

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

The Board of Directors elected by our membership at the Annual Meeting on January 17 met for the first time on Monday, January 24. At this meeting we elected officers and assigned other duties. Here are the roles that will be played by our returning board members:

- **Chris Buggé**, Special Projects
- **Reba Gillman**, Historian
- **Pat Hobbs**, Volunteer Coordinator
- **Leonard Johnson**, Musicale Coordinator
- **David Little**, Publicist and Webmaster
- **Roberta Long**, Executive Vice President
- **Randall McIntyre**, Wand'ring Minstrels Coordinator
- **Michael Meigs**, Bursar and Secretary
- **Libby Weed**, President
- **Dave Wieckowski**, Treasurer

Our board will be strengthened even more with the addition of these two excellent members:

- **Byron Arnason** – Byron served previously on the Board until his work took him away from Austin too many months in the year. We are pleased that, for now, he is able to stay in town more and agreed to have his name added to the slate of board members. Byron received a B.S. in Physics and an M.S. in Geophysics before embarking on a career in mineral, water, and geothermal exploration. His love for Gilbert & Sullivan was instilled in him when, as a small child, he attended rehearsals of his sister's high school's annual G&S operas. When he attended our 1994 production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, he could not quite understand why the words and music resonated so strongly with something inside him. He called his sister to tell about it and ask her why she thought he had such a strong feeling of attraction. She explained to him his early exposure to the G&S corpus and it all made sense. Since that time, Byron has been one of our most faithful and enthusiastic supporters and an active volunteer. He will help manage our office and will assist with group sales.
- **Robert L. Schneider** – Born and raised in Michigan, Robert started singing Gilbert & Sullivan at Port Huron High School, playing many lead roles during high school and college. He received his bachelor's degree from Eastern Michigan University and his master's from the University of Michigan; he has also done doctoral work in voice and opera at the University of Texas. Robert sang opera and taught voice in Germany for many years. He has taught high school music, directing many G&S productions. Many of you will recognize him from his role in *The Yeomen of the Guard* last summer,



when he commanded the part of the Lieutenant, Sir Richard Cholmondeley. Currently, Robert teaches voice lessons and lives in Spicewood with his wife Katie. He is the father of local musician Bob Schneider. Relatively new to our Society if not to G&S, Robert has already demonstrated his remarkable talents and his desire to increase the knowledge and love of these operas in our part of the world. He will assist with coordination of Wand'ring Minstrels and musicales.

We forge into the new calendar year with great expectations and outstanding leadership!

Libby Weed

The Mikado Auditions

The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin will hold auditions for its June 9-19 production of *The Mikado* on Saturday and Sunday, March 5 and 6. **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, and **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** will be returning as artistic and musical director, respectively, and **Bill Hatcher** returns as production manager.

Auditions are about 10 minutes long, by appointment only. Call **Chuck Antonie** at (512) 733-1006 or (512) 825-5187, or email cantonie@yahoo.com to reserve an audition time slot.

All roles are open for casting, including principals and chorus, with the exception of the role of Katisha which has been pre-cast. A small honorarium will be paid to all performers. Two children (pre-teen) will also be needed for the non-speaking and non-singing roles of Ko-Ko's Axe-Bearer and The Mikado's Attendant.

A memorized aria or art song (English language preferred) is required. An accompanist will be provided, although singers may bring their own pianist if they wish. Please note that unaccompanied (*a cappella*) auditions are not permitted, nor are self-accompanied auditions.

A completed Audition Form (available at the website www.gilbertsullivan.org) is required, and a résumé and headshot are requested if available.

Auditions will be held at Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Blvd (<http://www.genesispcusa.org/>). It is east of IH 35 and between Hancock Center and Airport Boulevard. There is plenty of parking. Visit www.gilbertsullivan.org for more details.

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Annual Business Meeting and Sing-Along

by Reba Gillman

On Monday night, January 17, 24 loyal members gathered in the pleasant fellowship hall at Genesis Presbyterian Church to do our annual business. The Martin Luther King holiday made a long weekend, which (added to the already busy season) kept attendance low, but enthusiastic. People were asked to pick up copies of music as they entered, but five former cast members lingered outdoors to catch up with their colleagues. President **Libby Weed** welcomed us with preliminary announcements. Board member **Michael Meigs** gave the Treasurer's report, in the absence of Treasurer **Dave Wieckowski**. Our June production of the less well-known opera, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, did very well. Any member may call the G&S office (512-472-4772) to request a copy of the Financial Report. Careful financial management kept us to our budget and the excellent publicity provided by **David Little** brought many people to see a fine show. But Libby reminded us that production is expensive, and we still must rely on financial support from our members.

