterizes the speeches in between. No reaction from Sullivan is documented, but he must have found the material that links these two passages to be beneath the level of the rest of the work.

Whatever details Sullivan might have been given about the yet-to-be-written dialogue—if any—can be suggested by Gilbert's draft libretti preserved in the British Library. These sources contain a wealth of detail about Gilbert's method, and his habit of writing out the plots repeatedly in prose as he worked them out reveals what might have been in tantalizing ways. These have been most extensively studied by John Wolfson, Jane W. Stedman, and Andrew Crowther.⁴² An example from the earliest known draft of *Patience* (c. early 1880, and containing only a portion of act 1) reveals Gilbert making a conscious distinction between prose dialogue and recitative at a very early stage of his work.⁴³ Rather than spoofing the aesthetic movement (as the work would eventually

do), in this draft the characters are more closely connected to his 1867 “Bab” ballad, “The Rival Curates.”⁴⁴ In the draft, the opening scene is described thus:

Scene. Exterior of country Vicarage. Ladies discovered seated on lawn in despairing attitudes, headed by Angela, Ella & Saphir. They are waiting to congratulate Rev.^d Lawn Tennyson on his birthday, & give him slippers, comforters, braces &^c which they are working upon

Gilbert then sketched out the lyrics for the opening chorus of “love-sick maidens,” which is remarkably close to the finished version. He then made notes about the dialogue which follows:

Approach of Patience who alone of all the village maidens is insensible to the charms of Rev.^d L. T. In point of fact Patience has never loved—does not know what it is,
Her entrance to recitative.
She is pained to see the girls so unhappy—
She is aware that it is owing to their love for Rev. L. Tennyson
Still that conveys no idea to her mind, as she cannot realize
what love is.

Recit

Angela.	See—hither comes the village school-mistress Poor Patience—who alone of womankind Remains insensate to his calm attractions!
Saphir	Unhappy girl—her heart has ne’er known love—
Ella	Benighted creature!
Angela	Miserable maid!
<i>Patience appears on rock L</i>	
Patience	Your pardon ladies—I intrude upon you—(going)
Angela	Come hither, Patience—tell us—is it true That you have never loved?
Patience (coming down)	Most true indeed!
Sopranos	Most marvelous!
Contraltos	And most deplorable!

There follows Patience’s song “I cannot tell what this love may be,” which survived with minimal changes in the version set by Sullivan.

Not only has Gilbert decided where the recitative should start (“Her entrance to recitative”), he has even made the musical decision

that the last two lines should be split between the upper and lower voices. It is clear Gilbert was thinking musically, and at a very early stage allotting specific moments to recitative. One might imagine a different method, with the composer reviewing the draft libretto and deciding what portions needed musical treatment—but that was clearly not how this partnership operated. Gilbert showed himself willing to write and rewrite for the composer, sometimes preemptively offering alternative texts for the same song in different meters, but he made a significant number of decisions bearing on the musical construction of the work on his own.⁴⁵

Gilbert's Operatic Prosody

Gilbert had written scripts for more than twenty-five productions before his first collaboration with Sullivan, and most of these other early pieces were in styles characterized by verse throughout—pantomime, extravaganza, and burlesque.⁴⁶ These were commonly written in rhyming couplets. Gilbert ventured into blank verse, though with indifferent results. In this effort, he was apparently aspiring to write drama on a higher aesthetic level.⁴⁷ He evidently considered the blank verse plays merited the permanence of publication: Four are included in his first volume of *Original Plays*, published in 1876. As one reviewer remarked:

Mr. Gilbert, in fact, has considerable command of pure, strong, nervous English; and his blank verse, if it does not appeal to the ear with any great charm of melody or bold refreshing beauty, is consistently free from the ignorant defects of metre which are so frequently found in the poetry of our contemporary stage. It is always studiously correct, and what is more the correctness is attained without any awkward inversion of the component parts of the sentences.⁴⁸

Whether the dialogue was in prose or in verse, in Gilbert's early works music is present only in the manner of a ballad opera: a pastiche from various sources, with newly composed texts (that is, contrafactum). As Gilbert notes in the preface to *Ruy Blas*, describing it as "a preposterous piece of nonsense for private representation":

The airs introduced into this burlesque were selected on account of their being for the most part old and hackneyed, and at the tip of everybody's tongue. They were chosen for the convenience of those rough and ready amateurs who get up a thing of the kind in a back drawing-room at two day's [sic] notice. Of course, if you are ambitious, and have plenty of time

to do it in, you can “go in” for operatic and concerted pieces of a complicated description. Only, you will have to write your own words.⁴⁹

After a few years of this sort of approach, the music Gilbert chose to parody came more and more from opera. Gilbert’s knowledge of Continental operatic traditions—particularly Italian opera—has been the subject of study, although such treatments have been limited to his indebtedness in terms of plot and have not included any musical considerations.⁵⁰ The situation is complicated. Gilbert could provide for a *largo concertato* at appropriate moments, and traces of the *solita forma* duet model (*tempo d’attacco—adagio—tempo di mezzo—cabaletta*) are even evident in *The Pirates of Penzance*, although whether the structural parallels were initially the idea of the composer or the librettist is unclear.⁵¹ Gilbert bought vocal scores for his own use, but it is not clear how much the musical notation would have been intelligible to him.⁵² The sole identifiable example of musical notation in his hand (scrawled on the autograph score of *Our Island Home*, an 1870 collaboration with Thomas German Reed) is nonsensical.⁵³ Although Sullivan’s diary records that Gilbert was enlisted to copy parts in the mad rush to prepare the performing materials for *The Pirates of Penzance*, it is impossible to determine how much actual help he was on that occasion.⁵⁴ The vocal scores he acquired may have served only as reference sources for musicians who prepared the pastiche productions, but also he may have used them to assist in the composition of texts that would closely follow the original versification. Among Gilbert’s papers, however, is a notebook of twelve-stave paper (twelve leaves); on the verso of the front cover, he has written:

Airs introduced into Burlesque of
 “Robert the Devil, or the Nun, the Hun, and
 The Son of a Gun.”
 W. S. Gilbert
 28 Eldon Road
 Kensington
 London. W.⁵⁵

Gilbert has headed each recto to designate the musical source of his contrafacta. Some music has been filled in on the last leaf in another hand; otherwise, the pages are blank, except for the amateurish scrawl reproduced in figure 3, which appears on the first page of music. “Opening Chorus” has been struck through and replaced with “Finale to Scene 6 / ‘Logeons le donc et des ce soir’—Grande Duchesse.” The two lines of music below are a mystery. Lacking bar lines and even a

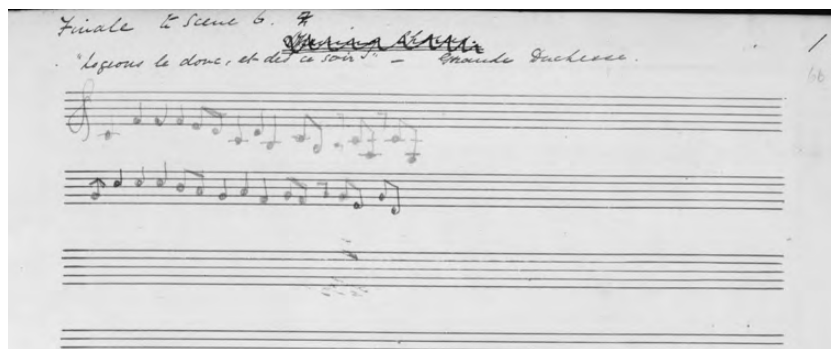


Figure 3. W. S. Gilbert, music notebook for *Robert the Devil* (1868). © British Library Board (Add. Ms. 49318 f. 66).

consistent meter, they are nonsensical; and yet they seem to have been copied from some source, albeit by someone (Gilbert?) for whom the graphic characters were meaningless. They relate neither to Offenbach's *La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein* nor to Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, which was the musical source for the opening chorus. As this is the first page, the notation may be unrelated to the heading, just a stray jotting on (by-then) scrap paper.

This mystery notwithstanding, *Robert the Devil* is significant because it contains the first instance of Gilbert's use of the term "recitative" in a libretto. This 1868 "operatic extravaganza" borrows tunes not only from its Meyerbeerian target, but also Bellini, Offenbach, Hervé, Auber, and others. Another of Gilbert's parody sources is "Les rendez-vous de noble compagnie" from Ferdinand Hérold's *Le Pré aux clercs* (1832). Hérold does not indicate *recitatif*, but Gilbert specifies "Recit." in his libretto, possibly intending some declamatory freedom in performance. Example 1 reconstructs the beginning of the *Robert the Devil* number by adding Gilbert's lyrics to the musical text of the 1840 *Le Pré aux clercs* vocal score. (There is a similar contrafactum in Gilbert's *The Pretty Druidess* [1869] where he provided a new text for Bellini's recitative "Sediziose voci" [*Norma*], although in this instance Bellini also designates "recitative.")

Whereas Gilbert's first attempts were perhaps a consequence of his selection of operatic models for parody, recitative continues to play a modest role in his musical works thereafter, when his lyrics were set to original scores. Among his early musical "entertainments" were those written for German Reed and his "Gallery of Illustration" (an institution so respectable that it eschewed the word *theatre*).⁵⁶ In these, Gilbert used recitative rarely, but he clearly recognized its potential to heighten

Allegro maestoso (♩ = 112)

6 Un peu moins vite (♩ = 100)

PLANARD: Les ren-dez
GILBERT: Be-fore I

10

- vous de no-ble com-pa-gni-e Se don-nent tous dans ce char-mant sé-
sing - my cap I cir-cu-late - The co-lour of your gold I like to
(handing round cap)

13

- jour Et dou-ce-ment on y pas-se la vi-e, Et dou-ce-
see! In stir-ring verse the ac-count I'll nar-rate In stir-ring

Example 1. Reconstructed score of “Before I sing, my cap I circulate” (labeled “Recit.”) in W. S. Gilbert’s *Robert the Devil* (1868). Sources: Ferdinand Hérold, *Le Pré aux clercs* (1832, lib. Eugène de Planard); Alexandre Grus (Paris), c. 1840, third edition vocal score; and W. S. Gilbert, *New and Original Extravaganzas*, ed. Isaac Goldberg (Boston: J. W. Luce & Co., 1931). 118f.

16

- ment on y pas - se la vi - e A cé - lé - brer le cham - pagne et l'a -
verse the ac - count I'll nar - rate Of Ro - bert[,] Duke of Nor - man -

19

- mour[,] A cé - lé - brer le cham - pagne et l'a - mour[,] A cé - lé -
- dee, Of Ro - bert[,] Duke of Nor - man - dee, Of Ro - bert[,]

22

- brer le cham - pagne et l'a - mour.
Duke of Nor - man - dee. animez

Example 1. Continued

a dramatic moment. A representative example is *Ages Ago* (1869), where Gilbert's libretto called for just two recitatives, reserving these for particularly dynamic moments. The first of these initiates a lengthy comic musical sequence, when the action is arrested by a knock at the door. The recitative consists of just two rhyming couplets, the former melodramatically overstated, the latter absurdly inane. Example 2 shows Frederic Clay's setting.

Presto TARE Recit:

Ha! what was that[?] It

7 a tempo

shook me to the core[!] What was it, Ro-sa? tell me I im-plore!

