

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

APRIL 2011 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Our board is delighted to announce the addition of a new member to our ranks, **Janet Forman**. She will be replacing **Randall McIntyre**, who has decided he must step down because of demanding personal and professional commitments at this time.



Many of you may remember Janet from her role in the chorus of our 2007 production of *Ruddigore*, which she describes as “one of the peak experiences of my life!” She has sung with the Austin Civic Chorus of Chorus Austin for ten years, during those years performing often with Austin Symphony Orchestra and also at Carnegie Hall and throughout Italy. She will never forget the thrill of singing “back-up” with the Head Cantor of Jerusalem. Janet is a teacher at Hebrew School of congregation Agudas Achim and is involved with many volunteer activities around Austin. She first became a fan of Gilbert and Sullivan through listening to her mother sing “Poor Little Buttercup” and “Tit-Willow.” Now she has stepped onto the board with great enthusiasm and has already taken on the role of office manager. You may be receiving a letter of thanks from her one day. Welcome, Janet!

We extend our hearty thanks to Dr. McIntyre for his service on the board. He promises us he will stay in close touch and will perhaps appear in some of our productions again in the future. Board member **Robert L. Schneider** has agreed to take on the coordination of our Wand'ring Minstrels program in Randall's place.

And speaking of that, don't miss our May 1 musicale at Bachus Conservatory. You will hear some outstanding future Savoyards perform a lively condensed rendition of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Those of us on the board are most thankful that folks such as Bob Schneider are communicating the joys of G&S to the rising generation and bringing them in on all the fun.

Hope to see you May 1 for a rousing good time!



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The Mikado Cast

The Mikado — **Russell Gregory**
Nanki-Poo — **Holton Johnson**
Ko-Ko — **Arthur DiBianca**
Pooh-Bah — **Robert L. Schneider**
Pish-Tush — **Jay Young**
Go-To — **Spencer Reichman**
Yum-Yum — **Tamsen Cohagen**
Pitti-Sing — **Patricia Combs**
Peep-Bo — **Angela Irving**
Katisha — **Janette Jones**

Chorus of Nobles: **Tai Collins, Andy Fleming, David Fontenot, John Hooker, Jake Jacobsen, Luke Leamons, Jay Michael, Brian Pettey, Adam Sales, Ian Stillwell, Michael Spears**

Chorus of School-Girls: **Heather Capello, Kate Clark, Alisar Eido, Katy Fontenot, Rosa Harris, Zendel Hernandez, Daytha Hulion, Claire Ludwig, Karlyn McCutchan, Jennifer Tucker, Jennifer Tullis, Hillary Weeks, Madison White**

May Musicale

The Pirates of Penzance – by Kids!

Bachus Conservatory

8000 Anderson Square (see map, back page)

Sunday, May 1 at 3pm

See this Gilbert & Sullivan classic as you have never seen it before! Set sail with a band of tenderhearted pirates, a modern Major-General, a bevy of Victorian maidens, and a bunch of bumbling British bobbies - all with a youthful spark.

Students from the Harmony School of Creative Arts in Marble Falls will perform this special abridged version of *The Pirates of Penzance*. The performing ensemble is made up of a group of richly talented 10- to 16-year-olds, along with a few faculty members including our own **Robert L. Schneider**.

35th Anniversary Gala

by Reba Gillman

On Thursday, March 3, about 100 friends and members gathered in the Gallery at Chez Zee to celebrate the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's 35th Anniversary with a sumptuous buffet, a cash bar, and a lovely program. When we celebrated our 30th anniversary in 2006, we created a Hall of Fame, and named to it ten persons whose hard work and commitment helped the Society begin and continue to grow and improve. Now we had the significant and dedicated labors of five more members to honor.

The program opened with everyone singing "God Save The Queen," led by Chris Buggé, in observance of British patriotic customs. Then followed "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," led by Mark E. Long; this employs the same tune and serves American patriotic customs. Dave Wieckowski thanked the committee who had planned the event: Roberta Long (Chair), Eva Laskaris, David Little, Libby Weed (and himself). He explained the Hall of Fame concept and the criteria the board of directors had considered, and the presentations began:

Byron Arnason presented **Arthur DiBianca**: Art came to Austin in 1991, and found his way into the chorus of our 1994 production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. He has been involved with 14 of our productions, and has worked his way up to excellent performances in such major roles as the Major-General in *The Pirates of Penzance*, the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe*, and Jack Point in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. He has served on our board of directors, worked in our office, and for ten years has managed our database. It has grown from about 900 names to about 5,400. He served as assistant to Ralph MacPhail Jr, in 1998 for Rafe's first Austin production, and has been a support and friend ever since. If you need an address, phone number, or email address he's the man to go to.

