The Lost Heirs

The Tragedies That Brought the D'Oyly Carte Dynasty to its End

A book by
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Synopsis

The name D'Oyly Carte is synonymous with success - a result of Richard D'Oyly Carte's famed partnership with William S Gilbert and Arthur S Sullivan (both later knighted) which created and produced the fourteen Savoy Operas between 1875 and 1896 and which became and remains a phenomenon throughout the world. Financed by the riches it brought to him and his two partners, Richard D'Oyly Carte's success and fame also stretched to building his Savoy Theatre and the later adjacent Savoy Hotel, the hotel group also acquiring Claridge's and The Berkeley in London together with other hotels and restaurants on the Continent. Later D'Oyly Carte also built The Royal English Opera House, now London's Palace Theatre, and a notable house on an island on the Thames, Eyot House, D'Oyly Carte Island.

After his death in 1902 and the death of his second wife Helen in 1913, his son Rupert, whilst enjoying some of the fruits of his father's endeavours, including the building of a noted country house, continued to nurture both the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and the Savoy Hotel Group, ensuring that the enterprise created by his father would continue to thrive and modernise, but always respecting the legacy of his father.

On the death of Rupert in 1948 the legacy fell to Rupert's daughter Bridget D'Oyly Carte who had assumed the family name again after her short, failed marriage. She ensured that the enterprise continued to thrive until her own death in 1985.

However, on Bridget's death, divorced and without children, the family's ownership of what her grandfather had created came to its end, there being no immediate family heirs. It was a sad conclusion to a fabulously successful dynasty over three generations and not the end that Richard D'Oyly Carte would

have envisioned. However, the failure of the family to ensure the continuation of the D'Oyly Carte enterprises and the D'Oyly Carte dynasty can be significantly attributed to the deaths of two male heirs in two generations.

In 1907, Richard D'Oyly Carte's eldest son, Lucas, died from tuberculosis as a young man, younger brother Rupert therefore inheriting the business from his father. Tragically, in 1932 Rupert's own son and heir, Michael, was killed in a motor accident in Switzerland whilst training for his future role as the heir to the business, resulting in the divorced and childless Bridget becoming the reluctant heiress until her own death.

Had the two males in two generations survived, the D'Oyly Carte dynasty would almost certainly have continued into the future. Moreover, the premature deaths of these two heirs were not the only tragedies, sorrows and controversy that blighted lives behind this seemingly successful family. It was a family also afflicted with failed and unhappy marriages, divorces, uneasy relationships, scandal and controversy.

For the first time, and with newly researched materials, the *Lost Heirs* focusses on the lives and the circumstances of the deaths of the two male heirs in two generations. It is set against the background of the extraordinary life and achievements of Richard D'Oyly Carte, his family life, his early struggles, his famed partnership with Gilbert and Sullivan and their own stormy and uneasy relationship with each other whilst creating what is recognised as the most significant milestone in the history of the musical theatre.

This book will appeal to the world-wide Gilbert and Sullivan audience that still has an insatiable appetite for any account of the famous triumvirate. Moreover, containing new researched material on the lives of the two *Lost Heirs*, normally just a passing reference in the accounts of D'Oyly Carte that already exist, it fills a void that has existed until now. To a wider audience unfamiliar with Gilbert and Sullivan and with D'Oyly Carte other than as vague historical figures, it will also provide a complete and easily readable account of their work, personalities, lives and uneasy relationship.

The story is told over thirteen chapters and 75,000 words and is planned to be accompanied by pictures and illustrations, some not published before.

Publication of the book is expected for first half 2025. Watch for updates on
www.jimstebbingspublicspeaker.co.uk

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