

THE

# GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

APRIL 2000 NEWSLETTER

## ★ Our Next Musicale ★

### *Princess Ida*

Monday April 3, 2000 • 7:30 pm  
At Paula Tyler's • 4400 Balcones Drive • 459-4639  
At the corner of Shinoak & Balcones  
Between 35<sup>th</sup> St. & Perry Lane (45<sup>th</sup> St.)

**Please bring munchies.**

Inspired by the interest of Leland Smith, Enid Hallock and Sue Caldwell are presenting the highlights of *Princess Ida* to acquaint us all with the delights of this little known opera. Performers will be members Sue Caldwell, Carolyn Gregory, Cynthia Hill, Janette Jones, Frank Delvy, Harold Gilbert, and Jim Robinson (who sang the male lead in the Houston G&S production a few years ago). Lord High Pianist Bob Wall will preside at the piano.

Coming in May

Save the day: May 1st • For a bang-up Musicale with heavy emphasis on our production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

Place to be announced.

.....  
**Hello!**

Brian Gaston • General Manager

“Why stay we on earth except to grow?” Robert Browning

Hello, My name is Brian Gaston, The Gilbert and Sullivan Society's new General Manager. As of the first of March I have taken on the duties of managing daily business affairs as well as producing the G&S season.

How did I get there? I was raised primarily in Miami, FL. I have a Theater BFA from the University of Memphis and have performed throughout Middle America. In 1990 I followed my intuition and came to Austin seeking growth as an individual and as an artist. On that quest I have worked with Zachary Scott Theater, Second Youth Repertory Family Theater, Inversion Repertory, Austin Theater Works, Freddy Carnes Productions, State Theater, Different Stages, Zilker Summer Musical, and several film and video projects. I have performed, written, directed, designed and produced theater now for more than twenty-three years.

My philosophy? I try to keep my personal life simple and get all my drama on stage. And I strongly believe in providing quality entertainment accessible to all ages. When we teach children to love theater we are creating tomorrow's audiences. As for success — create the highest quality possible and make sure everyone knows about it.

## Message from Your President

Larry Shepley • President

One of the first G&S operas I was involved with was *Princess Ida* (I played second flute — but the first flute had the good parts). I've always liked it in spite of its rather chauvinistic theme. I'm particularly happy therefore that Enid Hallock, with Sue Caldwell and an impressive cast, will be presenting our next Musicale on a *Princess Ida* theme.

The opera opens with Hilarion awaiting King Gama, who is scheduled to bring his daughter, Princess Ida, whom Hilarion married as a baby. Instead King Gama brings the news that Ida has locked herself in a castle, where she runs a school for women. Hilarion and his friends disguise themselves as women students and are admitted to the school. After a few shenanigans, the young men are discovered and are forced to battle the sons of King Gama. When the young men are victorious, Princess Ida realizes that her place is with Hilarion; all ends happily.

*Princess Ida* is written in iambic pentameter and has three acts. These factors alone make it a difficult opera to produce. The fact that Gilbert spoofs coeducation is another problem (and there are others). Nonetheless, it is a fun opera, written when Gilbert and Sullivan both were at the heights of their careers (it just preceded *The Mikado*). We as a society have never produced it, but someday we just might! I'm looking forward to our Musicale, and I'm sure you will enjoy it, too.

I also played in *H.M.S. Pinafore* when I was in high school (as first flute!). This was the opera which made Gilbert & Sullivan internationally famous. It appeared first in England, but productions quickly appeared in the US, all over the US, including here in Texas. I'll have more to say in the next Newsletter about the *H.M.S. Pinafore* craze and its consequences, some of which included profound changes in copyright laws. I really like this opera, and I think that after seeing Rafe MacPhail's direction of our production this summer, you will be using “What never? ... well, hardly ever” enough to annoy your friends the way opera goers did over a century ago.

Finally, I want to welcome **Brian Gaston** to The Society. As General Manager, he will have a great deal of responsibility for and a large influence over what we do. Those of you who came to our last Musicale had a chance to meet him, and I hope you were as favorably impressed as I am. Please see his remarks on this page.

The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin was created just for that purpose. To teach and share the art of theater and the wonderful art and history that Gilbert and Sullivan have created. And that excites me. We have a great deal of potential for growth in our audiences, membership, and programs and in our art. I look forward to seeing just how far we can go.

“No man is born into the world whose work is not born with him.”  
James Russell Lowell.

Please feel free to contact me with your questions or comments. I will be in the office most weekday afternoons at 472-4772 or through my e-mail: [brian@gastonart.com](mailto:brian@gastonart.com).

