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THE GEISHA  A story of a tea house
A Japanese Musical Play by Sidney Jones  (1861–1946)
Libretto by ‘Owen Hall’, lyrics by Harry Greenbank

ACT I

1. Opening Chorus ‘Happy Japan’ Chorus, Geishas [3'08]
2. Entrance of Officers ‘Here they come’ Chorus, Fairfax, Cunningham, Officers [2'02]
4. Song ‘The Amorous Goldfish’ Mimosa [4'22]
5. Duet ‘The Kissing’ Fairfax, Mimosa [3'43]
6. Concerted Piece ‘If you will come to tea’ Geishas, Officers [2'11]
7. Chorus ‘Lamentation’ Chorus, Geishas [2'35]
8. Concerted Piece ‘We’re going to call on the Marquis’ [1'45]

ACT II

10. Song ‘A geisha’s life’ Mimosa [3'25]
11. Song ‘Jack’s the boy’ Fairfax, Chorus [3'08]
12. Song ‘Chon kina’ Molly, Chorus [4'45]
13. Finale ‘Though of staying too long’ [6'48]

NEW LONDON LIGHT OPERA
CHORUS and ORCHESTRA
DAVID JURITZ leader

RONALD CORP conductor
WHAT?! The Geisha?! But isn’t that a musical comedy?

Well, yes and no. To be sure, The Geisha belongs to that category of pieces which emerged during the 1890s as a bright and breezy alternative to the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. However, there was still a great deal of development in musical theatre before the syncopated song-and-dance, boy-meets-girl musical comedy of the 1920s and 1930s. Listen to the opening chorus of The Geisha and you might readily believe you were hearing one by Sullivan. There are plenty of other numbers in The Geisha that display specifically nineteenth-century lyricism. The song ‘A Geisha’s Life’ is a model of its kind, as is the baritone ballad ‘Star of my Soul’, and the Kissing Duet is a quite exquisitely shaped piece of duet-writing. Altogether, Sidney Jones, the composer of The Geisha, displayed a level of technical accomplishment that would never be expected of twentieth-century musical comedy composers.

James Sidney Jones came from a musical family. His father, James Sidney Jones senior (c1837–1914), was a band-master and conductor, and his youngest brother Guy Sidney Jones (1875–1959) was to follow in his footsteps as a musical director and composer. Born on 17 June 1861 at 56 Dame Street, Islington, the future composer of The Geisha spent his childhood moving from one to another of his father’s military stations—Colchester, Aldershot, York, Dublin. Along the way he learned the capabilities of a variety of instruments, and in Dublin he rounded off his education with lessons from Sir Robert Stewart (1825–1894) of Trinity College.

His father finally settled in Leeds as conductor of the Leeds Rifles, musical director at the Grand Theatre and conductor of the Spa Orchestra at Harrogate. Young Sidney gave piano lessons and became clarinettist in his father’s orchestra at Harrogate before getting a position as conductor of touring musical shows in 1882. He toured for nine years, conducting such shows as Planquette’s Les Cloches de Corneville and Cellier’s Dorothy (with George Bernard Shaw’s sister Lucy Carr-Shaw in the lead). After going to Australia with a company from London’s Gaiety Theatre, he returned briefly to the provinces before finally making it to the West End in 1892 as conductor of the early musical comedy In Town. By now he had begun composing numbers for the impresario George Edwardes (1855–1915), who evidently liked what he heard. Jones’s song ‘Linger Longer Loo’ (1893) enjoyed an international career and inspired a celebrated drawing by Toulouse-Lautrec of Yvette Guilbert singing it.

It was for George Edwardes that Jones produced his first full score, A Gaiety Girl, in 1893. It ran for thirteen months, and its baritone ballad ‘Sunshine above’ was especially admired. In 1894 Jones followed it with An Artist’s Model, a more ambitious piece which ran for fifteen months. By 1896 he was already comfortably well-off, the owner of a villa in St John’s Wood with an Erard piano in his study and a pony-trap outside. Then came the Japanese ‘comedy opera’ with which George Edwardes sought to tap the constant fascination of the public for the oriental milieu that had brought such success to Gilbert and Sullivan in The Mikado. The formula worked yet again.

To be precise, The Geisha was a ‘musical play’ rather than a ‘musical comedy’. The emphasis was very much on catchy songs, attractive settings, colourful costumes, and dialogue that was snappy for its time; but the story was just that little bit more developed and its score just that shade more substantial than the loose musical comedies of the period. However, librettist ‘Owen Hall’ (James Davis, 1853–1907), lyricist Harry Greenbank (1865–1899) and Jones himself never sought to match Gilbert and Sullivan. On the contrary they expressly strove for something altogether lighter. For Jones, the principle was ‘brightness and brevity’, and his aim was that none of his numbers occupied more than three minutes, except the finales which ran to about five. Yet, within these aims, Jones approached his task with no less dedication than Sullivan. He claimed to ‘have worked-in a great deal of Japanese colouring, and [to] have taken many suggestions from the genuine national music’. The Japanese March in Act II
is specifically based on an old Japanese song. As with Sullivan’s *Mikado*, though, Jones’s music was for the most part anything but oriental, leaning more obviously to continental European dance rhythms than Sullivan’s very British style.

*The Geisha* ran at Daly’s Theatre, London, for an unprecedented 760 performances. Singing actress Marie Tempest (later Dame Marie Tempest) was O Mimoso San, dancing soubrette Letty Lind was Molly Seamore, handsome baritone leads C Hayden Coffin and W Louis Bradfield were Lieutenants Reginald Fairfax and Dick Cunningham, comics Harry Monkhouse and Huntley Wright were the Marquis Imari and Wun-Hi. As with all of George Edwardes’ shows, the score was subject to changes as new cast members joined. By no means all of these numbers were by Jones, and one of the most successful along the way was J M Capel’s still familiar ‘Love, could I only find thee?’. Eventually, however, the score became standardized in the form used for this recording, with just three numbers not by Jones himself—‘Jack’s the Boy’ and ‘The Toy Monkey’ composed by Lionel Monckton, and ‘The Jewel of Asia’ composed by James Philp.

