

THE  
**GILBERT & SULLIVAN**  
SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

SEPTEMBER 1999 NEWSLETTER

**Next Meeting • Our Monthly Musicale  
First of the Season**

**Note the Special Date**

**Tuesday September 7, 1999 • 7:30 pm**

(Tuesday because of Labor Day and other conflicts)

At Paula Tyler's • 4400 Balcones Drive • 459-4639

At the corner of Shinoak & Balcones

Between 35<sup>th</sup> Street & Perry Lane (45<sup>th</sup> Street)

Please Bring munchies!

**Special Program by Larry Shepley:**

Please participate in a discussion of where we are going  
and what the Society should be doing.

*Join a panel of experts drawn from our Board,  
and our performing companies.*

Topics will include:

- *Nature and number of our productions*
- *How to use and coordinate volunteers*
- *Our Executive Director*
- *In-school programs*
- *How to encourage younger membership*

&

*Choruses from H.M.S. Pinafore*

**MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT**

*Patience* opened with a flourish on Friday, June 11, to the delight of the audience and the praise of numerous critics. Opening-nighters enjoyed a bountiful buffet after the show while visiting with the cast and crew and enjoying the lovely setting on a bluff over Lake Austin at the Helm Fine Arts Center. Long before the conclusion of the first weekend's performances, we knew we had a winner in this Ralph MacPhail/ Jeffrey Jones-Ragona production.

Little did we know that, when the skies opened up with a brief but severe summer storm over that area of West Austin on Tuesday night, severe damage would be done to the roof of the theater—rendering the auditorium unsafe for performance in the judgment of structural engineers. It was not until late Thursday morning that we got the word that we could not use the theater for that evening's scheduled performance.

Rafe, Michael McKelvey, and several board members made hurried trips to the theater to survey the situation. Star Tickets had already been informed of the damage and had called ticket-holders to tell them that Thursday's show was off. However, with a huge measure of determination and immense good humor and cooperation from the cast, we held an intimate performance that night in the adjoining recital hall, accommodating those who had bought tickets from the office and the walk-up box office customers. We knew that with our good press, people were going to show up, and we had to have a show for them. We not only had a show; we had a GREAT show!

(see Message, page 4)

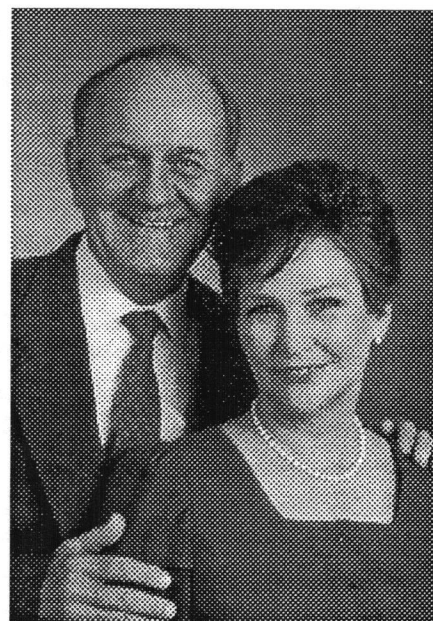
**Wyndy & Edgar Ellis, Generous Supporters of our *Patience* Libretto**

On Saturday 30 July, I interviewed Wyndy & Edgar and discovered that they are connected to me by more than the G&S Society: When they moved to Austin (from Houston) in 1973, they became neighbors of John & Janette Wheeler, John being not only a colleague of mine in the Physics Department at UT Austin but also my Ph.D. supervisor at Princeton years before. Edgar & Wyndy now live in Westwood (and the Wheelers in Princeton).

In the early 90's, Edgar retired from the UT System Comptroller's office, where he had audited travel expenses (mine, too?), and joined his wife Wyndy with the real estate firm RE/MAX Austin Associates—they mainly deal in residential properties. They joined the G&S Society two or three years ago, but started coming to our monthly Musicales only about a year ago. I know them as generous supporters, and in particular as supporters of the Libretto for *Patience*, which I put together for this summer's production.