Dave Wieckowski presented **Bill Hatcher**: When Bill was growing up in San Antonio, he loved to listen to the Gilbert & Sullivan records in his parents' eclectic collection of 78 rpm records. Bill's Mom is in the audience tonight. She has the distinction of being our most senior member (just ahead of Reba). Bill has been a true "Renaissance Man" for the Society, using his many talents to fill several roles over the years. Willing to do any job, Bill has also worked at the highest levels in both administration and production. In 1996 Bill became Treasurer and quickly put our financial records in order. Though not trained in web design, in 1997 Bill studied books on the subject and set up the Society website. Later he served as Historian and Vice-President before becoming President of the Society in 2004, and presiding over three successful summer productions. Bill retired a few years ago after a 37 year career with the Veteran's Administration, and we called on him to fill the challenging role of Production Manager. His work in 2009 for *Iolanthe* and in 2010 for *The Yeomen of the Guard* exceeded our wildest expectations.

Ralph MacPhail, Jr. presented **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**: An out-of-town staging director coming to town to work with a new company wonders just what the new group of colleagues will be like. During our ten collaborations since 1998, I've never had an argument with Jeffrey -- never even a cross word. Jeffrey brings his genuine love and appreciation for Sullivan's music to bear every summer in our "grand productions." We audition and cast in early spring; Jeffrey rehearses the music with the cast through the spring; in late spring I come down to stage the show. Inevitably there are adjustments to be made in tempi, dynamics, the restoring of "traditional" bits and bobs

that impact pauses and rests, tempi and retards. Jeffrey responds positively and with enthusiasm to these additions. When he rejoins the company after weeks of staging rehearsals with the concentration on movement and business and interpretation, many of his subtleties and insinuations have been forgotten. He patiently restores the music and "takes out the improvements" we've made during rehearsals. But Gilbert & Sullivan operas are but one facet of Jeffrey's professional career in music. He works with Musica Ecclesiae, which he founded; he is Artistic Director and Conductor of Capital City Men's Chorus; he is Director of Music at the Cathedral of Saint Mary in downtown Austin, and Conductor of the Makheilah at Temple Beth Israel. He has taught on the music faculties of Drake University, St. Edward's University, and Southwestern University. His work with GSSA has gained critical praise and a number of B. Iden Payne Award nominations. He received the award itself for our 2003 production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Congratulations to you, Jeffrey, my dear friend and colleague. Long may you wave -- your baton.

Russell Gregory presented **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**: Rafe was born in Arlington, Virginia, on the 64th anniversary of "the *Pinafore* Riot" at London's Opéra Comique in 1879. (The task of calculating his age he'd rather leave to *you*.) In 1966, the original Gilbert & Sullivan troupe, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, visited Washington, D.C. and Rafe saw three productions in one week. "My life hasn't been the same since," he admits, "for I was totally smitten with the colorful, tuneful, and traditional productions, and I promptly began seeking books and records (and anything else for that matter) connected with 'G&S'." On a personal note, we have found Rafe to be a perfect house guest, the consummate host, a personable, yet pedantic practitioner of his profession! In 2003, I auditioned for *The Pirates of Penzance* as the Pirate King -- but was offered the role of Sgt. of Police. Thinking that the role was beneath me, I said Nope. But he called back, assuring me that his staged business and my rubber face would stop the show! I said OK. The rest is history!

