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A GRADUATE RECITAL IN CONDUCTING

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Orchestral Conducting

Daniel Wilson McDill

Pittsburg State University

Pittsburg, Kansas

May 2018

A GRADUATE RECITAL IN CONDUCTING

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A GRADUATE RECITAL IN CONDUCTING

An Abstract of the Thesis by
Daniel Wilson McDill

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an understanding of the works conducted on the author's graduate conducting recital at Pittsburg State University. Biographical information of the composer, historical context of the pieces, program notes, and performance considerations will be included for each piece conducted.

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Chapter I

Columbia

Dr. John Ross (1962-present)

Pittsburg State University's own Professor of Music Dr. John Ross composed *Columbia* in 2003. John Ross was born in New Jersey and lived there for the first nine years of his life, before he and his family relocated to south Florida. For an accomplished Professor of Music, Dr. Ross had a relatively late start in music studies. Whereas many musicians start at a young age with lessons in piano, he did not begin any sort of musical training until he was in the sixth grade. Prior to this, his studies were limited to the general music class where he learned recorder. His music teacher became aware of his natural ability with the instrument and his ability to grasp musical concepts much quicker than other students, despite his lack of prior training. At the time, the school band was in need of French horn players, so the teacher asked him if he would be willing to join the school band and learn French horn. Dr. Ross agreed, and thus his musical career began.

Dr. Ross began composing around his ninth-grade year. He wrote his first piece, a fanfare, for his high school band. Because the marching band needed a fanfare for their show, they ended up using Dr. Ross's composition. During his high school tenure, he also composed a suite for band. The high school band's rehearsal of Holst's First Suite in

E Flat inspired him to write a suite of his own. Upon his completion, the director gave Dr. Ross the opportunity to take the podium, conduct, and rehearse his suite; however, this piece would not receive a public performance until later, when Dr. Ross attended community college. This ensemble performed the first two movements and he had to play in the ensemble instead of getting to conduct his work.

In 1979, after just three years of high school, Dr. Ross moved to Fort Myers, Florida, to attend a community college on a music scholarship. After attending the community college, he relocated to Covenant College, a small school located in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. Though the 500-student campus seemed like the right school at the time, Dr. Ross soon realized that there were fewer musical opportunities than he had anticipated. Nevertheless, he gained valuable experience by being on the podium conducting and working with ensembles. This was able to fill the void of some of the opportunities he might have received other places. Following Covenant College, he attended Florida State to study composition with Roy Johnson and John Boda for a master's program.

Upon completion of his master's degree, Dr. Ross was unsure what to do in the field of music. He ended up working at libraries for three years. At his first library he worked on cataloging music items. Dr. Ross then moved to South Carolina to work in the university library cataloging medical books. He had no prior experience with medical books but had the cataloging background. After spending time away from music he realized that he wanted to begin a doctoral program in composition, so Dr. Ross decided to attend the University of Iowa to continue his studies. As great of a learning experience that he had at Florida State, this was the first time that he had a multitude of

opportunities to compose. Besides just being able to work on more compositions, being at an institution with more players allowed him to perform and record his works consistently. While at Iowa he was also able to gain experience as a teaching assistant for the music department teaching theory classes.

During this time, Dr. Ross landed a temporary teaching position at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas when the professor Fisher Tull suddenly became ill. Originally it was only intended for him to teach for a semester but the university decided to have him teach for the entire year. Once the year was done he went back to Iowa to finish his doctoral studies, but his studies were once again interrupted. This time was because he received a Fulbright scholarship to study composition in France. After completing his studies in France and his doctoral work, Dr. Ross worked at a music store for a year before he was able to land a job working at Sam Houston again from 1997 to 2000. Following that Dr. Ross worked at Marshall University for a year before coming to Pittsburg State University in 2001. He has been teaching theory and composition in Pittsburg ever since.

