



GILBERT & SULLIVAN AUSTIN

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

We are off to another splendid start for our new season!

June Julian produced and **Janette Jones** directed a truly remarkable musicale, *The Daughter of the D'Oyly Carte*, on September 10. A sendup of Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment*, which was so charmingly produced in Austin Opera's last season, this musicale featured arias and ensembles from grand opera and Gilbert & Sullivan in a delightfully ridiculous setting. No question about it—June and Janette are raising G&S musicales to higher and higher levels. If you have not yet been to one of these, consider trying out the October 29 “Haunted House” musicale. I'm pretty sure you'll be amazed, and I know you'll be entertained. You'll leave with a smile on your face and a happy heart.

It happened again this year! Our June production of *The Pirates of Penzance* was honored with four nominations for B. Iden Payne awards:



Outstanding Music Direction – **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical Theater Production – **Arthur DiBianca**, Major-General Stanley



Outstanding Lead Actress in a Musical Theater Production – **Suzanne Lis**, Mabel

Outstanding Lead Actor in a Musical Theater Production – **Sam Johnson**, Pirate King



The number of nominations we received marked our production as one of the most outstanding musical theater offerings in the central Texas area for the 2016-17 season. Kudos to these nominees, to our wonderful artistic and stage director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, and to all of the other cast and crew members.

Yours for innocent merriment,

Libby Weed

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Gilbert & Sullivan Austin presents
The Haunted Houses Musicale

Sunday, October 29 at 3pm

**Bachus Conservatory Performing Arts Center
12233 RR 620 North #305**

Two households, both alike in spookiness,
In Old TV Land, where we lay our scene,
From ancient comedy break to new silliness,
Where G&S makes Shakespeare less pristine.

What happens when a young man from The Addams family falls madly in love with the beautiful young ingénue from the Munster family, and a Shakespearean Romeo & Juliet storyline is sung in Gilbert & Sullivan song? Find out in our spooktacular and topsyturvy “Haunted Houses” musicale. Join some of your favorite Gilbert & Sullivan singers Sunday, October 29 at 3pm—the Sunday afternoon before Halloween—and hear some of your favorite G&S classics with a scary twist, with selections from *The Sorcerer*, *The Yeomen of the Guard*, *Patience*, *Iolanthe*, and *Ruddigore*,

The cast of singers include:

Addams Family Members: **Robert Schneider** as Lurch; **Patricia Combs** as Morticia; **Andy Fleming** as Pugsley; **Teri Johnson** as Wednesday; **June Julian** as Grandmama.

Munster Family Members: **Bruno Barbosa** as Eddie; **Sarah Manna** as Marilyn; **Rosa Mondragon Harris** as Lily Munster; **Sam Johnson** as Herman Munster; and **Brittany Trinité** as Grandpa.

This frightastic show is conceived by **Janette Jones** and produced by **June Julian**, with **Jeanne Sasaki** as our specterrific accompanist! Audience members (and their kids) are encouraged to wear their Halloween costumes. This frighteningly fun afternoon of music will put a spell on you!

Please bring munchies and treats to share (per our venue requirements – no items with icing or sprinkles allowed).

The Daughter of the D'Oyly Carte by Rosa Mondragon Harris



Gilbert & Sullivan Austin kicked off its season with *The Daughter of the D'Oyly Carte* on Sunday, September 10, at 3pm, as 120 people gathered at the Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School.

President **Libby Weed** welcomed everyone, setting the stage for the afternoon of music to follow. Producer **June Julian** and director **Janette Jones** had created a takeoff on an opera that audiences enjoyed earlier this year by Austin Opera: Donizetti's *Daughter of the Regiment*. The afternoon's characters included **Libby Weed** as Narrator, **Charissa Memrick** as Marie, **Wayne Davis** as Tonio, **Janette Jones** as Marquise de Berkenfield, **Robert Schneider** as Sulpice, **June Julian** as Duchess Krackonanay, Founder of Opera Grand Dame, **Jenny Ohrstrom** as Frau Fior Fortissimo, **Stephen Maus** as Leporello Dolce Bello, **Jaimie Lowe** as Charlotta Voce Grande, and **Bruno Barbosa** as Count Zorro di Canto Grosso.



