

Princess Ida

LET'S STUDY A PLAY TOGETHER

Summer 2012



Princess Ida



CLASS CONTENT PLANNED FOR TODAY's CLASS

- Literary/historical background
- Class discussion
- Update on where our characters are now (Act II, start of Scene 2)
- Read Act II to end

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CLASS CONTENT PLANNED FOR JULY 31's MAKEUP CLASS

- Gilbert and Sullivan – their collaboration and back stories
- Class discussion
- Update us on where our characters are now (Act III)
- Read Act III to end of play

Princess Ida



- Princess Ida is based on a poem by Tennyson, *The Princess: A Medley* (1847)
- Tennyson's poem has a Princess Ida, betrothed to a Prince at age 8
- She founds a school exclusively for girls
- Gilbert wrote an early play (1870) in blank verse, *The Princess*, based on Tennyson's work
- "Our" Princess Ida was written in 1883-4, the 8th G&S collaboration (of 14)

Princess Ida



- *Princess Ida* was only a moderately successful production – ran 284 times in the Savoy Theater, but also performed in US and by other English touring companies
- The next G&S collaboration (*Mikado*) was much more successful
- Unlike most of G&S other plots, *Princess Ida* has no magical re-appearances or identity surprises

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- Still in the Victorian Age
- Cambridge and Oxford opening their first women's colleges (1868) around the time of Gilbert's first Princess— so a timely theme
- Women could not vote yet – suffragette movement was not organized before 1903
- Gilbert was decidedly not a feminist (see Act III)

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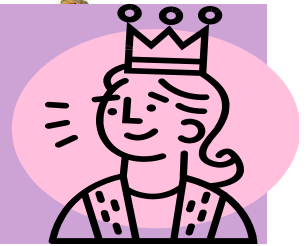
- Darwinism and *The Origin of the Species* (1860) was still being hotly debated
- Were women really inferior?
- Were men really inferior?
- How was man related to our ancient relative, the ape? (See Act II, Psyche's song)

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- **Aside:** William Shakespeare wrote a play, *Love's Labor Lost*, about three (male) friends, one a prince, who take an oath to go off to an isolated castle and study, study, study for truth and knowledge – and never to speak to any woman for a full three years. Has a familiar ring to it, doesn't it?
- Needless to say, the oath doesn't last long at all.
- **Another aside:** Shakespeare wrote several comedies where the heroine donned man's clothing (reverse of *Princess Ida*)

Princess Ida

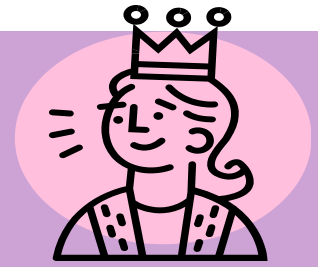


What characterizes British humor?

- Exaggeration
- Farce – over the top
- Unlikely situations
- Class distinctions (esp. upper class fools)
- (Sometimes) slapstick or risqué (not in Princess Ida)
- (Sometimes) witty word play
- (Sometimes) cross-dressing used as a comedic ploy

Maybe a better question is “how does British humor survive?”

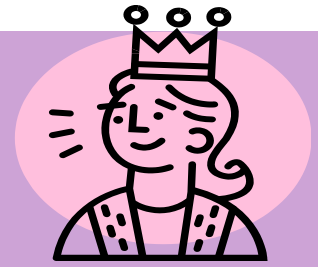
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Discussion – What is Enjoyable in G&S?

- Witty dialog
- Clever rhymes
- Variety and number of singers
- Catchy, hummable music
- Plots frequently based on thwarted romance, due to parents' opposition, misunderstandings, mistaken identities, etc., providing plot “tension”
- Usually lush costumes & scenery

Princess Ida



Discussion – What is Notable in G&S Productions?