Columbia

Columbia was originally meant to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Pittsburg State University. To honor the occasion, the piece was originally named *Centennial*. Dr. Ross decided to change the name of the piece because of a tragic event that occurred the day he completed it. Dr. Ross explains:

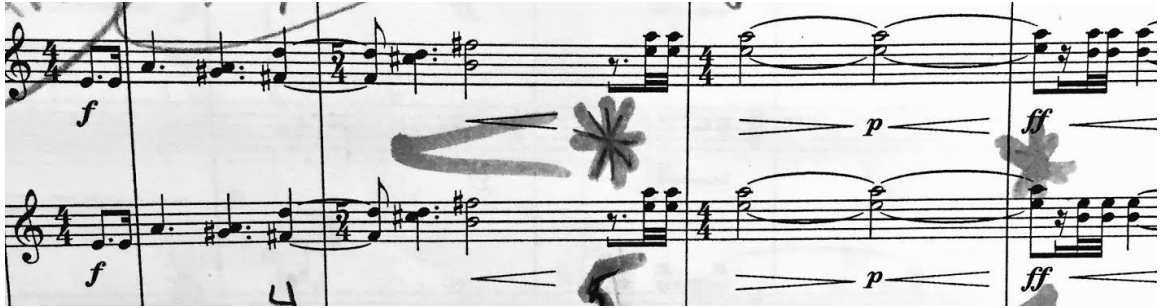
Columbia (2003) was completed on February 1, 2003, the day the space shuttle *Columbia* broke up reentering the Earth's atmosphere and all seven crewmembers perished. For me, this work commemorates those seven, and the relentless spirit of exploration they embodied. May that spirit live on.
JCR¹

When Dr. Ross approached composing the piece, he wanted *Columbia* to be a “beefy” piece that was not rhythmically challenging for the brass. With the rhythms being somewhat “plotty” on their own, Dr. Ross wanted to write a percussion part that went against the rhythms of the brass that complimented them but that sounded almost chaotic at the same time. When composing all of the rhythms, Dr. Ross was very deliberate on where exactly he wanted the brass players to release and breathe in their parts having rests consisting of eighths, dotted eighths, and sixteenth rests.

The first performance of this piece was recorded at Rice University in 2004. The piece was not performed again until the Southeast Kansas Symphony did it at Pittsburg State University in 2017. *Columbia* is scored for three B-flat trumpets, four French Horns, three trombones, one euphonium, one tuba, timpani, large crash cymbals, chimes, toms, and a large bass drum. There is also an optional glockenspiel part but it mostly doubles the trumpets.

¹ Dr. John Ross, *Columbia*, ASCAP, 2003.

Figure 1



The entire fanfare revolves around the note “D” and is loaded with chromatic mediants. In the beginning, the French horns have the main theme of the piece in D. The theme then transfers into the trumpets to be restated in the chromatic mediant key of F. It then moves up another chromatic mediant from F to A-flat in measure nine. After the piece goes through the chromatic mediants of D, F, and A-flat it revolves back to the key center of D in measure eleven and stays that way through measure eighteen.

At measure nineteen: a different key center than the original three mediants is introduced. The piece goes in a different direction to the subdominant key of G. The key is not a chromatic mediant but the material is similar to the opening theme but with many more parts playing. This material from nineteen and twenty is now imitated in the next two measures a whole step down from G to F. It is not a chromatic mediant but it is to the original key of D. The next six measures from twenty-three through twenty-eight take a different route from the original materials and keys. There is a transferring of triplet rhythms constantly through these measures. There is never a moment without triplets beginning with the chimes. In measure twenty-four the rhythmic motive transfers to the trumpets on beat three for a short time of two beats. It then goes into a conversation with the French horns and trumpets. In measure twenty-five and twenty-six

the horns have a smooth legato triplet line that is filled with neighbor notes. These notes then transfer seamlessly to the trumpets in measures twenty-seven and twenty-eight.

Once the piece arrives at measure twenty-nine, it is back to the original chromatic keys of D, F, and either A or A-flat. In twenty-nine and thirty it moves backwards through the chromatic mediant sequence going from A major, F major, and then back to the key center of D. The following two measures follow suit going backwards through the sequence with the only difference being that key in A is minor instead of major.

Finally in measure thirty-six one hears the opening theme in D in the French horns just as the beginning. Consequently, the trumpets play similar material in the key of F and moving to a thicker texture in the key of A-flat. Once we arrive at measure forty-four we go backwards through the key sequence one more time. The piece goes through A in forty-four, F in forty-five, and stays in D from forty-six to the end.