Moving to the important business of the day, Libby announced the nominations made by the nominating committee: **Byron Arnason**, Chair, and **Enid Hallock** and **Larry Shepley**. She asked each nominee to stand as his/her name was read, and gave a short bio for each candidate. Directors remaining on the Board are **Chris Buggé**, **Reba Gillman**, **Pat Hobbs**, **Leonard Johnson**, **David Little**, **Roberta Long**, **Randall McIntyre**, **Michael Meigs**, **Libby Weed**, and **Dave Wieckowski**; new nominees are **Byron Arnason**, who has served on the board in the past, and **Robert L. Schneider**, a newcomer to our Society, who sang the role of Sir Richard Cholmondeley in *The Yeomen of the Guard* last June. Pat Hobbs, Leonard Johnson, Randall McIntyre, and Dave Wieckowski were not able to be present. There were no nominations from the floor and **Russell Gregory** moved that the slate be accepted by acclamation, **Bill Hatcher** seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

It was noted that Lady High Pianist **Marti Dudgeon** had arrived and that a keyboard was set up and waiting for her. Robert L. Schneider then stepped forward to lead the singing he had chosen from *Trial By Jury*. He produced a bag full of props, including a white Judge's wig, which he ceremoniously donned. He gave us some instructions and off we went. We sang the opening chorus: "Hark the hour of ten is sounding; Hearts with anxious fears are bounding, Hall of Justice crowds surrounding, Breathing hope and fear – For today in this arena, Summoned by a stern subpoena, Edwin, sued by Angelina, Shortly will appear." Moving on, Robert as the Judge dramatically sang, "When I good friends, was called to the bar, I'd an appetite fresh and hearty," with the audience coming in on the refrain at the end of each verse, including Russell Gregory's favorite line, "She may very well pass for forty-three, In the dusk with a light behind her." And on to the climax, "But I'll live and die a Judge!" with the audience response, "And a good Judge, too!"

Next, **Bill Hatcher** took over to have us sing through the first act Finale of *Yeomen* to recreate the emotion and excitement that had stirred him powerfully at every performance. There were no women cast members present, but most of the men's parts were covered. **Russell Gregory** was there to sing Sergeant Meryll, **Arthur DiBianca** - Jack Point, **Robert L. Schneider** - Sir Richard Cholmondeley, **Ian Stilwell** - first yeoman, **Jake Jacobson** - 2nd yeoman, and **Spencer Reichman** volunteered to sing Wilfred

Shadbolt. Robert volunteered to sing Elsie, which he did, wildly changing octaves -- partly in a high falsetto and partly in the bass range. Bill instructed the women to sing all the solo female parts, and he brought the men over to sing bass and tenor next to each other. He had the men bring forth the props he had brought from the show: the block, the ax, the halberds. Marti played the somber opening music, and Russell told us that at the performances he nearly lost it every time as they awaited the execution of a worthy man. "The prisoner comes to meet his doom; The block, the headsman, and the tomb. The funeral bell begins to toll; May Heav'n have mercy on his soul!" Finally Fairfax and the two yeomen return to tell them all "We sought the pris'ner's cell - He is not there!" and wild excitement breaks out. We singers had a hard time: the music goes so fast, there are so many words. "We hunted high, We hunted low, We hunted here, We hunted there, The man we sought with anxious care Had vanished into empty air!" Elsie sings "What have I done! Oh, woe is me! I am his wife, and he is free!" and Point sings "Oh woe is *you*? Your anguish sink! Oh, woe is *me*, I rather think! ... What e'er betide, You are his bride, and I am left Alone - bereft! Yes, woe is *me*, I rather think!" All the others sing, "All frenzied, frenzied with despair they rave, The grave is cheated of its due. Who is, who is the misbegotten knave Who hath contrived this deed to do? Let search, let search be made throughout the land, Or my vindictive anger dread -- A thousand marks, a thousand marks I'll hand Who brings him here, alive or dead, Who brings him here, alive, alive, --- or dead!" (At the end, Elsie faints in Fairfax's arms; all the Yeomen and populace rush off the stage in different directions to hunt for the fugitive, leaving only the Headsman on the stage, and Elsie insensible in Fairfax's arms.)

Somewhere near the end, Marti cried out, "I've lost my ring!" So much excitement, the ring just flew off! It was a scramble, that music takes a lot of learning; we tackled it with energy, and all those men from the cast knew the music. That helped; there was a lot of emotion and the challenge of trying to do it. And then calm returned. Marti found her ring. Bill sang the Pirate King's lead-in, all rose and sang, "Hail, Poetry." Then **Chris Buggé** led us in "God Save the Queen," and then on to "Now to the banquet we press," and the reward -- gather round the table for the munchies, and the sociability. It was an Experience! Bill's props established the tone of the scene and helped to bring back warm feelings from the show. Thank you, Bill.