13 ROSA *p*

I ra-ther think, but

19

mind, I won't be sure— I think it's some-one knock-ing at the door!

Example 2. Frederic Clay, *Ages Ago* (1869, lib. W. S. Gilbert): no. 5, mm. 1–24. Source: vocal score, Boosey & Co., 1870.

In a subsequent scene that anticipates the second act of *Ruddigore* five portraits come to life. Clay precedes this with what he labeled an “Entr’acte” for the supernatural transformation, augmenting the traditional piano-and-harmonium scoring of the Reed entertainments with a

30 LADY MAUD Recit:

I breathe! I live! since last I saw the day, Five tar - dy cen - tu - ries — have pass'd a -

[Pianoforte]

34

- way — No long - er o'er my grave let chap - lets wreathe, my bo - som throbs with

38 *f*

life I live! — I breathe! My bo - som throbs with life, I

f

43

breathe! I live!

[Harmonium]

ff [Harp] *p*

Example 3. Frederic Clay, *Ages Ago* (1869, lib. W. S. Gilbert): no. 8, mm. 30–46. Source: vocal score, Boosey & Co., 1870.

harp “on the stage.” Gilbert’s recitative is very brief—again just two couplets (ex. 3). Clay adds a passionate repetition of the text (“My bosom throbs with life—I live! I breathe!”) as the vivified Lady Maud de Bohun steps down from her frame.

Recitative was a special effect rather than a default mode in the Victorian vernacular musical theater.⁵⁷ This notwithstanding, there is sufficient variety of recitatives to make it difficult to describe a “typical” example. In general, recitative texts in works by other librettists resemble the examples above—with text conveyed in rhyming couplets of tetrameter or pentameter—or sometimes no discernible meter at all, but with the rhyme inevitably retained.⁵⁸ The recitatives in Burnand and Sullivan’s *The Contrabandista* (1867) demonstrate this procedure, as shown in the two following examples. Burnand used recitative quite sparingly and apparently for rhetorical effect; he might not have known precisely what he wanted.

In the first example, as English tourist Adolphus Cimabue Grigg sets up his camera to capture the Spanish mountain vista, he discovers two brigands. He interrupts his song:

GRIGG.	[. . .] I think that the lens I can clearly direct And at last I have got quite a charming effect.
(<i>recit.</i>).	Ah! now to arrange it. A capital plan. I’ve sighted a rock. No, ’tis a man!
SANCHO.	Ha! ha! you have hit on a capital plan. I’m a man!
GRIGG.	And another!
JOSE.	Another young man.

At first glance, the lines marked as recitative seem not to scan: “Ah! now to arrange it . . .” has eleven syllables, and “I’ve sighted a rock . . .” only nine, although the lines are clearly intended to rhyme and thus form some sort of couplet. On closer inspection, it appears that Burnand is merely continuing the prevailing triple rhythm of the song (“I |**think** that the |**lens** I can |**clear**-ly di-|**rect**”) in the lines marked “*recit.*” If so, there are two silent beats in the second recitative line (“I’ve |**sight**-ed a |**rock**. ~ ~ |**No**, ’tis a |**man**!”), and the dactyls continue inexorably through “Another young man.” This is not at all clear in Sullivan’s setting of the text, however, which treats the whole section as a rhetorical break from the preceding meter, with rhythms dictated by an imitation of speech rhythm.

In the second example, Mr. Grigg has been mistaken as the chief of the brigands; for the recitative, again in the middle of a number,

words & phrases that involve a hard collocation of consonants & a succession of close vowels. I wrote two of the songs in “The Yeomen of the Guard” (“Were I thy bride” and “Is life a boon”) for the express purpose of proving this.⁶³

Whether this had “always” been his opinion or not, Gilbert’s Italianate prosody is clear in the early works with Sullivan, and may be illustrated by two brief sections of recitative from act 1 of *The Pirates of Penzance*.⁶⁴ (For each line of verse, the final accent is here marked by a bold underline and preceded by a vertical stroke. In the right column the number of syllables in the line is tallied.)

Recitative—FREDERIC.

What shall I do? Before these gentle maiden s	11
I dare not show in this alarming costume .	11
No, no, I must remain in close con cealment	11
Until I can appear in decent clothing !	11
[. . .]	

Recitative—MABEL.

Hold, monsters! Ere your pirate cara van serai	12 (= <i>sdrucchiolo</i>)
Proceed, against our will, to wed us all ,	10 (= <i>tronco</i>)
Just bear in mind that we are wards in Chancery ,	12
And father is a Major-Gener al !	10

The meter of Italian verse is determined by the placement of the last accent of the line, but in Italian, the default pattern concludes with an unaccented syllable—a duple (or feminine) ending. A line in which the last accent comes on the tenth syllable will usually have an additional syllable beyond that, and is therefore classified as an *endecasillabo*. (The same holds for lines of any length; the *settenario*, for example, has a final accent on the sixth syllable.) Frederic’s quatrain above consists of default (*piano*) *endecasillabo* lines—eleven syllables with the final accent on the penultimate syllable. Although this is the standard, the Italian line length may be altered in either of two ways: The line may be truncated (*tronco*), terminating on the accented tenth syllable (although still reckoned as *endecasillabo*), or a further unaccented syllable may be appended to the end, yielding a twelve-syllable *endecasillabo sdrucchiolo* (“slippery”). Mabel’s quatrain illustrates both of these types.

Significantly, the lines of Mabel’s quatrain are rhymed.⁶⁵ When Gilbert uses *sdrucchiolo* (triple ending) lines, he invariably rhymes them. Thus, in act 2 of *The Grand Duke*, these four *endecasillabi sdrucchioli*:

LUDWIG (*recit.*).

His Highness we know not—nor the lo <u>cal</u> ity	12
In which is situate his Princi <u>pal</u> ity;	12
But as he guesses by some odd fa <u>tal</u> ity	12
This is the shop for cut and dried for <u>mal</u> ity!	12

Here Gilbert departs from the Italian model, where such rhyme is rare. In English, prosodist Derek Attridge argues that this ending with two unstressed syllables tends to be rhymed, but even so this is “very rare and is most often done for comic effect.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Bernard Richards comments that the result is almost unavoidably comic:

One of the mainsprings of the comic is to be found in mechanical predictability; the fat man slipping on the banana skin walks with unerring regularity and fails to take avoiding action. The comic and absurd universe is made up of relentless regularity with no room for manoeuvre. The inevitability of polysyllabic rhyme seems to share in the grotesque over-determinacy of the comic and absurd universe.⁶⁷

Indeed, this sort of thing seems to have appealed to Gilbert’s impish sense of humor.⁶⁸

For most of the nineteenth century, and for more than a century before, recitative text in Italian libretti was cast in *versi sciolti*: unrhymed lines freely mixing *endecasillabi* and *settenari*. It would be more accurate to term Gilbert’s practice *endecasillabi sciolti*, as he does not usually mix lines of different lengths in the manner of the Italian operatic librettist. This difference associates Gilbert’s practice not with opera (as he perhaps intended) but with Italian epic verse generally. Rhymed or unrhymed, Dante argued that the *endecasillabo* was the meter of high style, and so it remained.⁶⁹

Blank verse was the nearest English equivalent to *endecasillabi sciolti*; indeed, scholars have argued that blank verse and *endecasillabi sciolti* are vernacular equivalents of the classical “heroic verse” prototype.⁷⁰ Unaccented endings abound in Italian vocabulary; there are markedly fewer in English, so that the default in blank verse is a true ten syllables—five iambs, thus ending with an accent. Extra syllables causing duple endings are certainly found in blank verse; for example, “To be, or not to be, that is the |question.” These are exceptions, however—rare in Marlowe, a special effect in Shakespeare, Wordsworth, the Brownings, virtually unknown in Milton.⁷¹ Indeed, it is exceedingly rare in Gilbert’s own blank verse: In *Princess Ida* (the dialogue of which is entirely in blank verse) only seven lines terminate with an extra unaccented syllable. In his recitative, however, eleven-syllable (duple-ending)

lines are extremely common—and in *The Sorcerer*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and *The Pirates of Penzance* they may even be regarded as his default meter. It seems more accurate to align Gilbert's recitative with Italian models (even if he seems not to have shown any interest in the usual patterns of accents within an *endecasillabo* line) than to argue that he was perversely pushing against the blank-verse norm. It is clear that Gilbert did not conceive of his unrhymed recitatives as blank verse.

Before his collaboration with Sullivan, Gilbert's recitatives are conventional, in that they are invariably rhymed, as illustrated above in the examples from *Robert the Devil* and *Ages Ago*. The same is true even in *Thespis* and, except for a few stray single lines, *Trial by Jury* as well. After that, however, there is a marked change in Gilbert's conception of recitative. *The Sorcerer* was the first commissioned two-act work from the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership by the newly formed Comedy Opera Company. Although the use of recitative is extensive, examining the metrical structure of the first scene suggests that Gilbert intended to have much more—and perhaps even writing all the dialogue in unrhymed verse, whether or not it was to be set as recitative. Here is Gilbert's libretto starting just after the opening chorus (annotated to indicate prosody):

At the end of the chorus, exeunt the men into house.

Enter MRS. PARTLET, meeting CONSTANCE, her daughter.

RECITATIVE.

MRS. PARTLET.	Constance, my daughter, why this strange de pression?	11
	The village rings with seasonable joy,	10
	Because the young and amiable A lexis,	11
	Heir to the great Sir Marmaduke Point dextre,	11
	Is plighted to Aline, the only daughter	11
	Of Annabella, Lady Sanga zure.	10
	You, you alone are sad and out of spirits;	11
	What is the reason? Speak, my daughter, speak!	10
CONSTANCE.	Oh, mother, do not ask! If my com plexion	11
	From red to white should change in quick suc cession—	11
	And then from white to red, oh, take no notice!	11
	If my poor limbs should tremble with e motion,	11
	Pay no attention, mother—it is nothing!	11
	If long and deep-drawn sighs I chance to utter,	11
	Oh, heed them not—their cause must ne'er be known!	10

MRS. PARTLET. My child, be candid—think not to de|ceive 10
 The eagle-eyed pew-opener—. You |love! 10
 CONSTANCE (*aside*). How guessed she that, my heart's most cherished
 |secret? 11
 (*Aloud*). I *do* love—fondly—madly—hopeless|ly!⁷² 10

ARIA [*sic*]—CONSTANCE.
 ["When he is here," two stanzas (omitted here)]

At the end of the song, MRS. PARTLET silently motions to women to leave them together. Exeunt chorus.

