

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2011 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Many who attended last summer's production of *The Mikado* commented in surveys on the beauty of the choruses and their important contribution to this grand production. These audience members were on to something important.



Our choruses truly are a remarkable part of our shows. One reason is the excellent training and choral direction provided by Dr. **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, our Society's Music Director. Another is the stunning quality of musicianship among the singers. Both Jeffrey and Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, will tell you that several in our chorus could have played roles including Yum-Yum, Ko-Ko, Katisha, Nanki-Poo, and other principals with extraordinary flair and aplomb. Don't you just wish you could hear those splendid voices singing on their own?

Well, you can hear these stars from the G&S chorus in solo performance! Please join us Sunday, November 6, at 3 pm at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church for an unusual musicale that lifts the veil on one of the big secrets of our success. Our shows are brimful of musical mastery and performing pizzazz, over every inch of the stage (and in the pit).

You will hear **Kate Clark, Tai Collins, Zendel Hernandez, John Hooker, Daytha Hulion, Jake Jacobsen, Karlyn McCutchan**, and **Jennifer Tucker**, accompanied by **Brett Bachus**, performing solos and ensembles from several G&S operas. In addition, these stars from the chorus will beguile you with some Puccini, Mozart, Scarlatti, Rodgers & Hammerstein, and more. It will be an enchanting show. Bring some munchies to share during our social time after the performances, and we guarantee you an afternoon full of delights!

While we are on the subject of musicales, thanks to all of you who attended the wonderful September musicale. It was a benefit performance at which we all had the opportunity to aid the Austin Firefighters Outreach Fund. This group expressed their profound thanks to you for the contribution of almost \$1200 toward the needs of Austin-area firefighters and others affected by the recent wildfires in our area.

Hoping to see you soon,



SUNDAY ★ NOVEMBER 6 ★ 3PM

November Musicale

Our fall musicale will be held Nov. 6 at 3 pm at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 8134 Mesa Drive. Please see the President's Message for more details. Members are asked to **bring munchies** to share.

The Mikado DVD/CD now available
ORDER TODAY!

The Mikado

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Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late December; the deadline for submissions is December 7. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

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The Patriot Day Musicale and Benefit

by Sue Ricket Caldwell

On Sunday, September 11, 2011, the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin presented “an afternoon of remembrance and joy.” President **Libby Weed** explained the Society’s goals for the concert:

- to reflect on the meaning of this tenth anniversary of one of the most lamentable days in our nation’s history;
- to show our appreciation for the brave responders who made heroic efforts to minimize the loss of life on 9/11 and who still stand in the breach for their fellow citizens every day;
- to honor the citizens of New York and show our solidarity with them;
- to remind ourselves of our unity as a nation in spite of our many differences;
- and to demonstrate the resilience of the human spirit and its inextinguishable capacity for joy by enjoying beautiful music.

The cast for the concert included: **Janette Jones**, who produced the musicale and most recently appeared as Katisha in our summer production of *The Mikado*; **Leonard Johnson**, the GSSA Board’s musicale coordinator and a voice professor at the U. T. Butler School of Music; **Tamsen Cohagan**, who was Yum-Yum in *The Mikado* and teaches voice lessons at St. Stephen’s Episcopal School; **Patricia Combs**, who was Pitti-Sing in *The Mikado* and is an active member of the Austin Lyric Opera chorus; **David Fontenot**, a chorus member in *The Mikado* and memorable Wilfred Shadbolt in last year’s *The Yeomen of the Guard*; **Angela Irving**, who was Peep-Bo in *The Mikado* and is a voice teacher; **Robert L. Schneider**, the pompous Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado* and the GSSA Board’s Wand’ring Minstrels coordinator; and **Jay Young**, who was Pish-Tush in *The Mikado* and performs often with various companies in central Texas. Accompanist for the concert was the GSSA’s Lady High Pianist, **Marti Dudgeon**, who has performed widely both on piano and as a vocalist.