the Narrator



Marie

The musicale opened with Marie, who had grown up in the D'Oyly Carte Orphanage, and had learned to love the music of Gilbert & Sullivan. Marie and her best friend Tonio, another orphan, were taught this beautiful music by the orphanage's music teacher, Maestro Sulpice. We listened into their

lesson and even joined in on the chorus of "When I was a lad" from *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

Next, we met Marie's aunt, the Marquise de Berkenfield, who had finally found her long-lost niece at the orphanage after many years of fruitless searching. The poor Marquise bemoaned the fact that she had been wandering everywhere looking for her precious niece for so many years. Her niece, so happy to have been found at last by her aunt, broke into song and offered us "Poor wand'ring one" from *The Pirates of Penzance*.



Marquise de Berkenfield

The Marquise de Berkenfield was immediately taken by her niece's beautiful voice, and declared that she would take Marie with her so that she could study music with the best teachers. Sadly, this meant that Marie and Tonio, with whom she had grown up and had fallen in love, would be parted from each other. Before their farewell, Tonio proclaimed his love for Marie and promised to provide for and love her



Tonio and Marie

forever with "There was a time" from *The Gondoliers*. However, the Marquise was a woman of means and objected to any union between her niece and the lowly orphan.



Duchess of Krackonanay

The Marquise and Marie arrived at the Berkenfield mansion. The Marquise explained to Marie that she must learn to sing opera, as what she considered the vulgar style of music known as "Gilbert & Sullivan" was not fine enough for such a talent. She called on her friend, the Duchess of Krackonanay, founder of the Opera Grand Dame company, to come in and sing a diva song. She entered and sang "This Place is Mine" from Maury Yeston's *Phantom*.

The Duchess of Krackonanay explained to the Marquise that she needed money for her fledgling opera company. The Marquise had a wonderful idea and proposition for the Duchess: she would happily pay the Duchess and her best opera singers if they would train Marie to love and sing only grand opera. The Duchess liked the idea and called in her cadre of singers. They toasted and sang "Brindisi," also known as "The Drinking Song," from Verdi's *La Traviata*, and were so busy celebrating that they did not notice that a new "First Footman" had entered and been serving them. It was revealed that the new servant was none other than a disguised Tonio, who had followed his true love to Berkenfield. He reflected on his love for Marie as he sang "A maiden fair to see" from *H.M.S. Pinafore*. When the Marquise recognized Tonio, she sent him away. Duchess Krackonanay assured the Marquise that she and her cadre of opera stars would work together to show Marie how wrong Tonio was for her. To keep her from following Tonio, the Marquise insisted Marie listen to the advice of the talented singers. Marie reluctantly gave in to her aunt's wishes and readied herself for the afternoon's "lessons."



"First Footman"
Tonio



Frau Fior
Fortissimo

Frau Fior Fortissimo first showed Marie how shameful it was for Tonio to attempt to prevent Marie from attaining the diva status she so deserved with "Come scoglio" from Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. To add fuel to the fire of depicting Tonio in a negative light, the next opera star, Leporello Dolce Bello, said there was no doubt that Tonio was a great womanizer who probably had a woman at every port. He provided more details to Marie in "Madamina, il catalogo è questo," also known as the "Catalogue Aria," from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.



Leporello
Dolce Bello

continued on page 3

The Daughter of the D'Oyly Carte continued from page 2



Charlotte Voce Grande

Marie was very upset by the thought that Tonio could be such a cad. Although Marie had seen him every day in the orphanage and had known him so well, she was overcome with doubt and unable to see that this was all just a ploy to keep her from her beloved Tonio. Before common sense could assert itself, the next opera star, Charlotta Voce Grande, stepped forward and encouraged Marie to let her tears flow with "Va! Laisse couler mes larmes" from Massenet's *Werther*. The audience felt for poor Marie, who did not know how she would ever get over losing Tonio now. Count Zorro di Canto Grosso assured her that joy would follow sorrow as he sang "Sorge infausta" from Handel's *Orlando*.



