

The

GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SEPTEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

From a fairy ring to the Tower Green ... from the House of Lords to a chopping block—the Austin G&S Society has exciting plans as we close one season and open another.

The 2008-2009 season opened last fall with a lovely September musicale, and we will host another such evening of beautiful music as we open the 2009-10 season. We hope you will join us in the newly renovated Harris Bell Hall at Westminster Manor on Sunday evening, September 20, at 7 pm for a delightful evening planned by June Julian and featuring some well-loved G&S singers. So far, this is a tale of two seasons with similar beginnings.

Last season culminated in our June production of *Iolanthe*, hailed by many as one of the finest shows our Society has produced in its thirty-three-year history. The production was dedicated to the late Frank Delvy, who was a featured player in most of our offerings during a period of almost thirty years. Donna Veteto Delvy, Frank's wife and our longtime friend, joined us on opening night for a tribute to Frank created by Freddy Carnes and presented by some of his dearest friends. How we will miss Frank—and how much joy he brought to us over the past years! We are thankful that we can still enjoy his art on many of our CDs and DVDs.

Iolanthe is not one of the “big three”—*Mikado*, *Pinafore*, and *Pirates*—that automatically draw big crowds, so we dedicated ourselves to producing an irresistibly charming show that audiences would love just as much as the more familiar operas. Of course, we started with our eminent directorial team, Ralph MacPhail, Jr., & Jeffrey Jones-Ragona. We cast the finest singers and actors. We assembled a top production crew. We didn't stint ourselves on costumes, sets, lighting, or sound. We promoted the show widely and creatively. We prepared the Travis Performing Arts Center to be an inviting, comfortable venue. And ... we drew large, appreciative audiences and garnered glowing reviews. The show was a hit!

Our usual procedure has been to alternate the “big three” with lesser-known G&S gems, hoping to earn a little money every other year so that we can go out on a limb in the “between years” and offer Austin a rarer treat. Following this pattern, we announced in the summer that next June's production would be *The Mikado*, even though it had been produced a scant five years before.

But with the success of *Iolanthe*, we heard the message that our audiences appreciate diversity and have a desire to experience a wider range of the lovely music and whimsical plots resulting from the collaboration of Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Sullivan. And so, it is with great pleasure that we announce our 2010 production: *The Yeomen of the Guard, or, The Merryman and His Maid*.

Produced by our Society only once in its history, in 1997, this richly textured show is the closest thing to grand opera in the G&S repertoire. Its story is lofty and its score is magnificent, and yet it loses not one bit of the fun and frivolity that are hallmarks of G&S shows. If you are not yet familiar with *Yeomen*, you will be captivated with its hauntingly beautiful tunes, its colorful pageantry, and, yes, its topsy-turvy storyline.

Our board and production team are so excited about our plans for 2010 that we believe we can promise you an evening at the theater next June every bit as wonderful as *Iolanthe* was this year.

Libby Weed

COMING IN JUNE 2010



The Soaring Soul Soirée
Sunday, September 20, at 7 pm

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin presents “The Soaring Soul Soirée,” an evening of popular G&S tunes imbued with traditional style, swing, and a jazzy twist. Reminiscent of an old-time radio show, this light-hearted parody will transport your soul to a place of reverie and delight. The program will include fine sounds from local jazz group *La Vie en Rose*, featuring vocalist **Diana Vandewater**; the pianistic stylings of accompanist **Martha Dudgeon**; the premiere of “Come to Me,” a lovely chamber choral piece written by **Lisa Alexander** (who appeared as the Fairy Queen in our recent production of *Iolanthe*); and other wonderful performers from past G&S shows – **Katherine Altobello**, **Jay Chacon**, **David Fontenot**, **June Julian**, **Lisa Alexander**, **Paul Nixon**, **Louis Ontko** and **Meredith Ruduski**. Our season-opening fall Musicales will be held at Harris Bell Hall in Westminster Manor, 4100 Jackson Avenue (see map on back page), on Sunday, September 20, at 7 pm. Invite your friends and family to join along and please bring your favorite munchies to share. We look forward to seeing you at “The Soaring Soul Soirée.”



RALPH MacPHAIL, Jr.