After its two-year run, *The Geisha* was succeeded at Daly’s in 1898 by Jones’s *Greek Slave*, a work with a slightly more ambitious score and a setting that makes it a precursor of Sondheim’s *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. But Greece appealed less than the Orient, and the team that created *The Geisha* followed up with a Chinese piece, *San Toy*, in 1899. Though not really up to the *Geisha* standard, it actually ran marginally longer.

By now Jones was feeling sufficiently confident of his ability to rebel against the George Edwardes formula that restricted his loftier ambitions and permitted interpolated songs by other composers. He severed his links and settled down to compose scores that were entirely his own. The results were the ‘comedy opera’ *My Lady Molly* (1902) and the musical comedy *The Medal and the Maid* (1903). The latter had only a short run; but the former was a significant success. A work in the more ambitious English rural comic opera tradition of Cellier’s *Dorothy* and Sullivan’s *Haddon Hall*, its 342 London performances beat any British comic opera (as opposed to musical play) subsequent to Sullivan’s *The Gondoliers*—a longer run than any of Sullivan’s shows of the 1890s, longer than anything ever achieved by Edward German.

Even at the age of forty, though, Jones found his style and aspirations too firmly rooted in the nineteenth century to compete with the brighter, more overtly tuneful Edwardian style of Lionel Monckton and Paul Rubens. A brief spell as musical director at the Empire Theatre, Leicester Square, produced a couple of ballets, *The Bugle Call* (1905) and the seasonal *Cinderella* (1906); but *See-See* (1906), another oriental musical play, enjoyed a limited run. The public was perhaps more inclined to prefer the revival of *The Geisha* that had opened two nights earlier. *The Ruritanian King of Cadonia* (1908), with a libretto by Frederick Lonsdale, was Jones’s biggest success of these later years, after which *A Persian Princess* (1909) again did little. Jones provided the more substantial numbers for a couple of collaborations with Paul Rubens—*The Girl from Utah* (1913) and *The Happy Day* (1916)—and then retired.

Jones was a fastidious craftsman and a quiet but stubborn man. Though popular with the orchestras he conducted, he was never one to join in theatrical socializing, much preferring a fishing expedition to a glamorous first night. Eric Coates, who met him in later years, was struck by his simple charm and complete lack of worldliness. He lived on for a further thirty years after his last show, dying in Kew on 29 January 1946 at the age of eighty-four.

By then there was no doubt of the extent to which the popularity of *The Geisha* had outstripped that of any of his other works. If it was Sidney Jones’s calling-card in Britain, it was no less so abroad. Indeed its success on the continent of Europe far outstripped that of anything by Sullivan and that of any other show by a British composer since Balfe. Vocal scores were published in German and Italian, and on German stages.
it achieved more performances than any native work of its time. Its popularity in Russia was exemplified by its key role in one of Anton Chekhov’s most popular short stories, *The Lady with the Little Dog*. When a 1959 Russian film of the story achieved international circulation, the strains of ‘The Amorous Goldfish’ were once more heard around the world.

On the Continent, indeed, *The Geisha* survived on stage and in recordings well into the LP era. By contrast, in English-speaking countries the overriding success of the post-War American musical was something that only the works of Gilbert and Sullivan from the nineteenth century could withstand. Thus in Britain *The Geisha* has been almost entirely forgotten other than in the memories of those fortunate enough to see one of the few amateur productions since the Second World War. Yet it belongs—along with German’s *Merrie England* and *Tom Jones*, Leslie Stuart’s *Florodora*, Monckton’s *A Country Girl*, *The Quaker Girl* and *The Arcadians*, and Paul Rubens’s *Miss Hook of Holland*—to a group of works with their own distinct musical qualities. They represent a period when the British musical theatre was a potent force in the operetta theatres of the world, and they still have the power to appeal through their delightful melodies and their unassuming, period charm.

ANDREW LAMB © 1998

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Front illustration: *Japanese Girls* (1893/4) by Edward Atkinson Hornel (1864–1933)
ACT I

The curtain rises on the Japanese Tea House of Ten Thousand Joys, run by the somewhat devious Chinaman Wun-Hi. The geishas who staff the tea house are hailing a new day.

[1] Opening Chorus ‘Happy Japan’

CHORUS Dawns the day in Eastern sky,
Here we hasten pitter patter
Where the tiny teacups clatter;
Mounts the golden Sun God high,
Shaded from his fury heated
Still at tea you find us seated;
Passes day towards the West,
Comes the night and calls to rest
Then we leave with sigh and sorrow—
No more tea until tomorrow.

Happy Japan,
Garden of glitter!
Flower and fan
Flutter and flitter;
Land of bamboo
(Juvenile whacker),
Porcelain too,
Teatray and lacquer,
Happy Japan.

GEISHAS Shall we sing you while they bring you
Tea or coffee, sirs,
Dainty lyric panegyric
Of the gentlemen?
We’ve a solo touching polo
For the officers
And a rondo rather fond,
O sentimental men.
Of a hymn in praise of women
Are you fanciers,
Or a sonnet to a bonnet
Supercilious?
We’ve a ditty of the city
For financiers
And a ballad of a salad
For the bilious!

Merry little geisha we!
Come along at once and see
Ample entertainment free,
Given as you take your tea.

CHORUS Charming little geisha they!
Come along and hear them play;
All of it is free they say
Nothing in the world to pay.

Happy Japan …

Wun-Hi hurries in to tell them that HMS The Turtle has arrived and that a shipload of English naval officers is coming their way in search of a cup of tea and female company.

