

= Rupert D 'Oyly Carte =

Rupert D 'Oyly Carte (3 November 1876 ? 12 September 1948) was an English hotelier , theatre owner and impresario , best known as proprietor of the D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company and Savoy Hotel from 1913 to 1948 .

Son of the impresario and hotelier Richard D 'Oyly Carte , Rupert inherited the family businesses from his stepmother Helen . After serving in World War I , he took steps to revitalise the opera company , which had not appeared in Central London since 1909 , hiring new designers and conductors to present fresh productions of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas in seasons in the West End . The new productions generally retained the original text and music of the operas . Carte launched international and provincial tours , as well as the London seasons , and he released the first complete recordings of the operas . He also rebuilt the half @-@ century @-@ old Savoy Theatre in 1929 , opening the house with a season of Gilbert and Sullivan .

As an hotelier , Carte built on his father 's legacy , expanding the Savoy Hotel , refreshing the other hotels and restaurants in the Savoy group , including Claridge 's and the Berkeley Hotel , and introducing cabaret and dance bands that became internationally famous . He also increased marketing activities , including foreign marketing , of the hotels .

P. G. Wodehouse based a character in his novels , Psmith , on a Wykehamist schoolboy whom he identified as Rupert D 'Oyly Carte . At his death , Carte passed the opera company and hotels to his only surviving child , Bridget D 'Oyly Carte . The Gilbert and Sullivan operas , nurtured by Carte and his family for over a century , continue to be produced frequently today throughout the English @-@ speaking world and beyond .

= = Life and career = =

= = = Early life = = =

Rupert D 'Oyly Carte was born in Hampstead , London , the younger son of the impresario Richard D 'Oyly Carte and his first wife Blanche (née Prowse) , who died in 1885 . Like his brother , Lucas (1872 ? 1907) , he was given his father 's middle name . He was educated at Winchester College , noted as among the most intellectually rigorous of English public schools . He then worked for a firm of accountants before joining his father as an assistant in 1894 .

In a newspaper interview given in the year of his death , Rupert recalled that as a young man he was entrusted , during his father 's illness , with helping W. S. Gilbert with the first revival of The Yeomen of the Guard at the Savoy Theatre . He was elected a director of the Savoy Hotel Limited in 1898 , joining his father and Sir Arthur Sullivan , who had served on the board since the Savoy Hotel was built . By 1899 he was assistant managing director . Richard D 'Oyly Carte died in 1901 , and Rupert 's stepmother , the former Helen Lenoir , who had married Richard in 1888 , assumed full control of most of the family businesses , which she had increasingly controlled during her husband 's decline . Rupert 's elder brother , Lucas , a barrister , was not involved in the family businesses and died of tuberculosis , aged 34 .

= = = Taking over the family businesses = = =

In 1903 , at the age of 27 , Rupert took over his late father 's role as chairman of the Savoy group , which included the Savoy Hotel , Claridge 's , The Berkeley Hotel , Simpson 's @-@ in @-@ the @-@ Strand and the Grand Hotel in Rome . At this time , the whole group was officially valued at £ 2 @, @ 221 @, @ 708 . He immediately issued £ 300 @, @ 000 of debentures to raise capital for a large extension to the Savoy (the " East Block ") . Like his father , Carte was willing to go to great lengths to secure the best employees for his hotels . When Claridge 's needed a new chef in 1904 , he secured the services of François Bonnaure , formerly chef at the Élysée Palace in Paris . The press speculated on how much Carte must have paid to persuade Bonnaure to join him , and

compared the younger Carte 's audacity with his father 's coup in securing Paris 's most famous maître d 'hôtel , M. Joseph , a few years earlier .

Between 1906 and 1909 , Helen Carte , Rupert 's stepmother , staged two repertory seasons at the Savoy Theatre . Directed by Gilbert and received with much success , they revitalised the D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company , which had been in decline after Richard D 'Oyly Carte 's death . In 1912 , when theatre censorship was under discussion in Britain , Carte was strongly in favour of retaining censorship , because it gave managements complete certainty about what they could or could not stage without fear of interference by the police or others . He joined with other London theatre managers , including Herbert Beerbohm Tree , George Edwardes and Arthur Bouchier in signing a petition for the retention of censorship . In the same year , together with Herbert Sullivan and theatre managers including Beerbohm Tree and Squire Bancroft , Carte was an instigator of a memorial to W. S. Gilbert at Charing Cross . In 1913 , Rupert 's stepmother Helen Carte died . She left all her holdings in the Savoy Hotel group , the Savoy Theatre and the D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company to her stepson .

