

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

JANUARY 2015 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Dear Friends and Members,

Are you making New Year's resolutions? Or are you looking back on 2014 and reflecting on the year's events? I'm doing both, and I'd like to invite you to reminisce and resolve with me.



Reminiscences: The year 2014 was a memorable one for G&S Austin.

- Our February production of *Trial by Jury* surpassed expectations, filling two houses. We are acting on the discovery that our audiences want a second staged performance each year.
- The summer grand production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* brought large audiences to see a spectacular show ... and once again we garnered some coveted B. Iden Payne nominations.
- *Downton Abbey Sings G&S* and *Return to Fairyland* musicales, devised and directed by Janette Jones, were two of the most enjoyable Sunday afternoons of the year.

It was a lovely year for G&S Austin, and the coming year should be splendid, as well. That leads to ...

Resolutions: Make plans now to be a part of these 2015 events:

- Annual Business Meeting and Sing-Along (Sunday, January 11). Join us at Genesis Presbyterian Church and enjoy some informal singing of G&S choruses led by **Leonard Johnson** and accompanied by **Jeanne Sasaki**. In a brief business meeting we will elect our board of directors for 2015. Please see the following article.
- Mid-year production of *The Zoo* (Sunday, February 15, 2:30 and 4 pm). Join us at the lovely Worley Barton Theater for a charming piece featuring music by Sullivan but libretto by another collaborator, B. C. Stephenson under the pen name Bolton Rowe. The score for *The Zoo*, first produced in 1875, lay dormant until the original manuscript was purchased at an auction in 1966. Since then, it has enjoyed a revival. Like *Trial by Jury*, it is a one-act opera without spoken dialogue, running about 40 minutes. The story concerns two smitten gentlemen: A nobleman who goes to the zoo to woo the girl who sells snacks there, and a chemist who loves a young lady and believes that he has poisoned her by mixing up her father's prescription with peppermint that he had meant for her. Sounds a lot like a farcical Gilbert libretto, doesn't it? Don't miss it!
- Musicales to bring you joy. On May 17, you'll get a sneak peek at this summer's *The Sorcerer*. In September and November, we'll have some more wonderful confections.

- Grand production of *The Sorcerer* June 18-28. More on this to come ... but be sure the dates are on your calendar.

Thanks for reminiscing and resolving with me!

Libby Weed



Our Society will elect a Board of Directors for the calendar year 2015 at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 11, at 3 pm. **Please come** to this important gathering at Genesis Presbyterian (see map on p. 6). At the meeting, we will hear a report on activities of the past year and plans for the coming year, then hold elections.

Reba Gillman, Chair of the Nominating Committee, was successful in securing the agreement of the twelve current members of the Board of Directors to continue their service in 2015. These nominees are:

Reba Gillman	Allan Longacre	Charles Smaistrila
Leonard Johnson	Michael Meigs	David Treadwell
David Little	Diane Radin	Libby Weed
Roberta Long	Robert L. Schneider	Dave Wieckowski

Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor; self-nomination is permitted. (Of course, nominees must be members.) Each paid-up member is entitled to a number of votes equal to the number of Directors to be elected, but is not permitted to vote more than once for a given candidate. The candidates receiving the most votes are elected. In accordance with our by-laws, officers are elected by the Board during their first meeting after the Annual Meeting.

Following the election, **Leonard Johnson** will lead us in singing some great G&S choruses ... and provide some excellent tutelage as he does so. As always, **please bring munchies to share!**

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A Return to Fairyland – Memories of *Iolanthe* by Reba Gillman



Sunday, November 9 at 3 pm: we are happily gathering in the Worley Barton Theater at the Brentwood Christian School, to enjoy recollections of our delightful June 2009 production of *Iolanthe*. **Janette Jones** has organized this musicale with her usual imagination and energy. We can expect cleverly contrived costumes, good music, and even occasional amazing hints at scenery. And of course good singers, and the

