

Theater

Los Angeles Times
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1998
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Maiden-Laden 'Patience' Pays Off as Fun One-Liner

Stage Review

BY JAN BRESLAUER
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's "Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride" is a satire of the Victorian era's aesthetic movement, the cult-like school of artists and others who were devoted to Pre-Raphaelite ideals. But it's also a skewering of celebrity pretentiousness—a subject that rings all too true in a place like Los Angeles.

The classics-oriented Antaeus company opened the first season in the newly renovated theater [Inside] the Ford with this 1882 comic operetta last weekend. The occasion is a rare opportunity to see this clever bonbon in a witty approximation of period style, directed by Maryedith Burrell.

A sendup of manners and mores, the Antaeus "Patience" opens with a witty slide show ex-

plaining Victorian aestheticism. The story begins with the plinking of the first notes of the chorus, "Twenty love-sick maidens we."

The plot, no more than a bare thread connecting the songs, concerns the vacillating affections of a bevy of "20" (but really seven) hyperventilating maidens, all of whom are in love with poet Reginald Bunthorne (a droll Jeremy Lawrence), who, in turn, pines for the humble milkmaid Patience (the charming Emily Chase).

Meanwhile, a platoon of 20 (but really seven) dragoons yearns for the maidens, to whom they were betrothed. Soon a rival poet, Archibald Grosvenor (the Wildean John Apicella), appears and the maidens transfer affections. Meanwhile, the dragoons adopt aestheticism to win back the ladies.

Ultimately, "Patience" is engaging, but a bit of a theatrical one-liner. Nor does Sullivan's music reach the winsomeness of, say, "The Mikado." Gilbert, however, is



CRAIG SCHWARTZ

Jeremy Lawrence stars as a poet in "Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride."

at his sly best, with lyrics and recitatives that revel in wordplay as much as social critique.

The stalwart acting ensemble—which is double- and triple-cast in typical Antaeus fashion—handles the singing capably while enabling you to catch nearly the entire cascade of the librettist's words.

BE THERE

"Patience," [Inside] the Ford, John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, 2580 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood. Thursdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays-Sundays, 2 p.m. \$20. (323) 660-8587. Running time: 2 hours.