

Operetta of the **GUARD**

'Yeomen' an artistic compromise

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior staff writer

Gilbert and Sullivan's penchant for wild plots and catchy tunes takes a turn.

The venerable pair, responsible for 19th-century operettas such as "Pirates of Penzance" and "H.M.S. Pinafore," made a trade-off when collaborating on "Yeomen of the Guard."

This opera, which opens tonight in the Howell Theatre, combines William S. Gilbert's fantastic story line with Sir Arthur Sullivan's need for serious material.

William Shomos, the director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln production, said Sullivan always wanted to compose serious music.

He realized, however, he still had to pay the bills. Frustrated with the light material he and Gilbert usually collaborated on, Shomos said, Sullivan reached a compromise with Gilbert in "Yeomen of the Guard."

"Gilbert was actually wanting to go in the opposite direction with a wildly ridiculous plot," Shomos said. "Sullivan created a libretto with real people and this tragic ending."

In Act I, Colonel Fairfax sits imprisoned in the Tower of London, falsely accused of being a sorcerer.

Culture The Facts



What: "Yeomen of the Guard"
Where: Howell Theatre, Temple Building
When: Tonight at 8 through Saturday, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sunday
Cost: \$7 for students, \$11 for general admission
The Skinny: Gilbert and Sullivan operetta combines comic plot with tragic twist

Hoping to save his fortune from the hands of his accuser, Fairfax marries a traveling performer named Elsie for the price of a hundred crowns.

Elsie's suitor and fellow performer, Jack Point, laments the fate of his beloved but consoles himself with the knowledge that the prisoner will soon be dead. Much to his surprise, Fairfax escapes.

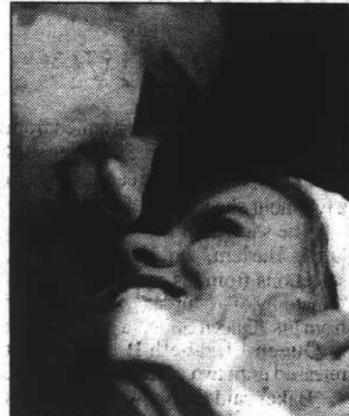
In Act II, Fairfax, disguised as a man named Leonard, resolves to woo his new bride and test her fidelity. Meanwhile, Jack Point devises a scheme to free Elsie from her marriage vows so he can marry her himself.

As Elsie professes her love for Leonard (a.k.a. Fairfax), news arrives of Fairfax's pardon. Elsie bemoans her cruel fate but then rejoices upon discovering her beloved Leonard is Fairfax in disguise.

The final joyous scene of the couple's happy reunion is punctured by Jack's cries of despair. Heart-broken, the unlucky jester falls at their feet.

"It has a lot of humor in it, but it's really a sad story," said Bryce Weber, who plays Jack Point. "In the end, the guy who could get any woman wins, as opposed to the guy who could only get, and only wants, one woman."

Overall, though, the operetta retains the light, bright tone for which Gilbert and Sullivan are known. Despite Jack's sad fate, audience members are still likely to walk away humming the show's tunes.



RICK TOWNLEY/DN
ABOVE: Bryce Weber (right), who plays Jack Point, suffers a broken heart at the hands of Melissa Wallner, who plays Elsie Maynard, in "Yeomen of the Guard." RIGHT: Joey Lott, who plays Fairfax, holds the heart and attention of Joye Johnson, who plays Phoebe.



Lied to showcase Duke Ellington

BY JOSH KRAUTER
Staff writer

Duke Ellington had as many roles in music as actors have in film careers. But he always played himself.

He was an arranger, composer and bandleader who pioneered innovations in jazz and dabbled in film scoring, classical and pop. And just over a century after his birth, the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra is presenting a retrospective of his varied career.

"If anybody could be said to be a Renaissance man, it would have to be Duke Ellington," said David Baker, director of the orchestra, which will be performing at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on April 24.

Baker, who teaches a course on Ellington at

Indiana University, assembled the orchestra. The 17 players composing the orchestra have worked with an impressive array of jazz legends such as Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Tito Puente and Wynton Marsalis. The musicians range in age from their early 20s to their late 70s. Joe Wilder, the oldest member of the band, has played with Ellington, Gillespie, Davis and Michel Legrand.

"Wilder is one of those players who, when you hear two notes, you know that it's him," Baker said.

Baker called the orchestra an "all-star band," but he said egos haven't been a problem.

"The band willingly came together. We're in the business of serving the music."

Baker has been serving the music for years. He has also conducted retrospectives of Miles Davis and Gil Evans' collaborations, Thelonious Monk and a celebration of Jewish-American and African-American composers. Artie Shaw was in the audience at the latter show, and he told Baker he was thrilled with the interpretation of his music. Interpretation is key for a true Ellington

Concert Preview The Facts

What: Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra: A Tribute to Duke Ellington
Where: Lied Center for Performing Arts, 301 N. 12th Street
When: Saturday, 8 p.m.
Cost: \$28, \$24, \$20 and half-price for students
The Skinny: Jazz orchestra celebrates birthday of a legend

performance, Baker said. "We're very faithful to the arrangement," he said. "We try to posit in our music the parameters of the time, but speaking in our own voices."

He said Ellington put his own personality in his interpretations of others' works, and that's what his orchestra tries to do.

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