= = = Revitalising the D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company = = =

After London seasons in 1906 ? 07 and 1908 ? 09 , the opera company did not perform in the West End again until 1919 , although it continued to tour in Great Britain . According to the theatre writer H. M. Walbrook , " Through the years of the Great War they continued to be on tour through the country , drawing large and grateful audiences everywhere . They helped to sustain the spirits of the people during that stern period , and by so doing they helped to win the victory . " Nevertheless , Carte later recalled , " I went and watched the Company playing at a rather dreary theatre down in the suburbs of London . I thought the dresses looked dowdy I formed the view that new productions should be prepared , with scenery and dresses to the design of first class artists who understood the operas but who would produce a décor attractive to the new generation . " In a 1922 memoir , Henry Lytton , having admired Richard D 'Oyly Carte 's keen eye for stagecraft , added , " That ' eye ' for stagecraft ... has been inherited in a quite remarkable degree by his son , Mr. Rupert D 'Oyly Carte . He , too , has the gift of taking in the details of a scene at a glance , and knowing instinctively just what must be corrected " . In 1911 , the company hired J. M. Gordon as stage manager , and Carte later promoted him to director . Gordon , under Carte 's supervision , preserved the company 's traditions in exacting detail for 28 years .

During World War I Carte served in the Royal Navy , and no renovation work could be undertaken . On his return , he put his aims into effect . In an interview in The Observer in August 1919 he set out his policy for staging the operas : " They will be played precisely in their original form , without any alteration to the words , or any attempt to bring them up to date . " This uncompromising declaration was modified in a later interview in which he said , " the plays are all being restaged ... Gilbert 's words will be unaltered , though there will be some freshness in the method of rendering them . Artists must have scope for their individuality , and new singers cannot be tied down to imitate slavishly those who made successes in the old days . "

Carte 's first London season , at the Prince 's Theatre , 1919 ? 20 , featured ten of the thirteen extant Gilbert and Sullivan operas . These included Princess Ida , which had its first London performances since the original production . The new productions retained the text and music of the original 1870s and 1880s productions , and director J. M. Gordon preserved much of Gilbert 's original direction . As his parents had done , Carte licensed the operas to the J. C. Williamson company and to amateur companies , but he required all licensees to present them in approved productions that closely followed the libretto , score and D 'Oyly Carte production stagings . In an interview with The Times in 1922 , Carte said that the Savoy " tradition " was an expression that was frequently misunderstood : " It did not by any means imply any hidebound stage ' business ' or an attempt to standardize the performances of artists so as to check their individual method of expression . All that it implied , in his view , was the highest possible standard of production ? with especial attention to clear enunciation Many people seemed to think that Gilbert believed in absolutely set methods but this was not by any means the case . He did not hesitate to alter

productions when they were revived . "

Although he had told the press that the original words and music would not be altered , Carte was willing to make changes in certain cases . In 1919 ? 20 , he authorised significant cuts and alterations in both Princess Ida and Ruddigore . In 1921 Cox and Box was produced in a drastically cut @-@ down version , to allow it to be played as a companion piece with the shorter Savoy operas . He also authorised changes to Gilbert 's text : he wrote to The Times in 1948 , " We found recently in America that much objection was taken by coloured persons to a word used twice in The Mikado . " The word in question was Gilbert 's reference to " nigger " (blackface) minstrels , and Carte asked A. P. Herbert to suggest an acceptable revision . " He made several alternative suggestions , one of which we adopted in America , and it seems well to go on doing so in the British Empire . "

Carte commissioned new costumes and scenery throughout his tenure with the company . For his restagings , Carte hired Charles Ricketts to redesign The Gondoliers and The Mikado , the costumes for the latter , created in 1926 , being retained by all the company 's subsequent designers . Other redesigns were by Percy Anderson , George Sheringham , Hugo Rumbold and Peter Goffin , a protégé of Carte 's daughter , Bridget D 'Oyly Carte .

For London seasons , Carte often engaged guest conductors , first Geoffrey Toye , then Malcolm Sargent , who examined Sullivan 's manuscript scores and purged the orchestral parts of accretions . So striking was the orchestral sound produced by Sargent that the press thought he had retouched the scores , and Carte had the pleasant duty of correcting their error . In a letter to The Times , he noted that " the details of the orchestration sounded so fresh that some of the critics thought them actually new ... the opera was played last night exactly as written by Sullivan . " Carte also hired Harry Norris , who started with the touring company , then was Toye 's assistant before becoming musical director . Isidore Godfrey joined the company as assistant musical director in 1925 and became musical director in 1929 , remaining in that post until 1968 .

