

Judge - Character ^{High} BAR

Counsel for Plaintiff - BAR

Defendant - Ten

Usher - BAR

Foreman Jury BAR small part

Plaintiff - 50p

Bridesmaids - 1st and other ^{50p}
Maybe 12

Spectators

Problem Men for Jury
Dress Contraltos?

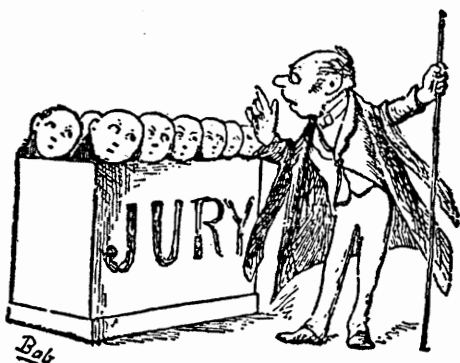
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE LEARNED JUDGE	High Baritone	1B
THE PLAINTIFF	Lyric Soprano	3B
THE DEFENDANT	Tenor	2B
COUNSEL FOR PLAINTIFF	High Baritone	2B
ASSOCIATE		4D
FOREMAN OF THE JURY	Baritone	3C
FIRST BRIDESMAID	Soprano	3D
USHER	Baritone	2C

JURORS, BRIDESMAIDS, AND GENERAL PUBLIC

Scene—A Court of Justice
One Act.

First produced at the Royalty Theater, March 25, 1875



HERE IS, PROBABLY, the grandest one-act operetta ever written. Always a favorite with amateurs for its simplicity, its light-heartedness, and general effectiveness, it has stood the test of time as well as any of its more elaborate successors and, played with the requisite energy and gaiety, can be relied upon to send an audience home feeling that "a good time was had by all."

Do not, however, underrate its requirements. You may play it with or without stage, scenery, or orchestra, and it will have its due effect; *but* the characterizations must be convincing, all movement be well rehearsed, and, above all, the music be performed with strict accuracy. The Judge and the Counsel must be real, serious legal lights, the Usher a vigorous busybody, the Plaintiff a maiden who is very broken-hearted indeed, and the Defendant a regular devil of a fellow, as dashing and as debonair as you please.

This was the first success of the great collaborators, neither of whom could possibly have imagined that it would be followed by such an impressive series. Both of them, but especially Sullivan, had already achieved some reputation in their individual work. Their first collaboration, *Thespis*, had been a failure, so that the unquestioned hit made by this little work must have come as a staggering surprise to both. Originally produced as a curtain-raiser to *La Perichole*, it soon be-

came evident that the smaller work was the main attraction, and within a week or so it was being played after, instead of before, Offenbach's opera.

Gilbert, we may suppose, was delightedly "getting his own back" for the dullness of the days he spent laboring in a law office, while Sullivan was reveling in a real holiday from the church music and oratorios through which he aimed at establishing himself as a serious composer. Be that as it may, Gilbert's wit is here at its brightest, and while Sullivan wrote much cleverer and more elaborate music for the later operas, none of it surpassed this of the *Trial by Jury* in engaging spontaneity, or in its miraculous fitness to its subject matter. It may almost be said that, to find music elsewhere of such unstudied ease and effortless mastery, one would have to go back to Mozart, and certainly the lovely melody that brings on the Bridesmaids would not have been unworthy of even that august pen. Alas! that same melody seems to be suffering the fate of much of Mozart's work today, in being usually taken at far too rapid a pace. So too with the Sestet, that perfect parody of conventional Italian opera, and also with the delicious Finale. Too often they run at such a rate that the melodic outline is lost, the form confused, and, in the case of the Finale, the words become unintelligible. As for the effect produced, we have left merely a routine performance of a negligible work, conveying the impression (entirely justified) of something which has to be got through as quickly as possible, without effort and without understanding.

