



GILBERT & SULLIVAN AUSTIN

SEPTEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Gilbert & Sullivan: A Family Affair

During our June production of *The Pirates of Penzance*, one of the things that pleased our board members immensely was the attendance of a great many children and teens. It is very important to us to introduce Gilbert & Sullivan to each new generation and watch them become a part of the fun.



It is also a delight to us to see how many families enjoy coming to our productions as a group each year. This year we heard heart-warming news from the family of the late **Dan** and **Robbie Boone**. Dan and Robbie never missed a show for years, and they brought their children up to love music and theater and to become "G&S lovers." After the children grew up and spread across the country, they always planned their visits home to coincide with Dan's June 17 birthday and our summer production. In June 2016, Dan had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, but he was able to enjoy *The Gondoliers* with his family.

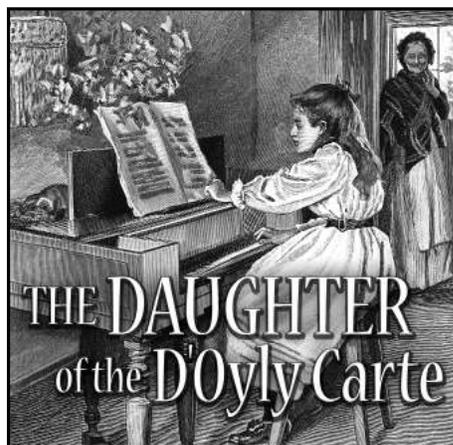
Dan Boone passed away in December of 2016, and Robbie in April of 2017. Their daughter **Angela**, now a band, drama, and choir teacher in Lancaster, California, told us exuberantly after attending a performance of *The Pirates of Penzance* that some 20 relatives of Dan and Robbie had gathered again this year for a show, coming from Wisconsin, Florida, and California, and that they intend to continue the tradition of gathering for the grand summer production each year. Angela said that this decision was to honor their parents, but also because they love attending our productions.

The Boones' other three children (**Darcy**, **Todd**, and **Carrie**) comprise two educators and a lawyer who love music and theater, and a bevy of grandchildren show interest in music, choir, and technical theater—and can sing G&S songs.

I suspect—and hope—that many other families out there are carrying on traditions such as the Boone family's annual gathering, and that is great news for children, for families, for our communities, for the arts, and for innocent merriment. Into the future!

In This Issue

<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> : A Retrospective	pp. 2,3
Summer 2018: <i>Ruddigore</i>	p. 2
Letter to Gilbert & Sullivan Austin Folk	p. 4
GSA Scholarships Announced	p. 5
Winners of <i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> DVDs	p. 4
News of Members	p. 5
Wand'ring Minstrels	p. 5



SEASON
OPENING
MUSICALE

Sunday
Sept. 10
3 pm

Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School
11908 North Lamar (see map on back page)

Join us for the first performance of our 2017-18 Season—a topsy-turvy takeoff on Donizetti's comic opera *The Daughter of the Regiment*.

The story involves Marie, who after losing her parents at a young age develops an abundant fondness for singing Gilbert & Sullivan arias at the D'Oyly Carte orphanage. As a teenager, her amazing musical talents are discovered by her long-lost aunt, The Marquise de Berkenfeld.

The Marquise, a stodgy snob, unable to appreciate the marvelous music of Gilbert & Sullivan, insists that Marie study grand opera and become a diva. The Marquise hires the Duchess of Crakenthorp and her posse of opera singers to train Marie for life on the opera stage.

Will Marie become an opera diva and make her aunt happy, or will the magic of Gilbert & Sullivan win over her heart? Find out during this Sunday afternoon of music and merriment.

Musical selections will include Gilbert & Sullivan favorites from *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Gondoliers*, *Ruddigore*, *HMS Pinafore*, and *The Mikado*—as well as grand opera classics from *La Traviata*, *Carmen*, and others.

The cast includes some of your favorite singers including **Charissa Memrick**, **Janette Jones**, **June Julian**, **Jenny Ohrstrom**, **Jaimie Lowe**, **Wayne Davis**, **Robert Schneider**, **Bruno Barbosa**, and **Steven Maus**.

Libby Weed narrates, with **Jeanne Sasaki** as the accompanist. The show is conceived and produced by **Janette Jones** and **June Julian**.

Admission is free. *Please bring your favorite treat to share at the reception that follows!*

The Pirates of Penzance: A Retrospective

by Rosa Mondragon Harris



This summer, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin brought back an audience favorite, *The Pirates of Penzance*, to enthusiastic patrons. After taking a break last year, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** returned to his second home in Austin to direct this year's summer production, which broke attendance and sales records. The cast was delighted to perform for packed and energetic audiences who came out to see the shows from Austin and several surrounding areas.

It is certainly no surprise that *The Pirates of Penzance* is one of Gilbert & Sullivan's most performed operas and remains such a crowd pleaser. Sprinkled with well-known tunes such as "Poor wand'ring one," "Oh, better far to live and die," and the ever popular "I am the very model of a modern Major General," one can easily comprehend the opera's enduring appeal to audiences of all ages. GSA's production included beautiful and vibrant costumes for the entire cast as well as crisp and engaging choreography, all vital components for a polished production.