Leonard started the program by conducting the cast and audience in the “Star-Spangled Banner” and “My Country, ’Tis of Thee.” Then Robert sang “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” accompanying himself on guitar and with the audience joining in on the chorus. Leonard led us in two verses of “America the Beautiful.” Then Libby read two moving excerpts from **The Legacy Letters**, a book published in August in which family members of Americans who lost their lives in the twin towers share letters they wrote ten years later to their lost loved ones. My eyes were still moist as Janette sang the verse and led us in the chorus of “God Bless America.” Janette was joined by Tamsen, Angela, Patricia, Leonard, and Jay in singing “Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor.”

Next were two songs in tribute to New York. The cast sang an enthusiastic “New York, New York.” Then Jay Young performed “Zipperfly,” the 1920’s song about a young man in New York rhapsodizing over a suit featuring the new-fangled zipper fly.

After a very brief intermission, the cast performed a number of G&S selections, each as re-envisioned for a New York setting. Angela sang “Love is a plaintive song” from *Patience* as Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*. David performed “O better far to live and die” from *The Pirates of Penzance* as a Wall Street mogul, with a tie in lieu of a piratical sash around his head. Tamsen, Angela, and Patricia reprised their “Three little maids” from *The Mikado* as cell-phone-clutching New York teenagers. Robert did “When I,



good friends, was called to the bar” from *Trial by Jury* as a judge from *Law and Order*, with the audience serving as chorus. Patricia sang “Were I thy bride” to David from *The Yeomen of the Guard* as Sarah Jessica Parker. Angela and Jay performed “I know a youth” from *Ruddigore* as young lovers from mid-20th-century New York. Finally, Tamsen sang “The sun, whose rays are all ablaze” from *The Mikado* as the Statue of Liberty.

It was time for the traditional end to the Musicale. David sang “Hail, Poetry!” from *The Pirates of Penzance*, with the audience rising to join in the chorus. In honor of our New York-themed refreshments, Roberta Long revised the closing song “Now to the banquet we press” from *The Sorcerer* to “Now to the deli we go.” As we prepared to assault the laden tables, Libby exhorted us to donate to the Austin Fire Fighters’ Outreach Fund. It was an especially timely appeal, given the wildfires that began on Labor Day. We raised nearly \$1200 towards this worthy cause.

Notice of Elections

On Sunday afternoon, January 15, The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin will hold its Annual Meeting in the fellowship hall at Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire. This is the one time of the year when our gatherings turn to a little business—but we assure you the business is brief and the enjoyment is long! We invite all members to join us for these matters:

- A summary of the past year’s activities and information about the Society’s financial position
- The election of a board of directors
- An enjoyable sing-along time, with Maestro Leonard Johnson leading all of us in several familiar G&S choruses

Please contact one of these members of the nominating committee if you wish to volunteer to serve on the board or to nominate someone else:

David Fontenot, 512 809-2876

Reba Gillman, 512 327-2277

Enid Hallock, 512 453-4431

Wanted: Publicity & Design Talent

Do you have experience in advertising or public relations? How about graphic design, web design, or social media outreach? Are you interested in using these skills to help us with getting out the word about the Society and our performances? Looking to bolster your résumé with hands-on advertising experience?

We are in need of a volunteer(s) to help with our publicity, and we’re willing to train you—or you can just jump right in. Current college students, recent graduates, young professionals—this is a golden opportunity to have real-life experience and achieve something worthwhile to put on your résumé. Contact David Little (our G&S publicity coordinator) at austingilbertsullivan@gmail.com to find out more about this great opportunity.

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin presented *Patriot Day Musicale and Benefit* on September 11, 2011

photos courtesy Steve Schwartzman

see more at gilbertsullivanatx.smugmug.com



performers Robert L. Schneider, Leonard Johnson, Jay Young, David Fontenot, Angela Irving, Tamsen Cohagan, Janette Jones, and Patricia Combs.



Maestro Leonard Johnson and Lady High Pianist Marti Dudgeon





An Introduction to *Patience*

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

“Let me confess” (as Bunthorne sings in recitative in Act I of *Patience; or, Bunthorne’s Bride*), this Gilbert & Sullivan’s hit show of 1881 has always been one of my favorites. It is true that my list of favorites got considerably longer in recent years following our productions in Austin of *Iolanthe* and *The Yeomen of the Guard*, but *Patience* is still near the top of the list.