MRS. PARTLET. Come, tell me all about it! Do not |fear— 10
 I, too, have loved; but that was long a|go! 10
 Who is the object of your young af|fections? 11
 CONSTANCE. Hush, mother! He is here!
Enter DR. DALY. He is pensive and does not see them.
 MRS. PARTLET. Our reverend |vicar! 11
 CONSTANCE. Oh, pity me, my heart is almost |broken! 11
 MRS. PARTLET. My child, be comforted. To such an |union 11
 I shall not offer any oppo|sition. 11
 Take him—he's yours! May you and he be |happy! 11
 CONSTANCE. But, mother dear, he is not yours to |give! 10
 MRS. PARTLET. That's true, indeed!
 CONSTANCE. He might object!
 Mrs. Partlet. He |might. 10
 But come—take heart—I'll probe him
 on the |subject. 11
 Be comforted—leave this affair to |me. 10

RECITATIVE—DR. DALY.
 The air is charged with amatory |numbers— 11
 Soft madrigals, and dreamy lovers' |lays. 10
 Peace, peace, old heart! Why waken from its |slumbers 11
 The aching memory of the old, old |days? 10

BALLAD.
 ["Time was, when Love and I were well acquainted," two stanzas (omitted)]

Although the dialogue after Constance's song is not labeled "recitative" or, to be more precise, is not so labeled in any known source, it is not prose dialogue. It continues in verse—indeed, in Gilbert's

recitative verse form of *endecasillibi sciolti*—right up to Dr. Daly’s (labeled) recitative, which continues in rhymed *endecasillibi*. At some point, the four lines immediately preceding Constance’s song were cut, so that the recitative ends with the line “their cause must ne’er be known.” This cut makes nonsense of Constance’s words: She then immediately divulges the cause without provocation. In the cut lines, her mother indicates that she has divined the cause already.

Gilbert’s Strategies, Sullivan’s Solutions

The verse dialogue immediately after Constance’s song seems never to have been set to music, and perhaps it was never even sent to Sullivan to set. Gilbert may have started the project imagining something sung throughout—as *Trial by Jury* had been—only to change his mind soon thereafter. If so, he did not see any need to change this, as it reads naturally anyway. As the critic of his *Original Plays* had noted, his verse was correct “without any awkward inversion of the component parts of the sentences.” The change to rhymed verse for Dr. Daly’s soliloquy is significant: It is no longer dialogue, but rather an introduction to the song that follows. Gilbert regularly employs such a rhymed quatrain (often 11.10.11.10 with rhyme scheme ABAB, as here) as a signal of some significant but dramatically static musical number to follow. A few examples may suffice to demonstrate the pervasiveness of this usage:

RECITATIVE—SIR MARMADUKE.

Be happy all—the feast is spread before ye;
 Fear nothing, but enjoy yourselves, I pray!
 Eat, aye, and drink—be merry, I implore ye,
 For once let thoughtless Folly rule the day.
 [attacca “Tea-cup Brindisi”]

(*The Sorcerer*, act 1)

RECITATIVE—BUTTERCUP.

Hail, men-o’-war’s men—safeguards of your nation,
 Here is an end, at last, of all privation;
 You’ve got your pay—spare all you can afford
 To welcome Little Buttercup on board.
 [attacca “I’m called Little Buttercup”]
 (*H.M.S. Pinafore*, act 1)

RECITATIVE—LORD CHANCELLOR.

Love, unrequited, robs me of my rest:
 Love, hopeless love, my ardent soul encumbers:

Love, nightmare-like, lies heavy on my chest,
 And weaves itself into my midnight slumbers!
 [attacca "When you're lying awake with a dismal headache"]
 (*Iolanthe*, act 2)

RECITATIVE—HILARION.
 To-day we meet, my baby bride and I—
 But ah, my hopes are balanced by my fears!
 What transmutations have been conjured by
 The silent alchemy of twenty years!
 [attacca "Ida was a twelve-month old"]
 (*Princess Ida*, act 1)

There are many similar examples in each of the Gilbert and Sullivan works (and even examples in Sullivan's later Savoy works *Haddon Hall* and *The Beauty Stone*). In each of these instances, Gilbert indicates recitative. So far as can be determined in the earliest texts of these collaborations, statistical analysis of the verse that Gilbert—rather than Sullivan—intended as "recitative" reveals that slightly more than half of the lines form rhymed couplets or quatrains, but seldom larger structures. Roughly 30 percent of the Gilbert's recitative lines are unrhymed *endecasillabi*, and these tend to form lengthy passages. *The Sorcerer* and *The Pirates of Penzance* contain the most such lines, closely followed by the very late *Utopia Limited* (in which unrhymed recitative supplants rhymed couplets to a large extent), the early *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and *The Yeomen of the Guard* in the partnership's most successful years.⁷³ Even if Gilbert's conception of what constituted recitative broadened over the years, he was drawn to unrhymed recitative throughout his career with Sullivan. The remaining lines—slightly less than 20 percent—are generally rhymed but use mixed metrical structures, or are complicated by internal rhymes.⁷⁴ A few stray single-line interjections appear as well.

In the rhymed quatrain examples above, the effect is like a preface, calling for attention to the ensuing piece. As such, Gilbert achieves an operatic effect that was once the domain of the composer—as in eighteenth-century opera, a significant aria would be preceded by a *recitativo accompagnato* (involving the orchestra rather than just the continuo in the recitative accompaniment). The switch from *recitativo secco* to *accompagnato* would not be apparent in the verse structure of the libretto: Generally, the recitative text would continue in *versi sciolti*—although perhaps a dramatic change might be apt because of the departure of all but one character from the stage. A possible final rhyming

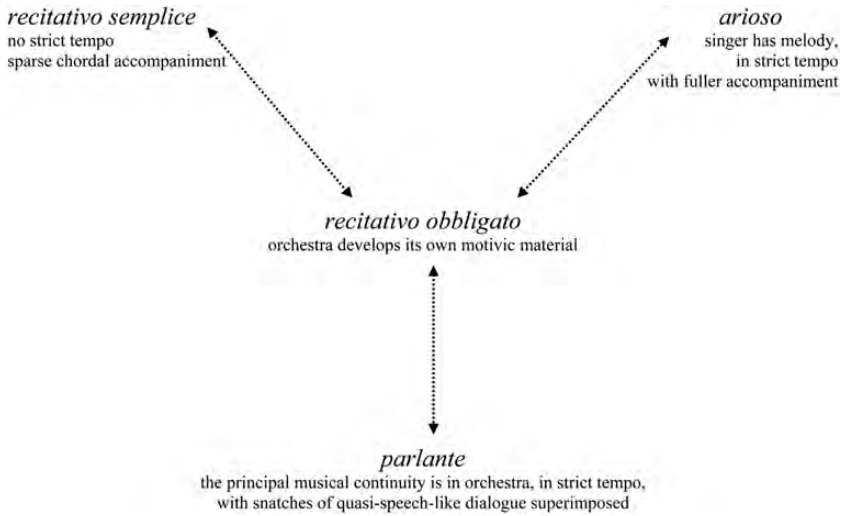


Figure 4. Typology of transitional textures.

couplet notwithstanding, the choice to change to *accompagnato* was principally in the composer's domain. As a librettist, Gilbert's tendency was to venture into the composer's territory, regardless of whether the composer would adopt his suggestions.

Sullivan's recitative settings are remarkable not for any new ground they break, but from the breadth of the styles that seem to have worked upon him. Little is known about the extent of his work as the coeditor of Boosey's series; the position may have been mainly nominal. His own scores, however, reveal a cosmopolitan range of influence, and the network of related musical textures Sullivan uses for moments that Gilbert identified as "recitative," shown in figure 4, is representative of mid-nineteenth-century European opera generally.

All of these textures may be regarded as "transitional," as they lead from dialogue or other music to some other substantial set piece. On the top left of the schema, the musical content is subordinated to a fairly straightforward delivery of the text. This is orchestral *recitativo semplice*, which from the early nineteenth century had replaced continuo *recitativo secco* as the least elaborate recitative texture. On the top right, *arioso*, the singer declaims the text to a distinct melody. Here the musical substance, though not the dominant factor, might entail repetitions of a few text phrases, and the rate of delivery depends on the coherent flow of the melody. At the bottom is a texture in which the principal musical continuity is given to the orchestra, whose material is self-sufficient. Snatches of quasi-speech-like sung dialogue are

Allegretto Recit. CAPTAIN C.

My gal-lant crew, good morn-ing!

ff

7

Chorus TENORS and BASSES I hope you're all quite well. I am in

Sir, good morn-ing! Quite well, and you, sir?

f

8^{vb}

Rhythm in first edition:

13 hap-py to

rea-son-a-ble health, And hap-py to meet you all once more.

You do us proud, sir!

p *f*

18 [a tempo]

ff

con *8^{vb}* con *8^{vb}*

The musical score is written for a vocal soloist (Captain C.) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The score is divided into four systems. The first system shows the vocal entry with the lyrics 'My gal-lant crew, good morn-ing!' and a piano accompaniment marked 'ff'. The second system features a vocal duet between the Captain and a chorus of tenors and basses, with lyrics 'I hope you're all quite well. I am in Sir, good morn-ing! Quite well, and you, sir?'. The piano accompaniment here is marked 'f' and includes '8^{vb}' markings. The third system continues the vocal dialogue with lyrics 'hap-py to rea-son-a-ble health, And hap-py to meet you all once more. You do us proud, sir!'. The piano accompaniment is marked 'p' and 'f'. The fourth system begins with a piano introduction marked '18' and '[a tempo]', featuring a 'ff' dynamic and 'con 8^{vb}' markings. The piano part includes complex chordal textures and rhythmic patterns.

Example 4. Arthur Sullivan, *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878, lib. W. S. Gilbert): no. 4, mm. 1–23.
Source: vocal score, Metzler & Co., 1878.

SIR J. PORTER

Here, take her, sir, and mind you treat her kind - ly!

5 JOSEPHINE
O bliss! O rap - ture! O bliss! O rap - ture!

RALPH
O bliss! O rap - ture! O bliss! O rap - ture!

9 SIR J.
Sad my lot and sor - ry, what shall I do? I can - not live a - lone.

12 CHORUS
What will he do? He can - not live a - lone. Fear

HEBE

Example 5. Arthur Sullivan, *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878, lib. W. S. Gilbert): no. 20a, m. 1–no. 20b, m. 3. Source: vocal score, Metzler & Co., 1878 (first edition).

14 no-thing, While I live I'll not de-sert you, I'll soothe and com-fort your de-clin-ing days.

16 SIR J. HEBE SIR J.
No, don't do that. Yes, in-deed, I'd ra-ther. To-mor-row morn our vows shall all be plight-ed,

19 FINALE
Allegro vivace
Three liv-ing pairs on the same day u-ni-ted.
[sic] [sic]

Example 5. Continued

superimposed *parlante*, a term that could be used to describe the texture as a whole.⁷⁵ At the center is *recitativo obbligato*, which puts the text delivery and musical integrity in the most complex relationship. The sung lines generally have a *semplice* character, but the accompaniment develops its own motivic material (often as interludes between sung phrases).

These types of transitional texture are not rigid, but allow great flexibility: Two or even three may be linked in quick succession in the course of just a few lines of text. Generally speaking, however, for Sullivan, these textures characterize the dramatic moment. He tends to use *obbligato* and *arioso* to explore a character's emotions; the other two

seem more impersonal and matter-of-fact, and Sullivan employs them to call attention to a significant dramatic change. Coming as a marked change after spoken dialogue or in the midst of a longer number, *recitativo semplice* is an effective device for focusing the audience's attention. Sullivan uses it as an indicator that something is about to happen, and thus it is his analogue to Gilbert's rhyming quatrains (although the two collaborators' techniques do not invariably coincide). Most of the examples of recitative in *H.M.S. Pinafore* are of this very simple type.

