

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

March 1993 Newsletter

• Next Meeting - Our Monthly Musicale •

• Monday, March 1st, 1993 at 7:30 pm. at Pearl Amster's, 2304 Hartford Road, 472-7028. Music, of course! And good fun, good food (especially if YOU bring it, please) and good conversation. Come join us!

• FLASH •

***Iolanthe* Opens Friday April 30th**
Save the date
Enjoy the Champagne Gala Buffet

Pearl Amster has agreed to organize the opening night Buffet. These volunteer Buffets are always so much tastier than anything commercially catered. Pearl will be calling y'all for volunteer food and help.

Society Members Cast in *Iolanthe*

Frank Delvy as The Lord Chancellor
Allen Lawshae as Lord Mountarat
Sheila Glenn as a fairy
Julia Lawshae (one of Allen's lovely daughters) as an important fairy

Other Friends Cast in *Iolanthe*

Leah Tsamous as the Fairy Queen
(Leah sang in our December 6th Fund Raiser)
Doug Schram as Private Willis
(Doug appeared in our *Sorcerer* in 1989)
Susan Pauley and Diana McAlpin as fairies
(Susan appeared in our *Pinafore* and *Sorcerer*;
and Diana appeared in the recent *Mikado*)

Program Advertising Rates

Back Page	\$275
Full Page	\$250
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Quarter Page	\$80

Call Robert Mellin at 345-5950

• Message from your President •

As of this writing *Iolanthe* casting is almost complete, and it looks as if we will have one of our best productions ever. It will certainly be a dancing show. We know *Iolanthe* is about fairies, and fairies naturally spend much of their time dancing. That is why I have engaged the talented choreographer Terri Lynn Fiala to design very special dances for the pretty young ladies (a number of whom are very experienced dancers) who will play the fairies. Stage Director Noel Koran demonstrated some exciting and refreshing old fashioned and effective directing techniques in just the auditions. You can see his work as director in *Alberti Herring* by Benjamin Britten. It opens at the UT McCullough Theater on February 25th for four performances. Music Director John McLean exudes an air of competency and professionalism. The newest of our artistic team are Leslie Bonnell as Costume Designer (she's on the staff at Zachary Scott Theater Center) and Lighting Designer Pat Fox, whose expertise is in demand by most Austin theaters.

And yes, I do hope to have an orchestra for *Iolanthe* as we had for *The Mikado*. This will depend on how much money can be raised before the show opens. We have a modest beginning for the \$15,000 needed but much more has to be collected. Please help me, especially with corporate underwriting. If you, or someone close to you, have a connection with a big company make contact for me, and I will follow through. Personal donations of course are welcomed and needed and are tax deductible. Send a check directly to Reba, whose address is elsewhere in this Newsletter, and mark "*Iolanthe* contribution" on the check.

You will soon receive information on how you can order tickets for *Iolanthe* in advance by mail. I will have the best seats in the house reserved for those who order by mail.

The audition notices for *Iolanthe*, designed by Scott McAfee of GSD&M Advertising were so popular and eye-catching that many were stolen as fast as we could post them on the walls.

God bless us with the good fortune of a successful production!

***** Robert Mellin *****

• • *Iolanthe* • *Iolanthe* • *Iolanthe* • *Iolanthe* • •

Calling All Members!

Come to our monthly gatherings for fun, fellowship and food, with the emphasis on Gilbert and Sullivan. If you have favorites, suggestions, news, and announcements, call me: Reba Gillman at 327-2277; 1606 The High Road, Austin 78746.

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• Last Gathering and Song Fest •

On Monday, February 1st, at Pearl Amster's we had a ball. There were 33 people, including 3 Directors, 3 children, 4 guests and 23 members. They were: members Jim and Nanni Almond attending for the first time, Pearl Amster, Wren Andersen, Patrick Bennett, Frank Delvy, Harold Gilbert, Reba Gillman, Doug and Sheila Glenn with son Topher, Loel Graber, Bob Greenwood, Enid Hallock, Bill and Nan Hatcher with daughters Lisa and Lauren, Janette Jones, Allen Lawshae, Robert Mellin, Lucy Shoe Meritt, Rosemary Russell-Vines (one of the original members, who hasn't been to a meeting in ages), Katharine Shields, Anne Collins Smith, and Bob Wall. Guests were Clare Hawkins (official Janette Jones Fan), Robin Elena Hinderer (who was one of the original members, but dropped out a long time ago), Matthew Kaplan (Pearl's baritone grandson), and Julia Spencer. Directors present were Noel Koran - Stage; John McLean - Music; and Terri Lynn Fiala - Choreography.

