

GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

SEPTEMBER 1998 NEWSLETTER

MUSICALE POSTPONED

by one day, so that members who want to can attend the B. Iden Payne awards ceremony on September 14 (see Bob Mellin's article on *The Mikado*)

• Our First Musicale of The Season •

Tuesday, September 15, 1998, at 7:30 pm
At Pearl Amster's: 2304 Hartford Road – 472-7028

Larry Shepley is planning the program,
featuring **Lord High Pianist Bob Wall**

Come join the fun! Please bring munchies!
We'll be singing choruses from *Patience*
(music will be provided if you don't have a score)

Volunteer- G&S or other musical offerings
Please call Larry (327-1511)

Also, we will be voting on our new **treasurer**
(see Libby Weed's Message on page 4)

Special Attraction after the Show
Sing along with Chris Buggé and his Banjo!

The Mikado Wins 5 Nominations

by Robert Mellin

Everyone seemed to agree that our recent production of *The Mikado* was a smashing success. Even the sometimes very demanding newspaper critics said that this was our very best production. So the resulting happy feeling of pride and satisfaction was reinforced this week when the Austin Circle of Theaters announced that our show was nominated for five of the most prestigious B. Iden Payne awards in the musical category. They are for: Best Musical — *The Mikado*; Best Stage Director — Ralph MacPhail, Jr.; Best Music Director — Jeffrey Jones-Ragona; Best Male Lead — Dan Girardot for his role as Nanki-Poo; Best Female Lead — Amy Baker Stinson for her role as Yum-Yum. It is indeed a great honor for the Gilbert & Sullivan Society to have these five nominated in the same category with some of Austin's very best theater talent. But our nominees would be the very first to say that they share the honors with the other performers and everyone who helped make *The Mikado* the beautiful work of art that it was.

Jess Walters Gala

Long-time Gilbert & Sullivan Society members Jess Walters and his wife Emma will be honored with a very special grand musical tribute at the Helm Fine Arts Center at St. Stephen's School on Friday evening, October 16, at 8 pm. Some of Austin's finest performers will be featured. There will be a wine and buffet reception following the show where you will have an opportunity of greeting Jess and Emma and telling them exactly what you think of them.

Jess, who is a member of the Society's Advisory Board of Directors, is possibly the most known and beloved musical personality in Austin other than Willie Nelson, but Jess can sing lower notes. Jess, a world-renowned bass-baritone opera singer, is a professor emeritus of voice at UT who still sings and teaches part-time.

This event will be a fundraiser to benefit the Gilbert & Sullivan Society's children's educational fund. Tickets are \$25 apiece, half price for children. We urge all friends of Jess and Emma to send a check in the mail today to be assured of seating because it is expected that there will be a full house. Send your checks and reservations to The Gilbert & Sullivan Society, 2026 Guadalupe #309, Austin, TX 78705. Look for more information about Jess and this one-time musical salute in the newspapers, on the radio, and in our next newsletter. This event will be coordinated by Robert Mellin, Vice President of Publicity and Promotion, who can be reached at 345-5950.



Last Musicales

Reba Gillman • Secretary

On a Monday long ago on June 1st 1998, a happy crowd of 75 people gathered at Paula Tyler's to honor the one and only Pearl Amster, "the great piano lady of Austin and New York." Robert Mellin had planned the program, and gathered as performers a goodly number of the cast from our production of *The Mikado*, due to open in just ten days.

After the introduction of some newcomers we plunged into the musical program, with emphasis on *The Mikado*, but not always in the correct order. In the absence of our Lord High Pianist Bob Wall, accompaniments were provided by one of the rehearsal pianists Michelle Schumann. Seven men sang lustily, "If you want to know who we are." Matthew Grace, our Pish-Tush, sang "Our great Mikado, virtuous man." Ko-Ko (Ezra Johnson) then sang the famous "I've got a little list" and Brett Barnes as Pooh-Bah sang "Young man despair, Likewise go to, Yum-Yum the fair You must not woo." Dan Girardot, our Nanki-Poo, sang "A wand'ring minstrel I."

Amy Stinson (Yum-Yum), Corey Rooney (Peep-Bo), and Stacey Amorous (Pitti-Sing), sang "Three little maids from school are we," followed by "So please you, Sir, we much regret." Then Dan and Amy sang the duet between Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum, "Were you not to Ko-Ko plighted" followed by the trio "I am so proud" sung by Pooh-Bah (Brett), Ko-Ko (Ezra), and Pish-Tush (Matthew), then skipping to Katisha (Janette Jones) and Ko-Ko (Ezra) singing "There is beauty in the bellow of the blast."