Why do auditors and real estate agents like G&S? In Wyndy's case, it was her mother who introduced her to the genre. Her mother had been a music major at Emory University, and was always singing G&S around the house when Wyndy was a child. Wyndy herself sings and plays piano (though her real artistic talent is in sculpture). Edgar says he can't carry a tune, but enjoys participating in the wit and music of G&S the same way I do, as a spectator and supporter. Both are avid opera fans (they main-

(see Interview, page 4)



6/10

## Last Musicale

Reba Gillman • Secretary

The last meeting of the season was held on June 7, 1999, at Paula Tyler's house with 48 people present. They included members Pearl Amster, Wyndy & Edgar Ellis, Terri Finch-Koinuma, Reba Gillman with daughter Miki from California, John & Carolyn Gregory, Bill Hatcher, Joyce & George John, Valda Kelch with guest Judy Schlayer, Robert Mellin with guest Tom Kennedy, Lucy Shoe Meritt, Maurie Ommerman, Joan Pearsall with guest Carla Cerisa, Bee Harris Polomé & Chuck Krauss, Gary Preuss, Steve & Eve Schwartzman, Rosemarie Schwarzer with guest "Saufy" Peg Frey, Andrée Sjoberg, Leland L. Smith, Dorothy Summerlin, Paula Tyler, Libby Weed, Benné Willerman, and Gil Zulkha. In addition to the cast members listed below we welcomed some of their relatives (all from Fiddler): Karen Cappolino with son David Jr., Paula Lamb, and Julie Slim's children Kama and Victoria Nassif. No one associated with the production of *Patience* could be present because they were all at an important rehearsal.

The program, planned by Robert Mellin, featured many enthusiastically sung excerpts from *Fiddler on the Roof*, the Austin Musical Theatre production, which Robert had just performed in. Cast members present included David Capellino playing the piano, Lloyd Lamb (understudy) singing Tevya, Julie Slim (understudy) singing Golde, and Jocelyn Adams, Bob Brody, Jennifer Hayes, Guenever Wolfe, and Gil Zilkha singing chorus and other parts. We all enjoyed the warm feeling of a working cast reunited, and happily joined in the chorus for "Sunrise, Sunset!" and "Anatevka."

While *Fiddler* was playing at the Paramount Theater, *My Fair Lady* was playing at the newly rebuilt State Theater right next door. The casts often mingled on the sidewalk after their shows, and it seemed very good to have Cara Briggs, Boni Hestir, and Cade Siemers from *My Fair Lady* join us as well. Boni sang "Wouldn't it be lovely" and Cade sang "I've grown accustomed to her face."

Julie Slim was already performing in another show, *Torch Song Trilogy*, and sang "Trois Fois Merci" from that show. Gil Zulkha sang "All the things you are" from *Very Warm for May* by Jerome Kern. Gil sang in the chorus of our *Mikado*. He is a student of Rose Taylor's and will be singing in Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* in Salzburg in July (where Amy Stinson will be singing the part of Despina). David Capellino, Jr., had played a child's part in *Fiddler*, and he now sang "What is love?"

Introductions and announcements had started off the evening. We especially welcomed guest Tom Kennedy, who had been the President of the Board of Directors of the late lamented Capitol City Playhouse. Reba announced that she had with her, available for purchase, *Mikado* CDs and Videos, as well as videos of *Gondoliers*, *Pirates*, and *Yeomen of the Guard*. Robert offered copies of the latest edition of Harry Benford's *Gilbert*

& *Sullivan Lexicon*, for sale at \$30 each. Reba said that Rafe MacPhail would be teaching two ElderHostels on G&S in Connecticut in July. Copies of the *Ivoryton Savoyard* with information, were on hand for anyone interested. Reba also reminded us that the Austin Critics Table Awards were to be presented on Monday, June 14, at 6:30 pm at the Top of the Marc. We are very pleased that nominations included *The Mikado*, for Best Musical Show; Rafe MacPhail for Direction of a Musical; and Amy Baker Stinson for her performance as Yum-Yum. (Several of us attended, including Rafe himself.)