Count Zorro di Canto Grosso



Sulpice

How would Marie resist the strong influence of her persuasive aunt and the talented opera stars? Who would sway the Marquise from her strong disdain for Gilbert & Sullivan and Tonio? Tonio had a secret. He had reached out to the D'Oyly Carte music teacher, Maestro Sulpice, for his help. The persuasive and beguiling charmer made a grand entrance disguised as the great operatic baritone Robert Schneider and sang the famous "Votre Toast," also known as "The Toreador Song," from Bizet's *Carmen* with the opera singers joining in with him. Sulpice then offered a flower to the Marquise.

The Marquise was indeed moved by his singing, but although Marie said she would die without Tonio, the Marquise would not believe that anyone would die of love. Sulpice told the Marquise that she did not know of what she spoke and sang "Titwillow" from *The Mikado*. The Marquise asked Sulpice if the fellow from the song really died of love; when Sulpice said that the story rang true, she asked if he would do the same if she refused him as well. When he said yes, the Marquise told him that he mustn't do so, and asked that he not hate her for being a wee bit of an opera snob. "Is there not beauty even in opera snobbery?" Sulpice asked the Marquise. She agreed and they joined together for "There is beauty in the bellow of the blast" from *The Mikado*.



Sulpice and the Marquise

Now that the Marquise had found love herself, she would be too occupied to plan an opera career for her dear niece Marie. At last, she finally agreed to let Marie marry Tonio. They rejoiced and sang "The battle's roar is over" from *Ruddigore*. The Marquise assured her

friend, Duchess Krackonany, that she would give the money needed for her opera company as long as they also performed Gilbert & Sullivan at least four times a year. All lived happily ever after, and the Marquise and her new husband would be seen at every performance sitting in the best box seats watching Marie and Tonio sing the leads in the latest production at the Berkenfield Opera Company. The afternoon closed with the cast singing a rousing reprise of "Brindisi."



Libby recognized the cast, accompanist **Jeanne Sasaki**, and her page turner **Hanna Akita**. In keeping with GSA tradition, the cast and audience sang "Hail, Poetry" from *The Pirates of Penzance*, led by Robert Schneider, followed by "Now to the banquet we press" from *The Sorcerer*. Everyone then adjourned to the lobby to enjoy refreshments and visit with the cast and audience members. Many commented that they were thoroughly entertained by the variety and inclusion of grand opera with the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta repertoire. I am very fond of all types of music myself, and I had much appreciation for the preparation and skill needed to provide this musicale's selections. While there were still musings of this past summer's wildly successful *The Pirates of Penzance*, there was definitely an air of excitement for next year's production of *Ruddigore*. This season is certainly off to a fine start!



page turner Hanna Akita and pianist Jeanne Sasaki



(front, l-r) Robert Schneider, Stephen Maus, Wayne Davis, Bruno Barbosa

(back, l-r) June Julian, Jeanne Sasaki, Jenny Ohrstrom, Charissa Memrick, Jaimie Lowe, Janette Jones

photos courtesy David Treadwell
see more at gilbertsullivanatjstn.smugmug.com



SFX in G&S

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

What kind of title is that for an article?
(Please note that the second letter in the title is an F, not an E.)

As you may suppose, “G&S” stands for “Gilbert & Sullivan,” but unless you’re a film or theatre techie, you might not realize that “SFX” in these professionals’ argots stands for “special effects.”

G&S is remarkably free of demands for SFX, but I’m expecting that more than a few of my readers are recalling a highlight in our production of *The Sorcerer* several years ago in which a table glided to center stage under the magical direction of **Arthur DiBianca**’s masterful characterization of Family Sorcerer John Wellington Wells. That worthy also conjured up some eerie flashes of light from a teapot that had been shown empty only a few moments earlier. (He also managed to magically fill his teapot with enough of the brew to serve to the entire company on stage.)

