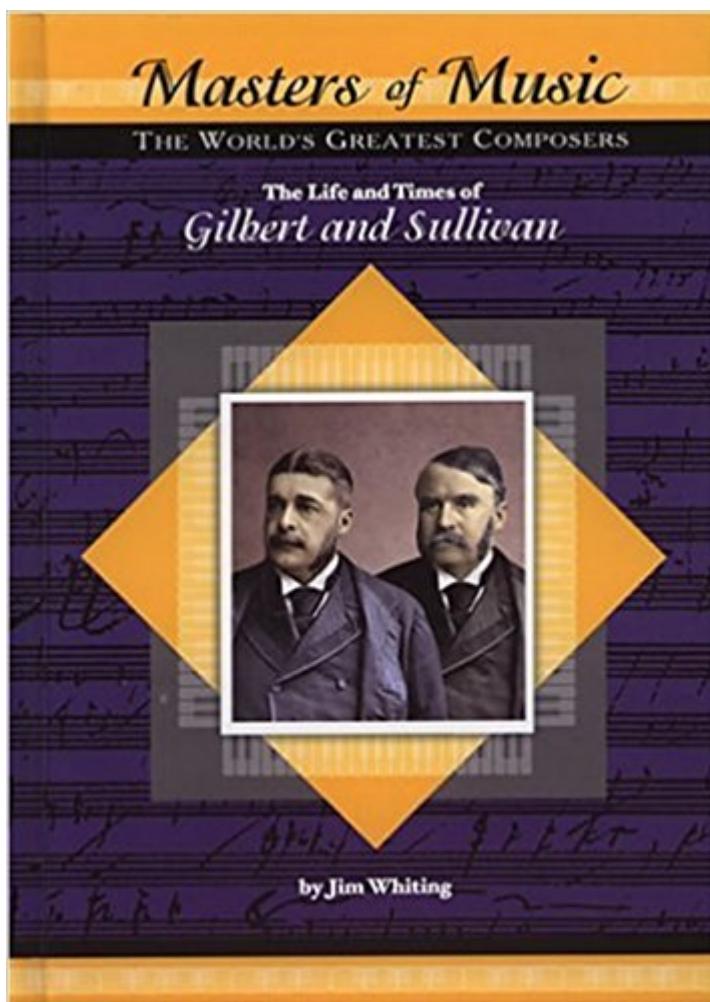


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The Life And Times Of Gilbert And Sullivan: The World's Greatest Composers (Masters Of Music)



Synopsis

What is probably the most famous pairing in musical history began without fanfare in 1871 when writer William S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan teamed up to produce a Christmas entertainment called *Thespis*. The two men parted ways soon afterward and it took a theatrical promoter named Richard D'Oyly Carter to reunite them four years later. Their first big hit came in 1878 with their operetta *H.M.S. Pinafore*. It reached the United States the following year and created the same excitement that we associate with a major rock concert or blockbuster movie. Despite some disagreements, the two men combined for 11 other operettas before going their separate ways. Today Gilbert and Sullivan societies exist all over the world. Audiences still enjoy their combination of clever, humorous lyrics and tuneful melodies.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Very highly recommended for both school and community library collections. "For assignments, casual browsing, or required reading, these volumes neatly fill the bill." "Lively and packed with fascinating detail, these biographies fill a gap. Both books outline the lives and times of the composers with a novelist's aptitude for pacing, detail, and economy. Each volume includes nicely rendered, full-color illustrations; a list of selected works; a useful chronology of the composer's life and historical timeline; and a fine glossary of musical and historical terms." "These inviting biographies open with an attention-grabbing chapter that provides a glimpse of the composer's life. Interesting sidebars cover related topics. These solid, well-written texts place their subjects within

historical time periods and explain important political and social events. Full-color reproductions of period artwork and bright borders in primary colors add to the appeal of these volumes."

Jim Whiting has been a journalist, writer, editor, and photographer for more than 20 years. In addition to a lengthy stint as publisher of Northwest Runner magazine, Mr. Whiting has contributed articles to the Seattle Times, Conde Nast Traveler, Newsday, and Saturday Evening Post. He has edited more than 100 Mitchell Lane titles in the Real-Life Reader Biography series and *Unlocking the Secrets of Science*. A great lover of classical music, he has written many books for young adults, including *The Life and Times of Irving Berlin* and *The Life and Times of Frédéric Chopin* (Mitchell Lane). He lives in Washington state with his wife and two teenage sons.

If you know nothing about G&S before you purchase this book, this book is a good introduction. It will take you about 30 minutes to complete. The graphics and photos are well done. However, if you are a musician and want more than merely an introduction, this is not the book for you.

With all respect to Mr. Rufino, I think he was over-harsh in down-rating this book because it is not an entirely different book, something that it was never intended to be. This book is clearly aimed at young readers who want more information on the famous team of Gilbert and Sullivan than is to be found in a typical theater program but who are not ready to tackle such magisterial tomes as Leslie Baily's "The Gilbert and Sullivan Book." On the whole, I think that the 40-odd pages that Mr. Whiting devotes to his main task successfully accomplish the task set out for them. I am knocking one star off my rating for the very thing that Mr. Rufino praised: the graphics and photos. One of the graphics is an entire page devoted to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (for some largely incomprehensible reason.) There is, admittedly, some tenuous relationship between Doyle and Gilbert. The two were rough contemporaries. Both started out in the professions, Gilbert in law and Doyle in medicine. Neither found much financial reward or personal satisfaction in them. Each turned to writing and found himself in the end ranked among the most famous men of their times. If Whiting had stopped there, I would have no significant objection. However, he had to go on and point out that Doyle's most famous character often says, "Elementary, my dear Watson." Now, as every American Sherlockian and every English Holmesian will heatedly point out, Holmes NEVER said those words! Such a howling clunker dropped so gratuitously forces me to wonder just how much understanding the author has of his materials. Then there is the photograph of Sullivan in which he is specifically described as youthful. One has only to glance at it to see that he had arrived at prosperous middle age. He would

not live to reach his 59th birthday. A TRIFLING ADDITIONAL NOTE: Like most people writing about G&S, Mr. Whiting omits one of their collaborations. In addition to the comic operas, they also created a dignified oratorio, "The Martyr of Antioch." Posterity may well have forgotten that piece of high-minded Victoriana but the contemporaries of G&S took it very seriously indeed. Sullivan would certainly have regarded it as a major landmark in his career as a musician.

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