Gilbert & Sullivan's fifth collaboration premiered in New York City in 1879 and was well received by audiences and critics alike. GSA's production did likewise: attendees lauded the cast and crew following each show, and critics also applauded the production:

"...exciting and enjoyable fun that brings this classic to life. It won't disappoint."

"...it cannot go without saying that this cast is made up, by far, of extraordinarily talented singers who embrace this work with an enthusiasm that makes the evening feel just a little magical."

"You will smile, you will laugh, you will be thoroughly happy during the show, and for many, many days afterward."

Our extraordinary Stage Manager, **Monica Kurtz**, was full of praise for the cast: "I have been delighted since the first rehearsal. I could not have picked a better group of people to work with."

Each show was filled with many wonderful moments. One highlight was during "Oh, is there not one maiden breast?" The Wardens in Chancery did not hold back their displeasure when Frederic sang of the ladies' "homely face and bad complexion." Their facial expressions always drew chuckles from the crowd. Another highlight of each show for me was the beautiful sound of the orchestra during the overture, led by **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**. My favorite moment overall was when the cast sang "Hail Poetry" on bended knee. The simple yet lovely harmony gave me a chill every time, and audiences applauded it at every performance.

It is always bittersweet to bid farewell to another fun and charming summer production, but GSA has already begun planning for next year's treat for audiences. See you next year in Rederring when GSA brings us a ghostly good time with *Ruddigore*!



GSA Hall of Fame members Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, Monica Kurtz, David Little, Dave Wiekowski, Arthur DiBianca, Bill Hatcher, Libby Weed, Janette Jones, Ralph MacPhail, Jr., Holton Johnson, and Russell Gregory at the first-Friday Gala Reception for *The Pirates of Penzance*



Summer Production:

Ruddigore

June 14-24, 2018

Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School

A personal favorite of our artistic director, "Rafe" MacPhail, Jr., and one of W. S. Gilbert's three favorites of his own libretti, this show has the potential to become a favorite for everyone, including those to whom it is entirely new. The opera parodies elements of melodrama, which in the 1880s was very popular at the Adelphi Theatre, rival of the Savoy. There is a shyly sweet-mannered and poor-but-virtuous heroine. There is a dastardly villain who carries off the maiden. There is a manly hero in disguise. There is a disheveled, mad girl who creates one of the most unforgettable scenes in the show. There is a deadly curse. To add a special element, there are frightful, menacing ghosts.

But Gilbert does not simply adopt the caricatures of melodrama; he turns them upside-down in his comical topsy-turvy fashion: The hero becomes evil, the villain becomes good, and the virtuous maiden changes fiancés at the blink of an eye. The ghosts come to life, foiling the curse, and all ends happily. Of course, these hilarious plot devices wouldn't be G&S without the melodious music of Sullivan, always perfectly suited to the clever lyrics of Gilbert. Many melodies will linger in your memory, such as "When the night wind howls," "There grew a little flower," and "I know a youth."

Ruddigore has made its way, along with just about every other G&S collaboration, into popular culture in a number of fashions. At least three murder mysteries concern the show: *Murder and Sullivan*, by Sarah Hoskinson Frommer; *Ruddy Gore* by Kerry Greenwood; and *The Ghost's High Noon* by John Dickson Carr. Snippets of its music appear in a story by Isaac Asimov entitled *I, Robot*. In the Doctor Who Big Finish Productions audiobook, *Doctor Who and the Pirates*, *Ruddigore* is among the G&S operas whose songs are parodied. And a line by Robin Oakapple is cited in the judge's opinion in the law case of Banks v. District of Columbia Dep't of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs (1993). Now, that is validation for certain!

Mark your calendars now, and get ready for a delightfully ghostly June.

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin presented *The Pirates of Penzance* in June 2017

photos courtesy Alex Labry & Betty Reichman

see more at gilbertsullivanAustin.smugmug.com



Frederic
(Danny Castillo)



The Pirate King
(Sam Johnson)



Major-General Stanley
(Arthur DiBianca)



Mabel
(Suzanne Lis)



Ruth
(Patricia Combs)



Samuel
(Jake Jacobsen)



Sergeant of Police
(Russell Gregory)



Kate, Edith, Isabel
(Jaimie Lowe, Teri Johnson, Sarah Manna)



Police,
Pirates,
and
Wards in Chauncery





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

To all who are Gilbert & Sullivan Austin:

Penzance in Austin seems so far away—both in distance and time—but I've often revisited mentally in recent weeks, filled with delight by the memories at the reception of our production of ***The Pirates of Penzance*** in June—and of the many people who made it all possible and successful.

I mentioned to many friends when we left the rehearsal hall that I felt we had a strong show, but I had no idea of the level of delight with which the opera would be received by our record-setting audiences.

So thanks to Gilbert & Sullivan for “building better than they knew” 'way back in 1879 in constructing such a sturdy stage work that would not only stand the test of time but also triumph over it.

