

= Jessie Bond =

Jessie Bond ( 10 January 1853 ? 17 June 1942 ) was an English singer and actress best known for creating the mezzo @-@ soprano soubrette roles in the Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas . She spent twenty years on the stage , the bulk of them with the D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company .

Musical from an early age , Bond began a concert singing career in Liverpool by 1870 . At the age of 17 , she entered into a brief , unhappy marriage . After leaving her abusive husband , she continued her concert career and studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London with such famous singing teachers as Manuel García .

At the age of 25 , in 1878 , Bond began her theatrical career , creating the role of Cousin Hebe in Gilbert and Sullivan 's H.M.S. Pinafore , which became an international success . After this , she created roles of increasing importance with the D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company in a series of successful comic operas , including the title role in Iolanthe ( 1882 ) , Pitti Sing in The Mikado ( 1885 ) , Mad Margaret in Ruddigore ( 1887 ) , Phoebe in The Yeomen of the Guard ( 1888 ) , Tessa in The Gondoliers ( 1889 ) and others .

During the 1890s , she continued performing in the West End for several more years , while being courted by Lewis Ransome , a civil engineer . In 1897 , at the age of 44 , Bond married Ransome and left the stage . They were happily married for 25 years , moving to Nottinghamshire , where Bond lived the life of a country squire 's wife . She also occasionally gave charity concerts and assisted amateur theatre companies . She survived her husband by twenty years , living to the age of 89 .

= = Life and career = =

= = = Beginnings = = =

Jessie Charlotte Bond was born in Camden Town , London , the third of five children ( and eldest daughter ) born to John and Elizabeth Bond . John Bond was a pianomaker who gave his children a musical education . Bond 's mother often took the children to see theatre . When Jessie Bond was six , her family moved to Liverpool , where she grew up . At the age of eight , she played a Beethoven piano sonata in a concert . To help with family expenses , Bond taught music as a teenager . At the age of sixteen , she began to study singing , which she much preferred to teaching . The same year , at Hope Hall ( now the Everyman Theatre ) in Liverpool , she accompanied the music students of professor Isouard Praeger . The next year , she made her own concert singing debut .

Bond 's mother took her to see Ferdinand Alexis Schottlaender ( d . 1885 ) , the director of a choral society in Liverpool , who she hoped would be able to help Bond 's singing career . Schottlaender was ten years older than Bond and had travelled , and the teenaged Bond became fascinated by him , breaking off her previous relationship . Under Schottlaender 's tutelage , Bond 's voice developed rapidly , and she soon became the leading contralto soloist at the Seel Street Benedictine Church ( now known as St. Peter 's Catholic Church ) in the same city . Her father 's enquiries revealed that Schottlaender was a " bad lot " , and he forbade any engagement until Bond was older .

On 8 March 1870 , Schottlaender abducted the 17 @-@ year @-@ old Bond on her way to sing at a church service , took her to a friend 's house and forced her to stay the night with him . Schottlaender convinced her that she was " compromised " and that they must marry . The next day , she was taken to Manchester , where they were married . The marriage was a terrible experience for Bond , and she became pregnant and ill . " He ill @-@ treated both my mind and my body , he denied me every comfort , often I had not even enough to eat . To add to my wretchedness , the inevitable baby was coming . ... He had been violently ill @-@ treating me , I was a broken , pitiful creature . " Her family persuaded her to leave him after ten months of marriage . Bond contracted smallpox from the doctor who attended her , but she recovered . The baby , Sidney John Arthur

Schottlaender , was born on 7 May 1871 and died on 18 June 1871 , six weeks later . The couple lived separately for several years , and Bond finally divorced her husband in 1874 . Bond stated in her divorce petition that she had been knowingly infected with a communicable disease by her husband .