Example 4 gives the first entrance of Captain Corcoran in *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Sullivan begins with the orchestral ritornello of the song that is to follow ("I am the captain of the *Pinafore*"), but immediately arrests it in order to convey the recitative—in this case, four lines of *endecasillabi sciolti*—with the strings of the orchestra supplying only the sparsest punctuating chords.

Gilbert also intended the last dialogue exchanges before the act 2 finale of *H.M.S. Pinafore* to be set as recitative; Sullivan did so, although after the first night this was cut—and (with very minor changes) Gilbert's unrhymed verse text was spoken instead. As with the example above from the beginning of *The Sorcerer*, the versification is so natural that the audience—and indeed the actors speaking the lines—may not perceive a change from prose to verse, save for the final rhyming couplet. The text appears in the first-night libretto as:

Recit:

SIR JOSEPH.	Here—take her, sir, and mind you treat her kindly.	
RALPH & JOSEPHINE.	Oh bliss, oh rapture!	
SIR JOSEPH.		Sad my lot, and
	sorry,	
	What shall I do? I cannot live alone.	
ALL.	What will he do? He cannot live alone.	
HEBE.	Fear nothing—while I live I'll not desert you,	
	I'll soothe and comfort your declining days.	
SIR JOSEPH.	No, don't do that.	
HEBE.		Yes, but indeed I'd rather—
SIR JOSEPH (<i>resigned</i>).	To-morrow morn our vows shall all be plighted,	
	Three loving pairs on the same day united!	

It is impossible to say how early in the first production this recitative was replaced by spoken text; certainly by the second impression of both the printed libretto and the vocal score the change had been made. At

some point, Sullivan's setting of this text (given in ex. 5) was removed from the autograph score, but it must have been a part of the autograph when it served as the source for the 1883 German lithographed edition of the full score published by the Litolf Verlag as *Amor an Bord*.⁷⁶ Thereafter the stray leaf was lost. Sullivan made a few amendments to the text, with no attempt to preserve the regular *endecasillabo* patterns. The first edition vocal score, from which this example is derived, was produced hastily with insufficient proofreading; this recitative is riddled with errors in both music and text. As it was removed before the second impression, it was never subjected to careful correction.

The probable reason for replacing this recitative with nearly identical spoken dialogue is that Sullivan's *semplice* setting slows down the action considerably at the penultimate moment. Where the music signals "something is about to happen," the drama is already over; there remains nothing in the plot to be worked out in the finale. The last item to be resolved is the partnering of Sir Joseph with Hebe. Gilbert's inclination to have this set as recitative might have been to allow this final resolution to be worked out musically. This seems to have been part of Gilbert's initial concept of an operatic structure: *The Sorcerer* and *The Pirates of Penzance* both have the final denouement transpire as part of the through-composed finale. In *H.M.S. Pinafore*, this strategy does not work, and the composer failed to respond in a satisfactory way. Instead, the work ends with the finale tacked on as a generic moment of jubilation (with reprises of the show's hit tunes)—and this formula works well enough that it becomes Gilbert's pattern for all of his other collaborations with Sullivan except *The Yeomen of the Guard* and *The Gondoliers*. In *H.M.S. Pinafore*, the plot is resolved in the preceding number—when Little Buttercup confesses to switching the infants under her charge—and the dialogue is needed to unpack this revelation. A dramatically heightened recitative thereafter is not only superfluous but enervating, and the collaborators presumably recognized as much.

At almost the same moment that Gilbert and Sullivan were discarding the musical setting from this text, they were also rewriting a section of prose dialogue to be set musically. Significantly, this was the last exchange before Little Buttercup revealed her secret—and was thus an apt time for the music to signal "something is about to happen." Here Gilbert contrives for a return of musical material heard earlier in the act. Sir Joseph's horrified response to hearing Captain Corcoran's profanity was couched in rhyming couplets in an irregular meter:

SIR JOSEPH. My pain and my distress
I find it is not easy to express;
My amazement—my surprise—
You may learn from the expression of my eyes!

It may be significant that Gilbert apparently gave no indication that this text should be recitative, although Sullivan set it in a fairly dry style—somewhere between *arioso* (as there is a recognizable melody) and *semplice*. Moments later in the show, once sailor Ralph Rackstraw has confessed his love for Josephine and is led off in chains, Gilbert planned for a short section of spoken dialogue. In this text, Sir Joseph begins: “Josephine, I cannot tell you the distress I feel at this most painful revelation.” Both Gilbert and Sullivan recognized that this closely paralleled the early passage and could be easily rewritten to allow the musical reprise:

SIR JOSEPH. My pain and my distress
Again it is not easy to express.
My amazement, my surprise,
Again you may discover from my eyes.
ALL. How terrible the aspect of his eyes!

Little Buttercup’s original prose interjection—“Hold! I have something to say to that”—became a rhyming couplet—“Hold! Ere upon your loss you lay much stress, / A long-concealèd crime I would confess”—followed by a segue into her song “A Many Years Ago.” The effect of this change was to link the octet “Farewell, My Own” with Buttercup’s legend to form a single, more complex musical unit. This is characteristic of Gilbert’s “operatic” structuring in his works with Sullivan. The opening portion of *The Gondoliers* is often cited as a remarkable example of continuous music with no spoken dialogue, but in fact each of the early operas contains a similar prolonged section in which the plot development is manifested in the midst of lengthy musical sequences.⁷⁷

It is difficult to determine precisely when this change to *H.M.S. Pinafore* was made. The dialogue version of the exchange remained in printed libretti for the next twenty-five years and more. This notwithstanding, the revision must have occurred quite early, because even the first state of the first edition of the vocal score (the only version to contain the recitative “Here, take her, sir,” discussed above) includes the setting of the newly written “My pain and my distress.” This setting appears in Sullivan’s autograph on a bifolio with no other music; it

could have been inserted at any time. A note in Sullivan's hand reads: "This follows immediately after the last note *sung* [of the preceding octet]. The few bars for winds I wrote on Friday to be cut." As the premiere was on a Saturday, it seems almost certain that the alteration was made within the first week of the run. This revision is very likely to be what Gilbert was referring to in his diary entry for 26 May 1875 (the morning after the *Pinafore* premiere): "Put some dialogue into recit."⁷⁸

Gilbert had conceded to Sullivan the final judgment regarding "all points bearing on the musical requirements of the pieces." The large majority of Gilbert's lyrics are in regular stanzas, accommodating (but by no means necessitating) strophic settings. For songs with no particular emotional interest—particularly the "patter songs"—Sullivan tends to treat the lyrics strophically. In most numbers in which there is any emotional element in the lyrics, the composer departed at least partially from a strophic norm. Gervase Hughes has perceptively discussed the remarkable differences between the two stanzas of "Now, Marco dear, / My wishes hear" from *The Gondoliers*, and many such examples could be cited.⁷⁹ In these through-composed settings, Sullivan typically writes an entirely new melody for the second or third stanza, generally setting it in a new key, particularly if it is allotted to another character with a different vocal range. In some cases, Gilbert anticipated this,⁸⁰ but in others, the degree of freedom the composer took in interpreting the text may well have surprised the librettist. Of particular interest are moments when recitative is introduced in a text that has no corresponding metrical change in the lyrics. The strategy is rhetorically effective, as it gives particular emphasis to the words set apart from the prevailing musical scheme.

Perhaps the most skillful example of this procedure is found near the beginning of *Ruddigore*. Dame Hannah recounts the legend of the Baronets of Ruddigore, doomed by a witch's curse either to commit a crime every day or to die. Gilbert settled on a lyric of four stanzas unusual only by the asymmetrical entrances by the chorus (after only the first and fourth stanzas). The first stanza introduces the character of Sir Rupert Murgatroyd, whose pastime was persecuting witches. The second stanza recounts a particular incident:

Once, on the village green,
 A palsied hag he roasted,
 And what took place, I ween,
 Shook his composure boasted,
 For, as the torture grim
 Seized on each withered limb,

The writhing dame,
'Mid fire and flame
Yelled forth this curse on him!

Gilbert clearly recognized that any choral refrain here would delay the curse itself; but Sullivan savors the dramatic moment with a fermata on an E5 (the singer's highest note in the opera) on the word *curse*. Otherwise the music of the first two stanzas is identical. The third stanza, which consists of a direct quotation of the witch's curse, is set in the parallel major, to an entirely new melody. The fourth stanza, however, is Sullivan's masterstroke. Gilbert's lyric is laid out in exactly the same metrical scheme as the rest of the song:

The prophecy came true:
Each heir who held the title
Had, every day, to do
Some crime of import vital;
Until with guilt o'erplied,
"I'll sin no more!" he cried,
And on the day
He said that say
In agony he died!

Sullivan begins the stanza with a return of the music of the first two—suggesting an AABA pattern, with the curse as the bridge—but then makes a sharp break from the predictable form. He recognized the important change in the character of the narration at the word *until*, where the overwhelming guilt of each baronet compels them to death. Here, for Sullivan, the human element is introduced. As twice before, the melody has wandered to the relative major (G), but here he interrupts its progress with an abrupt Neapolitan chord. With a striking chromatic gambit, the accompaniment slithering step-wise into a prolonged and intensified home dominant, Hannah switches to *recitativo semplice* to relate the consequences of the curse (ex. 6).

Sullivan's setting here is so different from the rest of the song that it is only by looking at the lyrics that one can perceive that Gilbert's versification remains unchanged in all four stanzas. (Incidentally, the chromaticism of this number foreshadows Sullivan's harmonic vocabulary in the second-act melodramatic ghost scene of this "supernatural opera.")

There are many other instances where Sullivan's settings ride rough-shod over Gilbert's verse structures. Sometimes the composer's choices were determined by musical factors rather than dramatic ones. It is difficult to argue that any harm was done, although in some instances

[Andante allegretto]

69

The pro - phe - cy came true: Each heir_ who held_____ the ti - tle Had, ev - 'ry day, to

74

do Some crime of im - port vi - tal; Un - til, with guilt o'er -

78

- plied, 'I'll sin no more!' he cried, And on the day He said that say, In

83

a - - go - ny he died! And thus, with sin - ning cloyed, Has

89

died each Mur - ga - troyd; And so_ shall fall, Both one_ and all, Each com - ing Mur - ga - troyd!

p

cresc.

dim.

pp

f

Recit.

Example 6. Arthur Sullivan, *Ruddigore* (1887, lib. W. S. Gilbert): no. 2, mm. 69–95. Source: vocal score, Chappell & Co., 1887.

the composer might well have been defying the tyranny of the librettist. In the opening sequence of *The Gondoliers*, for example, Gilbert constructs an exchange of eight rhyming *endecasillabo* couplets between the assembled characters on stage, but the couplets themselves are paired (yielding a rhyme scheme AA–AA–BB–BB–CC–CC–DD–DD).

*During [the preceding] chorus ANTONIO, FRANCESCO, GIORGIO,
and other Gondoliers have entered unobserved by the Girls—
at first two, then two more, then four, then half a dozen,
then the remainder of the Chorus.*

RECITATIVE.

