

The Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society

March 1988 Newsletter

Next Meeting: On March 28th, 1988, the last Monday of the month, at 7:30 pm at Enid Hallock's: 4001 Cherrywood; 477-0858. Note that this is a much delayed meeting. After the concerted efforts of the production we didn't feel up to an earlier meeting. Please bring munchies.

- Agenda: 1) Reports and Afterthoughts concerning our production of **Trial By Jury**, and **Scenes from G & S**.
2) Plans for our next production...**Yeomen of the Guard** in October.

Last Meeting: Ten members: Jacki Chapman (newly joined), Michael Drousche, Reba Gillman, Doug Glenn, Enid Hallock, Bob Kusnetz, Jan Pearsall, Janita Robbins, Katharine Shields, and Judy Thweatt, and guest, Veta Berry, met at Enid's house on Monday, February 1st. The main business of the evening was to address envelopes for the invitations to our opening night Gala, and we lost no time getting down to the job.

At about 9:30 pm President Bob took time out from penmanship to conduct a brief business meeting. The rest of us kept on writing as we listened and responded. A correction to the last **Newsletter** was that energetic newcomer Marcia Lemmon spells her name with two m's.

Bob reported that work on the production was progressing. An important decision was to set the time of the Sunday matinee at 2:30 pm. This was necessary to accomodate our pianist, Barbara Irvine, who has a Sunday morning playing job. John McNeill is working as the Technical Director, and designing the sets and lighting. Doug Glenn will run lights. A production meeting was held at the theater to discuss staging and other arrangements. Present were Bill Girard, Bob Kusnetz, Allen Lawshae, John McNeill and Jess Walters. Bill will definitely use two pianos for the performances and Jess has offered to lend us his grand piano.

Costumer Susan Norwood is a real find. She owns her own dress-making business, and specializes in bridal dresses. She has bought up a supply of men's jackets at a garage sale, and is well on the way to transforming them for our use. (At rehearsals Enid lets down cuffs and sews on braid, assisted by anyone she can commandeer. Turns out Bill Breaux is very handy with the needle.)

There is still no one in charge of running the house. At every performance we will need ushers, ticket takers, someone to run the concession, and someone to sell tickets. We will need at least ten people to work on the night of the Gala. Katharine and Marcia Lemmon are hard at work planning the Gala, and trying to line up donations, especially of food and champagne. The price will be \$15.00 per person. Stirling Printers, Scott Stirling, owner, is giving us a good price to print both the Gala invitations and the programs. Bob will solve the telephone problem at Concordia by having a special line installed for the run of the show, and transferring calls from his phone during the actual performance times. Thus, the only phone number to be used for information and reservations will be Bob's home phone.

Special Announcements: Michael Drousche is donating a book, Gilbert Without Sullivan, to the Gilbert and Sullivan Society. And Bob Kusnetz is donating all the scores of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, except **Thespis**, to the Society. This will start a nice library for the Society. Thank you both!

The meeting adjourned and we continued addressing envelopes, taking time out now and then for some welcome refreshments. Marcia Lemmon was present and helping during the first part of the evening, but left before the meeting. Bill Girard and Marilyn McQueen came in later, after the G & S rehearsal, and joined the addressing party. Many thanks to all the diligent writers!!!

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Follow-up: 1) On Wednesday, February 3rd, some of us gathered again at Enid's for the "Stuffing Party". The faithful workers that evening were Enid, Bob, Reba, Bob and Maudi Greenwood, Sharon Kite, and Marcia Lemmon. Katharine Shields joined us after Choir practice, and Bill Girard appeared after the G & S rehearsal ended. Shirley Girard joined us quite late, and helped us finish the task of stuffing the invitations into the envelopes. It was a Herculean Effort, folks. The next day Katharine took the whole batch to the main post office and mailed them out, using the ACOT Bulk Mail Permit. Many Thanks to ACOT!

2) Rosemary Russell-Vines took over the job of House Manager, and lined up the helpers for each performance.

3) The Show went on as scheduled; the Gala was wonderful, and a good time was had by all; a warm and appreciative audience came to our performances - albeit not in quite the overflowing numbers we had hoped for; but lots of people signed up to be on our mailing list for future events, or handed over money for memberships and donations. The final accounting takes time, as bills are settled and results added up - we hope to be able to figure it all out at our March 28th meeting.

4) To wind it all up, the final event was Len and Reba's traditional *after-the-show* **CAST PARTY**, featuring the Fourth Quasi-Annual **BOB & JUDY AWARDS**. Bob (Kusnetz, none other) provided his usual humorous Awards, with something suitable for each member of cast and crew. Swimming was offered, but as the water stood at 64 degrees, no one took the opportunity.

Members: A list of new members, Patrons, Lord High Patrons, and Donors will be provided in the next Newsletter. In the meantime, we welcome you all.

