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## Presidential peripateticisms – “*While this magnetic*”

As the last Newsletter marked the end of a Society year, this should note the beginning of the next, but, as I'm running a little late, we've already had two events and an AGM! To be fair, the first, “An evening with Cole Porter”, took place, strictly speaking, at the end of last year, on 28 June. However, as first I consider the Summer Apéro to close our year, and secondly as the Cole Porter evening was originally meant to take place in May, circumstances mean that a review of the evening has only found its way into this Newsletter.



As I write (and this is really the case!), a review of the second event, “Hiding in plain sight”, has fluttered into my inbox. Tom McClymont's insightful thoughts and, I'm happy to say, his praise, reflect and justify the amount of work that went into this production.

A word on terminology. The Cole Porter evening was billed as “The Gilbert & Sullivan Society presents ...”. While true, I felt (and my fellow Board colleagues agreed) that, in the best case, this might not mean much to the wider audience, and in the worst that it might actually detract some from coming if they would indeed make the incorrect assumption that it had something to do with G&S (although the title would suggest otherwise). Consequently, the Board has decided that future events which would be professional shows – and should be perceived as such – should carry a different ‘sponsor’. I decided on “Savoyards Productions” which had and has two advantages: first, our logo can also be used for such events and, secondly, the cognoscenti – and just as importantly, our members – will still be able to recognise both name and logo and link it to our Society.

Consequently, the first ‘official’ Savoyards production was “Hiding in plain sight”.

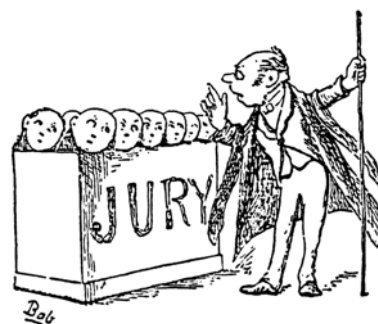
The Society's AGM took place between this and “An evening with Cole Porter” and the

main points are explained below, followed by, as ever, a look ahead to the events of the coming months: the DVD evening of October had to be cancelled due to lack of interest (I probably live too far out of Basel for most of the members), and that in November is already full. However, there are also three scheduled events between now and end-January (!) which are briefly mentioned; expect more information and, where applicable, registration in quick succession between now and the end of November.

What else is in this issue? Recent Board decisions, the second part of my talk on D'Oyly Carte, and other bits and pieces. For those receiving this Newsletter for the first time, and as a reminder to the others, all e-links are active. [And for those who no longer wish to receive anything from us, a short email to that effect will suffice.] A little too early, I feel, to wish you a joyous festive season, but come to our Yule Apéro and I can do so then!

## Board decisions – “*That we will well and truly try*”

The Board meeting in August dealt in large part with, as usual, forthcoming events, including the AGM and, specifically, the Society's financial situation, which can only be described as healthy. At its meeting earlier this week (!), the Board reviewed its first Savoyards Productions show, both the (predominantly) positive as well as the negative aspects, where improvements could and should be addressed. It also discussed the viability of improving and extending our singers' talents, as well as the possibility of setting up a numerically stable chorus. Finally, it decided to cut back on the number of Facebook accounts (from three to one), as a multiplicity could well be counter-productive. And last, but not least, the Board continued with its planning of those events scheduled for the next quarter.



## The Society's AGM – Thursday, 26 September

The draft Minutes (they may change slightly before being put before members for approval at the next AGM) and finances (these won't!) are attached – for members only – at the end of this Newsletter. I therefore will not dwell on it here: suffice to say that the evening went well, there were animated discussions and, for me the most important aspect, the endorsement from those present (exactly one third of our membership!) of the Board's short- and medium-term plans. The 'Kochschnische' at Markthalle is a useful venue (thanks to Johanna MacLeod Honegger for again arranging everything) but, with the increasing popularity of the Markthalle in general, and the food stalls in particular, was noisier than last year. The Board may need to consider a different venue in future, but members may be sure that it will be in Basel, and central to boot.

## Forthcoming Society events – “*Then no longer let us linger*”



## Friday, 22nd November: “*Closer still with Closer*”

The perfect way to chill out after a busy week: with our own Beverley Worboys, this close-

harmony trio will provide an unforgettable evening of music.

All information is in the flyer below. Open to all, and payment only at the door.

A pleasure not to be missed! Come along! Tell your friends and bring them with you!

## Savoyards Productions proudly presents – “Closer still with *Closer*”



feat. **Beverley Worboys, Sara Louisa Parry & Michael Robinson**

**Where:** Gundeldinger Feld, Halle 8  
Dornacherstrasse 192, Basel

**When:** Friday, 22 November 2019, 8.00 pm  
(doors and bar: 7.15 pm)

**Cost:** CHF 25 (payable at the door)

*Closer*'s exquisitely unique harmonies, vocal prowess and distinctive interpretations that transcend both generations and genres, combine to make a dazzlingly sophisticated sound that continues to move and excite audiences all around the world, from London's West End to Europe and beyond.



### **Wednesday, 27th November: DVD evening, *The Pirates of Penzance***

FULLY BOOKED! Hopefully, a second viewing of Opera Australia's production will be possible early in 2020. Many thanks to Bernie for the appropriate (?) cartoon.