"Now," said Robert "for something different," as he called on Jess Walters. Jess introduced his accompanist, Doctor Don Crandall — "He's the only one who can follow me." Jess sang the delightfully humorous "Pralines and Fudge" by Rodriguez, as requested by Pearl, and followed that with his favorite and more serious music, the spiritual "Go Down Moses!"

Robert said "We cannot do a proper tribute to Pearl Amster without Frank Delvy!" who then sang "The Nightmare Song" from *Iolanthe*. Frank told us that when he came to Austin 25 years ago as a young progressive musician from San Angelo, people told him there were two places he had to go: Armadillo Headquarters and Pearl Amster's Piano Barn. After hearing Frank sing "The Nightmare Song", Pearl had said to him "If you can sing like that I know you could play the piano." When Frank told her he could not, Pearl said that was because she hadn't been his teacher.

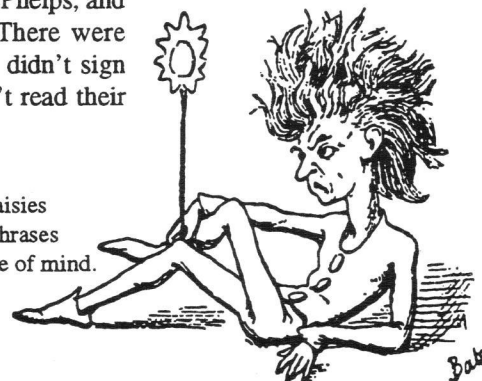
Robert then called Pearl to his side saying "We haven't thanked you enough" and handed her a beautiful yellow-wrapped box. He pulled a large silver tray out from a slit in the bottom of the box. Pearl seemed overcome, and said "I sure know how to pick a club to join!" Robert then proceeded to thank Rafe MacPhail for the wonderful show, and for being there tonight with half the cast. Rafe said "I spent a weekend with Pearl" (when he came to Austin for the auditions Pearl put him up). Robert then told us that Rafe had brought a wonderful collection of G&S memorabilia with him from Virginia. We need a lockable display case or two to use for this exhibit of beautiful and valuable objects.

Russell Gregory, our Mikado, could not be present so the cover, Harold Gilbert, then sang the entrance of the Mikado, "From ev'ry kind of man Obedience I expect," with Debra Mandel playing Katisha, continuing with "A more humane Mikado." Debra is also a cover and will sing Katisha at the matinées on June 14 and 20. Harold will sing the Mikado on June 20. Next came "Here's a how-de-do!" sung by Amy, Dan, and Ezra, followed by the madrigal "Brightly dawns our wedding day", in which Frank took the part of Pish-Tush, joined by Dan, Amy and Stacey. All then launched into the Act II finale with "For he's gone and married Yum-Yum", winding up triumphantly "With joyous shout."

"The show opens June 11th. Buy your tickets now! Don't think you've seen the whole show — this was only half!" Libby asked that we each bring one of our special little dishes to round out the buffet on June 12, the Gala night. Then we all stood to sing "Hail Poetry" as has become our tradition. There was a brief pause while chairs were put away and food brought out, and then we gathered round the groaning board to enjoy delicious food and delightful conversation as a finale to a lovely evening in honor of Pearl Amster, who has hosted our Musicales for years, and made us feel at home and welcome. Thank you, Pearl!

Those present were MEMBERS Pearl Amster, Byron Arnason, Marilyn Babcock, Lucian Chimene, Doug & Yvonne DeLay, Frank Delvy, *Art DiBianca, *Harold & Eve Gilbert, Len & Reba Gillman, Doug & Sheila & Topher Glenn, Loel Graber, John & Carolyn Gregory, Bruce & Enid Hallock with son Gary and grandson Robert, Bill & Nan Hatcher with daughter Lauren, George & Joyce John, *Janette Jones, Richard & Pat Lane, Director Ralph MacPhail Jr, Norman & Emilia Martin, Robert Mellin, Lucy Shoe Meritt, Maurie Ommerman, Joan Pearsall, Bee Polomé & Chuck Kraus, Bob Sharron with Barbara Fraus, Larry Shepley, Dan Smith, Leland L. Smith, Bob Spiegel, Ron & Paula Tyler, Jess & Emma Walters, Libby Weed, Benné Willerman with her friend Laura W. Kohr ?, and Theresa Wilson. Members who are also performers are indicated by an *. PERFORMERS from the cast: Stacey Amorous, Brett Barnes, Scott Boland, Clark Boykin, Dan Girardot, Matthew Grace, Andrew Hallock, Mandy Henderson, Ezra Johnson, Mark Long, Debra Mandel, Corey Rooney, and Amy Stinson. GUESTS were Dr. Don and Cathy Crandall, Peter & Karen Janson, Jeannette Lay, Austin & Irene J. Phelps, and Ed & Jean Smootz. There were others but they either didn't sign the sheet, or I couldn't read their names — sorry.

