

## Notes on Laetitia's "Lost Song"

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THE ZOO, a one-act "musical folly" without dialogue composed by Arthur Sullivan with a libretto by B. C. Stephenson (writing as "Bolton Rowe"), contains an oddity: a fully orchestrated song for Laetitia, the soprano lead, for which no lyrics survive. A contemporary review of the first performance implies that the song was included, but it was never published in a libretto. Sullivan's manuscript includes the orchestration and the vocal line, but without any lyrics underneath the latter.

Laetitia's song is designated "No. 4," to be sung before she is otherwise first heard ("Where is he?"). It was first published in the 1975 Cramer score, which includes a piano reduction of the accompaniment and a wordless vocal line. Probably most producers of THE ZOO ignore this song, as did the D'Oyly Carte recording, but others supply lyrics from various sources, very often themselves. R. Clyde mostly reprinted the Cramer score in 1991 but included anonymous lyrics for Laetitia (indicating only that they were not by Stephenson and required special permission for performance) to a slightly revised melody. In my opinion these lyrics leave something to be desired, and they were definitely not the first ones ever attempted.

In 1997 a request appeared on SavoyNet, the G&S Internet discussion forum, to gather different attempts to re-create the lyrics of Laetitia's song. I posted my own version of the lyrics along with the thought process behind them. The latter relates to the difficulties of fitting words to an existing tune and the way I found to get around them, and with only a few updates it is reproduced in the following paragraphs. Although I've since seen and heard several other sets of lyrics for Laetitia (none by Stephenson, of course), I wrote mine before being exposed to any of them. That's all the better; I wouldn't have wanted any undue influence.

First of all, I wrote my lyrics to fit the melody in the Cramer score, which was current at the time (1981). The later Clyde score has a revised melody into which my lyrics don't fit, but much of my work would need to be so totally rethought to go with the Clyde version that I prefer to leave well enough alone.

My objective was to write lyrics that not only fit the character and the situation, but could conceivably have been written BEFORE the music was composed. I wanted something that looked Gilbertian in libretto form (yes, I know THE ZOO was by Stephenson, not Gilbert, but why not emulate the better author?) and with which Sullivan might do more than just write one note per syllable.

I tried to find a logical metrical pattern in a melody that didn't readily suggest one. I took into account places where Sullivan might have repeated lyrics (e. g., the 2nd ending, which I totally ignored in working out the meter) and one place where he simply might have thrown in an "Ah!" on his own. This was the result for each verse, with a letter at the end of each line to indicate the rhyme scheme:

duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM (A)  
duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM (A)  
duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM (A)  
duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh (B)

DUM-duh-DUM-duh-duh-DUM (C)  
DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM (C)  
duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh (B)

duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM (D)  
duh-DUM-duh-DUM-duh-DUM (D)

I'd have preferred something iambic and a little more regular for Lines 5 and 6, but I couldn't work that out. I resigned myself to realizing that Gilbert was occasionally irregular (insert laxative joke), and I let it pass (insert second laxative joke). At this point I knew which syllables would wind up being repeated, but for now that was immaterial.

Two things pleased me in particular:

- 1) I knew that the first melodic line would actually end on the second syllable of the second lyric line, but that was fine with me. In fact, it would allow the melody to be independent of the rhyme scheme at that point, a strategy Sullivan often used.
- 2) The two B lines are very different rhythmically, but I was able to find identical scansion for them.

Next came writing real lyrics, which I began by working out a concept. Since Laetitia had already been cast, our Directors at the Ridgewood (NJ) Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company asked me to ask her what vowel would be most comfortable for her when singing the high Bb in the 2nd ending. She said it was "ah" (gee, what a surprise). I remembered Laetitia's repeated singing of "Father" in No. 12 and decided "Father" should be the word to make that Bb an "ah." From there I decided on making her song reflect the irony of the conflict of love for father with love for suitor, and you'll soon see the results.