### **Friday, 13th December: The Yule Apéro**

Our annual community singing and the usual socialising over a drink (or two!) heralding in the festive season is being held in a different venue this year, simply because the Lindengrabsaal, along with the rest of the Alterszentrum zum Lamm, is closed for renovation! We'll convene therefore at the Pfarreiheim of the Sacré Coeur, Feierabendstrasse 68. Details and registration very soon!

### **Saturday, 25th January 2020: The Burns Supper**

Our traditional, biennial event which has always proved immensely popular. So much so that it invariably sells out within a couple of weeks of registration, which this year will be around end-November. Details then, but don't expect them to differ much from the last time; however, we do plan to start a little earlier to give everyone more time to socialise, which must be in everyone's interest!

## Review of recent Society events – “Singing so merrily, ‘Trial la law’ ”



### “An evening with Cole Porter” – 28th June

This event, in effect the first of the Society’s “Savoyards Productions” – although billed slightly differently – started badly before it even got off the ground! Through no fault of the Society, nor indeed of the artists, who had to revise their plans at very short notice, the venue providers, less than a week before the foreseen and advertised date, cancelled due to a double booking! They were, of course, very sorry etc etc, and offered an alternative at no cost to the Society, but, although financially welcome (at least in theory) and accepted, was small recompense for the re-organisation that had to follow.

Consequently, the Society’s last event of the year wasn’t its Summer Apéro (see the last Newsletter for various reviews), but “An evening with Cole Porter”. In fact, it was rescheduled to the only date the artists could make before the summer break and the end of the Society’s year, namely the day before *Bündelitag* (the school-free Saturday which marks the first day of the holidays, when schoolchildren pack or prepare their ‘bundles’).

In spite of this and, perhaps more important but which was still to play a not insignificant role, the heat, around 40 came to the Gundeldinger Feld to listen to, predominantly, Nina Bradlin (vocals) and Tiffany Butt (piano). Predominantly, as Richard Doust ably assisted Nina with, often, his own ‘take’ on the Porter lyrics.

Halle 8 in the Gundeldinger Feld is not what one would define as a standard venue for a musical evening; in fact, it is simply a converted depot (*Lagerhalle*), whereby ‘converted’ is more to be understood for the events therein rather than any effort in conversion to assist such events. However, it was precisely this ‘urban’ quality that convinced the Board that it was worth trying out as a suitable venue to attract a younger generation. In addition, the logistics of the nearby Unser Bier (to purchase beer on a sale or return basis) and the Werk 8 bar (to hire glasses) was a further reason for the Board to take the risk.

In point of fact, there were as many Society members (for which my thanks) as non-members; whereas the former could hardly be termed the ‘younger generation’ (but undoubtedly ‘young at heart’), the latter were, so that the Board’s decision was, in my opinion, justified.

What no-one could either reasonably expect or do much about was the temperature in- and outside on that evening (hence my earlier comment that the financial advantage caused by the month’s delay was mitigated by the probable loss in profit of the number attending, as well as the amount drunk). At first sight this might seem strange: when it’s hot, people will drink more, surely? Yes, but water (first) and beer (second), and not wine, and spirits even less so, both of which almost by definition carry a larger profit margin.

But back to the show: anything with Tiffany involved is almost guaranteed to be good, and the evening was no exception. The selection of Cole Porter songs chosen by her and Nina well demonstrated the variety, wit and musical quality of Porter’s capabilities, and Nina (and Richard) interpreted them with skill, so that no-one had cause to regret braving the heat. That Porter was “inspired by Gilbert” was equally clear (were any justification by the Society needed). Many thanks to Nina, Tiffany and Richard for a most enjoyable – albeit hot – evening.



## **“Hiding in plain sight: suffragettes, singers and spies of World War One” – 19th/20th October**

At our recent 2019 AGM, Chairman Steve explained that under the title “Savoyards Productions” the Gilbert and Sullivan Society would start to explore how to extend the range of our artistic presentations so as to attract a wider audience.

On 19 and 20 October the first such event – “Hiding in Plain Sight” – was staged in the intimate venue of “The Safe” in Unternehmen Mitte. Written and presented by Dr Vivien Newman, an author and expert on the suffragettes and women’s role in World War One, this was a very moving, thought-provoking but also entertaining evening. Our Board Members Beverley Worboys (artistic and musical director) and Tiffany Butt (arranger and pianist) had worked closely with Vivien to put together a wonderfully atmospheric recreation of that time, ably assisted by Reiner Kohler’s sound and visual backgrounds.

The programme was in two parts: in the first half, the attitudes of the suffragettes and other women towards the war, and their later heroic work in field hospitals, were brought to life in poem and song. In the second half, the theme switched to the story of one particular woman in the war, that of the Swiss demi-monde singer, courtesan and German spy Régina Diana.

In the first half, Vivien told the story of the suffragettes and their responses to the outbreak of war. Tatjana Gazdik illustrated this most effectively by presenting the anti-war song:

“I didn’t raise my boy to be a soldier,  
I brought him up to be my pride and joy.  
Who dares to place a musket on his shoulder,  
To shoot some other mother’s darling boy?”

