



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Our Society said goodbye to one of its most noteworthy members at the passing of **Dr. Leonard Gillman** on Tuesday, April 7. Len and his wife **Reba** (who is still an active member of the Board) have been inspirations and guiding lights to Austin G&S since 1978.

Leonard Gillman served as a mathematics professor at Purdue University, the University of Rochester, and finally the University of Texas, leading the mathematics departments at the latter two institutions. He also served as President of the Mathematical Association of America and published many notable articles and books; it was as a distinguished mathematician that he was internationally known.

But there was another side to Leonard Gillman. As a lad, he showed precocity as a pianist. He won a fellowship to the Juilliard Graduate School of Music, from which he graduated with a diploma in piano; a few years later he completed a degree in mathematics from Columbia University.

Len pursued both interests—mathematics and music—all his life. While serving as a professor and doing research in topology at Purdue and Rochester, he performed as a classical pianist with a symphony orchestra and also at Joint Mathematics Meetings. He was a Savoyard long before coming to Austin, delighting when his lovely wife Reba starred as Phyllis in *Iolanthe* with an Indiana light opera troupe and Josephine in *HMS Pinafore* with the Princeton Savoyards.

In 1978 Len and Reba were in Austin and Len volunteered his services as a pianist for the auditions for *Iolanthe*. At one point, the director looked at him and said, "You look like the Lord Chancellor; I want you to audition." And so it happened that, despite his protests that he "couldn't sing his way out of a paper bag," Leonard Gillman played that signal role for our Society's first production of *Iolanthe*. In ensuing years he was music director for *Trial by Jury* (1982) and *The Gondoliers* (1983). Over the years since then, Len has entertained us often at musicales with piano selections ranging from Tom Lehrer to Bach, Schubert, and Rachmaninoff. He and Reba were fixtures on the front row of almost every show, and for several years they hosted a cast party at the end of each production in their lovely Westlake home.

Leonard and Reba took an early interest in raising the level of instrumental accompaniment of the Austin G&S shows. Early productions were accompanied by a lone pianist, but for the 1978 *Iolanthe*, Len knew that the fanfare of brasses required, at the very least, a trumpet. So he recruited instrumentalists, and that show became the first with a limited orchestra. Over the years, Len and Reba have used their influence and contributed their resources to create what is now the Gillman Light Opera

Orchestra—the GLOO that has raised our productions to truly professional levels.

Since the early 1990s, I have grown increasingly fond of the Gillmans for many reasons. Their mastery of everything related to G&S, their wonderful musicality, their Gilbertian wit, their willingness to work hard on something they believed in, and their warmth and friendliness all drew me to them. It also became abundantly clear to me that they loved each other very deeply and had been rare soul mates for each other for seven decades. No "conjugal fetters" for these two; they were felicitously matrimonified!

When our Society celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2006, we honored several laureates who had significantly influenced the growth and development of Austin G&S. The last two honored were Leonard and Reba Gillman, and we remarked at that time that no two people symbolized so well for Austin the splendors of Gilbert & Sullivan as Len and Reba. They received their certificates and acclaim just shortly before celebrating their 90th birthdays and their 68th wedding anniversary.

Now we say farewell to one-half of the First Couple of the Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society, extending our sympathy to Reba, Jonathan and Miki, and their families. Leonard Gillman will long be remembered in our Society. He lives on in the keen influence of Reba, the momentous contributions of the orchestra they founded, and our cherished memories of his wisecracks, his music, and his whimsical presence.

Libby Weed



Leonard Gillman as the Lord Chancellor and Reba Gillman as a fairy in the Society's 1978 production of Iolanthe.

Save the Date!

Please watch for news of the Society's season-opening Fall Musicale on September 14.

Patricia Kaplan by Reba Gillman



Patricia Kaplan

On Tuesday, March 24th, more than 50 people attended the memorial wake in honor of **Pat Kaplan**, held in the library of the Metz Elementary School in East Austin. Everyone present loved Pat, and didn't know nearly as much about her diverse interests as they believed they did -- G&S Society included. I was pleased to realize how much Pat had loved Gilbert and Sullivan, and how much she had enjoyed being part of our activities.

