

GILBERT & SULLIVAN

MARCH 2002 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

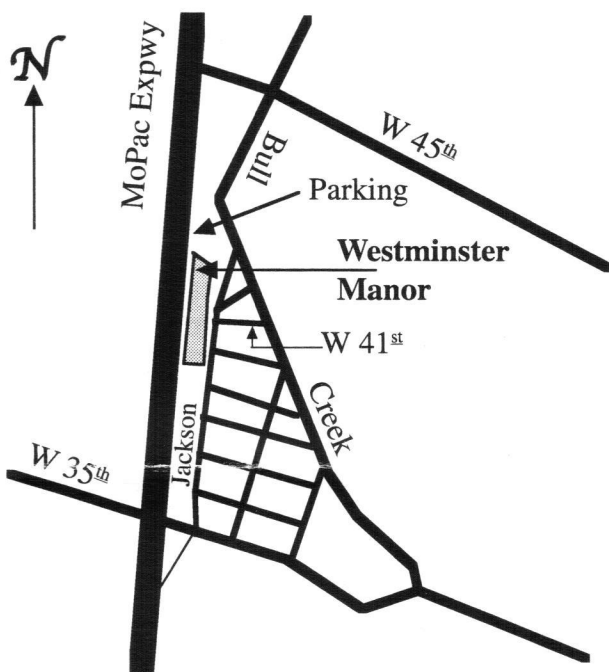
Our Next Musicale

Princess Ida

7:30 pm Monday March 4, 2002
Harris Bell Hall of Westminster Manor

Refreshments will be provided by Westminster Manor

Directions: See back page



Looking Ahead • Save the Date
Monday April 1, 2002, at 7:30 pm
Our next Musicale, at Paula Tyler's house

Next Board Meeting
Monday March 18 at 7:00 pm at Paula Tyler's house

Princess Ida or, Castle Adamant

Join us for this seldom seen spoof of Victorian feminism. This is our first production of this opera in our 25 years as a society, but it has some of Sullivan's most tuneful pieces and some of Gilbert's most ingenious dialog. It has been condensed to two acts (the original is three) and 1-1/2 hours in length, but Art DiBianca, Gary Hallock, Brad Merrell, and Derek Smootz have kept all the best bits!

Westminster Manor is the venue; Harris Bell Hall is a nice auditorium with a beautiful piano, and they will generously provide refreshments. We have several members who live there, and we expect a good crowd. Come and enjoy the fun!

The story involves Prince Hilarion and his baby bride Princess Ida — the marriage took place when they were infants. Ida, however, has locked herself up in Castle Adamant, where she runs a school for girls, teaching "That Man, sprung from an Ape, is Ape at heart" — far inferior to Woman. Hilarion and two friends break into the castle, disguise themselves as coeds, and convince some of the students that man is perhaps not as bad as all that. But then they are discovered and imprisoned. Hilarion's father, King Gama, anxious for the marriage vows to be fulfilled, storms the castle. Ida's girls prove to be no soldiers, so a fight is arranged by her father, King Gama, between Ida's brothers and Hilarion and his friends. Hilarion's party wins, and he and Ida, who has by now fallen love with him, are united.

We hope that modern feminists (actually we ourselves champion women's rights!) won't picket the opera, for after all the satire, the play closes with the sentiment, "It were profanity for poor humanity to treat as vanity the sway of love."

Message from Your President

• Larry Shepley

One of the most wrenching decisions we as a Board have had to make is to postpone *The Pirates of Penzance* until 2003. However, we felt that to do this opera right — with a good orchestra, great sets, a fine venue — needed more time and more up-front funds. (I am certain that singers would be no problem, however!) Instead, we will put on *Trial by Jury* plus scenes and songs from lesser known G&S works. Trial doesn't require a large cast, and a piano with a few instruments for color will be adequate. The set will be a good one, but it needn't be an expensive one.

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Last Musicale

Reba Gillman • Secretary

On Monday February 4, 2002, we gathered at Paula Tyler's to celebrate Saint Valentine's Day a little early with a program planned by Libby Weed. Present were 35 members, friends and performers: Stacy Amorous, whom we haven't heard recently, brought her 18 month old daughter Karen and her husband David Kramer (however, Karen and David left us as the program was beginning); Faith DeBow, Arthur DiBianca, Bud & Rosemary Garner with young friend David A. Reyes, Harold Gilbert, Reba Gillman, Enid Hallock, Gary Hallock, Cynthia & Marshall Hill, Holton Johnson, Nancy McQueen, Robert Mellin, Lucy Shoe Meritt, Joan Pearsall & Carla Ceresa, Bee Harris Polomé, Mary Roche, Leslie Salas, Martha Schumacher & Errol Olson, Steve & Eve Schwartzman, Larry Shepley, Leland L. Smith, Derek Smootz & Jennifer Burleson, Ed & Jean Smootz, Paula Tyler, Libby Weed, Theresa Wilson, and Cheryl Youngberg.

