



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

"Congratulate me, gentlemen, I've found a volunteer!" Ko-Ko chortled in the Act I finale of *The Mikado*, announcing to the populace of Titipu that he had found someone willing to be beheaded in his stead. That is reason to be pleased!

We on the board of directors of G&S Austin have never been precisely in Ko-Ko's position, but have often been in the position of being happy to have found a volunteer ... or a few of them.

Here in the early part of the 21st century, we are enjoying "a most ingenious paradox," to wit:

- ◆ Our productions are becoming more and more professional and our Society more of a front-line arts organization. This is due to having secured the services of Ralph MacPhail, Jr., as our artistic director and Jeffrey Jones-Ragona as our musical director a few years back, and also to having people on the board such as Allan Longacre and Stephen Reynolds with extensive theater management experience.
- ◆ And yet we are still greatly dependent upon—and grateful for—the services of many volunteers. We would never have a musicale or a gala without active involvement of many volunteers, and we look for that to continue to be the case as we move into the future.

We couldn't name them all, but let me mention just a few of our ready volunteers who have kept the wheels turning during the past few weeks:

Patricia Kaplan was a faithful worker in our office and behind the merchandise table at our productions right up until the time of her passing just a few weeks ago. We will greatly miss Pat and are already struggling to complete all the tasks she would have accomplished as a kind and efficient volunteer. You can read more about Pat on page 2 in this newsletter.

Chuck Antonie took calls and e-mails and created the schedule for our *Iolanthe* auditions February 28 and March 1. If you've been to any of our major productions in recent years, you've encountered Chuck and his delightful children selling refreshments before the show and at intermission. All of these services Chuck renders to the Society as a cheerful volunteer.

Janette Jones and Eva Laskaris heard our ideas for a "Magicale"—a combined magic and music show—and got together to brainstorm. Out of their creative minds and musical talents came the wonderful Act II of the March 8 *Magicale*. And Janette and Eva, along with Carol Brown, Dan and Michelle Girardot, and David and Katy Fontenot, created all that beautiful music for us as dedicated volunteers.

Pat Hobbs creates exquisite and delicious cakes, and she loves to contribute her creations to our special events. If you were at the

Magicale and got a taste of the carrot cake, the chocolate cake, or the pineapple cake, you know what I mean. When we expressed our thanks to Pat, she said, "I'll make at least three for the next gala."

Steve Schwartzman is a gifted photographer who has been of immense assistance to our Society. He was at the *Magicale*, capturing some images of the show which you can enjoy in this newsletter. Steve and his wife Eve, longtime Society members, are quick to respond when volunteers are needed.

Nanci Jay is a talented and experienced videographer who has created the DVDs of our productions in recent years. A few weeks ago we had a need for a brief DVD showing excerpts of recent shows to accompany our application for assistance to the Texas Commission on the Arts. Working solidly for two days, Nanci put together a lovely short program that will surely enchant the TCA.

Without such talented, gracious, and resourceful volunteers, we might not be beheaded, but we would surely not be able to accomplish all that we do. In appreciation for that, I hope you'll join me in "the Japanese equivalent for 'Hear, Hear, Hear!'"

Libby Weed

Iolanthe Cast

Principals

The Lord Chancellor — **Arthur DiBianca**
 Earl of Mountararat — **David Fontenot**
 Earl Tolloller — **Andy Fleming**
 Private Willis — **Russell Gregory**
 Strephon — **Derek Smootz**
 Queen of the Fairies — **Lisa Alexander**
 Iolanthe — **June Julian**
 Celia — **Natalie Wilemon**
 Leila — **Patricia Combs**
 Fleta — **Katherine Wiggins**
 Phyllis — **Meredith Groeschel Ruduski**

Dukes, Marquises, Earls, Viscounts, and Barons:
Jay Chacon, Daniel Gaskell, Mark Long, John Lopez, Randall McIntyre, Paul Nixon, Louis Ontko, Ariel Rios, Tom Westrup, Bob Wolff, Jay Young, Dirk Yaple (train bearer)

Chorus of Fairies: **Nancy Arnold, Rachel Boissevain, Cies Charbeneau, Kate Clark, Ashley Edwards, Angela Irving, Karlyn McCutchan, Rebecca Stokinger, Diana Vandewater**

The Spring Magicale

by Reba Gillman

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, over 100 people, young and old, gathered to enjoy a delightful family-friendly program. The day was beautiful, the sanctuary of the Northwest Hills United Methodist Church was a large and welcoming space, and a very good time was had by all. The talents of our Society members were well displayed in a program devoted to Magic in many and various forms. Performers included our Artistic Director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, and our Music Director, **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, along with **Carol Brown**, **David Fontenot** and his daughter **Katy**, **Dan Girardot** and his daughter **Michelle**, **Eva Laskaris**, and **Janette Jones**. **Martha Dudgeon**, our Lady High Pianist, played the accompaniments. The show was put together and directed by Eva and Janette. There were clever costumes and a few props, and some of the young girls in the audience especially enjoyed the ladies' dresses.

