



From the Directors

At first glance, *Patience* may seem rooted in the details of the period in which it was written. The operetta is a satire of the Aesthetic movement of the 1870s and 1880s, a movement that touted “Art for Art’s sake” , and became something of a fad among the young members of England’s privileged class.

In *Patience*, a bevy of young women have forsaken their original suitors to declare allegiance to Reginald Bunthorne, a thinly veiled parody of the father of Aestheticism, Oscar Wilde. Bunthorne is revealed to be no true adherent of Aestheticism; he has used the fad’s popularity to enhance his own. Bunthorne’s determined infatuation with the local dairy maid, Patience, causes his flock of admirers to abandon him and focus their attentions on his rival, Archibald Grosvenor, a parody of another prominent Aesthetic poet, Algernon Swinburne. The ladies’ original suitors, a troop of British Dragoons, are appalled by these events, and attempt to win back the women by adopting the look of the Aesthetic fad. All is resolved happily when Grosvenor discards Aestheticism and convinces the ladies and their now-baffled suitors to do so as well. Bunthorne, who retains his Aesthetic trappings, is abandoned as the ladies return to their original partners.

All of this may seem rather dated, and it is unlikely a modern audience will have the same reaction that the original audience of *Patience* did. Aestheticism is remembered only as a defunct artistic movement found in art history textbooks, not as something practiced by the exasperatingly trendy. However, the themes of *Patience* are as fresh and vibrant today as they were the day it was written. Indeed, in a world of mass-market media and an increasingly international popular culture, inane fads and the split-second popularity of specific artists have only become more prevalent. The satire of *Patience* may be more relevant than it ever was.

In this production, we will be updating *Patience* from its traditional time and place to explore its themes in a modern setting. To that end, this production will be set in an American high school, which we believe will serve as an excellent backdrop for this work, which skewers the foibles of the young, privileged, and none too bright. We’ve chosen to replace the now-dated Aesthetic movement with the (ironically) significantly more modern Gothic movement; the emphasis on style by the latter movement would seem to make it a natural heir to the former. The Dragoons find their modern analogue in a (American) football team, who’ve not only lost their love interests, but also their cheerleading squad!

Although we are updating the setting and the character concepts, this production will not be a significant rewriting of the original material. We have every intention to be faithful to the spirit of the material of the original setting, and as such, we are making minimal changes to the libretto. In one musical number we will replace unfamiliar references to clothing stores with the names of establishments more familiar to a modern audience.

We hope that this production will attract cast members who can have fun with this premise, and we hope to create an entertaining and original staging of this wonderful operetta. If you have any questions or comments about any of the above, please don’t hesitate to contact us at patience@mit.edu.