

Yeomen of the Guard

or, *The Merryman and His Maid*

THE CAST

Colonel Fairfax (*under sentence of death*)..... Graham Remple
Sergeant Meryll (*of the Yeomen of the Guard*) Waldyn Benbenek
Phoebe Meryll (*his daughter*) Charlotte Smith
Leonard Meryll (*his son*)..... Andrew Peterson
Jack Point (*a strolling jester*) Sam Vinitzky
Elsie Maynard (*a strolling singer*) Mary Kettlewell
Wilfred Shadbolt (*Head Jailer and Assistant Tormentor*) Trevor Woggon
Sir Richard Cholmondeley (*Lieutenant of the Tower*) Eric Sorum
Dame Carruthers (*Housekeeper to the Tower*)..... Lara Trujillo
Kate (*her niece*)..... Ella Rose Katzenberger
First Yeoman..... Seth Steidl
Second Yeoman Niko Simmons
First Citizen..... Lowell Rice
Second Citizen Scott Benson
The Headsman Mike Tober
Confessor Tom Berg

Chorus of Citizens:

John Azbill-Salisbury	Anna Maher
Maggie Benham	Mary Mescher Benbenek
Amanda Bindner	Mallory Rabehl
Maya Gitch	Lowell Rice
Mary Gregory	James J. Ruth
Liza Hartshorn	Emma Shine
Shawn Holt	Holly Windle
Therese Kulas	

Chorus of Yeomen of the Guard:

Wilson Alness	Jonathan Flory	Niko Simmons
Scott Benson	Stephen Hage	Seth Steidl
Tom Berg	Dean Laurance	Mike Tober
	Richard Rames	



Covers: Andrew Peterson (*Col. Fairfax, March 14, 7:30*)
Mike Tober (*Leonard Meryll, March 14, 7:30*)
Kate Jennings (*Dame Carruthers, March 20, 7:30*)
Scott Benson (*Lieutenant, March 20, 7:30*)
James J. Ruth (*Jack Point, March 21, 2:00*)
Tom Berg (*Sergeant Meryll, March 21, 2:00*)
Anna Maher (*Kate, March 21, 7:30*)
Alexander Gerchak (*Wilfred Shadbolt, March 21, 7:30*)
Therese Kulas (*Elsie Maynard, March 22, 2:00*)
Amanda Bindner (*Phoebe Meryll, March 22, 2:00*)

Act I: The Tower of London

15-Minute Intermission

Act II: The same, by moonlight, two days later



~ Please turn off all cell phones ~

~ No eating or drinking (except water) is allowed in the theatre ~

~ No smoking is permitted in the building ~

~ The use of cameras or recording of any kind is strictly forbidden ~

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It has been a great privilege to direct Gilbert and Sullivan's most consistently serious and operatic work, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, which Gilbert regarded as "the best thing we have done," and Sullivan often said was his favorite opera.

After the relative failure of *Ruddigore*, which ended its mediocre run at the Savoy Theatre in November 1887, the morale of Gilbert, Sullivan and their business partner Richard D'Oyly Carte was at a very low ebb. Due to the triumvirate's tumultuous relationship, there was no new opera on the horizon, so *H.M.S. Pinafore* had to be revived as a stop-gap measure.

Gilbert may have been inspired by a poster advertising the Tower Furnishing Company, which featured a yeoman ("Beefeater") against a background of the Tower of London. He initially thought of writing a burlesque on the subject, but decided instead "to make it a romantic and dramatic piece, and put it back into Elizabethan times." Gilbert's decision was no doubt partially influenced by the wave of patriotism and nostalgia which swept Britain in the wake of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. He reassured Sullivan that the story was dramatically affecting, "without anachronisms or pathos of any kind," and when Sullivan read the plot (entitled "The Tower of London") he was immensely pleased. Gilbert had kept his promise: "Pretty story, no topsy-turvydom, very human and funny also."

Gilbert was feverishly uncertain of his departure from the tried-and-true formulas he had previously established. For once, his libretto involved the behavior of real people in well-known surroundings, rather than the antics of comic caricatures in wholly fanciful settings. It follows logically that both cast and audience must have shared to some extent this unsettled state of mind. As the magazine *Punch* reported in the opening night review, "...none of the actors play with conviction. They seem uncertain as to the character of the piece - is it serious, or isn't it?"