Anyone who’s been around the arts for any length of time would have to love *Patience*, the story of a simple dairy-maid so naïve she “cannot tell what this love may be” that has consumed the other girls (“rapturous maidens,” as Gilbert calls them) in the village. It’s the object of the maidens’ love that puzzles Patience and delights us: Reginald Bunthorne, a “fleshy poet,” with his too-too precious poetry, his velvet knee-breeches and floppy beret, and his professed fondness for lilies, muted colors, and “all one sees that’s Japanese.”

But when Bunthorne himself sings “Let me confess,” he admits that he’s an “aesthetic sham,” and his passion is not “high aesthetic art” but rather “a morbid love of admiration” by the young girls—and *this* motivates his enigmatic vocabulary, precious posing, and artsy artifice.

All goes well for him until a rival poet appears on the scene, just after Patience has agreed to marry Bunthorne as an act of unselfishness (which, she’s told, true love must be). And caught in the swirl of changing alliances are the staunch Lady Jane and a male chorus of Dragoon Guards who just don’t “get it” when it comes to poetry—but who are willing to adopt the outward appearance of these two poets to “get the girls.”

You don’t have to be in and of the arts to appreciate Gilbert’s satire on affectation, of course. I remember wearing an ascot occasionally in college—so, so cool! And if you’ve ever adopted the hair style of the current teen idol, worn the fashions of the latest pop-culture phenom, or used the expressions of current TV stars, you will appreciate what Gilbert was writing about. (And maybe wince a little, too, at the recollection! Those ascots!)

Combine Gilbert’s wit and lyrics and situations with Sullivan’s irresistible melodies, ensembles, and choruses, and you have a wonderful show, filled with color and humor and delight—and one that might even make some of us working on it wince a bit when we think of younger days.

The libretto can be read in any library (or at any computer: just search on the Gilbert & Sullivan Archive, where you can also find the music). CDs and DVDs are available at reasonable cost through on-line retailers.

Jeffrey and I directed *Patience* at St. Stephen’s School back in 1999, and we’re looking forward to auditions in early March for the coming production. It’s a *delightful* show!



NEWS of our MEMBERS

James Shields, son of **Katharine Shields**, is Principal Clarinet of the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto. James, born December 1983, was introduced early to Gilbert and Sullivan while Katharine sang Casilda in the Spring 1983 GSSA production of *The Gondoliers*.

Betty Hatcher, the oldest member of the GSSA, has recently moved to Austin from San Antonio, and is living at the Heritage of Gaines Ranch. We are happy to think we will see her more often at GSSA functions, and know that she will enjoy being closer to family here.

Jay Michael oversaw marketing for and performed in the recent **50 Years of Harmony in Austin**, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Austin Chord Rangers and the Austin chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society.

Most of you know **Angela Irving** as Peep-Bo in our recent and highly successful production of *The Mikado*. Her role as voice teacher has won her a Rotary Club Exchange scholarship. The Rotary Club of Austin requested applications from young Central Texas businessmen and businesswomen for their coming exchange program in the Brittany region of France. The trip will be March 10 through April 7, 2012; participants will stay with host Rotarian families. An essay, an interview, and recommendations were required as well as the application and Angela was one of five chosen for this wonderful experience. The exchange is designed to bring American businesspeople into contact with French people in the same professions. Angela expects to learn about the singing and voice teaching business in France by meeting singers and voice teachers there and by visiting their studios. In addition, she will speak to Rotary Clubs both in France and back here in Texas about her experiences and what she has learned. One thing she will have to learn *tout de suite* is how to speak French! Congratulations to Angela on this honor and on the prospect of such an exciting adventure. Thanks are due to long time GSSA member and patron **Stanley Bullard**. Stanley is a member of the Rotary Club of Austin and supported Angela and her application.

GSSA’s Artistic Director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, was one of five speakers invited to participate at the Sept. 23 memorial concert in New York for John Odell Behonek, who died in April. Jack Behonek was a performer, producer, arts administrator, friend to hundreds in the light-opera subculture and a founder of Light Opera of New York (LOONY). Rafe represented the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of New York, of which he is a long-time member. For photos and Rafe’s tribute, go to www.jonathancarriel.com/misterb.