Chapter II

Concerto No. 4 in D for Violin, K. 218

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed the violin concerto in D at the young age of nineteen as a part of a set of five violin concertos in 1775.² Mozart was born on January 27, 1756 in Salzburg to Leopold Mozart and Maria Anna Pertl. Mozart had been originally christened as Joannes Chrisostomos Wolfgangus Gottlieb. One older sibling, Maria Anna preceded Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart by four years. Maria Anna, within her family, went by the name of Nannerl.³ Wolfgang and Nannerl would have had five other siblings but they were the only two that survived. Leopold Mozart insisted that the children be brought up on a diet consisting of only water and foods like gruel.

Mozart was born into a musical family. It all started with his father Leopold who immigrated to Salzburg in 1737 from his family's home in Augsburg, Bavaria. Although Salzburg was a musical city, Leopold Mozart did not move there to become a musician. He studied at the university but decided that music would be his career. Leopold became

² Louis Biancolli, *The Mozart Handbook: A Guide to the Man and His Music*, (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1954), 427.

³ Jeremy Siepmann, *Mozart: His Life and Music* (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks Inc., 2006), 3.

known as a composer and violinist of the time. Because of his musical talents, Wolfgang and his sister Maria Anna began to study with their father when Wolfgang was just three years old. At first he did not receive lessons, but he would sit and listen while his father taught Nannerl on the keyboard. After Leopold would be finished teaching her, Wolfgang would take his place at the keyboard and start playing different notes together to see what sounded pleasant to his ears.

By the time that he was four years old, Wolfgang had the capability to perform multiple short pieces very well. By the time that he was five years old, his father realized that Wolfgang had started to compose his own works. Mozart had composed an Andante and an Allegro for clavier, K. 1a and 1b that Leopold entered by hand into his own book of music.⁴ The earliest record of Mozart was composing was at the young age of four. The family was friends with the court trumpeter named Herr Schachtner. He recalled an experience on a visit to the family's home.

At first we laughed at what seemed such pure gibberish, but his father then began to observe the most important matter, the notes and music; he stared long at the sheet, and then tears, tears of joy and wonder, fell from his eyes. Look, Herr Schachtner, [he] said, see how correctly and properly it is all written, only it can't be used, for it is so very difficult that no one could play it. Wolfgangerl said: That's why it's a concerto, you must practice it till you can get it right, look, that's how it goes. He played, and managed to bring out just enough to give us a notion of what he intended.⁵

Mozart blossomed as a performer well before he achieved great success as a composer. He learned a scherzo by the composer Georg Christoph Wagenseil shortly before his fifth birthday. Shortly after, Wolfgang began performing at the age of five.

⁴ Jeremy Siepmann, *Mozart: His Life and Music*, 38.

⁵ Maynard Solomon, *Mozart: A Life* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 38.

Mozart made his public performance debut at the University of Salzburg on September 1st, 1761.⁶ Wolfgang went on to teach himself how to play the violin within the year following this performance. With Nannerl being able to perform keyboard music just as well as adults, Leopold soon realized that both of his children were quickly becoming child prodigies. So at the beginning of the year 1762, their father began to travel with the children having them perform. The first trip that Leopold, Wolfgang, and Nannerl took a three-week visit to Munich. While they were there, the children performed for people such as Maximilian III Joseph, the elector of Bavaria. This trip was successful and would pave the way for the family to travel to other areas and perform for important figures.

Fast forwarding to the end of 1774, Mozart was commissioned to write a comic opera in Munich. The opera was titled *La finta giardiniera* and was considered a success by others even though there was not a substantial reward to come from it.⁷ Because of this, Mozart had to return to his birthplace of Salzburg. His father was determined to push Wolfgang to become an amazing violinist. His son had no desire to become a virtuoso on violin. He only practiced to keep his father happy. Because of all the attention that was given to the violin, Mozart composed a set of five violin concertos at the age of nineteen years old when he returned to Salzburg.

⁶ Jeremy Siepmann, *Mozart: His Life and Music*, 5.

⁷ Louis Biancolli, *The Mozart Handbook: A Guide to the Man and His Music*, 19.