In no work is the injunction against clowning more cogent. The stage effects and business may be as crazy as you please, but they must never be funny to the persons of the play. It is recommended that the piece be rehearsed, at first, as a perfectly serious play, and that when this treatment be well established, the gestures and expression be exaggerated just

sufficiently to drive home the actual absurdity, without altering in the least the mental attitude of the players toward the play.

There is always a drawback. In this case it is that the singing parts are undeniably high. Surprisingly so, when one remembers that the English pitch of that day was almost half a tone higher than the present standard pitch. While average baritone voices will be found adequate for the Usher and the Foreman, the parts of the Judge and the Counsel would be too trying for any voice which cannot take E's and F's with complete ease. The soprano of the Plaintiff should be equal to a high B-flat, but the Defendant's music does not exceed the compass usually demanded of a well-trained tenor.

The operetta plays about thirty-five minutes, and will combine admirably with either *The Sorcerer*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, or *The Pirates of Penzance* to make a full-length entertainment. If so combined, the excellent precedent of the original production should be followed—let it end the program. There is no better way of sending your audience home happy and satisfied.

As for the stage business, one or two examples may be given which have been found successful and amusing. The first is entirely unauthorized. Put the Jury in a real box, with a lid on it. At the rise of the curtain, and as the populace struggle on, the Usher, assisted by a "bobby," raises the lid of the box and reveals the Jury. This is good for a laugh at the very start of the play—always a good thing.

The other is Gilbert's original specification for the Finale, which, for some reason, seems to have been dropped from most of the published scores. Here it is: "Judge and Plaintiff dance back, hornpipe step, and get onto the bench—the Bridesmaids take the eight garlands of roses from behind the Judge's desk (where one of them is fastened) and draw them across floor of Court, so that they radiate from the desk. Two plaster Cupids in bar wigs descend from the flies. Red fire."

The exact formation at the curtain may be modified to suit your particular limitations, and, as an easier alternative, a canvas with painted Cupids may be lowered from above instead of the plaster Cupids of the original scheme. But the Mardi-Gras effect of the garlands, to which may be added streamers, etc., should by all means be retained.

There is another Gilbertian direction. After the Plaintiff's entrance—"Angelina collects wreaths of roses from Bridesmaids and gives them to the Jury, who put them on, and wear them during the rest of the piece." But Gilbert apparently intended the chorus, "Comes the broken flower," to be repeated after the Plaintiff's solo; Sullivan, feeling that twice through was enough, omitted this, so that there is no time for the indicated distribution of garlands, unless the Bridesmaids perform it themselves immediately upon the conclusion of the number.

One note of caution: Should you decide to use a lot of special effects, be sure that they are carefully planned and thoroughly rehearsed so that they go off like clockwork. Otherwise you will have a meaningless jumble that defeats its own purpose.

THE CAST

THE LEARNED JUDGE

The Judge is the principal character in the opera and requires a very competent comedian. His entrance must be made with impressive dignity and watched with awe by everybody in the courtroom. When the Chorus breaks out, *forte*, with the lines, "He'll tell us how," it does not indicate lack of respect, but ecstatic joy that so august a personage should condescend to explain the secret of his success. The Judge's famous song, "When I, good friends, was called to the bar," should be rendered in an entirely simple manner, as if the events described were the most natural happenings in

the world. At the end of the line in the last verse, "Tried vainly to disparage," pause for an instant—the entire courtroom says "No!!" in accents of horrified incredulity—to which the Judge replies, sadly, "Yes," and then picks up the tempo brightly for his final lines.

During the rest of the action the Judge takes a keen and extremely personal interest in the proceedings, flirting first with the 1st Bridesmaid and later with the Plaintiff. He is recalled to his judicial duties by the Counsel, and, assuming his most pontifical manner, leaves the Bench to come down with the rest in the Sestet. From the end of Sestet, the opera moves at an increasing pace to the Finale, when the Judge, disgusted with all the wrangling, throws his papers about, and solves all problems by announcing he will marry the Plaintiff himself, to the great joy of all concerned.