Box 114 Bridgewater College
Bridgewater, Virginia 22812-1599

My Dear and Valued *Iolanthean* Friends and Colleagues:

Although I'm writing in late August, I'm still dusting fairy-dust from my shoulders when thinking of our wonderful show in June.

I've told quite a few friends here in Virginia who asked about this summer's show that if I were never to be associated with another Gilbert & Sullivan production, I would be hanging up my clipboard after a highly gratifying swan song. Comparisons are odious, I know, but certainly *Iolanthe* was one of the loveliest shows with which I've ever been associated *thanks to so many other people*.

There's no way I can positively thank by name each person who led to the artistic and financial success of this production, but if I list four names and one collective, I think I will have included you all.

Libby Weed presides over a hard-working board that meets month in and month out, doing the hard work, taking the chances, bearing the frustrations—and keeps coming back for more because each member believes so highly in the mission of GSSA. I thank each of them for doing all of the foundation work to make it possible for us to produce a production such as *Iolanthe*, and then supporting it “in many various ways.”

Byron Arnason coordinated a couple dozen people to serve as goodwill ambassadors at the front-of-house: ushers, boxoffice personnel, salespeople, and refreshments providers. In addition to that, he led a massive “strike and reset” between shows—all with great humor and enthusiasm.

Bill Hatcher was a most effective production manager. He gathered an artistic staff willing and more than able to translate the vision of a traditional *Iolanthe* into a reality by securing the services of costume, set, and technical staff—all in addition to communicating with the performers, securing rehearsal facilities, and doing so many other things incredibly well, not the least of which was controlling the budget.

Jeffrey Jones-Ragona once again assembled a wonderful orchestra, demonstrated his love for Sullivan in preparing the cast, and then conducted the final dress rehearsals and performances. Jeffrey is, for a stage director, the ideal collaborator, and it is always an honor to be associated with him. Our relationship is one that Gilbert and Sullivan themselves would have envied!

Our wonderful cast is worthy of our applause and appreciation for bringing one of Gilbert's most fanciful libretti and Sullivan's most beautiful scores to spark'ling life. May I mention to each one of you that as I watched each performance, I sometimes found tears in my eyes as audiences laughed, applauded, and as *you* let our audiences know why Gilbert & Sullivan have been around for over a century and will likely be just as delightful and frequently performed when the kids who attended our children's matinee have children of their own. Grandchildren, too. Thank you—and *congratulations*.

It's always fun and gratifying to look back, but just now *I'm* looking forward. The GSSA Board has decided, to Jeffrey's and my delight, that Sullivan's *other* most beautiful score, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, will be next summer's show. I look forward to writing more about it in future issues of the newsletter. I also keenly anticipate preparing to stage it—and then doing the deed itself. Both Gilbert & Sullivan considered *The Yeomen* their favorite collaboration, and it will be our goal to show Austin *why*. Watch for information concerning auditions in early-spring, and plan to join us, for we'll all have another beautiful set of wonderful songs “to sing, O!”

Yours sincerely,
Rafe



The *Iolanthe* cast and crew

photo courtesy Nanci and Benny Jay

G&S Elderhostels in Connecticut

For the fourteenth year, our artistic director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, will team with Deborah Lyon in offering Gilbert & Sullivan elderhostel classes at Incarnation Center in Ivoryton, Connecticut.

This unique program, now well over twenty years old, consists of two separate courses. The first is a "beginners' course" called "Gilbert & Sullivan and *Pira-Mika-Fore; or The Big Three*." It concentrates on the three most popular operas. The second course features one of the lesser-known operas, and attracts alumni of earlier program (though newcomers are always welcome). This fall's course will center on *Princess Ida*. They'll be taught in topsy-turvy order: "Gilbert & Sullivan and *Princess Ida*" will run October 11-16 and "Gilbert & Sullivan and *Pira-Mika-Fore*" will run October 25-30.

For further information, call or write to Rafe (540/478-4335 ~ RafeMacPhail@yahoo.com). Registration can be done on-line (www.elderhostel.org, which has additional details concerning the courses) or by calling 877/426-8056 M-F 9 am - 5 pm E.T.

