



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

We say a hearty thank-you and a wistful good-bye to June Julian as President of our Society. June has led us admirably through our last two outstanding productions, *Ruddigore* and *The Pirates of Penzance*, steering production teams and board activities with a sure hand. June resigned the presidency at the end of the summer to give more time and attention to

business and family matters. We are pleased that she will continue to serve on the board, working in areas of membership and development. Thank you, June, for your admirable leadership during the past two years.

As I assume June's role for the remainder of her term, I find that the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin is in a very good position in many ways. When I last served as president, we had fairly recently brought together the amazing talents of Ralph MacPhail, Jr., and Jeffrey Jones-Ragona (their first collaboration being our 1998 *Mikado*). How they have elevated the level of our productions since that time! We are elated with the prospects for next summer's *Iolanthe* under their leadership.

The last time this Society brought *Iolanthe* to the stage was 1993 (prior to my service on the board), and the venue was the rather cramped Dougherty Arts Center Theatre. The small space was used ingeniously to stage a magnificent show, and the centerpiece of the production was surely Frank Delvy in the role of the Lord Chancellor. This outstanding actor and singer was not new to my husband and me when we saw the show—we had enjoyed his work in several other G&S productions as well as shows at Zach Scott and Hyde Park theatres—but we reveled in the comic blend of majesty and ineptitude with which he led the peers, accompanied by the blowing of trumpets and the banging of brasses. He received an ACOT B. Iden Payne award for that role.

As is noted elsewhere in this newsletter, Frank Delvy died on August 31, depriving us of one of the most outstanding performers in the history of Austin G&S. The last role he played for us was played vigorously and with élan after his diagnosis of cancer, an indication of the fact that he refused to let the deadly disease rob him of his *joie de vivre* or keep him from bringing joy to others. An entertainer and a jovial companion to the very end, Frank didn't want a funeral going on without him—he preferred to be there when his friends and family gathered. So in the McFadden Auditorium at Seton Hospital on August 2, seated in a wheelchair, he joined about 200 of his admirers for a party. (See the September Newsletter for more on the party.)

Frank Delvy has left an indelible mark on the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin, and we will not soon forget him. In honor of the years he blessed us with his talents, the board has decided to dedicate the 2009 production of *Iolanthe* to the memory of Frank Delvy. Look for displays and tributes to this musical and comic genius during the run, and join us for an opening-night celebration with his wife, Donna, and some of Frank's long-time friends onstage for a special tribute.

## January: Annual Meeting, Musicale

The Annual Business Meeting and Musicale for the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin is scheduled for 7 pm on Monday, January 12, 2009. The location will be announced in the January newsletter. The Board has appointed a Nominating Committee consisting of Allan Longacre, Chair, Enid Hallock, and Larry Shepley. The Committee is working to fill the slate of nominees for Board of Directors for the coming year. The Board needs additional members to participate in specific roles including:

- ◆ grant applications;
- ◆ group sales;
- ◆ liaison with other community groups; and
- ◆ assisting with administrative and production supervision.

If you are interested in serving on the Board or wish to nominate someone else, or have any questions about the responsibilities of a Board member, please contact Allan at 276-8334, Enid at 453-4431, or Larry at 327-1511.

## Wand'ring Minstrels

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels are the ambassadors for the Society to the Central Texas community. Their programs serve as an educational outreach tool that provides an introduction to the genre that is distinctively Gilbert & Sullivan. Programs range from a lively recital of Gilbert & Sullivan's most popular tunes to interactive, mini-productions of the Society's full summer productions. The Wand'ring Minstrels are available for private parties, school shows, and corporate events. **NEW THIS FALL:** Fairies in the Schools, an interactive mini-production of *Iolanthe* for all ages.

The Wand'ring Minstrels will custom design a program for any event where G&S would be appropriate for a wide variety of budgetary considerations. You'll hear great voices, skilled in the G&S style, presenting satirical, sentimental, and rousing Gilbert & Sullivan favorites with style and flair.

For bookings or additional information, please contact Eva Laskaris by email at [minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org](mailto:minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org), or at 512-350-4935.

