

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

MAY 2011 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

The Pirates of Penzance ... by Kids!
Those of us who were privileged to attend this performance at Bachus Conservatory on Sunday, May 1, received a real breath of fresh air. You may read Reba Gillman's article about the musicale elsewhere in this issue.



Students from the Harmony School of Creative Arts in Marble Falls, founded and directed by Barbara Bend, put on an abridged version of the G&S classic for us, with a dashing Frederic, a lovely Mabel, a fresh-faced and sweet-voiced Ruth (if anyone claims she was "plain and old," she was surely "not a jot so"!), a crew of fearsome pirates, a band of bumbling police, and a bevy of beautiful maidens. Our own **Robert L. Schneider**, who teaches music at the Harmony School, charmed us as the Major General. (The next evening he was rehearsing for *The Mikado* as Pooh-Bah.)

No one would expect a group of children to perform at the level of seasoned, professional singers and actors, but these children put on a lively and entertaining show. It is easy to imagine some of them a few years hence auditioning for our chorus and becoming real Savoyards. And this is a powerful reminder of the purpose of our Society, as stated in our by-laws: *The Society is organized exclusively for educational purposes, including, for such purposes, production and encouragement of production of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas and excerpts thereof, in the traditional manner, and the study of the lore of Gilbert and Sullivan and the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.*

What a joy it is to know that love of the Savoy operas is being passed on to another generation!

On to our grand production: The members of your board of directors are thrilled at what we are seeing and hearing as the cast and directors of *The Mikado* prepare for that show. Singers are now "off book" with the music, thoroughly prepared by Maestro Jones-Ragona, and are hard at work on blocking and staging with Professor MacPhail. We honored the cast at their last music rehearsal and were overjoyed at what we saw and heard. We are all in for a treat in June.

Save the Date!

After our grand production of *The Mikado* in June, the Society will take its traditional summer holiday, but will return with a Musicale on Sunday, September 11, at 3 pm. Look for more details in the next newsletter.

Austin Live Theatre "Applause" Awards for the 2010-11 Season

The Yeomen of the Guard (produced by Austin G&S) was named by Austin Live Theatre as one of the top six musical theatre productions of the 2010-11 season in the greater Austin area. Sharing the honor were *Ain't Misbehavin'* (Tex-Arts, Lakeway), *The Drowsy Chaperone* (ZSTC), *Evita* (Georgetown Palace), *The Red Balloon* (Tongue and Groove), and *The Threepenny Opera* (UT Dept. of Theatre and Dance).

The Applause plaudits also recognized three individuals from our production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*:

- **Michelle Haché** – Outstanding Lead Actress in Musical Theatre
- **David Fontenot** – Outstanding Supporting Actor in Musical Theatre
- **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** – Outstanding Master of Music in Musical Theatre

These awards were made from a survey of 104 productions reviewed between May 1, 2010, and April 30, 2011, and were announced on May 1. **Michael Meigs**, who created and maintains the austinelivetheatre.com site, is an outstanding proponent, monitor, and critic of theatre arts in our area. He serves on the G&S board in addition to the many hours he spends attending, reviewing, and promoting Austin theatre offerings. We acknowledge that he has reason to look favorably upon our production while also noting that he has a reputation throughout the theatre community for good taste, humility, and dispassionate judgment.

Playbill Advertising -- Order Today!

Support our production of *The Mikado* by buying advertising space in the show playbills. Let our audience know about your business. Ad deadlines are fast approaching. To find out more contact Bette Redman Reichman at 474-5333 or bette@gilbertsullivan.org

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May 1st Musicale

by Reba Gillman

On Sunday afternoon, May 1, about 70 people gathered for an unusual G&S Society Musicale. The children of the Harmony School of Creative Arts in Marble Falls came to the Bachus Conservatory at 8000 Anderson Square to perform an informal version of *The Pirates of Penzance*. An occasional forgotten word or misplaced step served to remind us of the youth of the performers, and as all happily survived and enthusiastically proceeded, we saw that the kids were having a good time, and learning an important reality about show biz. The performers were: Samuel - **Lance Cox**; Pirate King - **David Bend**; Pirate King Apprentice - **Matthew Weagant**; Frederic - **Henry Rowland**; Ruth - **Anna Herrington**; Pirates - **Shelby Bettin, Chance Cox, McKenzy Fox, Emma Levine**; Kate - **Laura Bidwell**; Edith - **Sydney Sommer**; Isabel - **Chloe Madigan**; Mabel - **Melissa Anderson**; Daughters - **Emmy Gunlock, Kassidy Jamar, Blakely Schwoppe**; Major-General - **Robert L. Schneider**; Sergeant of Police - **Crystal Marroquin**; Police: **Shelby Bettin, Chance Cox, Lance Cox, McKenzy Fox, Emmy Gunlock, Emma Levine, Chloe Madigan, and Blakely Schwoppe**. Director - **David**

Bend; Vocal Coach - **Robert L. Schneider**; and Choreographer - **Chandra Irvin**. A copy of the program appears on page 3.