After leaving her husband , Bond continued to teach piano and was immediately back on stage singing oratorios , masses and other concerts near Liverpool . She gave a recital at St. George 's Hall , Liverpool at the end of January 1871 . In November 1871 , Mr and Mrs Howard Paul 's Benefit at the Queen 's Hall , Liverpool , featured J. L. Toole , and " Miss Jessie Bond and Miss Pattie Laverne both sing several new ballads " . She became friendly with the baritone Charles Santley , who advised her to move to London to study at the Royal Academy of Music . Bond did so at the age of 21 , studying with Manuel García and then J. B. Welch , and she continued to sing concerts both in the Provinces and in London . For example , in 1873 , she was the contralto soloist in Mendelssohn 's *Elijah* in Birkenhead and in Handel 's *Messiah* in Liverpool . In 1875 at the Liverpool Institute , she sang in J. L. Hatton 's *Enchantress* , and in the summer of 1877 , she appeared at the Queen 's Theatre in London in at least three of conductor Jules Rivi  re 's promenade concerts . Impresario Richard D 'Oyly Carte first heard her in a concert at St. George 's Hall and suggested concert engagements for her .

= = = H.M.S. Pinafore = = =

In May 1878 , Bond made her first appearance on the dramatic stage at the age of 25 , creating the role of Cousin Hebe in W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan 's *H.M.S. Pinafore* . The role had been written for a veteran performer , Mrs Howard Paul . But Gilbert and Sullivan were unhappy with Mrs. Paul 's vocal abilities , which were deteriorating . Finally , with only about a week to go before opening night , Carte hired Bond to play Cousin Hebe . At this stage of her career , Bond was not comfortable with spoken dialogue , and so her character was written out , or given nothing to say , in several scenes . After opening night , however , a portion of the recitative was converted to spoken dialogue , and Bond would have dialogue in all of the remaining roles that she created . She quickly grew to enjoy character acting .

In December 1878 , Bond created the part of Maria in *After All !* , composed by Alfred Cellier , when that companion piece was added to the bill with *Pinafore* . In late 1879 , Bond travelled to America with Gilbert , Sullivan and D 'Oyly Carte to give American audiences their first opportunity to see the authentic *H.M.S. Pinafore* , rather than the pirated versions that had sprung up in American theatres . While in New York City , she created the role of Edith in Gilbert and Sullivan 's next opera , *The Pirates of Penzance* . This was followed by a US tour of *Pinafore* and *Pirates* . Just before the American tour , Bond had developed an abscess in her leg . This never fully healed and would be with her throughout her stage career . In her autobiography , she wrote :

The abscess in my ankle was painful and persistent .... Owing to faulty treatment and want of rest my ankle became perfectly stiff , as it is to this day . Of course , I said as little as possible about it , for even partial lameness would spoil my chances on the stage . I doubt if the management ever knew ; the public certainly didn 't ; and those who saw me dancing and capering light @-@ heartedly about the stage for twenty years little thought under what difficulties I did it , and the pain I often suffered .

In fact , the management knew about Bond 's abscess , since Sullivan 's diary records that both he and Gilbert visited her during her temporary incapacity , and Sullivan paid the doctor 's bill .

= = = *Pirates through Iolanthe* = = =

Back in London , Bond continued to play Edith until *Pirates* ran its course in April 1881 . One of Bond 's sisters , Neva Bond , became a D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company chorister for approximately twelve years , from 1880 to 1891 . Neva created the role of Isabel in the London production of *The Pirates of Penzance* .

Bond , already ambitious , asked Gilbert if he might be able to increase the size of her role . Gilbert

tried to mollify her in a letter , concluding , " I am writing such a particularly good part for you in the new piece that I should be distressed beyond measure if you should leave us . I 've never said as much as this to any actor or actress before . I don 't say it to induce you to play so insignificant a part as Edith , for if you left us now , and came back to us to play that part , I should be satisfied . But if you didn 't play it , my calculations would be all upset , and I should lose a dear little lady for whom I have always had a very special regard . " True to Gilbert 's word , Edith was followed by a string of roles of increasing importance . First was Lady Angela in *Patience* ( 1881 ? 82 ) . Bond did not much like the role , writing later that she did not relate to the sentimental lady of luxury indulging in the aesthetic craze . At the same time , Bond was becoming known to theatregoers and attracting the attention of young men . Having had such bad experiences with romance in the past , Bond ignored such attentions . One poem sent to her by an admirer ran in mock @-@ Gilbertian style as follows ( in part ) :