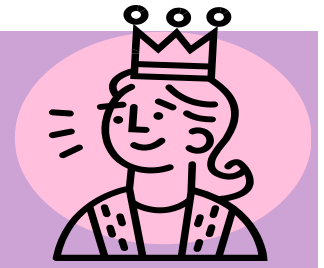
- Patter song (a G&S hallmark):
 - a song with one note per syllable
 - at a fast tempo
 - simple orchestration
 - with a rhyming scheme of couplets
 - often a list
 - often sung by a single comic character

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- Act I Clips (Patter Song example?):
- King Gama's Entrance - "If You Give Me Your Attention"
- Tom Lehrer MP3 "If You Give Me Your Attention"
- Text for Tom Lehrer's "Professor" song (see next three pages)

Princess Ida

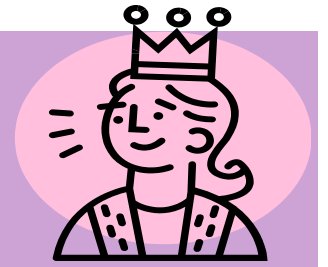


. To “If you give me your attention”:

If you give me your attention, I will tell you what I am.
I'm a brilliant math'matician - also something of a ham.
I have tried for numerous degrees, in fact I've one of each;
Of course that makes me eminently qualified to teach.
I understand the subject matter thoroughly, it's true,
And I can't see why it isn't all as obvious to you.
Each lecture is a masterpiece, meticulously planned,
Yet everybody tells me that I'm hard to understand,
And I can't think why.

,

Princess Ida



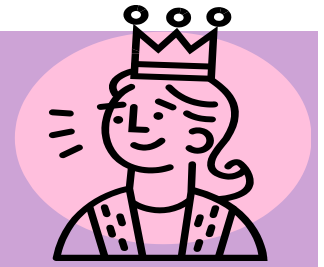
My diagrams are models of true art, you must agree,
And my handwriting is famous for it's legibility.
Take a word like "minimum" (to choose a random word),
This was performed at a blackboard, and the professor wrote:

////////////////

For anyone to say he cannot read that, is absurd.
The anecdotes I tell get more amusing every year,
Though frankly, what they go to prove is sometimes less than
clear

And all my explanations are quite lucid, I am sure,
Yet everybody tells me that my lectures are obscure,
And I can't think why.

Princess Ida



Consider, for example, just the force of gravity:
It's inversely proportional to something - let me see -
It's r^3 - no, r^2 - no, it's just r , I'll bet -
The sign in front is plus - or is it minus, I forget -
Well, anyway, there is a force, of that there is no doubt.
All these formulas are trivial if you only think them out.
Yet students tell me, "i have memorized the whole year
through
Ev'rything you've told us, but the problems I can't do."
And I can't think why!

[Lyrics from:

http://www.lyricsmode.com/lyrics/t/tom_lehrer/the_professors_song.html]

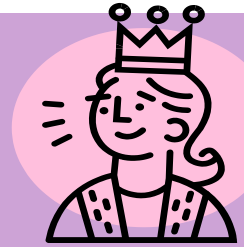
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**Time for class discussion -
What do you think of:**

- The words?
- The music?
- The characters?
- Plot?
- Style?
- Humor?
- Timelessness?

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LOCAL G&S PRODUCTIONS

- Wolf Trap will offer *Pirates of Penzance* this coming weekend
- Encore Stage will also put on a production of *Pirates of Penzance* in July
- DC Savoyards perform at the Atlas Performing Arts Center on H Street NE

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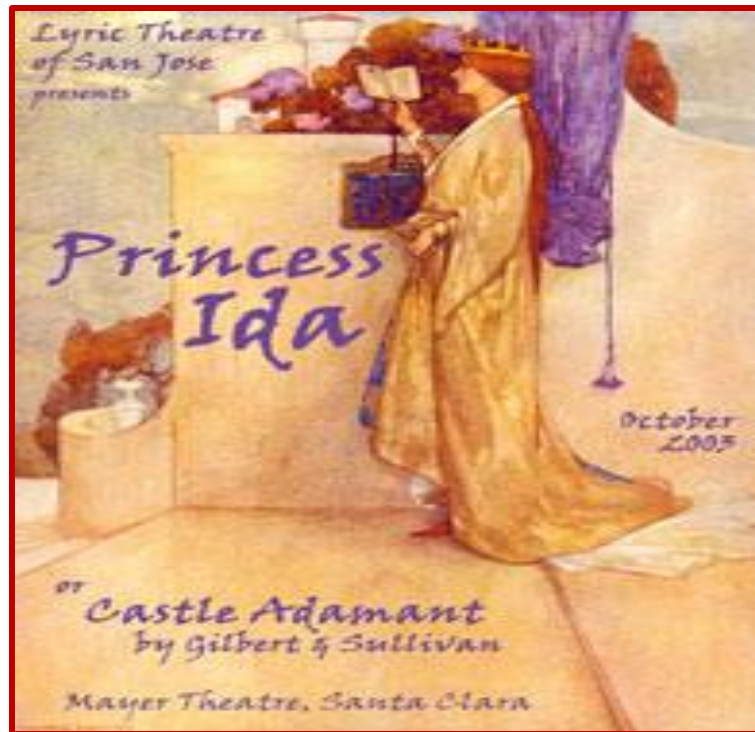


