

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

APRIL 2015 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin lost one of its most remarkable members on April 1, 2015, with the passing of **Reba Gillman**.



I counted Reba among my most beloved friends. The two of us had many differences in history and background and daily activities, and yet we shared a bond that went far beyond our common interest in Gilbert & Sullivan. Both of us put a high premium on common sense, and quite often we found ourselves coming to similar conclusions when making a decision or facing a controversy. I will always treasure a hand-written letter I received from Reba just over a month ago, reasoning thoughtfully through an issue that the G&S board was facing.

When I first became a part of the board twenty years ago, I was impressed by Reba's intelligence and wisdom, her authoritative presence, and her articulate use of the English language. My admiration of these things grew as we participated together in various activities—writing, proofreading, and editing newsletter articles; sitting side-by-side at meetings and considering a wide range of subjects; enjoying email and telephone conversations; attending musicales and summer performances and discussing our reactions; taking pleasure in social gatherings in restaurants and homes; and sharing information about our children and grandchildren. We grew to care deeply for each other's family.

Reba and Len were inspirations to me in myriad ways. I loved the verbal sparring and humorous exchanges I heard between the two of them over the years. It was clear that they loved each other and were precise matches for each other in wit and temperament and talent. And what talents they had! Both Len's mastery at the piano keyboard and Reba's singing brought a great deal of joy to those who knew them over the years.

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin will long bear the imprint of the Gillmans' influence. Our Gillman Light Opera Orchestra, GLOO, bears the Gillman name and stands as one of the main reasons our performances have grown so greatly in value and beauty.

Beyond all of that, dear Reba, our hearts bear the imprint of the sterling person you were.

Did Gilbert & Sullivan's *Sorcerer* attend Hogwarts? Find out at Magic and Muggles: *The Sorcerer* Preview Musicale

Sunday, May 17, 3 p.m.

Dell Jewish Community Center
7300 Hart Lane (see map on back page)

Get out your Quidditch robes, grab your latest purchase from Ollivander's, and come to *The Sorcerer* Preview Musicale on Sunday afternoon, May 17, at the Jewish Community Center.

There is magic in the air and so the cast from this summer's upcoming production will sing songs from *The Sorcerer*, but with a twist: they have all been changed into your favorite Harry Potter characters.

This is the time to wear your Harry Potter costumes if you have 'em. Those not in costume will also be welcome as Muggles. But Magician or Muggle, it matters not! Come and hear the witty lyrics and beautiful music of Gilbert & Sullivan as a preview of this summer's grand production of *The Sorcerer*.

Admission: Free to the public

Please bring munchies to enjoy after the musicale!

However, please do not bring meat or seafood treats, in observance of the JCC's dietary restrictions.

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The Zoo

by Libby Weed

What would **Reba Gillman** have said about *The Zoo*? She was there on Sunday, February 12, keenly observing both of the two afternoon performances. She had hoped to be in the company of her son Jonathan, a celebrated professional who loves theater but is (rather remarkably, considering his parents' fervor) not a fan of Gilbert & Sullivan. He had graciously planned to be with his mother at this special event but was prevented from traveling at the last minute by his wife's hospitalization.

So Reba was with friends and was in her element, but she was without her anticipated escort. She surely made notes, as she always did at any musicale or board meeting or other gathering. She would have had a sense of what were the highlights, the moments of special joy, the memorable lines or notes. She would have germinated a plan for extended quotations of special sections of the libretto.



Reba and I talked several times about the production, both that afternoon and in succeeding days. She enjoyed it quite a lot, although—like just about all the rest of us—she had known nothing whatsoever about *The Zoo* before artistic director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, suggested performing it. She and I agreed that Rafe and music director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, the “orchestra” of **Jeanne Sasaki** on piano and **Allison Welch** on oboe, and the charming cast gave us a delightful afternoon. We agreed that we learned a few things, including these:

- It is worthwhile and enlightening to explore some Sullivan-without-Gilbert and Gilbert-without-Sullivan pieces.
- Sullivan's music is always tuneful and lovely.
- Stephenson/Bowe, Sullivan's collaborator for *The Zoo*, had funny ideas and made us laugh but could not touch Gilbert's ingenious wit and deft way with words.

