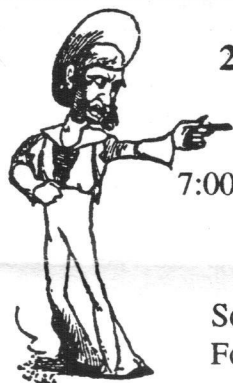


THE
GILBERT & SULLIVAN
SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

NOVEMBER 2000 NEWSLETTER



**25th Anniversary* Gala
& Fund Raiser**

7:00 pm, Sunday November 5, 2000
Dougherty Arts Center Theater
1110 Barton Springs Road

Song, Verse, & Levity!
Food, Wine, and Mirth!

Show your support and enjoy selections from
The Pirates of Penzance, the Bab Ballads,
and other delights as performed by:
Rose Taylor, Claire Vangelisti, Janette Jones,
Frank Delvy, Dan Girardot, Brian Gaston,
and many others.

General Admission \$30

Silver Savoyards \$100

(includes special gifts and recognition)

Call Austix: (512) 454-8497



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*For our historian members: We were founded in the Fall of 1976, and
this Gala is in support of our 25th season over the next year. At the end
of the year, yes, we will have another Celebration of our 25th
Anniversary! And don't forget *The Sorcerer*, in the summer of 2001.

Message from Your President

Larry Shepley • President

Pearl Amster and Jess Walters were wonderful people. Talented, generous, and good — they both were opinionated, they both were characters, they both were forthright. And they both will be missed. The G&S Society is proud that they both participated in our affairs. We will be joining in honoring their memory, as we honored them in special Musicales, with the music and words of two other great artists.

As for more mundane matters: At our last Board meeting, we discussed in some detail our financial situation. Our productions have been getting better and better, and our Musicales have continued to be enjoyable. We are committed to a strong educational program, which is beginning to shift into high gear — look for a preview at our November 5th Gala Fundraiser. This fundraiser is especially important, for all of our activities cost money. It is an unfortunate fact that ticket sales never fully pay for a production, but rest assured: We will continue to have free monthly Musicales and will offer our in-school programs to all schools, those which can afford to contribute and those which cannot, equally. Please come to our Gala; you will be rewarded with good music, fine refreshments, jovial fellowship, and especially the satisfaction of helping our fine Society.

We also discussed our In-School Programs. The basic structure will be a skit based on *The Pirates of Penzance*, scripted by Frank Delvy; it will be premiered at our Gala. We still are in the planning phase for *The Sorcerer* for next summer and are continuing to pursue grants and other sources of income. We are also developing a manual for our employees and office procedures. A problem which will quickly become quite pressing is to find an office to replace our present one!

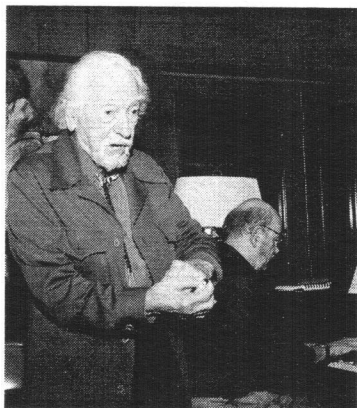
Our annual business meeting will be coming up in January, and so we will be appointing a nominating committee, to be chaired by Bill Hatcher; if you have suggestions, please call Bill at 892-3722.

Finally, on a rather delicate matter, we felt we should stress that our meetings are not suitable places for religious expression, despite our concern about the passing away of those whom we care so deeply about. We appreciate Dan Girardot's sensitive remarks in honor of Pearl Amster, but we want to assure our many members with their many philosophies that we are devoted to music and mirth. How better to celebrate our lives than through the songs and poems of G&S!

Looking Ahead

January 8, 2001: Our Annual Meeting
and Musicale

Because of the heavy November calendar
(Gala Fundraiser, Memorials for Pearl and Jess),
there will be no December Musicale



Jess Walters, with Bob Wall



Pearl Amster

6610

Last Musicale • Goodbye to Pearl •

Reba Gillman • Secretary

On Sunday October 1, 2000, at 3:00 pm Paula Tyler welcomed us into her home for our Musicale, which had become a "Goodbye to Pearl" planned by Frank Delvy. 34 people were present: General Manager Brian Gaston, and members Byron & Mayda Arnason, Sue Rickett Caldwell, Frank & Donna Delvy, Harold Gilbert, Reba Gillman, Dan Girardot, Loel Graber, Enid & Gary Hallock, Cynthia Hill, James Horwitz, Janette Jones, Bee Polomé & Chuck Kraus, Martha Schumacher & Errol Tyrone Olson, Steve & Eve Schwartzman & guest MaiMai Hunt, Larry Shepley, Paula Tyler, Jess & Emma Walters, and Libby Weed. Guests were Pearl's daughter Nancy Owen, Pearl's grandson Matthew Kaplan and his wife Alexa, friends Diana McAlpin and Garrett Maddox, pianist Stephen McElroy, and Allen Lawshae's friend JoAnn Reeves. Allen came in at the very end from his performance in "You can't take it with you" in Round Rock.