It is our intent in this production to present a serious opera filled with intrigue, betrayal and heartbreak—occasional glints of wit and humor notwithstanding—an interpretation guided by my unforgettable experience playing the "melancholy jester" in a production directed by John Reed, O.B.E., a definitive "Jack Point" with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

The opera, the eleventh of fourteen that the famous duo created, was composed in a great rush. Sullivan wrote the overture in the auditorium during the final rehearsal and tossed the parts to the players in the orchestra as he finished them. Tempers frequently flared between composer and librettist, but the First Night, on October 3, 1888, was an unqualified success. *The Yeomen of the Guard* ran for 423 performances, a total exceeded only by *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Mikado* and *The Gondoliers*, ending its initial season on November 30, 1889. It was revived in 1897 and was subsequently seldom out of the D'Oyly Carte repertoire. There is every reason to suppose that this magnificent opera will continue to touch audiences' hearts for as long as the Tower itself continues to keep its silent watch and ward over London town.

I hope you will be touched by this bittersweet tale ~

— Gary Briggles

SYNOPSIS

The Yeomen of the Guard is set in the Tower of London during the reign of King Henry VIII. The plot concerns Colonel Fairfax, a gentleman, soldier, and scientist, who has been sentenced to be beheaded in an hour on a false charge of sorcery. To avoid leaving his estate to his accuser, and with the help of the Lieutenant of the Tower, Fairfax secretly marries Elsie Maynard, a strolling singer. The bride agrees to be blindfolded during the ceremony and expects to be a well-paid widow in an hour. However, with the help of the Meryll family, Fairfax escapes, throwing the Tower into confusion and the astonished Elsie and Jack Point, a jester who loves her, into despair. But Fairfax, disguised as Leonard Meryll, woos Elsie, and after a number of plot complications are worked out, she unknowingly falls in love with her husband, but leaves Jack Point broken-hearted.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Director Gary Briggie
Music Director Randal A. Buikema
Assistant Music Director..... Jean Orbison Van Heel
Stage Manager Kevin Lindee
Set Designer & Artist..... Michael Hoover
Scenic Artist..... Kathleen Carlson
Set Builder Philip Hoks
Costume Designer Bronson Talcott
Lighting Designer Carl Schoenborn
Hair and Make-up Designer..... Breanna Fay
Props Designer Christine Keller
Cell Phone Song Lyrics Holly Windle
Assistant Stage Managers Taryn Shucha, Brianna Sullivan
Live Streaming Audio & Visual Waldyn Benbenek
Alexander Gerchak, Douglas Johnson
Wardrobe Supervisor Bronson Talcott
Set Construction Crew Floyd Swanson, Taryn Shucha
Gary Maher, and cast members
Rehearsal Pianist..... Jean Orbison Van Heel
Poster Design Tom McGregor, Mary Olson
Lobby Display & Photography Stephen Hage
Ticketing Steve Schellenberg
House Managers Steve Schellenberg, Rhea Sullivan
Phone Box Office..... Rhea Sullivan, Kate Jennings, Therese Kulas,
Wilson Alness, Holly Windle
Flyer, Program, and Ticket preparation Richard Rames
House Staff Recruitment..... Lowell Rice

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Producer Stephen Hage
Labour Pool Coordinator..... Eric Pasternack
Publicity Waldyn Benbenek
Treasurer John Orbison
Secretary..... Lowell Rice
Chorus Representatives Tom Berg, Therese Kulas
Orchestra Representative..... Barb Hovey

ORCHESTRA

Conductor Randal A. Buikema
Orchestra Manager / Librarian Lorine Menzhuber
Violin I Victoria Athmann (*Concertmaster*), Beth Henningsen
Jill Lestina-Warnest, Amy Letson, Mackenzie Powell, Derick Rehurek
Violin II Lorine Menzhuber, Betsy Lofgren
Karen Neinstadt, Katherine Sabak
Viola Ann Bur, Louis Berg-Arnold, Laura Bidgood
Gretchen Cerny, Teresa Mager, Aija Ronis
Cello Sara Hertz, Nick Crist, DJ Gallagher
Karin Holmberg Kimble, John Orbison
String Bass..... Jason Anderson, Benjamin Kitt
Flute..... Nancy Hagfors, Kris Henderson
Holly MacDonald, Nancy Wucherpfennig, Joseph Wypych
Clarinet Louise Buckley, Barb Hovey
John Orbison, Barb Sabal
Oboe Lori Bovitz, Lorelei Giddings, Eric Laska
Bassoon Beth Brandt, Ford Campbell
Gene Scholtens, Terry Wilson
Horn..... Michael Engh, Ken Lovely, Bob Olsen, Cristina Werling
Trumpet Pete Berg, Mandy French, Andrew Padula
Doug Snapp, Bob Zobal
Trombone Sarah Cooke, Cole Blackett, Chuck Watt, Matt Schlukebier
Tuba..... Aaron Rolloff
Percussion..... Charley Rich, Kat Felicis Ioco
Keyboard Jean Orbison Van Heel

