

# The Gondoliers

or, The King of Barataria

An Entirely Original Comic Opera, in Two Acts

Synopsis by Fredric Woodbridge Wilson

First produced at the Savoy Theatre, London, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on Saturday, December 7, 1889, for 554 performances through June 20, 1891. Sullivan conducted the first performance.

THE DUKE OF PLAZA-TORO, a Grandee of Spain	<i>Light Baritone</i>	Frank Wyatt
LUIZ, the Duke's Attendant	<i>Baritone</i>	Wallace Brownlow
DON ALHAMBRA DEL BOLERO, Grand Inquisitor of Spain	<i>Bass-Baritone</i>	W. H. Denny
Venetian Gondoliers		
MARCO PALMIERI	<i>Tenor</i>	Courtice Pounds
GIUSEPPE PALMIERI	<i>Baritone</i>	Rutland Barrington
ANTONIO	<i>Baritone</i>	A. Medcalf
FRANCESCO	<i>Tenor</i>	Charles Rose
GIORGIO	<i>Bass</i>	George De Pledge
ANNIBALE	<i>Baritone</i>	J. Wilbraham
OTTAVIO	<i>Chorus</i>	Charles Gilbert
THE DUCHESS OF PLAZA-TORO	<i>Contralto</i>	Rosina Brandram
CASILDA, the Duke and Duchess's Daughter	<i>Soprano</i>	Decima Moore
Venetian Contadine		
GIANETTA	<i>Soprano</i>	Geraldine Ulmar
TESSA	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Jessie Bond
FIAMETTA	<i>Soprano</i>	Nellie Lawrence
VITTORIA	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>	Annie Cole
GIULIA	<i>Soprano</i>	Norah Phyllis
INEZ, the King's Foster-mother	<i>Contralto</i>	Annie Bernard

GONDOLIERS, CONTADINE, MEN-AT-ARMS, HERALDS, and PAGES

First American production at the Park Theatre, New York, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on January 7, 1890, through February 13, 1890, reopening at Palmer's Theatre, New York, on February 18, through April 19, for a total of 103 performances. First revived at the Savoy Theatre, under the management of R. D'Oyly Carte, on March 22, 1898, for 62 performances through May 21, 1898, and for 63 further performances from July 18 through

September 17, 1898.

ACT I — THE PIAZETTA, VENICE, 1750

The four-and-twenty Contadine are discovered, each tying a bouquet of roses and singing of love (Chorus, *List and learn, ye dainty roses*). Meanwhile, the Gondoliers enter unobserved and greet the girls (*Good morrow, pretty maids*), and Antonio sings of the pleasures of their calling (Song, *For the merriest fellows are we*). All exchange courtesies (*Buon' giorno, signorine!*), and the brothers Marco and Giuseppe (Duet, *We're called gondolieri*) come to make their selections from among the Contadine (Recitative, *And now to choose our brides*), audaciously leaving their choice to a game of blind-man's buff (*Are you peeping? Can you see me?*), while in fact taking care to effect the capture of Tessa and Gianetta, "just the very girl I wanted!" The girls pay their compliments to the Gondoliers (Chorus, *Thank you, gallant gondolieri*), and they all dance off gaily in pairs.

Arriving in a gondola are the Duke and Duchess of Plaza-Toro, with their haughty daughter Casilda (Entrée, *From the sunny Spanish shore*). Attending the impoverished Castilian grandee is his sole servant, Luiz, "His Grace's private drum." The Duke and Duchess are put out by the absence of ceremonial reception. They take advantage of the quiet moment, however, to reveal to their daughter that twenty years earlier she was wed to the "infant son and heir to the immeasurably wealth King of Barataria." They have come to Venice to ascertain the whereabouts of the King. In order to raise the funds necessary for this liaison, the Duke has arranged the formation of a public-stock company, "the Duke of Plaza-Toro, Limited" — a progressive notion appropriate in a born leader (Song, *In enterprise of martial kind*).

Although Casilda insults and mistreats Luiz in front of her parents, they are secret lovers (Recitative, *Oh, rapture, when alone together*; Duettino, *Ah, well-beloved*). Casilda relates her predicament to Luiz, who is familiar with the situation since his mother was the nurse of the infant King of Barataria. In consideration of Casilda's newly-revealed marriage, Luiz suggests a means of expressing their affection retrospectively; but they part regretfully (Duet, *There was a time*).

The Duke and Duchess re-enter, followed by the Grand Inquisitor of Spain, Don Alhambra del Bolero, who had abducted the Prince and brought him to Venice (Song, *I stole the Prince, and I brought him here*). The sebaceous Don Alhambra confesses that Casilda's husband was entrusted to a gondolier, Baptisto Palmieri, who brought the youth up with his own son to follow that calling. The foster-brothers were none other than Marco and Giuseppe, but the gondolier was never able to say which was the Prince. Don Alhambra reassures Casilda that the infant's nurse, who will be able to identify the Prince, has been sent for (Recitative, *But, bless my heart, consider my position!*). But for now, the situation is a "tangled skein" (Quintet, *Try we life-long, we can never*).