The possibilities of the gramophone appealed to Carte . After World War I , he supervised a series of complete recordings of the scores of the operas on the HMV label , beginning with The Mikado in 1918 . The first nine sets , made between 1918 and 1925 , were recorded by the early acoustic process . At first , guest singers were chosen who were known for their ability to record well on this technology . Later in this series , more of the regular members of the company were featured . With the introduction of electrical recording and its greatly improved recording process and sound , a new round of recordings began in 1927 . For the electrical series , Carte 's own singers were mostly used . Carte also recognised the potential of radio and worked with the BBC to relay live broadcasts of D 'Oyly Carte productions . A 1926 relay of part of a Savoy Theatre performance of The Mikado was heard by up to eight million people . The London Evening Standard noted that this was " probably the largest audience that has ever heard anything at one time in the history of the world . " Under Carte , the company continued to make broadcasts during the interwar years . In 1932 , The Yeomen of the Guard became the first Gilbert and Sullivan opera to be broadcast in its entirety .

= = = Rebuilding the Savoy Theatre and later years = = =

In 1929 Carte had the 48 @-@ year @-@ old Savoy Theatre rebuilt and modernised . It closed on 3 June 1929 and was gutted and completely rebuilt to designs by Frank A. Tugwell with décor by Basil Ionides . The old house had three tiers ; the new one had two . The seating capacity (which had decreased to 986 from its original 1 @,@ 292) was restored nearly completely , to 1 @,@ 200 . The theatre reopened 135 days later on 21 October 1929 , with The Gondoliers , designed by Ricketts and conducted by Sargent . The critic Ernest Newman wrote , " I can imagine no gayer or more exhilarating frame for the Gilbert and Sullivan operas than the Savoy as it is now . "

Despite its historical connection with Gilbert and Sullivan , most of Carte 's London seasons were staged not at the Savoy but at two larger houses : the Prince 's (now the Shaftesbury) Theatre (1919 ? 20 , 1921 ? 22 , 1924 , 1926 , 1942 and Sadler 's Wells (1935 , 1936 , 1937 , 1939 , 1947 and 1948) . His three Savoy Theatre seasons were in 1929 ? 30 , 1932 ? 33 , and 1941 . In addition to year @-@ round UK tours , Carte mounted tours of North America in 1927 , 1928 ? 29 , 1934 ? 35 , 1936 ? 37 , 1939 and 1947 ? 48) . During the 1936 tour an American critic wrote , " If there

were only some way of keeping them on this side permanently . I humbly suggest to the New Deal that it cancel England 's war debt in exchange for the D 'Oyly Cartians . We should be much the gainer . "

Carte was deeply affected by the death of his son Michael in 1932 , discussed below . The actor Martyn Green said , " The heart dropped right out of him . His interest in both the operas and the hotel seemed to fade away . " Nevertheless , in 1934 the company made a highly successful eight @-@ month North American tour with Green as its new principal comedian , replacing Henry Lytton . Carte gave approval for , and was closely consulted about , a 1938 film version of The Mikado produced and conducted by Geoffrey Toye , starring Green and released by Universal Pictures , but his only new stage production after 1932 was of The Yeomen of the Guard designed in 1939 by Peter Goffin . The re @-@ staging was regarded as radical , but when Goffin took fright at the storm of controversy , Carte told him , " I don 't care what they say about the production . I should care if they said nothing . "

On 3 September 1939 , at the outbreak of World War II , the British government ordered the immediate and indefinite closure of all theatres . Carte cancelled the autumn tour and disbanded the company . Theatres were permitted to reopen from 9 September , but it took some weeks to re @-@ form the company . The company resumed touring in Edinburgh on Christmas Day 1939 . It continued to perform throughout the war , but German bombing destroyed the sets and costumes for five of its productions : Cox and Box , The Sorcerer , H.M.S. Pinafore , Princess Ida and Ruddigore . The old productions of Pinafore and Cox and Box were recreated shortly after the war , but the other two operas took longer to rejoin the company 's repertory . On the other hand , for the first wartime season , Peter Goffin designed and directed a new production of The Yeomen of the Guard first seen in January 1940 , and his new Ruddigore debuted in 1948 , shortly after Carte 's death . A return of the Company to the U.S. in 1947 was very successful .

