

The Gondoliers; or, The King of Barataria

[Comic opera, in two acts; text by Gilbert. First produced at the Savoy Theatre, London, December 7, 1889.]

PERSONAGES.

Duke of Plaza-Toro, a grandee of Spain. Luiz, his attendant. Don Alhambra del Bolero, the Grand Inquisitor. Duchess of Plaza-Toro. Casilda, her daughter.

[Gondoliers, contadine, men-at-arms, heralds, and pages.]

The scene is laid in Venice; time, the year 1750.

"The Gondoliers" will always bring a feeling of regret to the admirers of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, as it was their last joint production. It was during its run at the London theatre that their partnership was dissolved after the extraordinary collaboration of twenty-three years. Both were at their best in their Swan Song. "The Gondoliers" is not so much melodrama or pleasant satire as it is genuine comedy. Among all the Gilbert books which he furnished the composer, none is more delightful or more full of his rollicking humor than this. The story opens in Venice. The contadine are weaving garlands for the two favorite gondoliers, Marco and Giuseppe, who, as they have no preference, make their choice blindfolded, and secure Tessa and Gianetta for their brides. As all gayly dance off, a gondola arrives with the Spanish Duke of Plaza-Toro, the Duchess, their daughter Casilda, and Luiz, their attendant. While waiting for an audience with the Grand Inquisitor, the Duke tells Casilda the object of their visit. When she was an infant she was married by proxy to the infant son of the King of Barataria. When the latter abandoned the creed of his fathers and became a Methodist, the Inquisitor had the young husband stolen and taken to Venice. Now that the King is dead, they have come to find the husband, and proclaim Casilda queen. During the

audience the Inquisitor announces that the husband is a gondolier, and that the person who brought him up had "such a terrible taste for tippling" that he was never certain which child had been intrusted to him, his own or the other. The nurse, however, who is Luiz's mother, would know, and he would induce her to tell in the torture chamber. Shortly afterwards the Inquisitor meets the newly wedded gondoliers, Marco and Giuseppe, and decides that one or the other of them is the new King, but as he cannot tell which, he arranges that both of them shall rule until the nurse can be found and made to settle the matter. Thereupon they bid their wives good-by, and sail away for Baratavia.

The second act discloses the two Kings upon the thrones. While they are cleaning the crown and sceptre, and their friends, the gondoliers, are playing cards, contadine arrive with Tessa and Gianetta. The delighted Kings give them a grand banquet and ball, but the dance is interrupted by the Inquisitor, who informs them that the ducal party will shortly arrive, and that Casilda will claim one of them for her husband. When Tessa and Gianetta realize that neither of them can be Queen, they begin to weep, but are somewhat comforted when the Inquisitor assures them they will not be kept long in suspense as the foster-mother is in the torture chamber. In the dénouement she confesses that the late King intrusted the Prince to her, and when traitors came to steal him she substituted her own son and kept the Prince in hiding, and that Luiz is the real Prince. Thereupon Luiz ascends the throne with Casilda as his queen, and Marco and Guiseppe sail joyfully back to Venice with Tessa and Gianetta.

The music is of Sullivan's best. He has reproduced in the score the old Italian forms, employs the legitimate modern ballad and song styles, and introduces also the "patter" songs and the "chant" songs which are so common in his other operas. Besides this, he has given strong local color with fandangoes, boleros, cachucas, and other dance rhythms. The best numbers are the ensemble for Marco and Giuseppe, "We're called Gondolieri"; the pompous song of the Duke, "In Enterprise of Martial Kind"; the serious duet for Casilda and Luiz, "There was a

Time"; the Inquisitor's song, "I stab the Prince"; Tessa's beautiful song, "When a Merry Maiden marries"; the frolicsome quartette, "Then one of us will be a Queen"; the song of Marco with chorus, "For every one who feels inclined"; the characteristic song of Giuseppe, "Rising early in the Morning"; the gay and fascinating ensemble, "We will dance a Cachuca," with the brilliant dance music that follows it; the song of the Inquisitor, "There lived a King"; the ensemble, "In a Contemplative Fashion," a quiet movement with alternating comments by chorus, reaching a crescendo and then returning to the original movement, one of the most effective numbers in the opera; the Duchess' song, "On the Day when I was Wedded"; and the quintette in the finale, "I am a Courtier Grave and Serious."