

GILBERT & SULLIVAN

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

JANUARY 2001 NEWSLETTER

- Next Meeting •
- Our monthly Musicale •
- Annual Meeting •

- Monday January 8, 2001 •
 - at 7:30 pm •
 - At Paula Tyler's •
 - 4400 Balcones Drive •
 - 459-4639 •
- Please bring munchies •

Len Gillman will present a short musical program featuring a recording of Jess Walters singing in our 1982 production of *Trial by Jury*. Your recollections about Jess will be welcome at this time.

The Annual Business Meeting is described below.

• February Musicale •

Sunday February 4, 2001, 3:00 PM. Save the date.

A Savoyard Surprise Finds a Home

Lucian Chimene, Publicity V.P.

Sometimes an astonishment that comes out of the blue proves astonishingly delightful. One such happened just this Fall.

I got a call from a friend and fellow volunteer for radio station KMFA—a lady named Carolyn Walls. She knew I was a G&S fan, and she related an interesting story.

In the early '60s Carolyn had written a review for the *Music Educators Journal*, of a book titled *Martyn Green's Treasury of Gilbert and Sullivan*. Mr. Green, as many of us know, was for more than twenty years one of the most celebrated performers in the D'Oyly Carte company. He starred in roles like Ko-Ko, where his dazzling comedic turns and impeccable phrasing of Gilbert's tricky words in Sullivan's perfect settings left audiences in raptures. And he absorbed all the Savoyard traditions that had been passed down from the originators and the subsequent performers.

Flash forward to 2000. Looking through some old records Carolyn hadn't touched since 1962, she found something that had come to her shortly after writing the review, and that she'd filed away. It was a personal letter of response and thanks. It was from Martyn Green.

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Annual Business Meeting

The short Business Meeting will include election of officers. The nominating committee will present the following slate:

President	Larry Shepley
Executive V.P.	Libby Weed
Production V.P.	Sue Ricket Caldwell
Publicity V.P.	Lucien Chimene
Secretary	Reba Gillman
Treasurer	Dave Wieckowski
Historian/Parliamentarian	Leland L. Smith

Other Business: After many years the Board has decided to raise Membership Dues as follows:

Individual	\$20
Family or Group	\$30
Youth (aged 18 and under)	\$10
Senior (aged 65 and over)	\$10

Benefits of membership include receiving a regular Society Newsletter, 10% discount on tickets, and 1 vote per membership (2 votes for Family or Group membership).

Nominating Committee: Bill Hatcher, Chair; Allan Longacre; and Theresa Wilson. Nominations may be made from the floor. You must be a paid-up member to vote or run for office. [Bring your cash or check book and pay at the meeting!]

Volunteer Needed

to help us keep our membership list up to date and correct. Phone calls may be involved. Please call the office: 472-4772.

New Office

We have a new temporary office, but we will need to move again after three months. Consequently, we are still looking for suggestions for Office Space. Please Call 472-4772, or write us at our new Post Office Box: P.O. Box 684542, Austin, Texas 78768-4542

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So then, knowing that I took pleasure in matters of G&S, she asked if I'd be interested in having the letter. After picking myself up off the floor, I said that such a treasure really needed to find a home among a trove of others of its kind, in *The Gilbert & Sullivan Repository* maintained by Ralph ("Rafe") MacPhail, Jr. Would Carolyn be agreeable to this? Not only did she graciously assent, she took the trouble to put together a complete statement of provenance about how the letter had come into her possession—the kind of "corroborative detail" that distinguishes solid fact from some "otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative."

Rafe, the director of our Society's wonderful last three productions, and "Archivist and Proprietor" of the Repository, was of course delighted to add this to the collection of so many other historical items bearing on the G&S legacy. In turn he was able to look up the original review and will maintain a copy of that, along with the original of Green's response.

You may be interested in a couple of relevant excerpts. The first is from Carolyn Walls's review of *Martyn Green's Treasury*.

"...his real contribution is in the 'side' notes (run in a column next to the libretto) where he shares with readers and future producers all manner of anecdotes about the scenes. It is very much like having a conversation with the man, for he writes about anything that a line happens to bring to mind—an effective bit of staging or business, an embarrassing moment in his career, an explanation of a word from Gilbert's fantastic vocabulary, or examples of cuts employed by the D'Oyly Carte Company. The treasury thus becomes a guide to Gilbert and Sullivan through the eyes of the most celebrated contemporary Savoyard. It is to be hoped that it will be wisely used and not become the 'bible' to be followed without further exercise of imagination by school and amateur directors."

Martyn Green's response thanked Carolyn for remarking that his book should not be looked upon as a 'bible.' He went on to say,

"... [I]nterpret the word "tradition" as tradition, and not as a slavish imitation, nor a continuation of an out of date, overstylised, pompous, stereotyped manner of production. Rather treat it as being an intelligent representation of the authors intentions."

