

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

APRIL 2016 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed



It gives me great pleasure to introduce our newest board member, **Sarah Slaughter**. You probably have seen Sarah if you came to a performance of one of our grand productions during any of the past few years, as she has served as a volunteer in the lobby for several performances since 2012.

Sarah was added to the board after the passing of **Roberta Long**, who served faithfully for many years. Sarah will be taking on many of Roberta's former roles, including the oversight of our online gift shop and mailing orders of items such as CDs and DVDs. Sarah is a natural organizer, so she has already begun aiding in a number of areas. She will serve on our production committee.

Sarah grew up in the San Francisco Bay area. She earned a B.A. in business administration and worked in high tech areas until 2006. Then, after having a beautiful firebrick oven built at the Slaughter house, Sarah formed the Texas Oven Company, where she works with a talented masonry artist in creating marvelous wood-burning ovens and appliances for others.

Sarah is a musician, a flautist, who "fell in love with G&S" as a child watching a collegiate production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. She and her husband Nick are parents of Isabella and Sabrina, who were introduced early in life to Gilbert & Sullivan and frequently attend live productions. (Isabella's current favorite G&S number is "I am so proud" and Sabrina's is "My name is John Wellington Wells." Good taste, girls!) Sarah is grateful to **Pat Turpin** and **Chuck Antonie** for getting her and her daughters involved as volunteers four years ago. She says, "G&S is a rich part of history too, so I'm thrilled to be on the board! It gives me a renewed connection with live music. I can contribute to the preservation of Gilbert & Sullivan's genius—the music, joy, satire, rhythm, and laughter."

Welcome, Sarah!

On a wistful note, I find myself reflecting on the fact that our dear **Reba Gillman** died last April at the age of 98 after many years of service, performance, and friendship within our Society. We have lost two dear friends in a short time. Reba, like Roberta, is still very much with us in spirit and in memory.

I hope I'll see you May 15, at our exciting sneak peek at a wonderful summer treat!



The Gondoliers Preview Musicale

Meet the cast and stage director
Michelle Haché

Sunday, May 15, 3 p.m.

Worley Barton Theater at
Brentwood Christian School

11908 North Lamar (see map on back page)

Join us in May for a sneak preview of *The Gondoliers*, hosted by our illustrious guest stage director, Michelle Haché. She will guide you through the storyline with intriguing narrative, and the cast will delight you with beautiful sound bites from the show. Our program will include many of the delightful songs from *The Gondoliers*, including "In enterprise of martial kind," "Bridegroom and bride," and "Dance a cachucha."

Don't miss this rare opportunity to meet our outstanding performers, artists, and production team up close! Come on out to see what *The Gondoliers* is all about. Enjoy the fun, and as usual, *please bring munchies to share after the musicale!*

Admission: Free to the public

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels will be performing on Mother's Day at Westminster and at Spicewood Elementary School for MAE Day (Music and Arts Education Day) on May 17.

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, or contact Robert Schneider at minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org.

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Very Truly Yours, Gilbert & Sullivan

by Rosa Mondragon Harris



On Sunday, February 21, at 3 pm, some 200 of us gathered at First Presbyterian Church for the Texas premiere of Gayden Wren's original play *Very Truly Yours, Gilbert & Sullivan*. The playwright himself was in attendance for the two-act play of dramatic and comic readings from the correspondence of William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. Songs from all 14 of the operas on which they collaborated were also sprinkled into the play, which was based on diaries, letters, contemporary memoirs and newspaper reports. Our cast featured **Allan Longacre** as Narrator, **Tamsen Cohagan** as Soprano, **June Julian** as Mezzo, **Holton Johnson** as Tenor, **Patrick Wright** as Baritone, and **David Fontenet** as Bass. **Karl Logue** was the pianist. Our Artistic Director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, took a break from his sabbatical to come direct, joining Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**.

From the back of the church, Tamsen started with a beautiful invocation from Princess Ida, "Minerva! / Oh, Goddess Wise!" Allen told us that Gilbert and Sullivan, described by the New York Herald as "amiable, modest, simple, good-humored and vivacious men," first met on the set of Gilbert's operetta *Ages Ago* at the Royal Gallery of Illustration. Both men were already famous: Sullivan for his instrumental music, oratorios, and the operetta *Cox and Box*; Gilbert for some 14 plays and operas, as well as his nonsense verse published as *The Bab Ballads*.