In this 35th year of our existence you may have noticed several unusual goings-on. We are feeling our strength and growth. Artistic and Stage Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, and Production Manager **Bill Hatcher** are raising the professional level of our productions, and our Board of Directors is stronger than ever. Our activities are well organized and we are able to experiment and try new ideas. The *Mikado* Sing-along last November was a first for us, and so was this *The Pirates of Penzance ... by Kids!*

As the performance drew to a close, Robert L. Schneider sang the Pirate King lead-in, and the audience rose to sing "Hail, Poetry," followed by "Now to the banquet we press," from *The Sorcerer*, and all gathered in the lobby to chat and munch. Many thanks to Sue and Brett Bachus for allowing us to use the pleasant concert space in their Conservatory, and to our board members who provided the refreshments.

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



NEWS of our MEMBERS

Program

"Pour, o pour the pirate sherry"
Pirates & Samuel

"When Fredric was a little lad"
Ruth

"Oh, better far to live and die"
Pirate King & Pirates

"Oh, false one, you have deceived me"
Frederic & Ruth

"Climbing over rocky mountain"
Edith, Kate, & Daughters

"Stop! Ladies, pray!"
Frederic, Edith, Kate, & Daughters

"Oh, is there not one maiden"
Frederic, Mabel, & Daughters

"Poor wand'ring one!"
Mabel & Daughters

"Stay, we must not lose our senses"
Frederic, Daughters, & Pirates

"I am the very model of a modern Major-General"
Major-General & Chorus

"Oh, men of dark and dismal fate"
Major-General, Samuel, Pirate King, Frederic, Mabel, Pirates, & Daughters

"Oh, dry the glist'ning tear"
Daughters

"When the foeman bares his steel (Tarantara!)"
Sergeant, Police, Mabel, Edith, Major-General, & Daughters

"When you had left our pirate fold (Part 1)"
Ruth, Frederic, & Pirate King

"When you had left our pirate fold (Part 2)"
Frederic, Ruth, & Pirate King

"Tarantara! (Reprise)"
Sergeant & Police

"A rollicking band of pirates we"
Pirates

"With cat-like tread"
Pirates & Police

"Now what is this, and what is that"
Major-General, Mabel, Frederic, Daughters, & Pirates

"Finale"
All



Robert L. Schneider as Major-General Stanley

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in early September; the deadline for submissions will be in mid-August. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

In April, the St. Edward's University program Spotlight on Opera presented four short American operas in two completely staged and rehearsed productions. **Cindy Sadler** is the General Director, and performers who have appeared in our G&S productions were **Lisa Alexander, Jay Lucas Chacon, Patricia Combs, Andy Fleming, June Julian,** and **Christina Leidel**. They worked hard preparing the roles, and are seriously pursuing professional training. Two of the operas were short and humorous, and two were longer and more serious. *The Medium*, by Gian-Carlo Menotti, was especially well done and very moving. Lisa Alexander played the part of the medium, and June Julian played her daughter, Monica. They were excellent. *Trouble in Tahiti*, by Leonard Bernstein, was a more cynical work, but Patricia Combs and Jay Lucas Chacon performed very well in principal roles.

Angela Irving has been singing in our chorus for several years with humor and enthusiasm. This year she will play the part of Peep-Bo in our production of *The Mikado*. She teaches voice at Texas State University, and performed John Dowland songs there on May 2 in an evening of classical guitar music.

Steven Long (son of members Mark & Roberta Long), who was in the chorus of GSSA productions of *Patience* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*, announced his engagement to **Sonia Nizny**. Steven, a bass, and Sonia, a soprano, were cast as the Pirate King and Edith last year in *The Pirates of Penzance* in Jerusalem. Steve and Sonia currently live in New York. The wedding will be next spring.

