

THE GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

JANUARY 1998 NEWSLETTER

What's Inside

List or Silent Auction Contributors	2
Lucy Shoe Meritt: Portrait of a Noteworthy Member	3
Nominees for 1998 Board of Directors	5

JANUARY MUSICALE AND ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF 1998 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

January 5, 1998 at 7:30 p.m.

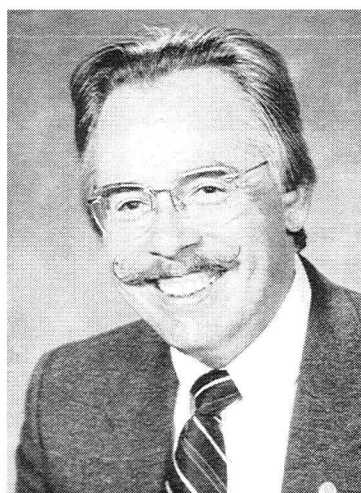
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BRING RAFE TO AUSTIN! FREQUENT FLYER MILES NEEDED FOR MIKADO DIRECTOR



Ralph MacPhail

Ralph MacPhail, world renown G&S expert will be the director of the Society's June production of the *Mikado* at St. Stephens. Mr. MacPhail lives in Virginia where he is a professor at Bridgewater College and teaches English and Theater. An authority on not only G&S but the D'Oyly Carte way of staging (continued on page 5)

ALL STAR GALA A SUCCESS

The 1997 Gilbert & Sullivan Holiday Season All-Star Revue Champagne Buffet with Wassail and Silent Auction was a success. Not only did the event seem to please our members, friends, and patrons who attended, but we achieved our second goal which was to raise funds for the society's programs and productions. Those funds came from 5 sources: (1) ticket sales, (2) corporate sponsorship, (3) private donations, (4) the silent auction, and (5) concessions which included sales of t-shirts, videos, etc. and the beverage table.
(continued on page 5)



Maury Ommerman, Photographer

G&S All-Stars L-R: Ann McKelvey, Sue Bilich, Dan Girardot, Cynthia Hill, Russell Gregory, Kathryn Findlen, Frank Delvy, Joe Taylor.

SOCIETY HONORS ROBERT MELLIN

by Reba Gillman

A great success, as you will learn elsewhere. But one member told me he thought the very best part came right after the intermission. Our President Libby Weed appeared on stage, accompanied by the five other Board members who were present. She spoke simply but eloquently of the dedicated service of Robert Mellin. He became active in the Society about ten years ago, served as President for four years (1992-1995), and as Executive Director for two more years. During this time he was instrumental in moving the Society forward to bigger and better annual shows, renting an office, hiring an Office Manager (and finally an Executive Director), planning monthly musicales, establishing the In-School concerts, and running a yearly fund raiser. Now that he is retiring (but he'll still be part of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society), and it is time to honor him with a good-bye present and message. Libby then read the famous lines from *Pinafore* describing a British tar, which begins:

A British tar is a soaring soul,
As free as a mountain bird,
His energetic fist should be ready to resist
A dictatorial word.
His nose should pant and his lip should curl,
His checks should flame and his brow should furl,
His bosom should heave and his heart should glow,
And his fist be ever ready for a knock-down blow.

We presented Robert with a bouquet of flowers and a framed picture of the British tar, a soaring soul indeed, and worthy of the spirit of our departing Executive Director. Beverly Seffel of LCRA Employees United Charities came up to add her heart-felt words of praise for the wonderful works of Robert Mellin, and give him a \$500 check for the Society in his honor. Frank Delvy then came forward to add a few words, or praise, saying he had known Robert from the beginning of his G&S association. And then—on with the show!



Maury Ommerman, Photographer

Jim Robinson sings "It Is Not Love" from *The Soccerer*

DONOR LIST DECEMBER 6th GALA SILENT AUCTION (G&S)

1. Kinko's
2. LCRA Employees United Charities
3. Tower Records
4. Sunshine
5. The Pubic Domain Theatre Co.
6. Renewed Reflections
7. Old San Francisco Steak House
8. Paramount Theatre
9. Zachary Scott Theatre
10. Quality Music
11. Red Lobster
12. Katz Top of the Marc
13. Esther's Follies
14. Chez Nous, Inc.
15. Hangtown Grill Westlake Village
16. Live Oak Theatre
17. Rose Taylor and Russell Prickett
18. Kiddie Acres Amusement Park
19. Wild Basin Wilderness
20. Lone Star Riverboat
21. Austin Symphony
22. Office Depot
23. W. H. Deacon Crain
24. Draught Horse Pub
25. Celebration Station
26. Armadillo Sport
27. Benold's Jewelers
28. Chris Buggé
29. San Antonio Spurs
30. Volente Beach
31. Body Business Health and Fitness Club
32. Austin Civic Orchestra
33. Abaki Travel
34. Texas Textbooks, Inc.
35. Longhorn Computer Repair
36. Alpha Music Center
37. Nomadic Notions
38. James Avery Craftsman
39. Austin Chamber Music Center
40. City Grill
41. Denise McCarthy Photography
42. Longhorn Copies
43. Austin Lyric Opera
44. Motorola
45. Capitol City Comedy Club
46. Mrs. Fox