Whene 'er I chance / A backward glance , / At times when , off my filbert  
With you ( my " mash ! " ) , / I blew my cash / On Sullivan and Gilbert !  
I loved you then / With all my pen / ( My heart 's amanuensis ) ,  
And folks who read / Sat up and said / " His love for her immense is ! "  
Nor were they wrong ; / Your merry song ? / You sing divinely , sweetly !  
Your lively dance / And roguish glance / Had captured me completely !  
I don 't complain ! / I 'd still remain / A pris 'ner now and ever !  
From such a Bond / ' Tis far beyond / My humble wish to sever !  
Now , pray don 't scold , / I know I 'm bold , / But , still , I 'm not a sinner . For ,  
Remember this , / I 've known you , miss , / Since you were in a Pinafore !

After the company had moved into the new Savoy Theatre , Bond met the Prince of Wales on several occasions , who assisted her career , securing singing engagements for her .

Bond wrote of her next role , " It was like a dream come true when I saw my own name in the title role " of *Iolanthe* ( 1882 ? 84 ) . Bond 's first entrance as *Iolanthe* was across a " stream " . She wrote in her memoirs about a performance of *Iolanthe* : " Realism can be carried too far , as it was when one night a zealous property man said to me : ' It 'll be just like the real thing to @-@ night , Miss Bond . I 've put some frogs into the water ! ' ' Then you 'll just have to fish them out again , ' I retorted , ' and the curtain won 't go up until you do . ' They had to catch those frogs in an inverted umbrella . Everybody got splashed and agitated , and the performance was delayed for some time . " The critics praised Bond 's portrayal of the title character : " Miss Jessie Bond ... may be credited with all the grace , delicacy , and fascination we should expect from a fairy mother , and her singing of the really exquisite melody in the last scene was one of the most successful items in the entire opera . "

*Iolanthe* was followed by *Princess Ida* ( 1884 ) , in which Bond played the role of *Melissa* . Bond played the role of *Constance* in the first revival of *The Sorcerer* ( 1884 ? 85 ) . The role had originally been written for a soprano , and some of the music was transposed down to suit Bond 's lower range and tessitura . Another feature of this revival was the pairing of Bond 's character with that of *Rutland Barrington* 's . The combination was so successful that in later Savoy operas , Bond and Barrington were generally paired together .

= = = The Mikado and Ruddigore = = =

Bond next created the role of *Pitti @-@ Sing* in *The Mikado* ( 1885 ? 87 ) , one of the " three little maids from school . " Sometimes , inspiration for plot points in the Gilbert and Sullivan operas was provided by characteristics of the performers themselves . For instance , Gilbert noted in an interview that the fact that the female singers to be engaged for *The Mikado* , *Leonora Braham* , Bond , and *Sybil Grey* , were all of short stature inspired him to make them schoolgirls ? three " little " maids ? and to treat them as a closely linked trio throughout the work as much as possible . Bond , however , knew how to stand out on stage . During preparations for *The Mikado* , she persuaded the wardrobe mistress to make the obi of her costume twice as big as that of the other " little maids " . She wrote : " I made the most of my big , big bow , turning my back to the audience whenever I got

a chance , and wagging it . The gallery was delighted , but I nearly got the sack for that prank ! However , I did get noticed , which was what I wanted . "

After seven years with D 'Oyly Carte , and still earning money from private and concert singing engagements , Bond 's salary had risen to the point where she was able to move into a better flat and hire a maid . Though she was happy with her success , Bond ( somewhat like Sullivan ) longed to devote herself to singing serious music . She wrote that when she was in a thoughtful mood , she would consider the following :

I had worked so hard at serious music , I had loved it so much and been so successful , that it was not without a pang that I gave it all up to sing little songs and choruses that were , after all , child 's play to me . ... [ O ] ften my heart ached when I thought of those days when I lived in an atmosphere of music of the highest order , and could express my inmost self in it . ... [ S ] ometimes when I thought things over I felt how far I had fallen from that first austere ideal , and wished that fame and success could have come in a higher sphere .

