

The

GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SEPTEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

What excitement the board members are feeling in regard to the coming season!

In the afterglow of our wonderful summer production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*, and in happy anticipation of revisiting Titipu next summer for *The Mikado*, we spent some time in July and August planning events for our members and friends during the months in between. We think you will be as excited as we are.

First, our September musicale is going to be a fascinating presentation coordinated by board member **Leonard Johnson**, featuring several of the principal performers from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Leonard has some surprises planned that will bring out not only the magnificent voices of these performers, singing both G&S standards and other pieces in their repertoires, but also present interesting details about their lives and the building of their careers. See details below — please join us!

Looking ahead, you will find there are great events for your calendar in November, January, March, and May that will gladden your heart with beautiful music and increase your enjoyment of the G&S canon and other fine music. We are happy to announce that Lady High Pianist **Marti Dudgeon** will be accompanying our singers at each of these events. We are also pleased that **Nancy McQueen** has consented to return to the board as Secretary.

We all look forward to next June's production, but remember that your G&S Society is active all year long. You don't have to wait until June to feast on beautiful music and enjoy fine occasions with your friends.

With warmest regards,



Season Opening Musicale

Sunday - September 12th - 3pm

Genesis Presbyterian Church
1507 Wilshire Blvd.

Board member **Leonard Johnson** has prepared a program of musical treats by our familiar singers. "Radio Announcer" **Arthur DiBianca** will help us get acquainted with them, and set the scene for visiting with our G&S friends.

Please Bring Munchies to Share!

G&S Austin 2010-11 Season

Don't miss any of these great events planned for the coming season:

Season Opening Musicale – Sunday, September 12, 3 pm, Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Blvd. Hear some of your cast favorites sing familiar pieces from the G&S operas and other repertoire, and learn some intriguing information about their own lives and careers.

Sing-Along Mikado Musicale – Sunday, November 21, 3 pm, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 8134 Mesa Drive. Come in costume, and visit the face-painting booth! Bring your own ideas for the "little list" for a contest that could possibly land your witticisms in our script for next summer. Sing along with "Miya sama" and the rest.

Annual Meeting and Sing-Along – Monday, January 17, 7:30 pm, Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Blvd. Join us for our brief business meeting and then have fun singing some great choruses from G&S shows.

Auditions for Summer Production – Saturday, February 26, and Sunday, February 27, location and times TBA. Help us spread the word and bring the best talent in central Texas to these auditions to prepare for a stunning summer show.

35th Anniversary Gala – Thursday, March 3, 7:30 pm, tentatively scheduled for Chez Zee, 5406 Balcones Drive. Were you present for our 30th anniversary gala? Then you know you won't want to miss this beautiful event. We will have delicious hors d'oeuvres, lovely performances, and a great deal of fun in a picturesque setting.

May Day Musicale – Sunday, May 1, 3 pm, Bachus Conservatory, 8000 Anderson Square. This event will get your appetite whetted for the summer production and may introduce you to a few performers you have never heard.

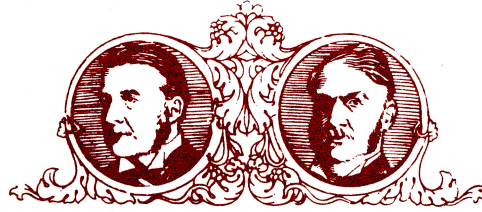
Grand Production of *The Mikado* – June 9 through June 19 (nine performances), Travis Performing Arts Center, 1211 E. Oltorf Street.

Winners of Yeomen DVDs

These ten lucky people completed a survey at the theater after viewing a production of *The Yeomen of the Guard* in June, and their names were drawn to receive a DVD of the production. We extend our hearty congratulations to these fortunate audience members:

Larry Abraham
R. A. Blanchette
Christine Cherepon
Melinda Curry
Charlotte Flynn

P. J. Holland
Camille Pridgen
Susan Seguin
Pam Turner
Paul Youngdale



RALPH MacPHAIL, Jr.
Box 114 Bridgewater College
Bridgewater, Virginia 22812-1599

To All “Yeopeople of the Guard”—On Stage and Off,

As I write in August, I’m reminded that I’m a very fortunate fellow.

I’m fortunate because I know you and had the chance to work with you on our very successful production of ***The Yeomen of the Guard*** earlier this year. I value our friendship so—and I’ll *always* treasure memories of our production.

I’m fortunate because **Libby Weed and the hard-working Board of Directors of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin** supported our endeavor before rehearsals began, during the production process and performances, and in follow-up activities with enthusiasm and dedication “in many various ways.” Special thanks to **David Little** for his incredible publicity efforts for this less-than-well-known show. Each Board member deserves special recognition for unique talents and contributions to our show, and these dovetailed so nicely that with great reluctance I don’t mention individuals.

I’m fortunate that GSSA engaged, once again, the remarkable **Bill Hatcher** as production manager for this summer’s show. Its success was as important to him as it was to *anybody*, and much of its success was due to his “get ‘er done” enthusiasm and pride in our project.