President Larry Shepley reported on the actions of the Board (see the message from the President), and various announcements were made. Matthew Kaplan, Pearl's grandson who has sung in many G&S events, told us that a memorial tribute to Pearl Amster will be held on Sunday November 12 at 2:00 pm in the Scottish Rite Temple theater. All are invited.

Frank Delvy then took over the program and introduced pianist Stephen McElroy. Frank told us that among several performers who wished to but could not be with us to honor Pearl, were Rose Taylor, Russell Gregory, and Allen Lawshae.

The music began with Frank and Cynthia Hill singing "I have a song to sing, O!" from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Janette Jones sang the opera's opening song, "When maiden loves, she sits and sighs." Cynthia sang "Love is a plaintive song" from *Patience*, and Janette and Dan Girardot sang the duet from *The Pirates of Penzance*, "Oh false one, you have deceived me!" Dan said he would sing "Take a pair of sparkling eyes" from *The Gondoliers*, and told us that when he had first performed this song in one of our Gala fund raisers, he had gone to Pearl, who was sitting in the front row, taken her hand and sung to her, a scene he had always remembered fondly. This time he went to Emma Walters and took her hand. Jess pretended to choke Dan in jealous rage.

The music continued with Frank and Janette singing the duet from *The Mikado*, "There is beauty in the bellow of the blast." Cynthia and Dan sang "Stay, Frederic, stay!" from *Pirates*. Jess then strode up to the piano and proceeded to sing a cappella, first saying "Pearl and I were very deeply friends. I remember she sat in that very seat when I sang her favorite ... she admired this song, and I admired her." His beautiful baritone rang out, "I feel like a motherless child ... sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone, a long way from home." Then he sang "Go down Moses," saying Pearl loved this song. It was a very moving moment, and since Jess died the following Sunday we have to wonder if this was the last time Jess sang for an audience.

Dan then invited the audience to tell stories about Pearl. Reba began, saying "Our association with Pearl goes way back. She invited us to sing at her Soirées several times. Later she opened her home to our monthly Musicales when Enid Hallock couldn't anymore. You will hear from others of her importance in Austin's musical community, I want to speak of a few memories. Once she forgot about our Musicale and went out to dinner. President Bob Kusnetz arrived and found the house locked, but went in through the unlocked door to her studio. The burglar alarm immediately began sounding and when Bob could not give Pearl's code to the alarm company the police were sent. Someone climbed into the attic and hushed the stentorian alarm, and the members assembled and began singing lustily. Jess Walters explained it all to the police, who departed chuckling.

"Pearl survived so many medical crises. After one surgery she lay recuperating in her bedroom while the Musicale went on. Then she said trash collection was the next day 'Could someone please put out my garbage?' So Jess Walters, the world-famous baritone, joined the garbage brigade.

"Then there was the time Pearl woke up at 3 am with a terrible pain in her foot. She called 911 and crawled to the door to let them in. She managed to set the alarm as they took her out to the hospital and extensive surgery for a blood clot on her foot."

Frank told us that when Pearl first heard him sing "The nightmare song" she was so impressed she asked him "Why didn't you study the piano?" And now he's considering doing just that. Harold Gilbert told us that once he took Pearl to Sam's Club to buy their meatballs to serve at a Gala fund raiser. Pearl swore Harold to secrecy and told him everyone thought it was her own recipe, but she just put some purchased sauce on the meatballs and everyone loved them. Libby reminded us that she had interviewed Pearl for an article in the Newsletter. Libby was fascinated by Pearl's interesting life and finally asked what had attracted her to Gilbert & Sullivan. Pearl had a sharp tongue and she replied, "There's nothing special about G&S; I just like good music." She then insisted that she be allowed to read the article before it was published.