Gilbert and Sullivan collaborated for the first time in 1871 on *Thespis*, an opera written for the Christmas extravaganza at the Gaiety Theatre. *Holton sang "Little Maid of Arcadée" from Thespis, telling the mildly cynical story of a love affair gone wrong.* Four years passed between *Thespis* and Gilbert and Sullivan's next opera, *Trial By Jury*, during which they occasionally collaborated on non-operatic songs. *Tamsen and Holton offered us "Sweethearts," which was written in connection with Gilbert's 1874 play of the same name. Holton, Tamsen, and June followed with "Oh, gentlemen, listen, I pray" from Trial By Jury.*

I was surprised to learn that George Grossmith had never acted before being hired for Gilbert and Sullivan's next opera, *The Sorcerer*. The show was a great success and Grossmith performed as the comic lead in the next eight Gilbert and Sullivan operas. *Patrick then sang the wonderful "My name is John Wellington Wells" from The Sorcerer.*

In the team's next work, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, many people thought that Grossmith's character, Sir Joseph, was modeled on W.H. Smith, the humbly born millionaire bookseller recently appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. *David and the cast next sang Sir Joseph's telling of the rise of his career, "When I was a lad."* The early reviews for *H.M.S. Pinafore* were generally positive, but the use of the word "damme" shocked audiences. Nonetheless, the opera became an international sensation, with eight different pirated productions of the work played simultaneously in New York.

In an effort to prevent unauthorized American productions of their new opera, *The Pirates of Penzance*, Gilbert and Sullivan decided to premiere the new opera in New York. It was their most ambitious work to date and included an unusual feature, a male chorus of policemen who appeared only in the second act. *David and the*

cast sang one of my husband's favorite selections from the show, "When the foeman bares his steel." The Pirates of Penzance was a great hit with New York audiences and critics alike.

Sullivan returned to England and began work on a new opera, *Patience*. *Holton next sang, "Prithee, pretty maiden."* Shortly after the show opened, we're told, *Patience* was transferred to the new Savoy Theatre, the first theater in London lit entirely by electricity and the site of all future Gilbert and Sullivan premieres.

Their next opera, *Iolanthe*, contained a song for Lord Mountararat which was a ringing affirmation of the utter uselessness of the House of Peers. In 1909, during a campaign against the veto power of the House of Lords, its opponents appealed to Gilbert for permission to use the song as a campaign hymn. Gilbert did not permit the use of his song, and stated that they did not express his own views. *David and the cast offered us "When Britain really ruled the waves."*

In 1884, Gilbert and Sullivan adapted Gilbert's play, *The Princess*, and delivered *Princess Ida*. The Prince and his friends disguise themselves to gain entrance to a women's university in Act II. *Dressed in school robes, David, Holton, and Patrick sang the always amusing "I am a maiden" from Princess Ida.*

For their next opera, the team gave audiences grim and melodramatic *Ruddigore*. *June demonstrated the show's tone with the ballad, "Sir Rupert Murgatroyd." Ruddigore was not considered a success and only ran nine months.* The opera's greatest trouble, most people agreed, was that it happened to follow *The Mikado*, the most popular comic opera ever written. *The Mikado* was also impressive lyrically and musically. *As the trio of Ko-Ko, Pooh-Bah, and Pish-Tush, trying to figure out which of them shall volunteer to be beheaded, David, Patrick, and Holton sang "I am so proud" from The Mikado.*

The two men followed *Ruddigore* with their most serious work, *The Yeomen of the Guard*. In addition to the change in tone, the opera also dispensed with the usual upbeat opening chorus. Instead, the curtain rose on mezzo-soprano Jessie Bond alone onstage at a spinning wheel, singing a sad song of love. *June sang Bond's opening number, "When a maiden loves." Then, led by Patrick and Tamsen, the cast presented the audience with another song from The Yeomen of the Guard, "I have a song to sing, O."*

The Gondoliers was Gilbert and Sullivan's next collaboration and was a hit second only to *The Mikado*. Sullivan used a variation on a musical technique he claimed to have invented, the idea of setting up separate tunes and then combining them. Heard in *The Sorcerer*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *The Mikado*, the most ingenious and certainly the most difficult demonstration of this technique was in a quartet in *The Gondoliers*. *"In a contemplative fashion" was delightfully sung by Tamsen, June, Holton, and Patrick.*

The relationship between the two men had been suffering for years, but they managed to come together to work on two more operas. *Utopia, Limited* opened in 1893 and was popular with audiences, but it was a costly endeavor and was withdrawn after an eight month run. *"Although of native maids the cream" from Utopia, Limited was sung by Tamsen and June.*

In 1896, Gilbert and Sullivan brought us their final opera, *The Grand Duke*. The title character was the ruler of a tiny German

(continued on next page)

