

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SEPTEMBER 2013 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

A brand new season! All of us who enjoyed *Princess Ida* at the Worley Barton Theater in June have hummed the tunes and remembered the magic throughout the summer months. And now as we all descend from the empyrean heights, we find to our delight that not all of the joy is behind us.



A splendid new season of musicales is planned for the coming year by our own **Janette Jones**. Look at the exciting prospects before us:

- Sunday, September 8 – Our season-opening musicale at Westminster Harris Bell Hall is entitled “Stars of G&S Go Italian!” As Janette began planning for this event, she mused, “What if Hilarion took Ida to Italy for their honeymoon?” It’s an intriguing thought—the happy bride and groom leaving strife and conflict behind and basking in the beauty and romance of Venice. Mark your calendar to join us for an afternoon of music with an Italian flavor featuring numerous stars of recent grand productions.
- Sunday, November 3 – The second musicale of the season will feature “Stars of the G&S Chorus” once more. The last time we had a musicale featuring chorus members, we were dazzled by the star power of our choristers. We will be again!
- Sunday, January 5 – We will hold our annual meeting and choral sing-along on this date. Members will elect a board for the coming year and catch up on Society news.
- Sunday, February 23 – Ralph MacPhail, Jr., our esteemed Artistic Director, will be on hand for this musicale. Stay tuned for details.
- Saturday and Sunday, March 1-2 – Auditions for next summer’s grand production are scheduled for these dates.
- Sunday, May 18 – Our musicale will be a preview of the delights to come in June.
- June 12-22 – The season culminates in our summer grand production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. What a fitting climax to such a wonderful season!

Get out your calendars and reserve these dates (all musicales at 3:00 p.m.; other details to come), as each one will be a special gem.

Our Board of Directors accepted with regret the resignation of **Pat Turpin** this summer. Pat has been a mainstay at every musicale and at our annual opening night gala, baking her marvelous cakes and serving as the perfect hostess. To our great pleasure, she said she would continue to serve as volunteer coordinator and auditions coordinator. Thank you, Pat!

To our continued pleasure, **Allan Longacre** has agreed to return to the board and complete Pat’s term. Allan has served in leadership roles on our board in past years and has had a long career in community

theater management. He will once again be an immense asset to our Society. Welcome, Allan!

Warmest good wishes to all of you,

Libby Weed



Sunday, September 8, at 3 pm

Harris Bell Hall

Westminster, 4100 Jackson (see map, page 6)

For our season-opening musicale, we present “Stars of G&S Go Italian!” Stars of recent grand productions, directed by **Janette Jones**, will bring us an afternoon of lovely music with an Italian flavor. You will hear musical selections from Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Gondoliers* as well as popular operas and musical theater. Join us for a taste of Italy!

As usual, bring munchies for a social hour after the musicale if you can. How about mini-cannoli cream cups? Italian cream cake? Pizza bites? Artisanal breads? Asiago, provolone, or gorgonzola? Tiramisu? Italian sodas? Anything is welcome, but Italian flavors would be fun!

Parking is available in the visitor parking garage and in the parking lot on the north side of the facility. Don’t miss this free performance!

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RALPH MACPHAIL, JR.
POST OFFICE BOX 14
BRIDGEWATER, VIRGINIA 22812 - 0014

August 2013

To All who Joined the Ascent of Those Empyrean Heights toward Castle Adamant,

This adventure was a pretty “heady” experience, wasn’t it? As I look back on it, I feel rather like King Gama, who had nothing whatever to grumble at!

Princess Ida certainly had its challenges: three acts with different sets, multiple chorus costumes (and highly specialized costumes, too—such as armor), so many props, blank-verse dialogue, a more-than-usually challenging score of, in places, truly operatic proportions.

Once again, the GSSA board stepped out in faith, and supported their decision, once made, strongly and in many various ways: with their enthusiasm, time and dedication, and their coffers. They proudly presented this central-Texas première before appreciative audiences who learned of the production through a masterful campaign of publicity. They—and we—were richly rewarded.

As I write, the DVDs and CDs are in final preparation, and I’m looking forward to seeing again the results of all of our efforts that “paid off” so handsomely, both artistically and financially.

It’s impossible to name names without naming them all, so please let me thank the entire cast of ***Princess Ida*** for your wonderful performances; the backstage and technical crewmembers who supported the cast so well; the instrumentalists in the pit who provided their critical support so faithfully; the volunteers at the front-of-house who welcomed our audiences so hospitably; and the financial supporters and members of GSSA who made it all possible.

I *have* to mention three persons by name: Production Manager Bill Hatcher, whose leadership, attention to detail, enthusiasm, and friendship helped to assure high standards in everything he touched; Music Director and Conductor Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, whose devotion to high musical standards in general and Sir Arthur Sullivan in particular ensured an excellent rendering of ***Princess Ida***’s challenging score; and Libby Weed who, with her wonderful and hard-working board, saw to it that the production team had what it needed to succeed.