I’m fortunate that Bill engaged **Monica Kurtz, Pam Friday, Jennifer Rogers, and Ann Marie Gordon, who, with valued assistants**, kept rehearsals and performances on track and gave the show the look it deserved.

I’m fortunate in having as a friend and colleague **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** to prepare and conduct our delightful cast and to recruit and rehearse an equally wonderful orchestra. Jeffrey’s admiration for Sullivan’s music is as strong as anybody’s, and it certainly showed in performance.

I’m fortunate in having had **an incredible cast** with which to work—one willing to once again steep themselves in the traditions of Savoy Opera and present the show as its original creators intended. Such enthusiasm! Voices! Acting élan! Friendliness!

I’m fortunate that so **many Society volunteers** invested time and energy to sell tickets, greet theatre-goers, sell souvenirs, entertain children, and police up the theatre between performances.

I’m fortunate that Society members **Russell and Kay Gregory** opened their hospitable doors, offered a room and office, loaned the keys to their spare car, and otherwise welcomed this wand’ring Savoyard to their whirlwind of a household.

Finally, I’m fortunate that I have annual opportunities to visit Austin, to be a part of this wonderful organization, and to do what I love doing with such an incredible company. Thank you for making “retirement” more of a “reincarnation”!

Alice joins me in sending you our congratulations on a memorable production of ***The Yeomen of the Guard***, our thanks for your many kindnesses, and our best wishes as many of us anticipate a return visit, in just a few short months, to Titipu!

With warmest thanks and congratulations to you each.

Yours very sincerely,

The Yeomen of the Guard – Afterthoughts

by Reba Gillman

Many people enjoyed *The Yeomen of the Guard* this June. Bill Hatcher had warned us, “Bring a tissue,” and he was right — many of us choked up every time we saw the opera. But the interesting thing is that it wasn’t just poor Jack Point’s sad end that got us. It was the love story — Elsie and her lord, Colonel Fairfax — that built up to the Jester’s sad end, and made everyone human. Elsie reached out to Jack Point in sympathy. And Colonel Fairfax let her do it.

It’s not clear that Gilbert intended that. Actors and critics have felt that Colonel Fairfax was not really a good man. He flirted happily with Phoebe. He seemed to delight in misleading Elsie, and letting her suffer. What kind of wronged hero was that? Well, that was a period in which women had no rights and not much choice. Elsie herself sings of weary wives “Who widowhood would win.” Did that make it OK to mistreat Elsie? Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr., thought not, and worked hard to find a way

to interpret Fairfax’s behavior in a different light. Who knows what Gilbert meant? But the director has the freedom to find new ways of seeing the meanings in the written text. So Fairfax really loves this enchanting dancing girl, and he means to tell her he is Fairfax in disguise, but just then the shot is heard that supposedly kills Fairfax, and all hell breaks loose. What Rafe did was to allow the character of Fairfax to indicate more and more that he loves Elsie; to show him wanting to reveal himself to Elsie, but being stopped by Sir Richard Cholmondely; which leaves the audience free to enjoy this growing love. And Holton and Michelle were superbly able to play their roles in this way, and that is how the emotion built up to the final climax, and the tears came unbidden. It was Rafe’s vision that caused that to happen.

It was a splendid production. But we’ve had good productions before. It was David Little who told the world about it, who enticed people to buy tickets. He has taught us what publicity is, how it works, and what good results it can bring. Thank you, Rafe. And thank you, David.



(above) Cast and crew of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. (below) The poignant finale. (next page) Assorted scenes from *Yeomen*.

Photos here & next page by Nanci and Benny Jay. More are available on our website, www.gilbertsullivan.org.





MEMBERSHIP FORM

We encourage you to join our Society. If you are a member, please check your membership renewal on the top of the mailing label. If expired or near expiration, your membership needs to be updated! To correct your address, renew your membership, or become a member, complete this form, and mail it to us with your check, payable to "GSSA", or call to join (512) 472-4772 (GSSA).

Please check a membership category:

- ☐ **Individual** (\$20-\$29)
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- ☐ **Savoyard** (\$2500 & up)

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We are proud to list our members in our programs, but if you would prefer NOT to be listed in our programs, please check here: ☐

News of Friends and Opera

by Reba Gillman

Austin is a big city now, and that is evident in many ways. It is heartening to realize how much our Society is involved in our arts community. The many people who sing in our productions show up in all sorts of other musical ventures. One interesting program is "Spotlight on Opera," now in its fourth summer, sponsored by Saint Edward's University, which is developing a broader music program for their students. Here we find old friends. **Dr. Michael McKelvey** is the Director of this Music Department, and he has hired **Cindy Sadler** to run the opera program. Michael played Giuseppe in our 1995 *The Gondoliers*, and in 1999 we hired him to be Managing Producer for *Patience*. These days he directs most musical shows in Austin and even sings in one now and then. In 1989, UT graduate music student Cynthia P. Sadler played Buttercup in our *H. M. S. Pinafore* in tiny Hyde Park Theater. Since then she has become a busy professional musician, singing in opera, lecturing, writing articles, and teaching students what they need to know to become professionals.