- FRANCESCO. Good morrow, pretty maids; for whom prepare ye
These floral tributes extraordinary?
FIAMETTA. For Marco and Giuseppe Palmieri,
The pink and flower of all the Gondolieri.
GIULIA. They're coming here, as we have heard but lately,
To choose two brides from us who sit sedately.
ANTONIO. Do all you maidens love them?
ALL. Passionately!
ANTONIO. These gondoliers are to be envied greatly!
GIORGIO. But what of us, who one and all adore you?
Have pity on our passion, I implore you!
FIAMETTA. These gentlemen must make their choice before you;
VITTORIA. In the meantime we tacitly ignore you.
GIULIA. When they have chosen two that leaves you plenty—
Two dozen we, and ye are four-and-twenty.
FIA. & VIT. Till then, enjoy your *dolce far niente*.
ANTONIO. With pleasure, nobody *contradicente*!

Gilbert labels this exchange “recitative.” It is difficult to imagine what he might have had in mind. Coming immediately after the opening chorus, such a prolonged recitative section might have mitigated against maintaining the dramatic energy through the twenty-minute musical sequence. By this time in his professional relationship with Sullivan, Gilbert trusted Sullivan’s dramatic instincts, recognizing that the mere word *recitative* would not bind the composer’s hands. Nor did it: Sullivan sets this as a *parlante* texture, with the musical coherence residing in the charming orchestral serenade in the orchestra. The regular eight-bar phrases of the serenade, however, do not coincide rhyming sections of the lyrics. Rather, the musical sense divides the lyrics against the grain. After a four-bar introduction, the rhymes are disposed in five

mismatched units: AA–AABB–BBCC–CCDD–DD. Though Sullivan’s setting undoes the structure of Gilbert’s verse, the musical compensation is the frothy energy that propels the scene forward.

In other instances, Sullivan’s setting glides over an abrupt break in the lyrics, or situates a more pronounced musical break at the more appropriate moment. In the second act of *Princess Ida*, Prince Hilarion and his two friends have stealthily invaded Castle Adamant, which houses Ida’s university for women. The trio of intruders sings “In this college / Useful knowledge / Everywhere one finds”; then they enumerate some of the lessons they have learned as they tried to gain entrance: “We’ve learned that prickly cactus / Has the power to attract us / when we fall.” After these comic exchanges, Gilbert added:

RECITATIVE.

FLORIAN. A Woman’s college! maddest folly going!
 What can girls learn within its walls worth knowing?
 I’ll lay a crown (the Princess shall decide it)
 I’ll teach them twice as much in half-an-hour outside it!
 HILARION. Hush, scoffers; ere you sound your puny thunder,
 List to their aims, and bow your head in wonder!

Gilbert’s recitative posed a challenge for Sullivan. It is a break from the preceding metrical scheme, and so suggested a change in the music; but the composer apparently wanted to reserve the biggest break for the mock-reproachful “Hush, scoffers,” and so he delays *recitativo semplice* until Hilarion’s interjection. (Indeed, Sullivan reserves even the term “*recit.*” until he twice breaks from strict tempo, and thus uses *a tempo* both times to cancel it.) Florian’s quatrain is set in *recitativo obbligato*. Although his first two lines present new material, his last two lines are accompanied by a return to the orchestral countermelody from the preceding section of the trio (ex. 7).

Another interesting instance of the composer’s creative modification of what might otherwise be straightforward is found in *Trial by Jury*. The judge’s entrance is heralded by a grand Handelian parody, Sullivan’s setting of the chorus “All hail, great judge.” This is followed by a prefatory quatrain intended to introduce his patter-song “When I, good friends, was called to the bar”:

RECITATIVE—JUDGE.

For these kind words accept my thanks, I pray.
 A Breach of Promise we’ve to try to-day.
 But firstly, if the time you’ll not begrudge,
 I’ll tell you how I came to be a judge.

57 [Allegretto con moto]
FLORIAN

A Wo-man's col-lege! mad-dest fol-ly go-ing! What can girls

learn with-in these walls worth know-ing? I'll lay a crown (the

prin-cess shall de-cide it) I'll teach them twice as much in half-an-

70 Recit. HILARION

-hour out-side it! Hush, scof-fer; ere you sound your pu-ny

74 a tempo Recit. a tempo

thun-der, List to their aims, and bow your head in won-der!

Example 7. Arthur Sullivan, *Princess Ida* (1884, lib. W. S. Gilbert): no. 12, mm. 57–77. Source: vocal score, Chappell & Co., 1884.

In the libretto deposited with the Lord Chamberlain's office, the song directly follows this recitative.⁸¹ A *recitativo semplice* setting would have sufficed (as Sullivan was to use for the four prefatory quatrains quoted above, and many similar examples). In this instance, however, he set these lines as an *arioso* in the midst of the chorus. By following the quatrain with an extended interchange between the Judge and the chorus ("He'll tell us how. . ." "I'll tell you how. . ."; "Let me speak" "Hush! hush! he speaks!"), the composer exaggerates Gilbert's digression from the court's business. What might have been an unmemorable moment became a comic highlight, and it seems to have been prompted by the composer's instinct for timing the joke.

Sullivan's Ideal?

In the middle years of the collaboration, recitative drops off precipitously. Gilbert used it very sparingly in *Patience* and *Iolanthe*, even less in *The Mikado*, and Sullivan took little initiative to produce it on his own in these works. The early works manifest Sullivan working out on the page what might have become his operatic mode of declamation. The *Trial by Jury* example above illustrates Sullivan as comedian, yet his concern for developing the characters' emotions through the music is clear in *The Sorcerer*. Example 8 is Sullivan's setting of the lengthy *endecasillabi sciolti* passage after the opening chorus.

This does not display Sullivan at his best, but his investment in these first few minutes is effective. Mrs. Partlet is given *recitativo semplice*, although arguably with hints of *obbligato*, given the nature of the orchestral introduction and interludes. Constance's reply is set to *arioso*; this is apt, as it is the first display of emotion in the work. The recitative ostensibly serves as a transition from the D major of the opening chorus to the F major of Constance's song "When he is here." Mrs. Partlet's scarcely drifts from D, and then only at the remark "You alone are said and out of spirits" (m. 14), which moves toward F; with a German augmented sixth chord (m. 16), D reasserts itself. The ensuing interlude migrates to B major, where Constance remains until measure 28. Then, via the parallel minor, Sullivan returns to D, and from thence to G minor and its relative major B-flat—all accomplished through standard fifth progressions. Constance's G-sharp in measure 41 transforms the B-flat triad into the self-same German sixth sonority, and concludes the recitative abruptly on the dominant of D. No modulation has been effected.

At this point, as has been noted above, four lines of text were deleted. Sullivan moved directly to Constance's song. "Aria" is Gilbert's

Recit. MRS P.

Con - stance, my daugh - ter, why this strange de - pres - sion?

5 The vil - lagerings with sea - son - a - ble joy, Be - cause the young and

(8) 9 a - mia - ble A - lex - is, Heir to the great Sir Mar - ma - duke Point - dex - tre, Is plight - ed to A -

10 - line, The on - ly daugh - ter of An - na - bel - la, La - dy Sang - a - zure. You, you a - lone are

13 a tempo sad and out of spi - rits; What is the rea - son? Speak, my daugh - ter, speak!

cresc.

Example 8. Arthur Sullivan, *The Sorcerer* (1877, lib. W. S. Gilbert): no. 2, m. 1–no. 2a, m. 9.
Source: vocal score, Metzler & Co., 1877.

17 *stringendo* Recit. CONSTANCE

Oh, mo-ther, do not ask! If my com -

22 *a tempo lento*

-plex-ion From red to white should change in quick suc - ces-sion, And then from white to

26

red, oh, take no no - tice! If my poor limbs should trem - ble with e - mo - tion,

31

Pay no at - ten - tion, mo - ther, it is no - thing! If long and deep-drawn sighs I

37

chance to ut - ter, Oh, heed them not, Their cause must ne'er be known!

Example 8. Continued

43 Andante

CONSTANCE

When he is

48

here, I sigh with plea - sure, When he is gone, I sigh with grief.

Example 8. Continued

word in the libretto, and this is perhaps indicative of an aspiration to a more ambitious class of work for the Comedy Opera Company; in any case, Sullivan's strophic ballad setting does not follow this lead.⁸² The introduction to the song is striking in its ambiguity: Sullivan willfully denied the audience a proper sense of either the meter or the key until the voice enters—whereupon the triple-meter F major seems mundane, capped by a pedestrian melody. If there is characterization of Constance in Sullivan's music, it is in the recitative and especially this introduction. Moreover, the introduction is repeated as a coda for the song; despite settling on a tonic chord, it leaves the sense of anxiety unresolved. After all of this, spoken dialogue comes as a relief: It can be more quickly delivered, but also seems more emotionally detached.

This example is longer than any recitative in Sullivan's earlier works; for the composer as well as the librettist, *The Sorcerer* marked a new venture into a yet-to-be-developed hybrid genre. At first this entailed intertwining old strategies of burlesque and opera rather than developing new ones. This example does not establish a model for Sullivan's subsequent work. He may have regarded it as an experiment that did not bear repeating; alternately, he may have found so much investment unnecessary, as his collaborator gradually integrated the lyrics into the drama so that the characterization could transpire

increasingly in set pieces. If Sullivan had an ideal for operatic recitative, he left little specific evidence of what his conception was. In an oft-quoted 1885 interview with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sullivan described the “opera of the future” as a mixed style that exploited the merits of French, Italian, and Wagnerian opera, while avoiding the excesses.⁸³ His vision is also recorded in his 9 January 1889 diary account of a conversation with Gilbert:

Explained . . . that I wanted to do some dramatic work on a larger musical scale, and that of course I should like to do it with him if he would but that the music must occupy a more important position than in our other pieces—that I wished to get rid of the *strongly marked rhythm* and *rhymed couplets*, and have words that would give a chance of developing musical effects. He seemed quite to assent to this.⁸⁴

Sullivan apparently felt that Gilbert’s librettos took too much of a lead in making musical decisions a priori. Gilbert’s “assent” was not consent; he wrote to Sullivan a few weeks later declining such a project, but suggesting Julian Sturgis as “the best serious librettist of the day.”⁸⁵ Sullivan asked Sturgis to assemble a libretto based on Walter Scott’s novel *Ivanhoe*, and Sturgis complied. Sullivan billed the work as “A Romantic Opera,” and in many ways, it shows the sort of eclectic musical influence that he said would be the future of opera. *Ivanhoe* is in no way an “opera of the future.” Had it appeared in 1861, it would have been a giant leap forward in English opera;⁸⁶ that it was composed three decades later seemed only to confirm to the most astute observers that Sullivan’s long career in the Savoy stable and producing works for the provincial choral festivals had left him out of touch with contemporary developments in the international operatic scene. (In his editorial role with Boosey’s Royal Edition, Sullivan had published no opera more recent than Gounod’s 1864 *Mireille*.)

