

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

APRIL 2012 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

We have a brand new theater for our grand 2012 summer opera!

We are delighted to announce that *Patience* will be produced at the sparkling new performing arts center at Brentwood Christian School in north Austin. Perhaps you viewed the YouTube video announcing this news and saw some pictures of the lovely facility. (Are you on our email list for such notifications? By all means, go to www.gilbertsullivan.org and sign up so you won't miss the next one.)

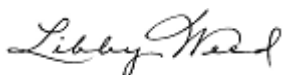
We are pleased to be in this venue for many reasons, but a big reason is that we believe our audiences will have a strikingly fine experience. The perspective of every audience member is superb. The stage is admirably equipped. And we will have a proper orchestra pit, so no more peering through the musicians to see the stage!

Good news: You don't have to wait until June to see this new theater. We hope you will make your Mother's Day a very special one by joining us for the last musicale of this season on Sunday, May 13, in the Brentwood theater. Here are some reasons you should be with us for this event:

- **Janette Jones** is planning it, and you know what flair her creations have!
- You'll become familiar with the new venue, its attractive setting on wooded acreage, and its spacious parking accommodations.
- You will get a preview of several numbers from *Patience* and meet some of the cast members.
- You may even get to visit with **Oscar Wilde** and **Elisabet Ney**, our special guests from the great beyond.
- You'll enjoy fellowship with other music lovers in the capacious lobby of the theater, as we share refreshments and conversation.
- Every mother present will receive a rose as a gesture of appreciation from our Society.

Please be with us for the musicale—there is room for 400!—and bring family, friends, and munchies to share for the time of laughter and fellowship.

Yours for innocent merriment,



Mother's Day Musicale:

Patience Preview

Sunday, May 13, 3:00 p.m.

Performing Arts Center
Brentwood Christian School
11908 North Lamar Blvd., Austin

Put on your best hat and gloves and bring your mother to a Proper Victorian Musicale. We will also have special guests to discuss the "current" trends in art. There will be a preview of the new production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Patience*, performed by members of the cast.

Please bring munchies!



In This Issue

Frederic's All-Star Birthday!	pp. 2,3
Spring Fever in Far-Off Bridgewater	p. 4
<i>Patience</i> Cast and Staff	p. 4
Wand'ring Minstrels	p. 5
News of our Members	p. 5

Frederic's All-Star Birthday!

by Reba Gillman



Frederic's Birthday—a joyous occasion! Leap Day—of course it's special. On Sunday afternoon, February 26, more than 170 people gathered at Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church to celebrate happily with singers from past G&S productions who haven't been singing with us recently. **Janette Jones** did a vigorously creative job assembling the familiar music, and giving each of our uniquely talented stars the best

music to remind us of their skills. There was dialog when it brought the scene alive, and explanations when needed. With President **Libby Weed** to greet us all, and our Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** (we affectionately call him Rafe) to bring back memories and present the show—what enjoyment! What delight!

Rafe's introductory remarks immediately established the tone—old friends, it's not just the show or the music, it's the fellowship. He also confessed to being a "Rafe come lately"—he first came to work with us in 1998, and our first shows were produced more than twenty years earlier. But the level of our productions has gradually increased over the years and notably since 1998 when Rafe and **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** began their fabulous teamwork. And although many past performers were invited to perform on this occasion, many could not arrange the necessary return to Austin, and only one real "old-timer" was present to perform: **Katharine Shields**, who played many principal roles in GSSA's earliest years, starting in 1977, and sang in the chorus for Rafe's first Austin *Patience*, back in 1999. **Sam Johnson** opened, singing "When I was a lad," from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, pleased that his wife, Cecily, and two little daughters were in the audience to hear him. Katharine sang "The hours creep on apace," Josephine's big second act aria from *Pinafore*.