GLOSSARY (in order of occurrence)

Tower of London - or simply, The Tower - refers to the complex of about 20 towers covering 18 acres, a fortress which in its history has housed the Royal Court, a prison, a menagerie, the Royal Mint and the Crown Jewels

Yeomen of the Guard (Tower Warders) - Gilbert is guilty of some inaccuracies when he used these terms interchangeably. The Yeomen of the Guard were established by Henry VII in 1485 to serve as the Sovereign's personal bodyguard. The Yeomen Warders were set up in 1548 as guards (and now also serve as tour guides) of the tower. Popularly known as "Beefeaters," they are selected from non-commissioned officers and warrant officers on the basis of merit.

Tower Green - A grassy space within the Tower, site of special executions

Beauchamp Tower - (pronounced "bee-cham") - often used as a lodging for prisoners of rank

Cold Harbour Tower - no longer standing

I was born in the old keep - the strong, innermost structure in a fort or castle

the screw may twist and the rack may turn - refers to tortures

Is life a boon? ... I have a boon to beg - a favor

an hundred crowns - about £25 – more than a laborer might earn in a year

give us quip and quiddity - witty remark and trifling point

love-lorn loon - man of low birth

peacock popinjay, bravely born - an overly proud person

like some of my jests, out of place - second meaning is "unemployed"

He who'd make his fellow creatures wise should always gild the philosophic pill - same sentiment as "a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down"

Were as a carrion's cry to lullaby such as I'd sing to thee - short for carrion crow

halbert or halberd - a 15th or 16th century weapon - pike or battle axe mounted on a long staff

debarred from all escape – prevented from escaping

standard lost in last campaign - battle flag or banner

The consequences fell no mortal can foretell - dire, evil

a thousand marks - about £666 (more than 6 years' salary for the well-paid Lieutenant!)

Act II :

Night has spread her pall once more – a dark shroud

Pretty warders are ye – sarcastic way of saying "fine bunch of warders you are!"

is not the world a big butt of humor, into which all who will may drive a gimlet - a butt is a barrel; a gimlet is a tool to bore holes

consider each person's auricular - sense of hearing

a bishop maybe or a solemn D.D. - Doctor of Divinity

hold thy peace and perpend – be attentive

a tale of cock and bull - an extravagant story presented as if true

or I'll swallow my kirtle - woman's gown, shirt, or outer petticoat

an arquebus - early portable firearm

consumed with a parlous jealousy - extremely bad

that none may gainsay - contradict

his twig he'll so carefully lime - refers to a method of catching birds by smearing twigs with a sticky substance (bird-lime)

Ods bodikins ... Ods Bobs - two versions of an oath meaning, literally, "Gods little body"

sweets that never cloy - become sickeningly sweet

Oh, the sighing and the suing! – wooing, courting

'tis but mickle sister reaps - old Scottish word, here meaning "little"

kissing, clinging cockatrice - mythical serpent with a deadly glance

I'll cleave thee to the chine - backbone; he means he'll split his head, down to the body

With happiness her soul is cloved – overwhelmed with sweetness

Since its founding in 1979 by Dick Fishel and Jim Hart, the company has produced all the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas: *Trial By Jury*, *The Sorcerer*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Patience*, *Iolanthe*, *Princess Ida*, *The Mikado*, *Ruddigore*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, *The Gondoliers*, *Utopia, Ltd.* and *The Grand Duke*.