It was the opening of London’s Endell Street Military Hospital (ESMH, the “Suffragettes’ Hospital”) in 1915 that really forced the Home Office to reconsider their previous dismissal of women’s abilities. Run entirely by women, ESMH embodied the suffragette slogan ‘Deeds not Words’. ESMH was founded by two prominent suffragettes, Louisa Garrett Anderson and Flora Murray. Tired of trying to convince the Home Office of their medical capabilities, Anderson and Murray went to the French Red Cross and offered to run a military hospital. They were readily granted Hôtel Claridge on the Champs Élysées and began treating patients almost immediately.

Beverley sang, in a beautifully authentic style, the romantic ballad “Roses of Picardy” of 1916, where, although the chorus is very well known, the less well-known verses were very touching:

“She is watching by the poplars,  
Colinette with the sea-blue eyes,  
She is watching and longing and waiting,  
Where the long white roadway lies.”

A graphic and deeply passionate “Sonnet to a Soldier” written from a front-line field hospital on the Somme by the “great forgotten voice of the first world war”, the American suffragette and nurse Mary (May) Borden, showed what terrible mental and psychological strain, horrific scenes and personal grief these young ladies were coping with. It seemed to me on a par with the best of the WW1 war-poets, such as Wilfrid Owen or Siegfried Sassoon.

The first half ended with the story of the front-line concert parties, initiated by Lena Ashwell, against the will of the War Office. These concert parties did much for the troops’ morale. The two most famous songs of that time, both composed by the 21-year-old Ivor Novello, “Keep the home fires burning”, sung by Cameron Gough with great feeling, and “We’ll gather lilacs”, beautifully presented by Beverley, brought this first half to a perfect end.

The second half of the evening highlighted a completely different aspect of women in WW1, which was practically unknown until the diligent researches of Dr Vivien Newman brought it to light. Born in Geneva as Marie-Antoinette Avvico, Régina Diana was French/Italian and, like Mata Hari, a singer, entertainer and seductress, who ran a successful spy ring for German Intelligence. While Vivien told the story, Tatjana (as Régina), Beverley, and Cameron, ably supported by Simon Honegger, acted out and illustrated the tragic story of Régina in song. Tiffany, whose perfectly judged piano accompaniments were one key to the evening's success, briefly abandoned her piano keyboard for an accordion, becoming a convincingly sleazy night-club entertainer!

To pass on her information, Régina Diana used handwritten messages in invisible ink on postcards to Switzerland. She was discovered when a card was left near the stove in a sorting office and the secret message emerged. She was arrested, tried and executed in 1918.

The second half of the programme also looked at the war from the sides of all combatants, and a medley of "It's a long way to Tipperary", "Die Wacht am Rhein" and "Le Chant du Départ" presented by our three soloists showed us that no side had the monopoly of sentimental or patriotic songs. Tatjana also beautifully presented the original version of "Mademoiselle from Armentières". Since Régina Diana's treachery led to the sinking of a troopship, Beverley sang with real emotion a verse of the hymn "O hear us when we cry to thee, for those in peril on the sea". The patriotic French anthem "Le Régiment de Sambre et Meuse" brought the evening to a fitting close.

All in all, judging by the 'full-house' audience's enthusiastic reaction, the evening was a great success. The concept, presented for the first time, gave a unique insight into aspects of WW1 which caused us to ponder, while enjoying the story and music. If further ventures of Savoyards Productions or of the G&S Society come up to this high standard, we can be assured of a very rich and varied programme and a wider focus, without losing sight of our roots.

## Other items of interest:

**"An Oily Card – the life and times of Richard D'Oyly Carte"**  
(part 2, with illustrations), by Stephan Arthur (talk given on 9th April)

### A first rift

The American venture had proved a great success financially, the three men had worked together closely and effectively, they had seen off their earlier backers in London and were their own bosses. Already they were planning much the same, i.e. a dual and simultaneous opening, for their next opera. But cracks were beginning to appear, of which the most serious was Gilbert's view of Carte as an equal and equally-remunerated partner. As he, Gilbert, saw it, he told Carte provocatively, all the manager had to do in London was to look after the advertisements and sign the contracts when performers were engaged. Gilbert estimated Carte's services at £1,000 a year. He even suggested to Carte that he and Sullivan might take a theatre themselves and employ a manager, not that he and Sullivan had any intention of doing so, he hastened to add. The mere threat was intended to put Carte in his place; Gilbert would never be able to accept Carte as an equal member in the partnership.



Perhaps Gilbert was not fully wrong with his reasoning; after all, we refer today to G&S and not G, S & C. But without Carte's business acumen (and later, Helen Lenoir's), his connections and those under his contract – as we'll soon see – and, probably most important of all, the freedom he afforded Gilbert and Sullivan to simply concentrate on writing and composing by alleviating them of all the everyday tasks, makes it, I venture to suggest, extremely unlikely that the Savoy Operas would have been as good, and therefore as popular and profitable, as they were, nor would there have been quite so many of them. In addition, and this certainly led him not to share Gilbert's views, Sullivan, with his poor health, coupled with his somewhat complicated private life and his desire to compose 'serious' music, would not have lived as long as he did had he been burdened with even overseeing to a greater extent a manager's work.