Glady Posch and **Trey Deason** then sang the duet, "I know a youth" from *Ruddigore*. Glady came to Austin from Houston to sing the role in 2007, and soon became a dear friend. Rafe told us that she had won an award for her Elsie in the Houston G&S Society's production of *The Yeomen of the Guard* at the International G&S Festival in Buxton, England, a few years before. **Meredith Ruduski**, who sang in our choruses, was promoted to Peep-Bo, and then played a romantic and feisty Phyllis in our recent *Iolanthe*, sang "Oh, happy young heart" from *The Sorcerer*. Glady sang "I cannot tell what this love may be" from *Patience*. There followed three pieces from *The Gondoliers*. **Stacey Amorous** sang "When a merry maiden marries," with Karen and Julia, her charming young daughters, sitting up front on the steps while mommy sang and dancing with her at the end. She played Pitti-Sing in the 1998 *Mikado* and Lady Angela in the 1999 *Patience*, and Rafe regretted when she retired to raise her children. Rafe said Jeffrey has always wanted to play either the Captain or Ralph Rackstraw in *Pinafore*, and has never failed to suggest that he could rehearse the cast and help them learn the music, and then train a conductor for the actual production, while he sang a principal role. Rafe said he had always been able to convince Jeffrey that we needed him waving the baton at the helm. Jeffrey did play the part of Luiz in our 1995 production of *The Gondoliers*, with another music director already hired. Jeffrey, playing Luiz, sang two duets with Meredith as Casilda: "Oh rapture, when alone together," and

"There was a time."

Then came *The Mikado*, and old times. Rafe has directed *The Mikado* three times in Austin, with three different Ko-Ko's, each excellent. **Trey Deason**, the second Ko-Ko, sang "As someday it may happen that a victim must be found, I've got a little list." Rafe remembered his first June in Austin: getting to know us; working with new people; **Ezra Johnson**, a young fellow from San Antonio who showed unusual appreciation and love for Gilbert & Sullivan at auditions and was to sing in the chorus; the planned Ko-Ko dropping out about two and a half weeks before opening night. Panic—that's a huge role. "What were we going to do?" Rafe suggested asking Ezra to play the role. Rafe and Ezra met an hour before rehearsals for him to learn the intricate staging. Rafe says "Not only did he do it, but he was wonderful." Contralto **Debra Mandel**, also from San Antonio, was in the chorus, and was the cover for Janette Jones as Katisha; she and Ezra got acquainted during the rehearsals, announced their engagement shortly after *The Mikado* closed, and married the following year. They are the proud parents of Aurora and Isobel, whom they brought along to our festivities. Debra sang Katisha's moving second act aria, "Alone, and yet alive," followed by Ezra as the frantic Ko-Ko singing "On a tree by a river," which is better known as "Willow, tit-willow," in which he successfully woos the fearsome Katisha, which he must do to save his life. Katisha asks "And you won't hate me because I'm just a teeny weeny wee bit bloodthirsty, will you?" Then both sing "There is beauty in the bellow of the blast ... If that is so, sing derry down derry! It's evident very, our tastes are one."

And finally, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Frederic, the birthday boy: **Dan Girardot** singing "Oh, is there not one maiden breast," with Mabel, **Carol Brown**, responding with enthusiastic coloratura, "Poor wand'ring one," going on to "Take any heart—take mine!" and finally "Stay, Frederic, stay ... Ah, leave me not to pine Alone and desolate, ..." Carol and Dan singing together—the sad result of that Leap Day birthday. Dan was double cast as Frederic in our 1996 production. He played Nanki-Poo in our 1998 *Mikado* and Ralph Rackstraw in our 2000 *Pinafore*. Carol was Mabel in our 2008 *Pirates*.

Rafe ended with some thoughts: "One of the strengths of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin is that the group is always looking ahead: to the next show, the next musicale, and (for some of us) the next Newsletter. Another strength of any group is a firm foundation—a foundation not only of leadership and past accomplishments, but also of past shared experiences—and friendships. Our productions through the years have showcased remarkable talents, some of the best of which we've heard from this afternoon."

Rafe asked that we thank again the performers, and Janette Jones who produced the program. He asked that we thank **Martha Dudgeon**, who accompanied most of the singers, and **Mary Parse**, who played for Katharine Shields. Sam sang the lead-in to our traditional "Hail, Poetry" (*Pirates*) and led us in "Now to the banquet we press" (*The Sorcerer*). All stood to raise our voices, and then happily repaired to the munchy spread in the lobby. **Pat Turpin** provided the delicious birthday cakes, and all gathered joyously to chat and munch together. It was a wonderful birthday party, and not just for Frederic—it was for us, for all who love Gilbert and Sullivan, who come together to celebrate our performances, our music, and our friendships.