Chris Buggé's Award-Winning Log Home

Chris Buggé's new log home has just been completed. It is situated on the Lake Austin waterfront at Greenshores, and was voted most energy efficient new home by the *Austin Business Journal* in their January 28, 2011, edition. It is built of huge highly insulative lodgepole pine logs from Colorado, and has solar power panels. In addition, the heating/air conditioning uses a geothermal system that recycles lake water as the heat sink. A byproduct of this is free heated water which is fed to the inlet lines of the two tankless propane domestic hot water heaters, thereby reducing the propane usage. The house was built into the land that faces the morning sun but is situated with no windows facing the hot afternoon sun. There are several gargoyles in prominent rooftop positions who work 24/7 to keep away evil spirits and politicians.





Lexicographic Gleanings for *The Mikado*

by Artistic Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr.
(and Harry Benford!)

One of the many delights of Gilbert & Sullivan is appreciating librettist William Schwenck Gilbert’s mastery of the English language and especially his vocabulary, which, like Katisha’s circulation, just may be “the largest in the world.”

And nobody has studied Gilbert’s vocabulary more than Harry Benford, long-time Faculty Adviser to The University of Michigan Gilbert & Sullivan Society and author of the invaluable *Gilbert and Sullivan Lexicon*, now in its third edition.

Harry was kind enough to allow me to skim a baker’s dozen of his explanations of terms from *The Mikado* to share with you.

Pre-Adamite (Pooh-Bah claims to be “of pre-Adamite ancestral descent”): “Brewer [in his *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*] informs us that this was the name given by Isaac de la Peyrère to a race of men whom he thought to have existed before the days of the Garden of Eden. He thought that only Jews are descended from Adam and Eve and that Gentiles derive from Pre-Adamites.”

Ablutioner (Pooh-Bah accuses Nanki-Poo of being a “very imperfect ablutioner”): “Pooh-Bah seems to imply that Nanki-Poo needs a bath, which at first seems out of character for a G&S tenor. But remember that he has been traveling for a month, or nearly, and without so much as a pocket handkerchief to mop his brow or dust his sandals. Then, too, there are just so many words that rhyme with *executioner*.”

Guy (“the lady from the provinces, who dresses like a guy” is on Ko-Ko’s little list): “This refers to the effigies of Guy Fawkes that are burned each November 5 in Britain to celebrate his lack of success in blowing up the Houses of Parliament in 1605. . . . [Jane W.] Stedman notes that the phrase ‘was also current in Gilbert’s day as meaning someone grotesque or ridiculously dressed—in this case the lady dresses inappropriately in attempting to look fashionable.’ [J. Stuart] Bradshaw assures us the expression is still in use in England. Some observers think Gilbert had in mind the American slang term for a man. The term was in those days not well known in England. . . , so I doubt the validity of the proposal.”

Genius tutelary (The Three Little Maids claim to be freed from the “genius tutelary” of their “ladies’ seminary”): “The OED [Oxford English Dictionary] . . . says regarding *genius*: ‘With reference to classical pagan belief: The tutelary god or attendant spirit allotted to every person at his birth to govern his fortune and determine his character . . . ; also, the tutelary and controlling spirit similarly connected with a place, an institution, etc.’ To this we may add that *tutelary* pertains to guardianship.”

Marine Parade (Yum-Yum says that Nanki-Poo “is the gentlemen who used to play so beautifully on the—on the—” and Pitti-Sing reminds her that she seems to be searching for the term “Marine Parade”): “In seaside resort cities, a waterfront street or promenade, usually with the beach on one side and major hotels, shops, etc., on the other. Since few American audiences understand the term, Pitti-Sing might substitute some familiar words such as *board walk*.”

I admit this would spoil Yum-Yum’s dumb reference to a musical instrument, but that’s a badly strained joke that might well be left out anyhow.” [I don’t often disagree with Harry, but—bah!]

Lucius Junius Brutus (Nanki-Poo characterizes his father, the Mikado, as “the Lucius Junius Brutus of his race”): “A Roman consul who lived about 500 B.C. He condemned his own two sons to death when they were caught in a plot to restore the villainous Tarquinius to the monarchy. . . . [Daniel] Knight adds that Lucius Junius Brutus’s name has become synonymous with duty above all.”

And for yam I should get toco (Yum-Yum fears this if she embraces Nanki-Poo since she’s engaged to Ko-Ko): “For today’s audiences this is one of the most confusing expressions in the entire G&S canon. Let’s start with *toco*. The OED . . . defines this as slang for chastisement or corporal punishment. There is good evidence that it was a common expression in Victorian England. . . . In some editions, incidentally, the word is spelled “toko.” [Eric] Partridge [in his *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*] has an entry: ‘*Toco for yam*. To be punished.’ It goes on to say that the expression, which dates back as far as 1860, is analogous to the Biblical stone for a loaf of bread. More explicitly, you can take it to mean ‘For doing something pleasant I should be punished.’ I think we can conclude that the term was generally understood in the vernacular of the day, but mystifies people today. Whoever is playing Yum-Yum can substitute ‘that’ for ‘yam’ and accompany ‘toko’ with a finger drawn across her throat. If people still don’t understand, it’s their own fault for not owning a copy of this book.” [This substitute of “that” for “yam” appears in the G. Schirmer score, so that’s the way the line is usually sung in American productions. But *not* in Austin—since 1998.]