## A Fun, Fantasy, and Fairies Musicale

by Reba Gillman

At 3 PM on Sunday, September 14, over 100 people filled Harris Bell Hall at Westminster Manor. Happy Society members were joined by enthusiastic residents of Westminster Manor to enjoy the program planned by Eva Laskaris, and performed by singers Lisa Alexander, Patricia Combs, Arthur DiBianca, Andy Fleming, David Fontenot, June Julian, Eva Laskaris, Kathryn Saar, and Jay Young, and accompanied by Martha Dudgeon.

It was a delightful afternoon, beginning with a strong sample of the fun, fairies, and fantasies in store for us next June with our production of the G&S opera, *Iolanthe*. Libby Weed set the tone with a humorous, but efficient, outline of the plot of the first act. She then introduced Eva, who called up the singers to lead us all in singing part of the opening of Act II, the chorus of Fairies and Peers: "Strephon's a member of Parliament!"

There followed songs from each of seven important characters, which gave a clear outline of the second act. David Fontenot, as Lord Mountarat, sang "When Britain really ruled the waves." Lisa Alexander, as the Queen of the fairies, sang "Oh, foolish fay." Arthur DiBianca, as the Lord Chancellor, sang "Love, unrequited," also well known as the Nightmare Song. Art and David, with Andy Fleming as Lord Tolloller, then sang the delightful trio, "If you go in you're sure to win." June Julian and Jay Young, as Phyllis and Strephon, sang the duet, "If we're weak enough to tarry." And last, Patricia Combs sang Iolanthe's moving and desperate appeal to the Lord Chancellor, "My Lord, a suppliant at your feet."

Proceeding without intermission, because of time pressures, to "Part II - Whimsical selections from various composers," we heard the choices of each performer. Our singers welcome the opportunity to sing pieces they might not otherwise have the chance to perform, and the audience is introduced to often unfamiliar music — sometimes unwillingly, but how educational! It included Broadway Show hits, opera, and classical songs from Richard Strauss in German, and Claude Debussy in French. I particularly appreciated the charming "Zipperfly" by Marc Blitzstein — probably because at my age I remember the trousers with buttons, and the great improvement of "the zipper fly."

To end the program, David Fontenot sang the Pirate King's lead-in, as in what has become our tradition, all rose to sing "Hail, Poetry." We were then invited to enjoy the tasty munchies, provided by our talented members, and laid out on tables in the lobby. A friendly social time followed to bring to a close the happy opening program of the new season. Our warm thanks go to Abby Gorton and Westminster Manor for providing this spacious and welcoming hall for the event.



Musicale singers Eva Laskaris, David Fontenot, June Julian, Lisa Alexander, Patricia Combs, Andy Fleming, Kathryn Saar, Jay Young, Arthur DiBianca

## Donors

We wish to thank the following contributors whose generous support helped to make our 2008 production of *The Pirates of Penzance* a resounding success!

Ken & Emily Ashworth • Ola Bell • Stanley Bullard • Barbara & Jerrold Buttrey • Mary Alice Carnes • Patricia & David Davidson • Marion DeFord • Mr. & Mrs. Douglas M. DeLay • Jewell Ellis • Leonard & Reba Gillman • Roslyn & David Gutman • James A. Hitt • Blain & Debbie Keith • Mr. & Mrs. Robert L. Kellogg • David & Peggy Little • Allan & Barbara Longacre • Alice & Ralph MacPhail, Jr. • Norman & Emilia Martin • Randall McIntyre • Col. George & Nancy McQueen • Gerrell D. Moore • Diana Phillips • Eugene & Betty Ripperger • Lawrence Shepley • Greg & Katharine Shields • Grace & Gary Silcott • Jean & Ed Smootz • Earl R. Hunt & Susan C. Spruance • Bernadette Tasher • Trudy Tommeraasen • William & Mary Weaver • Libby & Michael Weed • Carol Whitcraft Fredericks • Ingrid & James Yapple and family • David & Vanessa Young



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which believes that a great nation  
deserves great art.*



## Send Us Your News!

We try (within space constraints) to include descriptions of members' performances (past and future) and other activities, and any information related to Gilbert and Sullivan. Please send your news to [news@gilbertsullivan.org](mailto:news@gilbertsullivan.org). Thanks!

## *Iolanthe's Background: The Bab Ballads* by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Do you remember Jester Jack Point's admission, in *The Yeomen of the Guard*, that his best jokes came from a book called *The Merrie Jestes of Hugh Ambrose*?

