

Another of our Sunday afternoon meetings at Bill Dean Myatts' house in Walsall at which John Reading presented "A Gilbert & Sullivan Selection". As this writer was a one time member of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Trust this was the presentation that I had eagerly anticipated and I was not disappointed.

John had brought along a selection of early G & S recordings mostly, (although not entirely) on G & T discs from the 1906/1907 period. The first disc that we heard was indeed from 1906 – "*If You Want to Know Who We Are*" the opening chorus from "The Mikado" sung by the Sullivan Operatic Party a pick-up group of singers with a personnel that varied from session to session depending on who was in the Maiden Lane studio on the day of the recording. One of our group identified Ernest Pike as one of the singers on that particular disc. This was followed by another of the 1906 G & T recordings of selections from The Mikado. This was "*Tit Willow*" this time sung by Stanley Kirkby. A third 1906 recording of an item from the Mikado was the duet "*Were You Not To Ko-Ko Plighted?*" sung by Ernest Pike and Eleanor Jones-Hudson.

John then moved away from the 1906 G&T recordings and we heard an Ariel disc of "*Stay Frederick Stay*". Pressed from a Zonophone master recorded in about 1912 the singers were, according to the label, Edgar Cooper and Mabel Froome although they were really Ernest Pike and Eleanor Jones-Hudson. There was a further leap in time, to a 1931 HMV recording of "*Oh, is There Not One Maiden Breast*" performed by Derek Oldham and Mabel Dickson accompanied by the D'Oyly Carte orchestra under the direction of Dr. Malcolm Sargent (his knighthood came later).

While the first few recordings were all recorded by the Gramophone Co we then had a change to a 1912 Columbia recording of "*No Possible Doubt Whatever*" from The Gondoliers performed by Walter Passmore, the D'Oyly Carte opera company's principal singer of comic roles in the 1890s. A rarely heard label at our meetings is Velvet Face but that afternoon we heard two, "*A More Humane Mikado*" sung by the baritone singer Robert Carr and "*Here's a Howdy Do*" sung by a trio consisting of Elda May, Wilfred Virgo and Stanley Kirkby both discs being recorded in 1912. Another unusual recording was a Broadcast Super 12 dating from c.1932, of Frank Titterton (issued under the pseudonym of Guy Marshall) performing "*Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes*" from The Gondoliers. The last electrically recorded disc heard that afternoon was a 1926 Columbia of an alternative version of "*No Possible Doubt Whatever*". from The Gondoliers sung by the Australian born baritone Harold Williams.

The final discs of John's presentation were all G&T recordings from 1907 such as "*In Friendships Name*" from Iolanthe by the Sullivan Operatic Party which, on this occasion, may have included Peter Dawson. Some doubts were expressed by the members present as to whether the tempi on these G&T recordings was correct and general opinion was that it was not, being too slow on most of the recordings.

John concluded his presentation with two G&T items from Yeoman of the Guard. These were "*Free From His Fetters Grim*" and "*Is Life a Boon?*" both sung by Ernest Pike, who, although he was never a member of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company acquitted himself very well with Gilberts' lyrics.

Our thanks to John for a very enjoyable selection of early and I must say, rarely heard Gilbert & Sullivan recordings many of which were from the very early years of the Gramophone Company. Thanks also to Bill Dean Myatt for his hospitality and the light refreshments.

















