Even though I’ve been a practicing a magician most of my years, I *still* have not been able to figure out how he did these things, but Dame Rumour whispers that GSA member **Andy Heilveil** might just hold the key to JWW’s secrets, so ask him if you’re interested. (Being familiar with the Magician’s Code, however, I’m inclined to believe Andy will keep mum—mum, mum.)

Ruddigore; or, The Witch’s Curse, our Grand Production for 2018, is the only other Savoy opera calling for supernatural happenings, and they’re doozies! In the middle of Act II, the entire male chorus and one principal character, represented onstage by portraits in a gothic Victorian picture gallery, become animated and step from their frames onto the stage to threaten the Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd, the protagonist, with terrible agonies unless he commits the daily crime he must—the result of a family curse.

The scene always presents challenges, but theatrical challenges are worth meeting. And while I’m not about to reveal how we’re going to meet them, I will mention a couple of secrets about the history of *Ruddigore* that, unless you’re a student of G&S, you may not know.

Number One! (as John Wellington Wells might say): *Ruddigore* was not Gilbert’s first use the portraits-coming-to-life motif; he’d used it decades earlier in his long one-act comic opera *Ages Ago* (which was composed by Sullivan’s friend Frederic Clay). It was at a rehearsal for a revival of *Ages Ago* at the Gallery of Illustration in London, in fact, where G first met S; FC



introduced the two gentlemen about two years before the first G&S collaboration in 1871.

I’ve not the space to give *Ages Ago* the attention it deserves, but I highly recommend reading the libretto, available at: www.gsarchive.net/gilbert/plays/ages_ago/ages_ago_home.html along with the play’s history and other delights. (It would make a wonderful mid-season production.)

Number Two! Gilbert wasn’t the first to use the name “Ruthven” on the operatic stage. That honor may go to Wilhelm August Wohlbrück, whose opera *Der Vampyr* was composed by Heinrich Marschner and premiered in 1828. (The opera was based on a play which in turn was based on a short story—see Wikipedia for details.) The eponymous vampire is named Lord Ruthven in the libretto, a name Gilbert (as noted above) used for his protagonist in *Ruddigore*.

Number Threeeeeeee! “The Electricity,” which Richard D’Oyly Carte had installed in the new Savoy Theatre six years before *Ruddigore*, must have made the darkening of the stage necessary for the portraits’ transformations easier than it would have been with the old gas lighting. And it also had its influence on the musical side of the production, for on the opening night Sullivan conducted the “ghost music” as the lights dimmed to dark with a special baton graced with a glowing filament so that his orchestra could follow his direction.



Sir Arthur Sullivan as a conductor, sketch by Charles Lyall, c. 1879

My valued collaborator **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** won’t need a glowing baton next June, but many will be working in advance and during performances to make Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd’s ancestors come to life in a suitably ghostly and memorable fashion.

Notice of Elections

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin will elect members of the board for 2018 at the Annual Meeting, to be held Sunday, January 7, at 3 pm, at Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Boulevard. If you are interested in serving on the board, please contact nominations committee chair, **Charles Smaistrila**, at (512) 461-4636 or CJS@laweconomics.com. Charles and committee members **Allan Longacre** and **Sarah Slaughter** will prepare a nomination slate to be published in the December newsletter. Our board is an excellent group of men and women, each of whom has specific roles and works throughout the year to conduct business and bring the musical joys of G&S to our community.

***The Pirates of Penzance* Garners B. Iden Payne Award Nominations for Arthur DiBianca, Sam Johnson, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, and Suzanne Lis**

The B. Iden Payne Awards Council has announced nominations for the 2016-2017 Season Awards. Our 2016 Grand Summer Production of *The Pirates of Penzance* received four nominations: **Sam Johnson** for Outstanding Lead Actor in Musical Theatre; **Suzanne Lis** for Outstanding Lead Actress in Musical Theatre; **Arthur DiBianca** for Outstanding Featured Actor in Musical Theatre; and **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** for Outstanding Music Direction (his fifth year in a row!). Our stage manager, **Monica Kurtz**, received a nomination for her work on Sky Candy's production of *Agent Andromeda: The Orion Crusade*. **Michelle Haché** (Ida in our 2013 *Princess Ida*) received a nomination as Outstanding Lead Actress in the Vortex production of *Atlantis*. Congratulations to all! Winners of the awards will be announced on Monday, October 23, at Zach Scott's Topfer Theatre.