I read a number of programs and newsletters from various companies specializing in Gilbert & Sullivan, and I know that for some companies audiences are dwindling, bank balances are sliding, and perhaps—well, an enumeration of the inevitable results I’d rather leave to *you*. But our company appears to be building in terms of audience development, strength of production, and (equally important to *me*) cohesiveness and friendliness in the interpersonal realm—an absolute *necessity* when presenting these works effectively on the stage.

Congratulations to all concerned for a wonderful and memorable production of ***Princess Ida***. As we leave the rarified air of *Ida*’s university, it’s just about time to return to Portsmouth, smell that salty sea water, and climb aboard ***H.M.S. Pinafore*** where even more delights are awaiting us as we return to another and equally delightful corner of the wonderful world of Gilbert & Sullivan.

Yours sincerely,



Ida is her Name

by Reba Gillman

I took a two-week course in June—I experienced a new G&S show and I learned to love it. *Princess Ida*—a show about women’s education; about an institution for higher learning where it is death to be a man. A bunch of crazy military types—falls right in with contemporary world news; Darwinian Man, a very apey type. What’s going on here? Love—the answer. To give up the fight and enjoy the relationships. If only our world would do the same!

Rafe has told me that the first time he directs a show he ends up loving it. I told him that every show I’ve ever been in I ended up loving every word and every note. I’ve performed in seven G&S operas. That’s a pretty good education. I learned *Princess Ida* by attending every performance; not the same as singing in it—just the closest I could get.

The mission of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin is to bring their operas to the people; to open up this world to many more; to keep the joys of Gilbert and Sullivan alive, just as people work to keep Shakespeare or Mozart alive. They’re all worthy! We have been improving through the years and by now we’re doing a really good job. It’s always Fun! Onward! Ever Onward!

Behind the Scenes

by Sue Ricket Caldwell

My introduction to G&S was as a chorus girl in a Los Angeles production of *Princess Ida* in 1966. I was in the chorus of a number of early GSSA productions in the years B.K. (before kids)—the last time in 1983. I could not resist trying out for my beloved *Ida*, and was delighted to be accepted in the chorus.

I had often seen **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** conducting the orchestra, but had never sung under his direction. His skill and concentration helped bring the music to life without undue strife under an abbreviated and demanding schedule (we started late to accommodate participants in an Austin Lyric Opera production). I had briefly observed **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, in staging rehearsals, but now could admire his prodigious efforts to bring out the charm and humor of this less-familiar show. It was interesting to watch as Rafe and Jeffrey negotiated compromises between Rafe’s vision of staging with Jeffrey’s need for us to see his direction.

The stars of the show each embodied their character with remarkable professionalism. Many in the chorus are also trained vocalists, whereas “back in the old days” I felt at home as a computer programmer who just liked to sing and dance. But while I was in awe of those around me, I also felt accepted—there was great camaraderie among the cast and crew.

I treasure every minute of rehearsals and performances—and am glad to leave all that hard work to the younger folk in the future!



We mourn the passing of long-time member **Frances Johnson**, beloved wife of Board member **Leonard Johnson**, in July. She was a remarkable person in many ways. She loved and was trained in music, as Leonard was. She was deeply involved with religious education and studied under Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Seminary in New York. She taught at the diocesan seminary, Detroit, and the Seminary of the Southwest, Austin. She served at St. Michael’s Episcopal, Austin; St. John’s Presbyterian, Manchaca; and Holy Spirit Episcopal, Dripping Springs.

We offer our deepest sympathy to Leonard on the loss of his dear wife.

NEWS of our MEMBERS

Michelle Girardot begins her second year of opera studies at the University of Houston Moores School of Music. She made the top choir at UH last year, and they were invited to Germany this summer for the Marktoberdorf International Choral Competition where they won first place in a tie with a professional German choir. She recently sang the Spotlight on Opera performance of the Act I, scene 3, duet as Sister Constance, from the *Dialogues of the Carmelites* by Poulenc. Her love of opera began when, at the age of 6, she played the Midshipmite in GSSA’s *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

Bill Hatcher has just returned from a week in Colorado where he and a friend rode bikes and camped out in the woods. He reports that he feels fine but the tattler feels that his mental capacities should be re-evaluated!

Our Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, and his wife **Alice** taught a Gilbert & Sullivan Road Scholar course at the Warwick Center in Warwick, New York, in late August.

In May of this year our Lighting Designer, **Jennifer Rogers**, completed her Bachelor’s Degree at the University of Kansas. Congratulations, Jennifer!

Our Stage Manager, **Monica Kurtz**, and our Projectionist, **Pixie Avent**, are vacationing in Europe this summer visiting Monica’s relatives and escaping the Texas heat.