Wand’ring Minstrels

The Wand’ring Minstrels performed at Gateway Gardens in Marble Falls for an enthusiastic crowd on Tuesday, September 13. The audience managed to sing along to familiar Gilbert and Sullivan melodies and even announced the arrival of the Mikado and Katisha with the familiar Miya Sama chorus. A good time was had by all! Performers were **Janette Jones** (mezzo), **Robert L. Schneider** (bass), and **Martha Dudgeon** (vocals and piano).

If you wish to have the Wand’ring Minstrels perform for your event, contact **Robert L. Schneider** (bigdaddymusic1@gmail.com), or see our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org) for further details.

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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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 Nominated for B. Iden Payne Award

Congratulations to Arthur DiBianca for his B. Iden Payne Award nomination as Outstanding Lead Actor in Music Theater! This important recognition is well deserved for Arthur's nuanced and superbly entertaining performance as Ko-Ko in last June's production of *The Mikado*.

Arthur has appeared in 14 Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin productions beginning with our 1994 production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. Some of his featured roles prior to 2011 are Dr. Daly in *The Sorcerer*, Major-General Stanley in *The Pirates of Penzance* (2008), the Lord Chancellor in *Iolanthe* (2009), and Jack Point in *The Yeomen of the Guard* (2010).

Arthur was inducted into the Society's Hall of Fame in March 2011 in recognition of his many contributions both onstage and in the Society's daily activities. He is also active as a clarinetist with the Austin Philharmonic and the St. Edward's University Orchestra.

This year, after 37 years as a special event of the Austin Creative Alliance (previously the Austin Circle of Theaters), the B. Iden Payne Awards Council (BIPAC) became a separate sponsored project of the Austin Creative Alliance. The Council is composed of a group of volunteers who remain focused on recognizing artistic excellence within the Austin theatre community.

The B. Iden Payne Awards ceremony will be held October 24 at the State Theatre.



Laurie R. King's *Pirate King* reviewed by Sue Ricket Caldwell

As a fan of both Sherlock Holmes and Gilbert and Sullivan, I looked forward to *Pirate King*, volume 11 in the Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes series. I delighted in the first 8 books. The next two, which really comprised one muddled tale (with "to be continued" at the end of book 9), nearly caused me to abandon the series, but the G&S connection brought me back.

Alas, there is neither G&S nor Russell/Holmes flavor to the book. The story, set in 1924, involves Russell (and, later, her husband, Holmes) investigating possible criminal activity associated with a company filming a silent movie about a group making a silent movie about a G&S production of *The Pirates of Penzance* whose performers are kidnapped by actual pirates. Of course, the film company she is investigating is kidnapped by pirates, though not British. Large portions of the book are devoted to Russell providing minutiae regarding the film cast, the locations in which they film, the equipment used for filming – in lieu of potentially pertinent information regarding her assigned investigation. A major character in the series may be in jeopardy, according to sections midway through the book, but this subplot is abandoned. The case itself is resolved only by spontaneous confession by the perpetrator.

There is little for the G&S aficionado in *Pirate King*. Stray lines from the play are used to introduce each chapter, and occasionally parts of the G&S comic opera are mentioned, but they are incidental to what passes for a plot in this book. Russell casts aspersions on G&S throughout. And the "marriage of true minds" that was once the relationship of Russell and Holmes is now almost an afterthought.

If you like G&S or Sherlock Holmes, I strongly recommend that you avoid this book.

GSSA Receives City Grant

We were happy to learn that our City of Austin grant will be renewed in 2012, but unfortunately our Texas Cultural Arts grant was completely eliminated due to budget cuts. This means that our combined city and state grants will reflect a reduced amount in 2012. Due to this grant reduction, we will be relying even more on the generosity of our members next year.



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

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2011



SUNDAY ★ NOVEMBER 6 ★ 3PM

See details on page 1!

Coming Events

- November 6 Stars from the G&S Chorus (see p. 1)
- January 15 Annual Meeting (see p. 2)
- February 26 Happy Birthday, Frederic! musicale
- March 3-4 *Patience* Auditions
- May 13 *Patience* Preview musicale
- June 7-17 *Patience* summer production

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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**

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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**

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