

Audition Notes for
The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's production of
The Yeomen of the Guard
by Artistic Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

The Yeomen of the Guard was Gilbert's favorite collaboration with Sullivan--and Sullivan's with Gilbert. It has plenty of Gilbertian humor, but also its serious side, which makes it unique in the Savoy opera canon. My purpose is to provide information for auditionees concerning the auditions and also concerning the wonderful show slated for production this summer.

Auditions will be held on Saturday and Sunday, February 27-28. Music Director and Conductor **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** and I request that auditionees memorize a song from Gilbert & Sullivan or something similar and provide a copy of the music for the auditions accompanist.

If *The Yeomen of the Guard* is not in your library, you can download the libretto from The Gilbert & Sullivan Archive (math.boisestate.edu/gas). You can also download some printed music from the opera from this website, read a plot synopsis, or download audio files.

The Chorus is composed of the **Chorus of Yeomen of the Guard** (seven gentlemen, two of which, a tenor and baritone, have brief soli) and the **Chorus of Citizens** (four gentlemen, two having brief dialogue, and eleven ladies, none with solos or speaking lines). **The Citizen Males** can be of assorted ages and body types; **the Yeomen Men** should project military bearing, and should ideally grow beards--and be able to march. **The Women Citizenry** can be of assorted ages and body types. **Two children**, ages 8-12, will also be cast, one of which should be male.

The Yeomen of the Guard has wonderful roles and singing opportunities:

Sir Richard Cholmondeley (pronounced "Chumley") (bass-baritone, in his 60s or 70s) is the Lieutenant (*Leftenant*) of the Tower and in command. A stern taskmaster with limited sense of humor, he owes a debt to Colonel Fairfax, who saved his life in battle.

Colonel Fairfax (tenor). In his early middle years. Fairfax is the military hero around whom the plot swirls. Condemned to death for a crime he didn't commit, he is dashing and brave, but easygoing, and ready to die--though more than willing to escape his execution!

Sergeant Meryll (bass-baritone) is an older man, a retired soldier with many a memory of a life in battle. Staunch and true, but not the sharpest bayonet in the arsenal. He is clever and willing to risk all in helping to set Fairfax free.

Leonard Meryll (tenor) is the Sergeant's son, who appears early and late in the opera but who is then impersonated on-stage (and in his absence) by Colonel Fairfax through most of the opera. Must sing well a difficult tenor part in his one trio.

Jack Point (light baritone), a wand'ring jester, with a bag of old jokes that don't work very well. Must move and dance well, be agile and nimble, playful, but must also exhibit pathos and sentimentality. Whether he falls insensible at the end of the opera due to unrequited love for Elsie--or dies of a broken heart--is one of The Great Questions in Gilbert & Sullivan--and one that Shall Be Answered!

Wilfred Shadbolt (bass-baritone), the Head Jailor and Assistant Tormentor of the Tower, is lugubrious, ugly--well, in fact something of a slob--unshaven, and also something of a professional sadist. Frequently played as middle-aged, but he considers himself younger--he's also a swain for Phoebe, though his affection is not reciprocated.

Elsie Maynard (dramatic soprano), 17 years old, a strolling singer and partner to Jack Point. Her mother's illness leads her to a plot-initiating decision to marry a condemned prisoner (Colonel Fairfax). Elsie is something of a vixen (for tormenting Point, who genuinely loves her). She must sing and dance very well.

Phoebe Meryll (mezzo-soprano), a pert little flirt, warmhearted, but plucky and clever. Opens the opera (unique in G&S) with a spinning song solo. Strong actress required. She is Sergeant Meryll's daughter and Leonard's sister.

Dame Carruthers (contralto), housekeeper of the Tower. Grim, born and bred "in the old keep," stern, granite-hearted (sometimes) but sympathetic. "Of a certain age."

Kate (lyric soprano) is Dame Carruthers' niece. She is also the twelfth member of the women's chorus; no soli but some important ensemble singing.

If there are any questions, please send them to: RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com.

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