Concerto No. 4 in D for Violin, K. 218

Between the period of June fourteenth and December twentieth of 1774, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart composed five concertos for violin: K. 207, K. 211, K. 216, K.218, and K. 219. These five concertos are not known as the greatest compositions that Mozart had ever written but they are all fantastic works, especially to be written at the young age of nineteen. As Louis Biancolli mentioned, many reputable composers that were three times the age of Wolfgang would have been ecstatic to be able to claim this set of concertos that have features such as “incredible fluency of musical speech, the richness of texture, and the sheer beauty of melodic line that pervades this music.”⁸ The five concertos also all follow the same three-movement form. It begins with an Allegro in concerto-sonata form alternating back and forth between ritornellos and solos, a slower movement, and then finishes with a Rondo finale. These concertos are some of the earliest works of his that really took their place into today’s repertoire.

As I stated previously, his father was pushing him to be a violinist but Mozart had no interest in becoming a soloist. He would play violin occasionally at small parties while he was drinking and his spirits were high.⁹ Besides Mozart performing at small gatherings, these concertos would also be for the use of Gaetano Brunetti, the court master of the Salzburg court orchestra. Mozart enjoyed this work and reflected his

⁸ Louis Biancolli, *The Mozart Handbook: A Guide to the Man and His Music*, 428.

⁹ Robert W. Gutman, *Mozart: A Cultural Biography* (New York, San Diego, and London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1999), 350.

playing. Wolfgang had said in a letter that “everyone praised my beautiful pure tone” and that it “went like oil.”¹⁰

Even though each concerto can stand alone, there are definitely similarities that you will see throughout the five that are especially apparent in the fourth concerto in D. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was able to pack in a large amount of melodies in this work, going from one to another abruptly at times. Mozart will go straight into the next melodies without providing any transitioning music or a line to link the ending note of the previous theme to the first note of the new theme. Mozart did not also always feel the need to bring back the main opening theme of the piece into the recapitulation. Mozart’s fourth violin concerto is the perfect example of such.

Figure 2



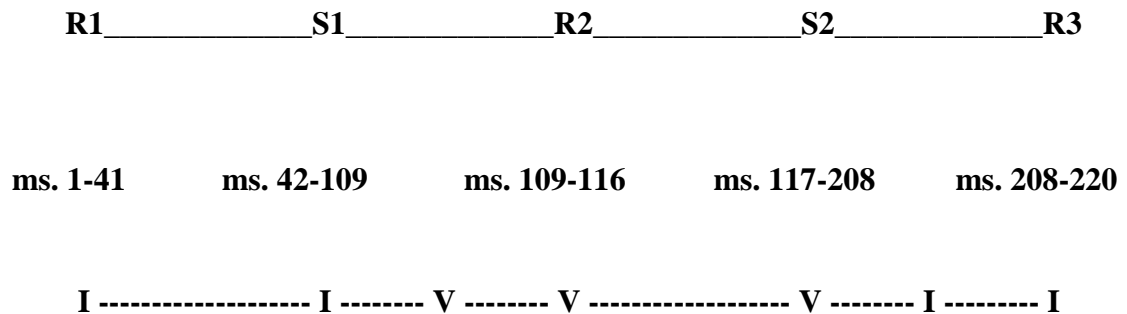
Here is the opening theme to the Allegro movement of Concerto No. 4 in D for violin. It opens up the entire piece in a forte unison passage between the entire orchestration: two oboes, two French horns in octaves, violin one, violin two, viola, cello, bass, and of course the solo violin. This main theme is seen at the beginning of the movement in the first ritornello. The theme only comes back up one more time fully at the beginning of the first solo section. The theme is referenced in a subtle manner in the

¹⁰ Louis Biancolli, *The Mozart Handbook: A Guide to the Man and His Music*, 430.

¹¹ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto No. 4 in D for Violin* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1877), 1.

very last measure of the piece by utilizing the first three beats of the theme. This main theme disappears quickly into new melodies. These four bars are not even brought back into any recapitulation of material. The movement does not have a real development but rather Mozart introduces new melodies that only have a general relationship to the main theme.

Figure 3



The Allegro movement of the fourth concerto in D is in concerto sonata form. Even though the piece is in the concerto form it does not follow exactly to what the normal form lays out. Jane R. Stevens talks about the form that Heinrich Christoph Koch lays out for us as a concerto sonata form. Jane says that "...he sees a concerto movement as a alternating pattern of four tutti sections, which function simply as ritornellos, and three solo sections..."¹² As noted in figure above, the number of ritornellos and solo sections vary slightly from Koch's model. Mozart instead uses a concerto sonata form that uses three ritornello sections with two solo sections in between them.