Reba Gillman presented **Libby Weed**: Libby has brought to us her skill and experience as an administrative director of an excellent elementary school. She is well-organized, knowledgeable, and efficient. She loves G&S; she enjoys fun; she knows how to work with people -- she welcomes all kinds and knows how to make them feel appreciated. And above all, she is adventurous. Libby has been off and on the board, she has served several times as President; she has done many other tasks, and served for several years as Secretary. She has organized Musicales programs and presented many with her charming bios and introductions. Best of all, she has let us know, time after time, that she loves her association with our Society; she finds the people so diverse and interesting, so friendly. I think a quote from *Pirates* suits her well: "Climbing over rocky mountain," the maidens sing as they come on stage. In the ensuing dialog they wonder what to do as they wait for the Major-General. They love the suggestion that they take off their shoes and stockings "and paddle," a very adventurous activity for 19th century maidens. That's Libby!

When the last presentation ended, the performers swirled onto the stage area singing "Miya Sama" from *The Mikado*: **Tamsen Cohagan, Patricia Combs, Arthur DiBianca, Holton Johnson, Janette Jones, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, Eva Laskaris, and Robert L. Schneider**, with **Martha Mortensen Dudgeon** at the piano. Tamsen, Janette, and Patricia sang "Three Little Maids," and we were invited to enjoy coffee and dessert during the intermission.

[continued on page 3]



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



new GSSA Hall of Fame members (l-r): **Arthur DiBianca, Bill Hatcher, Libby Weed, Ralph MacPhail, Jr., and Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

Act 2	
Maid in the GSSA Master of Ceremonies - Ralph MacPhail, Jr.	
<i>Thespis</i>	
Little Maid of Arcadec - the first MAID of G&S partnership	Jeffrey
<i>The Yeomen of the Guard</i>	
When Maiden Loves	Patricia
Is Life a Boon?	Holton
I Have a Song to Sing, O	Arthur & Janette
How Say You, Maiden?	Arthur, Eva, & Robert
<i>The Gondoliers</i>	
When a Merry Maiden Marries	Janette
<i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i>	
A Maiden Fair to See	Holton
Refrain, Audacious Tar!	Holton & Eva
Sorry Her Lot	Eva
Sing Hey, the Merry Maiden and the Tar ...	Arthur & Robert
<i>Patience</i>	
I Cannot Tell what this Love May Be	Tamsen
Prithee, Pretty Maiden	Robert & Tamsen
On Such Eyes as Maidens Cherish	Female Chorus
Sad is that Woman's Lot	Patricia
<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i>	
O, Is There Not One Maiden Breast. . .	Jeffrey & Female Chorus
Oh, Here is Love	Eva & Jeffrey
Hail, Poetry	Robert, Chorus, & Audience



Guests enjoy food, drink, and conversation



Chris Buggé and Pat Hobbs welcome guests at registration desk



Chez Zee provides a delectable buffet

35th Anniversary Gala, cont. from p. 2

As the audience returned for Act 2, Master of Ceremonies Rafe took over with welcoming remarks and grateful thanks for the honor just awarded to him. His informative and entertaining announcements introduced the charming G&S songs that followed. It was a lovely program with Marti Dudgeon providing excellent piano backup. Enough dialog was included to tell the story of each group of songs. A copy of this part of the program appears above. Songs from *The Pirates of Penzance* brought the evening to a close and Robert sang the familiar Pirate King's introduction to "Hail, Poetry" as all rose to sing together. It was a wonderful birthday party, and everyone went home happy.



performers for the evening include (l-r): **Eva Laskaris, Robert L. Schneider, Janette Jones, Holton Johnson, Martha Mortensen Dudgeon, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, Patricia Combs, Arthur DiBianca, and Tamsen Cohagan**



Sing Hey, the Merry Maiden and the Tar



Three Little Maids



The Mikado: Several Secrets in Sullivan's Score

by Artistic Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

In an earlier column, I wrote about several “secrets” in the history of *The Mikado* and in Gilbert's libretto. I thought this time it would be fun to turn our attention to “Sullivan's secrets.”

It has often been noted that *The Mikado*, while set in Japan, is as English as fish 'n' chips. This is certainly true of most of the music, but Sullivan *did* do his Japanese homework. When working on his score, he called on Algernon B. Mitford, formerly of Her Majesty's Foreign Office with a stint in Japan (and author of *Tales of Old Japan*), and got a piece of authentic Japanese music to use as the Mikado's entrance music. Mitford gave him a march composed in the Meiji era called “Ton-yare Bushi.” In addition to taking down the tune, Sullivan transcribed the lyric phonetically, presumably gave it to his collaborator, and Gilbert then incorporated it into his libretto, labeling it—in quotation marks—“*March of the Mikado's troops*.” Here are the words:

Miya sama, miya sama,
On n'm-ma no mayé ni
Pira-Pira suru no wa
Nan gia na
Toko tanyaré, tonyaré na?

