

Cellier potted biography

The Cellier brothers, Alfred (1844 – 1891) and François (Frank) 1849 – 1914)) are inextricably bound up with the history of Gilbert, Sullivan, D'Oyly Carte and the 'Savoy' Operas.

François was Sullivan's musical director at both the Opera Comique and the Savoy theatres during the original productions and early revivals of the operas, and was also the composer of several curtain raisers at both theatres. He continued to conduct the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company right up until the tour of South Africa in 1902-3. François was also the co-author of a book 'Gilbert and Sullivan and their operas with recollections and anecdotes of D'Oyly Carte & other famous Savoyards.'

The elder brother, Alfred, also occasionally acted as musical director for the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, and was responsible for the overtures to *SORCERER* and *PINAFORE*, (the entr'acte is also Cellier's work), and accompanied Gilbert and Sullivan to New York in 1879-80 for the première of *THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE*, helping Sullivan with the last-minute orchestrations and copying of parts – most especially the overture. He was also the musical director for the New York première of *IOLANTHE* for which he wrote an overture (now lost).

Alfred was also a highly successful composer in his own right, composing a number of curtain raisers for the Savoy, and other highly successful comic operas including *TOPSYTURVEYDOM* and *THE MOUNTEBANKS*, both with Gilbert. He also composed an amount of orchestral and choral music, including a setting of *GRAY'S ELEGY*, and a successful Grand Opera, *PANDORA*.

But his crowning achievement must be the Comedy Opera, *DOROTHY*, (libretto B C Stephenson), which first appeared at the Gaiety Theatre on 25th September 1886, later transferring to the Prince of Wales Theatre, and then the Lyric Theatre, and ending an unbroken run of 931 performances on 6th April 1889, thus becoming the longest running musical of the 19th century and beating the box office record of *MIKADO* by no less than 259 performances.

DOROTHY became a staple of the amateur stage in the UK, and also continued to tour in professional productions in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand well into the 20th Century.

In recent years, performances of *DOROTHY* have been very rare; the last known UK production was at Gosport in 1975. However, with a proposed full-scale professional recording in the planning stage, we have updated this page and added further resources in the form of the Chappell 'lyrics' book, as sold at the Lyric Theatre on 17th December 1888, the 817th performance and the opening night at that theatre, and also a prompt book for the professional 1932 Australian touring production.