

Auditions for *The Yeomen of the Guard*

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. You can download the libretto from The Gilbert & Sullivan Archive (use *The Yeomen of the Guard* tab at gsarchive.net).

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 claims our sympathy for having saved Colonel Fairfax "from the pestilent dangers which threaten human life outside" the Tower.

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.

Note: This article is taken from *Only Idle Chatter* by Ralph MacPhail, Jr. It originally was printed in the January 2010 GSSA newsletter.