

CLASSICAL MUSIC PETER G. DAVIS

Tip-Toperetta

New York's opera-light life is thriving with Symphony Space's 'The Yeomen of the Guard'; Gergiev is good news for the Met.

SAVOYARDS REJOICE. The New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players are once again in residence at Symphony Space on upper Broadway, currently performing *Iolanthe*. For 24 seasons, this plucky troupe has been hanging on, and it has earned our prayers—not so long ago, the city was full of enterprising small companies that produced opera, heavy and light, but NYGASP is one of the few that still manages to survive. Of course, its mission is restricted to the G&S canon of operettas, but these indestructible works never seem to lose their musical freshness or satirical point, and NYGASP's lovingly traditional productions never seem to lose their zing.

Tyler Bunch as his dimwitted foil, Wilfred Shadbolt, while the ladies they pursue—Charlotte Detrick (Elsie), Katie Geissinger (Phoebe), and Amy Ellen Anderson (Dame Carruthers)—could hardly have looked or sounded more delicious.

The man long responsible for setting the tone of these marvelous productions is artistic director-conductor Albert Bergeret, who has obviously lost none of his enthusiasm for G&S operettas or his ability to renew them. More than its companion works, *The Yeomen of the Guard* is laced with an undercurrent of melancholy, and Bergeret now gives that quality more attention in his nuanced treatment of Sullivan's wistfully delicate ensembles and Gilbert's often bitter self-mocking identification with Jack Point. But that never prevented general merriment from reigning onstage, as no doubt will be the case when this treasurable troupe flies off to fairyland in *Iolanthe* this weekend and next.



Duane McDevitt, center, in Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

I recently dropped in on a matinee of *The Yeomen of the Guard*, as ever a trim and colorful representation of the lively antics on Tower Green in sixteenth-century London. If anything, the casting is even stronger than in the past—perhaps the shrinking opportunities for talented young singers to perform in New York have worked to NYGASP's advantage. As Colonel Fairfax, whose intrigues to escape the headsman's ax set the whole complicated plot into motion, Brandon Jovanovich was just about ideal, a dashing romantic figure with an attractive, firmly anchored lyric tenor and an elegant way with words. Comic spice was supplied by Stephen O'Brien as a quicksilver Jack Point and

FOR THOSE WHO PONDER THE OFTEN inscrutable movements of today's international star conductors, the appointments of **James Levine** to head the Munich Philharmonic and **Valery Gergiev** to occupy the newly created post of principal guest conductor at the Metropolitan Opera have led to much head-scratching. No convincing reasons have yet been offered to explain why Levine would want to spend what little free time he has away from the Met overseeing a minor-league European orchestra, especially since the prospects for glamorous international exposure—global tours, major recording projects, and the like—are virtually nonexistent in these tight times for classical music. Of course, the pay isn't bad—an annual salary of \$289,000 plus an extra \$34,680 for each of his contracted 24 appearances per season—but money can hardly be an issue for a conductor who already commands a huge yearly salary and for whom dogged work seems to consume his whole life.

Then, too, one wonders why Levine continued to pursue the job at all after the acrimonious negotiations culminated in an outrageous demand from Germany's liberal Green party that the conductor present the city with a certificate of "good behavior," i.e., proof that he has not been convicted of a criminal offense or that any such charges may be (continued on page 72)