



THE GILBERT & SULLIVAN
VERY LIGHT OPERA CO.

is proud to present

The Regional Premiere of

THE ROSE OF
PERSIA

a comic opera by

Sir Arthur Sullivan and Basil Hood

Friday, October 19th, 2001

Saturday October 20th, 2001

7:30 p.m.

at

St. Paul's United Church of Christ

900 Summit Ave. - St. Paul

Acknowledgements

Ian Bond
St. Paul Chamber Orchestra
Martin Yates
Terrapin Technologies
St. Paul's United Church of Christ

Sir Arthur Sullivan Society
Steve Skinner
Stephen Turnbull
Ben Zvan
Land o' Lakes

A Note from the Director

Everyone has a story about September 11. Here is mine. As I watched in stunned horror while one World Trade Tower was burning with a gaping wound and the second exploded into a fireball, as I tried to grasp the immensity of such an atrocity, as I was gripped by cold fear and worry for the safety of my sister and friends in New York, I received a phone call from one of the cast members agreeing to do the concert. I had no idea what she was talking about.

September 11 was to have been the first rehearsal for this concert. In the days and weeks that followed we struggled with whether we should perform this show. In light of September 11, was a show set in Persia any longer a source of entertainment. In the final analysis, however, *The Rose of Persia* is a social satire of prevailing Victorian/Edwardian expectations of class structure and behavior. Musical theatre is rife with examples of composers/librettists choosing what they believe to be exotic locations in order to add spice and interest. Following in that tradition, *Rose* has no more to do with Persia or the religion of Islam than *Gondoliers* has to do with the Venetians, *Mikado* with the Japanese, or *Magic Flute* with the Egyptians.

The larger question, of course, is should there be artistic performances at all? How do musical theatre productions, orchestra concerts, art gallery openings fit in world severely damaged and cracked with hatred and fear? Is it appropriate to worry about intonation problems when there are bombings in Afghanistan? What is the importance of harmonic analysis when over 5,000 people are dead or missing in New York alone? Is it OK to be entertained while we are grieving?

For me the performing process is much more than the idea of "putting on a show." It is a collaborative process in which we - directors, chorus, principals, orchestra, audience - communicate, interact, and relate in a way that transcends this time and space and seeks to engage the passions of the human spirit. And so tonight I hope that the orchestra plays in tune, that the soloists make the right entrances, that I don't lose my place in the score. But more than that, I hope that we express and experience collectively and collaboratively the multifaceted beauty and energy of humanity.

*"But this sorrow and rage will not inflame us to seek retribution;
rather they will inflame our art. Our music will never again be quite
the same. This will be our reply to violence: to make music more
intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before"*

- Leonard Bernstein

Principals

(in order of appearance)

Hassan (a philanthropist)
 Blush-of-Morning (his twenty-fifth wife)
 Dancing-Sunbeam (his first wife)
 Abdallah (a priest)
 Yussuf (a professional story teller)
 Heart's Desire (a royal slave)
 Honey-of-Life (a royal slave)
 Scent-of-Lilies (a royal slave)
 Rose-in-Bloom (the Sultana Zubeydeh)
 Grand Vizier
 Physician-in-Chief
 Executioner
 Sultan

Larry Weller
 Megan Browning
 Lynn Hicks
 Thomas Melander
 Jim Ahrens
 Judith McClain
 Aimée Petra
 Jill Sandager
 Kristin Root
 Mario Diaz-Moresco
 Don Barbee
 Jeremy Bierlein
 Wally Benbenek

Chorus

Sopranos

Stephanie Brody
 Susan Compton
 Julie Parshall
 Molly Stoffer
 Sally Wissink

Altos

Pat Fischer
 Lisa Horton
 Kathryn Knudsen
 Carol Parshall
 Jo Pasternack

Tenors

Peter Erickson
 Paul Hardt
 Dan Hollinger
 Kris Lysne
 John Arthur Murray
 Peter Parshall
 Eric Pasternack
 Richard Rames

Basses

Ernest Brody
 Roger Evans
 Jim Garretson
 Stephen Hage
 Christopher Michela
 Charles R. Segal
 Warren Loud
 Mark Janda

Orchestra

Violin

J. Michael Compton
 (concertmaster)
 Joe Burling
 Debbie Feinwachs
 Sharon Munkwitz
 Kristen Sammartano
 Clementine Scott
 Madeline Thaden
 Agnes Wolf