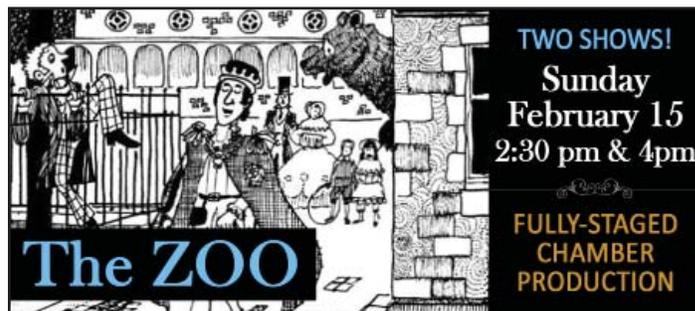
wonderful **Jeanne Sasaki** at the piano, with **Cody Ireland** turning pages. All are singing the roles they sang in 2009 except **Angela Irving** who is replacing Meredith Ruduski as Phyllis; and two men and two women choral singers who are also new. Again we have about 140 people in the enthusiastic audience.

As the program begins we find that President **Libby Weed** is also serving as Mother Goose, the Narrator. **Lisa Alexander** plays the part of Queen of the Fairies; **June Julian** plays Iolanthe; **Angela Irving** – Phyllis; **Natalie Wilemon** – Celia; **Patricia Combs** – Leila; **Derek Smootz** – Strephon; **Andy Fleming** – Earl Tolloller; **David Fontenet** – Earl of Mountarat; **Arthur DiBianca** – The Lord Chancellor; **Russell Gregory** – Private Willis; **Nancy Arnold, Maurine McLean, Janette Jones** – Chorus of fairies; **Mark Long, Robert L. Schneider, David Treadwell** – Chorus of Peers. All are on stage, including Jeanne at her piano, who is frequently rendered invisible when she is plunged into darkness. The music begins as Celia, Leila, and the chorus of fairies sing “Tripping hither, tripping thither,” to tell how they live their fairy lives, and how much they miss their sister, Iolanthe, who was banished twenty-five years earlier by their Fairy Queen for marrying a mortal. By fairy law, every fairy who marries a mortal must die. But Iolanthe did not die; why did the Queen banish her? The fairies persuade the Queen to call up Iolanthe and sing “Iolanthe! From thy dark exile thou art summoned!” joined by Iolanthe and then Celia, Leila, and the chorus of fairies. The fairies learn that Iolanthe had a son, who is half a fairy. He lives nearby and sees his mother regularly. The story continues, told by the songs the cast sing. Phyllis and Strephon sing of their love, “Good morrow, good lover” and “None shall part us from each other.” They leave and the Peers arrive singing “Loudly let the trumpet bray.” The Lord Chancellor sings “When I went to the bar as a very young man” to explain that he always keeps his duty in mind, and that is why he has advanced to his present position. Our recollection leaves out the entire Finale of the first act, and skips to Act II, omitting much complicated humorous material.

Private Willis sings “When all night long a chap remains On sentry-go, to chase monotony he exercises of his brains, That is, assuming that he’s got any.” He finishes the song singing “Nature always does contrive – Fal, lal, la la! That ev’ry boy and ev’ry gal That’s born into the world alive is either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative!” Fairies sing “Strephon’s a Member of Parliament! Carries ev’ry bill he chooses, To his measures all assent – Showing that fairies have their uses. Whigs and Tories Dim their glories, Giving an ear to all his stories – Lords and Commons are both in the blues! Strephon makes them shake in their shoes!” informing us that the Fairy Queen has enabled Strephon to become a member of Parliament to the discomfort of the Peers. Peers then sing “Strephon’s a Member of Parliament! Running amuck of all abuses, His unqualified assent Somehow nobody now refuses.