In writing her usual column, Reba would have set the scene for us, describing the crowd gathering in the lobby of the Worley Barton Theater and then taking their seats for the performance with an air of anticipation. She would have mentioned the printed program prepared by **Sue Caldwell** and the beautiful libretto prepared by **Larry Shepley**—the libretto carefully followed by many in the audience throughout the show, as the house lights were left partially lit to enable this. Reba would have noted that the “suggestion of a set” was more than that and was quite effective: a rolling refreshment cart, a picturesque wrought iron table and chairs, directional signs (including, ominously, a pointer to the

“Bear Pit”), and large plants that lined the a pathway through the London Zoological Gardens. She would have enthusiastically noted the colorful period costumes put together by the cast under the creative leadership of **Janette Jones** and **Pam Fowler**. Surely she would have celebrated the marvelous array of hats!

I don't know what sections Reba would have chosen to quote, but I feel sure she would have walked us through the story, highlighting the humorous aspects of the two intertwined romantic tales. We would have learned about one despondent suitor intent on suicide (shades of Nanki-Poo in *The Mikado*?) and about the gastronomical woes of another suitor who sought to impress the virtuous young lady at the refreshment stall by buying and ingesting every item she sold. Perhaps Reba would have told about the pitiful attempts at speechifying by this member of the aristocracy who had been disguised as a commoner in order to win his love's heart. Only through interpretation by the chorus could the audience have understood a single word. Reba might have described the scene as the dejected Carboy descended toward the Bear Pit to a rather ridiculously extended farewell by the rest of the cast (shades of the policemen going off to battle in *The Pirates of Penzance*?). She might have pointed out that Sullivan always did make adroit use of choruses!

Reba might have noted that at one point, when one of the young ladies was fearful about the welfare of the gentleman she loved, the chorus assured her, “He'll come back presently, and it will all end pleasantly.” Indeed, it did end pleasantly. And, indeed, all who attended appeared to enjoy the show and the warm fellowship (and plentiful food) at the social hour between the two performances.

Through many seasons, I have enjoyed the musicales our Society has produced, especially during the recent era when they have been graced with Janette Jones's special gifts of creativity and coordination. I have enjoyed our two February “minor productions” of *Trial by Jury* in 2014 and *The Zoo* this year. And as much as I have enjoyed the occasions themselves, I have looked forward to reading Reba's accounts in the newsletter afterward. I loved the way she recreated an event, brought it back to life, and made it sing.

Thank you, Reba, for being our friend, our scribe, our historian, our conscience, and our inspiration.



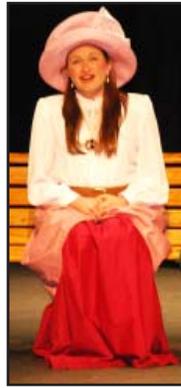
Reba inducted Libby into the GSSA Hall of Fame in 2011

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin presented *The Zoo* in February 2015
 photos courtesy Sue Caldwell

see more at gilbertsullivanatx.smugmug.com



the British Public (l-r): Daniel Brookshire, Alexandra Reilman, Jay Young, Lisa Alexander, Tim Shelburne, Leann Fryer, Mark Long, Janette Jones



(left) Lætitia (Angela Irving) searches for her true love, Carboy;



(right) Carboy (Andy Fleming) plans suicide because Lætitia's father refused to allow their marriage



Eliza (Katherine Wiggins) is "a simple little child"



Thomas (Bruno Barbosa) loves Eliza



Carboy explains his "suicide by bear" was foiled – no bears!



Mr. Grinder (Patrick Wright) continues to reject his daughter Lætitia's suitor, Carboy



Eliza computes the cost of all Thomas has eaten, while he is in pain from so much food



Thomas, revealed as a Duke, proposes to Eliza



(left) bystanders offer conflicting advice on helping Thomas, who has collapsed from overeating



as expected, it all ends pleasantly



the orchestra: Jeanne Sasaki on piano and Allison Welch on oboe

The “Two” Sorcerers

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Readers of this column, like all students of Gilbert & Sullivan, know that an interesting aspect of Savoy Opera scholarship is studying the changes made in the libretti before and after the opening nights. We treasure early material that didn't make it, for one reason or another, to the opening night version, and we delight in noting how the libretti were changed following their premières. We value Gilbert's various drafts and enjoy learning (or perhaps interpreting for ourselves) the *reasons* for the changes.