Libby reported that she and Rafe had appeared Sunday, June 6, at 6 am on Winston Bode's KVET show "On the Avenue." (The program had been taped in advance at a more convenient hour.) She said it was wonderful to appear with Rafe because he just takes off and explains why G&S works today. She also said that Robert and Rafe had done a beautiful job on a KMFA program to publicize *Patience*, and urged us to be sure to listen to John Aielli's program featuring the cast of *Patience*, on KUT the next day from 1 to 2 pm,

To close the evening Bill Hatcher gave us the Pirate King's lead into "Hail Poetry," which we all rose to sing with our usual gusto. We went right on to sing "Now to the banquet we press" (*Sorcerer*), ending the season with a bang (and as usual, delicious edibles brought by the members). We hope to see you all again on September 7<sup>th</sup>.

### Have a look at our Web Site

Thanks to Bill Hatcher  
for providing and maintaining this site  
[members.aol.com/mahitabel/gassa](http://members.aol.com/mahitabel/gassa)

## NOTICE

The Society is searching for back-up locations for our monthly musicales. For many years we have enjoyed meeting at the home of Pearl Amster and using her marvelous piano. During the past three years we have had several pleasant evenings at the beautiful home of Paula Tyler—and we will meet there again on September 7. However, in light of Pearl's recent health difficulties, we need to find an alternate location. We prefer a fairly central location—and a good piano, of course. We are open to any offers or suggestions. Please call our office at 472-4772.



**RALPH MacPHAIL, Jr.**  
**Box 114 Bridgewater College**  
**Bridgewater, Virginia 22812-1599**

8 August 1999

Dear Friends,

Since returning to Bridgewater I've often reflected on our *Patience* at St. Stephen's School (all three venues!), and I write to thank each of you for your contributions to that happy production.

Once again, I found working with the Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society a very gratifying experience—not only because of the show that resulted from our work and play together but also because of friendships made, renewed, and deepened.

I'll always remember that wonderful opening week, with "rock-solid opening night"—and then that scramble as we started the second weekend of performances: the choral room, The Grand Move to the gymnasium, and then watching the show get even better as adversity tried to dampen our spirits and success—to no avail.

*Patience*, truth to tell, has always been one of my favorites, and I was so pleased with our production, thanks to each of you.

On the last day of July, I was in London and had a chance to see the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company perform *H.M.S. Pinafore*. We got to town early (I had been at the Buxton Festival that week, speaking on *The Mikado*), and my friends and I crossed the Thames by walking across the Hungerford Bridge to pay our respects at the Gilbert, Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte memorials in and near the Embankment Gardens. Later, while seated in the Royal Festival Hall watching *H.M.S. Pinafore*, I thought of next summer and *H.M.S. Pinafore* in Austin and found myself thinking of you again. I do look forward to working on that show in Austin.

Alice joins me in thanking you for making us feel so welcome and for showering us with your many kindnesses.

With very best wishes to the jolliest utter of companies,

Yours sincerely,

*Rafe*

a/99

**BOATSWAIN** What is to be done with this here hopeless chap? Let us sing him the song that Sir Joseph has kindly composed for us. Perhaps it will bring this here miserable creature to a proper state of mind.

**GLEE—RALPH, BOATSWAIN, BOATSWAIN'S MATE, & CHORUS**

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 cheeks 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.  
**CHORUS**—His nose should pant, etc.

His eyes should flash with an inborn fire,  
 His brow with scorn be wrung;  
 He never should bow down to a domineering frown,  
 Or the tang of a tyrant tongue.  
 His foot should stamp and his throat should growl,  
 His hair should twirl and his face should scowl;  
 His eyes should flash and his breast protrude,  
 And this should be his customary attitude—(*pose*)  
**CHORUS**—His foot should stamp, etc.