Whigs and Tories Dim their glories, Carrying ev’ry bill he may wish: Here’s a pretty Kettle of Fish!” Leila, Celia, Tolloller, Mountarat, and the fairies sing “In vain to us you plead – Don’t go!” Leila and Celia are scolding Tolloller and Mountarat, but asking them not to leave. They have fallen for the peers. The Queen and fairies sing “Oh, foolish fay” and the Queen confesses that she, too, feels the attraction of a stalwart man. But she will obey the fairy law, she will not marry a mortal. The Lord Chancellor sings “Love, unrequited, robs me of my rest” which leads into the famous patter song, “When you’re lying awake with a dismal headache, and repose is taboo’d by anxiety,” He is overwhelmed by thoughts of Phyllis, desire to marry her, and belief that it may be wrong for him to presume to. To encourage the Lord Chancellor, Tolloller and Mountarat join him to sing “If you go in You’re sure to win – Yours will be the charming maidie: Be your law The ancient saw, ‘faint heart never won fair lady!’” Phyllis and Strephon straighten out their misunderstandings and sing, “If we’re weak enough to tarry Ere we marry, You and I,” and ask Strephon’s mother Iolanthe to plead with the Lord Chancellor to allow them to marry. Iolanthe knows that if she reveals her identity, she will die in punishment. Shrouded by a veil, she sings “My lord, a suppliant at your feet I kneel, Oh, listen to a mother’s fond appeal ... ’tis for my son, young Strephon, that I plead! He loves!” The Lord Chancellor is moved by the mother’s song but says it cannot be, for Phyllis is his promised bride. As the fairies lament, Iolanthe begins the song that will reveal her identity, and result in her death. The Queen raises her sword to kill Iolanthe but Leila says all the fairies have married Peers and must die as well. The Queen says she can’t slaughter the whole company, but the law is clear. The Lord Chancellor offers a suggestion. Insert a single word to read: Every fairy shall die who *doesn’t* marry a mortal. The Queen calls Private Willis up to save her life, which he obligingly does. All sing “Soon as we may, Off and a-way! Up in the sky, Ever so high, We’ll commence our journey airy – Happy are we – As you can see, Ev’ry one is now a fairy!” All fly off to Fairyland and President Libby thanks us all for participating.

David sings the Pirate King’s lead-in, Andy conducts as performers and audience join in singing our traditional “Hail, Poetry” (*The Pirates of Penzance*) and “Now to the banquet we press” (*The Sorcerer*). A very happy crowd rises to express approval, and surges off to enjoy the refreshments in the lobby.



A Special Event: *The Zoo*

Music by Sir Arthur Sullivan / Libretto by Bolton Rowe

two shows: Sunday, February 15, at 2:30 and 4 pm
Worley Barton Theater

Brentwood Christian School, 11908 North Lamar Blvd.

Visit www.gilbertsullivan.org or call (512) 472-4772

TICKETS: “Pay What You Will”

See next newsletter for more details.

A Return to Fairyland

photos courtesy Steve Schwartzman

see more at gilbertsullivan.austin.smugmug.com



Libby Weed as *Mother Goose*



Patricia Combs, Andy Fleming, Lisa Alexander, Russell Gregory, Arthur DiBianca, Angela Irving, Derek Smootz, and David Fontenet



June Julian as *Iolanthe* pleading for *Strephon*



Patricia Combs, Natalie Wilemon, June Julian implore Andy Fleming and David Fontenet
"In vain to us you plead – Don't Go!"



Nancy Arnold, Mark Long, Maurine McLean, and Robert L. Schneider



Nancy Arnold, Maurine McLean, Janette Jones, and Lisa Alexander



Angela Irving and Derek Smootz as *Phyllis and Strephon*



David Treadwell, Patricia Combs, Andy Fleming, Lisa Alexander, and Russell Gregory



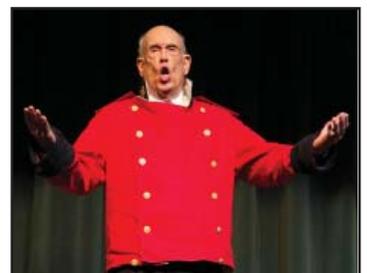
pianist extraordinaire Jeanne Sasaki



Arthur DiBianca



Andy Fleming conducting



Russell Gregory



The Source of *The Sorcerer*

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



Earlier columns have attempted to show Gilbert's indebtedness to Gilbert in writing his libretti, for one of the delights of studying Sir William is discovering his self-plagiarism (self-inspiration?). Even his early reviewers frequently noticed this, and Gilbert himself, late in life, expressed his "indebtedness to the author of the Bab Ballads . . . from whom I have unblushingly cribbed. I can only hope

that, like Shakespeare, I may be held to have so far improved upon the original stories as to have justified the thefts that I committed."