## **Patience and Oscar Wilde**

*The Pirates of Penzance* was still being performed successfully when Carte wrote on 11th May 1880 to the manager of Booth's Theatre in New York that "W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan ... agree to write a new Opera in time for production in New York on ... 29th Nov. 1880." This is a provocative statement to say the least, as Gilbert had not yet even suggested the sketch of a plot, and Sullivan was commissioned to write *The Martyr of Antioch* first, but had not yet started! This, if all went well, would only leave Sullivan around six weeks for the opera. In the event, Carte left for New York on 11th June and returned, with Helen Lenoir, at the end of July. There was no further mention of the agreement and was the end of the plan to have another opera within six months.

*Patience* satirises aestheticism, which grew partly as a reaction to the industrial age in the 1860s and 1870s, represented by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones. It achieved notoriety through Oscar Wilde: in 1878, in Oxford, he had attended a fancy-dress ball wearing plum-red breeches and silk stockings, and at one time filled his room with lilies. He was the subject of a series of cartoons by du Maurier in *Punch*.

All this was fine for London and the English provinces, but the movement had not yet reached America. Carte had to make sure that it did before *Patience* opened there. Recall that I mentioned earlier that Oscar Wilde was under contract to Carte? Well, it was time to make use of him. Consequently, in 1881, Wilde was dispatched on an extensive lecture tour of the United States. With his fluting voice, knee breeches, floppy ties and a lily in his hand, the Americans very soon knew all about the craze of aestheticism; the success of *Patience* was assured!

There is an interesting insight into Sullivan and the theatregoer of the day. After a dress rehearsal on 20th April 1881, he worked through the night completing the opera and sketching out the overture. That morning, the 21st, he gave his sketch to Eugène D'Albert, a 17-year-old student at the National Training School and winner of that year's Mendelssohn Scholarship. For Sullivan to have given him the overture to score indicates not only his belief in D'Albert's abilities but also that he did not consider it worth spending time himself on writing a specially composed overture that would be largely ignored by an audience still finding seats and chatting. Instead, Sullivan went to the Argus Club and lost £450 (around £45,000 in today's terms) at cards. It is not recorded how long D'Albert took to prepare the score, or how long the orchestra had to rehearse it, but suffice to say that *Patience* premiered two days later, on the 23rd. Incidentally, D'Albert, a prolific composer, and equally prolific conceiver of children – eight from six wives – became a naturalised Swiss and is buried in Morcote cemetery.

## **Michael Gunn and the Savoy**

It is now time to leave Gilbert and Sullivan for a while and introduce someone of whom Carte wrote in a letter to his solicitor, "I have a greater respect and regard for him than I think for any man living except my father". This was Michael Ralph Gunn who was destined to play, after



Gilbert, Sullivan and Lenoir, the greatest role in Carte's life. Born in Dublin in 1840, the second of eight children, Gunn enters our story when he and his brother built a new theatre, the Gaiety, on South King Street in Dublin, opening on 27th November 1871 with a performance of *She Stoops to Conquer*. In September 1875, as we've already heard, Carte toured with *Trial by Jury*, including performances at the Gaiety, and when he first met Helen Lenoir.

Michael Gunn took an interest in Carte's ambition to set up a permanent home for light opera in London, and eventually became his business manager. It was he who managed the two touring companies of *H.M.S. Pinafore* in the United Kingdom while Carte was in America, and he was involved in Carte's battles with the Comedy Opera Company in London.

A further interest that Gunn had obliquely involving Carte was a member of his, Carte's, company whose stage name was Bessie Sudlow. She played the Plaintiff in the company which alighted in Dublin, and, just a year later, married Michael Gunn; Carte was best man. The Gunns were to have six bullets, sorry, children.

But most important for Carte was Gunn's major role in realising Carte's plans for a theatre of his own, the Savoy. Carte had already seen a suitable site in 1879 to realise his dream, namely, as we've already heard, "to establish in London a permanent abode for light Opera." A syndicate was formed to secure the site, and both Carte and Gunn had a share, but it was Gunn that was responsible for negotiating additional loans for building the theatre itself and for finding additional backers. The site was on a piece of ground that sloped steeply towards the Thames embankment and was reached from the Beaufort Buildings off the Strand, where Carte had moved his offices a few years earlier. His first idea was to call the theatre the Beaufort, but changed the name to the Savoy as it was on part of the site of the ancient Savoy Palace.



To have some idea of the cost, and to convert to today's terms just multiply by 100: the freehold cost £11,000, and the initial estimate for the building was raised from £12,000 to £18,000. As a result, Carte dismissed the architect and employed another, C. J. Phipps. However, the dismissed successfully sued for £1,790 for services to date and a further £3,000 for wrongful dismissal.