"Gilbert is sacrosanct: Sullivan is sacrosanct: but — stage business is not. Sullivan is no longer with us. Gilbert was, when alive, considered to be some twenty years ahead of his time! But he has been dead for some fifty one years. He is therefore now some thirty years behind his time! Nevertheless, were he alive today I am convinced he would still be twenty years ahead. Such was his imagination. I doubt if either he or Sullivan would change a word —(What? Not a word? No, not a word! What — not a word? Well — hardly a word!)— or a note of his music — but I still feel that their manner [of] production would be more imaginative than any of our contemporary producers."

The witty banter gives not only a clue to the nature of the man, but a sense of his strong feeling about the underlying ge-

nius of a body of work that needs only intelligent interpretation to keep delighting audiences more than a century after its debut, despite the unimaginable changes in society and its attitudes that have since occurred.

To Carolyn Walls we give special thanks for her thoughtfulness in entrusting us with this piece of the past that fleshes out our enjoyment of Gilbert and Sullivan's work. And of course, to Rafe MacPhail our thanks for adding it to the base of material that he collects, serving as a growing and fertile resource for continuing enhancement of that enjoyment.

H.M.S. Pinafore Video

Now Available

\$25 Including Shipping and Handling

Send check and order to the G&S Post Office Box

P.O. Box 684542

Austin, TX 78768-4542

Tribute to Jess Walters

It now appears that the Tribute will occur in February. Jess's son, Emil Wolk, hopes that by then he will have recovered sufficiently from the severe pain of a pinched nerve in his back, to be able to travel to Austin. For updates on the situation call our office at 472-4772.

Trial by Jury • Audio Cassette

Copies can be made from Len Gillman's high quality original of our 1982 production with **Jess Walters** as The Learned Judge

Price will depend on number ordered. For instance,
6 copies will cost \$10 each and
12 or more copies will cost \$5 each.

Len will take orders at the January 8 Musicales,
or you can call Len at 327-2277.



Message from Your President

Larry Shepley • President

After much debate internal, the Executive Board on a dues increase decided. We hope that the increase will not discourage members. By leaving the dues low for youths and seniors and by increasing benefits, we hope that the new dues structure will even encourage new young members and retain our loyal retired ones. The dues had been so low that a great many of our members have opted for the categories of Patron and above. We are not doing away with the higher level categories of giving, but are restructuring them, with added benefits—we'll give details in a future Newsletter. As a start, you will notice that regular membership now includes a 10% discount on tickets.

In other action, the Board is continuing plans for its In-School program. The cast is all but complete, the directors are poised, and the schedule now includes performances at PlayFest this spring. We are beginning work on a study guide for the schools. The program is called "Pirates in School" and is a condensation of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Further details will be presented at our January meeting.

We continue to search for ways to encourage volunteers, in particular by searching for a Volunteer Coordinator. We also are in chronic need of funds, and to that end will be forming a Development Committee. Your ideas and suggestions along these lines are most welcome.

As a final word, I'd like to reflect on our 25 year history. In some ways I miss the good old days, when our shows were staffed by our members. Reba Gillman playing a 17-year-old fairy maiden had a charm which our professional-level productions somehow miss. Our Musicales, how-

ever, do provide an opportunity for member participation, and I hope to expand this concept in the future. For example, I envisage a "shadow" production of *The Sorcerer*: a concert performance by our members spanning several Musicales, complete with rehearsals, dances, and even—dare I say it—an orchestra. Would this be too much? Or would it enhance our appreciation of the first-rate show we will be producing in June?

News of Members

With sorrow we learn of the death of **Chuck Kraus**, our oldest member. He died in his sleep on November 28th at the age of 96. He came late to the joys of Gilbert & Sullivan, introduced by our member **Bee Polomé**. She says that of all the events she took him to, G&S was what he enjoyed most.

Congratulations to **Doug and Yvonne DeLay** who have moved to be near Doug's new job in Plano, Texas. Doug is manager of media and analyst relations for EDS, a large computer services firm. The DeLay's address is: 4808 Ivyleaf Lane, McKinney, TX 75070-5448. Their new phone number: (972) 450-7938.



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

P.O. Box 684542

Austin, Texas 78768-4542 Phone: 472-4772 (472-GSSA)

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The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

Since 1976, we have been spreading the joys of
Gilbert & Sullivan through

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G&S Office: Monday – Friday 1:00–5:00 pm.

4402 Burnet Road, #1, Austin, TX 78756

P.O. Box 684542, Austin, TX 78768-4542

(512) 472-4772 [472-GSSA]

Executive Board

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Executive Vice-President	Libby Weed	837-5441
Production Vice-President	Sue Ricket Caldwell	343-7700
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Reba Gillman

Layout

Larry Shepley

Our web site: members.aol.com/mahitabel/gassa

E-mail: gilbsulv@altavista.com



Coming: Our Production of

The Sorcerer

June 2001



THE
GILBERT
&
SULLIVAN

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