President **Libby Weed** greeted us, wearing an enchantingly frothy pink dress, representing Glinda, the Good Witch from *The Wizard of Oz*. She welcomed us to a magical experience to raise funds to support our June production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* in the lovely new theater at Travis High School. Then she turned the proceedings over to "that excellent Master of Ceremonies," **Chris Buggé**, wearing a green hat. He immediately established himself as our resident Brit, saying "Good Ahftanoon" in his charming British accent. He told us that we would later enjoy the adventures of Dorothy and excerpts from *The Wizard of Oz*. But first he introduced the Magician, Professor Marvel, with his crystal ball and fantastic sleight of hand.

Professor Marvel, none other than Ralph MacPhail, Jr., our Artistic and Stage Director, then proceeded to astonish us with his magical tricks, all the time telling us, "Don't believe anything I say" and "Don't believe anything I do." He ran through one trick after another, always demonstrating that "the impossible" was actually happening. He repeatedly informed us that after these sample tricks the magic show would begin. But of course they *were* the magic show. About halfway through his show he began to invite children from the audience to come up to hold a rope or a piece of paper, and have it change shape before their eyes or mysteriously jump out of their hands. Although this must have been disconcerting to these brave youngsters, they managed the situation very well. Perhaps some of them will later be inspired to learn some magic tricks themselves. We all know that Rafe MacPhail is a skilled and knowledgeable director, and that he is a phenomenal source of information about Gilbert and Sullivan. It turns out that he is also a charming, skilled, and very effective performer.

A pleasant intermission encouraged us to consume delicious bites of **Pat Hobbs'** best cakes and other munchies, with a tasty green punch to wash it all down. Then we all trooped back for the second part of our show, "Act 2, The Emerald City" -- based on L. Frank Baum's well-known story, *The Wizard of Oz*.

I have to confess that although I have seen an amateur staging of *The Wizard of Oz*, I am shamefully ignorant of the movies

and musical versions. However, it is evident that it was so popular that, like *The Mikado*, it has inspired the compliment of imitation and revision, including the hit currently playing on Broadway, *Wicked*, by Stephen Schwartz, and much earlier, a black version called *The Wiz*, music and lyrics by Charlie Smalls. Our show drew heavily on the original with seven songs, music by Harold Arlen, and lyrics by E.Y. Harburg. There were five songs from *Wicked*, and only two from *The Wiz*. With these songs and dialogue the cast told the story. Janette opened, singing the well-known "Over the Rainbow." The rest of the cast, Eva, Carol, Dan, David, and Michelle, entered singing "We're off to see the Wizard." Katy came on representing Dorothy, and remained on stage throughout, politely listening with hardly a word to speak. Eva sang "The Wizard and I" and Carol sang "Popular," both from *Wicked*. Dan did the songs of the Scarecrow ("If I only had a brain") and the Tin Man ("If I only had a heart") and David did a wonderful Lion, singing "If I only had the nerve" and "If I were King of the forest," all from the original *Wizard of Oz*. Then came the two songs from *The Wiz*: Janette sang "Believe in yourself" and all joined in to sing "Ease on down the road."

All left the stage as Jeffrey entered to sing "Wonderful" from *Wicked*, with clever comments interspersed: "Back where I come from people believe a lot of things that aren't true -- it's called History," and "The most celebrated are the rehabilitated." Jeffrey moved upstage as Eva entered to sing, "Defying gravity," which began "I'm tired of accepting limits, just because someone says I must," from *Wicked*. Eva moved back as Michelle and Dan entered to sing "For Good," also from *Wicked* -- "I have been changed for good, because I knew you." As they moved back, Carol entered to sing a reprise, "Believe in yourself as I believe in you," from *The Wiz*. And then the whole cast moved downstage to end the show singing the familiar refrain, "Somewhere over the Rainbow," from *The Wizard of Oz*. All took several bows from an enthusiastically applauding audience.

And thus ended our show, certainly popular with the younger members of the audience. But I was left to muse on the apparent contradictions. A Magic Show delivering the message "Don't believe what I say, don't believe what I do," followed by the children's story of *The Wizard of Oz*, and the invitation to our June production of *Iolanthe*, where the audience must suspend disbelief -- Theater depends on that. Whatever appears on stage, that is real -- right now. And the delightfully humorous fairy tale *Iolanthe, or the Peer and the Peri* -- perhaps that is magical.