The next step was to write the lyrics **WHILE TRYING TO FORGET THE MELODY COMPLETELY**. Admittedly I couldn't make the melody go entirely away, but I concentrated as much as possible on simply trying to fill in the above pattern. Once I had everything filled in, I then plugged it all into the melody. It was mostly satisfactory, but I then changed a word here and another word there to make it all sound better. Considering that G&S lyrics have often changed from original libretto form to final form, I don't feel I was cheating here.

Anyway, for what it's worth, here's the final product:

Verse 1:

A woman's tender heart  
Belongs to man from start;  
'Twould break had she to part  
    From father dear in childhood's leisure.

And, so rightly, I know,  
Love will surely grow.  
    Then young man shares heart's priceless treasure.

Young man and father must  
Compete for heart, I trust.

Verse 2:

A woman's heart has room  
For father and for groom.  
But father might assume  
    Her heart belongs to husband only,

And, so wrongly, I dread,  
Leave her love for dead.  
    Now heart and father both are lonely.

'Twixt heart and father dear,  
She can't please both, I fear.

This is the pure libretto form (schmaltz acknowledged and intentional) as Sullivan would theoretically have first seen it. To fit this into the melody, I did the following:

1. Added "Ah!" before the penultimate line of each verse, where it corresponded to a Bb dotted half note.
2. Repeated the last two words of each verse.
3. Added "She can't please both, heart and father dear!" to the end of Verse 2 (to account for the 2nd ending).

From here on you're welcome to your own opinions, and I can't give a much better reason why I wrote what I did than you might guess if you were analyzing my work as you would a long-dead lyricist's. My greatest satisfaction in the content of the lyrics comes from the Gilbertian (I feel) self-contradictory nature of the two verses, as with "Is life a boon?" The last words I wrote were either "And, so rightly" or "And, so wrongly" (I don't remember which); compared to each other, they make the contradiction that much more pointed.

One step remained to complete the simulation of a song whose lyrics were written before its music. Florrie Marks, our concertmaster at the time, orchestrated the entire score of THE ZOO based on the vocal score and D'Oyly Carte recording, trying (and succeeding) to get as close as possible to Sullivan. For this number alone she had nothing more than the vocal line and piano accompaniment to guide her, so her orchestration was original beyond that. She asked that I finish the lyrics before she even started on this number, and I obliged. Conversely, this meant I rightly didn't have the mood of the orchestration to affect my contribution, and I didn't even hear the piano accompaniment beforehand (nor am I sufficiently trained to get much out of studying the accompaniment in print). So the lyrics couldn't have been influenced by more than the vocal line (to the degree already described) and the rest of THE ZOO.

My version of Laetitia's song has been used in every Ridgewood production of THE ZOO: 1981, 1988, and 2001. The last of these marked their first use with Sullivan's orchestrations, only recently available for purchase. Ironically, Carol Ciancia, the Laetitia who first sang my lyrics and helped inspire them with her wish for an "ah" (see above), played Eliza 20 years later. Peter O'Malley, her husband, was our 1981 Thomas and played the role again in 2001. In fact, it was only about two weeks before their marriage that I sent the lyrics to Carol, telling her that I'd understand if she didn't make learning them her top priority. (She did learn them, though, and sang them perfectly when the time came. The marriage has worked out even better.)

Fortuitously, I posted most of the above to SavoyNet at the very time a New York City consortium was putting THE ZOO together for a July 1997 performance at the International G&S Festival in Philadelphia. One of the producers wanted to include Laetitia's song, and when he saw my lyrics, he thought they were superior to the ones he already had. Not only was I happy to offer their use, but I was asked to join the chorus. Naturally, I accepted. Thanks largely to SavoyNet, my lyrics also made their way to productions at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (who had rejected my college application, so now we're even) and by Ardensingers in Delaware.

Anyone who wishes to use my lyrics in performance is welcome to do so free of charge. I ask only that I somehow be notified of its use (see below for e-mail address) and acknowledged as the author, preferably through a program credit. If possible, I'd also want to discuss matters before the actual performance to make sure that words and notes are properly aligned. I'll mail a copy of the music, with the lyrics inserted properly, on request.

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