The Savoy Theatre opened on 10th October 1881 with a performance of *Patience*, which Gilbert and Sullivan had contractually agreed to move from the Opera Comique. *The Times* commented, "A perfect view of the stage can be had from every seat in the house", of which there were 1,292. Unlike today, the main entrance was on the Embankment, and it was only after the Savoy Hotel opened in 1889 that this was moved to the Strand, so that today, unusually, one descends to reach the stalls rather than ascends to the 'gods'. The theatre was lushly decorated, but it was, of course, the electric lighting – the first public building worldwide to be lit entirely by electricity – that was the talk of the town. As there were technical problems that couldn't be solved in time, Carte stepped on to the stage on the first night before the start of the overture and announced that only the auditorium would be lit by electricity and, as a precaution, one gaslight would be kept burning. The excited but apprehensive audience applauded the manager as he left the stage, and as the gaslight was lowered in the





theatre a hushed expectancy fell. *The Daily Chronicle* reported “As if by the wave of a fairy’s wand, the theatre immediately became filled with a soft, soothing light, clearer and far more grateful than gas.” Spontaneously, a cheer went up from the excited and relieved auditorium. After only a few weeks, the difficulties were overcome and, on 28th December, the stage, and thus the whole theatre, was also lit by electricity.

## The Savoy Operas

*Patience* was therefore the first true Savoy Opera, and it risked being the first of only two: Sullivan had announced to Carte that he was prepared to do one more with Gilbert, but that that would be it, as he would have to move on to Grand Opera. It was left to Carte to tell Gilbert, and to wrestle with the subsequent financial consequences, especially with a new theatre threatening to weigh him down. Just having to ‘look after the advertisements’, as Gilbert had jibed, indeed! Sullivan asked to be released from the partnership on several occasions, but even he – especially with his lifestyle – wasn’t immune to the income the Savoy Operas generated.

*Iolanthe* was the first G&S opera to premiere at the Savoy and, during its run, in February 1883, a five-year partnership agreement with Gilbert and Sullivan was signed, obliging them to create new operas for Carte at six months’ notice. As we’ve seen, Sullivan had not intended to write a new work with Gilbert, but he suffered a serious financial loss when his stockbroker went bankrupt in November 1882 and felt the long-term contract necessary for his security. As Andrew Crowther comments, “Effectively, [the contract] made [Gilbert and Sullivan] Carte’s employees – a situation which created its own resentments.”

In this five-year period, *Princess Ida*, *The Mikado*, *Ruddigore* and *The Yeomen of the Guard* premiered at the Savoy Theatre. There were also revivals by Carte of *The Sorcerer* and *Trial by Jury*, and matinees of *The Pirates of Penzance* with a cast of children. During these years, Carte was not just the manager of the theatre. He was a full participant in the producing partnership with Gilbert and Sullivan, involved in casting and finding designers; in charge of publicity; directing and hiring designers for the non-Gilbert works, including the many companion pieces (sometimes with the help of assistants); and casting, directing and rehearsing the touring companies, among other duties.

And Carte still had problems with those Colonials! He was in negotiation with two New York impresarios to put on *The Mikado* and agreed a deal with one of them. However, the other, a Mr Duff, was not prepared to let matters rest and Carte became aware that Duff intended

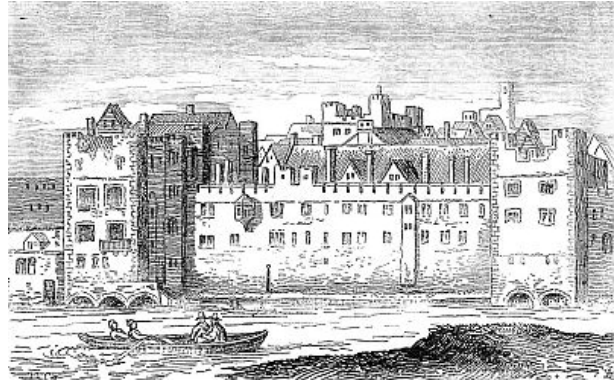


to put on a pirate production first. Carte wasn’t going to have that! First, he bought up all the Japanese costumes available in London and Paris, and gathered together a company which rehearsed on the pretext that they would tour the English provinces. Only when everything was ready did Carte tell them at a meeting at the Savoy in the strictest confidence that they were going to New York. In addition, their cabins on the Cunard liner all bore fictitious names. ‘His’ *Mikado* was a smash hit in New York before Mr Duff had even started rehearsals!

And he had remarried! Helen Carte, as she now was, became more and more indispensable, especially as her husband was about to realise his second dream, a grand hotel, which would increase their fortune but which would also cause him headaches anew.

## The Savoy Hotel

The Savoy Palace, built by the Earl of Richmond in 1263, stood on land donated by Henry III between the Strand and the Thames. By 1505, the palace was in ruins and, on its site, Henry VII built a hospital for “pouer, nedie people.” Drawings show that it was a magnificent building, with a dormitory, dining hall and three chapels. Dissolved in 1702, a fire in 1864 consumed everything except the stone walls and the Savoy Chapel, precisely the one in which the Cartes married



constant hot and cold running water in each room; glazed brickwork designed to prevent London’s smoke-laden air from spoiling the external walls and its own artesian well.