Viola

Tom Rognsvoog
 Aija Ronis
 Betty Swanson

Oboe

John Hunt

Cello

Karen Decker
 Melissa Gaul
 John Litch
 Karen Rognsvoog

Bass

Reid Hegland

Flute

Kristen Kinnear-Ohlmann
 Julie Lindstrom

Clarinet

Barb Hovey
 Angela Reisetter

Trombone

Keith Liuzzi

Bassoon

Ann Hagen
 Holly Leighton

Horn

Jeff Ohlmann
 Melissa Peterson

Trumpet

Bob Hirte
 Betty Mackay
 Lawrence Perry
 Benjamin Skroch

Percussion

Jeff Sass
 Jim Streich

Synopsis

The Rose of Persia, was Arthur Sullivan's last completed operetta and his first collaboration with dramatist Basil Hood. Opening at London's Savoy Theatre on November 29, 1899, the production received enthusiastic reviews. The London Times wrote that Sullivan's music displayed "all the spontaneity and refinement of his earlier years...that yields to none of its predecessors in charm or brightness." *Rose* lasted through 220 performances to become financially the most successful Savoy opera since *The Gondoliers* in 1889.

Act I: Court of Hassan's House

After a brief orchestral introduction, Abu-el Hassan explains that the addition of another wife to his twenty-five current wives might wreck his carefree life style. His first wife, Dancing Sunbeam, however, complains to Hassan that when she married him for his money she expected to be in the best society. Instead, he prefers to associate with beggars. But Dancing Sunbeam has concocted a plot with the priest Abdallah who arrives to drive out the evil spirits which must be possessing Hassan. To avoid this, Hassan makes a will in Abdallah's favor, pointing out that this will would only be valid if he were of sound mind; the priest promptly decides the evil spirit has left Hassan, and pronounces him sane.

At this point, Yussuf appears in pursuit of one of four alleged dancing girls; since they are afraid of meeting with the Sultan's guard, however, he deduces that they are really royal slaves in disguise. One of the slaves, however, is actually the Sultana herself, Rose-in-Bloom. While shut up in the palace, she longed to see the world outside, and now wants to get back to avoid execution. They are interrupted by a chorus of tramps and beggars (Hassan's dinner guests). Yussuf entertains them with a drinking song, and the "dancing girls" are invited to perform as well. In the middle of this, Abdallah returns to arrest the beggars; but while he is singing the beggars sneak off. Having lost the beggars, Abdallah orders the "dancing girls" to be arrested and brought to the Sultan. Rose-in-Bloom is alarmed, but Heart's Desire, wearing the Sultana's ring, claims that she herself is the Sultana.

Abdallah is delighted. When the Sultan hears that his wife has been secretly visiting Hassan, Hassan will certainly be executed - and then his will can also be executed. Dancing Sunbeam realizes she has been double-crossed: Abdallah will now have all of Hassan's money, instead of sharing it with her.

Hassan determines to get himself through the execution by taking a drug called "bhang". Yussuf is also distressed: Hassan is only going to lose his head, but he has lost his heart to the Sultan's wife. Rose-in-Bloom then reveals that she is the true Sultana. Though this cheers Yussuf up, Hassan, learning that the Sultan's wife is still in his house, takes an overdose of "bhang"

Heart's Desire announces that the Sultan, Grand Vizier, Physician-in-Chief, and Royal Executioner are arriving, disguised as dancing dervishes. Hassan, high on "bhang", claims that he himself is the Sultan; he must be, since the Sultan's wife is in his house. The Sultan, informed by his physician that Hassan must have taken an overdose of "bhang", decides to play a joke on him. He informs Hassan's wives that their husband has been leading a double life and is, in fact, the Sultan of Persia. His attendants confirm this. Hassan is about to make Rose-in-Bloom unveil herself to prove her (and his) identity when he passes out.

Act II: Audience Hall of the Sultan's Palace

Following a tender duet, Yussuf tells Heart's Desire that he is going to ask the Sultan to let him marry her. She and the other royal slaves point out that if he does so, there may be some awkward questions, and if the truth comes out they will all be executed. So he agrees to bend the truth a little.

The Sultan enters with his court, and announces that everyone is to treat Hassan as if he were the Sultan. Dancing Sunbeam arrives believing Hassan to be the real Sultan and proclaims herself Sultana. The Sultan plays along. Having been let in on the Sultan's joke, Rose-in-Bloom inquires of the Sultan what might happen if she were to play a joke and leave the palace in disguise. He remarks casually the punishment would probably be death, but if he was in a bad mood he might try to think of something worse.