Given, however, that Sullivan finally had a free hand in the construction of the libretto, *Ivanhoe*’s conservative versification corresponds with the conservative approach to the music. Sturgis’s libretto is mainly in blank verse, but also with a fair bit of iambic tetrameter, and with shorter lines at moments of dynamic stage action. “[Sturgis] gives way to considerable irregularity without apparent reason” was the assessment of *The Musical Times*.⁸⁷ Generally rhyme is reserved for the distinct metrical structures setting apart the intended set-pieces. This scheme allowed the composer maximum flexibility, but also challenged him to maintain the interest mainly through the music. This he accomplished with only indifferent success. Although there are not many discrete set-pieces in

the opera, many are so set apart from the prevailing texture (with concluding cadence and pause) that the piece can seem like a “number opera” prolonged by very lengthy transitions. All four of Sullivan’s transitional textures appear, but there is a much greater reliance on *obbligato* and *parlante* textures (both of which facilitate motivic recall and development in the orchestra). Sullivan seems to reach his “Romantic opera” ideal in the scenes with only a few characters on stage, where the music develops as a continuous duet (act 1, scene 2 and act 2, scene 3 particularly); but it is a cruel irony that the portion of the work most appreciated by the public at large was the comic scene that begins act 2. The scene was praised by the *Times*, but with the added grumble that it was the work’s “single tribute paid to the ears of the groundlings.”⁸⁸ Although there is no spoken dialogue, Sullivan’s treatment is closest to the extended musical passages of his “Savoy” style—and thus more immediately accessible to the “groundlings.” In the scene, Friar Tuck offers his hospitality to the disguised King Richard near St. Dunstan’s well, and a singing competition evolves into a hand-to-hand duel, interrupted by a call-to-arms. The whole scene comprises 563 measures. Of this, the orchestra has a 56-measure introduction and two substantial interludes that account for another 88 measures; the two stage songs of the competition (“I ask nor wealth nor courtier’s praise” and “Ho, jolly Jenkin”) together amount to 190 measures. The remainder—amounting to 40 percent of the scene—is a fluid mixture of *obbligato*, *semplice*, and *parlante* textures.

Ivanhoe may be imperfectly realized, but the libretto must represent the closest approximation to Sullivan’s vision for opera. The plot demands a considerable amount of stage action, leaving Sturgis little room for the characters’ emotional reflection; thus the comparative scarcity of lyrical set-pieces. Sullivan was compelled to realize the drama mainly through musical styles he was most accustomed to employing in transitional moments. These could be highly successful in the Savoy Operas, where they were thrown into high relief by the spoken dialogue; in *Ivanhoe* such textures posed a significant challenge for the composer, struggling to maintain musical interest throughout. His most palpable success was therefore with the material to which he had grown accustomed. Although *Ivanhoe* act 2, scene 1 seemed too light and popular for English grand opera to some initial reviewers, the comedy of the scene accords with Sullivan’s long-stated desire to set “humourous words . . . in a humourous (not serious) situation.” Perhaps this scene, with its vibrant mixture of musical textures, should be regarded as his ideal Savoy Opera moment—albeit not intended for the Savoy.⁸⁹

As the collaboration between Gilbert and Sullivan broke apart in the 1890s, recitative survived (in diminishing quantities) in their collaborations with others for the Savoy and similar venues. Thereafter, it soon disappeared entirely—both in librettists' intentions and in composers' realizations. Savoy Opera was succeeded in the 1890s by musical comedy, a style that interspersed song-and-dance routines within the action. It had no need for conventional, old-fashioned recitative to arrest the action. Indeed, recitative had become old-fashioned in opera; and even verse as the default expressive mode in the libretto was waning—with Debussy, Richard Strauss, Mascagni, and others turning to prose libretti.⁹⁰ In the popular theater, the artificial heightened declamation that recitative embodied was no longer desirable.

What has remained unrecognized is that the many varieties of recitative structures (Gilbert) and textures (Sullivan) manifested in their works were essential to the style they cultivated—and was briefly taken up by other collaborators. The demise of recitative at the turn of the century precipitated the ossification of Savoy Opera even more intensely than the deaths of Sullivan (1900) and Gilbert (1911). The genre could no longer survive as a living tradition; rather, it became a fixed object that could itself be referenced and misunderstood, appropriated and misappropriated, and made the subject of homage and parody—in exactly the way Gilbert or Sullivan had exploited parallels with early nineteenth-century Italian and French operas or Handelian heroism, or English pastoralism.⁹¹ Although the blame for this ossification has been laid on the staid and scrupulous performances of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, which jealously guarded the Gilbert and Sullivan copyrights,⁹² it will not suffice to explain the sudden disappearance of imitators in the Savoy style. Victor Herbert was perhaps the last to try to employ similar means to captivate the same audience that had gathered around the Savoy premieres (albeit in America), and even he set this aside to follow the new fashion.

Several decades later, Ralph Vaughan Williams, then in his fifties, attempted his overt homage to Savoy Opera, *The Poisoned Kiss*. It was composed in the late 1920s without a commission, and it remained unperformed until 1936. It was then published by Oxford University Press, but it proved unmarketable. Hubert Foss, head of the OUP music department, continued to promote it:

It is described in the printed score as a "Romantic Extravaganza." It is far more than this—it is a farce with music, but not a farce of the conventional kind. It can be compared to *The Sorcerer* of Gilbert [&] Sullivan, but the love interest is far stronger, there is much more

romance, and it does not “date” to a particular period. This is a fairy story Ruritania: in fact, it has been described as a fairy story for grown-ups, and has been suggested as a kind of annual Christmas show, like “Where the Rainbow Ends” but for an adult public.⁹³

(Foss’s claim that the work “does not ‘date’” was short-sighted in the extreme; the original version of the work now seems very much a period piece, and as such it now wears rather better than the 1957 revision in which the original prose dialogue was discarded and replaced with rhyming couplets devised by Ursula Vaughan Williams.) The description “Romantic Extravaganza” usefully blurs the generic boundaries it straddles. Several months into the project, Vaughan Williams wrote to his librettist Evelyn Sharp about the nature of the work they were trying to produce. This was Sharp’s first experience writing a libretto, and he felt she needed instruction:

We’ve really got to make up our minds whether this is to be a musical comedy or real comic opera. In musical comedy (or ballad opera) the music is purely incidental, i.e. the music c^d be left out and the drama w^d remain intact. In comic opera at certain points (usually the finale) the drama is carried on through the music—the only difference this makes to the librettist is that in certain places the drama goes on in verse & not in prose—& usually in short sentences not long songs.⁹⁴

Subsequently, the composer made clear that a comic opera was what he intended to write, and the novice librettist followed his instructions. If by “short sentences” Vaughan Williams was asking for verse appropriate for recitative, he did not get much of it, and much of that he decided to have spoken over music.

The initial reviews in the nonspecialist magazines and newspapers recognized the Savoy Opera aspirations of the composer. For the *Eastern Daily Press*, it was “a most promising beginning of another tradition comparable to that of the Savoy operas.” According to *The Spectator*, the “successor to Sullivan, who has been lacking to the theatre for the past generation, has surprisingly appeared in the person of the composer of ‘Job’ and the Symphony in F minor,” and the *Birmingham Post* recorded that “Dr. Vaughan Williams’ score is fascinating, enjoying himself with music [he] can be gently funny. Vaughan Williams now gently pulls Sullivan’s shapely leg.”⁹⁵

Perhaps the most significant reason that the piece did not succeed was that there was simply no market for ersatz Savoy Opera, a genre whose time had come and gone. Another important reason is that, unlike Sullivan, Vaughan Williams’s own musical voice could not be

(90) [ANGELICA] (*She yawns and stretches herself wearily*) E *senza misura*

How bored I am in this en-chant-ed for-est!

94 What chance has a-ny girl of be-ing court-ed here? To serve his vast-ly o-ver-rat-ed daugh-ter

(95) By Dip-sa-cus I was trans-port-ed here, And now, a-mong my ma-ny un-paid du-ties

(96) I must con-coct all kinds of poi-son mix-tures, and feed her pam-pered rep-tile pets, in-

[Bar-line in AUT] [Bar-line lacking in AUT]

97 -stead of go-ing ev-'ry eve-ning to the pic-tures!_____

Example 9. Ralph Vaughan Williams, *The Poisoned Kiss* (1927–29, lib. Evelyn Sharp): no. 3, mm. 90–98. Sources: vocal score, Oxford University Press, 1936; autograph score, BL: Add. Mss. 50412. “The Poisoned Kiss,” music by Ralph Vaughan Williams and libretto by Evelyn Sharp. © Oxford University Press 1936. Revised edition © 1981. Extract reproduced by permission. All rights reserved.

moderated enough to fit within such a narrowly circumscribed style, and the result is a curious mixture of incompatible characteristics. Nowhere is this more obvious than his recitatives, which float above drone pitches. Example 9 comes from the midst of Angelica's first song, as she pauses to complain about her mistress Tormentilla. The *senza misura* indication is necessary in order to derive anything speech-like from the rhythm notated, although Sullivan displays similar disregard for the tyranny of the bar line in the sections he labels as "recitative," as examples 5 and 8 illustrate.

Sullivan was willing to interrupt a song with a recitative for dramatic effect, as in the *Ruddigore* example above, but Angelica's shift here has no such justification. Vaughan Williams seems to have been prompted merely by the problem of the irregular meter of text that does not fit into the musical ideas on either side. In his contemporaneous *Riders to the Sea*, the musical declamation is superbly innovative—like *Pelléas et Mélisande*, a "play set to music." The few recitatives of *The Poisoned Kiss*, however, flounder.⁹⁶

As putative Savoy Opera, *The Poisoned Kiss* suffers from being the brainchild of a composer only; he engaged his librettist with too clear an idea of what he wanted, expecting the librettist to supply the catalyst. For Vaughan Williams, *The Poisoned Kiss* was a "labour of love,"⁹⁷ but for Sharp it was mainly an interesting opportunity to try a different sort of a project alongside a great composer. There was little creative tension, and certainly no warring about how to make the work persuasive on its own terms.⁹⁸ In the jousting between Sullivan and Gilbert, however, the tension is manifest throughout the works. Their recitatives—and the mismatched intentions, sometimes, of the librettist and the composer—demonstrate the composer as dramatic thinker as much as they show the librettist making his own musical decisions. The latter point is perhaps the real surprise. Clearly, the operatic nature of Gilbert's libretti goes well beyond plot into structural elements and prosody. The significance of recitative for both the composer and the librettist has been underestimated.

When Gilbert was awarded a knighthood in 1907, he complained that the newspaper account described him as a "playwright"—a craftsman—rather than as a "dramatist," which he felt would have better captured the artistic nature of his role.⁹⁹ Certainly, Gilbert earned both labels, but neither encompasses the particular skills and sensibilities he employed in his work with Sullivan. It is time that he be recognized as a *librettist* in the truest (and not just the incidental) sense.

Notes

James Brooks Kuykendall is an associate professor of Music at Erskine College, Due West, South Carolina. He received his PhD from Cornell University. His publications have focused on British music c. 1860–1960. He has edited two volumes of orchestral works for the *William Walton Edition* (OUP) and is currently working on a larger study of Walton's compositional process. E-mail: jbrooksk@gmail.com.

This essay originated in a presentation for the English-Speaking Union (Jacksonville, Florida) in April 2010. Expanded versions were presented at the fourth biennial meeting of the North American British Music Studies Association (Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa) in July 2010, the eighth biennial conference for Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain (Queen's University, Belfast) in July 2011, and at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society (San Francisco) in November 2011. For their comments, encouragement, and answers to my queries, I am grateful to Byron Adams, Ian Bradley, Ronald Broude, David Eden, David Russell Hulme, Steven Ledbetter, David Lloyd-Jones, William Parry, David Rosen, Julian Rushton, Meinhard Sarembe, Christopher Scheer, Marc Shepherd, Benedict Taylor, and Nicholas Temperley.

