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Sullivan's verse-ensemble forms

Bei einem Vers-Ensemble handelt es sich um ein Musikstück in einer Oper, bei dem drei oder mehr Charaktere beteiligt sind. Jede trägt einen Solo-Vers vor und alle beteiligen sich am Refrain. Es unterscheidet sich von anderen Ensemblestücken vor allem durch eine gleichmäßigere Aufteilung der Textpassagen. Sullivans Vers-Ensembles lassen sich zumeist dem strophischen, halb-strophischen, dem rondoartigen bzw. dem durchkomponierten Typus zuordnen, aber es gibt auch Ausnahmen. Sullivan gestaltet die Szenen gehaltvoller als sie der Librettist gedacht hatte und nutzt sie zu Charakterisierung der Figuren.

In her celebrated comic routine 'How to write your own Gilbert and Sullivan opera', Anna Russell cites a number of elements – dramatic and musical – that an audience might expect in a typical Gilbert and Sullivan piece.[1] Among the musical stereotypes she mentions are a self-accompanied tenor number in 6/8 time, a patter song from the principal comedian explaining his ascent to an exalted position, and a madrigal. Anyone familiar with the Savoy operas can readily supply particular numbers from the pieces that fit Russell's formula. While Russell's description does not presume to scholarly thoroughness, a distinctive musical element of these works that she neglects to mention is a type of ensemble in which a number of characters are each given solo stanzas. This type of lyric, which Gilbert seems to have borrowed from the *couplets* of French *opéra bouffe* and *opéra comique* repertoire, became a mainstay of the Savoy operas and it yielded a variety of musical settings from Sullivan. Indeed, it is fair to say that Sullivan made this type of number particularly his own.

This essay examines and defines this genre – here designated the *verse-ensemble* – while seeking some precedents and illustrating some of Sullivan's recurring strategies. The verse-ensemble, then, is a musical number (or a discrete section) in an opera which features three or more characters; each is allotted a solo verse, but all join in a refrain or other concerted section. A verse-ensemble does not happen accidentally: the librettist must make provision for

[1] This is most familiar from a live recording made in New York City on 23 April 1953, and released and re-released in many formats; the routine also appears in a slightly condensed form in *The Anna Russell Song Book* (London: Elek Books, 1960; repr. New York: Dorset Books, 1988).

it with stanzas given to different characters. It is different from most operatic ensemble numbers, in which the exchanges between characters happen much more frequently – changing from one to the next at the level of a line or even partial line, and with generally a more uneven distribution of the text among the participants. Such 'dramatic' ensembles are not characteristic of the Savoy operas; a rare example is the trio 'Alas I waver to and fro' from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Russell's list of Gilbert and Sullivan clichés includes the so-called 'madrigal' part-song, which has much more homophonic writing. Gayden Wren is wrong to lump the Savoy Opera ensemble pieces together as coming from the same 'quasi-madrigal' mold.[2]

Verse-ensembles are not characteristic of the mainstream operatic repertory: the verse-ensemble structure tends to be dramatically static or at least slow-moving, as each character involved is given a substantial block of text in turn, with little opportunity for interaction between the characters. Librettists have apparently avoided it, and a passage such as this (from the second act finale of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) is exceptional:

PEDRILLO
Liebstes Blondchen, ach, verzeihe!
Sieh, ich bau' auf deine Treue
mehr jetzt als auf meinem Kopf!

BLONDE
Nein, das kann ich dir nicht schenken,
mich mit so was zu verdenken,
mit dem alten, dummen Tropf!

BELMONTE
Ach, Konstanze, ach, mein Leben!
könntest du mir doch vergeben,
dass ich diese Frage tat?

[2] Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 46. Of the Savoy Opera madrigals, 'When the buds are blossoming' from *Ruddigore* is remarkable in that it allots an entire solo stanza each to two characters, and so leans strongly in the direction of a verse-ensemble. Otherwise, the default is to break the stanza into smaller fragments.