To open the proceedings Allen Lawshae sang "The law is the true embodiment of everything that's excellent" from *Iolanthe*. President Robert Mellin expressed his pleasure at the large turnout and started off introductions around the room. Reba reported that Bob Kusnetz had called from Atlanta to say he wasn't going to make the meeting, and to point out an error in the last Newsletter. Humble apologies from Reba, who knows that "When a maiden loves" (sung last month by Julia Spencer and misattributed by Reba) comes from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Kristina Havenhill also could not get to the meeting: her car was totalled last week as she drove back from seeing her husband off (he is stationed with the US Armed Forces in the Persian Gulf). Members reported catching a glimpse of Kristina on the TV news showing the departure of the troops.

The music then continued with three pieces from *Ruddigore*. "Why am I moody and sad?" by Frank Delvy; "Cheerily carols the lark" by Janette Jones; and the duet "I once was a very abandoned person" sung by Janette and Frank. A group of duets followed: Katharine Shields and Allen sang "O rapture, when alone together" from *Gondoliers*; Frank and Janette sang "Things are seldom what they seem", and Frank and Allen sang "Kind Captain I've important information", both from *Pinafore*. The program concluded with Janette singing "If somebody there chanced to be" from *Ruddigore*, and "When all night long" from *Iolanthe* sung by Frank.

At this point the audience took over and we all joined in an impromptu but rousing rendition of the finale of Act I of *The Mikado*. Sheila Glenn sang the part of Yum Yum,

and Katharine the part of Pitti Sing. Janette, Frank and Loel Graber filled in whatever parts were needed and everyone else sang along lustily. We then sang "Now to the banquet we press" from *The Sorcerer*, which has become the standard invitation to go eat. However, we did pause to watch a very short video tape of a quiz show which prominently featured G&S questions. Thanks to Anne Collins Smith for this tid bit. And only then did we adjourn to the dining room for tasty snacks and informal conversation with each other and the visiting Directors. Everyone agreed it was a fantastic "meeting". As always, many thanks to pianist Bob Wall!

Special Thanks to Michelle Perris
who has been helping Robert Mellin send out
financial solicitations to corporations.

♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥ ♥

• The University Ladies Club Luncheon • ♥ Report ♥

On Wednesday February 3rd, some members of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society were featured performers at the "Sweetheart Luncheon", honoring 50-year members of the UT Ladies Club. We were a great success, and everything went off well despite an unforeseen emergency. Our faithful pianist, Bob Wall, came down with the flu the day before, and a last minute substitution was required. Fortunately, Katharine Shields was able to enlist the capable services of Ann Cogdell (who played so beautifully for our Soirée in January 1992). Heartfelt thanks to both Katharine and Ann!

Program

Frank Delvy	"When all night long"
	<i>Iolanthe</i>
Janette Jones	"If somebody there should chance"
	<i>Ruddigore</i>
Katharine Shields	"O rapture, when alone together"
Allen Lawshae	<i>Gondoliers</i>
Kristina Havenhill	"The sun whose rays"
	<i>The Mikado</i>
Janette Jones	"I once was a very abandoned person"
Frank Delvy	<i>Ruddigore</i>
Allen Lawshae	"The law is the true embodiment"
	<i>Iolanthe</i>
Kristina Havenhill	"The Bell Trio"
Frank Delvy	<i>Pinafore</i>
Allen Lawshae	
Jess Walters	"When I good friends"
	<i>Trial By Jury</i>

Have you noticed? Have you wondered?

A few months ago we began using our true, official, and legal name (putting Austin at the end, not the beginning).

Before this we had a split personality; someone even asked us if there were two G&S societies in Austin.

Opera 'Mikado' Madness

By Joseph McLellan
Washington Post Staff Writer

The Virginia Opera's production of "The Mikado" at George Mason University desecrates more than a century of treasured Savoyard tradition. It does so superbly, with wit, style and high energy.

Voices, keyboards, guitars and percussion are amplified to the max, and a dozen pop styles are masterfully "overlaid" on vestiges of the traditional words and music. The result might be labeled something like "Saturday Night Live Meets the Mikado." Actually, it's called "The Not Mikado."

The plot outline is followed with

some care and large segments of the Gilbert and Sullivan text can be recognized under the funk, rap, rock, swing, calypso, country and soul wrappings. But clearly this show, which opened last night and will be repeated tonight, is not for the Gilbert and Sullivan purist—the kind who protests if a player makes with the left hand a gesture traditionally made with the right. But it will delight those who like to see old favorites in a new light.

Gilbert's text used a "Japan" that was pure fantasy, like a sort of funhouse mirror that reflected the England of his time with a truth that was heightened by its very distortions. Stage director Worth Gardner has done the same thing, with contemporary American pop culture as his target, and in the process he has demonstrated the toughness and versatility of the original concept.