The opening ritornello section begins with a short statement of the exposition followed directly by the second theme that is introduced in the strings in measure five.

¹² Jane R. Stevens, "An 18th-Century Description of Concerto First-Movement Form" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 24, no. 1 (1971), 89.

The first solo section is brought in by the soloist stating the exposition in the tonic key and then directly moving to the second section. The soloist then takes into the dominant key of A major in measure sixty-six. This solo section in A leads us all the way to the second ritornello section beginning at measure 109. The second ritornello section is a short section only lasting until the second solo section comes in at measure 117. The solo section could be thought of as a development section but it is "...largely occupied by passage work for the violin. The recapitulation omits the first, vigorous section of the principal theme, and begins with the second."¹³ Mozart arrives back in the key of D at measure 146 returning with material from the second theme again.

The third and final ritornello section arrives at measure 208 with a short five bar passage related to measure thirteen leading into a cadenza by the soloist. This part does match exactly with Koch's classical concerto form. This usually would happen in the fourth ritornello section but in this case we only have three. Jane R. Stevens talks about the orchestra coming in at the very end of the last solo section with a few measures leading into a fermata holding the tonic chord in second inversion. This matches exactly with what Mozart writes at measure 212. At the end of the five measures, the orchestra plays a sustained D chord with the fifth of the chord in the bass. At this point the soloist will begin improvising "either a free fantasy or a capriccio."¹⁴ When the soloist is finished with their cadenza, the orchestra will join them again as part of the final ritornello with a small coda.

¹³ Louis Biancolli, *The Mozart Handbook: A Guide to the Man and His Music*, 436.

¹⁴ Jane R. Stevens, "An 18th Century Description of Concerto form", 91.

Chapter III

The Pirates of Penzance

William Schwenck Gilbert and Arthur Seymour Sullivan

Gilbert and Sullivan wrote a number of operas together, most of which were produced at the Savoy Theatre in London. After they first collaborated in 1871, they went on to write famous works such as: “Trial by Jury” (1875); “The Sorcerer” (1877); “H. M. S. Pinafore” (1878); “The Pirates of Penzance” (1879); “Patience” (1881); “Iolanthe” (1882); “Princess Ida” (1884); “The Mikado” (1885); “Ruddigore” (1887); “The Yeomen of the Guard” (1888); and “The Gondoliers” (1889).¹⁵ You can hardly mention either one of their names without bringing up the other’s. But before these two would ever collaborate, they each had a career of their own.

William Schwenck Gilbert was born in November of 1836 and lived until 1911.¹⁶ W. S. Gilbert was not born into a family of the theater. William was a descendant of Sir Humphrey Gilbert who was a well-known soldier and navigator. The closest relation to anything theatrical was Gilbert’s father, William Gilbert. Even then, he was only a part-

¹⁵ J. Walker McSpadden, *Light Opera and Musical Comedy*, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1936), 198.

¹⁶ Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1983), 150.

time novelist who had retired from the navy as a surgeon. Gilbert had tried his hand at similar trades, such as government service and law, but knowing that neither of these backgrounds was anything he wanted to do he set out to write comic verse and journalism. Gilbert also worked as a drama critic writing for papers.¹⁷ By the time that William Schwenck Gilbert was thirty-five years old, he was a well-known dramatist and writer. Gilbert is well-known for his writing of *The Bab Ballads*, which was full of light verse. Not only was Gilbert known for his work as a writer, he was also recognized for his talents as a director – or in the idiom of the British, a producer.¹⁸ Gilbert could have had success as a comic journalist, but he was determined to pursue a life in theater.

Gilbert had become a regular theatergoer in London and France in the early 1860s. He went there extensively for work but also would go on his own time for his own purposes. Ironically enough, in 1867 Gilbert reviewed *Cox and Box*, the first opera that Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote. Gilbert seemed to enjoy Sullivan’s music but had harsher words for the librettist F. C. Burnand. Referring to what Gilbert had to write about the music and the librettist who worked with Sullivan, Wren declared:

Mr. Sullivan’s music is, in many places, of too high a class for the grotesquely absurd plot to which it is wedded,” he wrote. “It is very funny, here and there, and grand or graceful when it is not funny; but the grand and the graceful have, we think, too large a share of the honors to themselves.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta: From H. M. S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 17.

