

The Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society

June 1991 Newsletter

A Celebration

- **Monday, June 3rd:** at Pearl Amster's, 2304 Hartford Road, 472-7028: 7:30 pm, sharp.
 - A Fun-filled Recognition Evening for All ...
 - Bring your G&S scores. We'll sing our favorites!
 - A Special Surprise Performance, too!
 - Munchies provided by the Production Committee ...**Come One ... Come All!**

Garage Sale Update

- **Saturday June 15th: 9 am to 4 pm**
Ridgetop Baptist Church
708 East 51st Street (in Hyde Park)
G&S Music All Day
(Many thanks to Kate Hendricks who found us this space!)
- **SUPPORT your organization to ensure future productions!!!** We need your items from your cleaned out closets, garage, etc. Call us NOW ... before June 1st. We look forward to your assistance. Proceeds from this sale will go directly into production. All donations can be listed as tax deductions. Receipts issued upon request.
- **Drop Off Locations (please call first):**

North: Michael Drousche (459-9298)
8512 Contour (near Ohlen & 183)

Carla Hammock (258-2481)
7213 Fireoak (off 183 near TI)

Central: Jacki Chapman (323-0562)
4320 Bull Creek, #120

South: Karen Collier (288-5329)
10500 O'Rourke Lane (Circle C Ranch)

- **Be a part of the success of G&S future productions ... Donate Your Stuff ... Thanks!**

Join Us on a Trip

- **We are planning a trip to Houston on Sunday July 21 to see the Houston G&S Society 40th Anniversary production of *The Mikado*. Come with us!**

Members and Non-members Welcome! Call:
Karen Collier (288-5329) or Norma Garza (441-7148)

~~~~~ Congratulations ~~~~~

- **To Karen Collier and Carla Hammock** who wrote the grant application for City of Austin Cultural Arts funding.

We were one of only three organizations in Austin to receive \$1500.00, as first time applicants. Thank you so much for your hard work, Karen and Carla. This will be a big help in our production plans.

~~~~~ Production Update ~~~~~

Report by Jacki Chapman for the Committee

The production committee is serving in a double capacity:

- A) Fund Raising Endeavors
- B) Production Planning

A) It is an established fact that productions' box office receipts do not cover the costs of production. Therefore in order to insure future productions, serious plans and efforts need to be focused on fund raising. We are making a concerted effort to establish fund raising events and policies. Then we can, when applying for city and state arts funding, show our efforts at internal fund raising.

This year we are doing the following:

- a) Application for city funding. We are very fortunate that with all the theatre organizations there are in Austin we were awarded \$1500.00.
- b) The Society Garage Sale on June 15th. We need member support!
- c) A High Tea Event with performance (October 1991)

We welcome other ideas and assistance in fund raising.

B) In production planning the committee had created a modest, realistic budget for a small late summer (1991) production. The committee had secured a performance space for this time.

To secure personnel and stay within the budget the committee attempted to get Society volunteers to fill key supervisory positions for production. Our members are all busy people and none were able to make this commitment. The committee then made the following two recommendations to the board:

- 1) Grant approval to hire personnel for key supervisory production positions. These expenditures would increase the "modest, realistic" budget substantially.

Membership Dues

Still collecting dues. Many thanks to those who have paid. The red "DUES" on your label means it's time to renew. Please pay promptly, or let me know if you want to drop your membership.

6/1/91

The question then became: Is it wise to spend so much money on a production that we know (size of theatre, number of seats, length of run) will not pay for itself in any way?

This led to the second recommendation:

2) The committee (and others) continue to focus their energy and attention

- a) on fund raising for a '92 production
- b) on production planning for a '92 show
- c) on outreach programming which helps the Society in many ways — such as
 - 1) keeping us in the public eye,
 - 2) making a contribution to the community,
 - 3) educating future G&S audiences

The Executive Board and the members at the May 6th G&S meeting approved the second recommendation.

The bottom line is we have to have either volunteer labor or money to pay for it. We are still looking for individuals who will work with us on fund raising endeavors. Please call Jacki, Karen, Norma, Carla or Michael if you have anything — ideas, time, knowledge, etc. to offer.

Thanks so much!

• Our Friends in the Theater •

• **Operas Now Playing:** Double Bill — Jess Walters in *I Pagliacci*, curtain raiser *La Divina*; Bill Girard and David Utterback at the pianos. At Capitol City Playhouse, alternate nights — even dates in May and odd dates in June, through June 15. Call 472-2966.

• **Benefit for Hyde Park Theatre:** Cabaret Show starring Judy Scott Friday May 31 and Saturday June 1 at 8 pm. Noel Alford at the piano. Call 452-6688.

