

# The Gilbert & Sullivan

Society of Austin

April 1998

## Last Musicale

### Reba Gillman, Secretary

On Monday, March 2, 1998, at Pearl Amster's, 37 people gathered to enjoy a program planned by Larry Shepley and Bill Hatcher. Present were members Pearl Amster, Byron Arnason, Lucian Chimene, Harold and Eve Gilbert, Reba Gillman, George & Joyce John, \*Pat and Richard Lane (new member), Peter Langlois, Allen Lawshae and Kay Novak, Moise Levy, Nancy McQueen, Robert Mellin, Lucy Shoe Meritt, Maurie Ommerman, Bee Polomé and Chuck Kraus, Bob Sharron, Larry Shepley, new Executive Director Dan Smith, Lord High Pianist Bob Wall, Libby Weed, Benné Willerman and Theresa Wilson. Guests were UT freshman Leslie Hochman and her grandmother F. Marianne Szende, Jeannette Lay, Norman and Emilia Martin (friends of the Gilberts), Carol Mifsud visiting from Houston, Ruth Ann Rivette, John and Amy Stinson, and photographer Margaret Thomas, who has helped in the office.

President Libby Weed asked for introductions. Kay announced that she and Allen were going to spend two weeks enjoying the theater in London; Libby asked if anyone had read the article in last week's *Xlent* by her son Jonathan. Robert Mellin brought us back to Society affairs, telling us that the well-known Gilbert & Sullivan expert, Ralph MacPhail, Jr., who will direct our June production of *The Mikado*, will be in Austin for the auditions April 3, 4 and 5. We will host a reception for him, on Friday, April 3, that will take the place of the regular Monday, April 6th, Musicale (see

opening page). Robert extended our warmest thanks to Mrs. Charles Convers, who has graciously given us 30,000 frequent flyer miles to help defray the cost of bringing Ralph to Austin. Robert renewed his request for frequent flyer miles in increments of 25,000. If you have any to spare, please let us know. We need them!

Then Robert introduced our new Executive Director, Dan Smith, who has been an active member of our Society for at least the last five years. Dan said he was pleased to take on his new job, and also that "Congratulations" was not what he needed to hear, but, "Good Luck!"

Larry then took over and passed out a colorful word sheet. He asked that we all become pirates for the suitable choruses, and sing along. He announced that although Bill had helped plan the program he could not be present. Also, Enid Hallock could not be with us. Reba explained that Loel Graber, a faithful member who can sing anything from G&S, will be missing this spring. Lured by the opportunity to sing in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, and the *Ninth Symphony*, he has joined the Civic Chorus, which rehearses on Monday nights.

Moving on to music, Allen Lawshae came forward to sing the part of Samuel as we all sang the opening chorus of *Pirates*, "Pour, O pour the pirate sherry." Next, Allen sang Pish Tush's song from *The Mikado*. "Our great Mikado, virtuous man." Allen explained that this patter song was "nothing but expository material sung by a minor character." And then back to *Pirates*, with Amy Stinson's voice leading the women in their opening chorus, "Climbing over rocky mountains." Amy moved right into "Poor wand'ring one", with the ladies backing her up.

Then Bob Sharron sang three Irish ballads as a diversion in honor of Saint Patrick's Day: "The Rose of Tralee," "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen," and "Danny Boy."

Bob Wall stepped out of his usual role as faithful accompanist to tantalize us with another quiz on music you hear in the G&S operettas but don't usually pay much attention to. He played seven examples, eliciting only a few guesses at the answers. It's quite humbling to hear these familiar excerpts and be totally unable to place them.

Giving up the brain teasers, we moved on to the singing kind of participation. Harold Gilbert sang "A policeman's lot is not a happy one," from *Pirates*, as we all joined in on the refrains ("happy one"). Amy sang Yum-Yum's song, "The sun whose rays," from *The Mikado*. It was pointed out that most of the accompaniments fit the category of music that's hard to identify, with no telltale hints. From *Pirates*, Dan sang the Major General's "Sighing softly to the river." Using scores some of us had brought, we did a creditable job of singing the parts in the choral refrains.

Harold Gilbert invited us all to attend his ALO talk on *The Barber of Seville*, on Thursday, March 5th, at 10P:30 am, which would then entitle us to attend the dress rehearsal on Tuesday, March 10th, at 7:00 pm in Bass Concert Hall. Bee Polomé urged us all to attend the concert of the Austin Civic Orchestra on Saturday March 7th at 8:00 pm in Bates Recital Hall. This concert features the youthful winners of the Civic Orchestra Concerto Competition, which honors Pearl Amster. Pears said, "When you hear these very talented young students, it gives you hope for the world!"

