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GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

Ruddigore

Martyn Green

Richard Watson

Leonard Osborn

Ann Drummond-Grant

Darrell Fancourt

Ella Halman

The D'Oyly Carte Opera
Chorus and Orchestra
Isidore Godfrey

(Recorded in London in 1950)

William Schwenk Gilbert (1836-1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) *Ruddigore* (or *The Witch's Curse*)

Chronologically placed between *The Mikado* (1885) and *Yeomen of the Guard*, *Ruddigore* was first given at the Savoy on 22nd January 1887, under the baton of the composer. Comprising re-workings of ideas used previously, its libretto has long ranked among Gilbert's weakest and its early billing as a 'supernatural opera' made it only superficially a novelty, since the work's most memorable scene, the 'gallery of ghosts' sequence, was actually a revival from the short-lived *Ages Ago* (which Gilbert had co-written with the composer Frederic Clay, during their association at German Reed's Gallery of Illustration, in 1869). Originally entitled *Ruddygore* (until its eleventh performance, when its title was changed following objections from certain press-men), the initial London run of *Ruddigore* lasted for 288 performances.

While D'Oyly Carte subsequently also toured the show in England with moderate success, the first Broadway production at the Fifth Avenue Theater, from February 1887, fared less well, lasting a mere 53 performances. Subsequently, the work lay in limbo for

several decades, although it was reintroduced in America and made its first appearance in Australia in 1920 and was successfully revived in London in 1921. Thereafter, it never became a top G&S favourite, however, despite Sullivan's highly accomplished score and some finely-integrated dramatic moments and notwithstanding the fact that its highlights were variously recorded from the 78 era onwards. The opera's centenary was marked by a London revival in 1987, at Sadlers Wells.

In the tradition of several other Gilbert 'creations' *Ruddigore* made use of the theatrical melodrama format to poke fun at time-honoured British institutions and mores. In *HMS Pinafore* he mocked the Navy, in *Trial By Jury* the Judicature, in *Yeomen Queen Victoria's Personal Guard* and in *Patience* the Aesthetic Movement. *Ruddigore* ridiculed contemporary obsessions with etiquette and the supernatural, while British naval behaviour and language are strongly parodied in the character and utterances of Richard Dauntless.

Synopsis

Act 1

After the Overture 1 the curtain rises on the Cornish fishing village of Rederring, during the early nineteenth century. A unique band of 'professional' bridesmaids has gathered outside the cottage of Rose Maybud. Employed by the village for daily duty between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., they are the only such group in the entire world, but they are frustrated, as their services have not been called upon for six months 2. The elderly Dame Hannah enters and the girls try to persuade her to marry, only to discover she is sworn to eternal spinsterhood, having years previously been betrothed to a handsome youth who turned out at the last minute to be Sir Roderick Murgatroyd, one of the 'bad baronets' of Ruddigore. Hannah tells of the curse that was laid on the house of Ruddigore, by dint of which each successive baronet is required to commit a daily crime, on pain of agonising death 3. Rose appears at her cottage door and is asked by Hannah why she does not marry. Rose explains that she cannot attract a suitor without breaking the laws of etiquette in the catechism she carries with her 4. The girls exit, leaving Rose alone. She is in love with young Robin Oakapple, who now makes his entrance. Rose believes him to be a local farmer (he is, in reality, Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, *incognito*). Both are shy of declaring openly their affections, which they express obliquely, as it were 'in the third person' 5. Rose exits, leaving a dejected Robin. Old Adam Goodheart arrives and immediately recognises him as his long-lost master Sir Ruthven. Robin now relates how, twenty years previously, hoping to evade the family curse, he forsook his home and title by taking the name of 'Robin Oakapple' and, believed dead by all, was succeeded by his younger brother, Despard. Robin is cheered, however, to hear of