[2] Entrance of Officers ‘Here they come’

CHORUS Here they come!
Oh, look and see!
Great big English sailor men!
Englishman, he likes our tea,
Comes to taste it now and then.

Great big sailors walk like this—
Fight with any man they please,
Marry little English miss,
Flirt with pretty Japanese.

FAIRFAX Though you’ve seen a good deal in your walks about,
Here’s the prettiest place of the lot!
It’s the tea-house that ev’ryone talks about—
A delightfully curious spot.

CUNNINGHAM Are your stories a myth and a mockery
Of the excellent tea that they bring,
Of the quaint little pieces of crockery,
And the gay little geisha who sing?

OFFICERS Oh, we’ve heard of the frolic and fun
Of those dear little Japanese elves,
So we thought the best thing to be done
Was to come here and see for ourselves.

CHORUS Oh, they’ve heard of the frolic and fun
Of those dear little Japanese elves,
So they thought the best thing to be done
Was to come here and see for themselves.
Pretty geisha will amuse.
Dance or song she won’t refuse.
Great big English sailors, please,
Try our teapot Japanese,
Sailors, please, oh, try our teapot Japanese.

Prominent among the arrivals are Lieutenants Reginald Fairfax, who is here primarily to renew his acquaintance with the head geisha, O Mimosa San, and Dick Cunningham, who has a tale to tell of the romance between a sailor and a Japanese girl that foundered on communication difficulties.

3 Song ‘The dear little Jappy-Jap-Jappy’

CUNNINGHAM There came to the land of Japan
To the sea-port of fair Nagasaki
From an island afar
Such a jolly Jack tar,
With his hornpipe, his grog and his baccy.

Now it chanc’d that he pick’d up a fan
For a dear little Japanese party,
And he turn’d her young head
When he gallantly said:
“You’re a trim little vessel my hearty!”

So that dear little Jappy-Jap-Jappy
Set her smart little cappy-cap-cappy
At the Jolly Jack tar
From the island afar
In the west of the mappy-map-mappy!

GEISHA (PAULA BOTT) So that dear little Jappy-Jap-Jappy ...

CUNNINGHAM They walk’d in the shade of the trees
In the gardens of fair Nagasaki,
And her cheeks they were pink
At the nautical wink,
And the maritime manners of Jacky!

Though the tar couldn’t speak Japanese,
Yet in English he ask’d her to marry;
Then she crept to his side,
And her fan open’d wide,
As she murmur’d, “Hai! Kashikomari!”

But he knew not a scrappy-scrap-scrappy
Of the language of Jappy-Jap-Jappy!
Had she told him to go
With a Japanese “No!”
Or with “Yes!” made him happy-hap-happy?

GEISHA But he knew not a scrappy-scrap-scrappy ... 

CUNNINGHAM So Jack has departed in doubt
From that maiden of fair Nagasaki;
Though he wept and he sigh’d
At the loss of a bride
Till the captain and crew thought him cracky.

And he vows, as he cruises about
(Though by lessons and books as a rule bored)
That all seamen A.B.s
Should be taught Japanese
By a rather too liberal School Board!

But that dear little Jappy-Jap-Jappy
She has fill’d up the gappy-gap-gappy,
And has chosen instead
To be happily wed
To a Japanese chappy-chap-chappy!

GEISHA But that dear little Jappy-Jap-Jappy ...

As Fairfax is entertained by Mimosa it becomes apparent that there are complications. First, the pompous Marquis Imari, Chief of Police and Governor of the Province, announces that he has the Emperor’s permission to marry Mimosa—to the joint horror of Wun-Hi who stands to lose the most profitable attraction of his tea house, and of Wun-Hi’s French interpreter Juliette Diamant who wishes to marry the Marquis herself. Secondly, a party of English ladies is in the area; the leader of the group, Lady Constance Wynne, disapproves of Reggie’s apparent infidelity to his fiancée, Molly Seamore. Additionally, Mimosa’s own true love, Captain Katana, is not happy with the situation. For the time being, however, Mimosa pointedly sings to Reggie the song of the ‘Amorous Goldfish’ which vainly loved a naval officer and pined away when rejected in favour of a young lady.
**4 Song ‘The Amorous Goldfish’**

MIMOSA A goldfish swam in a big glass bowl,
As dear little goldfish do,
But she loved with the whole of her heart and soul
An officer brave from the ocean wave,
And she thought that he loved her too!
Her small inside he daily fed
With crumbs of the best digestive bread;
“This kind attention proves”, said she,
“How exceedingly fond he is of me!”
And she thought, “It’s fit-fit-fitter
He should love my glit-glit-glitter
Than his heart give away
To the butterflies gay,
Or the birds that twit-twit-twitter.”
She flash’d her frock in the sunshine bright,
That officer brave to charm,
And he vowed she was quite a delightful sight,
So her spirits were gay till he came one day
With a girl on his stalwart arm!
In whispers low they talked of love;
He begged for a rose and worn-out glove;
But when they kissed a fond goodbye,
The poor little goldfish longed to die!
And she sobbed, “It’s bit-bit-bitter
He should love this crit-crit-critter
When I thought he would wish
For a nice little fish,
With a frock all glit-glit-glitter.”
That charming girl for a time upset
The officer brave and gay,
And his sad little pet he contrived to forget,
For with never a crumb did he chance to come,
So the goldfish pined away

Until at last some careless soul
With a smash knock’d over the big glass bowl,
And there on the carpet, dead and cold,
Lay the poor little fish in her frock of gold!
But her fate so bit-bit-bitter
Is a story fit-fit-fitter
For a sad little sigh
And a tear in the eye
Than a thoughtless tit-tit-titter!

Reggie responds by giving Mimosa a lesson in the western art of kissing, which both appear to relish.

