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Victorian Theatrics, Egyptology, and Villainous Laughter

Seph Stanek '08

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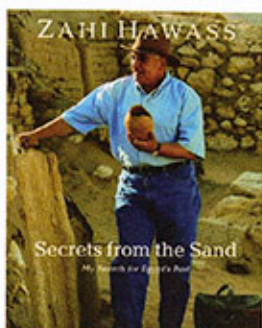
VICTORIAN THEATRICALS, EGYPTOLOGY, AND VILLAINOUS LAUGHTER

We asked Broadway actor **Seph Stanek '08** what works are currently inspiring him.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Seph Stanek '08 studied voice performance at Furman and currently lives in New York City. He performs with the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players, Light Opera of New York, and Ardea Arts, and has completed 10 Off-Broadway contracts, four concerts at Carnegie Hall, and several national tours. A frequent concert singer, Stanek's recent performances include singing alongside Kristin Chenoweth with the Concert Pops of Long Island and performing for the Breast Cancer Foundation's gala. Stanek will make his Broadway debut next year starring as The Scribe in Akhenaten the Musical. This year he produced a major benefit concert for 1996 Furman graduate Mary-Mitchell Campbell's organization ASTEP (Artists Striving to End Poverty). For more information on Stanek, visit www.SephStanek.com or @SephStanek.



Unpacks the great mysteries of a lost civilization

SECRETS FROM THE SAND:

My Search for Egypt's Past
by Zahi Hawass

I recently performed a concert for the Egyptian Security Council and had the distinct honor of meeting Zahi Hawass, one of the world's leading Egyptologists. I was able to pick his brain about Egypt's "rebel king" Akhenaten in preparation for a role I am originating in the coming months. He gave me sound advice and made me promise to read this favorite book of his, *Secrets from the Sand*, in order to more fully understand the dynamics of the world I'll be portraying in the show. When I began reading the book, I was instantly transported to my childhood fascination of Ancient Egypt and the great mysteries of this lost civilization; plus, with the Great Pyramids of Giza currently undergoing new structural investigations, this subject material is more relevant now than ever!

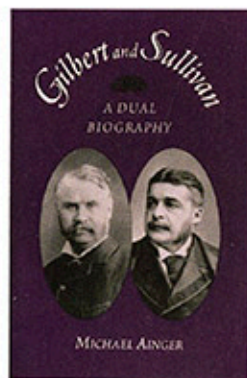
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Despite my cool demeanor and optimal street cred, I am and always have been a proud science nerd (consult my rock collection for proof). As a stage performer with a more than casual interest in how the

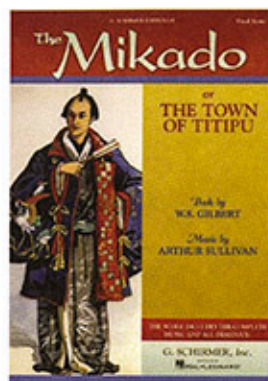
world around me operates, I have found that there's no better way to get the latest science news than on this website. The writers are curious and relatable, the content is updated several times a day, and the articles cover the entire gamut of scientific topics with links to videos and accredited scientific journals and websites.

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN: A Dual Biography by Michael Ainger

You can tell a lot about New York City residents by what they read on the subway, and my fellow straphangers can tell without a doubt that I'm a devout Savoyard (in layman's terms: a Gilbert and Sullivan super-nerd) by my current read, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography* by Michael Ainger. I am in my fourth year as a company member of the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players, and as an expert on G&S interpretation, I can never stop learning about the musical duo, their influences, and their legacy. To my surprise, this book has sparked more random conversations with strangers than any other book I've read on the subway (Savoyards unite!).



For the devout "Savoyard"



A classic that's become a hot topic in theatre

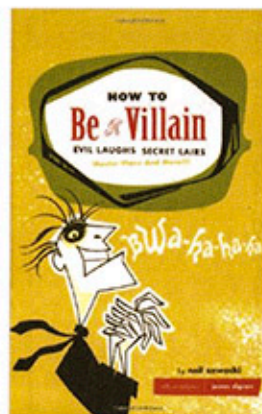
THE MIKADO

By W.S. Gilbert
and Arthur Sullivan

I'm fascinated by a current hot topic in the Broadway community centering around Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *The Mikado*. The show, which first opened in 1885, is set in Japan, which allowed Gilbert and Sullivan to freely satirize Britain's politics by disguising them as Japanese. Many contemporary critics believe the show is now considered racially insensitive toward the Asian community, using terms like "yellowface" to describe traditional makeup plots, costumes, and staging. As a frequent Gilbert and Sullivan performer, this controversy greatly affects my livelihood; it raises topics from my ethics classes I took at Furman, begging the questions: How has our perception of race evolved since Victorian England and is there a way to neutralize these accusations to save history's most-performed musical? I was elected to be part of a committee to re-conceptualize the show with the Actors' Equity Association in hopes of finding a happy balance to satisfy both views.

HOW TO BE A VILLAIN: Evil Laughs, Secret Lairs, Master Plans, and More!!! By Neil Zawacki

Don't laugh at this one—unless you're merely practicing your evil laugh, per chapter one's instructions, *mwahaha!* I was immediately entranced by this dastardly gem upon a recent trip to my neighborhood bookstore and at once devoured its pages with surprisingly sinister satisfaction. Take a break from your snooze-fest, serious *magna opera* for one second; this short book takes a fun, tongue-in-cheek approach to harnessing your inner darkness to become a world-dominating supervillain. Sprinkled with whimsical illustrations and quotes by diabolical icons like Lex Luthor and Darth Vader, the chapters are inventive and are certain to inspire you to think outside the coffin—er—box. Favorite lessons: "Locations for your Lair," "Evil Henchmen Guide," and "Fashion for the Evildoer." My only complaint: It's too short. ●



Harness your inner darkness with this guide