• **More Operas:** Watch for announcements of the double bill of *Gianni Schicchi* and *The Secret of Susanna* opening June 7 at the Gallery Theatre. Produced by Susan Adams Johnson, Bob Bobo and David Ketcham. Among the performers are: Frank Delvy, Michael Drousche, Carla Hammock, Carol Hopkins, Janette Jones, Allen Lawshae, and Judy Scott.

• **Musical Melodrama in Wimberley:** Joan Pearsall appears in *The Magician's Curse*, by The Children of Light Players: opens Friday June 7, and continues every Friday and Saturday through August 23. Call 444-7090.

• Robert Mellin has a non-singing role in *Easy Does The Stars*, which will run at Capitol City Playhouse. Watch for announcement of the opening in the paper.



• Other News of Members •

• Dave and President Karen Collier will soon return from their vacation in Hawaii. At the last meeting Karen announced that she's not really getting fat — she's pregnant! Congratulations and Best Wishes!

• Bob Kusnetz went the other direction for his early May vacation in Alaska. He reports hiking on the snow-covered ground and frozen ocean. He continues to jet around on his job, and we're lucky to catch an occasional glimpse of him.

• Pam Sabrin sends fond greetings to all the friends she made in Austin during the run of *H.M.S. Pinafore* back in 1989. Her address now is:

119 Washington Place, Apt. 16
New York, NY 10014 (212) 727-7281

• Anne Collins Smith distinguished herself in the Annual Pun-Off, held in April at the O. Henry House. Enid Hallock's son Gary was the MC and prime mover.

• Secretary Reba Gillman mailed off the March Newsletter to The Palace Peeper (Newsletter of the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Society). That's the issue containing the report of Len Gillman's ideas for making piano versions of the G&S operas more like the Sullivan orchestration. The Peeper printed our name and my address, and a remark about that Newsletter. As a result I have been receiving letters asking how to get the Newsletter, and in some cases offering to send their Newsletters to us. One such came from England, and one from the Midwest Gilbert & Sullivan Society. Other letters are from New York, New Jersey and California. It's impressive to realize the tremendous G&S network out there.

Missing your May Newsletter?

The post office has returned two mangled Newsletters with the address torn off. Maybe one is yours. If you didn't get your May Newsletter call me at 327-2277, and I'll send you one.

• Last Meeting •

• Our last meeting was held on Monday, May 6th at the home of Pearl Amster. Nineteen members were present, including one who joined on the spot. They were: Pearl Amster, Mary Lu Barras, Sue Ricket Caldwell, Jacki Chapman, Karen Collier, Michael Drousche, Norma Garza, Reba Gillman, Loel Graber, Enid Hallock, Telisa Harwell, Bob Kusnetz, Allen Lawshae, Joan Pearsall, Jim Robinson, Katharine Shields, Anne Collins Smith, new member Isobel Stevenson, and Deborah Zallen.

• Jacki introduced Jim Robinson to tell us about his experiences as a member of the Houston Gilbert & Sullivan Society. In 1969 his job moved him to Houston — “transplanted against my will to concrete city”. Listening to his car radio Jim heard about auditions for *The Mikado*. He went, sight read the Nanki-Poo aria, and got the part. He was a member for seven years, sang leading tenor roles, and served as President. (Then he moved back to Austin.)

The Houston Society was started in 1951 by John Cooper, then the Director of the Kincaid School. A Yale graduate, a dedicated Savoyard with great knowledge of Gilbert & Sullivan, and of Houston, he is still active in the Society. His connections through Kincaid with wealthy Houston families have enabled him to tap people for money.

The Society is governed by a Board of 15 Directors, all members of the Society and most of whom perform in the productions. Most of them chair committees which work all year on production, publicity, fund raising, etc. They produce one G&S opera a year, in July. They hire a professional technical staff, but no stage performer is paid. In 1966 they inaugurated Jones Hall, performing there until the opening of the new Wortham Center, which they also inaugurated. It costs a lot to rent the hall, and pay union wages to the full orchestra.

Roles are cast in January and February, but rehearsal does not start until May. The original music director, Dr. Lewis, served for many years, and groomed his successor. Recently the music direction has been taken over by Robert Linder, Dean of Music at Houston Baptist College. Stage directors have come and gone, but things have settled down with the hiring about 10 years ago of Alistair Donkin, a former member of the D'Oyly Carte Company. Incidentally, he will play the part of Ko-Ko in this year's *Mikado*.