**5 Duet ‘The Kissing’**

FAIRFAX You’re a charming little geisha,
Quite the nicest girl in Asia,
But I fear there’s something missing,
O my pretty Japanese!
English, French and German misses
Do not ask me what a kiss is—
They are all expert at kissing.
MIMOSA Will you teach me, if you please?
I believe I’m quick and clever,
And I promise I’ll endeavour
In the task to do you credit
If your pupil I may be!
O my sailor bright and breezy,
Is it difficult or easy?
FAIRFAX Only wait and you shall see!
MIMOSA I am half afraid to try.
FAIRFAX Then the task we won’t pursue.
MIMOSA Shall I like it by and by?
FAIRFAX It’s objected to by few!
BOTH Little maiden,
Wonder-laden,
Ev’ry day learns something new.
FAIRFAX  Now to make my meaning clearer
You must come a little nearer
Having first discover’d whether
There is anyone about;
Then, your face half shyly raising
Till your eyes in his are gazing,
Place your pretty lips together
In a dainty little pout.

MIMOSA  If a smile my cheeks should dimple,
It’s because it’s all so simple!
Why of such a tame proceeding
Should you make so great a fuss?
It’s a farce absurdly hollow
But perhaps there’s more to follow?
For instruction I am pleading!
FAIRFAX  And I give it to you thus!

MIMOSA  It has charms I can’t explain.
FAIRFAX  Which you never knew before!
MIMOSA  Teach me once, just once again!
FAIRFAX  Pretty pupils I adore.

Both  Little maiden,
Wonder-laden,
Ev’ry day learns something more.

The geishas then prepare tea for their sailor guests.

[6] Concerted Piece ‘If you will come to tea’

GEISHAS  If you will come to tea,
Sir, One and Two and Three,
We’ll do our best
For an English guest
On an Asiatic spree.

We’ll dance and sing for you
Our repertory through,
And show you then,
You officer men,
What smart little girls can do!

For you’re all so bright and breezy O!
That we’re sure to find it easy O!
To tease ’e O!
And please ’e O!
With our antics Japanesey O!

OFFICERS  We are sailors bright and breezy O!
And we’re sure to find it easy O!
To tease ’e O!
And please ’e O!
With your antics Japanesey O!

Of course we’ll come inside,
For none of us have tried
How dance and song
With a fine Souchong
Are effectively allied.

But if you’ve spoken true,
We’ll quickly prove to you
What sailors three
Of the Queen’s Navee
For good little girls will do.

We are sailors bright and breezy O!
So of course we find it easy O!
To tease ’e O!
And squeeze ’e O!
Little Missy Japanesey O!

Marquis Imari returns and is angry to find Mimosa still entertaining the British sailors. He uses his influence to order the closure of the tea house, leaving the geishas distraught at the prospect of their being sold at auction.

[7] Chorus ‘Lamentation’

CHORUS  Oh, will they sell our master up,
Or take him off to gaol,
And on the tea house plaster up
The notices of sale?

Whatever will become of us
If this should come to pass?
It’s bound to ruin some of us!
Alas, alas, alas, alas!
Here’s a dreadful blow, oh, oh!
Filling us with woe, oh, oh!
How could geisha know, oh, oh!
Fate would treat them so? oh, oh!
Pretty faces show, oh, oh!
Tears that faster flow, oh, oh!
Please at prices low, oh, oh!
Do not let us go, oh, oh!

The English officers rally to their support and are joined by Lady Constance’s party in vowing to let the Marquis know what they think.

Concerted Piece ‘We’re going to call on the Marquis’

FAIRFAX This infamous lord
   Shall have his reward
My anger each moment increases!
   Let’s quietly slip
Away to our ship,
And blow the old beggar to pieces.
CUNNINGHAM Of course to bombard
   A fellow’s back yard
Is jolly good fun, but you’ll rue it!
   You’d better instead
Try punching his head.
GEISHAS We’d like to be there while you do it!
ALL We’re going to call on the Marquis
To pay off a nice little score.
   And won’t he be chatty
When rat-a-tat-tatty
We knock at his dignified door?
We’ve something to say to the Marquis,
It’s something too funny to miss,
   For after pooh-poohing
All how-do-you-doing
We’re going to say it like this!

Officers You’ll pardon us, pray,
   For asking the way,
Our ignorance kindly forgiving,
   But oh! we are so
Impatient to know
Where Mister Imari is living.
GEISHAS We’ll show you the road
   To reach his abode,
Delighted your favour at earning.
   Simplicity quite,
Keep well to the right,
And carefully look for a turning.
ALL We’re going to call on the Marquis . . .

It is at this moment that Reggie’s fiancée Molly appears. She teases him for playing with the live dolls of the tea house in the way they used to play with toys in their childhood.

Duet ‘The Toy’

MOLLY When I was but a tiny tot
   My dollies were a lovely lot,
For one, a lady born and bred,
Could shut her eyes and move her head.
“Papa!” “Mama!” another talk’d,
And when you wound her up she walk’d,
But more than any other toy
I loved a little drummer boy.
FAIRFAX Of course I know the sort you mean,
   That drummer boy I’ve often seen.
MOLLY For he beats a feeble rum-ti-tum-tum
FAIRFAX When he hits his little drum-ti-tum-tum
MOLLY And his arms seem rather numb-ti-tum-tum
FAIRFAX As they rise and downward come-ti-tum-tum.
BOTH Oh, the dear old toys, and the simple ways
Of those childish versery,
Might be worsey,
Sweetly cursory
Nursery days!
FAIRFAX I know I had a famous top,
A painted gun that used to pop,
A spotted horse that boasted legs
Exactly like four wooden pegs;
But though I own’d a box of bricks,
And crimson monkeys climbing sticks,
My infant joys were centred in
A nodding Chinese Mandarin.

MOLLY Of course I know the sort you mean,
That Mandarin I’ve often seen.
FAIRFAX For his bells will tinkle ring-a-ding-ding
MOLLY While his head he’ll gravely swing a-ding-ding
FAIRFAX And his hands together bring-a-ding-ding
MOLLY When you pull a piece of string-a-ding-ding.