Readers of this column will also know that changes after opening usually entailed the deletion of songs (or parts of songs). Rarely were lyrics actually *changed*, for adjustments were usually made to condense the work. A notable exception is *Ruddigore* for which the ending dialogue and finale of Act II were changed, and years after the deaths of the collaborators, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company deleted verses and entire numbers and condensed and further changed the finale.

But possibly none of the works was changed as radically by Gilbert & Sullivan themselves as was *The Sorcerer*. When the work opened at the Opéra Comique on November 17, 1877, the action, set in front of the “*Exterior of SIR MARMADUKE'S Elizabethan Mansion*,” proceeded as we know it today—until the very end of Act I, when almost everyone had sipped the love-philtre-spiked tea. But while they “*struggle[d] against its effects*” they did not “*fall insensible on the stage*” as the libretto now has it; they “*resume[d] the Brindisi with a violent effort*” and sang:

Eat, drink, and be gay,
Banish all worry and sorrow—
Laugh gaily to-day—
Weep, if you're sorry, to-morrow.
Come, pass the cup round—
We will go bail for the liquor;
It's strong, I'll be bound,
For it was brewed by the vicar!
None so cunning as he
At brewing a jorum of tea.
Ha! ha!
At brewing a jorum of tea!

And the curtain descended on Act I.

Act II in the first version took place in the Market Place in the Village of Ploverleigh. The first stage direction is “*Enter PEASANTS dancing, coupled two and two, an old man with a young girl, then an old woman with a young man, then other ill-assorted couples.*” This chorus then sang:

Happy are we in our loving frivolity,
Happy and jolly as people of quality;
Love is the source of all joy to humanity,
Money, position, and rank are a vanity.
Year after year we've been waiting and tarrying,
Without ever dreaming of loving and marrying.
Though we've been hitherto deaf, dumb, and blind to it,
It's pleasant enough when you've made up your mind to it.

The youthful Constance then entered with the ancient Notary, and she sang her “Dear friends, take pity on my lot” aria. She solicited pity because of her new elixir-induced mismatch, and the story unfolded as we know it.

Why the change seven years later? When *The Sorcerer* was revived in 1884, following the relative failure of *Princess Ida* and while Gilbert & Sullivan were at work on *The Mikado*, I think that both collaborators saw the weakness in the end of Act I of their early work and were determined to improve it.

And they did. The audience on October 11, 1884, were left at the end of Act I with the company (except for Alexis, Aline, and the Sorcerer, John Wellington Wells himself), insensible on the stage. Act II takes place exactly where Act I transpires: at the “*Exterior of SIR MARMADUKE'S Mansion*”—but in that most romantic of scenic effects, “*by moonlight.*” Wells, Alexis, and Aline enter with lanterns, inspecting the sleeping chorus, but leave when the sorcerer sings:

But soft—they waken one by one—
The spell has worked—the deed is done!
I would suggest that we retire
While Love, the Housemaid, lights her kitchen fire!

They do, and they do—and the Villagers (they are not referred to as “Peasants” in the revised version) sing as they fall in love with one another and they dance; only after all that does Constance enter with the Notary, and all proceeds as it had seven years earlier.

Why is the 1884 version an improvement over the 1877 one? There are probably as many answers to that as there are people analyzing the question. Here are *mine*:

- The revised ending of Act I is more dramatic and builds more suspense with virtually everyone unconscious on the ground as a result of drinking the “spiked” tea instead of remaining on their feet and struggling against the drug's effects
- There is more unity to the story with both acts taking place in front of Sir Marmaduke's Elizabethan mansion (and one set was more economical as well)
- The new beginning of Act II “by moonlight” is a very picturesque scene, and the entrance of Wells, Alexis, and Aline with lanterns builds suspense
- The new Act II builds in comic intensity when the chorus awakens and finds themselves ill-matched but proclaiming their love for one another (in an enthusiastic chorus sung in dialect), and then indulging in a vigorous “country dance,” none of which happens in the earlier version
- All of this provides a fine prelude to the increasingly ludicrous mis-matches of the principals that follow, building to the final resolution.

The revision left some inconsistencies. How long does it take for the philtre to work? In 1877 it took a half-hour, and it didn't affect consciousness; but by 1884, this had been expanded to 12 hours, and of course the imbibers lose consciousness within minutes—by the end of the act. But why, in the revised version, doesn't Aline lose consciousness when she finally drinks the philtre toward the end of Act II? And why didn't Gilbert tidy up his details in the libretto?