They leave, and the Gondoliers and Contadine enter, followed by the two newlywed couples (Chorus, *Bridegroom and bride!*). Tessa sings of the happiness of marriage (Song, *When a merry maiden marries*), after which Don Alhambra approaches them, and informs them that one of the bridegrooms — *which* one, he cannot say — is already married; and, furthermore, he is the King of Barataria. Until the King can be identified, Don Alhambra has arranged for the brothers to reign jointly. But they must for the time being — a few months — be separated from their brides. Gianetta complains (*Kind sir, you cannot have the heart*), but Don Alhambra persuades them that their separation will be very brief (Recitative, *Do not give way to this uncalled-for grief*), and the reward will be worth the wait (Quartet, *Then one of us will be a Queen*).

The chorus enter, aroused by the commotion (Chorus, *Now, pray, what is the cause of this remarkable hilarity?*). The brothers have fallen in with their new situation (Duet, *Replying, we sing As one individual*), and they have determined that in order to establish equality everyone will be elevated to a position of prestige (Duet, *For every one who feels inclined*). The act closes as their brides admonish them coyly (Duet, *Now, Marco dear*), and Marco and Giuseppe prepare to depart for Barataria (Chorus, *Then away we go to an island fair*) accompanied by the rest of the Gondoliers.

ACT II — THE PAVILION IN THE PALACE OF BARATARIA,  
THREE MONTHS LATER

The second act opens on Marco and Giuseppe, who are seated on thrones. The Gondoliers have assumed various courtly posts without regard to rank (Chorus, *Of happiness the very pith In Barataria you may see*). In fact, the two acting Kings receive little respect from their comrades, a state which Giuseppe describes without ill-feeling (Song, *Rising early in the morning*). Their one yearning is for the companionship of their brides. No sooner has Marco sung of the “one recipe for perfect happiness” (Song, *Take a pair of sparkling eyes*), than all of the Contadine arrive (Chorus, *Here we are, at the risk of our lives*), the pangs of separation having proved too much for the girls to bear. Tessa and Gianetta describe their voyage (Duet, *After sailing to this island*), and they are full of questions. Marco and Giuseppe offer a banquet and dance in honor of the ladies’ arrival (Chorus, *Dance a cachucha, fandango, bolero*). The dance is interrupted by the appearance of the Inquisitor, who, noticing the Republican principles upon which the brothers have refashioned the court, questions them with condescension and disapproval. He offers an example to illustrate the danger of their course (Song, *There lived a King, as I’ve been told*): “When every one is somebody Then no one’s anybody!”

Don Alhambra has news to communicate: the Duke and Duchess of Plaza-Toro and their daughter have returned to Barataria, and the nurse has been found. (She is in the Torture Chamber, waiting to be “interviewed” by the Inquisitor; but no concern need be felt for her

comfort, as “She has all the illustrated papers.”) However, Don Alhambra reminds Tessa and Casilda that for the present they ought to regard themselves as “single young ladies.” The two couples attempt to sort out the mathematical complexities of their marital condition (Quartet, *In a contemplative fashion*).

A procession heralds the entrance of the Duke and Duchess and Casilda (Chorus, *With ducal pomp and ducal pride*). Now dressed magnificently, they demand an audience with the King of Barataria. Casilda doubts that she could ever love a man under such circumstances, but her mother relates the tale of her own marriage to Casilda’s “insignificant progenitor” (Song, *On the day when I was wedded*). The Duke takes offense at the Duchess’s description of their courtship, and he boasts of their (unaccustomed) prosperity. Together, the Duke and Duchess catalogue the little services they perform, for a fee (Recitative, *To help unhappy commoners, and add to their enjoyment*; Duet, *Small titles and orders*).

Marco and Giuseppe enter, and the Duke complains of the lack of ceremony that has attended the arrival of his party. The acting Kings remark that the courtiers “are very off-hand with us,” and the Duke offers a lesson in Royal deportment (Quintet, *I am a courtier grave and serious*), which is followed by a stately Gavotte. The Duke and Duchess exit, and Casilda and the two couples find common ground in their discomfort at the awkwardness of their situation (Quintet, *Here is a fix unprecedented*).

Don Alhambra enters (Recitative, *Now let the loyal lieges gather round*), accompanied by the Duke and Duchess, as well as the entire chorus. He brings forward Inez, the foster-mother of the Prince (*Speak, woman, speak*). Inez confesses that when the prince was in her care, she exchanged him with her own baby for the prince’s protection; in fact, she herself raised the true prince (Solo, *The Royal Prince was by the King entrusted*). The company are stunned (*Is this indeed the King*) when Inez reveals the King’s identity — Luiz! In spite of some disappointment on the part of the Gondoliers and their brides (Ensemble, *This statement we receive With sentiments conflicting*), the revelation “disentangles every knot.” The opera ends as the company praise the newly-found King (Chorus, *The hail, O King of a Golden Land*), and the Gondoliers cheerfully resume their former lives (Duet, *Once more gondolieri*).

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