During the run of *The Mikado* , Bond met Lewis Ransome , a young civil engineer from a wealthy Quaker family . He had just returned from America , and the two compared travel experiences . Ransome admitted to Bond that , after watching *The Mikado* , he had mentioned to his sister that he " liked the little one with the big sash best . So next day when she saw a photograph of you in a shop window she went in and bought it . She gave it to me and I have it now . " Thus , despite Bond 's aversion to romance , began a long friendship that led , twelve years later , to Bond 's second marriage . Ransome , several years younger than Bond , proposed marriage on many occasions over the course of the relationship , but Bond told him that she would not marry while she continued on the stage . Over the years , the two spent many of Bond 's days off ( Sundays ) relaxing together in the country .

Bond next created the role of Mad Margaret in *Ruddigore* ( 1887 ; originally spelt " Ruddygore " ) , which she regarded as her favourite of all the Gilbert and Sullivan roles , " for it gave me the chance to show what I really could do as an actress . " The part was her largest to date , and Gilbert , Sullivan and Carte made her audition it for them to be sure that she could handle the responsibility . " It was an awful ordeal . I saw the three white faces looming out of the darkness as they sat close together ; criticizing me , talking me over , with cold managerial detachment . It nearly killed me . Perhaps it gave an added realism and abandon to my simulated madness , for indeed I was nearly mad with fear ? but at any rate I came through triumphantly , they were all three of them delighted . " Bond was particularly nervous on opening night . " I shook and tottered so much that Mad Margaret 's staff was no mere adjunct , but an absolute necessity . Without it I should have fallen as I stood in the wings waiting to go on . Then some one gave me a push ; I was there , on the stage , in the glare of the footlights , hundreds of eyes fixed on me , tier upon tier of dim white faces rising from floor to ceiling in the gloom . It was enough ; I forgot myself , I was Mad Margaret and no one else . I made an immense success . " Cellier and Bridgeman seconded this assessment :

There were two particularly noteworthy features in the performance of ' *Ruddigore* . ' First to be mentioned was the acting of Miss Jessie Bond in the part of ' Mad Margaret . ' Among the host of her admirers few had given the popular Savoy soubrette credit for such great ability as a genuine comedy @-@ actress , for never before had the opportunity been afforded her to display her latent talent ? Jessie Bond 's triumph came as a surprise to all .... So true to real life was the portrayal of Mad Margaret that Mr. Forbes Winslow , the famous authority on mental disorders , wrote a congratulatory letter to Miss Bond and inquired where she had found the model from which she had studied , and so faithfully copied the phases of insanity . No greater compliment could have been paid the actress .

Bond next appeared in the first revivals of *H.M.S. Pinafore* ( 1887 ? 88 ) , *Pirates* ( 1888 ) , and *The Mikado* ( 1888 ) recreating her earlier roles . She had developed an enthusiastic following among the audiences at the Savoy Theatre . Between Savoy shows , Bond was able to appear in *To the Death* by fellow savoyard Rutland Barrington ( 1888 ) and *Locked In* ( 1889 ) .

= = = Yeomen and The Gondoliers = = =

After this , Bond 's next role was Ph?be Meryll in The Yeomen of the Guard ( 1888 ? 89 ) . Of this role , Bond wrote , " My share in the most beautiful of all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas was delightfully easy and natural . When Gilbert gave it to me at the first reading he said , ' Here you are , Jessie , you needn 't act this , it 's you . ' " Gilbert was even more nervous than usual on the first night of Yeomen and came backstage to give his best wishes to the cast . Bond wrote , " I am afraid he made himself a perfect nuisance behind the scenes , and did his best , poor fellow , to upset us all . These first nights were very hard on me ... and nearly always my understudy was called upon to officiate on the second night of a play , while I lay exhausted in my bed . [ In Yeomen ] , the curtain rises on Ph?be alone at her spinning wheel , and Gilbert kept fussing about ... until I was almost as demented as he was . At last I turned on him savagely . ' For Heaven 's sake , Mr. Gilbert , go away and leave me alone , or I shan 't be able to sing a note ! ' He gave me a final frenzied hug , and vanished . "

