

The

# GILBERT & SULLIVAN

JANUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

I hope you'll join us on Monday, January 11, at 7:30 pm at Genesis Presbyterian Church for our annual business meeting. We need as many dues-paid members as possible at this important meeting – and I can promise you'll enjoy being there.

The business segment of the meeting, as always, will be brief but important. We will hear a report from Treasurer **Dave Wieckowski** regarding our financial situation and a report from **Bill Hatcher** on our upcoming production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Then we will elect our Board of Directors for 2010. **Larry Shepley** and his committee (**Enid Hallock** and **Allan Longacre**) have prepared an excellent slate of nominees (see list below). We will also accept nominations from the floor.

But you know that we would never meet just for business. Following this brief session, we will have one of our rollicking sing-alongs, providing music and encouraging everyone to join in on some wonderful Gilbert and Sullivan choruses. Remember that great chorus at the end of Act 1 of *Iolanthe* ("The word *prestige* is French") and the stirring "He is an Englishman" from *H.M.S. Pinafore*? We'll sing both of these and some others – rounding out the evening with "God Save the Queen" before hailing poetry and pressing to the banquet.

You know we're not about to have a gathering without good food, so bring some of your best munchies and prepare to enjoy a festive and important gathering.

Come and help us run the Society!

## GSSA Board of Directors Nominees

The Nominating Committee, consisting of Larry Shepley, Allan Longacre, and Enid Hallock, has provided the following list of nominees for the 12-member 2010 GSSA Board of Directors:

Chris Buggé	Randall McIntyre
Reba Gillman	Michael Meigs
Pat Hobbs	Kathryn Saar
Leonard Johnson	Libby Weed
David Little	Dave Wieckowski
Roberta Long	Ingrid Yaple

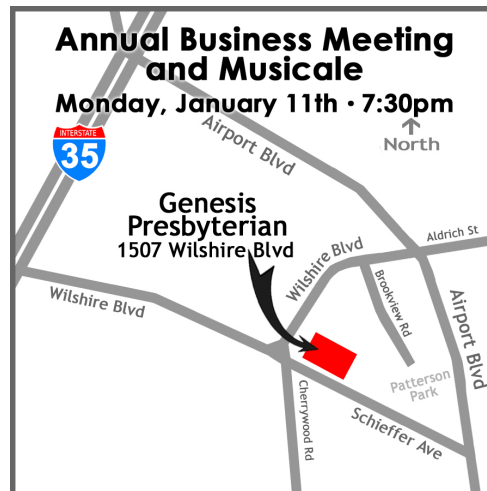
Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor during the Annual Meeting on January 11; self-nomination is permitted. (Of course, nominees must be members.) Each paid-up member is entitled to a number of votes equal to the number of Directors to be elected, but is not permitted to vote more than once for a given candidate. The candidates receiving the most votes are elected. In accordance with our by-laws, officers are elected by the Board during their first meeting after the Annual Meeting.

We mourn the passing of faithful member **John Gregory**, who died in an automobile accident on November 14. His lovely wife **Carolyn** was seriously injured and hospitalized at Brackenridge Hospital for a month. On December 14, she was moved to a rehabilitation center to continue her recovery. You can send her a card: Carolyn Gregory, Patient; Texas NeuroRehab Center; 1106 West Dittmar; Austin, TX 78745.

John and Carolyn have been a source of delight for years at musicales and other Society events. John's piano playing (always by ear, in any key you might choose) often accompanied our refreshment times after musicale programs concluded. Folks would gather around the piano and name a song, and John could play virtually anything named with style and grace. Carolyn's beautiful soprano voice was a highlight of many gatherings. Her eye for beauty and her generosity with her time and talents were of immense benefit when she helped decorate theater lobbies for major productions.

John Gregory was also a master lens designer and optician who created some of the most specialized devices in astronomy. He served as chief engineer at the UT McDonald Observatory for many years. A prominent telescope design bears his name, and he was working on a 41-inch telescope before he died. A fascinating article on John by Nathan Atkisson appeared in the *American-Statesman* on November 20; it detailed the many achievements of this remarkable man.

Carolyn, a long-time music teacher, is the sister of our frequent stage star **Russell Gregory** (yes, she is Carolyn Gregory Gregory!); **Peggy Brunner**, Professor of Voice in the Schools of Music and Theater at Texas State University; and **Mollie Tower**, creator of the remarkable Music Memory program widely used in public and private elementary schools across the nation, who is currently teaching in the School of Music at Texas State University. The Gregory family, so rich in musicality and in spirit, is thankful for the cards, thoughts, and prayers of many who are wishing Carolyn well as she recovers her strength.



## Love, Labour, & Loss: A Holiday Musicale

by Reba Gillman

On Sunday, December 6, a damp and dark evening, about 60 people gathered in the large, comfortable fellowship room at Genesis Presbyterian Church to enjoy the delights of Gilbert and Sullivan. As President Libby Weed emphasized in her introduction, they were to hear a variety of songs from Gilbert and Sullivan and a dash of works ranging from classical opera to the contemporary musical stage, all reflecting on the joys and sorrows of human love. Five songs from *The Yeomen of the Guard*, our production for June 2010, offered a glimpse of the musical, romantic, and dramatic feast in store for us next summer. Other G&S songs included one from the very rarely performed *Utopia, Limited*, and perhaps the premiere Central Texas performance of two songs from *The Grand Duke*.