¹⁸ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, (Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2001), 16.

¹⁹ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 17.

Figure 4



Illustration from *The Bab Ballads*²⁰

Gilbert's drawings for the *Bab Ballads* set a precedent for how he later wrote librettos. He paid close attention to details in all his works. Gilbert's writing for burlesques and especially his libretto work for musical works at Thomas German Reed's Royal Gallery of Illustration such as *No Cards* (1869) and *A Sensation Novel* (1871) set the precedent for him to write song lyrics that were not attached to previously established melodies.²¹

²⁰ W. S. Gilbert, *The Bab Ballads* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 206

²¹ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 18.

Sir Arthur Sullivan was born in London in 1842 and lived until 1900. Unlike Gilbert, Sullivan came from a musical family with his father having the role of a bandmaster. It is said that young Arthur was able to play all the wind instruments in the band by the time he reached eight years old.²²

Figure 5



Sir Arthur Sullivan as a Chapel Royal Chorister

Besides being proficient with wind instruments at a young age, Sullivan was blessed to have a fine voice. Young Sullivan expressed to his father a desire to become a chorister either at the Chapel Royal or Westminster Abbey. At first, his father did not support his dream. He was finally convinced and let Arthur's schoolmaster accompany

²² Gerald Bordman, *American Operetta: From H. M. S. Pinafore to Sweeney Todd*, 17.

him to see the organist and composer at the Chapel Royal.²³ The organist was impressed and sent Sullivan on his way to meet with the Chapel Royal boys' master, Thomas Helmore, to set up an appointment. Young Sullivan went on to have much success as a chorister singing many solos, a fact known because of the many letters he sent back home to his father. In a letter dated October 6, 1856 he mentions that he is now "first boy" and said "Yesterday I had to sing a long solo in the Chapel royal... Watch the *Times* every day, and most likely you will see all about it..."²⁴

Sullivan was at the Chapel Royal when the first Mendelssohn Scholarship competition would take place. Sullivan won the competition.²⁵ It was almost out of his reach because of his age. There was an age condition for the scholarship competition stating that one needed to be at least fourteen years of age. Sullivan barely squeezed his way into the competition with his birthday falling within weeks of the cutoff. When the competition was coming to a close, it was announced that the finalists out of the seventeen that entered were the oldest and youngest of the competitors. It had come down to a tie but at the end of a daylong tie-breaking competition young Sullivan finished on top.²⁶

After finishing with the Chapel Royal, Sullivan went on to study for three years in Germany at the respected Leipzig Conservatory. While in Leipzig, he received world-

²³ Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life-story, Letters, and Reminiscences* (London: James Bowden, 1899), 6.

²⁴ Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life-story, Letters, and Reminiscences*, 11.

²⁵ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 22.

²⁶ Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life-story, Letters, and Reminiscences*, 16.

class instruction. His masters for studying the pianoforte were Moscheles and Plaidy. Plaidy was sought after throughout the world for his instruction in the technical power of playing. Sullivan was also able to study composition under master Julius Rietz. Rietz was a renowned conductor who always strived for a high achievement in performance. Sullivan also studied counterpoint and fugue with Hauptmann and Ferdinand David for orchestral playing and conducting.²⁷ When Sullivan arrived in Leipzig, his main focus was pianoforte but he came to realize that conducting was his true passion. He talks about conducting as early as November of 1859 in a letter that he wrote to his brother. Sullivan speaks of working on an operetta by Reinecke.

...The operetta—one of Reinecke's—is only written for pianoforte accompaniment, and as that is not strong enough, I am obliged to arrange a great part of it for string instruments, and, besides that, I have to *conduct* the whole piece. I anticipate great fun at the rehearsals! ...My orchestra consists of three first violins, two second, one cello, and one contrabass, with the grand piano, and perhaps I shall have two or three more violins and another cello. We have eighteen in the chorus and six solo singers, so I shall have enough to do to keep them all together.²⁸

Almost a year after writing this letter he wrote once again to his brother expressing his passion for conducting and his growing confidence in his skills. This is part of a letter written on October 31, 1860:

My great hobby is still conducting. I have been told by many of the masters here that I was born to be a conductor and consequently have been educating myself to a high degree in that branch of the art. If I can only once obtain an opportunity to show what I can do in that way I feel confident of my success afterwards. Do not mistake this for conceit...but I am getting of an age now when I shall be obliged to have confidence in myself and my own resources.²⁹

²⁷ Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life-story, Letters, and Reminiscences*, 25.