The Sorcerer is unique among the Gilbert & Sullivan collaborations in that it was inspired by a Gilbert short story, not by his light verse or one of his earlier dramatic works. (I added those "hises" for, of course, the use of "love potions" is centuries-old in stories, plays, and operas, some of which remain well-known today; Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1590-96?) and Donizetti's *An Elixir of Love* (1832) are two of the most famous. (As noted in the last issue, *Dulcamara* was a burlesque by Gilbert of *An Elixir of Love*. And Donizetti's opera, incidentally, was an Italian adaptation by Felice Romani of Frenchman Eugène Scribe's libretto, *Le philtre*, set to music in 1831 by Daniel Auber.)

But in 1877, when Gilbert was casting about for an idea for his first full-length collaboration with Arthur Sullivan to be produced by Richard D'Oyly Carte, he went to his own short story, "An Elixir of Love," which had been published in the Christmas issue of *The Graphic* the year before. It's worth your attention, and you can read it here: <https://archive.org/details/foggertysfairyt00gilb> (note: the 00 before "gilb" are zeroes; the o before the "t" is an oh. The story runs on pages 43-68 in Gilbert's collection, *Foggerty's Fairy and Other Tales*).

Gilbert's method of writing his libretti centered on developing his plots in short-story form, then revising, revising, and (after consultation with Sullivan as to musical situations) revising some more. While "An Elixir of Love" is very similar to *The Sorcerer*, many adjustments were made to convert it to a libretto. In it you will find that the romantic couple in *The Sorcerer* (Alexis Poindextre and Aline Sangazure) have different names (The Rev. Stanley Gay and Jessie Lightly). J. W. Wells & Co., Family Sorcerers, located in St. Mary Axe in London are "Baylis & Culpepper, magicians, astrologers, and professors of the Black Art" located in St. Martin's Lane. And while romantic mix-ups are similar in both works, the Rev. Mr. Gay loses his love to his bishop, and his love's father, Sir Caractacus Lightly, baronet, ends up marrying the Rev. Gay's cook and housekeeper, Zorah.

It's a delightful read. If you'd like to compare it with *The Sorcerer*, and don't have a copy of the Savoy Operas in your nightstand (which you should), surf over to:

http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/sorcerer/sorcerer_lib.pdf.

At the risk of repeating myself, I'll conclude by saying that to *really* appreciate the Gilbert of Gilbert & Sullivan, it's necessary to become acquainted with his earlier works. It will be a delightful experience and will increase your appreciation for his libretti.



Auditions for *The Sorcerer*

Auditions for our summer 2015 production of *The Sorcerer* will take place February 21 and 22 at Brentwood Christian School, 11908 North Lamar Boulevard. Look for more details in the next newsletter.

Wand'ring Minstrels at St. Mark UMC



above, Janette Jones and Robert L. Schneider perform an excerpt from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*

below, students and staff are drafted into performing with the Minstrels





Michael Meigs
photo: Bill Hatcher

Michael Meigs Receives Recognition at the B. Iden Payne Awards Ceremony

The B. Iden Payne Awards Ceremony was held on November 3. While none of our nominees for *H.M.S. Pinafore* came home with a coveted BIPPY award, GSSA Board Member **Michael Meigs** received a Certificate of Special Recognition “awarded to Michael Meigs of Central Texas Live Theatre for reporting on the arts and fostering a regional perspective.” Congratulations, Michael, on this well-deserved honor!