(Message, cont'd from page 1)

What happened the next day to make the final weekend of *Patience* another rousing success is a testimony to our directors, cast, crew, and other supporters—but perhaps most of all to the heroic efforts of our technical director, Richard Brown. Richard had designed and built beautiful sets and had overseen all technical aspects of the show, and he knew the show had to go on—theater or no theater! So he masterminded and directed the removal of the set to the nearby Clayton Gymnasium and the ingenious arrangement of lights, baffles, sound, and seating to turn that gym into a theater. We hit the boards Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday and presented a wonderful show to appreciative audiences. Richard oversaw adjustments before each performance to make the quality of the show continue to grow.

Many thanks are owed to members who came on Friday and Saturday to move equipment and bleachers. Bouquets are due to our cast, who put on tremendous shows in each setting with great panache. But with all of this dedication, the show still would not have gone on if Richard had not been determined to make it happen.

Richard: All of us who thrilled to see *Patience* rise from the ashes like a Phoenix extend our thanks. You are truly a friend of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin.

*Libby Weed, President*

(Interview, cont'd from page 1)

tained season tickets to the Houston Grand Opera for a while after moving to Austin), but G&S, and especially our Society are special to them.

Wyndy is from Tyler, in East Texas, and she attended St. Stephen's School. At UT Austin she majored first in Art, but got her degree in English. Edgar, from Houston, majored in Accounting at UT, and that's where they met. They have three children, a girl and two boys, and I lost track of the number of grandchildren they have. Edgar was once Mayor Pro-Tem of Westlake Hills and now is the Treasurer (and Past President) of the Westwood Homeowners' Association. Wyndy is Recording Secretary of this Association.

The Ellises support opera and joined the G&S Society to support our work. Then last fall, after several years of membership, they came to a Musicales and found that our members are "unique" and our musicales are "fantastic." (I, of course, agree!) They have faithfully attended Musicales ever since. And support of our Society is meaningful to them because they don't have the time to volunteer as much as they would like.

This is my first interview for the G&S Newsletter. Both Libby Weed and Reba Gillman suggested the Ellises, and I must say that I enjoyed getting to know two of our unique members.

*Larry Shepley, Executive Vice-President*



## Virtue Triumphs in a Theatrical Performance

by Larry Shepley

Once again, Rafe MacPhail did yeoman service for our thespian adventures this summer. How he had the patience to direct all the would-be Mikados and princesses is anyone's guess—"Ida thought there would be gore all over the ruddy stage," one cast member was heard to remark. But Rafe was a humane guardian, overseeing every detail, down to the pinafores the maidens wore. (And fetching they were, too: As Gondo, a crew member said, "they make me want to leer!") The dragons' æsthetic attempts were particularly well received. Rafe admitted that he traveled as far as Penzance to pirate some of their maneuvers, but many were his own inventions. And the trials paid off: The jury of critics agreed that *Patience* was a great success!

But Austin proved to be no utopia, not even a limited one, for the roof caved in at the Helm Fine Arts theater (or theatre) after the opening weekend. Richard Brown, our lighting and set specialist was ready to duke it out with whomever was responsible, but he was able to work his sorcery to move the show to St. Edward's gym. "Lanthey" (as Libby Weed, our President is sometimes called) said, grandly, "The show must go on!" "I owe Lanthey a lot," said Rafe, "and also all the company." Thanks to him and the cast and crew, *Patience* did indeed triumph.



### CONTEST ANSWERS

As a promotional scheme, we had a "contest" questionnaire inserted in the program for *Patience*. Here are the answers:

1) How did *Patience* "yearn" her living?

*Patience* was a milkmaid, and one of her duties was to prepare milk and cream for cheese-making — to "yearn" milk is to curdle it in preparation for making it into cheese.

