

“A Day at the Savoy Theatre”

featuring

Mr. Jericho

**By Ralph MacPhail, Jr.
Staging Director
Gilbert & Sullivan Austin**

One of the delightful aspects of spending the last half-century devoted to Gilbert & Sullivan has been following the scholarship devoted to this remarkable collaboration.

I have seen Sullivan’s full orchestral scores come out of London bank-vaults and made available to all. I have seen books strip away the mythology that has surrounded the storied collaboration of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan (and Richard D’Oyly Carte). I have seen and heard performances of Sullivan’s non-Gilbert works (including his oratorios) as well as Gilbert’s non-Sullivan dramatic works. I have witnessed the lesser-known Savoy operas receiving more and more performances. I have been delighted to note that interest in Gilbert & Sullivan is now a part of the grist for scholarly journals and the repertoires of “grand” opera houses.

Mr. Jericho

March’s presentation of *Mr. Jericho* by Gilbert & Sullivan Austin, to be webcast by NEGASS on November 21st, represents another way in which scholarship into the history of the Savoy operas has deepened and broadened, for just five years ago, *Mr. Jericho* (words by Harry Greenbank; music by Ernest Ford) was an obscure footnote in the “post-carpet-quarrel” career of Gilbert & Sullivan. It was written in 1893 as a curtain-raiser for *Haddon Hall*, which was produced at the Savoy and composed by Sullivan, but written by Sydney Grundy. After a century of obscurity, *Mr. Jericho* was rescued from its fate by musicologist Christopher O’Brian and published in England.

I ordered a copy as soon as it became available, and found it a laugh-out-loud delight. The music sounds a lot like Sullivan’s (Ernest Ford was Sullivan’s pupil at the

Royal Academy of Music), and Harry Greenbank was well on his way toward writing the tremendous successes of “the new musical comedy” at Daly’s Theatre—works that for a while seemed to supersede comic opera in the public’s estimation in the 1890s.

Greenbank was surely familiar with his Gilbert & Sullivan, and in *Mr. Jericho* you may find echoes of *The Sorcerer*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Iolanthe*, and—well, discovering Greenbank’s possible antecedents is a delight I’d rather leave to *you*.

As for the little operetta itself, it’s a charming work filled with pleasant musical numbers and funny characters and dialogue poking fun (as Gilbert & Sullivan often did) at class distinctions and their impediments to “true love.” My long-time and valued musical collaborator **Dr. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** was enthusiastic, GSA President **Libby Weed** got on board, and Gilbert & Sullivan Austin soon costumed and fully staged *Mr. Jericho* with the suggestion of a set, and performed it with grand-piano accompaniment by **Jeanne Dayton Sasaki**.

Just *who is Mr. Jericho*? The eponymous gentleman is actually the manufacturer of “Jericho’s Jams,” a popular breakfast staple, and we guarantee you’ll be singing his advertising jingle long after the webcast is over! And if you’d like to dig deeper into the show, you can’t do better than to consult the Gilbert & Sullivan Archive:

<https://www.gsarchive.net/companions/jericho/index.html>.

A Day at the Savoy Theatre

When Gilbert & Sullivan Austin decided to produce the work, we realized that it was really too short to stand on its own, so CFO **David Wieckowski** researched the history of the Savoy Theatre. His researches led to an hour-long illustrated lecture using PowerPoint slides of historical images that complement his text. We further decided to have the five performers in *Mr. Jericho* perform musical numbers from each Gilbert & Sullivan première that ran at the Savoy from its opening in 1881 until *Mr. Jericho* opened in 1893. Faithful Savoyard **Janette Jones** selected these numbers, and the two of us staged them, interspersing them in appropriate places in the chronology.

Here is the cast of *Mr. Jericho*:

Michael de Vere (*Earl of Margate*) **Reagan Murdock**
Horace Alexander de Vere (*an omnibus driver*) **Taylor Rawley**
Mr. Jericho (*a jam manufacturer*)..... **Julius Young**
Lady Bushey **Patricia Combs**
Winifred (*her daughter*)..... **Amy Selby**

Of course, as with any dramatic production, many people made it possible by working behind-the-scenes. Here is a link to the full program (and photographs, too):

<https://www.gilbertsullivan.org/shows/a-day-at-the-savoy-theatre-2020/>

Our aim with this production was to offer an appealing array of familiar musical numbers that were first presented at the Savoy Theatre, and then give the same five singers a chance to present the Texas premiere of *Mr. Jericho*, a musical delight from two of Gilbert & Sullivan’s dramatic and musical friends. I was persuaded to present David Wieckowski’s historical narrative tying the first part together, thus with the singers setting the musical and historical stage for this little gem of an operetta.

We Austin Savoyards were delighted when the New England Gilbert & Sullivan Society expressed interest in sharing our production to a wider audience, and we’d like very much to see more such inter-organizational cooperation in the future.

[See show logo on next page]



A DAY
at the
SAVOY
THEATRE



GILBERT & SULLIVAN
GAUSTIN

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