²⁸ Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life-story, Letters, and Reminiscences*, 29.

²⁹ Arthur Lawrence, *Sir Arthur Sullivan: Life-story, Letters, and Reminiscences*, 42.

Besides having a love for conducting, Sullivan is well-known for his compositions. Sullivan first became a staple in English music in the year 1862. This was the year of his first appearance in front of the English public. He performed his incidental music set to William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* at the Crystal Palace in London. This was music that he had composed while he was still a student at the school in Leipzig, Germany. This was a huge success for the then twenty-year-old.³⁰

³⁰ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 23.

The Pirates of Penzance

The Pirates of Penzance, or *The Slave of Duty*, was the fourth operetta that W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan collaborated on as a team. This operetta is the only one that was produced in New York first. The rest of them were produced first in London. *The Pirates of Penzance* would not premier in London until April third, 1880 at the Opera Comique. There alone it would have 363 performances of *The Pirates of Penzance*.³¹

The work itself was basically retaliation from the amount of unauthorized performances of their massive hit *H. M. S. Pinafore* throughout New York City and Boston. Gilbert and Sullivan could never have imagined how much of a success the show would become. Unfortunately for the duo, the copyright laws at that time in America did not offer them any sort of protection from illegal showings of *H. M. S. Pinafore* that were happening.³² These multiple productions would use a printed vocal score and figure out the rest of the parts on their own with huge inaccuracies. Some productions would insert musical numbers into the production that had nothing to do with the libretto. There was even one production in New York City that had the role of Ralph Rackstraw was played by a woman onstage. W. S. Gilbert, with the amount of attention he paid to details, would have never approved of anything like this.³³ So Gilbert, Sullivan, their producer D'Oyly Carte (came shortly after with the cast), the conductor/musical assistant Alfred Cellier, and soprano Blanche Roosevelt traveled to

³¹ J. Walker McSpadden, *Light Opera and Musical Comedy*, 205.

³² Simpson and Jones, Preface to *The Pirates of Penzance* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001) v.

³³ Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, 159.

New York from London to do it justice. They left London on the Cunard steamship *Bothnia* on October twenty-fifth, 1879 and arrived in America on November fifth.³⁴

Gilbert and Sullivan wanted to premiere *The Pirates of Penzance* soon after their run of *Pinafore*. The American public had finally seen the English version of the show so they now they knew what to expect of Gilbert and Sullivan shows done by D'Oyly Carte. They were able to finally understand how it was to be sung and staged. This meant that it was crucial for them to do their fourth collaboration together justice. The showings of *Pinafore* were starting to die down but, in a mix up, Arthur Sullivan realized that he had accidentally left all his sketches for the first act of the new operetta back in London. This meant that Sullivan had to compose quickly to make sure that everything would go to plan to have the premiere ready by the end of the year.

...I cannot really enjoy myself until it is produced, and I cannot go anywhere or do anything. I fear I have left all my sketches of the 1st act at home, as I have searched everywhere for them. I would have telegraphed for them, but they could not have arrived in time. It is a great nuisance as I have to re-write it all now, and recollect every number I did. We hope to get it out in a fortnight from next Saturday—27th...³⁵

Sullivan was in so much of a hurry, he even included a prior song of theirs into the show. Sullivan had included “Climbing over Rocky Mountain” from an earlier collaboration of Gilbert and Sullivan entitled *Thespis*. *The Pirates of Penzance* also shows haste by the numerous times after the premier that they edited the show. They constantly edited the score until the London premier four months later. Because of the

³⁴ Simpson and Jones, Preface to *The Pirates of Penzance*, v.