A rough translation is, “O! Prince, what is that fluttering in front of your horse?” The second verse, which is not used in *The Mikado*, answers this musical question: “Don't you see—this is the royal banner—entrusted to me that I may defeat the enemies of the Crown. Don't you see!”

Not only does this authentic Japanese music, composed on the pentatonic scale, herald *The Mikado*, but it heralds *The Mikado*, too, for the composer featured it early in his overture to the work.

Sullivan may have been the first Western composer to use the “Miya sama” tune, but not the last. Giacomo Puccini also used a quotation from it in *Madama Butterfly* thirteen years after *The Mikado* was written.

The Mikado has other musical secrets. Gilbert said, late in his career, that he never had to explain a joke to Sullivan. What he *didn't* say was that Sullivan often brought his own sense of humor to his scores. Here are some examples:

The vocal line to the words “Behold the Lord High Executioner” is a quotation from an old song with roots perhaps in the seventeenth century. A version with music and lyrics by Henry Russell, called “A Fine Old English Gentleman,” was certainly recognized by original audiences. By using this tune, Sullivan builds on Gilbert's joke by comparing Japanese tailor/executioner to a benevolent old squire in the English countryside. Here's the third verse of Russell's song:

When winter cold brought Christmas old,
He opened house to all,
And, though three score and ten his years,
He featly led the ball;
Nor was the houseless wanderer

Then driven from the hall,
For, while he feasted all the great,
He ne'er forgot the small—
Like a fine old English gentleman,
All of the olden time.

Sullivan put other musical jokes into *The Mikado*. I remember reading years ago that there was originally a musical rest after “Freed from its genius tutelary” in “Three Little Maids.” At a rehearsal for a revival, the composer sketched in a little “bassoon gurgle,” telling his players that he'd been wanting to do that for years. Listen for it—it's still there—and note also how the music of the *entire trio* seems to giggle over with girlish glee!

When you hear *The Mikado* suggest that music-hall singers be forced to attend

. . . a series
Of masses and fugues and 'ops'
By Bach, interwoven
With Spohr and Beethoven,
At classical Monday Pops

listen carefully, and you'll hear a quotation from Bach's “Great” Fugue in G minor in the orchestra.

The next musical number in the opera, “The Criminal Cried,” tells of a *faux* execution with corroborative if fictional detail provided by Ko-Ko, Pitti-Sing, and Pooh-Bah. And it is filled with musical jokes. Listen for the instrumental “shriek” in Ko-Ko's verse, and for a decapitated head thudding to the ground after Pooh-Bah insists “that head was dead.”

But Sullivan's best and most subtle musical joke is in the middle verse, when Pitti-Sing asserts that, as he was decapitated, the victim “whistled an air, did he”: originally Sullivan inserted a snatch from a widely known tune from a child's piano exercise immediately after these words—but he later changed it to a quotation from the well-known English war-song, “The Girl I Left Behind Me.”

Here are the lyrics to the first verse:

The hours sad I left a maid
A lingering farewell taking
Whose sighs and tears my steps delayed
I thought her heart was breaking
In hurried words her name I blest
I breathed the vows that bind me
And to my heart in anguish pressed
The girl I left behind me.

My friend Bill Hyder recently stated succinctly Sullivan's motivation in selecting this well-known tune, “The Girl I Left Behind Me”: “Consider the story Pitti-Sing is telling: A criminal was about to be executed. He caught the eye of ‘a beautiful maid’ (Pitti-sing can't be accused of modesty!). It gave him courage, but he knew he wouldn't see her again, so he ‘whistled an air’—and what an appropriate title Sullivan chose!”

When Gilbert asserted, after Sullivan's passing, that when working with his most famous collaborator “he never had to explain a joke,” what he *didn't* say is that, quite often, Sullivan made his own jokes the way he knew best—through his music.