KONSTANZE
Belmont, wie? Du könntest glauben,
dass man dir dies Herz könnt' rauben,
das nur dir geschlagen hat?[3]

At only three lines apiece, these stanzas are very short, but even so Mozart shied from allocating solo stage time for each – especially as there is nothing for any of the characters to say that the audience cannot easily imagine (*viz.*, the men are contrite while the women are wounded and angry). So after the presentation of a single stanza (Pedrillo), the rest are superimposed in counterpoint: Belmonte's plea to Konstanze appears simultaneously with Blonde's angry reply to Pedrillo, then – as Blonde continues (with sporadic interjections from Pedrillo) – Konstanze's response to a silenced, shame-faced Belmonte.[4] Even if the words are lost in the counterpoint, the situation is clear, and Mozart's decision to not lay set them out one by one has sped up the drama where it might otherwise slow down. It is noteworthy, though, that this foreshortening of the dramatic time does not actually save Mozart any chronological time: Pedrillo's stanza requires six bars, and so one might posit a mechanical 24-bar version that would account for all four stanzas; in fact, despite the superimposed voices that ought to save time, 28 bars have elapsed by the time Konstanze is finished, although without any sense of the scene dragging.

The same issue of pacing matters less at the end of Act III of the same work, when there seems to be nothing more to be enacted save for the departure of the released captives. Each of the four Europeans takes leave of the Pasha in a verse-ensemble, a *vaudeville-final* voicing gratitude to the Pasha for his clemency. This number has a strophic verse-refrain pattern that is so regular that it

[3] Working from an original by Christoph Friedrich Bretzner, Stephanie devised an extended finale; the analogous moment in Bretzner's libretto is conveyed in dialogue (Act II, Auftritt 6), although it is followed there by a verse-ensemble for the four characters ('Mit Pauken und Trompeten') to conclude the act. In the first printed libretto of Stephanie's version, these four stanzas are set in parallel columns (Pedrillo and Blonde on the left, Belmonte and Konstanze on the right—and indeed these pairs are implicit in the concluding rhymes) with the indication that they be sung 'zugleich.' This is reproduced in Mozart, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Mozart Operas in Facsimile (Los Altos, CA: Packard Humanities Institute, 2008), pt. II, vol. 2, p. 58.

[4] A similar example from the Savoy operas is the argument quartet 'In a contemplative fashion' from *The Gondoliers*.

is truly jarring when Osmin interrupts before the fourth refrain – at first with a melody which caricatures the one he has just heard four times over, but then reverting as abruptly (breaking the metre of the lyric) to a quotation from his Act I set piece 'Solche hergelaufnen Laffen', detailing the tortures he wants to inflict upon them. After this, Osmin storms off, and the four soloists join in a moralising coda before the final Janissary chorus in praise of the Pasha.

This sort of vaudeville finale has its own tradition[5] which has some musical similarities with Sullivan's verse-ensembles, but no connection to the way Gilbert deploys them. Rather than relegating the verse-ensemble only to the end of an act where it can do little dramatic harm, Gilbert provides rather for such pieces at key dramatic moments – perhaps intentionally slowing the pace to savour the moment.[6] In Gilbert's earlier collaborations with Sullivan (as in *The Sorcerer*, *HMS Pinafore* and *Iolanthe*), verse-ensembles appear often immediately after an important decision is made; later they come more often as several characters wrestle with a perplexing situation, not always making a decision (as in *Ruddigore*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, *The Gondoliers*, and twice in *The Mikado* – and Gilbert's influence in this respect can be seen in Sullivan's works with other collaborators, like *Haddon Hall* and *The Emerald Isle*). In effect, over time Gilbert deploys the verse ensemble for action rather than reaction moments.

A reason that the verse-ensemble became a marked feature of the Savoy operas while not in continental operatic traditions has to do with its different deployment of the principals: in a verse-ensemble there is restricted scope for the sort of vocal display characteristic of an aria or a duet. Principals *as* singers may be thereby diminished, but principals *as characters* are not. Indeed, an audience hears more from each character in a short time in a verse-ensemble form than in any other operatic medium except for recitative. In the Savoy

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[5] See Elisabeth Cook, *Duet and Ensemble in the Early Opéra-Comique* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 36ff., and Herbert Schneider, 'Zur Entwicklung und Bedeutung des Final-Vaudeville', in *Lieto Fine? Musik-theatralische Schlussgestaltung um 1800*, ed. Ursula Kramer (Tübingen: Franke Verlag, 2009), pp. 85–122.