NEWS of our MEMBERS

The Society has awarded a Music Scholarship of \$500 to faithful performer and music student, **Andy Fleming**. Andy has performed in eleven summer productions and numerous musicales with the Society. He also performs with Spotlight on Opera and the Austin Lyric Opera Chorus. He is attending The University of Texas, studying for a Master’s in Vocal Performance.



Andy Fleming
photo: Steve Schwartzman

Two of our frequent performers have been performing at the Georgetown Palace Theatre: **Kate Clark** in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* in November, and **Leann Fryer** in *Shrek the Musical* in December.

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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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:

Wand’ring Minstrels

The Wand’ring Minstrels performed at the St. Mark United Methodist Church’s “St. Market Day Festival.” They received a glowing thank-you from St. Mark’s Jenny Smith:

“Dear Bob, Thanks so much to you, Janette, and all of the Wand’ring Minstrels who performed at our Fall Festival on October 25, 2014. We had a wonderful time! We received enthusiastic compliments from both members of and visitors to St. Mark UMC. Several of our members want to hire the Wand’ring Minstrels just for a fun afternoon event because they enjoyed themselves so much.

“The mix of more recent (Disney, etc.) musical numbers and the original Gilbert & Sullivan pieces was a good way to get both young and old audience members interested and involved. My four year old daughter kept insisting that she wanted to stay for ‘one more song’ until the show was over. I think both the youngsters as the ‘chorus’

and the rest of us in the audience really liked the use of props to help us sing along. The inherent humor in Gilbert & Sullivan’s writing is matched by the light and silly tone that you, the performers, take to keep the show fun and moving. The Beast mask was definitely my favorite prop. Thank you for including me and the audience in the show. It is harder to include others, but I think it was worth it.”

Pictures from this event are on page 4.

To hire the Wand’ring Minstrels for your concert, school event, or private party, contact **Robert L. Schneider** (bigdaddymusic1@gmail.com), or see our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org) for further details or to schedule the Wand’ring Minstrels for your organization.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in early February; the deadline for submissions is January 13. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

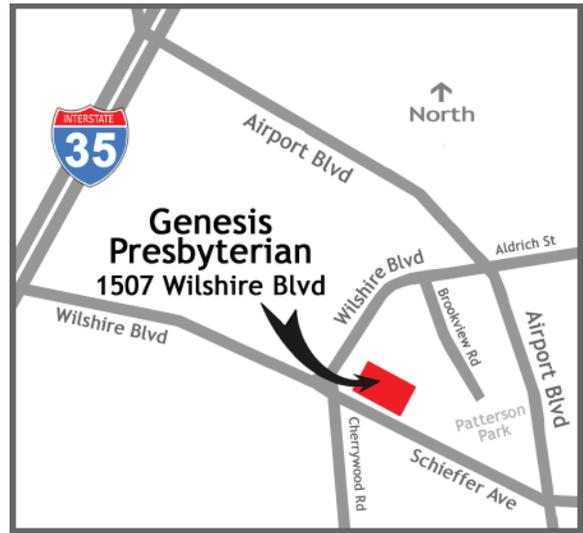
Coming Events

- Jan. 11 Annual Meeting and Musicales (see p. 1)
 Feb. 15 Mid-season one-act production: *The Zoo*
 Feb. 21-22 *The Sorcerer* Auditions
 May 17 *The Sorcerer* Preview Musicales
 June 18-28 *The Sorcerer* summer production

Armstrong Moving & Storage

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*Map to Annual Meeting –
See details on page 1!*

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JANUARY 2015

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Holiday Season Shows

G&S Office: 310 West 43rd Street, Austin, TX 78751
 Mailing Address: P. O. Box 684542, Austin, TX 78768-4542
 Phone: (512) 472-4772 (GSA-GSSA)
 Our web site: www.gilbertsullivan.org
 E-mail: info@gilbertsullivan.org



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 Visit Austin at NowPlayingAustin.com



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

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