The hotel may have been built to be fit for a king, but it was poorly operated, and, within six months of its opening on 6th August 1889, was losing money. The board of directors instructed Carte to replace the manager and chef de cuisine: Carte engaged César Ritz, later the founder of the 91 hotels bearing his name, and Ritz brought Auguste Escoffier as chef de cuisine and Louis Echenard as maître d’hôtel. Together they organised “a little army of hotel men for the conquest of London”; Escoffier recruited French cooks and re-organised the kitchens. The Savoy under Ritz and his partners soon attracted distinguished and wealthy clientele, headed by the Prince of Wales. Aristocratic women, hitherto unaccustomed to dining in public, were now “seen in full regalia in the Savoy dining and supper rooms”. The hotel became a financial success. What could possibly go wrong?



In September 1897 the Cartes received a nine-page letter signed by “One Who Knows”, alleging wholesale corruption over a period of eight years. The best-attested of these was the complaint of one of the chief grocery suppliers, that they were finding it hard to “allow 5% off the Savoy account, give 5% to the chef and supply Ritz and Echenard’s private homes for nothing.” Ritz and his partners were dismissed from the Savoy, accused of larceny, embezzlement and fraud. An idea of the amounts concerned is given by that which was recouped, namely £19,137 (recall the multiple of 100 to get today’s value), almost equal to the hotel’s total profits for that year. Most of this came from Ritz himself, and Escoffier was only



able, or perhaps willing, to return £500 of the £8,000 he owed; Ritz' stockbroker owed £281 for meals – he never paid. Moreover, Ritz and Echenard were implicated in the 'disappearance' of over £3,476 of wine and spirits. The story that they resigned from their respective positions was perpetuated for many years, with the consent of the Savoy company. In fact, however, after a damning report by the company's auditors and the advice of the prominent lawyer, Sir Edward Carson, that it was the board's "imperative duty to dismiss the manager and the chef", Carte handed Ritz, Escoffier and Echenard on 7th March 1898 letters of dismissal:

"By a resolution passed this morning you have been dismissed from the service of the Hotel for, among other serious reasons, gross negligence and breaches of duty and mismanagement. I am also directed to request that you will be good enough to leave the Hotel at once."

Ritz threatened to sue the hotel company for wrongful dismissal, but was evidently dissuaded by Escoffier, who felt that their interests would be better served by keeping the scandal quiet. It was not until 1985 that the facts became public knowledge.

### The Gondoliers, Sullivan's and Carte's dream and more property



THE SAVOY.  
THE ENTR'ACTE, *log.* :—"Glad to see you together, gentlemen. You'll find this more profitable than pulling different ways."

1889 not only saw the opening of the Savoy Hotel, but also Carte's need and wish for a further work from Gilbert and Sullivan. Sullivan again expressed reluctance to write another comic opera, asking if Gilbert would write a "dramatic work on a larger musical scale". Gilbert declined but offered a compromise that Sullivan ultimately accepted: the two would write a light opera for the Savoy, and at the same time, Sullivan could work on a grand opera that Carte would produce at a new theatre he was planning to build, thereby realising his, Carte's, third dream, namely to present British grand opera. The result of the former was *The Gondoliers*, which opened in December 1889 and became one of the partnership's greatest successes, with an initial run of 554 performances; the latter would be Sullivan's only grand opera, *Ivanhoe*, which finally opened in January 1891 at the Royal English Opera House. It played for an initial run of 155 performances,

a record for an opera, and was thus not the failure it has since been seen to have been. When the run finally ended in July, Carte had no new work ready to play at the opera house, and so it had to close. The opera house re-opened in November 1891 with a new production – alternating with a revival of *Ivanhoe* – but it closed in January 1892. Carte again had no new opera to present, and, after leasing the theatre to Sarah Bernhardt for a season, sold the opera house within a year at a loss. Today it is the Palace Theatre.

If the opera house was a failure, his other acquisitions were not. He acquired Simpson's-in-the-Strand and Claridge's, both of which he entirely rebuilt. He later bought the Berkeley Hotel, the Grand Hotel in Rome and the Marivaux Restaurant in Paris.

They all contributed to allowing him to live in luxury: the Cartes' London house was at the Adelphi, not far from the Savoy. Passionate about the visual as well as the performing arts, Carte invited his friend, the artist Whistler, who if you recall was also under contract to him, to decorate the house. Whistler had the entire billiard room painted the colour of the billiard cloth,

and elsewhere painted his favourite yellow with his own hand. Equally enthusiastic for technological innovation, Carte installed a lift, the first in a private house in England. Around 1890, he bought a small island in the Thames, between Weybridge and Shepperton, called Folly Eyot, which he renamed D'Oyly Carte Island. He wanted to use the island as an annex to the Savoy Hotel, but the local authorities refused to grant him a drinks licence. Instead, he built Eyot House, a large house and garden on the island, that he also used as a residence. In later years, Carte displayed his macabre sense of humour by keeping a crocodile on the island. In 2014, the property went up for sale for £4 million, but I have not been able to ascertain who the present owners are or whether the island – via a footbridge – can be visited.

## The (in)famous carpet quarrel and the end of a partnership

Most of you will know the story known as *The Carpet Quarrel*, so I'll not spend much time on it. Also, it was, at least for Gilbert, the final straw which tipped the balance in quarrels over Carte's book-keeping, his expenditures, but mainly his insistence on being treated as an equal partner and not, as Gilbert would have preferred, a salaried employee.