[6] If there is a *vaudeville-final* in the Savoy operas, it is 'Oh, happy the lily' which concludes the Act I finale of *Ruddigore*; in this case, however, the stanzas are generally sung by several characters together and there is no refrain, although the villain Sir Ruthven gets his own contrasting section before order is restored. Although it is not quite the same thing, in *Patience*, *Iolanthe*, and *Princess Ida*, Gilbert featured a reprise of a verse ensemble as the *finale ultimo*.

operas, Sullivan was not writing for principals who were primarily operatic vocalists, but for artists whose dramatic and musical talents were essentially equal. There are, to be sure, moments of vocal display, but they are few and far between.[7] Sullivan's vocal writing exploits the capabilities of his singers; verse-ensembles were an ideal means of featuring the vocal talents of his company in settings that would be congenial to their voices. Regarding the dramatic pacing, the fact that many of the ensembles (and duets, for that matter) are stanzaic reveals more about Gilbert than it does about Sullivan: Gilbert was a natural versifier, and – as his *'Bab' Ballads* demonstrate abundantly – he could spin a tale out stanza after regular stanza, sometimes for pages at a time. Gilbert's early works display a greater familiarity with *opéra bouffe* and *opéra comique* than with Italian repertoire, still less any German works. Thus in his early 'extravaganzas' Gilbert turned more regularly to songs by Meyerbeer, Auber, Hérold, Hervé and Offenbach than to Bellini and Donizetti for his *contrafacta*.[8]

The French operatic use of stanzas designated *Couplets* – generally for a single singer, although sometimes allotted to more singers in verse-ensemble fashion – was congenial to Gilbert. Thus it comes as no surprise that in his libretti Gilbert designates some verse-ensembles with the term COUPLETS,[9] although curiously only for ensembles, and this is not a term found in his libretti for Sullivan. Even without the 'couplets' designation, this type of piece appears throughout the Savoy repertoire. Sullivan's musical treatments are remarkably

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[7] The most notable examples would be 'Poor Wand'ring One' in *The Pirates of Penzance* and ''Neath my lattice' from *The Rose of Persia* (lib. Basil Hood)—both featuring the leading soprano. For a pessimistic assessment of Sullivan's vocal writing, see the chapter devoted to it in Gervase Hughes, *The Music of Arthur Sullivan* (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 84–95.

[8] See for example *Robert the Devil* and *The Merry Zingara* (both 1868) and *The Pretty Druidess* (1869). When Boosey & Co. published Offenbach's *Les Brigands* in 1871, they issued Gilbert's singing translation but the situation is complicated. When it was (finally) staged in 1889, Gilbert asserted that it was only a copyright translation, and went to court over it. (See the account in Jane W. Stedman, *W. S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 262ff.) Judging from the accession stamps on the copies in the British Library, in 1871 Boosey & Co. simultaneously published two versions: a vocal score with the translation by Henry S. Leigh, and a libretto with translation by Gilbert; in 1884, Boosey produced a vocal score of Gilbert's version, and a libretto of Leigh's.

[9] Examples include 'It does perplex, annoy and vex' in *Ages Ago* (1869) which has only two solo verses; the quintet 'How de do, miss!' in *The Gentleman in Black* (1870); and the quartet 'At last I shall marry my own' in *Princess Toto* (1876); but Gilbert was still using the term for 'When homage to his Queen' in *Fallen Fairies* (1909, set by Edward German).

varied, although certain patterns recur. These are assessed below in order from simplest to most complex.[10]

Type 1: Strophic

Pinafore: trio (Bar/Bar/S) 'Never mind the why and wherefore' A-ref / A-ref / A-ref-coda [note: refrain includes solo interjections from each character]

Mikado: trio (S/T/Bar) 'Here's a how-de-do' A / A' / A / Ens. [note: A' is in a new key]

Mikado: trio (Bar/M/B) 'The criminal cried' A-chor. / A-chor. / A-chor / coda

Ruddigore: trio (Bar/M/Bar) 'My eyes are fully open' A-ref / A-ref / A-ref-coda

The simplest manifestation of the verse-ensemble form is strophic, with each of the characters given the same melody. One can find this type occasionally in Viennese operetta – the champagne song ('Im Feuerstrom der Reben') in Act II of *Die Fledermaus* would be a familiar example, although it is a much more common feature of French works. Indeed, even when they are divided between characters, the vast majority of Offenbach's couplets are set strophically.[11] (Strophic form is the default also for solo numbers in the Savoy operas. With a libretto full of Gilbert's regular stanzas, more often than not Sullivan