the arrival home from sea of his foster-brother, Richard Dauntless, who is now welcomed in chorus by the bridesmaids. Richard enters and boldly recounts his adventures to his rapt audience 6. He next executes a hornpipe 7 and warmly greets his foster-brother, who tells him of his love for Rose and of his bashfulness toward her. Richard agrees to assist the diffident Robin in his wooing 8 and promptly sets about pursuing Robin's case. However, in the process he himself becomes enamoured with Rose who, after consulting her book of etiquette, allows him to kiss her 9. Although taken aback by this sudden development, Robin agrees in principle with his brother's credo that one's heart should be one's sole guide in life. Rose next adds poignancy to the dilemma by turning her attention to Robin, who finally plucks up the courage to embrace her 10. Robin and Rose depart together, as does the lovelorn Richard, in tears. Next, the wild and dishevelled figure of Mad Margaret enters and sings her doleful lay 'Cheerily carols the lark' 11. Tearful, she is encountered by Rose, who is dismayed to hear that Margaret is not only in love with the evil Sir Despard but has vowed revenge on Rose, who she mistakenly believes is also in love with him. Rose convinces her that this is not so and the two quietly go out, reconciled. Next, a band of village 'Bucks and Blades' arrive and exchange pleasantries with the bridesmaids 12 until their mirth turns to apprehension at the arrival of the nefarious Sir Despard 13. The bridesmaids recoil in horror from Sir Despard, who informs the audience in an aside that his compulsory daily crime is usually committed in the morning, leaving him the rest of each day to devote to good deeds. Richard, meanwhile, has decided to scupper Robin's progress with Rose by informing Sir Despard that his elder brother Sir Ruthven is still alive, under the alias of Robin Oakapple, a development which instantly removes the family curse from Sir Despard back to Robin 14. At first

oblivious, Rose and Robin are hailed as bride and groom by the assembled chorus [15](#) and a merry madrigal ensues [16](#), followed by a gavotte [17](#), before Sir Despard enters in high dudgeon to denounce 'Robin' as Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd. At this disclosure, Rose declares she cannot marry Robin and pledges herself instead to Sir Despard. He, however, 'a virtuous person now', plights his troth once more to Mad Margaret. The curtain falls on two happy couples and a dejected Robin [18](#).

Act 2

The curtain rises on the Picture Gallery of Ruddigore Castle in which are hung the portraits of all the Baronets of Ruddigore, dating back to the reign of James I. Robin, who has now reverted to being Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, is discussing in melodramatic tones the enactment of his 'daily crime' with Old Adam [19](#). As they recoil, ghoul-like, into the background, Richard and Rose enter, preceded by the bridesmaids [20](#). The couple have come to the castle hoping for Robin's consent, as their lord and master, to their union. An irate Robin at first threatens to throw them in jail, but Richard defuses the situation by waving a Union Jack while a genuflecting Rose sings her own tuneful entreaty [21](#) to which Robin finally succumbs. As the happy couple take their exit, he ponders the curse that constrains him to commit his daily crimes. As he pleads with his ancestors for mercy their portraits spring from their frames and parade around the Gallery [22](#). The most recently deceased, Sir Roderic Murgatroyd, speaks for all in his ghastly lay of the 'ghosts' high-noon' [23](#). Sir Roderic requests Robin's proposed list of that week's crimes. His ancestors express their collective

dissatisfaction at the triviality of his proposals and, as they return to their frames, Robin is ordered to 'seize a maiden' from the village, without delay. Reluctantly agreeing to their behest, he muses on the high price he must pay for being a baronet [24](#). As the dejected Robin departs, Despard, now freed from the curse, enters with Margaret. Attired in black, they are the very acme of Victorian respectability [25](#). Having now been married for a week, each is gradually acclimatising to a different way of life. Robin returns and Despard exhorts him to accept, as the rightful baronet, responsibility for the crimes carried out in his name over the previous ten years. In desperation, Robin resolves to defy his forbears, even at the risk of his life [26](#). Suddenly, Adam rushes in with a village maiden, whom he has seized on his master's instruction. The maiden turns out to be Dame Hannah, however, and left alone with Robin, Adam tries to engage him in a duel with daggers. At this, Robin summons the spirit of Sir Roderic to his aid. Sir Roderic steps down from his portrait and instantly he and Hannah recognise each other as the youthful lovers of long ago. They are left alone together and Hannah serenades Roderic with a sentimental ballad [27](#). Fired by a flash of inspiration, Robin rushes in. It has occurred to him that, as a Baronet of Ruddigore can only die should he refuse to commit his daily crime, such a refusal would effectively be suicide, which in itself would constitute a crime, and therefore, by extension, Sir Roderic ought never to have died in the first place. At this good news Roderic resumes his earthly life with Dame Hannah, and while Robin is now free to marry Rose, Richard has to content himself with one of the bridesmaids [28](#).