The library was a pleasant large room, with many round tables and chairs so all could be seated, and a delicious spread of munchies (à la G&S) on tables at the side of the room. The Metz teachers seemed to be present in full force, and the informal program was supervised by **Don Bos**, the current librarian. Other groups present included librarians from other schools and members of the AAUW. **Allan Longacre** served as Official Representative of the G&S Society, supported by **Reba Gillman**, **Nancy Jay**, **June Julian**, **Nancy McQueen**, **Jean Smootz**, and **Monica Kurtz**. Monica has been our stage manager for several years, and her attendance was a reminder that Pat's cheerful, helpful presence had inspired the cast and crew backstage, as well as the volunteers who worked with Pat in the lobby selling DVDs and T-shirts.

Pat's daughter, **Ruth Kaplan**, welcomed us and said she had been learning many things she had never known about her mother. She had found a poetic parody of "When I was a lad" from *H.M.S. Pinafore*, written by Pat: "When I was a lass, I broke my back As a lowly page in a college stack." Ruth gave Allan a copy of the poem, and he explained a little about these two Englishmen who had written many popular comic operas in the nineteenth century. Asking us, his back-up team, to come in as chorus on the refrain after each verse, he gallantly sang through the entire five verses. Enthusiastic but unrehearsed, I'm afraid our performance was not a good example of the excellence of our productions. However, the audience responded with delight.

Many people told of their experiences with Pat, who had been always cheerful, always helpful, quietly efficient, and an energetic force to be reckoned with. She came in as a volunteer bringing special things -- books, jokes, and wonderful joy. Librarians who dealt always with children appreciated that she spoke to them as adults and broadened their lives. I learned of her involvement with projects I also was interested in, and I sorrowed that I had never discovered these overlapping connections, and now would never be able to talk with her about them. For me, the high spot of the entire afternoon was the contribution of **Ruth Murphy**, a librarian who came over from San Antonio to tell us about her experiences working with Pat in a San Antonio public library. She acted out how she and Pat had read dramatically to the children some time ago, with props Pat supplied to support the action (a colorful cap, a few false teeth, a fiery red wig). The book was Raymond Briggs's *Jim and the Beanstalk*, a sequel to *Jack and the Beanstalk*. It tells how Jim, the grandson of Jack, climbed the same beanstalk and met up with the aging giant, now bald and

toothless and showing many other signs of deterioration. Ms. Murphy's commanding performance summoned up the scene for all of us, and let us know that Pat was truly a performer, too. On this hilarious note we ended the afternoon, and went home invigorated by our recollections of a wonderful person and the chance to meet so many of her interesting friends.

Blogging for Gilbert and Sullivan

by Ingrid Yaple

As a new board member, I found myself on both the fundraising and publicity committees. I realized how much work all the board members put into the Society. The months leading up to our summer production (this year *Iolanthe*) are always the busiest for the publicity people. I am learning a lot working with **David Little**, who's a PR man through and through.

As my contribution to spreading the word of our organization, I started up a blog (separate from the website), a Twitter account and a Facebook account. Knowing as a blogger how viral news and connections can become, I figured it was time to join other Gilbert and Sullivan societies who are using some of these tools to have more of an online presence. If you are online, please follow "TheSavoyard" on Twitter (note the capitalization), visit "The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin" on Facebook, and visit our blog at <http://www.thesavoyard.blogspot.com>. I hope our members can join me!

NEWS of our MEMBERS

GSSA Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** participated in a post-performance feedback session for *Iolanthe*, which was presented over two weekends in April by Eastern Mennonite University Theatre in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

GSSA artist soprano **Christiana Little** recently performed the leading role of "Lucy Lockit" in Benjamin Britten's *The Beggar's Opera* at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City in early April. Christiana highlighted her 2005 GSSA performance as "Yum-Yum" in *The Mikado* in her biography under "favorite roles," along with "Cinderella" in *Into the Woods*, which she performed at the Manhattan School in 2007. On April 10, Christiana presented her senior graduation recital, including works by Mozart, Alban Berg, Erik Satie, Charles Ives, Ned Rorem, Benjamin Britten, several young composers, and one piece that Christiana wrote herself. Christiana graduates this May with her Bachelor's degree in vocal performance. She will continue to study privately in New York, and plans to audition for graduate school in the next few years. Christiana sends her warmest wishes to the GSSA community and thanks them for their ongoing encouragement!



