



Gilbert and Sullivan

Happy plays here again

by Glenn Walton

It takes courage to put on a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta nowadays. Hopelessly trivial, they are loaded with every cliché the theatre can muster.

Your typically G&S story line contains plots and subplots of sterling young heroes and wooing maidens of unquestionable chastity, matonly altos and pompous men of rank fussing about with English stuffiness, at least one long-lost relative with Important News in the last act, and of course a con-

trived Happy End, committing everyone to that magical heterosexual cure for all worldly woes, Marriage. The songs, with titles like "Carefully, on Tip-Toe Stealing," and "Oh Rapture Unforeseen," are a parody of poetic syntax and sentiment; the music, a collection of galumping 6/8's, saccharine ballads, and rousing choruses, outcamps the Boy Scouts. Audiences, of course, love it.

If they are aesthetically undefendable, G&S operettas

are also loads of fun, and only the most hardened of critics, say, German existentialists, are immune to their charm. Gilbert and Sullivan had a most deserving target, Victorian morals and manners, to poke fun at, and in **H.M.S. Pinafore**, (now in rehearsal by the N.S. Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Nova Scotia for May production) they do plenty of poking.

The G&S Society is a three year-old endeavor, originally brought into being by a newspaper ad placed by its

energetic musical and stage director, Scott-Savage. About 20 people showed up for that first meeting, and since then the membership has grown to 70. Financed by private contributions, ticket sales, and fund-raisers (and at the beginning with a starting-up grant from the province) the society is solvent, and relies in great part upon volunteer work. It sees itself not merely as a production team, but as a workshop for all the skills connected with putting on a show: stage and costume design, lighting, singing, etc. The emphasis is on the G&S Society as a society, and not just a group putting on plays. Films and lectures are held, and plans for future road tours around the province are being discussed.

The G&S society has wandered from its first 'home' at the N.S. Art Gallery to St. John's United Church Hall, using, at one time, a rented house on Brunswick Street for set building; at present, a warehouse on Argyle Street serves that purpose. Productions until now have been put on at St. Patrick's High School, but many feel that the society deserves a better 'theatre'. The Cohn, a larger and more attractive possibility, has been discussed, but financial and technical reasons preclude its use in the near future. It is to be hoped that enough contributors can be found to enable this deserving group to expand, and perhaps find a permanent home in Halifax. In an age of economic malaise and radioactive clouds, it is nice to be able to escape once in a while into the inspired silliness of a Gilbert and Sullivan entertainment.

H.M.S. Pinafore will be produced on May 3, 4, and 5 at St. Pat's High School auditorium, at 8:30 p.m. Tickets are available (adults \$4, students and senior citizens \$3 plus special rates for groups over 10) at Lawley's Music Stand in the Halifax Shopping Center, Finney's, Kawai; or by telephone (477-0735).

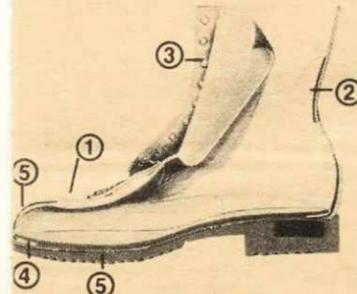
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