Patricia Kaplan

We report with sorrow the death of our friend and volunteer, Pat Kaplan. All who met her as she sold T-shirts and DVDs during intermissions at our shows knew her as a capable, energetic, friendly, and always cheerful person. The memorial wake in her honor held March 24th at Metz Elementary School revealed many aspects of her person and life that we did not know. Read the report in the May Newsletter.

Scenes from a Joyous Magicale

photos by Steve Schwartzman



(above) Ralph MacPhail, Jr., as Professor Marvel, amazes Dorothy (played by Katy Fontenot). (below) He also weaves his magic on volunteers from the audience.



Janette Jones sings about the land “Over the Rainbow.” Eva Laskaris as Elphaba, who becomes the Wicked Witch of the West, explains about “The Wizard and I.”

Scenes from a Joyous Magicale

photos by Steve Schwartzman



(above) **Dan Girardot** as the Scarecrow imagines what could happen “If I Only Had a Brain.” A change of a hat and an ax, and he’s the Tin Woodsman who sings “If I Only Had a Heart.” (below) **David Fontenot** is the Cowardly Lion in “If I Only Had the Nerve” and “If I Were King of the Forest.” Dorothy (**Katy Fontenot**) reassures the Cowardly Lion.



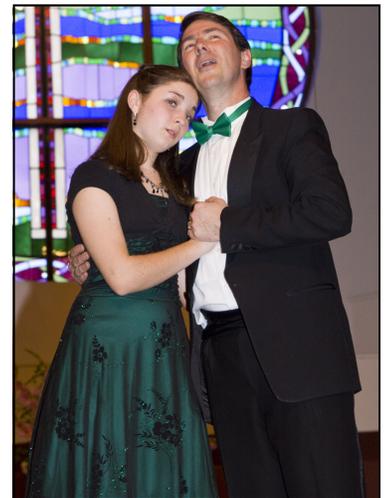
Dan Girardot, Janette Jones, Katy Fontenot, David Fontenot (front) and **Michelle Girardot, Eva Laskaris, and Carol Brown** all “Ease on Down the Road.” **Eva Laskaris** as Elphaba sings “Defying Gravity.”

Scenes from a Joyous Magicale

photos by Steve Schwartzman



(above) Carol Brown as Glinda, who becomes the Good Witch of the North, sings “Popular.” Dan Girardot, David Fontenot, and Janette Jones “Ease on Down the Road.” (below) Jeffrey Jones-Ragona as the young Wizard of Oz sings “Wonderful.” Carol Brown reprises “Believe in Yourself” (sung earlier in the program by Janette Jones). Michelle and Dan Girardot sing “For Good.”



Dan Girardot, Eva Laskaris, Carol Brown, and Michelle Girardot lead the cast and audience in “Over the Rainbow.”

Scenes from a Joyous Magicale

photos by Steve Schwartzman



(above) Our Master of Ceremonies, **Chris Buggé**, was hard at work throughout the show — as was (below) Lady High Pianist **Martha Dudgeon**. Opening and closing the show as Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, was our President, **Libby Weed**, shown here with **Chris Buggé** and with the magical **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**



NEWS of our MEMBERS

On Saturday May 2, at 8 p.m., The Capital City Men's Chorus, directed by our Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, present its 20th anniversary Spring Concert, "Bigger, Bolder, Broadway-er!" a revue of some of the most beloved music from the Great White Way, featuring music from such classics as *Oklahoma*, *Cabaret*, *Applause*, *The Man of La Mancha*, and newer shows like *Chorus Line*, *Titanic*, *Les Miserables*, and *Hairspray*. Special guests include singers Jeanette Franz, Kris Olson, and Zilker Hillside's Laura Powell, with a special appearance by Austin's own dance muse, Toni Bravo. The performance takes place at Northwest Hills United Methodist Church (site of our Magicale). Tickets are available online at ccmcaustin.org (click on 'tickets' in the top menu bar), or by calling 477-SING. Special group rates for 10 or more GASSA members and their friends are available; contact Jeffrey at jjr1567@grandecom.net or call him at 220-7856. See you at the show!

Stage Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, has returned home to Virginia after *Iolanthe* auditions and the delightful Magicale in Austin, and directing a highly successful production of

Gilbert's *Sweethearts* for the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Northwest Louisiana in Shreveport.