2) What is the difference between a dragon and a Dragoon?

A dragon is a fire-breathing, blustering animal. A Dragoon was an English soldier. Although Dragoons could bluster and even be fiery, it was their loud, flashing guns that gave them their name.

3) Just how "pure" was the real-life Reginald Bunthorne?

Bunthorne describes himself as walking down Picadilly with a poppy or a lily, so that everyone will say that he is "particularly pure." Bunthorne was modeled after a number of æsthetic artists, possibly mostly after James McNeill Whistler—but he embodies some of Oscar Wilde, too. Wilde's legal difficulties came long after *Patience* debuted,

Many Thanks to the following corporate sponsors of our production of *Patience*

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so Gilbert did not refer to them in the opera, but certainly people knew that the Æsthetes were more—or less—than they seemed. Moreover, in an early version of *Patience*, the two rivals were curates, not poets, as in a similar Bab Ballad which Gilbert had previously written. Gilbert was worried about being thought irreverent in the operatic version, possibly in part because of the satirical reference to Bunthorne's purity.

4) What technological marvel did Richard D'Oyly Carte adopt for the staging of *Patience*?

*Patience* opened at Opéra Comique on April 23, 1881. Then on October 8, 1881, it moved to the Savoy Theatre, the first major theater to be lighted by electricity. In fact, electrical lighting was still under development at the opening date, and gas light was available as a backup. It wasn't until a couple of months later that the stage itself was illuminated by electricity. On that occasion, December 28, 1881, Richard D'Oyly Carte, the entrepreneur who had built the Savoy for G&S, broke open a lit electric lamp on stage to demonstrate how safe this scientific miracle was.

5) What was the first truly big Gilbert & Sullivan hit?

Gilbert and Sullivan individually had previous successes: *Trial by Jury* and *The Sorcerer* were very popular, but *H.M.S. Pinafore* was the duo's first really major hit. This delightful comic opera about "the Merry Maiden and the Tar" will be our millennium production in June, 2000. It promises to be our best show ever—and that's saying a lot!

## New or renewal membership form

We encourage you to join our society. If you are a member, please check your membership renewal date on the top 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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## 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.

### What we do

**Annual Grand Production**  
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**Free Monthly Musicales**  
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### Executive Board

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Our web site: [members.aol.com/mahitabel/gassa](http://members.aol.com/mahitabel/gassa)

## News of Members

**Bill & Nan Hatcher's** older daughter Lisa is off to college. Lisa is attending UT, will live in Littlefield Dorm, and has just been accepted as a member of the Longhorn Band.

**Rafe MacPhail** has had a busy summer. After his triumph in *Patience*, here, he ran two week-long Elderhostels in Ivoryton, Connecticut. He then rushed to Buxton, England to give a talk at the International G&S Festival Symposium, "*The Mikado*: Red, Hot, and Swing!" Thus it happened that on Saturday, July 31, he celebrated the anniversary of "The Pinafore Riot" (see your G&S history books) and his birthday by attending a performance of *H.M.S. Pinafore* by the (new) D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. He'll be just as busy next summer, when he'll conduct two Elderhostels: "Gilbert & Sullivan and *Princess Ida*" (July 9-

15) and "Gilbert & Sullivan and *PiraMikaFore*" (July 16-22), also in Ivoryton.

**Robert Mellin** has just returned from a fine vacation in Venezuela. He took along his two teenage great-nephews, an experience in itself. He especially enjoyed revisiting the Andes, where at 7000 ft, he went paragliding.

**Larry Shepley** just returned from Turkey, where he celebrated his 60th birthday by viewing a solar eclipse from the deck of a boat on the Bosphorus. It was a great party.

Congratulations to new grandmother **Libby Weed**. Mary Ashlynn Womack was born on July 28, 1999, to Susan and Patrick Womack. Susan and her mother Libby performed in our last production of *Pinafore*; Susan also performed in our last *Gondoliers*.

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