

The GILBERT & SULLIVAN

APRIL 2013 NEWSLETTER

SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Milestones ... We enjoy marking them, and sometimes they take us by surprise. We've had a few milestones at G&S Austin, and we've thrown a party now and then to celebrate an anniversary and to recognize important people and events in our Society.



A recent publication by the *Austin American-Statesman* pointed out some milestones in our community:

- Willie Nelson is 80 years old this year
- The Austin Motel on South Congress has been in business 75 years
- The Blanton Museum of Art has been around for 50 years
- Eeyore has been celebrating his birthday in Austin parks for 50 years
- The Capitol 10,000 has been run for 35 years on Austin streets

Some of those came as a bit of a surprise to me. It also surprised me when I was invited to the high school reunion I attended this month. Had it really been that many years? Why, it seems like just a few years—not decades! Then I thought about a different kind of milestone. What about *firsts*? Those are milestones, too. And we have a really big one this year in The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin.

Princess Ida is being presented to Austin audiences in its entirety—and in faithfulness to the brilliant conceptions of its creators—for the very first time this year! Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, and Production Manager **Bill Hatcher** have been working for months in preparation for this blockbuster (see Rafe's article in this issue for just a taste of all the activity already completed or underway). The cast and crew are busily readying all the on-stage and off-stage aspects of the show. The glimpses I have seen of set designs and costumes have me truly excited about this wonderful premiere.

I hope that you have gone online or called to purchase your tickets, because this is a milestone you don't want to miss!

Libby Weed



Mother's Day Musicale:
***Princess Ida* Preview**
Sunday, May 12, 3:00 p.m.
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
8134 Mesa Drive, Austin

We will celebrate Mother's Day with a preview of our summer production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Princess Ida*, performed by members of the cast. All mothers will receive a rose.

Please bring munchies!

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Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive at the end of May; the deadline for submissions is May 13 (Sir Arthur Sullivan's birthday). Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

Sir Arthur Sullivan: The California Connection by Reba Gillman



On Sunday, March 10, 68 people gathered at the Brentwood Christian School's lovely Worley Barton Theater for a G&S Musicale that turned out to be very different from any we've had before. We were to hear an eminent visiting speaker; the subject was Sullivan as a relative; and there was no music, except our two traditional songs sung by

the audience (Music Director Jeffrey Jones-Ragona played the piano for "Hail, Poetry" from *The Pirates of Penzance*, with Russell Gregory singing the Pirate King's lead-in, and "Now to the Banquet We Press" from *The Sorcerer*). **Scott Hayes** was the speaker, and he gave us many insights into his great-great-uncle Sir Arthur Sullivan. His chief emphasis was to honor this eminent relative and reveal to us how lovingly and generously he had assisted the family of his brother, who died young, leaving a wife and eight children. It is fairly well known that Fred Sullivan was a great hit playing the part of the Learned Judge in the original D'Oyly Carte production of *Trial by Jury*. It was a tragic loss when he fell ill and died at the age of 39, and his brother, Sir Arthur, was grief stricken. What is not generally known is how involved Sullivan became in the care of his brother's family.

Scott Hayes is from California. When he retired some years ago, he decided to spend some of his new free time researching the life of the great-great-uncle who had spent so much time and money helping his deceased brother's family. Scott did a thorough job of research, interviewing elderly family members, gaining access to letters Sullivan had written, and investigating any other resources he turned up. With his wife, Kitty, he has traveled around to speak to interested groups (usually Sullivan-oriented). He has charged no fee, and has paid his own travel expenses and hotel bills, although he was pleased to accept offers to stay in the homes of interested persons wherever he went.

Our Society was delighted to put him and Kitty up, thanks to Kay and Russell Gregory, and escort him on interesting tours of Central Texas (thanks to Bill Hatcher and Rafe MacPhail). There were several dinners, lunches and breakfasts, including barbecue at the Gregor's, breakfast at Libby Weed's, and a dinner at Estancia Churrascaria (a Brazilian Steakhouse) generously hosted by Stanley Bullard and enjoyed by several board members and other important and hard-working Society members. And finally, an informal evening at the wondrous log cabin lake home of Chris Buggé, where we enjoyed desserts and cocktail foods. Scott gave us a short talk quoting from some of the many letters Sullivan wrote to his mother. The hosting sociability of this weekend was an opportunity to get to know our interesting visitors, and to tell them about our now very well organized Society. It was a sample of an important aspect of membership in The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin: we not only enjoy Gilbert and Sullivan together, we also enjoy each other—we are indeed a very

interesting and diverse bunch of people!