6610

## Last Musicale

Reba Gillman • Secretary

On Monday, March 6, 2000 at Paula Tyler's home 32 people gathered to welcome Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr., in town for the *H.M.S. Pinafore* auditions over the weekend. Present were members Pearl Amster, Sue Ricket Caldwell, Frank & Donna Delvy, Arthur DiBianca & guest Elana Wakeman, Len & Reba Gillman, John & Carolyn Gregory, Enid Hallock, Gary Hallock, Bill & Nan Hatcher, Allen Lawshae & Kay Novak, Allan Longacre, Robert Mellin, Rafe MacPhail, Lucy Shoe Meritt, Maurie Ommerman, Steve & Eve Schwartzman & guest Joseph Smith, Larry Shepley, Leland L. Smith, David Tampke, Paula Tyler, Libby Weed, Dave Wieckowski, and Theresa Wilson, and finally our new General Manager and Producer, Brian Gaston.

President Larry announced that he had provided name tags, "And if you see anyone without one feel free to tease or harrass him or her." He also explained that although we had John Gregory as pianist for the evening, we did not have an accompanist. John told us that in honor of his late father-in-law Malcolm Gregory, he had made up a musical contest. He handed out sheets of paper so that we could write down the titles of all the 15 tunes he proposed to play snatches of, and sailed into the music he plays so well. Larry announced that the prizes would be items donated by the promoters of *Topsy-Turvy*. My score was a miserable 1: I recognized Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, the first piece. It turned out there were others I might have known, but I didn't catch them as they flew by. Grand winner was Paula with 14; her prize was a program and CD of the music from *Topsy-Turvy*. Next came Robert Mellin with 13; his prize was a pair of sports binoculars. Allen Lawshae and Libby tied with 11 each. Their prize was a fan "You'll have to take turns using it."

Larry then invited the latest arrival to come up and get his name tag and be introduced: Brian Gaston, newly hired to be our General Manager and Producer. Brian told us he was excited to be on board, "I am 36 years old; I have 23 years as a solid performer; I am a playwright, director, and actor. I've worked with Second Youth Repertory Family Theater for ten years in Austin. When we did *Liu the Dragon King* for PlayFest 2000 at the Dougherty Arts Center, 300 people crammed into the theater."

Enid Hallock told us that on the inspiration of Leland Smith the next Musicale would be dedicated to *Princess Ida*. Our member Jim Robinson, who played the lead role with the Houston G&S Society some years ago, would sing and provide a synopsis of the opera. Other performers would be Sue Caldwell, who sang in the opera in Los Angeles, Carolyn Gregory, Frank Delvy and Harold Gilbert. Bob Wall is expected back from Spain in time to play the piano. Larry remarked that *Princess Ida* was his favorite show — he played second flute in the orchestra for *Princess Ida* when he was in high school.

With John Gregory at the piano, Frank then sang "Some Enchanted Evening" from *South Pacific*. After this musical interlude Larry introduced Ralph MacPhail, Jr., Director for *Pinafore*. Rafe told us he will direct a traditional *H.M.S. Pinafore*. He proceeded to let us in on many little tidbits of information about the original production of *Pinafore*, and other G&S matters, and discussed some aspects of

the film *Topsy-Turvy*. In answer to questions he mentioned his concern that some cast behaviors had not been properly put into the perspective of the times. Although it is true that George Grossmith used cocaine before the performance of *The Mikado*, the movie left the impression that he habitually shot up on cocaine, which was not the case. Also attitudes at the time were based on little knowledge and were very different from today's point of view about use of drugs. Rafe felt that it was not necessary to include the bordello scenes, and regretted the R rating apparently sought by the film's makers. As for the relationship between Gilbert and his wife Kitty, Rafe said little was known, and the very moving scene near the end of the film was "poetic license." He told us that Gilbert had kept a diary in French (so the servants couldn't read it), but it was actually rather dull. Kitty was 20 years younger than Gilbert, and remained something of a mystery, but in her many years of widowhood she became a forceful figure. Referring to the last and little known operas, Rafe said that in the next 20 years the Society should do *The Grand Duke* and *Utopia Limited*. "You should educate the audience until they'll come to anything you do." A source book Rafe referred to was "Merely Corroborative Detail" written by longtime member of the D'Oyly Carte company, Kenneth Sanford. Sanford said that in later years many performers got frustrated with the D'Oyly Carte productions because they tended to be so presentational. Finally Rafe said "Thank all of you for everything you do for Gilbert and Sullivan, and especially Robert Mellin, Reba, Larry, and Pearl Amster, who's putting me up."

There was some audience discussion of the presentational style of performance and the various places it turns up. Then Larry said that Rafe had suggested that we perform the music of Sullivan a lot, and should occasionally present the poetry contributed by Gilbert. Larry had taken a Bab Ballad off the Internet, and given it to Allen to read. There followed a dramatic rendition of "Joe Golightly or the First Lord's Daughter," written by Gilbert and later used by him in writing *H.M.S. Pinafore*. In one section we were asked to assist by uttering the refrain "Willow!" at indicated moments, which we did enthusiastically with suitable dramatic inflection.

