

# The Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society

## November 1986 Newsletter

**Next Meeting:** Will be held Monday, November 10th, at 7:30 pm, at Enid Hallock's, 4001 Cherrywood. For directions call Enid at 477-0858; or Reba at 327-2277. Come sing and celebrate for Carole and Loel Graber, our newly weds. We are delighted to know that Bob Wall will be on hand to play for us. Cake and champagne will be provided; you can bring other morsels to brighten the scene (optional).



**Bring Music** to sing for wooing and wedding: Be thinking of your own favorites from G & S. I've got a bunch of suggestions, especially from **Gondoliers**, **Ruddigore** and **Mikado**. And of course, there's always **Pirates**, and a few goodies from **Iolanthe**, and I'm still finding them in other operas. So do bring your scores. Loel and Carole promise to sing a duet for us . . . mystery, what have they chosen? While we sing we will also be thinking of members Jim Kellogg and Dorothy Allen off in Washington, D.C. They are planning a February wedding here in Austin. And friends, Donna and Frank Delvy, who got married in October. Is it catching?

**Note:** We will start the short business meeting promptly at 7:30 pm. If you are interested in helping shape the future for the Society please come on time and bring your ideas. We need you!

**News of Members:** Rumor has it that Gail White is on a trip to Australia.

Jennifer Arndt reports that **The Impresario**, by Mozart, will be performed at UT in the Opera Lab Theatre at 8 pm on Wednesday and Friday, November 12th and 14th. Jennifer plays the part of Madame Silverpeal, a spectacular coloratura Prima Donna.

Enid Hallock is rehearsing the part of the Mother in **Hansel and Gretel**, by Humperdinck. Jess Walters directs the production at Capitol City Playhouse. The roles are double-cast, and Enid will perform at 8 pm on Tuesday, December 2nd (free Preview); and Thursday, December 4th; Wednesday, December 10th; Friday, December 12th; Saturday, December 13th; and Thursday, December 18th. She will also appear at matinee performances on Saturday, and Sunday, December 6th and 7th; Sunday, December 14th; and Saturday, and Sunday, December 20th and 21st (the final performance).

**Other News:** Spunky Pearl Amster has announced that there will be 5 Soirées this year. The first was in October, dedicated to her husband, Gus, who died on August 28th. The second will be on Sunday, December 14th, at 7 pm, at her home.

Have you noticed? The Newsletter has a clean, printed look recently ... Thanks to Len's new Laser Writer.

In the last Newsletter did you recognize the Lord Chancellor "giving agreeable girls away" (**Iolanthe**)? Perhaps you were confused because I split the picture into two parts.

Dues are coming in, Thank You! But if you haven't paid up yet, Now Is The Time! Bring the money to the meeting, or mail it in. See the enclosed Dues Notice.

*Come to the meeting!*

*Reba Gellman,  
Secretary*

# THINKING THEATRE

Continuing ACOT's series of articles written by theatre artists about theatre, this month's contributor, **Reba Gillman**, known to Austin as the Gilbert & Sullivan activist, and theatre patron, writes about her pet project.



## THE AUSTIN GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY

Gilbert and Sullivan, like Shakespeare, may be an acquired taste. But a little cultivation brings a large reward. The madcap ideas presented in polished language, expertly set to delightful music, soon enchant the listener. The plots are wild, but so are some of Shakespeare's. W. S. Gilbert was a widely known Victorian "nonsense" poet--the leading British dramatist of his day. Arthur S. Sullivan, famous as a serious composer, focused the full power of his talent and skill on the comic operas. The magic they created together lives on today, over a hundred years later.

Ten years ago, here in Austin, the Zachary Scott Theatre Center put on a very successful production of Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *H.M.S. Pinafore*. This brought the secret Savoyards out of the closet. A few months later a hardy little band met at Linalice Carey's old Creek Theatre to form a society to promote the enjoyment and production of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. There followed a flurry of enthusiastic activity.

As perhaps only a new and dedicated group can do, we tackled the problems of production in the spirit of Do-it-yourself and Everything-is-possible. We had no money, so we spent no money. The cast sewed their own costumes, and built their simple sets. Cast, directors, and designers were all volunteers. Donations were solicited, and were forthcoming primarily in the form of needed props and materials. With this energy the new Society put on *Ruddigore* in the Creek Theatre in February 1977. Despite the tiny theatre, it was a great success. Several performances of the rarely performed *The Sorcerer* were done with equal success at Hancock Center's Town Hall in November.

In between, the Society joined forces with ZSTC in August, 1977 to produce *The Pirates of Penzance*. This was our first co-production, assisted by money from the Austin Arts Commission. A year later ZSTC and the G&S Society joined the Austin Symphony to put on a grand production of *The Mikado*, at the Paramount Theatre. The musicians were paid union rates to provide the orchestral accompaniment, and Maestro Akira Endo conducted wearing an appropriate kimono. Some of the money for this big co-operative effort came from the Austin Arts Commission, the ZSTC Guild Cooking School, and the Mobil Oil Foundation.

Since then we have collaborated with St. Edward's University to put on *Iolanthe* in December 1978; and worked with ZSTC to produce *Patience, An Evening with Gilbert & Sullivan, Trial by Jury, The Gondoliers*, and most recently *Ruddigore*. We have benefitted from grants from the Arts Commission, and have enjoyed the mixed blessings of co-production. Our *Trial by Jury* starred UT's well-loved Jess Walters, and was given a second run at the Capitol City Playhouse, where we sold out the house one night to the State Bar of Texas, which was meeting in Austin at the time. In all we have performed nine of the fourteen G&S operas.

Less ambitious projects have been performances of excerpts from the operas, done by invitation for such groups as the Austin Poetry Society, the Austin Women's Club, and Pearl Amster's Soiree. These have the advantage that they can be organized and rehearsed to suit the need, using whoever is free to participate. Another idea, which awaits only the organizing effort, is to perform excerpts and short scenes in the area public schools. As a means of educating a future G&S audience this effort would carry rewards on several levels.

We've been operating with a membership of about 40 people, some potential performers, and others "supporters". What we need is a few more talented enthusiasts to help do the work. We meet on the second Monday of each month (skipping July and August) to sing and to plan. Dues are low (\$5) to exclude no one; but donations are encouraged. \$25 makes you a Patron, and for \$50 you become a Lord High Patron. All members receive the Newsletter--ten issues a year. In growing Austin there must be many G&S fans lurking--all we need is to meet up with them! If this sounds like something you'd like to do, let us hear from you! For information, call: Bob Kusnetz, President, 11624 Parkfield, Austin, TX 78758, 836-1853 or 823-7516 or Reba Gillman, Secretary, 1606 The High Road, Austin, TX 78746, 327-2277.

*Editors note: Reba included the illustration shown with the note: "Gilbert went in for little drawings to accompany his work and signed them 'Bob'."*

The next meeting of G&S is 11/10 at the home of Enid Hallock, 4001 Cherrywood. For directions, call Enid at 477-0858 or Reba at 327-2277.