And thanks to a remarkably wonderful cast and to musical colleague Jeffrey Jones-Ragona and his orchestra who gave life to words and notes on paper and made a venerable work seem fresh as new-mown hay.

Gratitude to designers Ann Marie Gordon, Jennifer Rogers, and Jan and Scott Malabar for their settings, lighting, sound, and costumes which realized beautifully what the show needed to be most effective.

Thanks, also, to a conscientious and diligent backstage support staff, headed by Stage Manager Monica Kurtz, for undergirding all that happened on stage in many various ways, and to our genial and cooperative hosts at Brentwood Christian School.

My gratitude as always to Production Manager Bill Hatcher for bringing the sometimes sprawling and disparate elements of theatrical production together into an unified whole.

Deepest thanks to GSA President Libby Weed and her hard-working Board of Directors, truly unsung heroes working tirelessly offstage to see that everything that happens *onstage can* happen.

Thanks, too, to that army of front-of-house volunteers whose smiles and welcomes made our audiences grateful they'd decided to see our show, and also to Sue Caldwell, our tireless mistress of publications, who makes newsletters and programs so attractive.

Deepest gratitude to Russell and Kay Gregory, R. B. Rudy, and Chris Buggé, for giving this wand'ring Savoyard a place to stay and work and sleep while in Austin and the means to gallivant about.

Finally, I'm so grateful to so many in our talented and dedicated band of Savoyards for their many kindnesses and expressions of support and friendship.

Now, on to ***Trial by Jury***—and ***Ruddigore!***

Yours gratefully,

GSA Scholarships Announced

Please join us in congratulating the 2017-18 GSSA scholarship recipients: **Charissa Memrick** and **Brittany Trinité**.



Charissa is working on a Master's Degree in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy at Texas State University. She will be performing in our September musicale.



Brittany will begin work towards a specialty in the Music Therapy Equivalency Distance program this fall at Saint Mary of the Woods College.

We wish Charissa and Brittany the best in their future endeavors!

Winners of *The Pirates of Penzance* DVDs

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

Kathryn Files of Austin

David Giles of Austin

Sam Hankins of Austin

Jade Noble of Round Rock

Stephen Pont of Austin

Ellen Rohr of Austin

Jeff Townsend of Burnet

Danny Tunks of Austin

Jolene Webster of Hurst

Margarita Willhelm of Kingsville

We appreciate our patrons, and are delighted to share the pleasures of Gilbert & Sullivan.

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:

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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:

NEWS of our MEMBERS

GSA's Musical Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** is also the Artistic Director of the Capital City Men's Chorus. Their first concert of the season is their first-ever Halloween show, "It Came from Ladybird Lake!" Music from *The Addams Family Musical*, Arthur Sullivan's "When the Night Wind Howls" and more. Performances October 14 at 7:30 pm and October 15 at 4 pm, both at the hauntingly beautiful University Baptist Church (2107 San Antonio St).

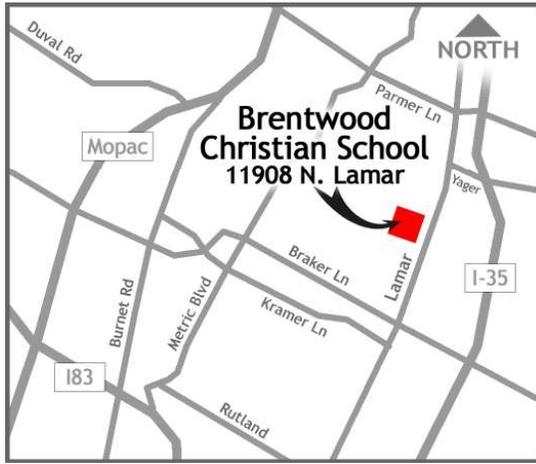
Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels are busy getting their Back-to-School shows ready for the 2017-18 school year.

If you would like to have the Wand'ring Minstrels perform at your school, retirement center, civic club, business meeting, or private party, please see the web site, www.gilbertsullivan.org, for information.



*The children's activities and entertainment preceding the first-Sunday matinee for *The Pirates of Penzance* brought kids on stage to meet the cast, wave at the orchestra members, and practice being pirates*



Our opening musicale, *The Daughter of the D'Oyly Carte*, will be presented at the Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School.

Coming Events

- Sept. 10 *The Daughter of the D'Oyly Carte* Musicale (see p. 1)
- Oct. 29 Halloween-themed Musicale, with many connections to *Ruddigore*
- Jan. 8 Annual Meeting and Musicale
- Feb. 24-25 *Ruddigore* Auditions
- Mar. 3-4 Mid-season production: *Trial by Jury*
- May 20 *Ruddigore* Preview Musicale
- June 14-24 *Ruddigore* summer production

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in early October; the deadline for submissions will be September 25. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



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SEPTEMBER 2017

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin

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 Phone: (512) 472-4772 (GSA-GSSA)
 Our web site: www.gilbertsullivan.org
 E-mail: info@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

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