

PATIENCE

at [Inside] the Ford

Reviewed by Anne Louise Bannon

Opera, schmopera. Forget aesthete appreciation of divinely executed, melodic storytelling. The Antaeus Company's production of *Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride*, Gilbert and Sullivan's sendup of the Aesthetic Movement (a.k.a. the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood), is a good, old-fashioned gut-busting knee slapper. Director Maryedith Burrell has seen to it that the show's finer Victorian sensibilities are still intact. Bawdying up that era seldom works well. Nonetheless, it's darned funny.

You don't have to know about the Aesthetic Movement to get *Patience*—after all, artistic snobbery and pretensions are with us always (can you say performance art?). Still, during the overture, there's a little slide show that graphically explains the Pre-Raphaelites. Then John H. Binkley's set of corrugated cardboard is pulled back to form the setting.

The story, what little there is of it, is pretty basic: The local young ladies are head over heels in love with poet Reginald Bunthorne (Jeremy Lawrence), the resident aesthete, much to the dismay of the local army officers. Bunthorne has his eye on the milkmaid Patience (Emily Chase), who wants no truck with love because the young women in love are so unhappy. This changes when she runs into the simply perfect Archibald Grosvenor (John Apicella), who loves her.

Unfortunately, to love Grosvenor and keep him all to herself would be too selfish for the poor Patience, so she must refuse his love. In the meantime, the maidens have transferred their affections to Grosvenor, to Bunthorne's dismay. This is all resolved in the incredibly contrived yet somehow wonderful way most Gilbert and Sullivan shows are.

The vocal performances are strong across the board. Anne Gee Byrd, as the older Lady Jane, makes much of losing her looks in her hysterical solo. As for Chase, well, it's just wonderful to hear real soprano singing for a change. Lawrence is delightfully smarmy; better yet is his ridiculous costume, designed (with all the others) by Margaretrose. Musical director Jan Powell accompanies the cast on piano without missing a beat, in spite of numerous page turns (I just had to look to see how he did it.)

All in all, after much debate internal, *Patience* is fun to see.

"Patience," presented by the Antaeus Company at [Inside] the Ford, the lower level of the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood. Nov. 7-Dec. 20. (323) 660-8587.

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Back Stage West/Drama-Logue



photo by Craig Schwartz

Poetic justice: Jeremy Lawrence with company in "Patience."