CLASS LOGISTICS

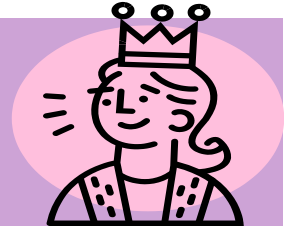
- Does everyone have the text today?
- We will probably study another G&S opera at OLLI next summer, so if interested in G&S hold onto your book for that class

Princess Ida - Characters

NOW TO UPDATE OUR CHARACTERS TO ACT II

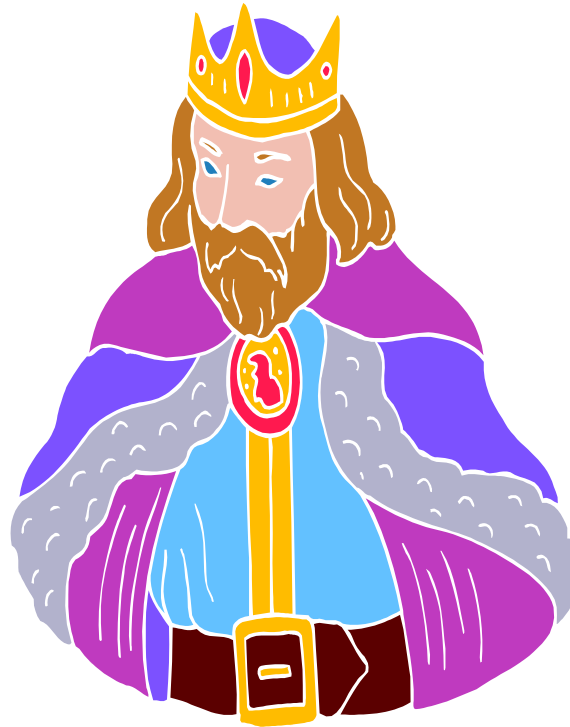


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- **Still in King Hildebrand's kingdom:**

King
Hildebrand



Princess Ida



- **Now in Adamant, disguised as a female student to meet and win his fiancé:**

Prince
Hilarion,
King
Hildebrand's
son



Princess Ida



- **Now in Adamant, disguised as girl students to aid Hilarion:**

Prince
Hilarion's
friends,
Florian and
Cyril



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- **Visitor to Hildebrand's kingdom, now in Hildebrand's prison as a hostage:**

King
Gama

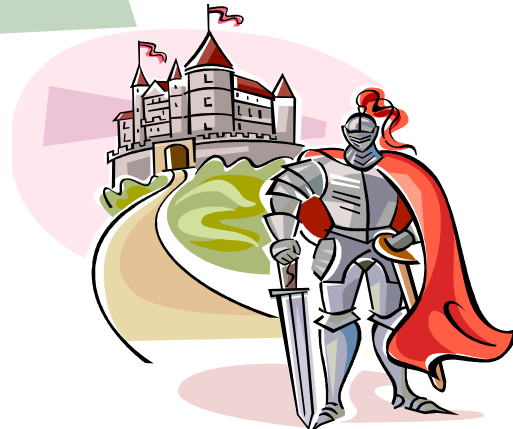


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- Visitors to Hildebrand's kingdom, now in Hildebrand's prison:

King
Gama's 3
sons Arac,
Guron,
Scynthius



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ACT TWO

In Castle Adamant:

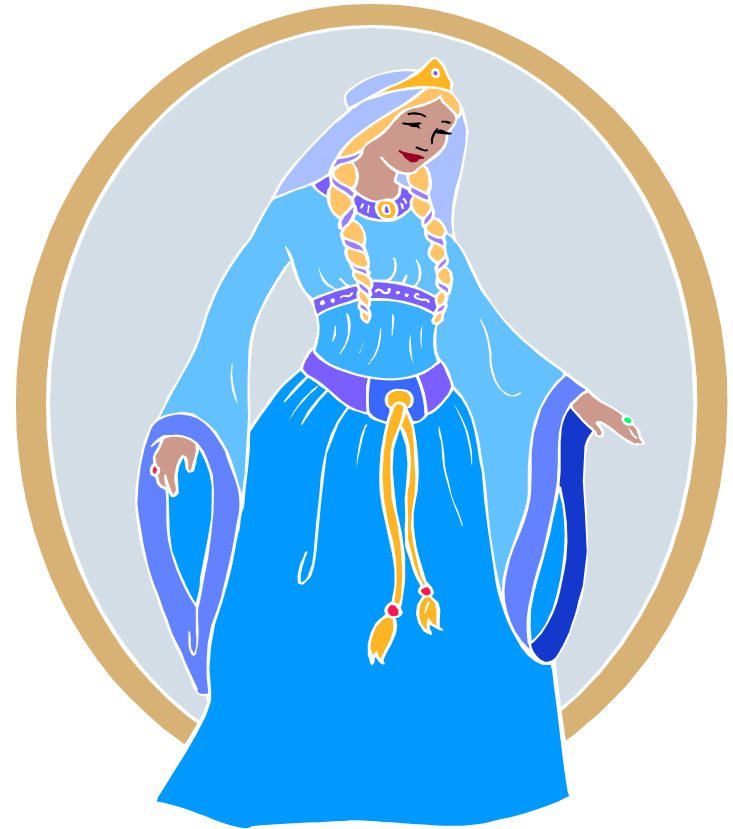


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In Castle Adamant:

Princess Ida,
headmistress
of the school
Adamant



Princess Ida



In Castle Adamant:

Lady Psyche,
professor of
Humanities



Princess Ida



In Castle Adamant:

Lady Blanche,
professor of
Abstract Science
and scheming
to replace the
headmistress

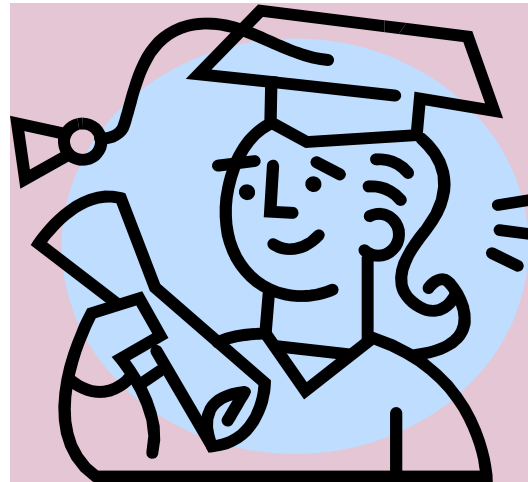


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In Castle Adamant:

Melissa,
daughter of
Lady Blanche,
aiding her
mother



Princess Ida



In Castle Adamant:

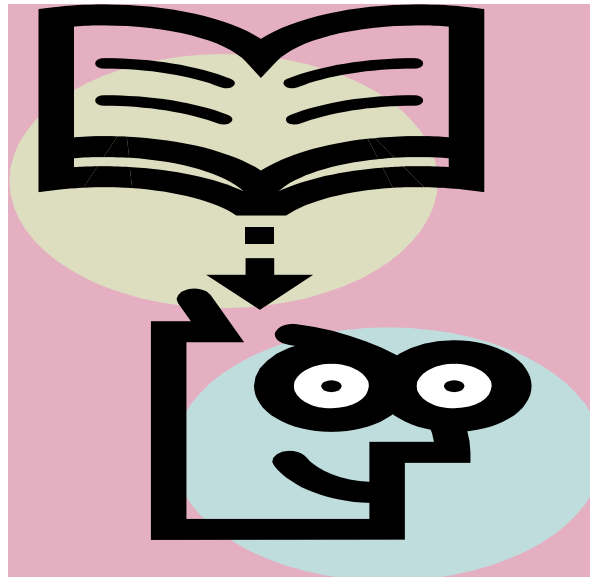
Sacharissa,
Chloe, Ada -
students



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Let's Begin Our Reading



Princess Ida



Act II Clips:

- "Women of Adamant" speech (Ida)
- "Gently, Gently" (Hilarion and Friends)
- "The World is but a Broken Toy" (Ida and the so-called maidens)
- "A Lady Fair" (Psyche)
- "Wouldn't You Like to Rule the Roast?" (Blanche and Melissa)