LUCY SHOE MERITT:

Portrait of a Noteworthy Member

by Libby Weed

The nine-year-old girl stared wide-eyed at the image projected by the stereopticon. She gazed at the ruined buildings, the broken columns, the rubble of something that had once been beautiful. Darting to another peephole, she saw scenes depicting smooth stone walls, stately columns, and striking architecture. What was the meaning of these displays she found almost by accident in the basement of the museum?

On the way back through Philadelphia streets to her grandparents' home, the girl's mother told her about the deadly eruption of Mount Vesuvius at Pompeii, the thick layers of ash and cinder that buried and preserved the ruined city, and the excavation of the site many years later. She explained the stereoptical projections depicted how Pompeii had looked when the ruins were discovered, and also how it had looked before the eruption.

"But how, Mother? How can they say it looked like that?"

Lucy Shoe's mother described something of the work of archaeologists--the painstaking examination of every piece of rubble, projections of how they might have fallen and from what distance, reconstructions of how they fit together and what the original whole must have been.

"What would I have to do to learn more about that?" was Lucy's next question.

Her mother explained that in order to be able to understand ancient settings as archaeologists did, she would need to study the history, culture, and languages of the people who lived there.

"I knew that day what I wanted to do with my life," Dr. Lucy Shoe Meritt told me on a recent day in November, smiling between sips from a steaming cup of tea, "and I've been headed in that direction ever since."

The coziness of the setting in Lucy's nearly hundred-year-old historical Austin house contrasted sharply with the wintry afternoon. As I listened to her animated story, I gazed around the room at the floor-to-ceiling bookcases crowded with scholarly tomes (and interspersed with birthday cards), vintage wood-and-upholstery chairs strewn with the day's newspaper and other papers and books, a carved oak fireplace floored with tile, framed nineteenth-century photographs of her Quaker ancestors, and china cabinets filled with tiny cups and more books.



Ernie Welch, Photographer

Lucy Shoe Meritt talks with Libby Weed

"Mother told me to go to my grandfather's office and look at his *Art and Archaeology* magazines," she went on. "My grandfather, a physician who had his office in his grand old home, was delighted with my interest. He had been a classicist before he began his medical studies, and he began to show me his books on classical literature. I was enraptured when I saw his text of Homer, which had Greek on one page and Latin on the facing page. I decided that day I would learn those languages and figure out how to put together those ancient buildings."

Lucy's path to that goal was unrelenting. When she confided her ambition to be an archaeologist to a teacher at the Philadelphia High School for Girls, the teacher, a classics graduate from Wellesley who had hoped Lucy would follow her footsteps, reluctantly said, "Then there is only one place for you to go to college. You must go to Bryn Mawr." Lucy did exactly that, earning her B.A. in 1927 and her M.A. in 1928. by the time she was awarded her Ph.D. in 1935, she had filled several years with studies at the American School of classical Studies at Athens and at sites throughout Greece and Asia Minor. More importantly, she had made a seminal discovery about minute variations in the curvature of decorative mouldings found at numerous excavations in the area. This discovery became the impetus for years of travel and study, the basis for her doctoral dissertation, and a pivotal breakthrough in classical scholarship and chronology.

1/98

"I could never express enough appreciation for the good teachers I had--I received a thrilling, magnificent training at Bryn Mawr," Lucy avers. And she is just as grateful for the support of her family at every stage of her career and the largess of benefactors who believed in the importance of her work. In her modest retelling, all of the glory goes to someone else.

"The very first day at Delphi," she recounts, "I began looking at every tiny detail of the mouldings, just as I had been trained to do. I saw that they were not all alike within a certain type, and I asked, 'Why?' This was simply a part of the nature of my training. The words of my professors rang in my years: 'See what you look at,' and 'Yes, but what is the *significance*?' I simply did what my wonderful teachers had trained me to do."