We've also presented Sullivan's *The Zoo*, Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and a concert version of Sullivan's *Rose of Persia* (2001)

In November 2026, the GSVLOC will present *The Pirates of Penzance*.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Merrymen and Maids (up to \$100)

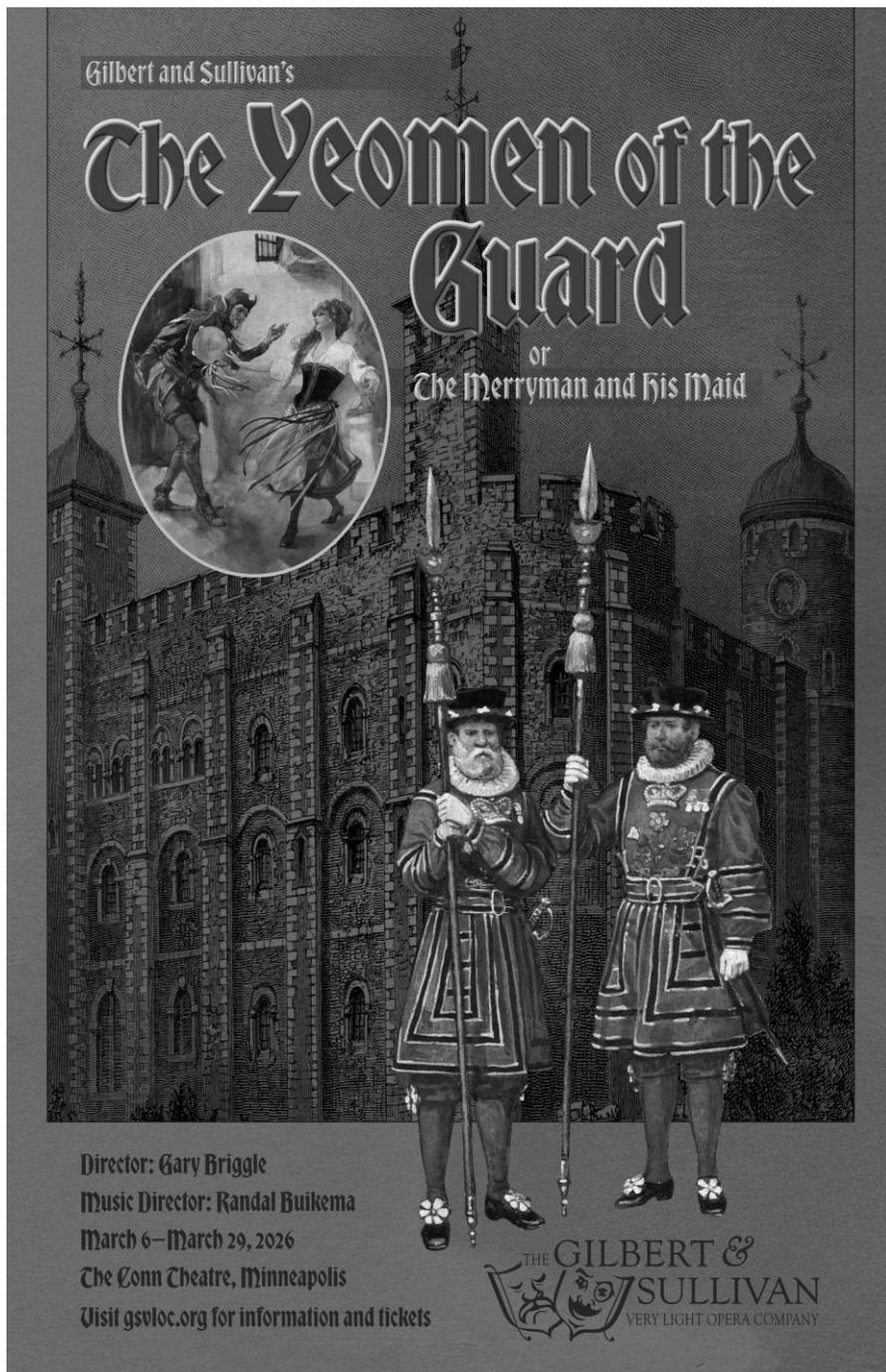
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The Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera Company

presents



Gilbert and Sullivan's

The Yeomen of the Guard

or
The Merryman and His Maid

Director: Gary Briggie
Music Director: Randal Buikema
March 6–March 29, 2026
The Conn Theatre, Minneapolis
Visit gsvloc.org for information and tickets

THE GILBERT & SULLIVAN
VERY LIGHT OPERA COMPANY

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The Conn Theater
1900 Nicollet Avenue South
Minneapolis

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