In each of the new Gilbert and Sullivan operas , Bond 's roles continued to grow larger and more challenging , until with Margaret , Ph?be , and Tessa in The Gondoliers ( 1889 ? 91 ) , Bond 's roles were at least as important as any other female role . By the time The Gondoliers was in preparation , Gilbert felt that his regular principal cast members were becoming too demanding and that the precision and style of D 'Oyly Carte productions could be maintained only if there were no " stars " . He endeavoured to make the nine leading roles as co @-@ equal as he could . Bond , aware of her importance to the company , declined to appear unless her salary was raised from twenty pounds to thirty pounds a week . Gilbert bitterly resisted the raise , but Bond prevailed .

I was the only one who asked for a rise , and Gilbert was furious with me . All the time we were rehearsing [ The Gondoliers ] he never spoke to me , and only acknowledged my existence by sometimes saying sneeringly : ' Make way for the High @-@ Salaried Artiste ! ' ... Passing storms like this did occasionally ruffle the course of our friendship , but on the whole it flowed on deep and strong .

During the run of The Gondoliers , Queen Victoria called for a royal command performance of the show at Windsor Castle . Bond wrote ,

I quaked a little as we began our quartet ' A Right @-@ down Regular Royal Queen . ' But [ this and Barrington 's solo ] numbers seemed to amuse the real Queen more than anything else in the opera , and , indeed , who could so well as she see the point of them ? The very fact of her choosing this opera from all the others to be played before her shows how vivid was her sense of fun , and how truly British was her willingness to laugh at herself . There was ... only one encore ... [ a ] nd who do you suppose was singled out for that honour ? Who but I who write this , little Jessie Bond ... for my song in the first act , ' When a Merry Maiden Marries.'

= = = Last years on stage = = =

After The Gondoliers closed , Gilbert and Sullivan were estranged for a time , and Carte hired Bond to play Chinna @-@ Loofa in Dance , Desprez , and Solomon 's The Nautch Girl ( 1891 ) . Although her salary continued to rise , she was less happy at the Savoy after Gilbert 's departure . She took a three @-@ month leave from the D 'Oyly Carte organisation in August 1891 , together with Rutland Barrington , performing a series of " musical duologues " and sketches , written mostly by Barrington and composed by Edward Solomon , on a provincial tour , where they received good notices and profits . Bond also did some of the writing . She had passed up the opportunity to create a role in Gilbert 's next opera , The Mountebanks at the Lyric Theatre ( 1892 ) , as she was still under contract to Carte . She and Barrington returned to the Savoy in November , but Bond left the D 'Oyly Carte organisation at the end of the run of The Nautch Girl in January 1892 , as there was no role for her in the next Savoy opera , The Vicar of Bray . Bond was unwilling to accept the part offered to her in the next Savoy piece , Haddon Hall ( 1892 ) .

Over the next few years , Bond had several engagements in London theatres , including in Ma Mie Rosette ( 1892 ) by Ivan Caryll , Poor Jonathan ( 1893 ) , Corney Courted ( 1893 ) , a revival of Pickwick by Solomon and F. C. Burnand ( 1893 ) Miami ( as Nelly O 'Neil ) at the Princess 's Theatre , and others . She enjoyed good runs as Helen Tapeleigh in the musical comedy Go @-@ Bang (

1894 ) and Nanna in Gilbert and F. Osmond Carr 's His Excellency ( 1894 ? 95 ) . In 1894 , she also played in Wapping Old Stairs , by Stuart Robertson and Howard Talbot ( with Courtice Pounds and Richard Temple ) , and Pick @-@ me @-@ up at the Trafalgar Square Theatre ( with George Grossmith , Jr. and Letty Lind ) . During these years , Bond owned a fox terrier named Bob . She returned to the Savoy to play Pitti @-@ Sing in the revivals of The Mikado that ran off and on from November 1895 to February 1897 . When the revivals were over , Bond left the stage .

After he had first seen her perform in The Mikado in 1885 , Bond 's friendship with Lewis Ransome continued and deepened . Subject to an increasing number of short illnesses that prevented her from performing , and tiring of life in the theatre , Bond finally agreed to marry Ransome , and the couple wed in May 1897 .

