

Act Two – Palace Yard, Westminster

The second act opens with a contemplative sentry on duty, reflecting on the two-party political system, and on the parliamentary whipping system - *When all night long*. The fairies and Peers enter, the former delighted with the havoc Strephon is causing in parliament, the latter very cross - *Strephon's a member of parliament*. Their Lordships try to justify their institution - *When Britain really ruled the waves*. Complications are arising, because the fairies are becoming somewhat smitten by their Lordships - *In vain to us you plead*. The Queen is very cross with them. She finds that the sentry has an extraordinary effect on her, but she subdues this inclination - *Oh, foolish fay*. The Lords Tolloller and Mountarat have emerged as favourites to win Phyllis's hand, but neither will yield to the other. They are both much relieved to find that the other agrees that the sacred ties of friendship are paramount, and they needn't fight a duel - *Tho' praps I may incur your blame*. The Lord Chancellor now appears. His infatuation with Phyllis is costing him his beauty sleep - *Love, unrequited*. Lords Tolloller and Mountarat help him make up his mind - *If you go in*. Strephon has told Phyllis about his fairy mother and, reconciled, they sing a happy love duet - *If we're weak enough to tarry*. But there is still the problem of the Lord Chancellor. Leila, one of the few fairies in the know, reveals to us that the Lord Chancellor is Strephon's father. The Lord Chancellor believes Iolanthe to have died childless, and she is bound, under penalty of death, not to deceive him. Keeping her face hidden, she makes one last appeal on Strephon's behalf - *My Lord, a suppliant at your feet/it may not be*. The Fairy Queen is about to carry out the death sentence when all the fairies reveal that *they* have all become fairy duchesses, marchionesses, countesses, viscountesses and baronesses. The subtleties of the Lord Chancellor's legal mind are equal to the emergency, and the entire company fly off happily to Fairyland - *Soon as we may*.

OPERA COMIQUE

present
a concert performance of

IOLANTHE
or, The Peer and the Peri

by

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

Sunday 2 October at 3.00pm
in the Church of the Resurrection, Drayton

Musical Director Kevin Sivyver

Accompanist Nigel Smith

The Charitable Trust Opera Comique was founded by Kevin Sivyver some thirty years ago, and in that time has raised many thousands of pounds for a variety of good causes with performances of, and concerts from, the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. As well as theatres in Portsmouth, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, Shaftesbury and Havant, venues have included H.M.S. Victory, H.M.S. Warrior 1860, T/S Foudroyant when she was moored in Portsmouth Harbour, Portchester and Southsea Castles, Basing House and London Guildhall. Overseas venues have included Rauma in Finland, Duisburg in Germany, Venice (has any other English group performed *The Gondoliers* there?) and several locations in New England, USA. We are delighted to be performing nearer home today, in aid of the Farlington Parish Building Project.

IOLANTHE

Cast of characters

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| Iolanthe, a fairy, Strephon's mother | Alison Jerome |
| Phyllis, an Arcadian Shepherdess and Ward in Chancery | Amanda Crehan |
| Queen of the Fairies | Josephine Craston |
| Strephon, an Arcadian Shepherd | Simon Cooksey |
| The Lord Chancellor | David Francis |
| Lord Mountararat | Ken Hick |
| Lord Tolloller | Mike Sylvester |
| Private Willis, of the Grenadier Guards | John Warner |
| Celia, a fairy | Irene Kent |
| Leila, a fairy | Penny Bullough |
| Chorus of Dukes, Marquises, Earls, Viscounts, Barons and Fairies | |

"Iolanthe" was the seventh collaboration of Gilbert and Sullivan, first produced at the Savoy Theatre on 25 November 1882. Over and above their usual concoction of love, laughter and song, "Iolanthe" is a trenchant satire on the British political system – both the House of Commons – "When in that house MPs divide/...they've got to leave their brains outside/and vote just as their leaders tell 'em to" – and the House of Lords – "if there is an institution in Great Britain which is not susceptible of any improvement at all, it is the House of Peers" – all as sadly true in these times of coalition government and half-hearted reform of the upper house as it was when the piece was first written.

Act One – An Arcadian landscape

In our concert performance, the story is narrated by two fairies, Celia and Leila. After the opening chorus, *Tripping hither*, the Fairy Queen summons Iolanthe – *Iolanthe, from thy dark exile*. Iolanthe had been condemned to death for marrying a mortal, but the Queen and all the other fairies loved her so much that the sentence was commuted to lifelong banishment – and now the Queen has been persuaded to pardon her. We learn that Iolanthe had a son, who immediately puts in an appearance – *Good morrow, good mother*. Strephon is in love with Phyllis, a beautiful young Ward in Chancery, but the Lord Chancellor won't give his consent to their marriage. The fairies leave – *Fare thee well*. We meet Phyllis – *Good morrow, good lover/None shall part us*. The entire House of Lords enter, followed by the Lord Chancellor – *Loudly let the trumpet bray/The law is the true embodiment*. It is clear that all the Lords are in love with Phyllis – *My well-loved Lord/Nay tempt me not/Spurn not the nobly born/My Lords, it may not be*. Celia and Leila rightly think that the Lord Chancellor has also taken a fancy to Phyllis. Strephon tries again (unsuccessfully) to persuade the Lord Chancellor to let him marry Phyllis – *When I went to the bar*. Strephon determines to ask his mother for assistance but the problem is, fairies never age – so that Iolanthe looks no older than her son. The *Finale* shows the Peers and Phyllis refusing to believe that Strephon is Iolanthe's son, the fairies coming to Strephon's aid by making him a member of parliament and throwing the Peerage open to competitive examination.

There will be an interval of 20 minutes