

Arts

Gilbert and Sullivan a bit too ambitious

by Mäven Gates

Take the Dunn Theatre on a Thursday night. Add a near capacity crowd of loyal Gilbert and Sullivan Fans. Just to be safe prepare COX AND BOX, TRIAL BY JURY and 25 selections from 6 other G&S operas (sic). Now, what should result is 2½ hours of comedy and music. If all goes well,

If enough care is taken during preparation.

As a great man once said, "Two out of three ain't bad" and that's about the best way to describe this tripartite performance of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Nova Scotia. The two complete selections were quite entertaining. However, the series of excerpts which opened

the program were quite another matter.

Perhaps they couldn't decide what pieces to delete. Perhaps they just wanted to make sure that the audience got its money's worth. Whatever the reason for the overly ambitious undertaking, quality was sacrificed for quantity.

When the full company sang

together, their harmony and balance were really quite good. It was hard to understand their painful expressions. Most of the solos, however, wallowed about mediocrity. Without the comfort and support of the other voices to act as guidance, the vocalists allowed timidity to weaken their delivery.

There were notable exceptions. Pam Lutz gave a beautiful rendition of 'Sad is that woman's lot' from PATIENCE. Anne Whitney's interpretation of 'Poor Wandring One' from THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE was certainly a highlight of well-blended acting and singing.

Regardless, however did the choreography for the men's chorus must have cringed whenever the fellows went into action. If a centipede's legs were as synchronized they would never take him anywhere and beat him to death in the bargain.

Clearly not yet ready for public consumption, the RUDDIGORE segment was almost unbearable. The cast were as lively as a rerun of 'Hymn Sing'. Relief soon followed — we were saved by the first intermission.

Act Two brought *Cox And Box*, an absurd, but charming three man piece centered around a most unusual set of triangles. The entertainment had finally begun in earnest.

What made the big difference? Was it that these three males were the cream of the crop? It didn't seem so. There was Jack Wenaus,

who sang most of the male leads during Act One and concentrated more on his vibrato than anything else. His tenor voice was now under control in *Cox and Box*.

Perhaps it was the addition of a fine set or the excellent costumes. Most likely it was the structure of a plot to supply motivation — to add substance to their characters. Whatever the reason, Adrian Sly and the wild-eyed Avery Bain, who completed the trio, managed to get the evening rolling.

Trial By Jury was even better. Like the subjects of Aurora's kingdom, the full company magically revived. Suddenly they were imbued with the lively enthusiasm necessary for an enjoyable performance of musical comedy. Once again the costumes were a colourful treat for the eyes.

Richard Sircom was a devilishly decadent Learned Judge. Jack Wenaus was back, in even better voice, as the dashing defendant. His resemblance to a young Captain Kangaroo proved rather endearing.

The men still had a little problem moving in unison when they were supposed to but the overall production was rich with animate detail. Ray Grant (Conductor) and Alan Fraser (Pianist) deserved all the applause they received.

With just a little trimming, this show would have been uniformly enjoyable. Judging by the size of the audience, the G&S Society of Nova Scotia appear to be doing a good job of perpetuating the G&S tradition.

Bush's 'The Dreaming', top job

by Kenneth Newman

Kate Bush's new album, *The Dreaming*, can be divided into its three component elements — the music, the lyrics, and the vocals.

The music is quite good. Bush has produced herself on this one and done a top job of it. The record is mostly dominated by Bush on various keyboards with bass and drums. However, notable exceptions are the appearance of the legendary Irish traditional group Planxty on one tune and ultra-mellow German jazz bass player Eberhard Weber on another. Full credit, of course, should go to Bush herself who is responsible for most everything on this record from start to finish.

The music is a bit more developed here than on her previous records, sounding more like Peter Gabriel's recent work than anything else. The moods on the record

switch a fair bit, but never in a jarring way. Make no mistake about it, this is Romantic pop (note: not New Romantic) but it's very good Romantic pop.

The lyrics are another matter. Each song has a meaning or a story. Obviously, they are well crafted and took much time and care on Bush's part. However, a few of them reveal a lack of maturity which clashes with the sophistication of the music. A prime example is the song, "Pull the Pin", about a Vietnamese soldier about to shoot an American. While extremely well put together, the song distills, or romanticizes, a fairly complex and far-reaching scenario into the rather simplistic and sophomoric chorus

Just one thing in it
Me or him
And I love life.

Other lyrics deal with suppressed

sexuality, frustrated ambition, Harry Houdini, Abo-bashing in Australia, and gun-running, among other things. Each of these extraordinarily complex themes are romanticized to the sappy approaches of a Harlequin Romance novelist. But then again, that's part of her appeal. Perhaps one should marvel more at how talented she really is compared to most other songwriters. Even more important, these are rock lyrics and are meant to be heard and not read as poetry. They sound great, anyway.

The vocals — the central focus of all Kate Bush's music — are absolutely fantastic. She's worked harder on this album than any of her others and it shows. Her range is impressive, musical and expressive. If you listen to this record for no other reason, listen for her voice.

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