Singers Meredith Ruduski, Rebecca Stokinger, Katherine Wiggins, Arthur DiBianca, Andy Fleming, Ariel Rios, and Derek Smootz (all members of the cast of our recent production of *Iolanthe*) were beautifully accompanied by Lady High Pianist Martha Dudgeon. Katherine began the program singing "When maiden loves, she sits and sighs," the opening song from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Then came the quartet "When a wooer goes a-wooing," also from *Yeomen*, sung by Meredith, Ariel, Rebecca, and Derek. Two contemporary pieces followed: Andy sang "Later" from *A Little Night Music*, and Derek sang "Try to Remember" from *The Fantasticks*. Meredith returned to sing "'Tis done! I am a bride!" from *Yeomen*. Next came Ariel singing the unfamiliar "Amor, vida de mi vida" from *Maravilla*. Andy sang "A tenor, all singers above" from *Utopia, Limited*, the next-to-last work by Gilbert and Sullivan, which our Society has never performed. Meredith, Katherine, Andy, Derek, and Arthur sang "Strange the views some people hold" from *The Grand Duke*, the little-known last opera that Gilbert and Sullivan wrote. The Society performed a mini concert version some years ago.

Returning to *The Yeomen of the Guard*, an opera that may be rather new to many of our members, but which I hope we all will learn to love this year, Ariel sang "Is life a boon?" This ballad sets the tone of the romantic story of the brave soldier, falsely accused and condemned to die, but used to meeting the challenges of battle:

- (1) Is life a boon? If so, it must befall That Death, when'er he call, Must call too soon. Though fourscore years he give, Yet one would pray to live Another moon! What kind of plaint have I, Who perish in July? Who perish in July? I might have had to die, perchance in June! I might have had to die, perchance in June!



Love, Labour, and Loss pianist Martha Dudgeon with (l-r) singers Meredith Ruduski, Andy Fleming, Ariel Rios, Rebecca Stokinger, Katherine Wiggins, Derek Smootz, and Arthur DiBianca.  
*photo courtesy Nanci Jay*

- (2) Is life a thorn? Then count it not a whit! Nay, count it not a whit! Man is well done with it; Soon as he's born He should all means essay To put the plague away; And I, war-worn, Poor captured fugitive, My life most gladly give – I might have had to live another morn! I might have had to live, to live another morn!

Meredith sang the humorous "Vanilla Ice Cream" from *She Loves Me*. Then Derek and Rebecca sang what may be called the theme song of *Yeomen*: "I have a song to sing, O!" It comes early in the opera when Elsie and Jack Point first come on stage, and it returns at the end: the plaintive song of the joys and sorrows of love. Yet life goes on, and this evening we were given Mozart: Katherine singing Cherubini's aria "Voi che sapete" from *Le Nozze di Figaro*; followed by Arthur DiBianca singing "At the outset I may mention," a patter song from *The Grand Duke*. Arthur remarked that this song did not seem to fit the evening theme --unless perhaps it was a song of Labour. Then Rebecca did a very funny "Adelaide's Lament" from *Guys and Dolls*. Meredith, Rebecca, Andy, Derek, and Arthur finished the program with a delightful G&S quintet, "If Saphir I choose to marry," from *Patience*.

Libby asked that all join in singing "Hail, Poetry" from *The Pirates of Penzance* and "Now to the banquet we press" from *The Sorcerer* before we gathered round the tables at the rear to enjoy our traditional goodies, brought by the members. It was good to mingle with friends old and new.

## Jess Walters Memorabilia Sought

Jess Walters, renowned bass/baritone who was professor emeritus at the University of Texas and had an extraordinary performing career in both England and America, was (along with his wife Emma) a great friend of the Austin Gilbert & Sullivan Society before his death in 2000. The UT Fine Arts Library is assembling an archive of materials relating to Jess Walters' career. Our long-time friend Joyce Payne is collecting materials for this project and would appreciate e-mails and phone calls from anyone who might have programs, recordings, or stories about this uncommon man. She can be reached at [joyce@macandJoyce.org](mailto:joyce@macandJoyce.org) or 512-985-5490.

## 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](mailto:minstrels@gilbertsullivan.org), or at (512) 350-4935.



Wand'ring Minstrels singers at a recent performance (l-r): Eva Laskaris, Janette Jones, David Fontenot, and Andy Fleming, with Lady High Pianist Martha Dudgeon in front.

*photo courtesy J. Robert Howard*

## 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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- ☐ **Savoyard** (\$2500 & up)

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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: ☐



### **Auditions for The Yeomen of the Guard** by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

*The Yeomen of the Guard* was Gilbert's favorite collaboration with Sullivan—and Sullivan's with Gilbert. It has plenty of Gilbertian humor, but also its serious side, which makes it unique in the Savoy opera canon.