You must lie upon the daisies
and discourse in novel phrases
of your complicated state of mind.





RALPH MacPHAIL, Jr.

Box 114 Bridgewater College
Bridgewater, Virginia 22812-1599

Late Summer 1998

To the *Mikado* Company:

Dear Friends,

Since returning to Bridgewater I have thought of you and our project of the summer often, for I look back on our production of *The Mikado* with great delight and satisfaction. Its reception was the result of so many people working diligently and well together. (Isn't it wonderful when hard work can also be so much *fun*?)

I write to thank you for what you brought to the production. And on the personal side, I thank you again for welcoming me into The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin so warmly (no pun intended!), and for making Alice feel so welcome, too.

When we returned to Bridgewater, I set out in my G&S Room at home Roy's framed poem with all of your signatures on the mat, wondering where in the world I would put it on our over-crowded walls. When I returned home later in the day I found that Alice had hung the frame on the wall behind our television set in the living room, and put the engraved spurs over the top corners. I am so happy she did this, for the placement of the frame means I notice it every day and am reminded of all of you and of our summer in Austin with *The Mikado*. Thank you again for these lovely gifts--and for the friendships and the many happy memories they represent.

I want very much to write further, acknowledging my gratitude to individuals, but there's no way to do that without mentioning by name every member of the Society who contributed to the production, so "the task of filling up the blanks I'd rather leave to you!"

Very best wishes to you each, and renewed thanks for making our production so very gratifying and so very much fun. I look forward to the possibility of working with you all again in the future on another Savoy opera.

May all good fortune prosper you!
May you have health and riches, too!
May you succeed in all you do!
Long life to you!

Yours very sincerely,

Rafe

a/a

Message

Libby Weed • President

The acting treasurer of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin sat down to the table for his first board meeting, removing from his briefcase his note pad and pen and two large bars of gourmet chocolate. As he unwrapped the bars and passed them around the table for his colleagues to share, we knew we had found the right man for the job!

David Wieckowski—Dave to his friends—was selected as interim treasurer after the resignation of former treasurer Edward O. Kluth. His nomination will be brought before the membership at the September musicale, and you can learn as we have how much he has to contribute to our Society. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Dave was a music lover from an early age. He mastered several instruments—notably the clarinet, saxophone, and recorder—and played in his high school band and in a drum and bugle corps while studying accounting at Drexler University. His

wife Kristen reports that he is now teaching himself to play the keyboard. Having come to Austin to visit a friend, Dave was delighted to discover a place where the weather allowed him to play tennis on New Year's Day. He decided to move to Austin first and find a job second. His accounting degree helped him secure a position in the corporate offices of Whole Foods in 1992 (hence the gourmet chocolate), and it was in that office that he met Kristen. The two of them stay very busy these days with Dave's work and Kristen's studies in pursuit of teaching certification at UT—not to mention enjoying the antics of their one-year-old son Brian, the light of their lives.

The Society first came to know Dave a few years ago when we had hired our first paid office worker. With questions about payroll issues, we called the offices of Austin Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts and were put in touch with Dave. He had begun volunteering for AALA because of his love of the arts. His admiration for the works of Gilbert and Sullivan had begun years before, so he began attending our Society's productions. He has been a good friend ever since.

Dave's wife tells us that lest we begin to think the mild-mannered accountant is all corporate image and high culture, he does have another side. He is a huge fan of the Three Stooges and boasts a large collection of Three Stooges statues, videos, and games. Kristen confesses she is mystified when he "just howls at each rerun like it's the first time he ever saw it." Remembering my husband's three-hour *Fawlty Towers* binges during KLRU auctions, I could relate. "It must be a guy thing," we agreed.



Yum-Yum (Amy Baker Stinson) and Nanki-Poo (Dan Girardot), who were each nominated for B. Iden Payne awards this year
 Congratulations!
 (photo by Margaret Thomas from *The Mikado*, 1998)

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin is accepting applications for a new executive director. Former executive director Dan Smith has taken another position, and we wish him well.

They're here, and they're great!

The Mikado CDs and Videos are now available in the Society Office @ \$25 each.
 Call 472-4772 to order or to check on your order.

