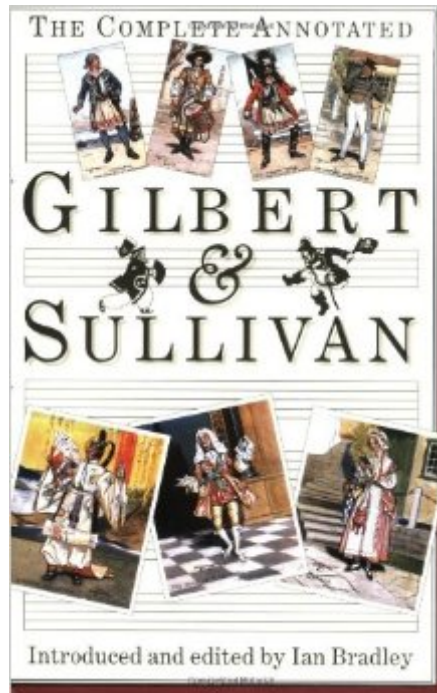


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The Complete Annotated Gilbert & Sullivan



Synopsis

The comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan are a performing arts phenomenon. Wildly popular when first produced, they are if anything even more popular today. The Complete Annotated Gilbert & Sullivan provides the complete text of all thirteen of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas still being performed today, including H.M.S. Pinafore, The Pirates of Penzance, and The Mikado. Each work is thoroughly annotated, with the text, including stage directions, given on the right-hand page, and the notes on the left. The annotations provide a wealth of information--everything from the identity of real-life people mentioned in the opera, to clear explanations of obscure words and phrases (such as legal terms) and other literary references, to comments from first-night critics, and much more. In addition, Bradley has written a marvelously informative introduction to the book as well as superb introductions to each piece, describing the genesis of the work, its performance history, and other fascinating tidbits. A goldmine of information, The Complete Annotated Gilbert & Sullivan will delight the hearts of Savoyards everywhere.

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Customer Reviews

Although I hate that expression (see above), I must admit it applies totally to this marvelous edition. Granted that if you listen to Gilbert & Sullivan, you will want to follow the words--which are not always provided with many recordings nowadays. Then given the words, you will also want to know the meanings of most of Gilbert's more esoteric words ("Daphnephoric"), or simple words that have lost or changed their meanings since Gilbert's day ("Be firm, my pecker!"), or references to people

(Captain Shaw), places (Basingstoke), or even objects (Parliamentary trains). Then too, the complete G&S nut will want to see the original versions of some of the songs and certainly the texts to songs that were cut just after opening night or even during rehearsals. In fact, I still have a lot of fun just looking at the left-hand pages to brush up on my G&S trivia. So while this book sells at twice the price of other collections of the "Savoy" plays, it gives twice as much and should be as welcome as the flowers that bloom in the Spring.

Occupying that middle area between musicals and grand opera, the works of W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan are showing their age to the point where this invaluable guide can become an invaluable, addictive pleasure. While their stories and music are lighthearted and accessible, the Victorian events and personalities that infuse the lyrics do need some explanation, and Ian Bradley's guide is the place to look. The book itself offers additional pleasure, since Oxford University Press decided to print the complete libretto of all 13 operas on the right-hand page, leaving the left-hand pages free for Bradley's footnotes. This saves an enormous amount of page-flipping. Bradley's footnotes cover a wide range of knowledge. They clear up obscure references, offer alternative line readings, give advice from actors, comment on stage business, describe who the major characters were modeled on and even add songs that were dropped from the production. Bradley also uses this opportunity to discuss Gilbert and Sullivan's solo works, and how they were sometimes cannibalized for use in their collaborations. Each work is prefaced with a short introduction describing the conditions under which they were created. While Gilbert and Sullivan were known to be at loggerheads through most of their collaboration, it is amazing to realize that the popularity of their operas did not reflect their distaste for the work. This is particularly true in Sullivan's case; he always thought of himself as a musician first, and resented having to bend his music to fit Gilbert's words. "The Annotated Gilbert & Sullivan" is a must for any fan of the Savoy Operas, and recommended for those just starting to discover the delights of comic opera's pirates, policemen and peers.

The book nicely provides the (almost) complete librettos with detailed notes on, among other things, the various versions from preproduction onward to twentieth century changes, the origins, the inspirations, and the meaning of words Bradley thinks are obscure. He is much more likely to explain reasonably familiar words than to assume too much. The introductions nicely trace the history down to the most recent productions. Those who have seen the current movie *Topsy-Turvy* will find the notes helpful in seeing some of the actual events depicted in the movie. The one

omission is Thespis, the first collaboration. The libretto, but not the score, survived. Two areas of omission are exhaustive treatment of either the major performers or recordings. However, this is an excellent source for lovers of G&S.

This omnibus edition of the complete Gilbert and Sullivan librettos is a handbook for the G&S enthusiast who wants to know everything about the operas and their librettos. Each opera contains the complete libretto, as well as an interesting and entertaining introduction, which reflects the nature of the annotations in the libretto. The annotations are also humorous, which adds to the reading pleasure. As for the librettos, they are well-produced, with only slight inaccuracies, yet are still readable. The book is well-organised, with the lyrics on one page and the annotations on another. Overall, to all G&S fans, this is excellent value for money. I would encourage all G&S enthusiasts to buy this book whenever they can.

This is the only book for a true Gilbert and Sullivan fan, especially since it literally is the only complete collection of their works available today for purchase. Luckily, it's a good one: it includes all of their Savoy operettas as well as their lesser-known later works such as Utopia Ltd. The real jewels of the collection, however, remain their best operas: HMS Pinafore, The Mikado, The Pirates of Penzance, The Sorcerer. This book is especially helpful because it contains all of the lyrics to all of the songs, and most CD recordings of the operas do not come with the lyrics (for many of the songs, it is impossible to catch all of the words simply by hearing them). Ian Bradley's notes, printed off to the side, are also interesting and help shed light on obscure words and phrases. Enjoy!

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