BOTH Oh, the dear old toys . . .

MOLLY What jolly games I used to play
With little boys across the way!
We raced and romped as children do,
I gave them back at leapfrog too.
We bowl’d our hoops and flew our kites,
At hopscotch had some splendid fights;
But life was only quite complete
With Punch and Judy in the street.

FAIRFAX How well its varied charms I know—
I’ve seen that Punch and Judy show!
MOLLY Mister Punch comes up with root-i-toot-toot,
FAIRFAX To the baby he’s a brute-i-toot-toot;
MOLLY But his Toby makes him hoot-i-toot-toot,
FAIRFAX And the beadle bids him scoot-i-toot-toot.

BOTH Oh, the dear old games, and the simple ways
Of those childish versery,
Might be worsery,
Sweetly cursory
Nursery days!

When Molly discovers that the attention Reggie is paying the geishas is not altogether innocent, she confides in Mimosa, not knowing who she is. Mimosa suggests that Molly might regain Reggie’s full attention by disguising herself as a geisha, though reflecting that her calling is not all joy.

10 Song ‘A geisha’s life’

MIMOSA A geisha’s life imagination tints
With all the charming colour of the rose,
And people won’t believe her when she hints
Its beauties are not quite what they suppose.
Because I’m rather quaint and picturesque,
They think that for a butterfly like me
Existence is delightfully grotesque—
How very much mistaken folks may be!

“Oh, dance, my little geisha gay,
And sing your pretty songs!” they say;
But don’t you see,
It’s hard on me
Who sing and dance the livelong day?

And ever as my samisen I play
Come lovers at my pretty feet to fall,
Who fancy till I bid them run away
A geisha’s heart has room enough for all!
Yet Love may work his will, if so he please;
His magic can a woman’s heart unlock
As well beneath kimono Japanese
As under any smart Parisian frock.

“We love you, little geisha gay!
Oh, won’t you love us too?” they say;
But don’t you see,
It’s lost on me
Who hear the same thing day by day?

Amid the preparations for the auctioning off of the geishas, the sailors sing a rousing hymn, one of the numbers interpolated into Sidney Jones’s original scheme. The music here is by Lionel Monckton.
Song ‘Jack’s the boy’

FAIRFAX Of all the lads that be
There is only one for me
And his home is on the waters deep and blue:
But a friend he’ll never lack,
For the world’s in love with Jack,
He’s the smartest and the best of fellows too!
So his hand we like to grip
As he goes aboard his ship.
While the girls are fit to break their pretty hearts,
For he loves them by the score
When he gaily comes ashore,
And they’re sad when their Jack departs!
Jack’s the boy for work!
Jack’s the boy for play!
Jack’s the lad,
When girls are sad,
To kiss the tears away!
Ah! Hard as nails—afloat;
Best of friends ashore;
You’re just the boy
That all our hearts adore!

CHORUS Jack’s the boy for work . . .

FAIRFAX When Jack has got his pay
He’s the gayest of the gay
For the money in his pocket burns a hole,
And he’s never happy quite
Till he’s spent it left and right
Like a jovial and careless-hearted soul.
Tho’ he’s very far from shy
When a pretty girl is by,
Yet a lad may surely “kiss and never tell!”
And when duty calls him back,
Taut and trim goes Jolly Jack
To the ship that he loves so well!
Jack’s the boy for work! . . .

The Marquis’s determination to buy Mimosa against the extravagant bidding of Lady Constance is weakened by the arguments of Juliette. Instead he successfully bids for a second geisha named Roli Poli (the name assumed by Molly), who announces herself with a seductive Japanese song and dance.

Song ‘Chon kina’

MOLLY I’m the smartest little geisha in Japan,
And the people call me Roli Poli San—
Lost in admiration utter
At the variegated flutter
Of my cleverly manipulated fan.
I can dance to any measure that is gay,
To and fro in dreamy fashion I can sway,
And if still my art entices
Then at extra special prices
I can dance for you in quite another way.
Chon kina, chon kina,
Chon chon, kina kina,
Nagasaki, Yokohama, Hakodaté hoi!

CHORUS Chon kina, chon kina . . .

MOLLY Please to notice how correct and highly bred
Is the hair erected stiffly on my head,
All severely coil’d and braided,
While my cheeks are pinkly shaded,
And my lips are tinted elegantly red!
I’m a votary of fashion as it flies,
And my latest new kimono will surprise;
But the charms of Roli Poli
Will not captivate you wholly
Till you gaze into her liquid almond eyes.
Chon, kina, chon kina . . .

I’m consider’d quite an oriental belle,
And they tell me I perform extremely well
On the samisen or koto
While my very latest photo
Is an article that’s always sure to sell.
When they dally over dainty cups of tea,
The attractions of the chaya come to see,
   Rich and haughty, poor and lowly,
   Call for pretty Roli Poli
Ev’ry customer is sure to order me!
Chon kina, chon kina,
Chon chon, kina kina,
Nagasaki, Yokohama, Hakodate hoi!
Kirigirisho!

The conclusion of the sale leaves the English officers reasserting their enthusiasm for Japan, with Fairfax unaware that Roli Poli is actually Molly in disguise. Besides Molly, the sale’s unexpected outcome leaves two other lovers in despair: Mimosa’s true lover, Captain Katana of the Governor’s Guard, sees her forced to follow Lady Constance; Juliette sees Molly-alias-Roli Poli as an unexpected addition to her rivals.

**Finale ‘Though of staying too long’**

**Cunningham** Though of staying too long you’re accusing us,
   Yet Japan has such wonders to show,
   And you’ve all been so good in amusing us,
   That no wonder we’re sorry to go.
   While the freest of fun is permissible,
   And such excellent tea we obtain,
   And the girls are so quaint and so kissable,
   We shall certainly come here again!