= = = Savoy Hotel group = = =

From the beginning of his career , Carte maintained the Savoy group in London , disposing in 1919 of the Grand Hotel , Rome , which his father had acquired in 1896 . In the 1920s , he ensured that the Savoy continued to attract a fashionable clientele by a continuous programme of modernisation and the introduction of dancing in the large restaurants . The Savoy Orpheans and the Savoy Havana Band were described by The Times as " probably the best @-@ known bands in Europe " . In 1927 Carte appointed his opera company 's general manager , Richard Collet , to run the cabaret at the Savoy , which began in April 1929 .

Until the 1930s , the Savoy group had not thought it necessary to advertise , but Carte and his manager George Reeves @-@ Smith changed their approach . Reeves @-@ Smith told The Times , " We are endeavouring by intensive propaganda work to get more customers ; this work is going on in the U.S.A. , in Canada , in the Argentine and in Europe . " Towards the end of World War II , Carte added to the Savoy group the bombed @-@ out site near Leicester Square of Stone 's Chop House , the freehold of which he purchased with a view to reopening the restaurant there on the lines of the group 's Simpson 's @-@ in @-@ the @-@ Strand . The revived Stone 's reopened after Carte 's death .

= = = Personal life = = =

In 1907 , Carte married Lady Dorothy Milner Gathorne @-@ Hardy (1889 ? 1977) , the third and youngest daughter of the 2nd Earl of Cranbrook , with whom he had a daughter , Bridget , and a son , Michael (1911 ? 1932) . Michael was killed at the age of 21 in a motor accident in Switzerland . In 1925 , Carte and his wife had a country house built for them in Devon between Paignton and Kingswear , named Coleton Fishacre . The house is still known for its design features and garden with exotic tropical plants . After her parents ' divorce , Bridget D 'Oyly Carte took over the house , which her father , who lived in London , would visit for long weekends . She sold the house after his death , and it is now owned by the National Trust .

Carte 's private pastimes included gardening , notably at Coleton Fishacre , driving and yachting . He was an early devotee of the motor car and incurred the displeasure of the courts more than once . He was fined £ 3 for driving at 19 miles an hour in 1902 , and the following year he was subject to criminal prosecution for knocking down and injuring a child when driving at the speed of 24 miles an hour . He made " every provision for the comfort of the child " , who recovered from the accident . In the years after World War I , he was a frequent competitor in yachting races . From 1919 he raced his yacht " Kali " in the Hamble River class . Later , he owned and raced a 19 @-@ ton cutter , " Content " .

In 1941 , Carte divorced his wife for adultery . The suit was undefended . Lady Dorothy moved to the Bahamas and married St Yves de Verteuil , who had been the co @-@ respondent in the divorce case . De Verteuil died in 1963 , and Lady Dorothy de Verteuil died in February 1977 .

P. G. Wodehouse based the character Psmith , seen in several of his comic novels , on either Rupert D 'Oyly Carte or his brother Lucas . In the introduction to his novel Something Fresh , Wodehouse says that Psmith (originally named Rupert , then Ronald) was " based more or less faithfully on Rupert D 'Oyly Carte , son of the Savoy theatre man . He was at school with a cousin of mine , and my cousin happened to tell me about his monocle , his immaculate clothes and his habit , when asked by a master how he was , of replying , ' Sir , I grow thinnah and thinnah ' . " Bridget D 'Oyly Carte , however , believed that the Wykehamist schoolboy described to Wodehouse was not her father but his elder brother Lucas , who was also at Winchester College . Rupert D 'Oyly Carte was " shy , reserved and at times distinctly taciturn . " Psmith , by contrast , is outgoing and garrulous .

= = = Death and legacy = = =

Carte died at the Savoy Hotel , after a brief illness , at the age of 71 . A memorial service was held for him at the Savoy Chapel on 23 September 1948 . His ashes were scattered on the headland at Coleton Fishacre . He left an estate valued at £ 228 @,@ 436 . At his death , the family businesses passed to his daughter , Bridget D 'Oyly Carte . The Savoy hotel group remained under the control of the Carte family and its associates until 1994 . Carte 's hotels have remained among the most prestigious in London , with the London Evening Standard calling the Savoy " London 's most famous hotel " in 2009 . The year after Carte 's death , the opera company , which had been the personal possession of Richard and Rupert D 'Oyly Carte , became a private company , of which Bridget retained a controlling interest and was chairman and managing director . She inherited a company in strong condition , but the rising costs of mounting professional light opera without any government support eventually became unsustainable , and the company closed in 1982 .

The Gilbert and Sullivan operas , nurtured by Carte and his family for over a century , continue to be produced frequently today throughout the English @-@ speaking world and beyond . By keeping the Savoy operas popular throughout the mid @-@ 20th century , Carte continued to influence the course of the development of modern musical theatre .