Peter Dempsey

Martyn Green

Born William Martyn-Green in London on 22nd April 1899, Martyn Green studied first with his father the distinguished English tenor William Green, and later with Gustave García (1837-1925) at the Royal College of Music. After active service during World War 1, he gained stage experience from 1919 onwards on tour with Daly's Theatre companies in musical comedy productions including *A Southern Maid*, *The Maid of the Mountains* and *Sybil*. He joined D'Oyly Carte as a chorister and understudy in 1922 and his solo début as Luiz in *The Gondoliers* was followed by other comic leads, including John Wellington Wells (in *The Sorcerer*), Major-General Stanley (in *Pirates*), The Associate (in *Trial By Jury*), Reginald Bunthorne (in *Patience*) and Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd. His masterly portrayal of Ko-Ko the Lord High Executioner in *Mikado* is preserved in the 1939 Technicolor screen adaptation by Geoffrey Toye and in the 1950 Decca complete audio recording. He served in the RAF during World War 2, but returned in 1946 to D'Oyly Carte where he played leading comic rôles until 1951. Subsequently, he toured the United States, performing and directing as well as lecturing on the Savoy operas. He appeared on American television (his was the voice of the fox in the cartoon *Pinocchio*) and on Broadway as Chaucer in the musical *The Canterbury Tales*. He died in Hollywood, California, on 8th February 1975.

Darrell Fancourt

Most closely identified with the Mikado, a rôle he played over 3,000 times and twice recorded, in his day Darrell Fancourt was also rated, on account of his commanding stage-presence, breath control and clear diction, an ideal Dick Deadeye (in *HMS Pinafore*), Pirate King (in *Pirates*), Colonel Calverly (in *Patience*) and Sir Roderick Murgatroyd. Born in London in 1888 and educated at Bedford School, he trained at the London Royal Academy with Alberto Randegger (1832-1911) and Sir Henry J. Wood (1869-1944) and also in Germany with Lilli Lehmann (1848-1929). Already an experienced concert recitalist before he sang Galitzky in Borodin's *Prince Igor* under Albert Coates at Covent Garden during the 1919 Beecham opera season, he joined D'Oyly Carte in 1920. His other G & S rôles included Sir Marmaduke Pointdextre (in *The Sorcerer*) and Sgt. Meryll (in *Yeomen*). Awarded an OBE in the 1953 Coronation honours list, Darrell Fancourt was due to give a farewell performance (as the Mikado) at Sadlers Wells when his final illness overtook him.

Leonard Osborn

At first an amateur singer in his native London, Leonard Osborn worked as a chemist in a silk-printing mill before joining the professional chorus of D'Oyly Carte in the mid-1930s. After his début with the company in a small part in *Yeomen of the Guard* in 1937, he had by 1939 sung The Defendant (in *Trial By Jury*), Francesco (in *The Gondoliers*) and Leonard Merrill (in *Yeomen*). An RAF flight-lieutenant during World War 2, in 1946 Osborn returned to D'Oyly Carte where, until his retirement in 1959, his many rôles included Tolloller (in *Iolanthe*),

Fairfax (in *Yeomen*), Marco (in *The Gondoliers*), Ralph Rackstraw (in *HMS Pinafore*), Nanki-Poo (in *Mikado*), Frederic (in *Pirates*), The Duke of Dunstable (in *Yeomen*) and Richard Dauntless.