Winners of *Princess Ida* DVDs

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

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Ben Caudle | Katrina Kennedy |
| Christina Fairfield | David McLean |
| Tom Fuller | Lisa Quates |
| Cynthia Hale | Joe Reynolds |
| Mary Herrold | Ashton Wood |

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive by early November; the deadline for submissions is October 11. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin presented *Princess Ida* in June 2013

photos courtesy Cecily Johnson and David Little

see more at gilbertsullivanatx.smugmug.com



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).

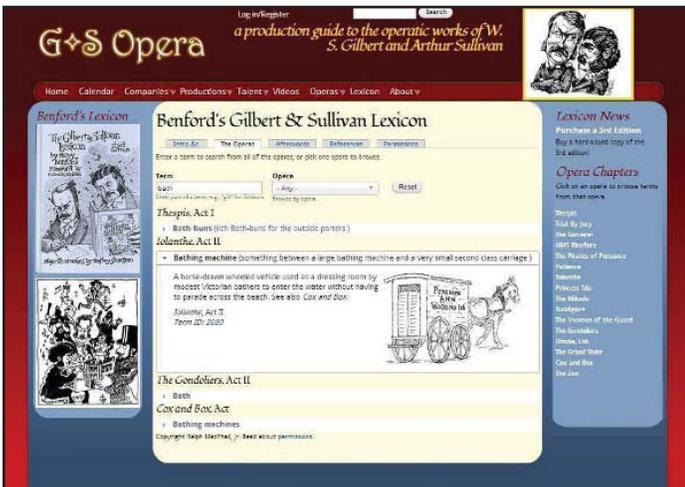
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We are proud to list our members in our programs, but if you would prefer NOT to be listed in our programs, please check here:



screen shot of the online Lexicon

G&S Resource Enhanced

There is a wealth of information about all things Gilbert & Sullivan on Ted Spencer's website, GSOpera.com. In the last year, working with our own Ralph MacPhail, Jr., he created an online version of Harry Benford's classic reference work, *The Gilbert & Sullivan Lexicon*. Rafe is the new editor of the Lexicon as it moves from its third edition in print to a dynamic online "publication." It is ready for your review – just click on the **Lexicon** link on the top menu-bar. Rafe welcomes suggestions, corrections, and feedback; please send them to RafeMacPhail@yahoo.com.



our 2006 production of H.M.S. Pinafore

Summer 2014 Grand Production: *H.M.S. Pinafore* June 12-22, 2014

Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School
 11908 N. Lamar

Get ready to sail the ocean blue with The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin, as we present one of the most beloved of all the G&S operas!

Artistic Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr., and Music Director Jeffrey Jones-Ragona will again direct an all-star cast to set Austin singing.

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin are looking forward to an exciting year after their successful performance at Houston's Mucky Duck. They will make your concerts, school events or private parties entertaining and fun. Guaranteed to get the audience laughing and singing along to favorite Gilbert and Sullivan and Broadway musical numbers.

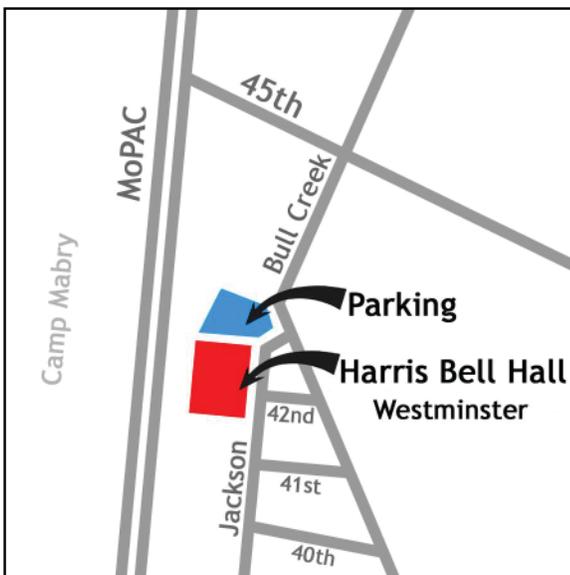
Contact **Robert L. Schneider** (bigdaddymusic1@gmail.com), or see our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org) for further details.

the Wand'ring Minstrels recently performed at the French Legation in Austin and at McGonigel's Mucky Duck in Houston; shown (l-r in left photo) are Janette Jones, Katie Schneider, Marti Mortensen Ahern, and Robert Schneider



Top line of mailing label is date when your membership expires.

SEPTEMBER 2013



*Map to September Musicale
 See details on page 1!*

Coming Events

- Sept. 8 "Stars of G&S Go Italian!" (see p. 1)
- Nov. 3 "Stars of the G&S Chorus" Musicale
- Jan. 5 Annual Meeting and Musicale
- Feb. 23 Musicale
- March 1-2 *H.M.S. Pinafore* Auditions
- May 18 *H.M.S. Pinafore* Preview Musicale
- June 12-22 *H.M.S. Pinafore* summer production

**Armstrong
 Moving & Storage**

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

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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 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 **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**
 Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

Board of Directors

- Libby Weed** President
- Roberta Long** Executive Vice President
- Dave Wieckowski** Treasurer and CFO
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