As an example of their financial set up, Jim cited an estimated budget of \$160,550 for production costs this year. \$87,300, about half, will come from ticket sales. The rest

must be raised. The Cultural Arts Commission gives them \$15,000, and another \$45,000 comes from interest and various fund raising events. Large donations make up the remainder; these are generated by the dedicated work of a long-time member.

The Society makes grants: pays \$700 each to two stage managing interns; grants two vocal scholarships (\$1500 and \$750) to students who sing in the production; allocates 150 seats for inner city children to attend the production.

Really the Society is a rather fragile group. There are no paid staff, just like the Austin group, and the work is done by a core of volunteers. It has benefitted from having a consistent money-raising person throughout its history, and a stable music director (only two in the entire 40 years). Another factor is that Houston is much larger than Austin.

• Allen Lawshae passed around paper and asked us to write the answer to his question: In what way are *Yeomen of the Guard* and *Oklahoma* alike?

• Jacki reported for the Production Committee. She outlined the plans that had been made for the approved smaller production this August with a minimum budget. This would require a dedicated, volunteer working team; if supervisory persons must be hired that raises the budget, and still requires volunteer labor. The Production Committee suggests that it would be a mistake to devote so much time and money to a production that by its nature can not be expected to make money or to pay for itself. They therefore recommend that we give up the idea of the August '91 production and concentrate our yearlong efforts on a big production in Spring or Summer '92.

The discussion following referred often to the set up described by Jim for the Houston G&S Society. If a well-established group like that finds it necessary to concentrate on one production a year, why should our smaller organization endeavor to mount two a year?


Instead the Committee recommends that we continue to work toward a big show in '92, concentrating on fund raising and smaller community oriented activities, especially outreach programs involving the AISD. We have already made contacts at Reagan High School and talked about ways we could work with them. We could pursue this plan within the Adopt-A-School program, and Karen has been talking to them. As we have discovered in making grant applications, this kind of community involvement is good exposure. Other activities could involve continued small appearances, like the one June 1st at the Austin Chamber Music Marathon for the benefit of Aids Services. (See flyer)

Allen's Question

In what way are *Yeomen of the Guard* and *Oklahoma* alike?

Discussion focused on the need to establish a consistent time and place for our major yearly productions. There was somewhat reluctant agreement that we would have to recognize the greater availability of summer-time slots, but hope that we could produce in June, rather than later in the summer.

Bob Kusnetz thought it very important to keep our name in the public eye year-round, through public service, small appearances, and any means we find. Reba urged that we concentrate on good music in our productions. That is an important, often slighted, aspect of Gilbert & Sullivan. Reba also delivered a message from Robert Mellin (absent at a rehearsal of *Easy Does The Stars*). It was: Remember that the Gilbert & Sullivan Society purpose is to produce and perform quality G&S.

 The consensus was to approve the recommendations of the Production Committee.

- In order to encourage member participation, Karen passed around sign-up sheets for several specific tasks. Another sheet offered members the opportunity to sign up for the proposed day-trip to Houston to see *The Mikado*. This would be for a matinee performance on Sunday July 21. We would set out in the morning and return home that night.

- Karen read us a letter she had received from a former member: Mike Richmond, who directed our first production of *The Sorcerer* in November 1977. He was glad to learn that the Society was still alive and active. He lives now in Fort Lauderdale, FL, where there is no G&S group.

- Karen turned the meeting over to Allen Lawshae for our entertainment. He said no one had correctly answered his question. He played us the opening of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. As the curtain rises we hear immediately Pheobe's aria, "When a maiden loves, she sits and sighs". Sullivan's operas had always begun with the chorus, and it was unheard of to start with a solo. Years later *Oklahoma* made news on Broadway — and advertised that it was the first musical to open with a solo. But it wasn't! Sullivan beat that record by perhaps 50 years.

Allen then told us a bit about his experiences as a performing member of the Houston G&S Society back in the 50's. He started with *The Mikado*, doing Pish Tush whenever the opera was performed. In 1959 he played Sergeant Meryll in *Yeomen*. He was a relatively young man for the part, but they greyed his hair and lined his face. It was his first exposure to this music, and it was a revelation. He loved the musical fan fares (described as "replete with flourishes"), and the Wagner-like leit motifs. These all appear in the overture, which Allen then played for us. As he continued to play choral and orchestral excerpts he suggested that we were free to leave for refreshments and conversation.



Reba

The Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society
Reba Gillman, Secretary
1606 The High Road
Austin, TX 78746



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Guest Speaker—The Hon. Glen Maxey,
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Saturday, June 1, 1991

Noon-Midnight

(break for dinner, 6-8 pm)

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4700 Grover**

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hands will be stamped.
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