There's an unbounded field of speculation on which I could discourse for hours!

The Sorcerer



The Sorcerer Cast and Staff

Sir Marmaduke Poindexter – **David Fontenot**

Alexis – **Holton Johnson**

Dr. Daly – **Julius Young**

Notary – **Russell Gregory**

John Wellington Wells – **Arthur DiBianca**

Hercules – **Daniel Kregel**

Lady Sangazure – **Lisa Alexander**

Aline – **Alexandra Reilman**

Mrs. Partlet – **Janette Jones**

Constance – **Patricia Combs**

Female Chorus of Villagers:

Leann Fryer, Rosa Harris,

Maurine McLean, Susan Meitz,

Natalya Shelburne, Sarah Steele,

Abigail Stokley, Jamieson Taylor,

Brittany Trinité, Michelle Vanecek

Male Chorus of Villagers:

Daniel Brookshire, Danny Castillo,

Andy Fleming, Ezra Hankin,

Evan Kelly, Gary Preuss,

Ian Stillwell, David Treadwell,

Patrick Wright, Jay Young

Artistic Director: **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**

Music Director: **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

Production Manager: **Bill Hatcher**

Stage Manager: **Monica Kurtz**

Set Designer: **Ann Marie Gordon**

Lighting Designer: **Jennifer Rogers**

Costume Coordinator: **Pam Fowler**

Rehearsal Pianist: **Karl Logue**

Ad Space Available in the Playbill for *The Sorcerer*

Consider purchasing an ad for your business, practice, service, etc., in the playbill for *The Sorcerer*. It will be seen by several thousand G&S aficionados.

Ads come in several different shapes and sizes, all at reasonable rates:

- Full page 4½”x7½” @ \$300,
- Half page 4½”x3¾” @ \$150, and
- Quarter page - vertical or horizontal - 2¼”x3¾” or 4½”x1⅞” @ \$75.
- The one and only Full Back Page (in color!) can be yours for \$500.

Invite the people with whom you do business to purchase an ad and help support this production.

You can see playbills from our last six productions on our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org): Click Summer Grand Production, then select a show under Recent Summer Productions and click on the Playbill.

To reserve ad space in the playbill for *The Sorcerer*, or to ask questions and get more information, please contact **Libby Weed** at libby@gilbertsullivan.org.

The deadline for ad commitment (both size and format) is May 16, and final copy is due by May 31.

Come to *The Sorcerer* at Reduced Group Rates!

Organizations or individuals who wish to put together a group of at least ten persons to see *The Sorcerer* can contact Michael Meigs at michael@gilbertsullivan.org or telephone 512-420-0888 for information. GSSA can provide a special code to be used for advance purchases at reduced rates either at the Long Center’s on-line ticketing service or when telephoning Long Center ticket services at 512-474-5664.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late May; the deadline for submissions is **May 11**. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

This and many previous editions of the newsletter are available (in glorious color!) on our website. www.gilbertsullivan.org: under About Us, select Newsletter Archive, then the desired issue.



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



Reba Gillman and her husband, **Leonard**, joined the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin in 1978. They immediately became involved with that year's grand production of

Iolanthe, with Len cast as the Lord Chancellor and Reba as Celia. Leonard, a Juilliard-trained pianist as well as professor of mathematics, was involved as pianist or music director in a number of subsequent productions, but Reba became the heart of it. She joined the GSSA Board in 1980 and served continuously until her death earlier this month. She held many positions:

- President, 1981 to 1983
- Secretary, 1980 and 1984 to 2003
- Historian, 2009 to 2015
- Newsletter Editor, 1984 to 2008

Reba performed in the chorus of *Patience* in 1980, *Trial by Jury* in 1982, *The Gondoliers* in 1983, and *Ruddigore* in 1985, as well as appearing in several fund-raising musicales.

Reba has been an ever-present guiding light to the organization. She attended nearly every performance of our grand productions and musicales, and seldom missed a Board meeting in 35 years! She and Leonard were especially interested in guiding the Society toward proper accompaniment, and eventually founded the Gillman Light Opera Orchestra (GLOO) to enhance our grand productions.