**Officers** For to pass the most pleasant of days
   You should always contrive when you can
   To attentively study the ways
   Of the dear little girls of Japan.

**Chorus** Yes, to pass the most pleasant of days
   You should always contrive when you can
   To attentively study the ways
   Of the dear little girls of Japan.

Night approaches clear and starry,
   Silver shadows softly fall,
   Bringing rest to great Imari,
   Welcome rest to one and all.

**Katana** Pearl of the radiant Eastern sea,
   Light of a soldier’s life,
   Time in its course will set thee free—
   Free to become my wife!
   All that my heart desires to say—
   Would that my lips could tell;
   Fairest of fortune bless thy way
   Light of my life, farewell!
   Rose of my fancy’s garden fair,
   Fortune foretells
   Joy that excels.
   Almond-eyed maid of beauty rare,
   Fondest of fond farewells!

**Mimosa** Sorry and sad I go from thee,
   Lord of my loving heart;
   Ever and ever think of me,
   Though for a time we part.
   Saved by a friend from hapless fate,
   Whither she goes go I;
   So till I come, my soldier, wait!
   So till I come, goodbye!
   Son of the sword, whose gleaming blade,
   Guarding its prize
   Danger defies,
   Truest of knights to trusting maid,
   Sweetest of sweet goodbyes!

**Molly** Oh, what will they do with Molly,
   With poor little mad-cap me?
   I’ve got in a mess
   In a Japanese dress,
   And what will the consequence be?
   No doubt with a girl like Molly
   They’d try to take liberties free,
   But if they’ve the folly
   To take them with Molly,
   They’ll have to be sharper than she!
CHORUS  Now who is this Roli Poli,
And what is her little game?
    We’re bound to admit
    That we’re puzzled a bit,
For nobody knows her by name.
It’s hard upon Roli Poli
To hint that she’s open to doubt,
    And yet we’re suspicious,
    And rather ambitious
Of finding a thing or two out.

CUNNINGHAM  Do you know, Reggie,
Tho’ he’s bought that one,
    By buying sweet Mimosa,
    We’ve spoilt his fun.

FAIRFAX  Most noble! we’re heartbroken, I may say,
To take Mimosa from you.

IMARI  Laugh away!
But don’t make sure you’ve got the best of me!

FAIRFAX  Take care, my lord,
In English hands is she;
    So don’t you dare
    To touch a hair
Of the head of that dainty geisha fair.
    If truth be told
To a Marquis old,
It’s you, not the girl,
Who’s just been sold!

CHORUS  It’s only the way
    Of sailors gay,
Yet is seems uncommonly rude to say
    That if truth be told
To a Marquis old,
It’s he, not the girl,
Who’s just been sold!

IMARI  This conversation we will not prolong;
It may turn out that after all you’re wrong!

CHORUS  Please to go! Please to go!
Fast the sun is setting,
    Due respect
    To custom show;
Orders you’re forgetting.
Please to go! Please to go!
Seek the city’s shelter;
    Time is pressing
Swift progressing,
Hurry helter-skelter!

ACT II
The curtain rises on the gardens of the Marquis Imari’s palace,
with the ladies of his court preparing for his marriage.


CHORUS  Day born of love,
    Of gladness and delight,
Your moments soon invite
    To mystic marriage rite!
Thron’d high above,
    O Tento Suma shines,
And laughing he divines
A lover’s sweet designs.
Ohayo! Ohayo!
    Moon by night and sun by day
Tender beam and blazing ray!
Ohayo! Ohayo!
Watch and ward o’er lovers keep!
Day to drink of pleasure deep,
    Night for rest and gentle sleep.
Day born of love …
Politely dress’d  
In all our best,  
The wedding we await,  
And hope they won’t be late,  
Or else forget the date.  
What would be done  
If either one  
Neglected to appear;  
If somebody demurr’d  
Or anything occurr’d  
With all to interfere?  
Before our eyes  
The prospect lies  
Of rich and festive fare,  
With cups of sake rare  
To toast the happy pair.  
No wonder then  
That maids and men  
Unite in Hymen’s praise,  
And sing their joyous lay  
With blushes all ablaze!

The disguised Molly can see no way out of her predicament and rues the folly that led her into it in a second number with music composed by Lionel Monckton.

15 Song ‘The Toy Monkey’

MOLLY Poor little maiden, who loves a bit of fun,  
Learns her propensity to rue!  
Just look at me! What a pretty thing I’ve done!  
Here’s a delightful how-de-do!  
A precious pickle I’m in!  
Foolish little Molly,  
Punish’d for your folly,  
A wooden monkey climbin’  
Isn’t on a stick like you!  
Click! click! I’m a monkey on a stick!  
Anyone with me can play,  
And my antics he’ll enjoy  
Till he finds a newer toy,  
When he’ll wish me a polite good-day!

CHORUS Click! click! I’m a monkey on a stick . . .

MOLLY Nobody doubts that this horrid Japanese  
Wives—orientally has got;  
One, two or three, or as many as you please—  
I won’t be added to the lot!  
He thinks I can’t resist him;  
Rolling in his riches,  
Fancies he bewitches—  
But round my thumb I’ll twist him  
Whether he’s aware or not!  
Click! click! He’s a monkey on a stick,  
Bound to let me have my way!  
So I’ll keep him all alive  
Till my English friends arrive—  
When I’ll wish him a polite good-day.

CHORUS Click! click! He’s a monkey on a stick . . .

Meanwhile, the equally despondent Juliette and Wun-Hi seek to cheer each other up with thoughts of a resolution to the situation.