THE PLAINTIFF

Angelina, pronounced "Angeleena," the Plaintiff, has some excellent singing numbers but is not called upon to do much acting. She must be attractive and have a good voice. Everyone, excepting the Defendant, falls in love with her at first sight, and she seems thoroughly to enjoy sobbing on almost any masculine breast that is handy. Angelina has one important dramatic scene, immediately following the "Nice Dilemma" Sestet, where she abruptly changes the mood and tempo of the opera in her duet, "I love him." This must be played rapidly and intensely—especially the struggle with the Defendant.

THE DEFENDANT

The Defendant should have a pleasing tenor voice and personify "a shocking young scamp of a rover." He suffers from the fact that no one likes him from start to finish, his case being hopelessly prejudiced against him as soon as

Angelina appears. The part should be played in a debonair, carefree manner in contrast to the emotional fireworks that are exhibited by the rest of the cast. It is permissible for him to carry on a mild flirtation with the first Bridesmaid. Perhaps the only line that really moves the Defendant is the Judge's suggestion that he be made tipsy!

COUNSEL FOR THE PLAINTIFF

The Counsel takes himself very seriously and is proud of his forensic style. The very fine song, "See my interesting client," should be sung with a great show of pompous dignity, building up to a climax as the song progresses, and becoming more and more dramatic as he pictures the horrible conduct of the Defendant. Counsel must be well sung and played with a real sense of authority.

USHER

This can be a very amusing character part when played by a person with a good comedy personality. The singing is not very important, but there are many fine pieces of business that may be added. Of all the cast the Usher is the only one who tries to preserve a certain amount of decorum. He is constantly trying to hush up the jury, keep order in the court, and have things run smoothly. Needless to say he doesn't succeed. A good comedy point can be made by having the Usher, when he summons the Plaintiff into court, call "Angeleena," and having the echo reply incorrectly "Angelina." The second time the Usher almost shouts the name; when it is again mispronounced by the echo, the Usher gives up in disgust.

FOREMAN OF THE JURY

A small part with a few solo lines and a part in the Sestet. Also has some effective pieces of business with the Plaintiff

and his fellow Jurors. The Foreman, as indeed all the Jurors, should express in vivid pantomime his emotional reactions to the drama unfolding before him.

ASSOCIATE

No solo lines—business only. Can be seated at table with Counsel and help him with books, papers, and so on. Some humorous touches may be added by inserting a little by-play between the Counsel and Associate which will indicate that the Associate is really the brains of the firm and the Counsel just the “front.”

FIRST BRIDESMAID

Entirely a personality part with no solo lines. Should be bright, vivacious, and charming. Has an effective piece of business with the Judge, who sends her a note, and later recalls it when his affections switch to the Plaintiff.

THE JURY

Twelve good men and true, who can have a lot of fun by really participating in the action. Should be baritones or basses. The most important thing for the Jurors to remember is never to let their attention flag from the proceedings in the court. They run the whole gamut of human emotions during the course of the opera and can contribute greatly to its success by playing up to each situation. Their chorus after the “Tink-a-tank” number should be sung as an aside to the audience until the line, “He shall treat us with awe,” at which point the Jurors may break into a simple and rather ponderous dance step that carries them back to the jury box.

THE BRIDESMAIDS

Twelve bridesmaids are desirable if you have a large enough company and adequate stage room; but six will suffice if neces-

sary. They should be as pretty as possible and have pleasant soprano voices. Youth and gaiety is the key to their scenes, and the comments directed to the Jurors on playing up to the action apply with equal force to the Bridesmaids.

THE PUBLIC

In a large company ingenious use of the public can be made by creating as many separate and distinct characterizations as possible. Some suggestions: A policeman with a "handlebar" mustache; a very tall man with a dumb little girl hanging on to his hand sucking a peppermint stick; a laborer who starts eating his lunch out of a paper bag in the midst of proceedings; a couple of elderly, timorous ladies who are scared of what is happening. But be careful that these little pieces of business are timed so that they do not conflict with any important main action of the opera. And, like the Jurors and Bridesmaids, the Public must participate in the action.