³⁵ Simpson and Jones, Preface to *The Pirates of Penzance*, v.

amount of editing between the New York and London showings, no one is for sure what all was exactly in the New York showing.³⁶

Rehearsals for the new show began very quickly in secret. Sullivan even locked the orchestra parts away in a safe at night to be sure that no one could steal the parts and cause a copyright fiasco like *H. M. S. Pinafore*. The musical parts themselves were much more sophisticated than the last show and the musicians thought highly of them as well. They thought so highly of them the orchestra thought that they should have been paid at a higher rate equal to playing a grand opera.³⁷

Arthur Sullivan strived to make the orchestration for *The Pirates of Penzance* more grandiose than Gilbert and Sullivan's last two operettas, *The Sorcerer* and *H. M. S. Pinafore*. Sullivan was able successfully insert styles of Italo-French music into English operettas. Frederic and Ruth's duet "Oh, False One, You Have Deceived Me!" from the first act could have very well been written by Verdi if you had not heard the lyrics. Mabel's entrance song "Poor Wandering Ones" is very reminiscent of a Gounod waltz. If you listen to the music of "Poor Wandering Ones" and the waltz from *Faust*, there are many similarities to each other. Sullivan's use of "With Catlike Tread" is also very similar to Offenbach's *Les Brigands*. Gilbert had also translated this work in 1871. Sullivan also incorporated simpler songs into the operetta that were very successful. The Major-General's patter song entitled "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General"

³⁶ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 74.

³⁷ Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, 161.

and the Sergeant's number "When a Felon's Not Engaged in His Employment" are some of the most memorable songs in the show.³⁸

The Pirates of Penzance is an operetta that is packed with a large amount of music from the beginning to the end. Throughout the entirety of the operetta, there are only seven occurrences of actual dialogue sequences, with only two of those happening in the second act alone.³⁹ The first instance of dialogue in the second act falls between the opening number "Oh, Dry the Glistening Tear" and a short recitative by the Major-General followed by the large number sang by multiple characters "When the Foeman Bares His Steel". This Dialogue consists of Frederic talking to Mabel and the Major-General about that Major-General did right because if not the pirates would have already married his entire family. The other occurrence of dialogue in the second act happens right after Ruth and the Pirate King finished singing "When You Had Left Our Pirate Fold" with Frederic about a most ingenious paradox of Frederic having been born on a leap year. During this exchange they come to the conclusion that Frederic must appeal to his sense of duty and join back in arms with the pirates. It is now when he finally reveals to them that the Major-General was never an orphan.⁴⁰

As I stated previously, this operetta has a vast amount of music. A large contribution to this fact is how *The Pirates of Penzance* is built upon series of musical scenes. The musical sequence that begins with the recitative "Stop, Ladies, Pray" is the single longest sequence of music that W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan ever put together

³⁸ Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, 162.

³⁹ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 75.

⁴⁰ Gilbert and Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001), 167, 201.

in their operettas.⁴¹ This sequence of music does not contain any section of pure dialogue. This sequence includes: Recitative “Stop, Ladies, Pray”, Aria with Chorus “Oh, Is There Not One Maiden Breast”, Air with Chorus “Poor Wandering One”, Solos with Chorus “What Ought We to Do”, Chattering Chorus and Duet “How Beautifully Blue the Sky”, Recitative with Chorus “Stay, We Must Not Lose Our Senses”, Chorus “Here’s a First Rate Opportunity”, Recitative with Chorus “Hold, Monsters!”, and ends with Song with Chorus “I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General”. This sequence alone in total is thirty-nine pages of music in the score with no break for the orchestra demanding stamina and concentration from the orchestra and the conductor.

Large musical sequences, such as this last one, are due to Gilbert and Sullivan’s substantial implications of recitative. Their use of recitative is much more sophisticated than the recitative secco in their preceding operetta *H. M. S. Pinafore*. There are still moments of recitative secco but then Gilbert and Sullivan will mix in more extensive recitative.

The Recitative and Trio “Now for the Pirate’s Lair!” with Frederic, Pirate King, and Ruth is a perfect example of this concept. It starts off with a recitative sang by Frederic about going to the Pirate’s Lair and being able to right the wrongs that he had committed under the indentures of the Pirates. The recitative begins with the orchestra playing chords on beats two and three with interjections by Frederic. This directly goes into long sustained chords played by the orchestra while Frederic sings long statements beginning with multiple repeated words sang on the note F. It is not authentic secco since it is played by more than just continuo, but it has the same application. This then

⁴¹ Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 75.

transforms into a trio between the three characters exchanging back and forth with each other through “blank verse in small snatches of melody, each flowing effortlessly into the next.”⁴²

⁴² Gayden Wren, *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*, 75.

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