President Larry Shepley started things off with some announcements. He told us Jeffrey Jones-Ragona was going to perform at St. Edward's on Thursday. Plans are going well for the do-it-yourself *Princess Ida*. The first rehearsal will take place at 1 pm on Saturday, February 9th at Gary Hallock's house across from a big duck pond. Art DiBianca is in charge of people who want to sing, and Larry is in charge of physical arrangements. Art, Gary, and Brad Merrell are directors; Andrew Hallock is Music Director. Derek has had to drop out as a director in order to spend more time on his college courses. Props needed include flower-decorated hats (to designate the men disguised as women), stylized armor, castle walls, music stands, and signs to identify the singers (since different people will sing a given role at different times signs will be helpful: e.g. "Princess Ida," "Hilarion," etc.).

Larry reported that he, Libby Weed, and Chuck Antonie had coffee with Michael Barnes of the *Austin American Statesman* one afternoon recently. Barnes was friendly and helpful and offered such advice as: Find some rich people to help us.

The Board last week made a very important decision. Following Robert Mellin's advice that time was needed in order to do a proper job of producing *The Pirates of Penzance*, the Board decided at a specially called meeting to postpone the production to next year. Rafe MacPhail, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, and Robert Whyburn at St. Stephen's have all released us from our June 2002 commitment. Larry has tentatively booked us for three weekends at St. Stephen's in 2003, and directors Jones-Ragona and MacPhail will be available then, also. This gives us a year's lead time to do an excellent show in 2003. Meanwhile we will mount a less expensive show this summer. We are considering *Trial by Jury* and samples of other Gilbert or Sullivan works. Russell Gregory may be available to do *Trial*. There were some questions and suggestions. Several thought it would be a good idea to do *Trial* in a court room. There is a suitable room at the UT School of Law, which Larry is inquiring about. Several suggested that the accompanying scenes be material already worked up for the do-it-yourself *Princess Ida*. Another suggestion was that we do two versions of *Trial* back to back: a traditional performance and a western style version.

Larry then turned the program over to Libby, who thanked our hostess Paula Tyler and singled out for introduction the few

unfamiliar faces present. She then introduced her cast with charming remarks about each, starting with Faith DeBow, "Grand Duchess of Piano." She noted that the first half of the evening featured melancholy and wistful aspects of love, while the playful and jubilant aspects of love dominated the second half. Program sheets had been passed out.

Arthur DiBianca started the melancholy part of the program singing "Tit Willow" from *The Mikado*. He then joined Cynthia Hill in the duet "I have a song to sing, O!" from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Cynthia then joined Holton Johnson singing "Stay, Frederic, stay ... Ah, leave me not to pine alone" from *The Pirates of Penzance*. Stacey Amorous sang "My Funny Valentine" by Rodgers and Hart, remarking that the song had been copyrighted in 1937 — "Frederic wouldn't even have been 21 yet!" she said. Leslie Salas has been working up a program of World War I songs in honor of her grandmother who left a pile of old songs in her attic. From this collection Leslie sang the familiar "Silver Threads Among the Gold" by H.P. Danks.

Then on to the playful and jubilant aspects of love. Derek Smootz sang "Younger than Springtime" from *South Pacific* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Cynthia sang "Embraceable You" by George and Ira Gershwin. Stacey brought us back to Gilbert & Sullivan singing "When a merry maiden marries" from *The Gondoliers*, complete with backup chorus made up of five of the performers plus Marshall Hill substituting for Holton. Leslie sang Irving Berlin's "I'll get by," with the audience invited to sing the second chorus, which they did enthusiastically. Derek sang "Miracle of Miracles" from *Fiddler on the Roof* by Bock and Harnick (the part he had sung in high school in Leander), and finally Cynthia gave us another Gershwin classic, "S'Wonderful!"

To conclude the evening in proper style "the company" (that's us) led by Holton, Art, and Derek, sang "Hail Poetry" from *The Pirates of Penzance*, passing on to a rousing "Now to the banquet we press" from *The Sorcerer*. We expressed our heartfelt thanks to Faith DeBow, the Grand Duchess of the Piano, and then gathered round the table of delicious snacks to munch and chat.



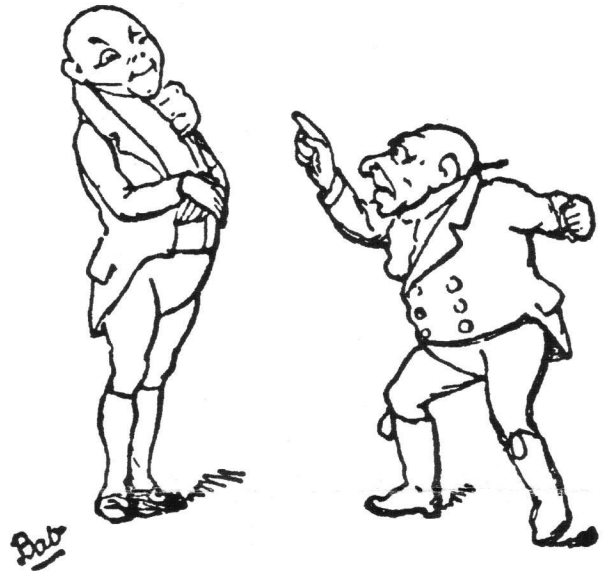
From *Princess Ida*: King Gama, a "genuine philanthropist," knows everybody's income and what everybody earns and carefully compares it with the income-tax returns.