Gilbert had a "*Hugh Ambrose*," too—but when he plagiarized from it he was actually borrowing from himself. The Genesis for *Iolanthe* is to be found in his "Bab" Ballad, "The Fairy Curate."

Read it—in your bedside copy of *The Bab Ballads* (or Google "Gilbert 'The Fairy Curate'")—and you'll meet Georgie, the son of a fairy and a dull solicitor. Gilbert's plot-line for *Iolanthe* went through a number of changes. The ladies' chorus was always composed of fairies, but the men were barristers on the Northern Circuit, then members of the House of Commons. Finally he settled on the House of Peers—and Georgie's father, a solicitor, became The Prime Minister, The Home Secretary, and finally The Lord Chancellor himself. (And of course Georgie became Strephon, an Arcadian shepherd.)

Google "Old Paul and Old Tim" and "The Periwinkle Girl," and you'll see the seeds for the courting of Phyllis in *Iolanthe* by two elderly lords, Mountararat and Tolloller.

*Iolanthe* contains the longest and most difficult of Gilbert's patter songs. Google "Gilbert 'A Bad Night of It,'" and you'll discover its prototype. You'll have to refer to James Ellis's edition of *The Bab Ballads* [Harvard U. P., various printings] to read "Boulogne," a Victorian travel commercial in verse in which Gilbert experimented with the metrical form of "The Nightmare Song."

Finally, Google "Sleep On!" and you will find an early lyric for what *may* have become Private Willis's "When All Night Long" ("The Contemplative Sentry") which opens Act II of *Iolanthe*. There's no historical corroborative detail that Gilbert ever intended to use it in the opera, but he *did* collect it in his *Songs of a Savoyard*—and it doesn't seem to fit anywhere else!

### FRANK DELVY 1950-2008



We regret to announce the passing of Frank Delvy, one of the dearest friends and most illustrious performers of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin. Frank died Sunday, August 31, after fighting a valiant 18-month battle against cancer. In addition to two brothers, he is survived by his wife Donna, who has also been a longtime supporter and friend to our Society. Frank will long be remembered for bringing to life many of Gilbert & Sullivan's most distinctive roles for our audiences, having performed in ten different G&S operas (many of them several times) from 1983 (Giorgio in *The Gondoliers*) through 2007 (Sir Despard Murgatroyd in *Ruddigore*).

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin is dedicating its 2009 production of *Iolanthe* to the memory of Frank Delvy. Donna will join us on opening night for a special presentation.

### MEMBER NEWS

Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, is back home after a very successful Elderhostel session on "Gilbert & Sullivan and *Iolanthe*" in Connecticut. He is home just in time to perform magic for Halloween. Meanwhile, there are photographs and both audio and video clips of his April production of *The Mikado* at the Virginia Commonwealth University Opera Theatre last April on-line at [www.vcumusic.org](http://www.vcumusic.org).

Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** is also Artistic Director of the Capital City Men's Chorus, which will hold their Holiday Concert at St. Martin's Lutheran Church on Saturday, Dec. 13, at 7:30 pm. Tickets are available at [ccmcaustin.ticketleap.com](http://ccmcaustin.ticketleap.com) or call 477-SING.

Member **John Lopez** is in Connecticut, working for Radio City Music Hall. He is working on costumes for the Arena Tour of The Rockettes' Christmas Spectacular.

When not singing with GSSA, member **Arthur DiBianca** plays clarinet with the Austin Philharmonic Orchestra, which recently performed their first concert of the season at Crockett High.

### 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:

# The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

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

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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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## COMING EVENTS

**Annual Business Meeting and Musicale**  
Monday, January 12, 2009

*Iolanthe* Auditions  
Saturday, February 28, 2009  
and Sunday, March 1, 2009

**IOLANTHE**  
*or the Peer and the Peri*  
June 2009

## September Musicale

photos courtesy Steve Schwartzman

*accompanist*  
*Martha*  
*Dudgeon and*  
*organizer Eva*  
*Laskaris*



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*Arthur DiBianca, Lisa Alexander, Jay Young and June Julian, Andy Fleming, Kathryn Saar, David Fontenot, and Patricia Combs*

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