For example, Ko-Ko the Lord High Executioner's famous "little list" of offenders who "never would be missed" is updated to include "pencil-necked Madonna," 2 Live Crew and

other rappers, Oprah, Geraldo, "New York drama critics," "skinheads at the airport" and a special verse aimed at Washington: "The slimy politicians/ And their clever cutting quips/ Advancing their positions/ 'Make my day' and 'Read my lips.'"

The opening chorus of "gentlemen of Japan" becomes "technos of Japan," dancing with robotic gestures and singing about "exquisite merchandising" while a women's chorus intones "Sony, Sanyo, Atari, Sansui, Mitsubishi, Kawasaki, Yamaha, Suzuki." The dialogue is also updated: Nanki-Poo's opening words are: "Hey, amigos, what's up? Any you dudes hip to a most savory babe named Yum Yum?" And there is a perceptible Valley Girl flavor in the mannerisms of the "three little maids from school."

For much of the musical adaptation, you have to have a taste (or at least a tolerance) for contemporary pop styles, though the influences date back as far as Fats Domino and some of the arrangements are both timeless and beautiful—for example, the coun-

try-western ballad treatment of the "Willow, Titi-Willow" song. Vocal beauty is not what this production is really about; acting and dancing are at least equally important. But the voices of the nine performers making their first and possibly last appearances with the company are generally good and seasoned by considerable Broadway and off-Broadway experience.

The strongest impression was made by Kurt Johns in the role of Ko-Ko. Also specially notable in a cast that had no real weaknesses were David Gunderman (Nanki-Poo), Rebecca Baxter (Yum-Yum), Howard Kaye (Pooch-Bah, in a costume that might be right for an admiral in the Royal Martian Navy) and Billy Miller (Pish-Tush). Highly specialized assignments were well filled by Dennis Fury, who played the Mikado with overwhelming stage presence, and Brian T. Cahill, a drag Katharina to end all Kathinas. Rebecca Hirsch and Wendy Perelman were much more prominently featured and much funnier than the show's maids from school usually are.

Note from the editor

It seems that Gilbert and Sullivan are alive and kicking up their heels. I am glad the operas can survive such treatment, even if it's not to my taste.

Many thanks to our Poet Laureate, Anne Collins Smith, for the above clipping, courtesy of her parents who live in the suburbs of Washington, D.C.

♥ The University Ladies Club Luncheon ♥
Report cont. from p. 2

Our invitation to perform on this occasion came from Nanni Almond, a new Society member and big booster, who serves this year as the Program Chair for the the Ladies Club. It was very important that we carry through our promise, and perform as scheduled. Presenting our most illustrious member, Jess Walters, as part of the program was also important. Many thanks to each performer for a truly professional presentation!

• Coming Events •

- We have been invited to perform again for the **Annual Pun-Off** at the O. Henry House on Sunday, May 2nd. This year they promise no interference from nearby bands.
- We have also been asked to be part of the **AIDS Chamber Music Marathon**, to take place on Saturday, June 5th at the Unitarian Church. This annual event has achieved a national reputation, as well as high local visibility.
- We are pleased to report that two of our members were cast in the coming production of *Sweeney Todd* at Capitol City Playhouse. Janette Jones and Kristina Havenhill are the deserving singers. Also cast is our friend and colleague, Martin Vasquez (better known to some as Nanki Poo). This production will overlap our own *Iolanthe*. Watch the newspapers for information.

• Meeting of G&S Executive Committee •

On February 8, 1993 at President Robert Mellin's, your new Executive Committee held its first meeting. All were present except Patrick Bennett. We discussed various aspects of our production of *Iolanthe*. Wednesday night performances? Ticket prices? How will we manage ticket reservations, since there is no box office phone at the Dougherty Arts Center? House volunteers? Opening Night Gala? Importance of an up-to-date mailing list and knowing our audience. Donna volunteered to work with Patrick Bennett on the lay-out and printing of the mail-out and program. Discussion of the need to reconstitute the way this organization is set up. We need to have two boards: 1) Good names, involved community theater leaders; 2) Executive Board (like our Executive Committee). Work on this.

Officers

President	Robert Mellin	345-5950
Executive V.P.	Bob Kusnetz	836-1853
Production V.P.	Patrick Bennett	442-0528
Publicity V.P.	Donna Delvy	451-3710
Secretary	Reba Gillman	327-2277
Co-Treasurers	Kate Hendricks	371-7901
	Diane Simpson	343-0901
Historian	Anne Collins Smith	339-1086

Rodgers & Hammerstein Hit Parade
Celebrating the 50th anniversary of *Oklahoma*
Katharine Shields and Jerry Conn
Carol Robbins Piano
John Bustin MC

At the Capitol City Playhouse
March 25, 26, 27, 1993 Call 472-2966

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



See you at our Musicale on March 1st at 7:30 pm. Come and enjoy music and refreshments!