Happy Dispatch (Nanki-Poo threatens to “perform the Happy Dispatch with this dagger” if he can’t marry Yum-Yum): “A euphemism of *Hara-Kiri*, from *hara* meaning ‘belly’ and *kiri* meaning ‘cut.’ It refers to suicide by disembowelment as formerly practiced, with due ceremony, by the highest classes in Japan when in disgrace. [Daniel] Knight adds that the suicide’s family was also required to die with him unless a special writ was obtained from the emperor. The practice went out in the late 1800s.”

Parliamentary Trains (One of the Mikado’s punishments is to make railway car graffiti scribblers “ride on a buffer, In Parliamentary trains”): “In 1844 the British Parliament decreed that each workday every railroad company had to run at least one train in each direction, with stops at every station, and run at least twelve miles an hour. The law was changed in 1883, but those minimum-fare parliamentary trains were still slow and uncomfortable.”

Monday Pops (Another of the Mikado’s punishments is to force “music-hall singers” to listen to music “At classical Monday Pops”): “Popular concerts. [Arthur] Jacobs explains the term as being short for ‘Classical Monday Popular Concerts.’ They were established in 1858 by the music publishing house of Chappell and were held in St. James’s Hall, on the site of the present-day Piccadilly Hotel. . . .”

Snickersnee (Ko-Ko, in his lie about a beheading that never happened, tells the Mikado that he “drew” his “snickersnee”): “An old, jocular word for a long knife or small sword; the term is from the Dutch *snik and snee*, a sailor’s knife. It has also been

[continued on page 5]

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).

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Lexicographic Gleanings, cont. from page 4

ascribed to the musical chord emitted by a well-swung vorpal blade.
...

Niger (Ko-Ko, agreeing with Katisha, assures her that he likes "to see a tiger From the Congo or the Niger, And especially when lashing of his tail!"): "The general region of northwest Africa drained by the Niger River. Many critics have complained that tigers are not native to the Congo, Niger, or any other regions of Africa. Not only that, but *Niger* does not rhyme with *tiger*. Ko-Ko's education (a dropout Ph.D. in tailoring) obviously was not of the highest order. Gilbert, presumably, was only kidding."

Tom-tit: (Ko-Ko sings an affecting tale to Katisha about this bird who committed suicide due to unrequited love): "A bird of the tit family, all being cute little chickadee-like rascals. Brewer . . . and the noted ornithologist Michael Walters . . . both agree that *Tom* implies not male, but small, as in Tom Thumb. This being so, was Gilbert careless when referring to 'a little tom-tit'? In any event, the context clearly implies a small male bird."

If you're not familiar with Harry Benford's *Gilbert and Sullivan Lexicon*, perhaps you will realize from reading these entries that it is probably the most entertaining reference work ever written. It is truly indispensable to any Savoyard's library—and it's still available, at a reduced price, from Amazon.com. Or if you'd like to help the Society and save postage costs, purchase your copy at the sales desk when you attend *The Mikado* in June.

Now put this newsletter aside, take out a piece of paper, and number from one to thirteen. . . .

Photo Shoot Video

Ever wonder about what goes into preparing the publicity for our grand summer production? AustinLiveTheatre.com attended the publicity photo session where Brenda Ladd worked with Russell Gregory (the Mikado), Tamsen Cohagan (Yum-Yum) and Holton Johnson (Nanki-Poo) to create the image for our flyers and poster (see page 6 for an example). You can view the five-minute video at the following link:

<http://tinyurl.com/ALTPSMK>

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels are "a thing of shreds and patches, of ballad, songs, and snatches, and dreamy lullaby," and are ready to entertain you at your next event. See our website, www.gilbertsullivan.org, for further details.

For bookings or additional information, please contact **Robert L. Schneider** by email at minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org, or by calling (512) 789-2928.



Wand'ring Minstrels (l-r) Janette Jones, Martha Dudgeon, and Robert L. Schneider

Armstrong Moving & Storage

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



MAY 2011

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The
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*The Major-General's daughters
 from The Pirates of Penzance ... by Kids
 see page 2*

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

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 believes that a great nation deserves great art.



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