Scott's talk at the Musicale covered many subjects. First he explained the family. When Fred died, his wife Charlotte continued to live in England, and Sir Arthur contributed much to their support. She remarried and moved her family to Los Angeles, where her brother William Lacy was already living with his family. Sullivan continued to provide important moral and financial support and Bertie, the oldest boy, remained in England with him. Bertie was like a son to Sullivan, and shared performing interests. While living in Los Angeles, Charlotte bore a ninth child, and died soon after. Her young widowed husband confessed that he felt totally incapable of managing this ménage, and soon moved back to England by himself. Sullivan's advice to his family was, "Above all things stick together. In the Battle of Life you want all of your Army." But an important addition was, "Don't waste a moment of playtime on work!"

Sullivan went to visit his family in 1885 and was treated to a thorough dose of the wonders of America. Sight-seeing in the enterprising new state of California, he was overcome by the magnificent views of the native wilderness. He enjoyed nature in Yosemite, but he also delighted in the fine upscale hotel he stayed in while there. Sir Arthur was used to fine living. He visited a developing San Francisco and especially enjoyed its Chinatown, as have many other visitors. He went to a gathering of Chinese workmen and found himself in the middle of a large and serious demonstration demanding better conditions for these imported workers. Scott did not go into detail about this, but we need to remember that many Chinese workers had been brought to this county to build the east-west railroad, and had been treated almost like slave labor. Sullivan played on an organ when crossing the Sierra Nevada and passed through Iowa, where no liquor was allowed. He wrote in his diary, "Shall not dine in Iowa." He also visited Niagara Falls and was amazed at its tremendous force, and went to New York City to see the D'Oyly Carte production of *The Mikado*.

It is not well-known that, in an effort to protect their copyright, D'Oyly Carte never allowed Sullivan's orchestrations to be published, while Gilbert's exact words were published and widely known. This meant that Sullivan's genius in composing music, and the interesting and varied instrumentation that enlivened Gilbert's words, was not available to the public and was not appreciated during Sullivan's life-time. The published vocal scores present the music in rather ordinary piano arrangements and give no hint of the skill and humor Sullivan used in his composing.

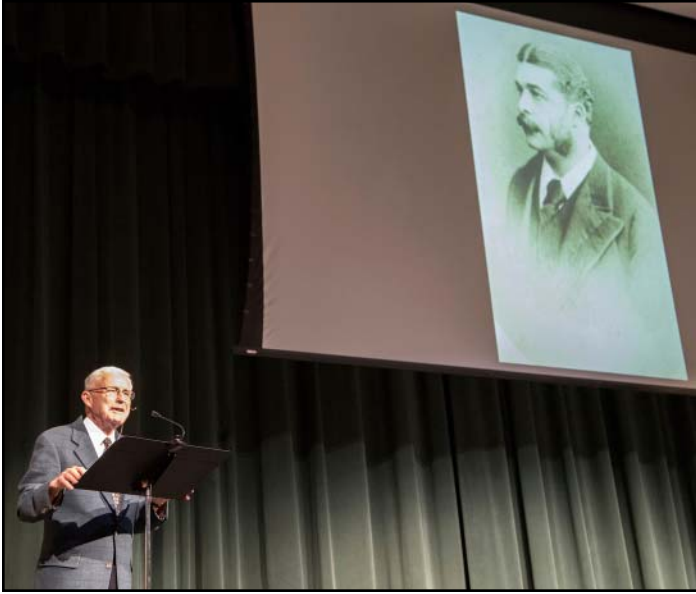
Thank you, Scott Hayes, for giving our Society such a vivid picture of your relative's whirlwind visit to the U.S.