Richard Watson

Despite his close links with Gilbert and Sullivan operas, the career of the bass Richard Charles Watson was more far-reaching. Born in 1903 (some sources incorrectly give 1906) in Adelaide, Southern Australia, where he studied initially at the Elder Conservatory, he was from 1926 until 1929 a vocal student at the London Royal College of Music. A principal bass at Covent Garden from 1929 (by 1933 appearing in both the English and International Seasons) he first sang with D'Oyly Carte in 1932 and by 1934 had quit Covent Garden to become a Savoyard. Between 1935 and 1937 he toured Australia and New Zealand with J.C Williamson G & S ensembles before resuming his career at Covent Garden, until 1939. In 1940 he returned to Australia for recitals (for Australian Broadcasting Corporation) and further tours for J.C. Williamson. From 1944 to 1947 he taught singing at the Elder (Adelaide University Conservatorium) and produced operas at the Adelaide Tivoli for the ABC. From 1946 until 1951 Watson was again principal bass with D'Oyly Carte both in London and the United States (notably in New York) and was a featured soloist in various G & S recordings, including *The Mikado* (Pooh-Bah), *Pirates* (Sergeant of Police) and *Yeomen* (Wilfred Shadbolt), all for English Decca. From 1951 to 1955 he was Director of the Regina Conservatory of Music in the University of Saskatchewan in Canada, before returning to Southern Australia for further Williamson Company G & S tours.

Radley Flynn

Radley Flynn joined D'Oyly Carte in 1928 and sang with the Company for a total of 23 years. He made his solo début during his first season as Giorgio in *The Gondoliers* and among his many subsequent rôles were Dick Deadeye (in *Pinafore*), the Mikado, both the Pirate King and the Usher (in *Trial By Jury*) and Old Adam Goodheart. Flynn was married to the contralto Ella Halman.

Ann Drummond-Grant

Although later a noted principal contralto and the wife of D'Oyly Carte conductor Isidore Godfrey, Ann Drummond-Grant began as a soprano in opera and musical comedy. She first sang with the D'Oyly Carte from 1933 until 1938, her rôles including the Plaintiff (in *Trial By Jury*) Celia and Phyllis (in *Iolanthe*), Fiametta (in *Gondoliers*), Josephine (in *HMS Pinafore*) and Lady Saphir (in *Patience*), Phoebe Meryll (in *Yeomen*) and Mad Margaret. Her later career was devoted largely to annual summer seasons and non-G&S operetta, but in 1950 she returned to D'Oyly Carte where, a year later she took over the repertoire vacated by Ella Halman. She died in 1959.

Margaret Mitchell

Margaret Mitchell began her association with the D'Oyly Carte as a chorister in 1943. During the following season she played her first lead (Fleta in *Iolanthe*) and from then until 1951 she was heard in a variety of soprano parts, including Edith (in *Pirates*), Ella (in *Patience*), Yum-Yum (in *Mikado*), Kate (in *Yeomen*), Casilda (in *Gondoliers*), Phyllis (in *Iolanthe*) the title-rôle in *Patience* and Rose Maybud.

Ella Halman

Ella Halman joined the D'Oyly Carte Chorus in 1937. She remained with the Company until 1951 and sang a variety of rôles, including Katisha (in *The Mikado*), The Duchess of Plaza-Toro (in *The Gondoliers*), Ruth (in *Pirates*) Lady Jane (in *Patience*), Dame Caruthers (in *Yeomen*) and Dame Hannah. She was married to the Savoyard baritone Radley Flynn.

RUDDIGORE or The Witch's Curse

Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, disguised as Robin Oakapple, a young farmer Martyn Green
Richard Dauntless, his Foster Brother – a man-o'-war's man Leonard Osborn
Sir Despard Murgatroyd of Ruddigore, a wicked baronet Richard Watson
Old Adam Goodheart, Robin's faithful servant Radley Flynn
Sir Roderick Murgatroyd, the twenty-first baronet Darrell Fancourt
Rose Maybud, a village maiden Margaret Mitchell
Dame Hannah, Rose's aunt Ella Halman
Zorah, a professional bridesmaid Deirdre Thurlow
Mad Margaret Ann Drummond -Grant
(There are 7 ghosts listed in the Dramatis Personae, but not credited on the recording)

Chorus of Officers, Ancestors, Professional Bridesmaids and Villagers
The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company conducted by Isidore Godfrey

Gilbert & Sullivan: Ruddigore (or The Witch's Curse)