1. In addition to the stage works, Gilbert adapted the libretto for Sullivan's "sacred musical drama" *The Martyr of Antioch* for the 1880 Leeds Festival. Sullivan's songs also include three of Gilbert's texts: "The Distant Shore" (1874), "The Love That Loves Me Not" (1875), and "Sweethearts" (1875).
2. For a reappraisal of Sullivan's generic influence, see Martin Yates, "Men of the Theatre—Arthur Sullivan and Benjamin Britten," in *Sullivan Perspektiven—Arthur Sullivans Opern, Kantaten, Orchester- und Sakralmusik*, ed. Albert Gier, Meinhard Sarembe, and Benedict Taylor (Essen, Germany: Oldib-Verlag, 2012), 315–34.
3. On this confusion generally, see Karl Gänzl, *The British Musical Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 1:v.
4. On the turbulent history of the Comedy Opera Company, see Michael Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130–95. A single review of *The Sorcerer* employs "comedy-opera" to designate its genre; see the perceptive but anonymous review in *Monthly Musical Record* (1 January 1878): 8.
5. H. F. Frost, "Music—Opéra Comique Theatre—"The Sorcerer,"" *The Academy* (24 November 1877).
6. Gilbert regularly used the adjective *original* to describe works even transparently modeled on those of others. In his first published book of plays (which employs *original* in the title), he appends the following disclaimer: "It has been generally held, I believe, that if a dramatist uses the mere outline of an existing story for dramatic purposes, he is at liberty to describe his play as 'original.'" W. S. Gilbert, *Original Plays*, U.S. ed., first series (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, & Co., 1876), [5].
7. On the target demographics Carte intended to attract to the Savoy, see Regina B. Oost, *Gilbert and Sullivan: Class and the Savoy Tradition, 1875–1896* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 15–33, passim.
8. On these later works, see William Parry, "Identity Crisis and the Search for English Opera: The Savoy Theatre in the 1890s," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, ed. David Eden and Meinhard Sarembe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

University Press, 2009), 22–35. The early chronicle of the wider Savoy repertory is S. J. Adair Fitz-Gerald, *The Story of the Savoy Opera: A Record of Events and Productions* (London: S. Paul & Co., 1924).

9. Sullivan's diary entry for 29 January 1884; quoted in Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 226.

10. Sullivan to Carte, 28 March 1884; quoted in Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 230.

11. Sullivan to Gilbert, 2 April 1884; quoted in Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 230.

12. Percy Fitzgerald, *The Savoy Opera and the Savoyards* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1894), 206f.

13. Unsigned review, "Music. The Week. Savoy Theatre—'Iolanthe,'" *The Athenæum* (2 December 1882): 743.

14. Gilbert to Sullivan, 31 March 1889; quoted in Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 291.

15. Sullivan to Gilbert, 27 March 1889; quoted in Arthur Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1992), 290.

16. Reginald Allen, *The First-Night Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York: Heritage Press, 1958), xviii. The libretto of *The Pirates of Penzance* was not published until many months after the premiere(s); consequently, Allen resorts to philological gymnastics to posit a "first night" text.

17. Allen, *The First-Night Gilbert and Sullivan*, xvi.

18. David Russell Hulme, ed., *Ruddigore* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000), ix. See also Ronald Broude, "The Gilbert & Sullivan Critical Edition and the Full Scores That Never Were," *Textual Cultures* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 71–89, esp. 82.

19. See, for example, David A. Randall, "Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* and *Princess Ida*," in *W. S. Gilbert: A Century of Scholarship and Commentary*, ed. John Bush Jones (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 257–72; J. B. Jones, "The Printing of *The Grand Duke*: Notes Toward a Gilbert Bibliography," in *W. S. Gilbert: A Century of Scholarship and Commentary*, 273–84; and, more recently, Hal Kanthor, "Collecting American Librettos," Gilbert & Sullivan Web Archive, http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/articles/american_librettos/librettos.pdf.

20. New York and Williamstown, MA: Broude Bros., 1994–present. This project is a massive undertaking. To date, the only publications have been *Trial by Jury* (ed. Steven Ledbetter, 1994), *H.M.S. Pinafore* (ed. Percy M. Young, 2003), and *Iolanthe* (ed. Gerald Hendrie, in press), together with a separate issue reconstructing a discarded number from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, "Reflect, My Child" (ed. Bruce I. Miller and Helga Perry, 1999).

21. "Collaborating with Sir Arthur Sullivan: A Chat with Mr. W. S. Gilbert," *Cassell's Saturday Journal* (21 March 1894): 522; see also his description in "How They Write Their Plays: Mr. W.S. Gilbert," *St. James's Gazette*, 23 June 1893, 5.

22. Harry How, "Illustrated Interviews, no. IV—Mr W. S. Gilbert," *The Strand Magazine* 2 (October 1891): 337.

23. British Library (henceforth BL), Add. Ms. 49300, Gilbert Papers, vol. XII, ff. 1–88.
24. For an examination of the preproduction text of *Utopia (Limited)*, see John Wolfson, *Final Curtain: The Last Gilbert and Sullivan Operas* (London: Chappell & Co., 1976), 111–207.
25. Andrew Crowther goes so far as to suggest that, in this instance, “If Gilbert and Sullivan were working on the opera together in the same room, words and music may have in places been composed more or less simultaneously.” See Crowther, *Gilbert of Gilbert & Sullivan: His Life and Character* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: History Press, 2011), 151.
26. This manuscript is in the Morgan’s Gilbert and Sullivan Collection, lacking a shelf mark. The most complete published description of it is in Reginald Allen, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Composer & Personage* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1975), 105; illustration, 101.
27. Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life Story, Letters, and Reminiscences* (Chicago and New York: Herbert S. Stone, 1900), 105.
28. Gilbert’s “operetta” of the same name was published in *Fun* on 11 April 1868. See W. S. Gilbert, *The Bab Ballads*, ed. James Ellis (Cambridge, MA: Harvard/Belknap Press, 1970), 157–59, 340.
29. Nonetheless, the licensing copy of the libretto deposited at the Lord Chamberlain’s office lacks some songs in the final version, so it is clear that the text read to Sullivan was still subject to some alteration during composition. Differences between the licensing copy and the text of Sullivan’s autograph are scrutinized in Steven Ledbetter, “*Trial’s* Tribulations,” in *The Creative Process, Studies in the History of Music* (New York: Broude Bros., 1992), 3:217–46.
30. Steven Ledbetter, ed., *Trial by Jury, Gilbert & Sullivan: The Operas* (New York: Broude Bros., 1994), 1:157. This edition presents as its main text the version of the 1884 revival, hence the significance of the third edition of the libretto.
31. Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 220–22.
32. For Sullivan’s celebrated discussion of text setting, particularly his exploration of various rhythmic treatments of the same lyric, see Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan*, 224.
33. Gilbert to Sullivan, 30 March 1884; quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 194.
34. Gilbert to Sullivan, 5 May 1884; quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 197.
35. Gilbert to Sullivan, 5 May 1884; quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 198.
36. On librettist/composer relationships in Italian opera in the nineteenth century (and the textual consequences thereof), see Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 33–48.
37. Sullivan to Gilbert, 1 April 1884, quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 194.

38. BL, Add. Ms. 49298, Gilbert Papers, vol. X, f. 56.
39. *The Gondoliers*, ed. David Lloyd-Jones (London: Eulenburg, 1984), xii, xxviii.
40. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Gilbert's libretti are taken from Allen, *The First-Night Gilbert and Sullivan* (in turn derived from early printed libretti). Typographical idiosyncrasies of these quotations are reproduced here; while the printed libretti are more standardized, the manuscript sources exhibit considerable variety in format.
41. For an extensive discussion of the collaborative genesis of *The Gondoliers*, see Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 294–301.
42. Wolfson, *Final Curtain*, 9–33, 67–82; Jane W. Stedman, *W. S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 211–20; and Stedman, "The Genesis of *Patience*," *Modern Philology* 66, no. 1 (1968): 48–58 (repr. in Jones, *W. S. Gilbert: A Century of Scholarship*, 285–313, but now more widely available in electronic form in its original source); and Crowther, *Gilbert of Gilbert & Sullivan*, 157–71.
43. British Library, Add. MS 49304, Gilbert Papers, vol. XVI, ff. 48–69. This source is transcribed and analyzed in Stedman, "The Genesis of *Patience*."
44. Ellis, *The Bab Ballads*, 120–21, 333–34.
45. See, for example, the two options for the trio "How say you maiden" from *The Yeomen of the Guard*, reproduced in Leslie Bailey, *The Gilbert & Sullivan Book* (London: Cassell & Co., 1952), 288. Moreover, although the letter reproduced there includes the text that Sullivan set, the text of the first-night libretto provides a third version; see Allen, *The First-Night Gilbert and Sullivan*, 322. This shows Gilbert at his most compliant. If Sullivan had his share of frustrations working with Gilbert, his 1898 collaboration with Arthur Pinero and J. Comyns Carr, *The Beauty Stone*, proved to be the most difficult working experience. Sullivan wrote: "Both Pinero and Carr, gifted and brilliant men, with no experience in writing for music, and yet obstinately declining to accept any suggestion from me, as to form and construction. Told them that the musical construction of the piece is capable of great improvement, but they declined to alter. 'Quod scripsi, scripsi,' they both say." Quoted in Herbert Sullivan and Newman Flower, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: His Life, Letters, and Diaries* (London: Cassell, 1927), 245.
46. On Gilbert's early works, see Stedman, *W. S. Gilbert*; and Andrew Crowther, *Contradiction Contradicted: The Plays of W. S. Gilbert* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000). On these genres generally, see Michael R. Booth, ed., *English Plays of the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 5: *Pantomimes, Extravaganzas, and Burlesques* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1976), 1–63.
47. Late in life, Gilbert claimed, "A blank verse play appeals most powerfully to me, because in every line I am doing all I know. In writing prose plays one is apt to let the pen be carried away by comedy scenes. When you have got to put everything into iambic form and to remember the high-sounding and grandiose conditions of blank verse you must honestly put your best into it. Blank verse always takes the best work out of me." See "Interview with Mr. W. S. Gilbert: The Press, the Play, and the Players," *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 5 October 1897, 2.
48. Unsigned review, "Mr. Gilbert as Dramatist," *The Theatre*, 26 June 1877; repr. in Jones, *W. S. Gilbert: A Century of Scholarship*, 7–16, quote on 10. Gilbert's friend William Archer was more direct: "As a rule they are correctly enough measured off into

ten syllables, but there is not one whose cadence lingers in the memory." William Archer, *English Dramatists of Today* (1882), repr. in Jones, W. S. *Gilbert: A Century of Scholarship*, 17–49, quote on 28.

49. Warne's *Christmas Annual* (1866), 50.

50. See, for example, Alan Fischler, "Gilbert and Donizetti," *Opera Quarterly* 11 (1994): 29–42; and Audrey Williamson, *Gilbert and Sullivan Opera: An Assessment*, 2nd ed. (London: Marion Boyars, 1982).

51. James Brooks Kuykendall, "Motives and Methods in Sullivan's Allusions," in Eden and Saremba, *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, 122–35.

52. Stedman, W. S. *Gilbert*, 56.

53. Reproduced in Frederic Woodbridge Wilson, *An Introduction to the Gilbert and Sullivan Operas* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1989), 15.