Scott Hayes's book, *Uncle Arthur: The California Connection*, is available on-line from The Sir Arthur Sullivan Society at www.sullivansociety.org.uk. (Click on SHOP.) The book sells for £11.00 (about \$17) plus postage, and one can pay using PayPal.

Sir Arthur Sullivan: The California Connection

photos courtesy Steve Schwartzman

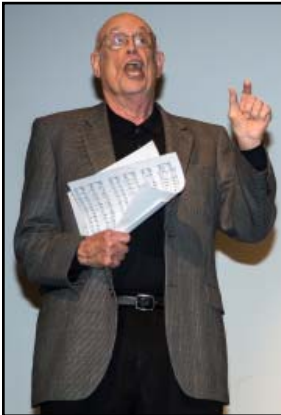
see more at gilbertsullivan.austin.smugmug.com



Scott Hayes (above with his Uncle Arthur, and below left) gave a delightful and well-illustrated lecture



Kitty and Scott Hayes with Angela Irving and Arthur DiBianca



Pirate King Russell Gregory



our President, Libby Weed



Music Director Jeffrey Jones-Ragona & Artistic Director Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



the little Cat Orchestra sculptures Mr. Hayes inherited once belonged to Sir Arthur Sullivan



Princess Ida
SUMMER GRAND PRODUCTION
June 13-23
9 Performances
TICKETS ON SALE NOW

***Princess Ida* Cast and Staff**

King Hildebrand – **Gil Zilkha**

Hilarion – **Holton Johnson**

Cyril – **Michael Borysow**

Florian – **Derek Smootz**

King Gama – **Arthur DiBianca**

Arac – **Russell Gregory**

Guron – **Robert L. Schneider**

Scynthius – **Spencer Reichman**

Princess Ida – **Michelle Haché**

Lady Blanche – **Patricia Combs**

Lady Psyche – **Amelia Ciskey**

Melissa – **Angela Irving**

Sacharissa – **Alix Reilman**

Chloe – **Kate Clark**

Ada – **Brittany Trinité**

Chorus of Courtiers and Soldiers:

Daniel Brookshire, Andy Fleming,

David Fontenot, Ezra Hankin,

Mark Long, Jay Michael, Scott Poppaw,

Adam Sales, Mario Silva, Jon Silver,

David Treadwell, Jay Young

Chorus of Courtiers and Girl Graduates:

Amanda Kay Boundy,

Sue Ricket Caldwell, Pamela Christian,

Katy Fontenot, Leann Fryer,

Rosa Harris, Jan Jones,

Karlyn McCutchan, Nicole Ryder,

Rachael Shaw

Artistic Director: **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**

Music Director: **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

Production Manager: **Bill Hatcher**

Stage Manager: **Monica Kurtz**

Set Designer: **Ann Marie Gordon**

Lighting Designer: **Jennifer Rogers**

Costume Coordinator: **Pam Fowler**

Deadlines—Deadlines—Deadlines!

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



'Tis April 5, and I've known for *months* that Sue Caldwell is expecting, by the end of today, a column from Bridgewater for the *Newsletter* you're holding. I suppose it's human nature to wait until the last moment, and Sue's been around long enough to know not to expect early submissions—from me, anyway.

As I was reflecting on this (it was more fun to so reflect than to sit down and *write*), it occurred to me that deadlines—*lots* of them—are faced

by all of us who are involved in theatrical production.

I know I need to be ready to start staging *Princess Ida* at the first rehearsal following the GSSA Musicales on May 12. Am I ready—never having directed this show before? Not by a long shot. But I finished staging—on paper—Act I before I left my desk yesterday. “No worries,” as the kids say. There's still plenty of time. . . .

But while this date looms, there's some satisfaction in having already met earlier deadlines. This is the fourth column on *Princess Ida*, and the earlier three were filed on time. Our efficient Production Manager Bill Hatcher has met more deadlines than I can count—and tossed more than a few my way (“Have you a Flow-chart? Staging Sequences? Rehearsal Blocks?”). Months ago, Jeffrey and I, at Bill's urging, worked at selecting a score to use for the show (the standard score is published only in England and doesn't include the dialogue) so they would be on hand by auditions. Done.