1	<i>Overture</i> (Orchestra) (composed by Geoffrey Toye)	6:49
ACT 1		44:19
2	<i>Fair is Rose as bright May day</i> (Chorus, Zorah)	2:28
3	<i>Sir Rupert Murgatroyd</i> (Dame Hannah, Chorus)	2:29
4	<i>If somebody there chanced to be</i> (Rose)	3:03
5	<i>I know a youth who loves a little maid</i> (Robin & Rose)	3:37
6	<i>From the briny sea / Ballad: I shipped d'ye see</i> (Chorus, Richard)	2:38
7	<i>Hornpipe</i> (Orchestra)	1:12
8	<i>My boy, you may take it from me</i> (Robin)	1:39
9	<i>If well his suit has sped</i> (Chorus)	0:43
10	<i>In sailing o'er life's ocean wide / My heart says</i> (Chorus, Richard, Robin, Rose, Ensemble)	1:56
11	<i>Cheerily carols the lark / To a garden full of posies</i> (Margaret)	4:17
12	<i>Welcome, gentry, for your entry</i> (Chorus)	2:32
13	<i>Oh why am I moody and sad?</i> (Sir Despard)	1:56
14	<i>You understand? I think I do</i> (Sir Despard & Richard)	1:21
15	<i>Hail the bride of seventeen Summers</i> (Chorus)	1:45
16	<i>When the buds are blossoming</i> (Rose, Hannah, Ensemble)	3:33
17	<i>Gavotte</i> (Orchestra)	1:11
18	<i>Hold, bride and bridegroom / Finale</i> (Sir Despard, Robin, Richard, Rose, Margaret, Hannah, Adam, Zorah & Chorus)	8:01
ACT 2		23:11
19	<i>I once was meek as a new-born lamb</i> (Sir Ruthven & Adam)	2:21
20	<i>Happily coupled are we</i> (Richard & Chorus)	1:06
21	<i>In bygone days I had thy love</i> (Rose, Sir Ruthven, Richard, Chorus)	1:36
22	<i>Painted emblems of a race</i> (Sir Ruthven, Ghosts)	3:54
23	<i>When the night wind howls</i> (Sir Roderick)	2:35
24	<i>He yields! He answers to our call</i> (Chorus, Sir Ruthven)	2:14
25	<i>I once was a very abandoned person</i> (Despard & Margaret)	2:46
26	<i>My eyes are fully open</i> (Sir Ruthven, Despard & Margaret)	1:36
27	<i>There grew a little flower</i> (Hannah & Sir Ruthven)	4:12
28	<i>Finale</i> (The Company)	0:51



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GILBERT and SULLIVAN

Ruddigore

ADD

**Playing
Time
74:19**

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Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd Martyn Green
 Richard Dauntless Leonard Osborn
 Sir Despard Murgatroyd of Ruddigore Richard Watson
 Old Adam Goodheart Radley Flynn
 Sir Roderick Murgatroyd Darrell Fancourt
 Rose Maybud Margaret Mitchell
 Dame Hannah Ella Halman
 Zorah Deirdre Thurlow
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Chorus of Officers, Ancestors, Professional Bridesmaids
 and Villagers

Recorded 21 July and 24 August 1950 London

Decca LK 4027/8, London LLP 243/4; mx ARL 429/32

The D'Oyly Carte Opera Chorus and Orchestra
 conducted by Isidore Godfrey

Having already mocked the time-honoured institutions, the Navy (*HMS Pinafore*), the judicature (*Trial by Jury*) and the archetypal English 'flower power' group known as the Aesthetic Movement (*Patience*), in *Ruddigore* W. S. Gilbert ridiculed contemporary obsessions with etiquette and the supernatural. Without being a top G&S favourite, *Ruddigore* is a highly accomplished score with several finely-integrated dramatic moments, including the memorable 'gallery of ghosts' sequence.

1	Overture	6:49
2-18	Act I	44:19
19-28	Act II	23:11

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Archivist & Restoration Producer: David Lennick
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A complete track list can be found in the booklet

Cover Image: Mad Margaret from *Ruddigore*

(Mary Evans Picture Library)

MADE IN
CANADA