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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- Major General** (\$250-\$499)
- Pooh-Bah** (\$500-\$999)
- Pirate King** (\$1000-\$2499)
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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 our MEMBERS

The Capital City Men's Chorus, under the direction of GSSA's Musical Director, **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, will present a concert entitled "A River City Home Companion," a tribute to our wonderful city. Inspired by old fashioned radio and TV variety shows, the concert will cover a wide range of music, from cowboy songs to spirituals to Latin Jazz (and of course, some show tunes), and feature two new songs written especially for this concert to celebrate Our Fair City: "Hotel Lights" (choral version) by Amy Cook, an Austin troubadour, and "Austin, Texas!" - a locally based take on the Frank Loesser song, "Abbdanza!" (from *Most Happy Fella*). Special guest host is comic Rob Faubion. The show will be performed on Saturday, April 30, at 7:30 pm at St. Martin's Lutheran Church, 600 W 15th St. There are 30 discounted tickets available to the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin, for \$15 each. Once those are gone, tickets may be purchased at the regular advance price online (\$20). The price goes up the day of performance, so do get your tickets early! Visit ccmcaustin.org and click on "tickets" at the top of the page, then select "River City Home Companion"-- on that page you will see a box for a discount code. Our code is "gilbert" (not case-sensitive).

Last fall, The Criterion Collection flew GSSA's Artistic Director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, to Los Angeles to record an on-camera interview for their release of the 1939 English film of *The Mikado*. Criterion also borrowed and scanned dozens of images from Rafe's G&S collection for use in the supplements to the release and for use in their concurrent release of Mike Leigh's film *Topsy-Turvy* (which tells the story of the creation of *The Mikado* in London in 1885).

The two releases are now available for sale. Barnes & Noble carries Criterion DVDs; they are also available on-line at Amazon.com and Criterion.com. If you can wait and would like to save postage (and also help GSSA), the releases will also be available for a discounted price of \$20 each at our sales desk at the May 1 Musicale and in June at performances of *The Mikado* at Travis High School.

This is a significant year -- the GSSA celebrates 35 years, and the Austin Chamber Ensemble celebrates 30 years. The Ensemble is celebrating with a concert: **Best of Bolling and PDQ Bach**, on April 8 and 9 at the Westlake United Methodist Church. The concert

will feature our own **Martha Dudgeon** on piano; Barb Mahler, flute; Klondike Steadman, guitar; P. Kellach Waddle, bass; and Koji Kodama, percussion as they perform Claude Bolling's famous Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano Trio, his Suite for Classic Guitar, and selections by PDQ Bach to celebrate Peter Schickele's 80th birth year.

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.

Armstrong Moving & Storage

is the official moving and storage company of The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin. Many thanks, Armstrong!

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late May; the deadline for submissions is May 3. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



APRIL 2011

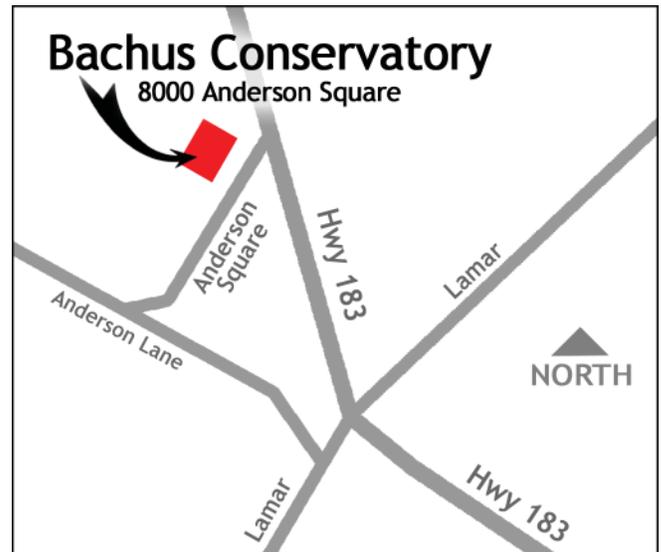
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MAY MUSICALE



The Pirates of Penzance *By Kids!*

map to the May Musicale *The Pirates of Penzance*
 see page 1 for details!



Summer 2011 Grand Production

The Mikado



June 9-19
 Thursdays thru Sundays
TICKETS ON SALE NOW

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

Since 1976, we have been spreading the joys of G&S through
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 believes that a great nation deserves great art.



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

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