Hassan finally comes to, and is bewildered to find everyone treating him as the Sultan. He is told that he has just awakened and lost his memory. He is almost convinced that he only dreamed his life as Hassan when Abdallah arrives and reveals that the Sultana secretly visited Hassan the night before. The enraged Sultan condemns him to death, and then announces that he will divorce Rose-in-Bloom and marry her off to Yussuf since she "favours low company." All prepare for the wedding, except for Hassan, who sings, "Bless my heart, it's time to start, or I shall be late for beheading!"

Heart's Desire, upset that Yussuf is to marry the young and beautiful Rose-in-Bloom, arranges for Dancing Sunbeam to take the real Sultana's place at the wedding ceremony. The social-climbing Dancing Sunbeam is shocked to find herself married to a lowly storyteller.

Heart's Desire at last confesses to the Sultan that it was she wearing the royal signet. When Abdallah identifies her as the woman he saw wearing the ring, the Sultan condemns him to death for falsely sullyng the Sultana's reputation. The relieved Hassan requests "the usual free pardon for what I never did", but is told that he, too, must die, since he falsely stated that the Sultana was at his house. Heart's Desire is also condemned to death, but Rose-in-Bloom begs her husband to spare her slave. When he asks why, Heart's Desire claims that she has been telling a story to Rose-in-Bloom, who wants to know how it ends. The Sultan decrees that Heart's Desire shall be spared until the story is finished. Hassan then claims that he has been telling Heart's Desire the story, so the Sultan agrees that he shall not be executed either until the story has ended. He makes a further command that the story must have a happy ending.

Requested to continue the story (at the end of which he is to be decapitated) Hassan finds himself at a loss, but then has an idea. He begins to sing a song about a small boy; then explains that this is actually the story of his own life. Since the Sultan himself has decreed that the story (which is the story of his life) must have a happy ending, the Sultan must spare Hassan's life.

Steven Michael Utzig

Steve Utzig received his formal musical training at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, IA and the University of Minnesota. Among his teachers were Margie Marrs, Thomas Houser, Dr. Allan Kellar, Dr. Jerry Owen, Dr. Clifton Ware, and Kathy Saltzman Romey. 2001-2002 marks his fifth season with GSVLOC with whom he has conducted *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Yeoman of the Guard*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, and *HMS Pinafore* as well as a program dedicated to Sullivan's music featuring the *Symphony in E Major* and *Festival Te Deum*. He has served as music director for several theatre companies and has conducted well over twenty musical theatre and major choral performances throughout the Twin Cities, including *Sweeney Todd*, *West Side Story*, John Rutter's *Requiem*, excerpts from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and G.F. Handel's 1716 setting of the Passion. As baritone soloist, he has performed the role of El Gallo in *The Fantasticks* and has appeared as featured soloist with the *Christmas Revels*, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, and *Canticum Novum* in New York. In addition to serving as music director with GSVLOC, he is also music director for the Minnesota Christmas Revels and St. Paul's United Church of Christ.

Lawrence Weller

Lawrence Weller received his formal music training at the University of Illinois and at Indiana University. Among his teachers and coaches were James Bailey, Pierre Bernac, Paul Ulanowsky, David Garvey, Gerhard Hüsch, Julius Herford, John Wustman, and Anna Hamlin. Mr. Weller has performed in concert and opera throughout North America, in ten European countries, and in South America. He has twice appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, recorded for the BBC London, and toured widely as soloist with the Philadelphia Composers Forum and Orchestra of Our Time. He has premiered 75 works by contemporary composers and has performed 22 principal roles in opera and music theater. In 1997 he performed the title role in Verdi's *Falstaff*, as faculty guest artist with the University of Minnesota Opera Theater; and with Northstar Opera the same year the title role (Tony Esposito) in Loesser's *The Most Happy Fella*, and Mustafa in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*. Mr. Weller has appeared as guest soloist at the Festival d'Automne in Paris, the Inter-American Music Festival in Washington D.C., the Foro Internacional de la Musica Nueva in Mexico City, the White Mountain Arts Festival, and The Aldeburgh Festival. His recordings for the ProArte, Nonesuch, CRI, Desto and Virgin Classics labels have included the Grammy award-winning recording of Britten's *Paul Bunyan*, and the first recording of George Crumb's *Songs, Drones, and Refrains of Death*, recorded under the composer's supervision and recently re-released on CD on the Phoenix label.

In 1999 he sang 21 songs, including 3 major cycles, in concerts of the complete songs of Poulenc at the Theatre de la Jeune Lune in Minneapolis, and made his debut with the baroque opera company, Ex Machina. He is the featured baritone soloist in a new CD of the music of Yehuda Yannay recently released on Innova Recordings.

Lawrence Weller is on the faculty of the University of Minnesota School of Music, Minneapolis, where he is Professor of Voice.

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Please join us for
our March 2002 production
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