NEWS of our MEMBERS

If you love Charles Dickens' masterpiece, *A Christmas Carol*, and if you enjoyed the talented performers in the Gilbert and Sullivan Society's June production of *Iolanthe*, then you're in for a treat! Imagine a courtroom scene in which Ebenezer Scrooge, after his dramatic encounter on Christmas Eve, puts the ghosts on trial for what he suffered in his ordeal. Mark Brown's *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge*, to be presented the first three weekends in December at the Gaslight Baker Theatre in Lockhart, Texas, is a Christmas-season event you won't want to miss. *Iolanthe* cast members performing in this play include Arthur DiBianca, Angela Irving, Derek Smootz, Katherine Wiggins, and Jay Young. G&S board member Stephen Reynolds directs the production. Please consult the group's web site www.gaslightbakertheatre.org for more details.

On August 28 & 29, **Glary Marie Posch** will be in Austin at The Razor's Edge recording a CW demo for songwriter Con Pierson. This coming November 5, 6, 7, she will be singing the role of Cherubino (*Marriage of Figaro*) with CyFair Lyric Opera, and will present a Faculty Lecture Recital at CyFair College on April 17.

Faithful chorister **Ariel Rios** is staging Donizetti's *Elixir of Love* in Guadalajara. He notes that he's found the experience of working with GSSA has "influenced greatly" his work in Mexico.

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.

While the Minstrels will be offering ***Pirates in the Schools*** as the touring program for children this season, Wand'ring Minstrels' 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. Book your holiday parties now to insure availability! We can 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, or at 512-350-4935.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive mid-November; the deadline for submissions is October 26. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



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:

The
Gilbert
SULLIVAN *Society*
 OF AUSTIN

P. O. Box 684542
 Austin, TX 78768-4542

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit
 Organization
 US Postage Paid
 Permit No. 2054
 Austin, Texas



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

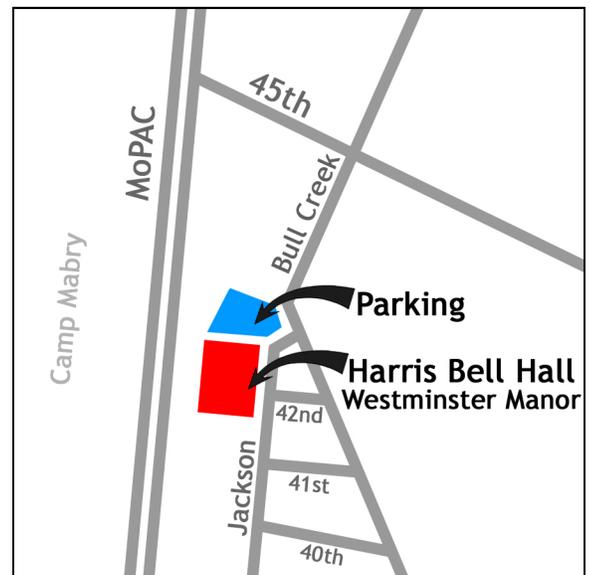
SEPTEMBER 2009



**The
 Soaring
 Soul Soirée**

FALL MUSICALE
 Harris Bell Hall in Westminster Manor
 Sunday, September 20th - 7pm

*Please see
 article on
 page 1 for
 details!*



Directions to Harris Bell Hall, 4100 Jackson: From the north, take 45th Street to Bull Creek (second light east of MoPac); go south, turn right onto Jackson. From the south, exit MoPac at 35th Street, and continue north on Jackson. Parking is available at the North Entrance. Please enter through the Health Care Center.

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: 6901 Lamar Blvd., #139, Austin, TX 78752
 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

This project is funded and supported in part by the City of Austin through the Cultural Arts Division and by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts which believes that a great nation deserves great art.



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

Libby Weed
Allan Longacre
Kathryn Saar
Dave Wieckowski
Reba Gillman
June Julian
David Little
Byron Arnason
Chris Buggé
Stephen Reynolds
Ingrid Yaple

President
 Executive Vice President
 Secretary
 Treasurer
 Historian
 Membership
 Publicity

Database Manager
 Newsletter Editor

Arthur DiBianca
Sue Ricket Caldwell