See you Monday, March 28th!!!!

Reba

Reba Gillman, Secretary



The rich attorney, he jumped with joy,
And replied to my fond professions:
"You shall reap the reward of your pluck, my
boy
At the Bailey and Middlesex Sessions.
You'll soon get used to her looks," said he,
"And a very nice girl you'll find her!
She may very well pass for forty-three
In the dusk, with a light behind her!"

TRIAL BY JURY

Enclosed: A copy of the article published by ACOT in their February 1988 Newsletter.

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GILBERT AND SULLIVAN AND THE SAVOY OPERAS

In Victorian England in the latter part of the nineteenth century, theatre was dominated by rowdy burlesque, and music was composed by the geniuses of Europe. Into this scene came two young men, talented and ambitious, and totally different from each other in background and temperament.

Arthur S. Sullivan was hailed as a prodigy and the hope of English music. Thoroughly trained as a performer and composer in London and Leipzig, he had composed his first anthem at the age of eight. He enjoyed people and the good life, and made friends wherever he went. William S. Gilbert was a journalist with legal training . . . quick tempered and caustically witty, famous for feuds and lawsuits. He turned out plays, verse, drawings, criticism, articles and stories in which dark cynicism was brightened by a streak of pure nonsense.

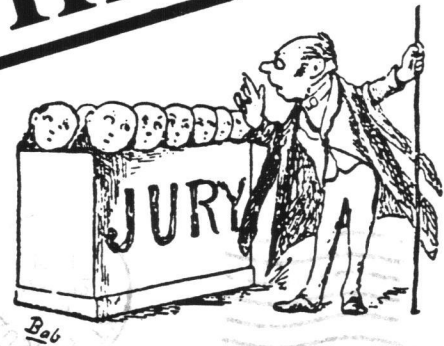
Together they wrote fourteen comic operas, many of them delightful gems. Their first effort, *Thespis* appeared in 1871. Produced just after Christmas in a burlesque theatre, it was under-rehearsed, and the cast was not up to the musical demands of the piece. *Thespis* was considered a failure, and Sullivan's music has since disappeared. But in 1875, Richard D'Oyly Carte got them together again to produce *Trial By Jury*, which was an immediate hit.

Carte was a talented young man, trained in music with a special interest in management. His ambition was to start English comic opera in a theatre devoted to that alone. *Thespis* had convinced him that Gilbert and Sullivan would be the ideal team for the purpose.

In Carte's theatre Gilbert could direct the cast with his passion for detail and high standards of performance. Sullivan's skillful composition enhanced the words and added warmth and emotion to the satirical drama. He had high standards, too, and his musical direction was thorough and strict. In this setting Gilbert and Sullivan opera could be lively and tasteful, fast-paced and disciplined, and so was born that unique team of three men, diverse but complementary. When *Trial By Jury* finished its run, they produced *The Sorcerer*. After that came *H.M.S. Pinafore*. There followed 20 years of collaboration. The members of the D'Oyly Carte Company were carefully chosen to perform the Gilbert & Sullivan operas. In 1881 they moved into the Savoy Theatre, newly built for them, which became their permanent home. Hence the term, "the Savoy Operas".

Throughout, Gilbert and Sullivan continued their separate work. Gilbert became a successful West End author, and Sullivan a beloved and much acclaimed figure in English music. Early in his career Gilbert had written and illustrated the *Bab Ballads* (from a childhood nickname). He frequently drew on this and other early material for the plots and characters of the operas. Sullivan had always prized his "serious" work more highly than his comic operas. When he was knighted in 1883, the pressure on him mounted to stop "wasting his talent" on frivolous musical comedy. They continued to work together, but the disagreements became frequent and bitter. *The Grand Duke* in 1896 was their last but certainly far from their best effort.

The D'Oyly Carte Company went right on presenting the best of Gilbert and Sullivan under the management first of Richard's daughter, and then his grand-daughter. When the



copyrights ran out in 1961, other productions abounded. In the U.S. there are Gilbert and Sullivan Societies in almost every large community. Children perform truncated versions of *Pinafore* in grade school and *The Mikado* has been presented in every conceivable form . . . "hot", Black, translated into Japanese, in modern dress, and even on television with Groucho Marx as Ko-Ko. Shining through it all sparkles the true charm and superb craftsmanship of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas.

Reba Gillman, the secretary of Austin's Gilbert and Sullivan Society gives credit to Geoffrey Smith's book, "The Savoy Operas: A New Guide to Gilbert and Sullivan", published in the U.S. in 1985 by Universe Books. The local group meets monthly; for information about the G & S Society, contact Reba at 327-2277. Their performance of "Trial By Jury" opens this month at the Concordia College auditorium with Jess Walters performing and directing.

Austin Circle of Theatres

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February 1988

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