[10] In the brief descriptions below, the following codes are used: immediately after the ensemble designation (trio, quartet, etc.) voice types are indicated in the order they appear in solo verses by the letters S (soprano), M (mezzo soprano), C (contralto), T (tenor), Bar (baritone), and B (bass or bass-baritone); descriptions of musical form (melody and accompaniment) are given with letters (A, B, C, etc.); A' indicates a substantial variant of A; a slash [/] indicates a noticeable break between sections (sometimes an orchestral interlude, but at least an arrival on the tonic *before* the new section begins); a dash [-] indicates a flow from one section to the next which is continuous (i.e. no interlude, the final cadence of the first is elided with the next, etc.); 'Ref.' is recurring and is sung by soloists (possibly including other solo voices); 'Chor.' is a refrain that includes the chorus ; 'Ens.' happens only once (thus not a refrain) and involves all the soloists (possibly plus others); 'Coda' indicates the inclusion of at least some new concluding material for the ensemble (i.e. not just an extra repeat, a fermata or the like).

[11] For example, 'On vante partout son sourire' (labelled 'Cancans-Couplets') from Act II of *La Périchole*; or 'Je suis Venus!' from Act II of *Orphée aux Enfers*; a counterexample (the only one I've yet to notice) is semi-strophic: 'Je t'ai sur mon coeur' (which I parse as A-ref / A-ref / B-A-ref) from Act II of *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*).

set them as strophic songs.)[12] Of the examples of this type listed above, 'Here's a how-de-do' is remarkable because of the modulation to and from a new key; this is not prompted by the vocal range, but rather Sullivan may have sought to avoid a stagnant tonality. 'When sailing o'er life's ocean wide' (from *Ruddigore*) could be cited as an interesting variant of the strophic verse-ensemble. The trio begins and ends with a refrain (with a coda added); the three solo verses are very nearly identical, excepting that each is sung in a different key, and thus there is an adjustment made to the conclusion of each to accomplish the modulation smoothly.

Type 2: Semi-strophic

Pirates: trio (C/Bar/T) 'When you had left our pirate fold' A-ref / A-ref / chant / *parlante* / B-ref / Coda

Patience: quintet (T/Bar/B) 'If Saphir I choose to marry' A-ref / A-ref / B-ref [note: verses for 'A' divided between two characters each time; third verse to only one character; two singers sing only in refrain]

Iolanthe: trio (T/S/B) 'Of all the young ladies I know' A-chor. / B-chor. / A-chor. / Coda

Iolanthe: trio (T/B/Bar) 'If you go in' A-ref / A-ref / B-ref

Princess Ida: trio (T/T/Bar) 'I am a maiden' A-ref / A-ref / B-ref / Coda

Yeomen: trio (Bar/M/T) 'To thy fraternal care' A-chor / A-chor / B-chor

Yeomen: trio (T/S/M) 'A man who would woo a fair maid' A / ref / A / ref / B / ref – Coda

Haddon Hall (lib. Sydney Grundy): trio (S/T/M) 'O tell me, what is a maid to say' A-ref/ ab-ref / Coda [note: second stanza is divided between two characters; the first sings the first half of A;

[12] Among the notable exceptions to this—and there are never more than two through-composed stanzaic solo songs in any of the G&S collaborations—are 'Now, Jurymen, hear my advice' (*Trial by Jury*), 'I'm called Little Buttercup' and 'A maiden fair to see' (*HMS Pinafore*), and 'Were I thy bride' (*The Yeomen of the Guard*). Note that this list does not include works constructed of irregular stanzas and thus necessarily through-composed, of which the most familiar would be 'A wand'ring minstrel, I' (*The Mikado*). Perhaps because they require a minimum of three stanzas, semi-strophic solo songs are rare, although they become common in *The Grand Duke*, with 'By the mystic regulation,' 'Ten minutes since' and 'About a century since'.

the second sings new material]

Rose of Persia (lib. Basil Hood): trio (M/S/S) 'If you ask me to advise you' A^1 / B / A^2 – Ens. – Coda

Emerald Isle (lib. Basil Hood): quartet (ST/M) 'Two is company – three is none' A-ref / A-ref / B-Ens. / Coda [note: first two stanzas are sung by two characters in unison; third stanza is for a third character, with new melody; one character does not get a solo verse at all; general dance after the coda]