Lucy received a series of fellowships and grants that enabled her to pursue her investigations through Turkey, Italy, and other Near Eastern countries. She found that the principle she had discovered in the mouldings in one locale was reflected throughout the Greek world, including sites of Greek colonies in Italy, Sicily, and other western locales. Publication of her research began in 1936, and further definitive studies containing her intricate drawings and precise text were published in 1952. Later, the architectural mouldings of the Etruscans and Romans, clearly very different from the Greek, called to her through an opportunity to study at the Academy in Rome, and she returned to Italy to complete work that was published in 1965.

Lucy's eventful career included a stint at Mount Holyoke College, where she taught archaeology, oriental art, and advanced Greek in addition to counseling students and serving in administrative roles. Another significant facet of her academic career was the establishment of a publications department for the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton.

In 1964, Lucy married Benjamin Meritt, another Princeton archaeologist and a close friend whom she had first known at the School in Greece and who had preceded her in her editorial role. Ben and Lucy were ready to return from the Institute in 1972, and her parents' Austin home beckoned to them. Both came to The University of Texas at Austin as Visiting Scholars.

Since Ben's death a few years ago, Lucy has continued to work in the classics department, teaching informally and carrying on the Etruscan-Roman work. The drawings of her original studies in Greece and Asia Minor were given to The University some years ago. To her immense delight, a roll of her Italian drawings that had been missing for many years was recently found by a curator at Bryn Mawr and has been sent to Austin, providing even more material with which to engage her remarkable energies and her keen intellect.

As we prepared to roll the tea cart back to the kitchen, I had to ask, "When and how did you become interested in Gilbert and Sullivan?"

"It was at Bryn Mawr, in my sophomore year. A glee club decided to do an all-female 'Piratus,' using a all and stage at Haverford. That was my introduction." Lucy described in detail the friend in her residence hall who played the Pirate King and delivered stirring renditions of "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major General" in the hallways.

The following year, the troupe decided to present "The Mikado," and Lucy was a member of the chorus until her archaeological studies made it impossible for her to attend rehearsals. "I was not in the production, but two of my close friends were Ko-Ko and Katisha. Every night after our study time concluded, we had 30 minutes to 'blow off steam' and make noise before we had to maintain quiet again. We made that corridor ring night after night with the songs from Mikado. I'll never forget them!"

As I prepared to leave, I told Lucy how terribly impressed I was with her marvelous career and her remarkable accomplishments.

"Oh, no," she said, holding her hand up in dismissal. "I suppose I did do some things that were unusual for a woman at that time, but I had nothing but the most wonderful help and support. I look back at decisions I made at certain points in my life and realize that sometimes you have to take a gamble. At several points I as willing to do that, with faith that something would turn up, and the Lord has taken care of me."

As I walked down the front step of the stately old home and into the November rain, I thought again of that little girl who dashed down the basement steps in the museum in 1915, drawn inexorably by the visions below. I wondered if even she could have envisioned the remarkable life that lay ahead of her. I was thankful to have had just a glimpse of it.

WISH LIST

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ALL-STAR GALA A SUCCESS

(continued from page 1)

The guest artists who volunteered their talents for this production said they had fun too. But we owe them a debt of gratitude. And so a big **THANK YOU** to those All-Stars. Michael McKelvy, stage director, David Mead, music director, Tess Waltors, Toe Taylor, Amy Stinson, Katharine Shields, Jim Robinson, Ann McKelvey, Karen Kuykendall, Janette Tonos, Cynthia Hill, Russell Gregory, Dan Girardot, Kathryn Findlen, David Lee Ellis, Frank Delvy, Mary Alice Carnes, and Sue Bilich. They are all truly All-Stars!

FREQUENT FLYER MILES

(continued from page 1)

as well, he promises a production faithful to the traditional style which has made this unique form of musical theater a world favorite for more than a century. We are indeed fortunate to have such an important guest artist as our stage director.

However, there is a logistical problem. We need to get Mr. MacPhail from Virginia to Austin and back several times and airfare is quite expensive. So we are asking our faithful members who have accumulated frequent flyer miles to contribute them to the Society so that they can be used to bring our director to us. People who help will of course be properly recognized as righteous friends of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society. So please call the office with your donation at 472-4772 and help bring "Rafe" to Austin.

NOMINEES FOR 1998 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Production V.P.	Chris Buggé
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Secretary	Reba Gillman
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Nominating Committee: Russell Gregory, Chair,
Doug Glenn and Theresa Wilson.

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NEWSLETTER

EDITOR REBA GILLMAN

2026 GUADALUPE STREET
SUITE 309
AUSTIN, TX 78705
(512) 472-4772

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Maury Ommerman, Photographer
Karen Kuykendall sings "Koko's 'I've Got a
Little List' from *The Mikado*

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