This summer there were four "Spotlight" programs. The first, on July 25, was called "An Aria Extravaganza." It presented 32 arias and was truly a marathon performance. The program listed 35 singers signed up to work on opera. Of these, ten (ranging from relative beginners to advanced serious students) had sung in one or more of our shows. The earliest singer was **Kathryn Findlen**, who played Edith in our 1996 *The Pirates of Penzance*. Roaming the halls of St. Stephen's during that run, Kathryn met (and later married) **Scott McAfee**, who worked for the GSD&M advertising agency and was doing some volunteer publicity for us. I was delighted to meet their adorable three-year-old daughter this June when her dad brought her to see *The Yeomen of the Guard*, which she loved. Other GSSA "Spotlight" performers, in alphabetical order, were **Lisa Alexander** (The Fairy Queen in *Iolanthe*), **Jay Chacon** (chorus), **Patricia Combs** (most recently Phoebe Meryll in *Yeomen*), **Andy Fleming** (Earl Tolloller in *Iolanthe*, and many other small or choral roles), **June Julian** (Board member, President, *Iolanthe*, and other roles), **Christina Leidel** (chorus in *Yeomen*), **Ariel Rios** (chorus), **Kathryn Saar** (recently on our board of directors as Secretary), **Katherine Wiggins** (Flora in *Iolanthe*, and three previous chorus parts; she is excited to be going off to Miami to study in their opera program).

I attended all four programs, and was especially interested in the dramatic aspects they addressed. It was also good to find Gilbert

and Sullivan right up there with the other operas: Mozart (lots of Mozart), Verdi, Puccini, Mascagni, Bizet, and many others. *The Mikado* got the most G&S attention: "A more humane Mikado" and the duet "Were you not to Ko-Ko plighted" on the first program. The second program consisted of art songs — no G&S there. In the third program, scenes were developed and the duet from *The Mikado* reappeared with more acting direction. The first four scenes from *Iolanthe* were done in an artificial glitzy style featuring Celia, Leila, Iolanthe, the Fairy Queen, and Strephon. The Fairy Queen was played by a very tall, very thin singer with an iconic long black wand. The line "I see no objection to stoutness in moderation" made no sense at all.

The final program was a culmination of all that went before. First part: Acts I and II of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, fully staged with costumes and simple scenery — very well done, and well sung. Second part: The entire short opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*, by Mascagni, also fully staged, and very dramatic. The chorus was an important part of the opera. All the singers got a full dose of what an opera can be. Except — there was no orchestra (too expensive). Excellent pianists provided the accompaniments.

NEWS of our MEMBERS

Christiana Little, Yum-Yum in GSSA's 2005 production of *The Mikado*, is actively performing in New York City. She can currently be seen in the double roles of the fairy Peaseblossom and the mechanical Starveling in an outdoor production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, produced by Curious Frog Theatre Company. She was praised by reviewer Richard Grayson as "excellent" and "skillful at comedy...with

(truly) funny faces and slapstick, over-the-top gestures." Starting in September, she will be touring with the musical-parody troupe Chuckleball, a four-person review which spoofs sports. Christiana is the only female in the cast, and will impersonate the likes of Maria Sharapova, Elin Woods, and a down-hearted LeBron James fan. All of her years as a Texas Longhorn fan will finally be put to good use on the stage! In addition to these live performances, Christiana is in the process of recording a new CD of classic showtunes, opera arias, and the occasional pop song. Email her at christianalittle@gmail.com to reserve your copy or to send your good wishes.





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SEPTEMBER 2010

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels are the ambassadors for the Society to the Central Texas community. Their programs provide an introduction to the genre that is distinctively Gilbert & Sullivan. Programs range from a lively recital of Gilbert & Sullivan's most popular tunes to interactive, mini-productions of the Society's full summer productions. Costume elements, props and choreography provide the visual pop which turns each event into a celebration, with the camaraderie and spontaneous banter of the Wand'ring Minstrels adding an extra measure of froth to the proceedings!

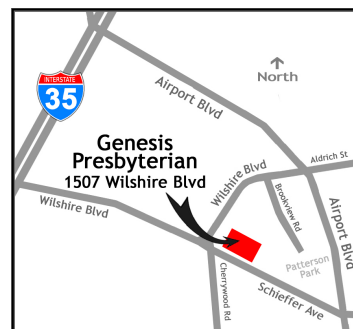
For bookings or additional information, please contact Eva Laskaris by email at minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org, or by calling (512) 350-4935.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in mid-November; the deadline for submissions is October 25. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

Season Opening Musicale
Sunday - September 12th - 3pm
Genesis Presbyterian Church
1507 Wilshire Blvd.

See details on page 1!



The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

Since 1976, we have been spreading the joys of G&S through

Annual Grand Productions
Educational/Community Outreach
Musicales
Musical Scholarships
Newsletters
Holiday Season Shows

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Phone: (512) 472-4772 (GSA-GSSA)
Our web site: www.gilbertsullivan.org

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The Society holds nonprofit status under 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

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