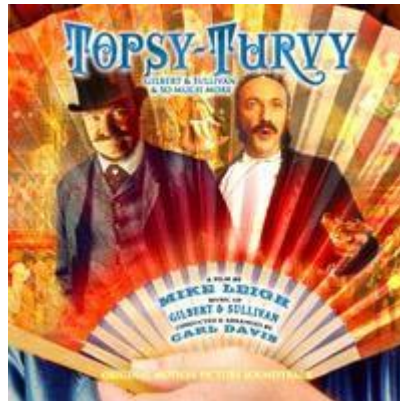


TOPSY TURVY

Year 1999 Country UK Certificate 12 Length 160 minutes



Director:	Mike Leigh
Producer:	Simon Channing-Williams
Script:	Mike Leigh
Cinematography:	Dick Pope
Editing:	Robin Sales
Production Design:	Eve Stewart
Sound Dept:	Orin Beaton and Tim Fraser
Make-up Dept:	Christine Blundell and Trefor Proud
Costume Design:	Lindy Hemming
Orchestrator and Arranger:	Carl Davis
Musical Director:	Gary Yershon

CAST

William Schwenk Gilbert	Jim Broadbent
Arthur Sullivan	Allan Corduner
Richard Temple	Timothy Spall
Lucy Gibert ('Kitty')	Lesley Manville
Richard D'Oyly Carte	Ron Cook
Helen Lenoir	Wendy Nottingham
Durward Lely	Kevin McKidd
Leonora Braham	Shirley Henderson
Jessie Bond	Dorothy Atkinson
George Grossmith	Martin Savage
Fanny Ronalds	Eleanor David
Madame Leon	Alison Steadman
Madame	Katrin Cartlidge
Mad Woman	Brid Brennan

Leigh's movie won the best film of the year award and best director prizes from both the New York Film Critics Circle and the US National Society of Film Critics.

In the film the "role" of **The Savoy Theatre** was taken by **Richmond Theatre**,

Winner of two Academy Awards®: Best Costume Design and Best Makeup:



Gilbert reads a first draft of *The Mikado* to Sullivan

Jim Broadbent won the Best Actor award at 1999's Venice Film Festival for *Topsy-Turvy*

The soundtrack recording features music from Gilbert & Sullivan's comic operas arranged and conducted by Carl Davis and includes songs, ensembles and instrumental excerpts from *The Mikado*, *Princess Ida*, *The Grand Duke*, *The Sorcerer*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Gondoliers*. All music was recorded specifically for the film under Carl Davis' direction and fully staged excerpts are interspersed throughout the film, which explodes with Sullivan's infectious music.

Interviewed by Robert McTaggart, Uncut Magazine, Leigh discussed his project:

"I grew up in Manchester in the Forties and Fifties, when the late Victorian era was recent enough to hang in the air. Gilbert and Sullivan were part of the culture of that era. What's happened since is that it's been degenerated by endless conventions. When people say they hate Gilbert and Sullivan, it's usually because

their auntie used to appear in it, or their teachers used to ram it up their arses. One thing I wanted to do was subvert this 'chocolate box' image, and go back to the roots. Gilbert and Sullivan are extremely interesting characters, and I honestly think their work is very healthy. It isn't esoteric or inaccessible, it's popular, sexy music that can get your foot tapping. If you can't make a movie about 'The Mikado', then you can't make a movie about anything."

"I've always made a very deliberate attempt to make every film different, because I think one should. The contrast between say, *Life Is Sweet* and *Naked* is just as great, but because *Topsy Turvy* is a period film, it seems more of a change. It concerns a world I've been living in for a long time - it's about actors and performers, and the nature of the collaboration. I wanted to make a film where I swung the camera round to look at 'us', but I thought it would be more interesting, and liberating, to look at the 19th century, rather than making a film about film-makers."

Was the dialogue improvised in the same way as in your previous films?

"Totally, because of the formal language, it gives the illusion that it's somehow more precise, but I'm equally precise about colloquial language. If you think about Johnny's cadences in *Naked*, they're no less literary than *Topsy Turvy*. The only difference this time is that woven into the text are actual quotes. So some of Gilbert's epigrams are things he actually said, some Jim improvised, and others I wrote. We got so much into the bloodstream of the thing we could make them up."

"I wanted to do a period film almost as a reaction to those period films where you think, 'Well, people aren't like that.' The minutiae of the everyday is part of the process with which I work, so we can include scenes like the one with the telephone, which you can't do with a Jane Austen adaptation. I also thought it was important to see the industrial process of the production, so you have an exact from 'The Sorcerer', where you get to see the guy with the thunder sheet and someone messing about with the wing. The audience needs to see the working world that these people were involved in, not just the end product."

Yeah. I tend to react a different way to [other films], like, "We're not going to do that." One of the films we were certainly not going to mimic was one made in 1953 called *The Story Of Gilbert & Sullivan* with Robert Morley and Maurice Evans.

In general terms, there were a number of things that I was absolutely resolute about. The first and foremost of those is that I get sick of films about artists that go to great lengths to show their suffering and lack of inspiration, but you never actually find out what they did.

Without question, in *Topsy-Turvy*, like it or not, you will get a good dose of Gilbert & Sullivan's stuff. Take it or leave it, that's what this film is going to deal with. We're going to do it properly, we're going to take it seriously, and we're not going to be coy about it.

And the other thing I decided not to do... A lot of discussion and communication between Gilbert and Sullivan was done by letter. They wrote to each other several times a day; in fact, there are something like 16 collections of their correspondence. Using the telephone for chatter hadn't quite happened yet. Sewn, hopefully invisibly, into the dialogue in a couple of scenes—one with them on the sofa together and another in D'Oyly Carte's office—there are direct quotes from their correspondence,

because I was determined that one thing that wasn't going to happen were letters being read out loud. [Laughs.] That's a real turkey thing to do in a movie."



Sir William Schwenk Gilbert (1836-1911) met Sir Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900) in 1870. Their artistic partnership lasted until 1896, with Gilbert the person who wrote the libretti, or words, set to music by his colleague

Their first collaboration was *Thespis* (1871). Although not a great success, one at least of the audience realised that it was a welcome departure from the popular crude burlesques being presented at other theatres. This was Richard D'Oyly Carte, theatre manager, and it was he who persuaded the pair to collaborate again.

It was in 1889 during the run of *The Gondoliers* that the duo quarrelled about the cost of a carpet in the Savoy Theatre. Although they appeared to be perfect partners, they quarrelled frequently; but the "carpet quarrel" was one of the worst, culminating in a lawsuit that bemused and saddened their loyal admirers.

They managed to reunite for two further operas, but the urge and appeal of their former collaboration had gone. They met for the last time in 1898 at a revival of *The Sorcerer*, taking a joint curtain call but never spoke to each other.

Two years later, at the age of 58, Sullivan died of bronchitis. Queen Victoria ordered a state funeral, and he was buried in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral.

Gilbert got his knighthood in 1907 and lived another four years. He was drowned rescuing a young guest who had got into difficulties swimming in the lake at Grim's Dyke where he lived. In contrast to Sullivan he was buried, aged 74, quietly in the graveyard of Stanmore Parish Church.

Gilbert chose the words that are engraved on a monument to Sullivan in the Embankment Gardens in London. They are taken from *The Yeoman of the Guard*, and perhaps could be an epitaph for both men:

'Is life a boon?
If so, it must befall
That Death, when e'er he call
must call too soon.'

Iain McGlashan
WNCC Chairman