On 22nd April 1890, during the run of *The Gondoliers*, Gilbert discovered that maintenance expenses for the theatre totalling £4,500, including £500 for a new carpet for the front lobby of the theatre, were being charged to the partnership instead of borne by Carte and wrote a letter of complaint to Sullivan. Gilbert angrily confronted Carte, but the latter refused to reconsider the accounts. Even though the amount of the charge was not great in light of the profits being generated by the production, Gilbert felt that it was a moral issue involving Carte's integrity, and he could not look past it. Gilbert stormed out and wrote to Sullivan that "I left him with the remark that it was a mistake to kick down the ladder by which he had risen". Helen Carte wrote that Gilbert had addressed Carte "in a way that I should not have thought you would have used to an offending menial." Matters deteriorated further, and Gilbert brought a lawsuit. Sullivan sided with Carte, as he was building the Royal English Opera House. Gilbert won the dispute and felt vindicated, but his actions had been hurtful to his partners, and the partnership disbanded.



COMIC OPERA AT THE SAVOY.

"GOOD TIMES WILL COME AGAIN, D'OTLY, MY BOY!"

35

Gilbert's aggressive, though successful, legal action had embittered Carte and Sullivan, but the partnership had been so profitable that the Cartes eventually sought to reunite the author and composer. After several attempts, the reconciliation finally came through the efforts of Tom Chappell, who published the sheet music to their operas. In 1893, Gilbert and Sullivan produced their penultimate collaboration, *Utopia, Limited*. Three years later, their last collaboration, *The Grand Duke*, premiered at the Savoy, but the fire had gone out. It ran for a comparatively short 123 performances and was a financial failure. The Triumvirate were not to work together again.



On 22nd November 1900, Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan died: he was 58. Less than four months later, on 3rd April 1901, Richard D'Oyly Carte followed, a month short of his 57th birthday. Carte left a



substantial fortune – easily the largest of the three – valued at £240,817 and all of his business affairs were passed on to his wife Helen, which, in 1903, when a debenture was requested for refurbishment, the hotel group alone was officially valued at £2,221,708. She continued to manage them all with the same success as before until her own death on 5th May 1913, a week short of her 61st birthday. Sir William Schwenck Gilbert was the oldest of them all, dying in his 76th year on 29th May 1911.

## In conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, that pretty much ends my discourse on Richard D'Oyly Carte. I hope that I have been able to illustrate that without Carte, there would likely as not never have been a Gilbert and Sullivan, in much the same fashion that, without Gilbert, there was no Sullivan and vice versa. True, without the other two, Carte would likely be less remembered than they, individually, would be today, but what is certain is that, without Carte, there would not be those musical delights which we collectively know as the Savoy Operas.

## “The Tangled Skein” from *The Bab Ballads*

Gilbert published his Bab Ballads in book form in 1869, but he began writing them for *Fun* in 1861; they then became a regular feature. However, it was not until 1897 that “The Tangled Skein” appeared in print as a poem, with an illustration by Bab (aka Gilbert), in his publication *The Bab Ballads with which are included Songs of a Savoyard*. It is reprinted below, and the accompanying illustration is the one I use under the *Review of recent Society events* (see above).

Try we life-long, we can never  
Straighten out life's tangled skein,  
Why should we, in vain endeavour,  
Guess and guess and guess again?  
Life's a pudding full of plums  
Care's a canker that benumbs.  
Wherefore waste our elocution  
On impossible solution?  
Life's a pleasant institution,  
Let us take it as it comes!

Set aside the dull enigma,  
We shall guess it all too soon;  
Failure brings no kind of stigma -  
Dance we to another tune!  
String the lyre and fill the cup,  
Lest on sorrow we should sup;  
Hop and skip to Fancy's fiddle,  
Hands across and down the middle -  
Life's perhaps the only riddle  
That we shrink from giving up!

You will of course have recognised the text, which is, word for word, embedded in the recital by Casilda, the Duke and Duchess, Luiz and Don Alhambra immediately after Casilda is told by Don Alhambra (“I stole the prince”) that she is married, but either to a prince or ‘just’ a gondolier. And that, of course, is in *The Gondoliers*.

But which came first? Well, actually, *The Gondoliers*, which opened at the Savoy Theatre on 7th December 1889, and in part explains the title of the book in which “The Tangled Skein” first appeared, namely ... *with which are included Songs of a Savoyard*. Probably the same is true of many of the other ‘new’ pieces there.

## Kate Miller-Heidke



I'm sure that some of you (even if you won't admit such to your friends) watched this year's European Song Contest (live and/or on YouTube) or even listened to the songs on Spotify. Those who did see the spectacle – for that, for all the criticism it receives, is what it is – will hardly have failed to have been impressed by Australia's entry (that nearby European country).

Why do I mention this? Well, the singer, Kate-Miller Heidke, while perched on a swinging pole, pictured here, was still able to apply her considerable singing talent. When one knows that she completed a Bachelor of Music degree in Classical Voice from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music at Griffith University on full scholarship, has sung for the English National Opera at the London Coliseum and the New York Met, and has sung at many festivals, this is hardly surprising.