Sullivan also frequently employs a 'semi-strophic' form of the verse-ensemble, in which one verse is set to a new melody. While this sort of setting is allowed within the parameters of strophic form,[13] as the works discussed here allocate the verses to different singers, it is useful to have a designation for this modification of strophic form. Sullivan's decision to set the last verse anew can be a response to a change in the lyric of the third stanza. In 'If Saphir I choose to marry' from *Patience*, the Duke speculates about not taking a bride at all, and thus Sullivan's setting becomes more subdued; similarly, in 'If you go in' from *Iolanthe*, the Lord Chancellor summons up the courage to seek Phyllis's hand; in 'To thy fraternal care' from *The Yeomen of the Guard*, Sullivan gives longer phrases for Fairfax's romantic effusions, and the song soon degenerates into one of Gilbert's comic 'kissing' numbers. Sometimes, however, Sullivan is forced into some sort of alteration because of the different vocal ranges of the singers.

Thus in Act I of *Iolanthe*, the tenor and the soprano can sing identical lines for the trio 'Of all the young ladies I know,' but in between comes a new melody for a baritone, set in the flattened-submediant major.[14] Similarly in 'I am a maiden' from *Princess Ida*, where Sullivan faces two tenors and a baritone, the baritone verse moves to a new key. (This is something like the vaudeville-finale of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, where Figaro, Rosina, and Almaviva are given the same melody – albeit differently ornamented; in that

[13] Michael Tilmouth's article 'Strophic' for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (appearing in both the 1980 and 2001 editions) cites Schubert's *Die Forelle* as an example of a 'strophic' Lied which nonetheless has a contrasting setting of the final stanza (*NG2* vol. 24, p. 603).

[14] In the rare semi-strophic solo numbers the new melody usually comes in the third (penultimate stanza)—resulting in the form AABA; examples include 'This helmet, I suppose' (*Princess Ida*) and 'Sir Rupert Murgatroyd' (*Ruddigore*).

instance, there is a move to the dominant for Rosina's verse, exploiting her lower register.)

Type 3: Rondo

Sorcerer: quintet (T/S/Bar/M/Bar) 'I rejoice that it's decided' A-ref / B / C-ref / D / E / ref / Coda

Princess Ida: trio (T/T/Bar) 'Expressive glances' A-chor. / B-chor. / C-chor. / Coda

Yeomen: quartet (S-T/M/Bar) 'When a wooer goes a-wooing' A-ref / B-ref / C-ref / Coda [note: A is split between two singers]

Gondoliers: quartet (S/T/M/Bar) 'Then one of us will be a queen' A-ref / A-ref / B-ref / C-ref / Coda

Rose of Persia: quintet (S/B/T/M/Bar) 'It's a busy, busy, busy, busy day for thee!' A / B / Chor. / C / D / e / F / Chor. / Ens. [note: Ens. combines A-B and C contrapuntally]

The rondo verse-ensemble has three or more distinct verse melodies with a recurring refrain. 'Expressive glances' (from *Princess Ida*) and 'When a wooer goes a-wooing' (from *The Yeomen of the Guard*) could serve as textbook examples of this, with a single statement of each of three verse melodies of equal length, and the same refrain recurring three times. It seems significant that the term *couplet* was used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the alternating sections of *rondeaux*, distinguished from the returning main section. 'Then one of us shall be a Queen' has a slight modification, in that the A melody is heard twice (soprano first verse, tenor second verse), but thereafter Sullivan moves to the flat-submediant major for the mezzo soprano's third verse, and to the relative minor for the baritone's fourth verse; each verse ends on the home dominant (C) to set up the return to the refrain. 'Expressive Glances' from *Princess Ida* has only three verses but has a similar key scheme as 'Then one of us will be a queen': a verse for tenor in the tonic, with choral refrain; a second verse for the other tenor, starting in the relative minor, but (with a few extra bars) moving back to the tonic for the refrain; and the baritone's verse in the flattened-submediant, with a few extra bars to negotiate the move back to the tonic. Offenbach's semi-strophic couplets tended to move to dominant or subdominant; Sullivan's use of mediant relationships makes him a little more progressive, although it is hardly daring by late-nineteenth-

century standards, given the precedents set by Weber, Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn. It is hard to know how much solo arias in rondo form were influences on Sullivan's rondo verse-ensemble. The *alla Polacca* 'Heiterkeit und Fröhlichkeit' from Act III of Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz* (1842), for example, features the same sorts of key relationships that Sullivan favours – the relative minor and the flat-submediant (in addition to tonic minor, dominant, and subdominant).