Frederic's All-Star Birthday
photos courtesy Steve Schwartzman
 see more at gilbertsullivan.austin.smugmug.com



Stacey Amorous and daughters



Trey Deason and Glay Posch



Meredith Ruduski and Jeffrey Jones-Ragona



*Dan Girardot and Carol Brown
 as the birthday boy and his true love,
 Frederic and Mabel*



Ezra and Debra Johnson



Martha Dudgeon



Katharine Shields



*The Three Ko-Ko's:
 Trey Deason, Arthur DiBianca, and Ezra Johnson*



Sam Johnson

Spring Fever in Far-Off Bridgewater

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



Here I sit, in my Gilbert & Sullivan room in Bridgewater, Virginia. The flowers blooming outside my windows (lilacs, daffodils, iris, dogwoods, forsythia) do, indeed, breathe the promise of merry sunshine, and also the promise of another trip to Austin—just four weeks from tomorrow (though you're reading this a couple of weeks later).

Work's already begun on *Patience*, of course.

Jeffrey Jones-Ragona and I cast a wonderful roster of actor-singers for this summer's show weeks ago, and his music rehearsals are well under way. President Libby Weed and that incredible GSSA board have been making plans, raising money, organizing publicity, and otherwise preparing to put *Patience* into production—on a brand-new stage, in fact: the one at Brentwood Christian School off North Lamar.

I toured this new facility while in town for auditions in February/March, and it's a beauty! It's very modern and has what I call a "lima bean (kidney bean?) arrangement" of seats. There are about 400 of them, and they're arranged on a broad arc so that every seat is ideal. And of course it has an orchestra pit, something that Jeffrey and I and many others have been longing for since we left St. Stephen's School in 2004. (The parking for this new theatre is convenient, too.)

Production Manager Bill Hatcher has been in almost daily contact by phone and e-mail, finding props, finalizing the contract with Malabar of Winnipeg, Canada, for our costumes, lining up a strong roster of production personnel, and working on the staging-rehearsal schedule (a huge job, because we try to work around conflicts, call only artists needed, and use everyone's time well).

Jeffrey's contracting the orchestra, David Little's juggling props, costumes, and people in preparation for the photo-shoot—and here I sit, heart in Austin but kept at bay by the set of curious chances that characterize my close-yet-so-far relationship with GSSA.

Other enticing e-mails report that Janette Jones is planning another of her unique musicales, and I'm pleased that I'll be in town for it—and delighted that she's asked me to participate, for I've always wanted to shake hands with Oscar Wilde. . . .

In an earlier column, I quoted Bunthorne's "Let me confess," and I feel another confession coming on: When I sat down to write this, I was planning to explain just *why* I've considered *Patience* one of my favorite Savoy operas for now over forty years. But I have a problem: I've run out of space!

So I've no room to extol Gilbert's wonderful lyrics, comic situations, memorable characters, and satirical send-up of artistic pretension. I've no room to wax eloquently on Sullivan's score, which came early in the collaboration and builds on the English-speaking-world-wide successes of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance*: that incredible Act I finale, those quirky duets and trios (and quintet!) of Act II, and *Patience*'s ballad that always makes me feel guilty. (Read the lyric to "Love is a plaintive song" and see why I always think of Alice when I hear it—Alice who lets me run away from home for over a month at a time to indulge my love for these wonderful comic

operas with a company such as GSSA that invariably brings them to the stage with beauty—visual, aural, and emotional—with lots of laughs and perhaps even a tear or two, too.)

But I'm out of space, and besides that my eyes are drawn outside once more on this sunny afternoon. The flowers that bloom in the spring have nothing to do with this case, I suppose, but if I stop here I can go for a little walk, rejoicing in this lovely day in Virginia and anticipating delightful early summer of roses and wine in Texas—with friends and colleagues I hold dear.