Larry announced to applause that next year we will do *The Sorcerer*. He also announced that he had made a video-tape of the Winston Bode TV program about our Society, which would be shown on the VCR in a back room, later in the evening. Robert Mellin asked if anyone had heard the PBS program the night before on which Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Shore, and Dame Joan Sutherland sang "Three Little Maids" from *Mikado*.

Frank then launched into "Night and day you are the one," with able assistance from John at the piano. Frank and Allen sang the Pirate King's lead in, and we all joined in "Hail Poetry", (*Pirates of Penzance*) which without the piano, and in the wrong key, did not sound its usual lusty self. Nothing daunted we pressed on to end the program with "Now to the Banquet we press." As we gathered round the groaning board some drifted off to the back room to view the Bode TV video, and all enjoyed the delicious food and good fellowship. Thank you Paula, for having us!

### Golf Cart, Anyone?

Does anyone have a golf cart to lend us for the run of *H.M.S. Pinafore*? Last year we successfully used one to ferry customers up the hill at St. Stephen's.

Please call our office: 472-4772

### Bulk Mail

We use bulk mail because it's a lot cheaper than 33 cents per piece. But as the mail delivery in Austin gets slower and slower we have a few reports of very late deliveries, and anything not in Austin is REALLY slow. Please help us by calling our office (or dropping us a post card or an e-mail missive) to tell us of unsatisfactory delivery of your Newsletter.

Note: While you're at it check your mailing label for your expiration date, and send in that check NOW! Thanks.

## H.M.S. Pinafore

### THE DIE IS CAST

The auditions for *H.M.S. Pinafore* were held successfully on March 4 and 5, 2000, at St. Edward's and the results are in (with a few additions to the chorus yet to come). Stage Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr., and Music Director Jeffrey Jones-Ragona have put together a fine cast, including a few old favorites. Music rehearsals will start May 2, and Stage Director MacPhail will be in town after May 29<sup>th</sup> for blocking and stage directing. Plan now to attend our Gala Opening Night on Friday June 30. There will be a Special Preview on Thursday June 29; and other performances will be at 8:00 pm on Saturday July 1, Thursday July 6, Friday July 7, and Saturday July 8; with matinées on Saturday July 1, Sunday July 2, and Saturday July 8.

### H.M.S. Pinafore • Cast

Sir Joseph Porter, KCB	Jim Hunter
Captain Corcoran	Frank Delvy
Ralph Rackstraw	Dan Girardot
Dick Deadeye	Harold Gilbert
Bill Bobstay (Bosun's Mate)	Sam Johnson
Bob Beckett (Carpenter's Mate)	David Tucker
Josephine	Claire Vangelisti
Cousin Hebe	Carolyn Gregory
Little Buttercup	Janette Jones
Ship's Mite	Michelle Girardot

Chorus of First Lord's Sisters, Cousins and Aunts and Sailors, Marines, etc.

Katherine Altobello, Nancy Arnold, Emily Bem, Carol Horton, Sara Kendrick, Teresa Kim, Laura Lanham, Montana Pifeyro, Patty Rowell, Sarah Stevens, Reid Allen, Peter Langlois, Boyd Lawrence, Mark Long, Steven Long, Brett McHargue, James Meny, Dan Smith, Derek Smootz

Note that the correct British pronunciation of Ralph is Rafe (as in our Director, Rafe MacPhail).

## News of Members, Former and Present

Congratulations to **Frank Delvy**, who is now a happy member of the Dowser Dan Water Conservation Program. Sponsored by the City of Austin Water Conservation Division, this program goes into the schools to present skits to grades 1 – 4, that entertain and promote understanding of the need for water conservation. This is Frank's dream "day job". He gets paid to do what he loves.

Congratulations to **Allen Lawshae**, who has been cast as the Stage Manager in a production of *Our Town* by the Sam Bass Community Theater in Round Rock. It will play April 14 through May 6, 2000.

Commiserations with President **Larry Shepley**, who has distinguished himself by coming down with gout — how Edwardian! He was hobbling around on a stockinged foot, leaning on a cane, but he is much better now, thanks to modern medicine.

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

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Many thanks to IBM for a generous donation.

## 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 (472-GSSA)

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## H.M.S. Pinafore

or, The Lass that Loved a Sailor

Directed and Choreographed by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.  
Music Director and Conductor: Jeffrey Jones-Ragona  
Helm Fine Arts Center, St. Stephen's School



Our next production • June 29 – July 8, 2000  
The opera which brought G&S international acclaim!

THE  
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&  
SULLIVAN

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