Sue Caldwell recalled that when she first came to Austin in 1972 she wanted a piano and went to the Amster's music store on Lavaca Street. Pearl's husband Gus told Sue just what she needed and set up a payment plan she could afford. From then on they always treated her like a member of their family. "Gus and Pearl gave so much to the community," said Sue. Byron Arnason remembered the time that the G&S Society honored Pearl in that very room, and gave her a silver tray. Pearl was overwhelmed but finally said, "Well, I sure know how to pick Societies!" Loel Graber said one of Pearl's favorite songs was 'Rising early in the morning' from *Gondoliers* ... "I'm sorry I didn't prepare to sing it."

Dan said that since Pearl was Jewish he had consulted a rabbi and now wished to lead us in prayer in the Jewish tradition. He recited the 23rd psalm "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want."

Frank then sang Pearl's favorite "The nightmare song" from *Iolanthe*. He said he had always wondered what Pearl meant when she said to him "Delvy, if you'd been alive a hundred years ago you'd have been a star!" To close out the program in traditional style we all sang the Pirate King's lead in and "Hail Poetry" from *Pirates* followed by an a cappella version of "Now to the banquet we press" from *The Sorcerer* (we never seem to have the music available for our new pianists).

In the well fed sociability that followed I think we all felt warm and peaceful about our final tribute to Pearl. Her daughter, Nancy Owen, thanked us and said it had been a healing experience.

H.M.S. Pinafore Video

Now Available

\$25 Including Shipping and Handling
Send check and order to the G&S Office
2026 Guadalupe, #309
Austin, TX 78705

There will be more about Jess Walters in the December Newsletter.

Remembering Pearl

Bob Wall • Former Lord High Pianist

I didn't really get to know Pearl until we started having the Gilbert and Sullivan Society meetings at her home. I had been to the occasional soiree in her living room over the years, and I had of course run into her at the Wednesday Morning Music Club, but it had not occurred to me to take piano lessons from her until one evening after a G&S meeting I impulsively asked her if she could help me improve my playing. I guess I had in mind a few coaching sessions that might start maybe in a month or two. "Sure," said Pearl, "be here tomorrow morning at 9:30." Well, I knew better than to argue with Pearl. I showed up, more than a little nervous, and we started from ground zero. Here's how you sit, here's how you move a key (and more importantly, here's how you release a key after you've moved it), and much, much more. Three and a half years later, at two lessons per week, I think I was at last beginning to absorb what Pearl was trying to teach me. Not that I got it all; that would be the work of a lifetime. But we did make progress, and even today when I play I hear in my mind's ear Pearl saying "turn-drop, forearm, upper arms, relax the wrists, rotate, rotate!"

Anyone who has studied with Pearl soon came to understand that she gave not only piano lessons but also "life lessons." She had strong opinions and was not reluctant to share them. She never doubted that she knew what was best for you, even if you didn't.

But she gave her life lessons with such kindness and with such obvious concern for the welfare of her students that one could only accept them with grace and gratitude. More to the point, Pearl taught us by example: how to stay engaged in life, to be vital, active, alive, taking on new challenges, never giving up or giving in to the inevitable diminishments of age. Who could forget the magnificent recital she

gave on her 80th birthday? Learning the Beethoven Appassionata Sonata and playing it from memory would be challenging enough for a pianist of any age. And she continued to perform at the Wednesday Morning Music Club almost to the end of her life—and not easy pieces, either! I remember vividly a triumphant performance of the Liszt Hungarian Fantasy she gave there a couple of years ago (because I was playing the simple second piano part while Pearl was dazzling everyone with virtuoso flourishes). True, there were a couple of rough spots, but no one cared, even if they were aware of them, because when Pearl played, she made Music. Music with a capital M.

We are all the richer because Pearl gave unstintingly of herself and her talents for all those years since she and Gus methodically picked Austin to settle down in. There will never be another like her. She will be greatly missed.

New Office

We will need a new office soon. If you have a suggestion for a suitable place at a reasonable rent (or—even better—free), please call: 472-4772.



Many thanks to IBM for a generous donation.

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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
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E-mail: gilbsulv@altavista.com

In Memoriam

Pearl Amster

May 17, 1917 • September 22, 2000

Memorial Tribute

Sunday November 12, 2000

2:00 PM

Scottish Rite Temple Theater

207 West 18th Street

Austin, Texas 78701

Jess Walters

November 18, 1908 • October 8, 2000

Memorial Tribute

Saturday November 18, 2000 (Tentative)

~~5:00 – 7:00 PM~~ *3pm*

One World Theatre

7701 Bee Cave Road

Austin, Texas 78746



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