See you soon!

--Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Patience Cast and Staff

Colonel Calverley — **Robert L. Schneider**

Major Murgatroyd — **Donald Bayne**

Lieut., The Duke of Dunstable — **Wayne Davis**

Reginald Bunthorne — **Arthur DiBianca**

Archibald Grosvenor — **Holton Johnson**

Mr. Bunthorne's Solicitor — **Russell Gregory**

The Lady Angela — **Patricia Combs**

The Lady Saphir — **Daytha Hulion**

The Lady Jane — **Janette Jones**

Patience — **Meredith Ruduski**

Chorus of Rapturous Maidens:

**Alice Ames, Leann Fryer,
Jasmine Haghghatian, Rosa Harris,
Karlyn McCutchan, Jennifer McKenna,
Rachael Shaw, Abigail Stokley,
Brittany Trinité, Jennifer Tullis,
Zendel Hernandez**

Chorus of Dragoon Guards:

**Daniel Brookshire, Andy Fleming,
David Fontenot, Robert Frost,
John Hooker, Mark Long, Jay Michael,
Joshua Miller, Spencer Reichman,
Mario Silva, 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**

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 _____
 Address _____
 State _____
 Phone number(s) _____
 E-mail address _____
 Employer _____
 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:



*Arthur DiBianca, Meredith Ruduski, Donald Bayne, and Pam Fowler at a recent publicity photo shoot for **Patience***

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels entertained an enthusiastic audience at Granite Mesa Nursing Home in Marble Falls on February 28. The Minstrels are going to be featured in a gala concert at the Villa Antonia in Lago Vista, Texas, in January 2013 as part of their Twilight Concert Series.

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels are ready to entertain for your next event. Have Gilbert and Sullivan tunes performed at your home, party, school, or activity. See our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org) for further details.

NEWS of our MEMBERS

Claire Vangelisti and **June Julian**, sopranos and past GSSA principals, and our Lady High Pianist **Martha Dudgeon**, on piano, are among those performing with the Austin Chamber Ensemble at 8 PM on May 18 and 19 at the Westlake United Methodist Church, 1460 Redbud Trail, Austin. The program, entitled "Best of Moonstruck by Movie Music and More," features arias, jazz selections, and instrumental music heard in film, including a set of Dick Hyman's work from "Moonstruck." Tickets are available at NowPlayingAustin.com; call 219-7457 for more information.

June Julian was also the featured singer in a Spotlight on Opera concert: Sing to Love: A Concert for Valentines in mid-February.

We mentioned in our December newsletter that frequent G&S performer **Angela Irving** would be in France on a Rotary Club exchange program for young professionals in March. She has now returned, but you can share her adventures vicariously through her blog (gse2012france.weebly.com/).



Angela writes, "In some ways, you just can't beat sitting by a petite table sipping high quality tea on a really old & small cobblestone street in France, especially when a crêpe is on its way to your table."

One of the many hats worn by GSSA's Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** is that of Artistic Director of the Capital City Men's Chorus (CCMC). He advises us to "Just Go to the Movies." The CCMC pays tribute to new and classic movie themes in a concert on Saturday, May 12, at 7:30 p.m., at St Martin's Lutheran Church (606 West 15th Street, 78701). From lively jazz ("One Note Samba") to broken-heart ballads ("And So It Goes") to inspiring anthems ("I Know Where I've Been") to the saucy ("42nd Street") to the sublimely silly ("I'm Super, Thanks for Asking!"), the men of the CCMC will take you through some of the most memorable music created for the silver screen. And if that wasn't classy enough, we're throwing in a world premiere, "Embers," by Austin-based composer Karl Logue and poet George Klawitter. Take a break and head on over, you'll be glad you did! Ticket information is at ccmcaustin.org, or call 477-SING.



Armstrong Moving & Storage

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



APRIL 2012

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



See details on page 1!

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive at the end of May; the deadline for submissions is May 14. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



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**

G&S Office: 1507 Wilshire Boulevard, Austin, TX 78722
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 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
 Music Director

Ralph MacPhail, Jr.
Jeffrey Jones-Ragona

Board of Directors

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