16 Duet ‘Ching-a-ring-a-ree’

JULIETTE When I want anything done,  
I try my favourite plan—  
I wheedle and coax,  
And flatter the folks  
As only a French girl can!  
If ever I chance on one  
Who won’t be coax’d by me,  
I peep and I pry,  
And I work on the sly—  
Comprenez-vous ça?  
WUN-HI ‘Wee! Wee!  
BOTH O chickee hickee Ching-a-ring-a-ree!  
The smart French girl and the cute Chinee!  
Monsieur, mam’melle  
Suit very very well,  
So sing Ching-a-ring, Ching-a-ring-a-ring-a-ree!'
Wun-Hi When me want gettee my way,
Keep muchee open eyes;
   For Chinaman mild
    Him wellee sharp child—
Tell plenty big whopper lies!

Juliette Together we’ll work today,
You’re just the man for me!
   A girl never jibs
    At a few little fibs
Comprenz-vous ça?
Wun-Hi Wee! Wee!

Both O chickee hickee Ching-a-ring-a-ree! …

Fairfax and his fellow officers (unaware of Molly’s predicament, of course) proclaim their nautical happiness.

Quartette ‘Jolly young Jacks are we’

Fairfax Half-round the world we’ve been, my boys,
On pleasure and on duty.
At ev’ry port we’ve known the joys
Of some bewitching beauty!

Cunningham The simple maid from sunny France,
Who blush’d and seem’d to falter;
The Spanish girl we met by chance
When strolling through Gibraltar.

Cuddy Give me a girl from any clime,
And I’ll adore her for a time!

All Jolly young Jacks are we,
Merry of heart and gay!
Sons of the rolling sea
Homage to Beauty pay.
What if her eyes are dark?
What if her eyes are blue?
   Beauty is fair
   Ev’rywhere
If Beauty’s the girl for you!

Fairfax We’ve seen all sorts and sizes too—
Some rather quaintly dress’d ones;
But give me eyes of English blue—
Believe me, they’re the best ones!

Cunningham That Chinese girl I couldn’t stand
With feet of small dimensions,
Or Gretchen from the Fatherland,
Who ask’d us our intentions.

Cuddy Well, any you don’t care about
Pass on to me—I’ll take them out!

All Jolly young Jacks are we …

Mimosa now sings another of the interpolated numbers, ‘The Jewel of Asia’; the music is by James Philp.

Song ‘The Jewel of Asia’

Mimosa A small Japanese
Once sat at her ease
In a garden cool and shady,
   When a foreigner gay
Who was passing that way
   Said, “May I come in, young lady?”
So she open’d her gate,
And I blush to relate
   That he taught Japan’s fair daughter
To flirt and to kiss
   Like the little white miss
Who lives o’er the Western water!

He call’d her the Jewel of Asia,
But she was the Queen of the Geisha,
So she laugh’d, “Though you’re ready today, sir,
To flirt when I flutter my fan,
Tomorrow you’ll go on your way, sir,
Forgetting the girl of Japan!”

But when he came back
(Alas! and alack!)
To that garden cool and shady,
The foreigner bold
   Was decidedly cold,
And talk’d of an English lady.
With his heart in a whirl
For the little white girl,
He declared how much he miss’d her,
And forgot, if you please,
His poor Japanese
For he never even kiss’d her!
But she was the Jewel of Asia,
The beautiful Queen of the Geisha,
And she laughed, “It is just as they say, sir,
You love for as long as you can!
A month, or a week, or a day, sir,
Will do for a girl of Japan!”

Fairfax has by now discovered the danger facing Molly and he passionately confirms his true feelings for her.

**Song ‘Star of my soul’**

**FAIRFAX** How can I wait when she I worship only,
Friendless and fair, my help may sorely need?
How can I wait, and leave her sad and lonely,
Counting the hours that all too slowly speed?
Earth has no grace that does not cling about her—
Life has no charm, if mine she may not be;
Star of my soul! I cannot live without her;
O grant this day may give her back to me!
Dream, O my dearest, till we meet once more,
Daydreams of happiness again in store,
Dreams of a future that our fates may hold,
Pass’d in the wonderland of love untold!

Glory of flow’rs and fairyland around me,
Over my path the joyous sunlight falls;
Yet is my dear, whose charms so fast have bound me,
Caged like a bird within those gilded walls.
Would I could break the cruel bonds that hold her,
Snap ev’ry chain that keeps us two apart!
Star of my soul! The half I have not told her
Of all the love that fills my beating heart!
Dream, O my dearest, till we meet once more,
Daydreams of happiness again in store,
Dreams of a future that our fates may hold,
Pass’d in the wonderland of love untold!

Aware of Juliette’s infatuation with the Marquis, Mimosa devises a plan to switch one veiled bride for another, and she, Fairfax, Cunningham and Wun-Hi chuckle in anticipation.

**Quartette ‘What will the Marquis do?’**

**FAIRFAX** When he finds that his dear little love-bird’s gone,
Oh, what will the Marquis do?
Will he fly into a rage,
Or fill the empty cage
With another little bird or two?

**CUNNINGHAM** He’ll vow that the ceremony must go on
With some little girl or other!
And I fancy he’ll admit
That he doesn’t mind a bit;
For one of them is very like another!

**ALL** Oh, what will he do, and what will he say?
Will his language be improper
In a Japanesey way?
He may do what he likes; he may say what he thinks;
But we’ll pop a little stopper
On his jolly, jolly jinks!

**MIMOSA** When he finds that his dear little bride has fled,
Oh, what will the Marquis do?
If he isn’t too upset
He’ll marry Juliette,
And adore her for a month or two!

**WUN-HI** Me think that he’ll breakee breakee Wun-Hi’s head
Some bad luckee day or other!
If no beatee me with stick,
Then he givee me a kick—
But one of them is wellee like another!

**ALL** Oh, what will he do . . .

The Marquis enters followed by a group of geishas.

**Japanese March**

**CHORUS** Koiwa seni sumu,
Toriwa kini tomaru,
Hitowa nasakeno Kageni.
22 Entrance of Geishas ‘With splendour auspicious’

Geishas With splendour auspicious,  
O sunbeams illumine the day!  
With perfume delicious,  
O flowers, make fragrant the way!  
O zephyrs, go carry  
Our song to the Master of Might,  
Who cometh to marry  
The Rose of his fancy’s delight!  