When I told Gilbert he was so angry that I don 't think he ever quite forgave me ; he would not accept my health as an excuse , he was unreasonable , as , alas , he often was ! ' You are a little fool ! ' he said . ' I have often heard you say you don 't like old women , ' I retorted . ' I shall soon be old . Will you provide for me ? Will Sir Arthur ? Will Carte ? No , of course you won 't . Well , I am going to marry a man who will.'

Bond wrote of her feelings at the end of her last performance :

Twenty years of hard work , twenty years of fun and frolic and jolly companionship , twenty years of living in an atmosphere of tuneful nonsense , with the glare of the footlights in my eyes and the thunders of applause in my ears . How terribly I should miss it all ! And domesticity , that all my life I had fled from , had caught me at last .

Bond and Ransome spent three years in London , where Bond entertained her neighbours and theatrical friends with musical soirees and dinner parties . She also participated in charity benefits , such as a performance of H.M.S. Pinafore for the benefit of the families of soldiers and sailors , on 6 January 1900 , in the village of Maiden Bradley . In 1900 , the lease on Ransome 's family business ( Ransome and Co . , later Ransome & Marles , a manufacturer of bearings and wood @-@ working machinery ) ran out , and it relocated to Newark , Nottinghamshire , to reduce costs . Bond and Ransome moved near the new factory to a large house in Farndon . Gilbert wrote to her that " The Savoy is not the same without you . "

= = = Later life = = =

Although Bond 's life as a performer in the theatre had ended at age 44 , she occasionally gave charity concerts thereafter . Unlike Bond 's first marriage , her second was a happy one . Initially reluctant to leave London , Bond reported , " We entertained a good deal , and gave hunt lunches and shooting parties of our own , so my time was well filled up , and I missed London less than I could have believed . " She founded and directed the Newark Amateur Dramatic Society , an amateur dramatic club , whose performances supported local charities . The couple also often visited London and did some travelling abroad .

In 1912 , and for some years afterwards , Bond played a significant role in developing the career of Donald Wolfit , whom she first saw perform when he was ten years old . Her first action on his behalf was to advise his concerned parents not to try to prevent him from pursuing a career on the stage . Together with George Power , Leonora Braham and Julia Gwynne , she was one of four artistes of the original D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company who attended a reunion at the Savoy Hotel in 1914 ( see photograph below ) . The four then posed for a group photograph beside the Sullivan monument in the Victoria Embankment Gardens . Her husband died in May 1922 , after 25 years of marriage . Two years later , Bond moved out of the large house to Newark and later to Worthing , Sussex , and often visited London .

In the 1920s , Bond wrote several articles about her memories of Gilbert and Sullivan and her years with the D 'Oyly Carte Opera Company for The Strand Magazine and The Gilbert & Sullivan Journal . Her autobiography , The Life and Reminiscences of Jessie Bond , the Old Savoyard , was published in 1930 . In that book , she expressed great admiration particularly for Gilbert , but also for Sullivan and D 'Oyly Carte , and she bemoaned overacting by performers in the " modern " era . In March 1930 , the Gilbert and Sullivan Society invited the original three little maids to a reunion in

London to celebrate the 45th anniversary of The Mikado .

In her last years , Bond entertained wounded World War I servicemen , playing the piano and singing at a south coast home for disabled soldiers and sailors . An obituary in The Evening Standard reported : " Every day for more than a year , until just recently , she was taken out in her wheelchair . After a breath of sea air ... she would always go into her favourite hotel for a drink and would often sit down at the piano and entertain the company with some of her old Gilbert and Sullivan tunes . She often used to go to a home for wounded ex @-@ servicemen of the last war [ and ] would give an impromptu entertainment , playing and singing her old songs . She liked to go to parties and would always play and sing . " The Worthing Gazette stated that Bond continued to be much loved in her later years , and people came to see her from all over Britain to pay homage in her old age . The Worthing Herald wrote : " Despite her great age , Miss Bond preserved a quick and active mind , and hated to be fussed over . "

She died in 1942 at age 89 in Worthing .