

BRIGHTON ARGUS – 7/11/16

Review: Gilbert (No Sullivan), The Foundry Group, 3 November 2016 at St. Michael's Community Hall, Brighton.

W.S. Gilbert did exist before Arthur Sullivan and indeed without him. WSG rollicked around the clubs and theatres of Victorian London, sparking satire like fireworks through the pages of 'Fun' and 'Punch' and 'scribbling amusing scenes/in all the London magazines'.

It is this literary life which inspired David Mountfield and Brian Mitchell's show 'Gilbert No Sullivan', a hilarious selection of Bab Ballads and comic sketches created by an imagination stretched laterally as far as the eye can see. By turn, pained railway travellers, tiresome old biddies, sea captains, cannibals, burglars, Lords of the realm and confectioners, the two actors marvellously interpret Gilbert's wilder flights of fancy, illustrating some of the tropes which were to become familiar from the Savoy operas.

David and Brian romp with minimum props and maximum gusto through Gilbertiana, occasionally ad libbing to great effect, trying to avoid any hint of a musical connection and failing. It's a very clever show from two enormously talented and very funny actors.

Louise Schweitzer

SAVOYNET – 12/11/16

Review: Gilbert (No Sullivan), presented by The Foundry Group, 4 November 2016 at Fifield Parish Hall, Oxfordshire.

Subtitled 'Tall Tales and Bonkers Ballads by W.S. Gilbert', this consisted of short stories 'The Finger of Fate', 'The Burglar's Story' and 'Foggerty's Fairy' (aka 'Story of a Twelfth Cake', and Bab Ballads 'Annie Protheroe' and 'The Yarn of the Nancy Bell'. They were adapted by Brian Mitchell and Joseph Nixon, and performed by David Mounfield and Brian Mitchell, both experienced comic actors.

The set was simple: a clothes rack holding a curtain, with a lace curtain underneath. This provided a left, right and centre entrance and formed the window for 'The Burglar's Story'. A blue cloth thrown over it was the sea in 'Finger of Fate' – the heads of the characters appeared over it when the ship went down. 2 dining chairs also served to make a coach, a railway carriage, an executioner's block and, covered with a grey blanket, rocks. Both actors wore Victorian gentlemen's day clothes, and added hats, shawls, a wig or a jabot to play all the characters. Extra cast members were puppets appearing over the clothes rack.

A running gag was that this was a 'No Sullivan' show, while the music cues were all Sullivan: The Tempest for 'Finger of Fate', Iolanthe for 'Foggerty's Fairy', Pirates for 'Burglar's Story', and Yeomen for 'Annie Protheroe'. I think I recognized Victoria and Merrie England in the introductory/interval music.

The show was fast and beautifully timed. The performers trusted the material, enjoyed the Victorian language and had the audience in fits of laughter. A very enjoyable evening.

Deirdre Kincaid.