Sing sweetly and shrilly,  
O twittering birds of the air!  
Than lilac or lily  
The bride is more daintily fair.  
From hill and from valley  
The echoes are greeting the day  
With soft fallallally,  
And tender fallallallallay!

Wun-Hi has been put in charge of entertainments and presents his credentials to the assembled guests.

23 Song ‘Chin Chin Chinaman’

Wun-Hi Chinaman no money makee  
Allo lifee long!  
Washee-washee once me takee  
Washee-washee wrong!  
When me thinkee stealee collars  
P’iceemanee come;  
Me get finee fivee dollars—  
Plenty muchee sum!

Chin Chin Chinaman  
Muchee muchee sad!  
Me afraid  
Allo trade  
Wellee wellee bad!  
Noee joke—  
Brooke broke—  
Makee shuttee shop!  
Chin Chin Chinaman,  
Chop, chop, chop!

Chorus Chin Chin Chinaman . . .

Wun-Hi When me gettee catchee cheatee  
Playing pieccee card,  
Chinaman they allo beatee  
Kickee wellee hard!  
When me takee nicee placee  
Makee plenty tea,  
Gettee me in more disgracee—  
Up they sellee me!

Chin Chin Chinaman . . .

A fortune-teller is produced. This is none other than Mimosa in disguise, and she proceeds to forecast good luck for everyone except the Marquis unless he can be redeemed by a loving young wife. Molly calms herself with a cautionary tale before taking her turn in private with the fortune-teller.

24 Song ‘The interfering parrot’

Molly A parrot once resided in a pretty gilded cage,  
Sarcastic was his temper, and uncertain was his age.  
He knew that two canaries had apartments overhead  
Who’d only very recently been wed!  
Chorus They’d recently been wed!

Molly He kept an eye on all that they were doing  
Chorus An interfering parrot in a nasty frame of mind!  
Molly And vow’d he’d stop their billing and their cooing.  
Chorus Which really was exceedingly unkind!

Molly Polly winked his eye, and Polly gave a sigh,  
And Polly took his best hat down;  
He called on Mrs C. and took a cup of tea,  
When Mr C. had gone to town;  
Then wisely wagg’d his head,  
And seriously said:  
“Well, husbands are a lot!  
A pretty one you’ve got!  
Such tales I never heard!  
So dissolute a bird  
I never met before!  
What goings on! Oh, lor!”

Chorus Polly winked his eye . . .
Molly He left the poor canary with her spirits rather low,
But when she got her husband home her tongue began to go.
In vain he tried caresses, and attempted to deny—
The silly little bird began to cry!
Chorus The bird began to cry!

Molly She told him that she knew he lov’d another—
Chorus A shocking accusation for a little bird to make!
Molly And said she meant to go and see her mother.
Chorus A very silly step for her to take!

Molly Polly winked his eye, and Polly gave a sigh,
And Polly took his best hat down;
He knew there’d be a fuss, so jumping on a ‘bus,
He called on Mr C. in town;

Then wisely wagg’d his head,
And seriously said:
“A pretty wife you’ve got!
I see you’ve had it hot,
And bless your heart, it’s true
She’s just as bad as you!
Directly you are gone—
Oh don’t she carry on!”

Chorus Polly winked his eye . . .

Molly Canary’s yellow countenance with jealousy was green,
And when he met his wife they had a nice domestic scene—
Till she with pocket handkerchief and he with sullen scowl,
They hurried off to Mr Justice Owl!
Chorus To Mr Justice Owl!

Molly He granted a judicial separation—
Chorus And all because of Polly’s unsubstantiated words!
Molly And now they live in icy isolation.
Chorus Two really very wretched little birds!

Molly Polly winked his eye, and Polly gave a sigh,
And Polly bought a Special Sun.
He read the full report of what occur’d in court;
And chuckled at the mischief done;
Then going off to bed,
Contentedly he said:
“Thank goodness that’s all right!
I’ll get some sleep tonight,
A thing I cannot do
When lovers bill and coo.
They won’t annoy a soul!
Poor Polly! Scratch a poll!”

Chorus Polly winked his eye . . .

Molly Of course there is a moral, and of course it’s at the end—
Those foolish young canaries had a monkey for a friend,
And as to all the trouble each in turn was giving vent,
They put the cunning monkey on the scent!
Chorus They put him on the scent!

Molly He called upon the parrot in the morning—
Chorus No doubt the parrot wonder’d what on earth he had to say!
Molly And went for him without the slightest warning.
Chorus The parrot had a very happy day!

Molly Polly piped his eye, and Polly gave a sigh,
And Polly used a naughty word.
The monkey, when he’d done, of feathers hardly one
Had left upon the bad old bird.
He scratch’d his aching head,
And ruefully he said:
“Oh, Sarah, ain’t it prime?
I’ve had a beastly time!
Poor Polly’s feeling bad—
Oh, what a day I’ve had!
I’m sorry on the whole—
Poor Polly! Scratch a poll!”

Chorus Polly piped his eye . . .
Inside the fortune-teller’s tent Molly and Juliette are promptly switched, and the latter proceeds to go through the wedding ceremony with the Marquis. To general approval, Molly now finds comfort in Reggie’s arms, and Mimosa is left free to marry Captain Katana.

25 Finale ‘Before our eyes’

Chorus Before our eyes
The prospect lies
Of rich and festive fare,
With cups of sake rare
To toast the happy pair.
No wonder then
That maids and men
Unite in Hymen’s praise,
And sing their joyous lays!

Happy Japan,
Garden of glitter!
Flower and fan
Flutter and flitter;
Land of bamboo
(Juvenile whacker!),
Porcelain too,
Teatray and lacquer!
Happy Japan!

THE END