The quintet in *The Sorcerer* is the earliest known verse-ensemble in the Gilbert & Sullivan canon.[15] Each of the five characters is given a unique melody, and with the different vocal ranges they stake out new key areas; sometimes two verses are run together, so that the refrain occurs only three times. There is nothing in the libretto to mandate the elaborate rondo treatment: the only stanza in which the mood changes enough to suggest a different musical setting is the last, with the vicar's lament of 'no one left to marry me.' Perhaps Sullivan's great success in this number so early in their collaborations prompted Gilbert to make the verse-ensemble a standard feature of the Savoy Operas.[16]

Type 4: through-composed

Mikado: trio (B/Bar/Bar) 'I am so proud' A / B / C / ABC / D / D' / E / Ens. / Coda [note: the first three stanzas recur simultaneously]

Yeomen: trio (B/S/Bar) 'How say you, maiden' A / B / C / Ens. [note: Gilbert's original text included a refrain, but Sullivan moved it to the end, where it is stated only once; each verse was shortened as well]

Sullivan's works feature two splendid examples of truly through-composed verse-ensembles. The most remarkable of these is the contrapuntal *tour de force* 'I am so proud' (from *The Mikado*), in which each character's melody ap-

[15] A precedent for this may be the Act I finale of *Thespis*, which includes two sections in which four characters are given a stanza each; as the music is lost, it is impossible to know how Sullivan set these.

[16] A Mozart *vaudeville-final* which more clearly anticipates Sullivan's rondo verse-ensemble is the finale to *Der Schauspieldirektor*, in which there are four contrasting verses and a common refrain between each. Did Sullivan know this work? It was available in a few vocal score editions; moreover, it was in the operatic repertory in Leipzig in 1859 and 1860. See Meinhard Saremba, 'Zwischen Tradition und "Zukunftsmusik" (Teil 2): Sullivans Studienjahre und das Kulturleben in Leipzig', *Sullivan-Journal*, 10 (2013), p. 7.

pears separately before being repeated in counterpoint. This famous example must be regarded as exceptional as a verse-ensemble, as the metre of the stanzas is irregular (although essentially two iambs per line). Indeed, when Gilbert sent the lyrics to Sullivan, he laid them out in parallel columns, noting 'I have put the three verses side by side for convenience sake, but, of course, they will be sung separately. I fancy the metre admits of each verse being set differently from the others, but I may be wrong in this.'[17] While this sort of counterpoint was one of Sullivan's specialties, it was not without precedent in the continental operatic tradition – hinted at already in the Act II finale from *Entführung* cited earlier. It may be more likely that he was emulating the Act I finale of *Don Giovanni*, in which three dances (in different musical metres) proceed simultaneously at the Don's dinner party.

'I am so proud' is a dramatically static number: there is no action, and the audience knows nothing more about any of the characters or the situation at the end of it than we did at the beginning. The trio 'How say you, maiden' in *The Yeomen of the Guard* is a kinetic through-composed ensemble, in which a vital element of the plot is decided – Elsie's answer to the Lieutenant's question 'will you wed?' Although the metrical structure of each stanza is identical, the settings for these three stanzas differ markedly; the first two are constructed very similarly, and each lasts 32 bars. Although the third ('patter') character gets through the text quicker, his setting consumes the same amount of time (with a repeat of 'objection I will waive' and orchestral tag appended). Despite the structural similarities, even the first two stanzas sound very different, with the lyricism of Elsie's melody in strong contrast to the Lieutenant's, and Jack Point's stanza sounds even more different, and – as might be expected in the principal comedian's part – begins with a rapid patter of syllables. Gilbert's text originally provided for a refrain ('Temptation, oh temptation') which was to come after each of the solo verses, but Sullivan withholds it until after the third as a concluding ensemble. Moreover, Sullivan shortened and modified the text of each of these stanzas: the only remnant of a shorter rhyming quatrain that was originally in the middle of each of Gilbert's stanzas can be seen in the first verse, betrayed by the extra rhyme and capitalisation ('For half an hour / You'll be a wife, / And then the dower /

[17] Letter of 9 December 1884, quoted in Ian Bradley, *The Complete Annotated Gilbert & Sullivan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 588.