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels will be featured in Austin Chamber Ensemble's Concert Series on October 13 and 14 at the First Presbyterian Church, 8001 Mesa Drive.



If you would like to have the Wand'ring Minstrels perform at your school, retirement center, civic club, business meeting, or private party, please see the web site, www.gilbertsullivan.org, for information.

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 "GSA," or call to join (512) 472-4772 (GSSA).

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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: ☐

NEWS of our MEMBERS

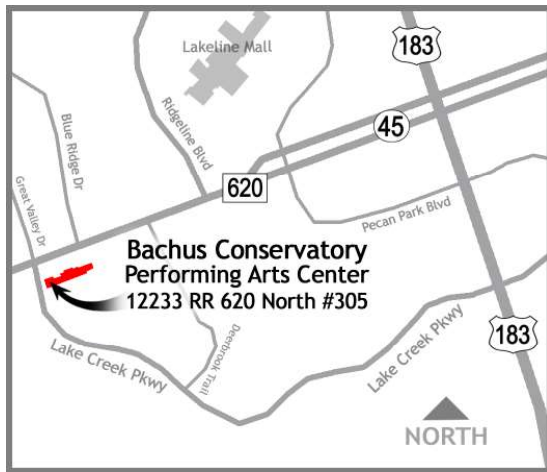
Tina Lake, long time percussionist in the Gillman Light Opera orchestra, died September 12 of a massive heart attack. Her death was very sudden and a great shock to all who know her. Tina served faithfully in the G&S pit for 11 years, missing only one performance in that time due to a family emergency. She loved G&S Austin and especially admired Rafe's staging, always taking her family to see the final piano tech rehearsals, the only chance those in the pit have to see the full shows. She got to know many of the cast members personally. We will miss her.



Austin Opera's staging of *Carmen* (November 11, 16, and 19 at The Long Center for the Performing Arts) includes many of our Grand Production performers, including **Carol Brown, Danny Castillo, Patricia Combs, Jerry Cordova, Andy Fleming, Rosa Mondragon Harris, Abigail Jackson, Holton Johnson, Robert LaBas, Stephen Maus, Jenny Ohrstrom, Robert Schneider, Sarah Steele, and Jamieson Taylor.**

Brittany Trinité, one of our regular choristers and a recent recipient of a GSA Scholarship, has produced the *Drag Me to the Opera* show for two years in a row. All of the opera singers for this year's production ("Love and Vengeance" on Friday, November 17 at 7 pm at The Sidewinder) have sung with GSA: **Jamieson Taylor, Susan Meitz, Lisa Alexander, Jena Grafton, Danny Castillo, and Rosa Mondragon Harris.**





*Map to Halloween Musicale –
See details on page 1!*

**The
& Gilbert
SULLIVAN Society**
OF AUSTIN
The Gilbert and Sullivan
Society of Austin, Inc.
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Austin, Texas 78768-4542

Coming Events

- Oct. 29 Halloween-themed Musicale, with many connections to *Ruddigore*
- Jan. 8 Annual Meeting and Musicale
- Feb. 24-25 *Ruddigore* Auditions
- Mar. 3-4 Mid-season production: *Trial by Jury*
- May 20 *Ruddigore* Preview Musicale
- June 14-24 *Ruddigore* summer production

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late December; the deadline for submissions will be December 4. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

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OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2017

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin

Entertaining and educating Texas audiences since 1976, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin is dedicated to spreading the topsy-turvy humor and joyful music of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan.

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

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Music Director

Ralph MacPhail, Jr.
Jeffrey Jones-Ragona

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