To finish off the program, the men all joined in singing the part of the Pirate King, and we all rose to sing "Hail Poetry!" With "Now to the banquet we press," from *The Sorcerer*, the happy group moved out into the dining room for a feast of goodies brought by our members. Thank you, Pearl!

## Introducing Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Professor of Theatre, Speech, and English; Director of Theatre; Bridgewater College, Virginia.

Add to this impressive list the title "Stage Director for *The Mikado* for The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin—June 1998." "Rafe," as he prefers to be known, is coming to Austin for a few days on April 3rd for auditions. We are planning a gala reception for him on Friday evening, April 3. This will be our chance to meet and chat with the eminent G&S authority.

Rafe's interest in Gilbert & Sullivan began in 1967, when he attended three productions in one week of the original British Gilbert & Sullivan performers, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, in Washington, D.C. He confesses that he was "totally smitten with the colorful, tuneful, and traditional productions," and immediately began his immersion in all the material he could find.

Rafe has since taken advantage of many opportunities to learn more about Gilbert & Sullivan operas, with special emphasis on *The Mikado*. As a result, he is often consulted as an authority, and his name is mentioned in many references. Rafe has long been a member of our society and a faithful reader of our Newsletter.

In 1996 and 1997, he got to know Robert Mellin while attending the International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival in Philadelphia. This led to an invitation to direct *The Mikado* in Austin. Rafe says, "I am very excited about working in Austin, for I've never visited the Lone Star State. Everyone knows that everything in Texas is bigger and better, and I'm looking forward to a happy collaboration with Robert and the new Executive Director, Dan Smith, Music Director, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, and the Other Dynamic members of the production team on one of the best productions of Gilbert & Sullivan's greatest hit that Texas has ever seen.

We are indeed fortunate to have him. Seize this opportunity to come out and have fun at the reception.

# Special Musicale Grand Levee



Come Meet **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**  
**World-renowned G&S Authority**  
**Our Stage Director for *The Mikado***

Note Special Time, Date, & Place:

**8:00 pm, Friday, April 3, 1998**

4400 Balcones Drive  
See Directions Below

From the South:  
Take 35<sup>th</sup> Street west past Mopac (Loop 1)  
Turn right on Balcones Drive.

From the North:  
Take 45<sup>th</sup> and Perry Streets West  
from Mopac to Balcones Drive.  
Turn Left to 4400 on the right and on the  
corner of Shinoak and Balcones.

## Win Great Prizes!

You may win!

☞ A Walk-on role in *The Mikado*

☞ *Rolls-Royce* service and  
tickets to our  
Opening night Gala

# OPEN AUDITIONS!

## The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

Is holding open auditions for its upcoming production of *The Mikado*, to be performed at the Helm Fine Arts Center at St. Stephen's School June 11-21. For this very special production, Ralph MacPhail, of the fine arts faculty at Bridgewater College in Virginia, and a widely recognized expert on Gilbert & Sullivan, will direct. A modest stipend will be provided for principals and chorus.

### Auditions:

Date: Saturday, April 4, Noon to 6:00 PM  
Sunday, April 5, 1:00 PM to 6:00 PM

Callbacks: April 6, 6-8 pm

Place: Trinity  
Presbyterian  
Mission Site,  
5801  
Westminster  
Drive

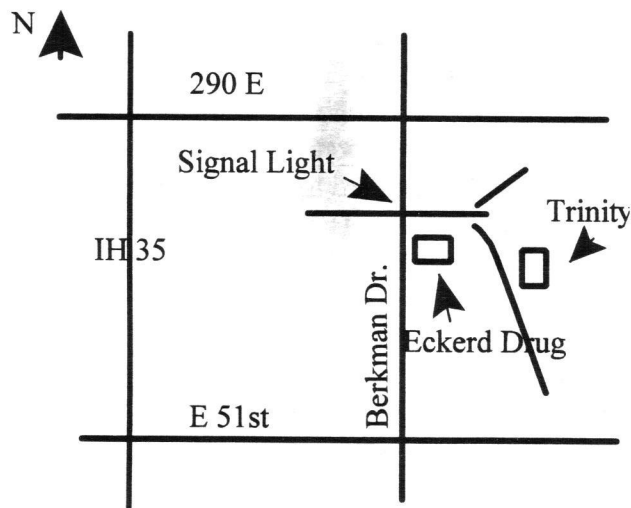
For an audition appointment, contact:

**Dan Smith**  
Executive Director  
472-4772

**Director: Ralph MacPhail**

**Music**

**Director: Jeffrey Jones Ragona**



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