

The Pittsburgh Savoyards Present

Utopia, Limited;

or,

The Flowers of Progress

A Comic Operetta in Two Acts

Music by Sir Arthur S. Sullivan

Libretto by Sir William S. Gilbert



Study Guide:

Operas, Operettas and Musicals

Operas, Operettas, and Musicals

An **Operetta** is a form of opera, light both in topic and in music style. English-language operettas are closely related to musical theater in genre. English-language operettas first came on the scene in England in the Victorian Era and were considered more family-friendly than the risqué French operettas that were being composed at the time. English operettas continued to be written through the latter part of the 1800s, at which point they evolved into the Edwardian musical comedies.

Operettas hold similarities with both operas and musicals and the boundaries between the three are often blurred. For example, in American theater there is question as to the classification of Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*, Leonard Bernetein's *Candide*, and George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, to name a few.

Operas

- have multiple acts
- convey the story through song with little or no spoken lines
- can be serious or humorous
- feature classically-trained singers

Operettas

- are usually shorter than operas
- have a lighter topic and often feature satire
- have some of the libretto spoken rather than sung and the musical segments are broken up with dialogue between the characters
- features classically trained singers

Musicals

- use spoken dialogue to help tell the story, which also allows for more complex characters
- can tell serious or comic stories
- are plays with singing and dancing
- singers are not necessarily classically trained and are often called upon to dance
- These distinctions are often subjective and many shows cross genres and are difficult to categorize.

Some Topics for Discussion:

- Which of the three forms—opera, operetta, or musical—demand the most resources for its production?
- Which form do you think would be most appropriate for a high school production?
- Which would be the least suitable?
- The leads in the three forms all require different types of training. Which do you think would require the most training?
- In which form would a contemporary pop star most easily step into a role?
- Where do *you* draw the line between opera, operetta, and musical? Why?