



Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography

Michael Ainger

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"A Gilbert is of no use without a Sullivan." With these words, W.S. Gilbert summed up his reasons for persisting in his collaboration with Arthur Sullivan despite the combative nature of their relationship. In fact, Michael Ainger suggests in *Gilbert and Sullivan* the success of the pair's work is a direct result of their personality clash, as each partner challenged the other to produce his best work. After exhaustive research into the D'Oyly Carte collection of documents, Ainger offers the most detailed account to date of Gilbert and Sullivan's starkly different backgrounds and long working partnership. Having survived an impoverished and insecure childhood, Gilbert flourished as a financially successful theater professional, married happily and established himself as a property owner. His sense of proprietorship extended beyond real estate, and he fought tenaciously to protect the integrity of his musical works. Sullivan, the product of a supportive family who nourished his talent, was much less satisfied with stability than his collaborator. His creative self-doubts and self-demands led to nervous and physical breakdowns, but it also propelled the team to break the successful mode of their earliest work to produce more ambitious pieces of theater, including *The Mikado* and *The Yeoman of the Guards*. Offering previously-unpublished draft libretti and personal letters, this thorough double-biography will be an essential addition to the library of any Gilbert and Sullivan fan.

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