newly elected/re-elected Board members (l-r) **Robert L. Schneider**, **Chris Buggé**, **Libby Weed**, **Michael Meigs**, **Reba Gillman**, **David Little**, **Roberta Long**, and **Byron Arnason**

photos courtesy Nanci & Benny Jay
 see more at gilbertsullivan.austin.smugmug.com



Bill Hatcher conducts the enthusiastic sing-along



headsman Benny Jay (center) causes
 Chris Buggé and Byron Arnason to cower



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 Pianist Martha Dudgeon
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MAID in the GSSA

G&S and Austin – MAID for each other for 35 years! It's time to celebrate the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's 35th Anniversary on Thursday evening, March 3, at 7 pm. This elegant event will feature a sumptuous buffet, ravishingly beautiful singing by some of Austin's top vocal performers, and the induction of members into the G&S Austin Hall of Fame. There will be a cash bar available. This event will be held in the Gallery at Chez Zee, at 5406 Balcones Drive – a MAID-for-Austin venue! (See map below left.)

Come hear “three (no, four!) little MAIDS” – Patricia Combs, Eva Laskaris, Janette Jones, and Tamsen Cohagan (who formerly sang the role of Mabel with Amarillo Opera) – as well as the men “who would woo fair MAID”ens – Holton Johnson, Robert L. Schneider, Arthur DiBianca, and Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, with Master of Ceremonies Ralph MacPhail, Jr. and pianist Martha Dudgeon. You'll enjoy excerpts from last summer's hit production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*, get a preview of *The Mikado*, and hear tunes from other Gilbert & Sullivan favorites while savoring delicious Chez Zee-MAID hors d'oeuvres and desserts.

At our 30th anniversary gala in 2006, we recognized ten people who had made significant contributions to our Society throughout our first three decades. At this 35th anniversary gala, we will add five more names to that Hall of Fame:

Arthur DiBianca Jeffrey Jones-Ragona
 Bill Hatcher Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Libby Weed

Please join us for this special occasion. Tickets are \$30, and are available through our website, www.gilbertsullivan.org. We expect a sell-out, so order now!



Onward to Titipu!

Auditions for *The Mikado*

by Artistic Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

With keenest anticipation I look forward to returning to Austin for auditions for *The Mikado*—and for helping our wonderful Society to celebrate a remarkable 35 years of production!

The Mikado is usually regarded as the masterpiece of Gilbert & Sullivan and is arguably the most popular comic opera ever written. It has been translated and adapted more frequently than any other of the G&S works, and has probably been performed more frequently than most of the rest of them put together. My purpose here is to provide information for auditionees concerning the auditions and also concerning the hilariously funny and incredibly tuneful and popular show we will present this summer. And I hope that much of what follows will also be of interest to members who will *not* be auditioning.

Details of the auditions, which will be held on Saturday and Sunday, March 5 and 6, are elsewhere in this issue. Music Director and Conductor **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** and I request that each auditionee memorize a song from Gilbert & Sullivan or something similar that will show their voice and range to best advantage. *It is also mandatory to provide a copy of the music for the auditions accompanist.* I will ask people auditioning for principal roles to read from the libretto with me.

If *The Mikado* is not in your library, you can download the libretto from The Gilbert & Sullivan Archive website (math.boisestate.edu/gas). You can also download some printed music from the opera from this website, read a plot synopsis, or download audio files. And there's a *lot* more there, too!

The Chorus is composed of the **Chorus of Japanese Noblemen** (12 gentlemen, one of whom ["Go-To"] has a brief solo, and who MAY sing the Act II "Merry Madrigal") and the **Chorus of School-Girls** (12 vivacious ladies, all "eighteen and under," though their age will probably range considerably above that limit!). **Two children** (pre-teens) will also be needed for the non-speaking, non-singing roles of Ko-Ko's Axe-Bearer and The Mikado's Attendant.

The Mikado has classically memorable roles, incredible singing opportunities, and requires actors who can sing well as well as singers who can act well. And boy—is it a *romp*!

The Mikado of Japan (bass or "dark baritone"). He appears only in the second half of the second act, but all of the action swirls around his edict against flirting, which turns this delightful activity into a capital crime. Larger than life and blood-thirsty (he likes to find punishments that fit crimes), with a BIG voice, he is cowed only by the redoubtable Katisha.

Nanki-Poo (tenor). He's the Mikado's son, who fled his father's court rather than marry the terrifying harridan Katisha. He can sing all sorts of "ballads, songs, and snatches" and dance a hornpipe. He also loves Yum-Yum and knows how to tell her (and show her!). He is also clever when it matters most—when his life is on the line. Strums a lovely samisen, too!

Ko-Ko (light baritone). This timid tailor was made Lord High Executioner of Titipu when he was convicted of flirting, which essentially stopped executions because he would be unable to execute another until he'd cut his *own* head off. Ko-Ko is a little dynamo of energy, frantically trying to stay ahead of plot

complications in order to preserve his own life—and he, too, loves Yum-Yum. Never in dramatic literature was there a more amusing love triangle!