Donna Dely has returned to her roots in Valley Mills, Texas, and enjoys living in a small trailer on an 18 acre wooded lot, where the sounds of wildlife surround her at night. She finds it fitting that her address is on Bandit Drive, off Bone Road, with Panther Road nearby: she has been collecting bones and skulls for many years. She also enjoys living near her mother and sister, and baby-sitting her adorable young nieces (aged 6 months and 5 years). She serves as the Assistant Publisher for the local weekly paper, the *Valley Mills Progress*, which gives her the job of helping to get the paper printed and mailed out every week. She also writes a column under her maiden name, Donna Veteto. Her old email does not work in Valley Mills, but her Austin cell phone still does: (512) 636-0709. Address: Donna Dely, 225 Bandit Drive, Valley Mills, TX 76689.

Glay Marie Posch is now on faculty at CyFair College in Houston (a campus w/in the Lone Star College System) teaching private voice. She is currently Stage Directing *The Medium* (by Menotti). The performances will be in May.

A 10-Question Quiz on *Iolanthe*

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Here's a little quiz on *Iolanthe*. I'll not give answers, so referring to the libretto, to reference books, and even to Google are all OK. (For help or answers, please write to RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com.)

1. What does the name *Perola* have to do with the history of *Iolanthe*?
2. Gilbert & Sullivan second acts usually begin with a chorus; however, several of the operas start with solos. Lady Jane opens Act I of *Patience* (though an off-stage chorus precedes a bit of dialogue before her famous solo with 'cello accompaniment). The second act of *Ruddigore* begins with a duet. Two of the operas begin second acts with male solos. *Iolanthe* is one. What are the first words of this solo? Who sings it? Which *other* opera begins Act II with a male solo? What are the first words of this solo? Who sings it?
3. *Iolanthe* has at least two nods to Richard Wagner: one in costuming (the original production, anyway) and the other in music. What are they?
4. *Iolanthe* contains at least one sung stage direction. What is it?
5. An ebullient trio in *Iolanthe* reads as if Gilbert plundered *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, for in his lyric, he strings together a number of well known expressions. List at least three of these expressions, worded as you've heard them stated.
6. Gilbert did the same in a duet from another opera. What are the first words of the lyric? In which opera does it appear? Who sings it? List at least five of the expressions from this duet, worded as you've heard them stated.
7. In the Lord Chancellor's famous "nightmare song" we learn details of the singer's stockings (at least those he was wearing in his dream). Of what material are they made, what color is this material, and how are they decorated?
8. Although many actual persons are referred to in passing in the libretti for the Savoy operas, one real person is actually apostrophized at some length in *Iolanthe*. Who is this person? What was his profession? And where was he, usually, on the nights of Gilbert & Sullivan premières?

9. In the Act I finale of *Iolanthe* the Fairy Queen threatens the Peers with "dire revenge." How does she threaten to reform the hereditary Peerage?

10. The doyenne of Gilbert studies, the late Jane W. Stedman, set forth what she called Gilbert's "invasion motif," where a realistic setting is established, only to have it "invaded" by personages one would hardly expect to find present in such a setting (bridesmaids in a court of law; ladies aboard a man-of-war; a London sorcerer at a village betrothal, etc.). Discuss at length (or at least ruminate on!) how *Iolanthe* might be regarded as a more-than-usually skillful use of this motif—different in each act. Corroborative detail required!

May Musicale (?)

We are in the process of organizing a May musicale. Details were not set at press time. Those of you who are on our email list will receive notice as soon as plans are finalized. Otherwise, please check the May newsletter for details.



Send Us Your News!

We try (within space constraints) to include descriptions of members' performances (past and future) and other activities, and any information related to Gilbert and Sullivan. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

MEMBERSHIP FORM

We encourage you to join our Society. If you are a member, please check your membership renewal 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 with your check, payable to "GSSA", or call to join (512) 472-4772 (GSSA).

Please check a membership category:

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I'd like to volunteer. I'm interested in:

We are proud to list our members in our programs, but if you would prefer NOT to be listed in our programs, please check here:

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E-mail: info@gilbertsullivan.org

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The Society holds nonprofit status under 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

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IOLANTHE

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Wand'ring Minstrels

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels are the ambassadors for the Society to the Central Texas community. Their programs serve as an educational outreach tool that provides an introduction to the genre that is distinctively Gilbert & Sullivan. Programs range from a lively recital of Gilbert & Sullivan's most popular tunes to interactive, mini-productions of the Society's full summer productions. The Wand'ring Minstrels are available for private parties, school shows, and corporate events. We also offer Fairies in the Schools, an interactive mini-production of *Iolanthe* for all ages.

The Wand'ring Minstrels will custom design a program for any event where G&S would be appropriate for a wide variety of budgetary considerations. You'll hear great voices, skilled in the G&S style, presenting satirical, sentimental, and rousing Gilbert & Sullivan favorites with style and flair.

For bookings or additional information, please contact **Eva Laskaris** by email at minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org, or at 512-350-4935.

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