Very Truly Yours, Gilbert & Sullivan

photos of the event courtesy Steve Schwartzman

see more at gilbertsullivan.austin.smugmug.com

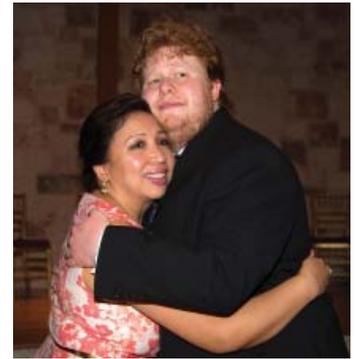


(front, l-r) Allan Longacre, June Julian, Gayden Wren, Tamsen Cohagan, Karl Logue
(back, l-r) Holton Johnson, David Fontenot, Patrick Wright



an audience-eye view of the production

June and Patrick illustrate the action of the song, "Sweethearts"



During the preshow hour, entitled "Gilbert & Sullivan & me," Gayden Wren has an audience of 35 in stitches with a delightfully entertaining mishmash of songs, comedy, and oddities from his own repertoire—everything from G&S to Johnny Cash's "I've Been Everywhere." Jeanne Sasaki provides the piano accompaniment.



Tamsen and June sing "Although of native maids the cream"

(continued from previous page)

principality, and despite his enormous wealth he is the cheapest man in the world. *June and David stepped forward and offered us "As o'er our penny roll we sing."* Unfortunately, *The Grand Duke* was a failure and only ran for five months.

The two partners separated, without ever officially agreeing to do so. Sullivan continued to write operas for the Savoy with several other collaborators. Gilbert moved into semi-retirement, taking up the automobile and attending to his voluminous correspondence. On November 22, 1900, The Times of London announced that Sir Arthur Sullivan had died at the age of 58. *Fittingly, Patrick sang "Is life a boon?" from The Yeoman of the Guard.* In 1907, Gilbert was knighted by King Edward, almost 25 years after Sullivan, and he passed away in May of 1911.

Today, Allen told us, more than 200 professional and amateur groups in the United States and Canada alone perform primarily or exclusively the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. These productions are seen and loved by millions. Gilbert and Sullivan's collaborations have become the world's most popular body of musical-theater works, second only to Shakespeare in the history of English-language theater. *The cast concluded the show with "Try we life-long" from The Gondoliers.*

The audience proceeded to the lobby of the church for refreshments, a meet-and-greet with the cast and playwright, and a book signing of Wren's *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan*. Through their words, the audience had been brought even closer into the minds of Gilbert and Sullivan, and it was a captivating afternoon for all.

Roberta Long, Devoted Friend and Supporter

The Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society lost a beloved friend in the passing on Tuesday, March 1, of our Executive Vice President, **Roberta Long**. This summer's production of *The Gondoliers* will be dedicated to the memory of Roberta—supporter, volunteer, and board member *par excellence*.



If you have attended any of our summer productions or our musicales throughout the year, you have seen Roberta, often sporting a classy chapeau, at the merchandise table. She was ready to assist guests with CDs, DVDs, books, T-shirts, or any memorabilia needed.



Roberta and her husband Mark have been true Savoyards for decades. Mark has performed in the cast of almost every summer production over the past twenty years, while Roberta has steadfastly supported our efforts through assisting with the budgeting process, writing grant applications, planning events, preparing delicious refreshments, and attending virtually every performance. Roberta and Mark's son Steven has also appeared in G&S productions here and in Israel.

A legendary teacher and leader of Torah studies for Congregation Agudas Achim, Roberta was generous with her knowledge of Hebrew law and held many of us spellbound with her ability to expound eloquently on related subjects.

We have lost a dear friend, as last spring we lost our beloved Reba Gillman. But, like Reba, Roberta will be long remembered and her influence will continue to be felt throughout the coming years. Join us this summer to honor the memory of Roberta at *The Gondoliers*.

The Gondoliers Cast and Staff

The Duke of Plaza-Toro – **Bob Beare**

Luiz – **Jerry Cordova**

Don Alhambra del Bolero – **Arthur DiBianca**

Marco Palmieri – **Holton Johnson**

Giuseppe Palmieri – **Derek Smootz**

Antonio – **Jake Jacobsen**

Francesco – **Danny Castillo**

Giorgio – **Jay Young**

Annibale – **Clint Cox**

The Duchess of Plaza-Toro – **Patricia Combs**

Casilda – **Corinna Browning**

Gianetta – **Priscilla Salisbury**

Tessa – **Angela Irving**

Fiametta – **Jennifer Garza**

Vittoria – **Diana Rodriguez**

Giulia – **Sarah Manna**

Inez – **Janette Jones**

Chorus of Contadine:

Elizabeth Etter, Jayda Maret,

Erica Salinas, Sarah Steele,

Jamieson Taylor

Chorus of Gondoliers:

Bruno Barbosa, Andy Fleming,

Paul Halstead, Ezra Hankin,

Tristan Tierney

Artistic Director: **Michelle Haché**

Music Director: **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

Production Manager: **Bill Hatcher**

Stage Manager: **Monica Kurtz**

Set Designer: **Ann Marie Gordon**

Lighting Designer: **Jennifer Rogers**

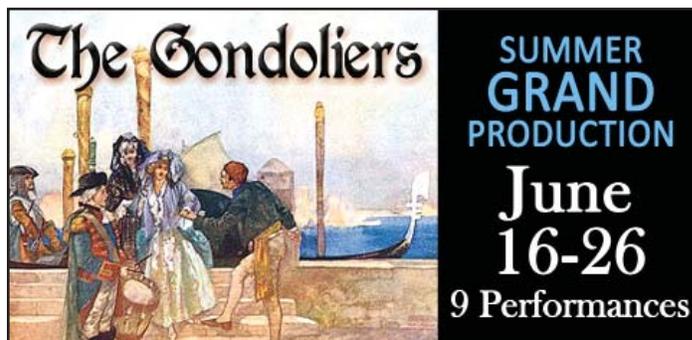
Costume Coordinator: **Pam Fowler**

Choreographer: **Christine Jean-**

Jacques

Pianist: **Jeanne Sasaki**

Assistant Chorus Master: **Andy Fleming**



A Very Important New Book Just Published by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

The Variorum Gilbert & Sullivan, Volume I, was published by Oakapple Press in December. It's a labor of love by two Savoyard-scholars, Marc Shepherd and Michael Walters. The 781-page volume contains an extensive General Introduction of 169 pages, which introduces the challenge of presenting texts with virtually all known variant states along with editorial commentary. Volume I contains the first four Gilbert & Sullivan operas: *Thespis*, *Trial by Jury*, *The Sorcerer*, and *H.M.S. Pinafore*. And while Volume I was 35 years in gestation, the other four volumes are well along, and we are assured that they will appear at intervals of about one year.

What makes this work of such great interest is that the editors have not only compared printed texts, but they've unearthed pre-production manuscripts, combed the pre-production "license copies" submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for approval, surviving scraps of manuscript, prompt-books, and also compared vocal scores, sheet-music publication of the songs, and audio recordings reflecting traditional D'Oyly Carte performance practice. Earlier

books have treated the libretti in somewhat similar fashion, but never as comprehensively, carefully, or with such attention to detail. All the major archives have been consulted on both sides of the Atlantic, and on-line publishing has freed the editors from the trammels imposed by traditional publishers in terms of length, detail, and target audience.

In addition to the invaluable bibliographical information, the editors have corrected and clarified the often muddled history of the partnership, particularly the chronicle of the writing and composing of their joint works.

This is a labor of love, but the editors' achievement is in every way professional. It is a book that we Gilbertians have been hoping for for decades, and it belongs on the shelf of any student of W. S. Gilbert and his operas with Arthur Sullivan. It is available for \$40 from www.lulu.com.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late May; the deadline for submissions is May 10. 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:

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- Grand Duke or Duchess** (\$100-\$249)
- Major General** (\$250-\$499)
- Pooh-Bah** (\$500-\$999)
- Pirate King** (\$1000-\$2499)
- Savoyard** (\$2500 & up)

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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:

Henry Lytton on *The Gondoliers*

Sir Henry Lytton joined the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in 1884 and performed with them for most of the next 50 years, the last 25 as principal comedian. In his 1922 book, *The Secrets of a Savoyard*, he summarized the play that is our summer production as follows:

The Gondoliers tells of the strange and romantic fortunes of two sturdy Republicans who are called upon jointly to assume the responsibilities of Monarchy. They are Marco and Guiseppe Palmieri, who ordinarily follow the calling of Venetian gondoliers, and who hold staunchly to the doctrine that "all men are equal." Kingship does, indeed, seem rather less abhorrent to their ideas when they are summoned to fill that exalted office themselves, but at the same time they do concede that neither their courtiers nor their menials are their inferiors in any degree. Indeed, when they rise in the scale of social importance they see that their subjects rise too, and perhaps it is not surprising that in this quaint court of Barataria are functionaries basking in the splendour of such titles as the Lord High Coachman and the Lord High Cook. Even in the heart of the most democratic of mankind does the weakness for titles eternally linger!



Lytton as Jack Point,
his favourite role



*Map to Preview Musicale –
See details on page 1!*

Coming Events

- May 15 *The Gondoliers* Preview Musicale
 June 16-26 *The Gondoliers* summer production



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APRIL 2016

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

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- Annual Grand Productions**
- Educational/Community Outreach**
- Musicales**
- Musical Scholarships**
- Newsletters**
- Holiday Season Shows**

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 E-mail: info@gilbertsullivan.org



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 Visit Austin at NowPlayingAustin.com



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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