My purpose this month is to provide information for auditionees concerning the auditions and also concerning the wonderful show slated for production this summer.

Auditions will be held on Saturday and Sunday, February 27-28 (see further details next issue). Music Director and Conductor **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** and I request that auditionees memorize a song from Gilbert & Sullivan or something similar and provide a copy of the music for the auditions accompanist.

If *The Yeomen of the Guard* is not in your library, you can download the libretto from The Gilbert & Sullivan Archive (use *The Yeomen of the Guard* tab on [math.boisestate.edu/gas](http://math.boisestate.edu/gas)). You can also download *some* printed music from the opera from this website, read a plot synopsis, or download audio files.

The Chorus is composed of the **Chorus of Yeomen of the Guard** (seven gentlemen, two of which, a tenor and baritone, have brief soli) and the **Chorus of Citizens** (four gentlemen, two having brief dialogue, and eleven ladies, none with solos or speaking lines). The **Citizen Males** can be of assorted ages and body types; the **Yeomen Men** should project military bearing, and should ideally grow beards—and be able to march. The **Women Citizenry** can be of assorted ages and body types. **Two children**, ages 8-12, will also be cast, one of which should be male.

*The Yeomen of the Guard* has wonderful roles and singing opportunities:

**Sir Richard Cholmondeley** (pronounced "Chumley") (bass-baritone, in his 60s or 70s) is the Lieutenant (*Leftenant*) of the Tower and in command. A stern taskmaster with limited sense of humor, he owes a debt to Colonel Fairfax, who saved his life in battle.

**Colonel Fairfax** (tenor). In his early middle years. Fairfax is the military hero around whom the plot swirls. Condemned to death for a crime he didn't commit, he is dashing and brave, but

easygoing, and ready to die—though more than willing to escape his execution!

**Sergeant Meryll** (bass-baritone) is an older man, a retired soldier with many a memory of a life in battle. Staunch and true, but not the sharpest bayonet in the arsenal. He is clever and willing to risk all in helping to set Fairfax free.

**Leonard Meryll** (tenor) is the Sergeant's son, who appears early and late in the opera but who is then impersonated on-stage (and in his absence) by Colonel Fairfax through most of the opera. Must sing well a difficult tenor part in his one trio.

**Jack Point** (light baritone), a wand'ring jester, with a bag of old jokes that don't work very well. Must move and dance well, be agile and nimble, playful, but must also exhibit pathos and sentimentality. Whether he falls insensible at the end of the opera due to unrequited love for Elsie—or dies of a broken heart—is one of The Great Questions in Gilbert & Sullivan—and one that Shall Be Answered!

**Wilfred Shadbolt** (bass-baritone), the Head Jailor and Assistant Tormentor of the Tower, is lugubrious, ugly—well, in fact something of a slob—unshaven, and also something of a professional sadist. Frequently played as middle-aged, but he considers himself younger—he's also a swain for Phoebe, though his affection is not reciprocated.

**Elsie Maynard** (dramatic soprano), 17 years old, a strolling singer and partner to Jack Point. Her mother's illness leads her to a plot-initiating decision to marry a condemned prisoner (Colonel Fairfax). Elsie is something of a vixen (for tormenting Point, who genuinely loves her). She must sing and dance very well.

**Phoebe Meryll** (mezzo-soprano), a pert little flirt, warmhearted, but plucky and clever. Opens the opera (unique in G&S) with a spinning song solo. Strong actress required. She is Sergeant Meryll's daughter and Leonard's sister.

**Dame Carruthers** (contralto), housekeeper of the Tower. Grim, born and bred "in the old keep," stern, granite-hearted (sometimes) but sympathetic. "Of a certain age."

**Kate** (lyric soprano) is Dame Carruthers' niece. She is also the twelfth member of the women's chorus; no soli but some important ensemble singing.

If there are any questions, please send them to: [RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com](mailto:RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com).





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JANUARY 2010

COMING IN JUNE 2010



*Please see article on page 1 for details!*

### Coming Events

Annual Meeting  
Monday, January 11, 7:30 pm

Auditions for *The Yeomen of the Guard*  
Saturday and Sunday, February 27 and 28

March Musicale  
Sunday, March 7

*The Yeomen of the Guard*  
June 10 through 20, Thursdays through Sundays

### Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in mid-February; the deadline for submissions is January 27. Please send your news to [news@gilbertsullivan.org](mailto:news@gilbertsullivan.org). Thanks!

### The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

Since 1976, we have been spreading the joys of G&S through

**Annual Grand Productions**  
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**Musicales**  
**Musical Scholarships**  
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**Holiday Season Shows**

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Mailing Address: P. O. Box 684542, Austin, TX 78768-4542  
Phone: (512) 472-4772 (GSA-GSSA)  
Our web site: [www.gilbertsullivan.org](http://www.gilbertsullivan.org)  
E-mail: [info@gilbertsullivan.org](mailto:info@gilbertsullivan.org)

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



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

Artistic Director  
Music Director

**Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**  
**Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

### Board of Directors

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**(vacant)**  
**Kathryn Saar**  
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**David Little**  
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