Is yours for life').[18] That this number is kinetic rather than static is that a pivotal factor in the plot. Clearly Sullivan recognised that the characters were in such different emotional states that nothing but a through-composed setting would suffice. Although most of Sullivan's verse-ensembles can be divided into the four types detailed above, there are some that are not readily classifiable. The trio 'Away, away! My heart's on fire!' from *The Pirates of Penzance*, for instance, gives no solo verse to Ruth; and the ensemble section is presented first alternating phrase by phrase between the soloists, and then that melody is taken up in the orchestra while the soloists only sing the harmony. 'The lady of my love has caught me talking with another', which forms part of the Act I finale of *Iolanthe*, has an AABB'A form featuring five solo singers with interjections from the full chorus: Strephon is given the first stanza; the Fairy Queen and the Lord Chancellor divide the second (and, in the case of the Lord Chancellor, the vocal melody is simplified, while the orchestra plays it as before); the two B strains are given to Mountararat and Tolloller, and these are necessarily new because Gilbert casts these stanzas in a new metre; finally the whole ensemble (with chorus) returns to the A idea.

Some of Sullivan's choral numbers are structurally similar to the verse-ensemble: in its original place in *Thespis*, the chorus 'Climbing over rocky mountain' featured four solo voices, each allotted a quatrain of text. The musical text must have been substantially the same as that of the number's reappearance in *The Pirates of Penzance*.[19] Not counting orchestral introduction and interludes, the choral A section was lengthy, at 40 bars. The ensuing solo verses (B, B', C, D) were much shorter, with only 16 bars apiece – the first two in the subdominant key, and the last two in the flat supertonic. The choral conclusion (in the tonic) to the number is not a return of A but rather of B', although it is given in counterpoint with the A head motive played by piccolo, flute, and first violins. In its original form this movement was closer to being a verse-ensemble than as revised (with only two solo verses – Edith has B-B', Kate C-D), but the structural resemblance remains.

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[18] For this original—or at least the earliest extant—text, see Bradley, p. 784.

[19] This portion of Sullivan's autograph manuscript is mainly a copyist's transcription of the then-extant *Thespis* score, although the vocal staves in the middle section were left blank for the solo melodies to be adapted as necessary to the new text, and entered in Sullivan's hand; see pp. 131ff of the scan of the manuscript available at http://www.themorgan.org/music/manuscript/115806.

The chorus 'Toward th'Empyrean height' from *Princess Ida* (with two solo verses) also has verse-ensemble elements. Gilbert's lyrics call for an opening choral section which is to be repeated at the end; in between are contributions by three soloists, each given rhyming couplets of seven syllable lines: Melissa (one couplet); Psyche (eight couplets); Sacharissa (one); and again Psyche (eight). Sullivan sets these very differently. The single couplets of Melissa and Sacharissa are accompanied as if *secco recitative*; Psyche's first stanza ('If you'd climb the Helicon') is in the subdominant, set *parlante* over a Schumannesque running figure in the strings; her second stanza ('Man will swear and Man will storm – ') is in the flat submediant, and is a solemn declaration over forcefully articulated chords – sounding more like Weber than anyone else.

There is really nothing in the works of Sullivan's successors to compare to the verse-ensemble as it developed in the Savoy operas. It was not a feature of musical comedies, and elements of it are rare even in subsequent West End and Broadway musicals.[20] Given Gilbert's almost invariably regular verse forms, one might expect a much more formulaic treatment from Sullivan – especially because strophic forms prevailed throughout Offenbach and other French light opera. To be sure, there is manifest evidence of French influence in the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations, but except for some specific musical stylistic elements, such evidence relates much more to the libretti than to the scores. George Macfarren's characterisation of Sullivan as 'the English Offenbach'[21] isn't really supported by the musical treatments in the verse ensembles. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Gilbert wrote his libretti as if writing for 'the English Offenbach', but that Sullivan used the verse ensembles as the means for something more substantial than Gilbert intended, indeed as some of the strongest musical characterisations in these works.

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[20] 'Tradition!', the opening number of Jerry Bock's *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), might be cited as a proximate example, with the 'solo' verses given to the fathers, mothers, daughters, and sons respectively—although these quatrains are metrically irregular.

[21] 'Unfortunately the remark was given permanence by its inclusion in Macfarren's article on Music in the *Encylopaedia Britannica.* It was never intended as a complement, nor was it taken as such. Indeed we know that Sullivan smarted under what he considered an unjust taunt.' Thomas Dunhill, *Sullivan's Comic Operas: A Critical Appreciation* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1928), p. 38. See also H.M. Walbrook, *Gilbert & Sullivan Opera: A History and a Comment* (London: F.V. White, 1922), pp. 139ff.