54. Sullivan's diary, 30 December 1879; quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 137.

55. BL, Add. Ms. 49318, Gilbert Papers, vol. XXX, f. 65b.

56. On Reed and his company, see Jane W. Stedman, ed., *Gilbert before Sullivan: Six Comic Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1–51.

57. "Vernacular" is significant, as English opera employed spoken dialogue primarily. When Michael Balfe translated his *The Bohemian Girl* (1843) into Italian as *La Zingara* (1858) for production at Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, he was obliged to supply recitatives in place of all the spoken dialogue. See Michael Hurd, "Opera: 1834–1865," in *The Athlone History of Music in Britain*, vol. 5: *The Romantic Age: 1800–1914*, ed. Nicholas Temperley (London: Athlone, 1981), 315.

58. Concerning recitative in English opera, see George Biddlecombe, *English Opera from 1834 to 1864 with Particular Reference to the Works of Michael Balfe* (New York: Garland, 1994), 51f. Recitative in lighter Victorian musical theater has not been a subject of intense study; my own survey suggests that it was more prominent in works that intentionally spoofed Continental operatic traditions. Like Gilbert and Clay's *Ages Ago*, Burnand and Sullivan's *Cox and Box* (1867) is a case in point.

59. See Yopie Prins, "Victorian Meters," in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 89–113; also Derek Attridge, "Classical Meters in Modern Languages," in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, 4th ed., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 202–4.

60. Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 21.

61. Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 253.

62. Edith A. Browne, *W. S. Gilbert* (London: John Lane, 1907), 9.

63. Gilbert to Archer, 5 October 1904; quoted in Crowther, *Contradiction Contradicted*, 136.

64. In the exceptionally small literature on Gilbert's prosody, most notable is Robert Fink, "Rhythm and Text-Setting in *The Mikado*" in *19th-Century Music* 14 (1990): 31–47. Wren, in *A Most Ingenious Paradox*, covers aspects of text-setting sporadically

throughout. See also Jeffrey Kresky, “A Note on Gilbert by Sullivan” on the Gilbert and Sullivan Web Archive, <http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/articles/kresky/kresky.htm>.

65. It is the rhyme—which Gilbert invariably begins with the last accented syllable—that establishes that Gilbert is regarding “General” in Mabel’s last line to have its prosodic accent on the final syllable; if he had meant “Gen-er-al” (as set by Sullivan), the corresponding rhyme would have had to account for the entire word.

66. Derek Attridge, *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 103.

67. Bernard Richards, *English Poetry of the Victorian Period, 1830–1890* (London: Longman, 1988), 84.

68. For Gilbert’s most extreme triple rhymes, see “Something like Nonsense Verses” (1865), in Ellis, *The Bab Ballads*, 55; and for a Gilbertian recitative consisting entirely of rhymed *endecasillabi sdruccioli* couplets, see “O luck unequalled” in *The Mountebanks* (1892, with music by Alfred Cellier).

69. For a useful summary of operatic prosody, see Julian Budden, *The Operas of Verdi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 2:17–19; for broader treatments, see Christopher Kleinhenz, “Italian Prosody,” in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 651–54; and Giuseppe Sangirardi and Francesco de Rosa, *Breve guida all metrica Italiana* (Milan, Italy: Sansoni, 2002), 6–13, 45–48, and 146–49.

70. T. V. F. Brogan and Edward R. Weismiller, “Blank Verse,” in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 137f.

71. A thorough statistical analysis for early literature is Philip W. Timberlake, *The Feminine Ending in English Blank Verse* (Menasha: [author], 1931).

72. Without rhyme, it is impossible to prove that this is not a *nonario sdrucciolo* line (“hope-less-ly”). Gilbert’s strict adherence to the line lengths for the rest of the passage makes a single *nonario* unlikely.

73. The line counts are based on the printed libretti and do not include verses apparently not set by Sullivan; for example, the unrhymed recitative of Luiz and Casilda intended for *The Gondoliers*, quoted above. Two instances of lengthy unrhymed recitative verse by other librettists working with Sullivan should be mentioned. The longest is a twenty-six-line unrhymed recitative in *The Beauty Stone*—“Who stands within?”—with libretto by Carr and Pinero. This passage is in standard Victorian blank verse rather than Gilbertian *endecasillabi*; nonetheless, as a lengthy example of unrhymed verse recitative it is remarkable. Intriguingly, a few of Basil Hood’s recitative texts in *The Rose of Persia* and *The Emerald Isle* include short passages in unrhymed *endecasillabi*—the only unambiguous instances by another Savoy librettist.

74. For example, from *Iolanthe*, act 1, “Nay, tempt me not. / To rank I’ll not be bound: / In lowly cot / Alone is virtue found!”—which might be parsed as two ten-syllable lines, but Gilbert lays it out as 4.6.4.6. Gilbert seems have been punctilious with his syllable counting, so that when a line within an otherwise consistent structure fails to scan an alteration is likely to have been made by the composer. Thus, in the second act of *The Pirates of Penzance*, the meter is compromised by a fragment not set by Sullivan (here shown with strike-through):

RECITATIVE—GENERAL

Then Frederic, let your escort lion-**hearted**
 Be summoned to receive a general's **blessing**
 Ere they depart upon their dread **adventure**.

FREDERIC. Dear sir, they come!

ALL.

Good luck! they bear them bravely

75. An outstanding example in the Savoy Operas is in the act 1 finale of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. The twenty lines of *endecasillabi sciolti* beginning "Leonard! / I beg your pardon? / Don't you know me?" is parlante throughout. On parlante as a texture, see Joseph Kerman, *Opera as Drama* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 136–39.

76. Recent editions that include Sullivan's recitative setting are *H.M.S. Pinafore in Full Score*, ed. Carl Simpson and Ephraim Hammett Jones (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2002), 232; and Percy M. Young, ed., *H.M.S. Pinafore, Gilbert & Sullivan: The Operas*, vol. 3 (New York: Broude Bros., 2003), A:318–21 and B:72.

77. Not counting the sometimes lengthy first-act finales, examples include *The Sorcerer*, act 2, beginning at "I rejoice that it's decided" (193 lines); *H.M.S. Pinafore*, act 2, beginning at "Carefully on tiptoe stealing" (103 lines); *The Pirates of Penzance*, act 1, beginning at "Stop, ladies, pray!" (216 lines); *Patience*, act 1, beginning at "In a doleful train" (50 lines); *Iolanthe*, act 1, beginning at "My well-loved Lord and Guardian dear" (109 lines). By comparison, the opening scene of *The Gondoliers* runs for 240 lines set to music before any dialogue is spoken.

78. Quoted in Young, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, B:17–18. Young does not reach the same conclusion.

79. Gervase Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan* (London: Macmillan, 1960), 32f.

80. See Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 203, regarding the contrapuntal trio "I am so proud" in *The Mikado*; and Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography*, 297ff, concerning Gilbert's adjustments to "In a contemplative fashion" in *The Gondoliers*.

81. See Ledbetter, "Trial's Tribulations," 231.

82. Gilbert's used this word previously on only two occasions: in "Columbus dear, thy knock I hear" in *Ages Ago* (1869) and "With a sense of deep emotion" in *Trial by Jury*. As here, in neither of these cases was the usage apt.

83. "A Talk with the Composer of 'Pinafore.'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 22 July 1885. The interview is quoted *in extenso* on http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/sullivan/interviews/cpsr_pf.html.

84. Sullivan diary, 9 January 1889; quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 287.

85. Gilbert to Sullivan, 20 February 1889; quoted in Jacobs, *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian Musician*, 288.

86. A similar observation was made by the *Times* when Thomas Beecham briefly revived the opera in 1910: "To be archaic is to be interesting, but to be merely old-

fashioned is a sin for which there is no forgiveness." Unsigned review (very likely Ernest Walker), "Royal Opera: 'Ivanhoe,'" *Times*, 9 March 1910.

87. Unsigned review, "Ivanhoe," *Musical Times* 32 (1 March 1891): 150.

88. Unsigned review, "The Royal English Opera-House: 'Ivanhoe,'" *Times*, 2 February 1891.

89. It should be noted that Fuller Maitland, in his fierce obituary article on Sullivan, praises this scene among others as "in the vein of true music-drama," although he takes exception to Richard's "very feeble ballad." J. A. Fuller Maitland, "Sir Arthur Sullivan," *Cornhill Magazine* 10 (1901): 300–9, quote on 308.

90. See Hugh MacDonald, "The Prose Libretto," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1 (1989): 155–66.

91. Raymond Knapp hesitates to cite the "influence" of the Gilbert and Sullivan works on the American musical, preferring instead to speak of their "legacy." Thus, individual aspects of the Savoy Operas are replicated in various ways in subsequent works (for different reasons); the tradition is thus gone but not forgotten. See Knapp, "How great thy charm, thy sway how excellent!": Tracing Gilbert and Sullivan's Legacy on the American Musical," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert and Sullivan*, 201–15. For an even-handed intellectual perspective of the Savoy tradition in the 1920s, see Horace Shipp, "Upon Gilbert and Sullivan and 'Do-It-Again-Daddy-ism,'" *The Sackbut* 4 (1923–24): 244–46.

92. For example, Ian Bradley, *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture: The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 27–52.

93. Foss to Laurie Phillips, 16 August 1940, OUP Music Dept., file 1106, reproduced by permission of the Secretary to the Delegates of Oxford University Press. Foss resigned from his position at OUP in November 1941, leaving *The Poisoned Kiss* with no in-house champions, but the same file includes correspondence from July and August 1943 recording that Foss was still trying to mount a production and was negotiating with the Press on what terms this might be done. Concerning Foss and his work at OUP, see Duncan Hinnells, *An Extraordinary Performance: Hubert Foss, Music Publishing, and the Oxford University Press* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998).

94. Vaughan Williams to Sharp, 18 August 1927; in Hugh Cobbe, ed., *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams 1895–1958* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 156.

95. All of these are excerpted in a collection of press reviews in the archive of the OUP Music Dept., file 1106.

96. Edmund Rubbra noted this discrepancy in "The Later Vaughan Williams," *Music & Letters* 18 (1937): 1–8, esp. 6. A closer example to a nouveau-Savoy recitative style, perhaps, would be those in Britten's *Albert Herring* (1947).

97. Vaughan Williams described the project thus in a letter to Sharp dated 23 July, probably 1930 (BL, Ms Mus 161, f. 90). In his "Musical Autobiography" (1950), the composer recalled that "I never showed [Gustav Holst] my comic opera, because he never would have been able to understand how I could at the same time consider it trivial and yet want to write it." Quoted in Hubert Foss, *Ralph Vaughan Williams: A Study* (London: George G. Harrop, 1950), 18–38; quote on 38. In fact, in his youth, Holst had attempted his own Savoy-style piece, the operetta *Lansdowne Castle* (1893).

98. Vaughan Williams gave Sharp much advice—even specific request for the lyrics, frequently qualifying his suggestions with remarks like “I don’t want you to be fettered in any way—I believe the best method is for me to make hay of your words *after* you have written them.” Letter to Sharp, 18 August 1927; quoted in Cobbe, *Letters of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, 156.

99. Stedman, *W. S. Gilbert*, 328.