

## HISTORICAL NOTES

Iolanthe," the 7th Gilbert and Sullivan opera, was produced for the first time on 25th November 1882 at the Savoy Theatre.

Gilbert's first idea for Iolanthe originated from one of Gilbert's Bab Ballads in 1870, entitled 'Fairy Curate,' in which a fairy came down to earth and married an attorney. Their son grew up to be a curate in the Church of England.

Gilbert's idea of the peer and the peri with Strephon, a half mortal Member of Parliament, Mountararat singing his sarcastic song 'When Britain Really Ruled the Waves,' Private Willis giving his opinion of Liberals and Conservatives, was most unusual in Victorian days and was criticised.

W. S. Gilbert thought that the 'fairy-down-to-the-waist' whimsy was 'perhaps not quite pleasant,' but what really upset the critics was the fact that Gilbert became class conscious. (He did not agree with this). In Strephon's song, which was excluded after the first night, the Arcadian Shepherd boy tells the legislature to 'Fold its Flapping Wings,' declares that he intends to bring in 'some urgent measures' and that 'crime begins at home.' We have been able to include this song in our production, and we extend our thanks to Mr. Gerald Payne for his research, and to Mr. Andrew Hubbard for orchestrating the song.

On the first night of Iolanthe a certain Captain Shaw, the Chief of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, was sat in the audience, and was astonished when the Fairy Queen gestured towards him and sang passionately!

## SYNOPSIS

The curtain rises on an Arcadian landscape, with the fairies tripping on to tell of their sorrow. Iolanthe had been banished by their Queen for marrying a mortal 25 years before. They persuade the Queen to summon Iolanthe and forgive her. On her arrival she reveals that she has a son who is half a fairy — his legs are mortal. Strephon, who now enters, tells his mother and his 'aunts' that he is anxious to marry Phyllis, a Ward of Chancery, but is prevented by the Lord Chancellor. The Fairy Queen promises Strephon any help he wishes. After Strephon and Phyllis sing of their love for each other the Peers enter with 'Loudly Let the Trumpet Bray.' The Lord Chancellor still refuses his consent to the marriage between Strephon and Phyllis. Strephon, in despair, consults his mother, but Phyllis (seeing him with a young woman) assumes he is being unfaithful. He calls for the Fairy Queen for help and Act I ends with her and the fairies telling the Peers that Strephon is to go into Parliament and wreak havoc there.

At the start of Act II, Private Willis, on guard at Westminster, meditates on the political scene. After a second meeting between Phyllis and Strephon, in which Strephon manages to explain his position, they are reunited and ask Iolanthe to intercede for them with the Lord Chancellor. She agrees, although if she goes to him and is recognised, she will be condemned to death. Why?— because we'd hate to spoil the story for you!

## COMMITTEE 1976-77

PRESIDENT	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	ANDREW HUBBARD
SECRETARY	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	DIANE HIGGINSON
TREASURER	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	BERNARD HAYLETT
PUBLICITY OFFICER	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	MARTIN SACH
LADY ORDINARY MEMBER	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	MARGARET ATKIN
GENTLEMAN ORDINARY MEMBER	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	PETER FOGG