Note: Because of some problems in the office, our records are incomplete.
 Please do call to check on your order.

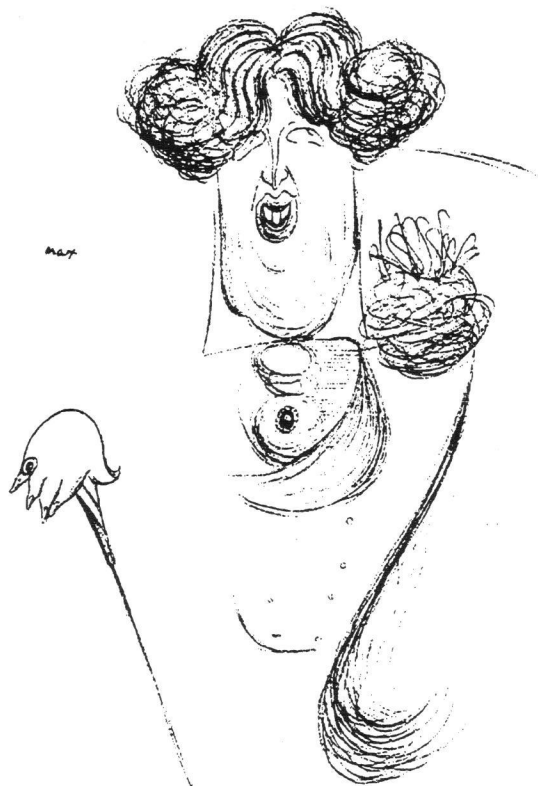
Rafe MacPhail Will Direct Our Production of *Patience* in June, 1999

The Society is pleased to announce that Ralph MacPhail, Jr., acclaimed stage director of our recent production of *The Mikado*, has accepted our invitation to return to Austin to direct our 1999 production of *Patience*. Rafe, who teaches English and Speech and is director of the theater program at Bridgewater College in Virginia, is a recognized expert on Gilbert and Sullivan. His version of *The Mikado* was a popular success with cast, society members, audiences, and newspaper critics. His insight into *The Mikado* opened the doors to brilliance and fun. For excerpts from the great reviews of our 1998 *Mikado*, please see our web site at

<http://members.aol.com/mahitabel/gassa/home.html>

Rafe is especially happy at the prospect of directing *Patience*, one of his personal favorites. He and Alice enjoyed their visit here and look forward to spending more time in central Texas. On your 1999 calendars mark the second two weekends of June — approximately June 10 to 20 — and be sure you're in town for at least one performance.

Bringing guest director Rafe to Austin entails certain logistical concerns. As in 1998 we look to our members for help. The key elements are round-trip air tickets, the use of a car, and accommodations for Rafe and his wife Alice. Please call the Gilbert & Sullivan Society office at 472-4772 if you can help.



"HIMSELF . . . There with the sacred daffodil . . . stood the exponent of uncut hair . . . Ajax-like defying the gods!" (from a report on the opening of *Patience* — though this is a drawing by Max Beerbohm made in 1894, 13 years later).

Our will

We wish to thank the many people who turned in survey forms during the 1998 run of *The Mikado*. We are pleased to announce the winners of the gift certificates for travel on Southwest Airlines:

Catriona Buist, Marion DeFord, Betty Hendrix, John Hertenberger, William B. Weaver

New or renewal membership form

Please check your membership level on the top of the mailing label. If you are in the "Development" category, you will receive three complimentary newsletters. We encourage you to join our society. If you are a member, please check your membership renewal date on the top right corner of the mailing label. If expired or near expiration, your membership needs to be updated! To correct your address, renew your membership, or become a member, complete this form, and mail it to us at:

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin
2026 Guadalupe, #309
Austin, Texas 78705 Phone: 472-4772

Name (as you want it to appear) _____

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Please check one:

- ☐ Member \$10
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- ☐ Lord High Patron \$50-\$99
- ☐ Grand Duke \$100-\$249
- ☐ Major General \$250-\$499
- ☐ Pooh-Bah \$500-\$999
- ☐ Savoyard \$1,000 and over
- ☐ I'm interested in becoming a business sponsor. Please call me.



KoKo (Ezra Johnson) sings of the sad plight of a Tom Tit to Katisha (Janette Jones), who is much affected.
(photo by Margaret Thomas from our 1998 production of *The Mikado*)

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

SINCE 1976, WE HAVE BEEN DEDICATED
TO SPREADING THE JOYS OF GILBERT & SULLIVAN
THROUGH PERFORMANCES AND IN-SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

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