Gina Ducloux, a longtime member of our Society and a luminary of the Austin music community, died on April 15, 2009, in Newport Beach, California. She and her late husband, **Walter Ducloux**, founded the Austin Lyric Opera and worked tirelessly for many years to advance both symphony and opera offerings in Central Texas. A remarkable voice teacher and vocal coach, Gina introduced several of her best pupils to Austin G&S, including the incomparable Cynthia Hill, Elsie in our 1997 *Yeomen of the Guard* and the title character in our 1999 *Patience*. An Austin memorial and celebration of Gina Ducloux's life will be held at a future date.

Question: What's So Great About *Iolanthe*?

Answer: *Everything!*

In 1882, Gilbert & Sullivan were at the height of their powers. After a rather shaky start in 1871, Richard D'Oyly Carte united the librettist and composer for their first great hit, *Trial by Jury*. Its success led to the formation of a company expressly for production of English light opera, and ultimately the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan. *The Sorcerer* was the first.

This led to *H.M.S. Pinafore* and international fame. *The Pirates of Penzance* followed, and then came *Patience*. During the original run of this "Aesthetic Opera," D'Oyly Carte completed the Savoy Theatre, and it was there that *Iolanthe* opened, making it, literally, the first "Savoy opera."

It's hard to fault either librettist or composer for any shortcomings when thinking of *Iolanthe*. Gilbert's metrical challenges for Sullivan's settings were becoming more complex, and the composer invariably met them. But G also provided S with the musical opportunities he craved: compare "dainty little fairy" music with that rousing March of the Peers—or the high-spirits of so much of the score with the moving appeal by *Iolanthe* to the Lord Chancellor at the end. The Act One finale is arguably the best in the entire series, and Sullivan even composed the overture himself, something he usually delegated to an associate.

One of the great appeals of Gilbert & Sullivan for me is its very "Englishness," and *Iolanthe* is as English as Savoy opera gets. And, as usual with G&S, the humor still works beautifully across the pond and across the years.

But don't take my word for it. Join us at Travis High School in June to see and hear for yourself!

--Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Place an Ad in the *Iolanthe* Playbill

Ads are now being taken for the playbill. To see ad templates and pricing, go to www.gilbertsullivan.org and click on Summer Production. The deadline is May 15. To place an ad, contact Michael Borysow at (512) 586-1392.

GILBERT and SULLIVAN

IOLANTHE;
or, the Peer and the Peri

June 11-21



The Gilbert & SULLIVAN Society
OF AUSTIN

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www.gilbertsullivan.org
or call 1 (800) 494-TIXS

Thursday - Saturday Evening Performances at 8pm
Saturday Matinee at 3pm - June 20
Sunday Matinee at 3pm - June 14 & 21

Travis High School Performing Arts Center | 1211 E. Oltorf

Children's Day Pre-Curtain Activities Sunday June 14 at 2pm
Captioning June 13, 14, 18 & 19

This project is funded and supported in part by the City of Austin through the Cultural Arts Division, by a grant from the Texas Commission on the Arts and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes a great nation deserves great art.

Entertaining Austin Audiences Since 1976

Photography: Brenda Ladd

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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:

- ☐ **Individual** (\$20-\$29)
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- ☐ **Pooh-Bah** (\$500-\$999)
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The Society holds nonprofit status under 501(c)(3) of the IRS code.

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MAY MUSICALE

Come see a staged reading of

John Maddison Morton's 1847
hilarious farce, *Box and Cox*

Featuring: **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, as Mr. Box

Libby Weed as Mrs. Bouncer

Allan Longacre (stage director) as Mr. Cox

Genesis Presbyterian Church

1507 Wilshire Blvd.

Monday, May 11, 2009 at 7:30 pm

Please Bring Munchies!

Following the performance, Rafe MacPhail will explain, with musical examples, how the play was adapted by F. C. Burnand and Arthur Sullivan from comedic drama into musical theatre as *Cox and Box*.

IOLANTHE

or The Peer and the Peri

June 11th - 21st
Thursdays - Sundays

Travis High School Performing Arts Center



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

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