Pish-Tush (baritone). This noble lord has an important, expository solo in Act I and participates in a good number of ensembles. Something of a foil to Ko-Ko and Pooh-Bah, Pish-Tush helps the others negotiate the maze of plot complications. His part in the Act II madrigal, depending on his voice, is sometimes sung by Go-To—and this may happen in our production.

Pooh-Bah (bass-baritone). One of Gilbert's greatest creations, Pooh-Bah was, as he admits, "born sneering." He holds all of the municipal offices in Titipu (other than Lord High Executioner), and accepts the salaries attached to them—and bribes at every opportunity. Traditionally a LARGE man, his physique matches his [self-]importance. Pooh! Bah!

Go-To (bass). Go-To is a member of the male chorus who has a single question in recitative early in Act I before Nanki-Poo's introductory song, and he *may* speak Pish-Tush's line before and sing his part in the madrigal in Act II.

Yum-Yum (soprano). Just eighteen years old and home from school for the "hols," Yum-Yum's in love with Nanki-Poo even though she's betrothed to her guardian Ko-Ko. She's beautiful and knows it—and can sing beautifully about it. Still, like many a Gilbertian soprano, she knows which side of the bread holds the butter, and has second thoughts about marrying Nanki-Poo when burial alive will be one of her wedding gifts.

Pitti-Sing (mezzo-soprano). If Yum-Yum is delicious, her sister is indeed a pretty thing. Sings well, too. Filled to the brim with girlish glee, Pitti-Sing is Yum-Yum's sister and is also Ko-Ko's ward. She is a saucy little thing, and gives Katisha what-for in the Act I finale. Her role is one of the great soubrette parts in all of Gilbert & Sullivan.

Peep-Bo (mezzo-soprano). The third of the famous "three little maids," Peep-Bo is a little minx who seems to have a bloodthirsty streak—especially in her dialogue with Yum-Yum in Act II. She wonders, with the other girls, "what on earth the world can be?"

Katisha (contralto). Another of Gilbert's greatest creations. She's a frightening though not grotesque harridan "of a certain age," spurned by Nanki-Poo, and looking for love. Her two solos make her a three-dimensional character of somewhat tragic dimensions, but she also has her fair share of comic opportunities. **(This role has been pre-cast for this production.)**

I think there's only one G&S activity more fun than seeing one of their operas performed on stage—and that's actually *working* on one. If you need a little push to encourage you to audition, please consider this it. Jeffrey and I do all we can to make the auditions fun and relaxed. If you have any questions, please send them to RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com.

On page 1 are details on how you can sign up for an audition slot, so please do it today, and then please encourage a friend or two to audition so that even *more* can share the delight of Gilbert & Sullivan.

See you in Titipu!

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in mid-April; the deadline for submissions is March 29. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

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:

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I'd like to volunteer. I'm interested in:

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 our MEMBERS

Jeffrey Jones-Ragona performed on January 8 and 9 with the La Follia Austin String Ensemble, playing the harpsichord in a program of Four Harpsichord Concertos by J. S. Bach. A number of G&S members were in the enthusiastic audience. Jeffrey said he had wanted to perform this music since he was 16 years old.

Our Artistic Director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, will be a busy fellow a week after our production of *The Mikado* closes: he's been invited to participate "in many various ways" at The International Gilbert & Festival in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, June 24 - July 3, which is being billed as "The Largest North American Gilbert & Sullivan Event Ever!" The Festival will feature nine operas over ten days and lots of interesting "fringe" events.

For more information on the Festival, including registration particulars and a *lot* more detail, surf over to www.gsfestivals.org, and then click on Gettysburg. Tickets for shows can be ordered by calling the the Majestic Theatre Box office at 717/337-8200 or online at gettysburgmajestic.org.



*Bill Hatcher exercises his leadership skills as our membership strives to recreate the thrilling conclusion to Act I of *The Yeomen of the Guard**

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 presentations 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 **Robert L. Schneider** by email at minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org, or by calling (512) 789-2928.

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*performers at the Sing-Along include
Jake Jacobson, Bill Hatcher, and Ian Stilwell*

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FEBRUARY / MARCH 2011

Coming Events
 March 3 Gala 35th Anniversary Celebration (see p. 3)
 March 5-6 *The Mikado* auditions (see pp. 1, 4)
 May 1 May Day Musicale
 June 9-19 *The Mikado* summer production

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

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

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- Musicales**
- Musical Scholarships**
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- Holiday Season Shows**

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 Mailing Address: P. O. Box 684542, Austin, TX 78768-4542
 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.

Artistic Director
 Music Director

Ralph MacPhail, Jr.
Jeffrey Jones-Ragona

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