However, the main reason I mention her here is that she was to have sung G&S with Opera Australia, but instead turned her back on classical singing to concentrate on popular music and songwriting. Pity.

From Marina Emmel

## «Bunte Palette»



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**Leitung: Benoît Kiener**

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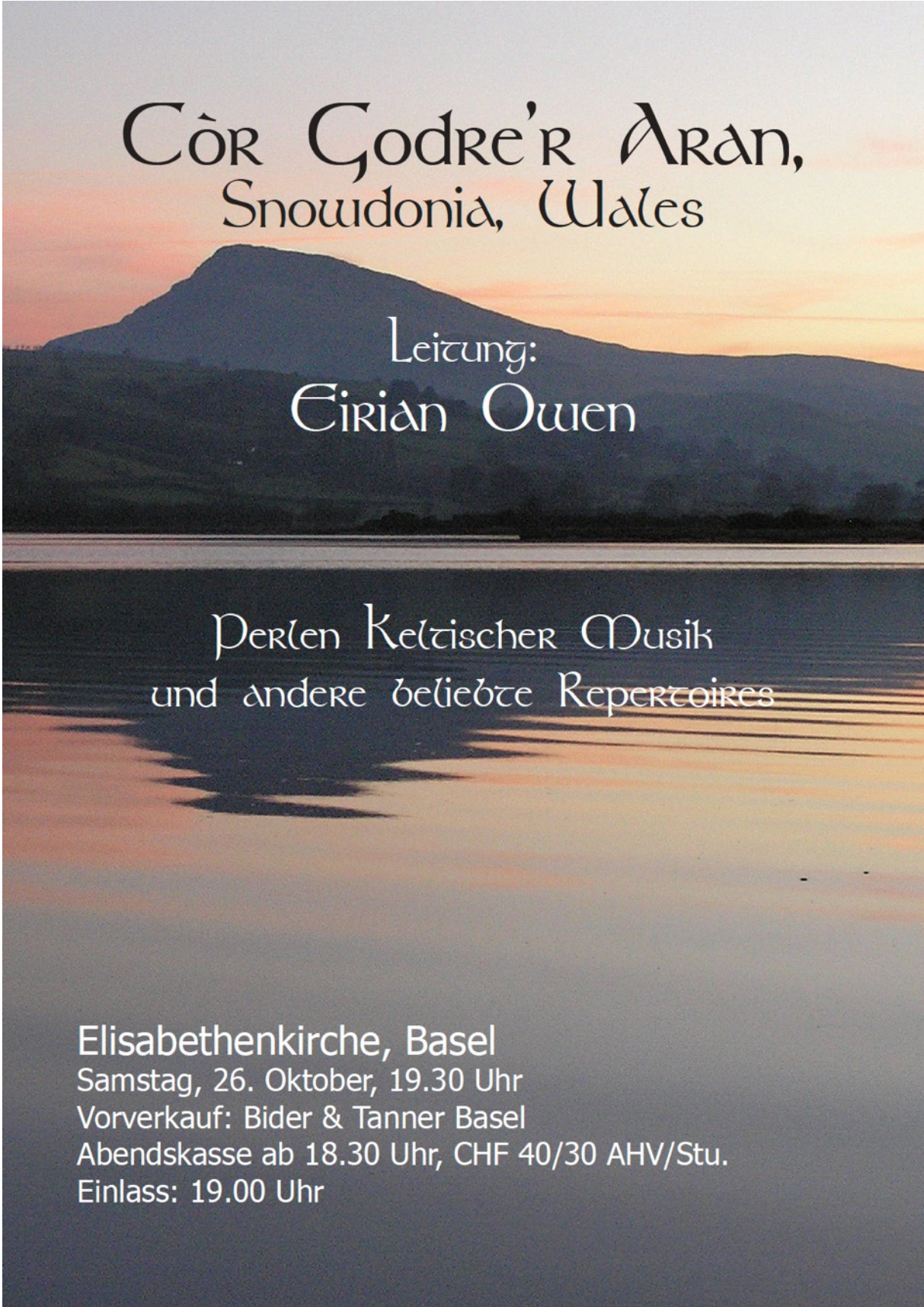
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# Côr Godre'r Aran, Snowdonia, Wales

Leitung:  
Eirian Owen

Perlen Keltischer Musik  
und andere beliebte Repertoires

Elisabethenkirche, Basel  
Samstag, 26. Oktober, 19.30 Uhr  
Vorverkauf: Bider & Tanner Basel  
Abendskasse ab 18.30 Uhr, CHF 40/30 AHV/Stu.  
Einlass: 19.00 Uhr



## Footnote

I have no intention of entering or even entertaining the thought of entering a conversation or piece on the continuing saga of Brexitgate, but I am reminded of a phrase from *The Mikado*:

“And I am right,  
And you are right,  
And all is right as right can be!”

## STOP PRESS!

Saturday’s performance of “Hiding in plain sight”, thanks to Reiner, is now available on YouTube! See and enjoy it at <https://youtu.be/MRP-KVwC2H4>.

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