In recognition of their countless contributions to the Society, Reba and Leonard were inducted into the inaugural GSSA Hall of Fame in 2006.

by Sue Caldwell

Remembering Reba 1916 - 2015



Reba (left) as a Contadina in GSSA's 1983 The Gondoliers



Reba at the Mikado Sing-Along Musicale in 2010



Reba at the center of the 2008 GSSA Board of Directors



Reba and Leonard Gillman

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)
- Family/Group** (\$30-\$49)
- Patron** (\$50-\$99)
- Grand Duke or Duchess** (\$100-\$249)
- Major General** (\$250-\$499)
- Pooh-Bah** (\$500-\$999)
- Pirate King** (\$1000-\$2499)
- Savoyard** (\$2500 & up)

Name _____
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Phone number(s) _____
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Does your company match donations? _____
 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:

Rotary Fellowship Offered

Member **Stanley Bullard** has informed us that the Downtown Rotary Club of Austin is seeking applicants for a Rotary Peace Fellowship. This is an opportunity for study at one of several universities around the world, including Australia, Japan, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and also two U.S. universities. Up to 110 people worldwide are selected for this program each year; those who are selected receive all tuition and fees, room and board, round-trip transportation, and internship expenses as they work toward either a master's degree or a professional development certificate in peace and conflict studies.

It was just a few years ago that Stanley told us about another Rotary fellowship, this one a cultural exchange, and asked if any G&S members might be interested. G&S member and frequent performer **Angela Irving** expressed interest and was selected to be one of the six fellows who made the trip and enjoyed six weeks of cultural engagement in France.

Complete information about the Rotary Peace Fellowship can be found at rotary.org.

Thank you, Stanley, for letting us know about this great opportunity.

GSSA Announces 2015-16 Scholarship Opportunities

The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin is now accepting applications for scholarships in the 2015-16 academic year. Applicants must be pursuing a formal course of study leading toward professional development in a musical career (ideally a voice major). They also must be enrolled in a university, college, or conservatory music degree program, or in a professional study course (e.g. an opera apprentice). Please see the scholarship description and application posted on our website for further information at www.gilbertsullivan.org/Scholarships.htm. Applications must be postmarked by **Friday, May 8, 2015** to be eligible.

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels have been busy entertaining in the public schools. After successful performances at the Cathedral of St. Mary's and at Hudson Bend Middle School, they will be performing at Lakepoint Elementary on May 15. If you would like to have the Wand'ring Minstrels perform at your school, please see the web site, www.gilbertsullivan.org, for information.

NEWS of our MEMBERS

Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, will offer a Gilbert & Sullivan Road Scholar (Elderhostel) Program at the Warwick Center in Warwick, New York, the week of August 23-28. The entire week of programming will be devoted to G&S, with emphases on *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *The Mikado*. For further information, visit www.RoadScholar.org (then search on "Warwick Gilbert"); and/or write to RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com.

Frequent GSSA performer **Spencer Reichman** is involved in many musical performances in the next few months. He has a baritone solo in Mozart's *Requiem* with the Texas State Symphonic Choir at 7:30 pm on Saturday, April 25, at the First Baptist Church in San Marcos. His Senior Recital will be on May 2 at 6 pm at the Performing Arts Center Recital Hall at Texas State University in San Marcos. He will travel to China with the Texas Symphonic Choir to perform the Mozart *Requiem* in late May.

Grayson Little, son of GSSA board member **David Little**, recently performed as "Charley" in Different Stages' production of *Charley's Aunt*. Grayson has performed in several productions produced by Different Stages. Grayson was a theater major at Texas State University.

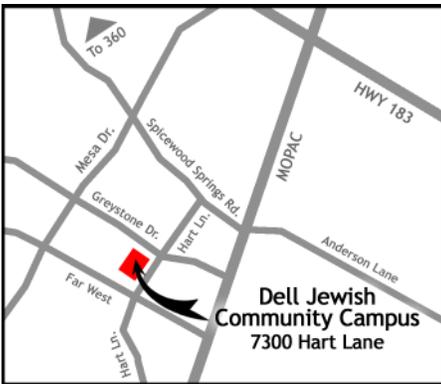


Grayson Little (left)
as Charley



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

APRIL 2015



*Map to
 May 17
 Preview
 Musicale
 (see page 1)*



The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

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

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E-mail: info@gilbertsullivan.org



Texas
 Commission
 on the Arts

This project is funded and supported in part by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts and in part by the City of Austin Economic Development Department/Cultural Arts Division, believing that an investment in the Arts is an investment in Austin's future.

Visit Austin at NowPlayingAustin.com



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

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