



# Trial by Jury

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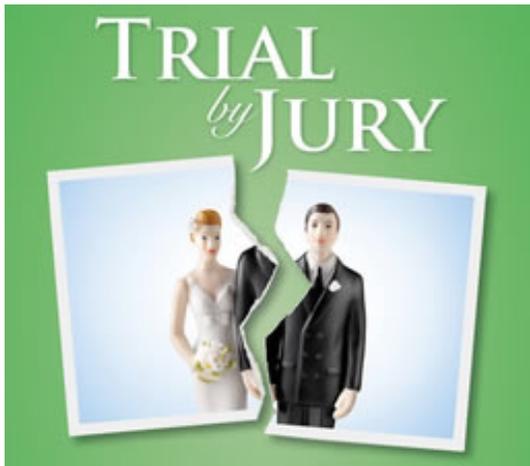
July 17, 2012 By [Annie Causey](#) [2 Comments](#)

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Smile for the paparazzi! They came in full force to Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*. The one-act opera was the team's first hit and began captivating audiences in 1875. The Victorian Lyric Opera Company brings the show to modern times, poking fun at the spectacle of celebrity court cases. The show, which is painstakingly updated, employs video cameras and microphones as props and paparazzi photos as evidence. It even invites you to tweet along (hashtag: Trialbyjury).

In a brisk 45 minutes long, *Trial by Jury* packs a lot of punch. A movie star is suing her ex for standing her up at the altar, and that's not even half the drama. It's almost overwhelming how much is happening, from the jury to the gallery to the defendants, but it never feels out of control.



[click for tickets to Trial by Jury](#)

Bennet Umhau, as the usher, offers most of that control. He anchors the others with reason and lack of bias.

Most convincing in this update was the gallery ensemble, who worked impressively as a tangle of spectators. They texted and whispered throughout the show, managing to create a great backdrop for the leads without distracting from their performances.

Also wonderful was Courtney Kalbacker who portrayed the accuser Angelina, a spoiled and narcissistic movie star. Even the judge is immediately infatuated with her. Her expressions and grandiose movements were both believable and entertaining. Her voice is astounding. We first hear it before her entrance, when she does a call and answer with the also talented Umhau.

Blair Eig played a different type of narcissist in the show, as the Learned Judge, who tells anyone willing, or not-so-willing, to listen to his stories about himself and his rise in the political sphere. One funny moment was when the judge pulls out a Keurig to make himself a cup of coffee during the trial.

**David Merrill plays a great defendant, smug but endearing.** He puts up with Angelina's pendulum of emotion, from anger to undying affection, as well as the hatred of most of the gallery, with the heaviness of a guilty man. He knows what he has done, but wants to make things right.

His every suffering Solicitor is portrayed by Gary Sullivan, who also stays in character throughout and seemed to have a great handle on the entire production.

Kids and adults alike will enjoy this show. Adults will enjoy the nostalgia of Gilbert and Sullivan, as well as the cast's excellent voices, and children will love the drama of modern celebrity brought in.

*Trial by Jury* has 6 shows, ending July 27, 2012 at Mountain at Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church, 900 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC.

**3** Annie rates this 3 out of a possible 5.

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## Comments

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### Comments

1. *Rebecca Klemm* says:  
[July 17, 2012 at 3:12 pm](#)

Delightful and wonderfully staged. Very enjoyable and better than a score of 3. But, it is not a usual fringe festival show: no swearing, nothing about sexual orientation, not over the top. A wonderful update of today's reality-show pop culture entertainment.

2. *James* says:  
July 17, 2012 at 6:44 pm

I am not a fan of Gilbert and Sullivan but I really liked this show. The Victorian Lyric Opera Company made it fun. The cast has a number of stand outs but the entire cast made this show work. It's a great ensemble effort.

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