Bill's also pulled from me a prop list (however preliminary), set plans (in time for a production meeting in Austin the Saturday following auditions), and costume information, 'most all of this in 2012. As late as yesterday we were wrestling on how to divide the Men's Chorus in Act I into Soldiers and Courtiers (they're all Soldiers in Acts II and III), and just two days ago we decided to make the Daughters of the Plough in Acts II and III supernumeraries (quite apart from the Ladies Chorus). Why was it important to make these decisions now? Because according to contract from our costumiers, the Malabars in Winnipeg, we have to submit this information 45 days prior to the production. *They* have *their* deadlines to meet, too.

The resourceful Bill has also managed to rent some interesting props for the Girl Graduates to use in their studies in Act II from our friends at the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Seattle. They're already in Austin and ready to use in rehearsal—one less thing to worry about.

But we've both been worrying about the huge broadswords needed by Arac, Guron, and Scynthus in Act I. Bill suggested I contact my friend Mary Metz, M.B.E., of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Houston. According to an e-mail I saw this morning, Houston leading lights Steve and Barbara Robbins (who have seen some of *our* shows) are checking the warehouse today to see if they will be available. Here's hoping. [Later: They found them. And they will shortly be on their way to Austin!]

Tonight I'll be in Bridgewater, but I'd really love to be in Austin, for our incredible media relations guy, David Little, will be meeting with Michelle, Holton, Derek, Michael, and a photographer to shoot production logo that will grace posters, postcards, the website, and our playbill/program's cover. It won't be too early to get this

done, David will tell you. And he has a list of *additional* self-imposed deadlines for other strategies to let all of Austin know that *Princess Ida* will be The Show to See in June.

Last night, President Libby Weed sent me and several others a draft of a fundraising letter to look over. (What *would* we do without e-mail?) And this is just one example of the work that's been going on by our hard-working and dedicated Board of Directors as they raise funds, line up personnel, write contracts, enter into agreements, plan publicity stunts, sponsor informal concerts, write for grants, and meet so many other deadlines that my grey matter swirls when thinking about them.

Jeffrey will be starting music rehearsals later than usual, necessitated by the Austin Lyric Opera schedule, but this will be a first *Princess Ida* for him, too, and you know as well as I do that he will be more than prepared for *his* first rehearsal: deadline, April 30.

Bill Hatcher has also been working this week (and earlier) at securing air travel for me and Alice. He's always on top of his deadlines, but on this matter he's been waiting for prices to drop, and when they did earlier this week, he swooped down (if you can do this by computer) and nailed our flights (to mix a metaphor).

Michael Meigs has found a car for my use (*thank* you, R. B. Rudy!), and Michael's even going to let me use *his* car—after he leaves the country. Dates for taking delivery of and switching vehicles are all worked out, as are the dates for my (and Alice's) stay with the ever-hospitable Russell and Kay Gregory.

Chris Buggé responded to Bill's invitation to build three tables for Act II of *Princess Ida*. We don't need them for performances only—we also need them *early* for rehearsals (since they need to be of a special size, be moved by the cast, and be sturdy enough to be stood upon), starting in early May. Chris made one, sent me a photo for approval (e-mail again!), which was immediately forthcoming. I wouldn't be surprised if he's already completed the other two, too. Deadline more than met—and one less thing to be concerned about.

And while Chris was building tables, Bill was foraging for stools (we'll need over a dozen—and need them for rehearsals, too—no waiting to the last minute).

Bill has also published the rehearsal schedule, after wrangling the cast's conflicts (a *huge* job!), and now all company members know when they will be needed for rehearsal and can thus plan their lives around our exciting project.

If you've read this, you will know that I met my deadline (well, if I were late, Sue would never tell you), as did the other contributors to this issue. Sue has met her own subsequent deadlines of compiling the submissions into a coherent and attractive issue, circulating them multiple times to her informal editing/proofreading committee, editing based on our picky feedback and adding photographs, and finally firing the finished document through cyberspace to the printer. The printer has deadlines as well, for production and mailing.

There! I'm about done. I need to run this through the spell-check and read it one mo' time, and *then* I can get back to my blocking book.

But not before pressing [SEND].

--Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

P. S. Mission accomplished—deadline met!

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)
- Family/Group** (\$30-\$49)
- Patron** (\$50-\$99)
- Grand Duke or Duchess** (\$100-\$249)
- Major General** (\$250-\$499)
- Pooh-Bah** (\$500-\$999)
- Pirate King** (\$1000-\$2499)
- Savoyard** (\$2500 & up)

Name _____
Address _____
State _____
Phone number(s) _____
E-mail address _____
Employer _____
Does your company match donations? _____

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:

NEWS of our MEMBERS

Many of our members and performers, including quite a few in the cast of *Princess Ida*, are performing in the Austin Lyric Opera production of *Faust* on April 25-27 at The Long Center for the Performing Arts. Performers include **Alix Reilman, Andy Fleming, Angela Irving, Carol Brown, Holton Johnson, Jake Jacobsen, Jan Jones, Jasmine Haghghatian, Jay Young, June Julian, Patricia Combs**, and **Rosa Harris**.

Spencer Reichman performed the role of Leporello in the Texas State University production of *Don Giovanni* on April 6. In contrast to traditional staging, the opera was set in the 1940's and was film noir styled. Spencer's performance was outstanding. Bravo!

Ariel Rios (who performed in our 2010 production of *The Yeomen of the Guard*) will play the role of Yusef in Spotlight on Opera's production of *Arabian Nights* on May 25 (at Bachus Conservatory Recital Hall) and May 26 (at United Christian Church). The production features excerpts from several operas, including Sir Arthur Sullivan's *The Rose of Persia*.

Musicale Coordinator **Leonard Johnson** has just returned from a visit to the University of Michigan. There, 35 years ago, he conducted the Men's Glee Club in winning the men's choral competition at the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod (Festival) in Wales (U.K.). During this visit, he had the honor of conducting 40 members of that group plus the current members of the glee club, and also sang a solo at a gathering of about 3000 at the Hill Auditorium on campus.

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels have added new and exciting Gilbert and Sullivan excerpts and songs to their already large repertoire. They have an upcoming show on July 21 at McGonigel's Mucky Duck in Houston.

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin's Wand'ring Minstrels are ready to entertain for your next event. Have Gilbert and Sullivan tunes performed at your home, party, school, or activity. See our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org) for further details.

Ad Space Available in the *Princess Ida* Playbill

Consider purchasing an ad for your business, practice, service, etc., in the *Princess Ida* playbill. It will be seen by several thousand G&S aficionados.

Ads come in several different shapes and sizes, all at reasonable rates:

- full page 4½" x 7½" @ \$300,
- half page 4½" x 3¾" @ \$150, and
- quarter page - vertical or horizontal - 2¼" x 3¾" or 4½" x 1⅞" @ \$75.
- The one and only Full Back Page (in color!) can be yours for \$500.

Invite the people you do business with to purchase an ad and help support this production.

You can see playbills from our last four productions on our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org): Click Summer Grand Production, then select a show under Recent Summer Productions and click on the Playbill.

To reserve ad space in the *Princess Ida* playbill, contact **Diane Radin** at diane@gilbertsullivan.org. Ad copy is due by May 17.

Armstrong Moving & Storage

is the official moving and storage company of The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin. Many thanks, Armstrong!



APRIL 2013

Top line of mailing label is date when your membership expires.



See details on page 1!



David Little, Holton Johnson, Pam Fowler, Michelle Haché, Derek Smootz, Michael Borysow, and Bill Hatcher put in a long session shooting the image that will grace our publicity and playbill for *Princess Ida*. Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, participated from his home in Virginia by means of linked iPads (Michelle is holding the Austin link in this photo). Rafe indicates that he was just repeating history: "It is said that Sullivan had a direct telephone line installed from his home in London across town to the Savoy Theatre, and could listen in on performances when he wanted to."



The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin

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

- Annual Grand Productions**
- Educational/Community Outreach**
- Musicales**
- Musical Scholarships**
- Newsletters**
- Holiday Season Shows**

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 Our web site: www.gilbertsullivan.org
 E-mail: info@gilbertsullivan.org



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 Visit Austin at NowPlayingAustin.com.

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

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