Continued from page 1

But wait, you say. I said that singers would be no problem, so why does the fact that *Trial* needs fewer people matter? True, singers love G&S, and we always find that this love means good singers for our productions. Having a smaller cast mainly translates into lower expenses for costumes and props. Singers we will need, for the first half of our production will feature melodies most enjoyable. Have you ever heard Lady Blanche's song "Come mighty must" from *Princess Ida* (we ourselves won't be able to fit it in when we do *Princess Ida* on March 4)? Or Strephon's recitative and song "My Bill has now been read a second time" from *Iolanthe* (it was too radical for Victorian audiences)? Many of you have enjoyed these, but many have not yet had the pleasure of hearing them. And then there is *Utopia, Limited* and *The Grand Duke*, both almost never done anywhere. And Sullivan wrote many songs, of which too few are now sung. You will enjoy the show, and then be prepared for a blockbuster in the *Pirates* of 2003.

When I was in high school, I played second flute in *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Princess Ida*. For years I have wanted to play in the orchestra for G&S, but here in Austin it seemed not possible. Actually, that was one of the reasons why I pushed to have a G&S opera put on in a do-it-yourself format, rather than in the professional style we have come to expect for our major productions. I will be playing the flute to back up some very good pianists and singers, as it happens, in *Princess Ida*. It is not too late for more people to volunteer, too, for this concert performance. And if we are successful (and how can we not be, for rehearsals are a lot of fun!), look for more do-it-yourself operas in the future.



From *Princess Ida*:

King Gama, an irritable, mean old man, has been imprisoned by King Hildebrand for failing to produce his daughter Princess Ida to fulfill her marriage contract with King Hildebrand's son Prince Hilarion.

Gama: He tortures me with torments worse than death,
I haven't anything to grumble at!
He finds out what particular meats I love,
And gives me them. The very choicest wines,
The costliest robes — the richest rooms are mine:
He suffers none to thwart my simplest plan,
And gives strict orders none should contradict me!
He's made my life a curse! (*weeps*)

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:

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Our web site: www.gilbertsullivan.org

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The Society holds non-profit status under 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

Princess Ida

7:30 pm Monday March 4, 2002

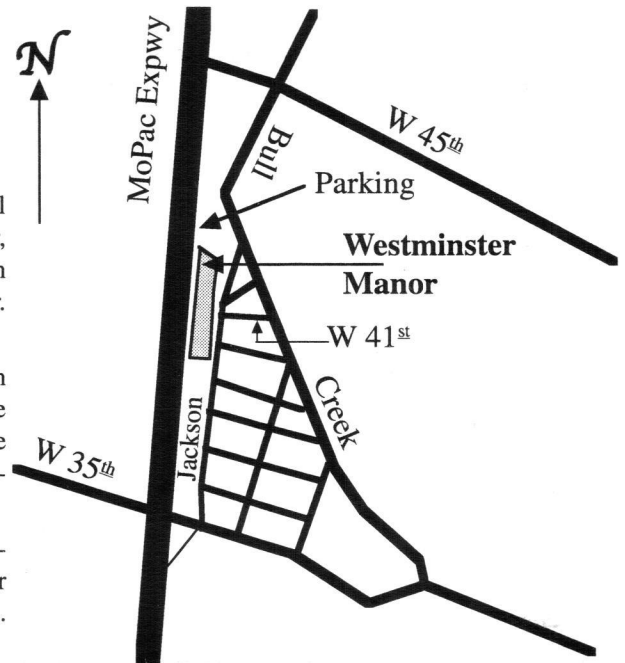
Harris Bell Hall of Westminster Manor

Directions:

Going south on MoPac, take the 45th St. exit east. Turn right on Bull Creek, and bear right on Jackson. You will see the sign for Westminster Manor, and parking is at the north end. Enter the Health Care Center (HCC), go down the corridor straight in front of you, and take the elevator to the third floor. Harris Bell Hall is right there.

Going north on MoPac, take the 35th St. exit east. Keep going straight on Jackson to Westminster Manor, which will be on the left. Keep going to the parking lot, just north of it, at Bull Creek and Jackson. Enter the Health Care Center (HCC), go down the corridor straight in front of you, and take the elevator to the third floor. Harris Bell Hall is right there.

You can also park on the adjacent streets or in the parking lot of the Highway Dept., next door. If you come in the main front entrance of Westminster Manor, the doorman or receptionist will give you directions to Harris Bell Hall.



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&
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