



GILBERT & SULLIVAN AUSTIN

DECEMBER 2017 - JANUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

On a short road trip during the Thanksgiving holidays, my husband and I listened to a D'Oyly Carte "Best of G&S" CD as we traveled down the highway. We heard (and I'm afraid I often sang along with) highlights from seven of the collaborations of Gilbert and Sullivan.

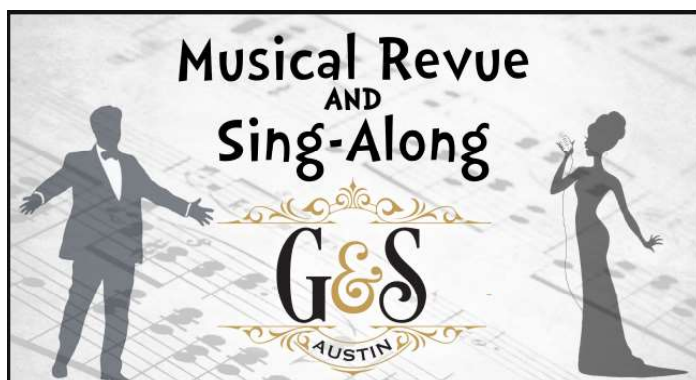


As I listened, vivid pictures formed in my imagination of many scenes on various Austin stages throughout the past decades. I could see **Frank Delvy** and **Janette Jones** as the Duke and Duchess of Plaza Toro in *The Gondoliers*, **Rose Taylor** as Katisha in *The Mikado*, **Arthur DiBianca** and **Michelle Haché** as Jack Point and Elsie in *The Yeomen of the Guard*, **Lisa Alexander** as the Fairy Queen in *Iolanthe*, **Russell Gregory** as Sir Joseph Porter in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, **Dan Girardot** as Frederic in *The Pirates of Penzance*—and these were just a few of the rich memories that flooded my mind. As Nanki-Poo might say, the "catalog is long" of outstanding acting and singing performances that this society has brought to central Texas stages over the years.

That little episode in the car became an important part of my Thanksgiving experience. I am very thankful that we have a thriving group in Austin that keeps these comic operas alive on the stage year after year. I am thankful for the founders and early members such as **Enid Hallock**, **Allan Lawshae**, **Bob Kusnetz**, **Leonard** and **Reba Gillman**, and **Sue Caldwell**, who were determined that our city should not be without the joys of Gilbert & Sullivan. I am thankful that we now have the beautiful Worley Barton Theater for our productions. I am thankful that we have a board of caring and hard-working individuals who work seamlessly together to conduct our activities throughout the year. I am thankful that talented actors and singers overflow our auditions every year. I am thankful that we have such great leaders in **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**, **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, and **Bill Hatcher**, each of whom plays a crucial role in creating the beauty we enjoy on the stage. And I am very, very thankful that our members love these shows enough to support our efforts with their attendance and their contributions. I hope to see you in January!

Warm winter regards,

Libby Weed



Sunday, January 7, 3 pm
Genesis Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall
1507 Wilshire Blvd. (see map, page 6)

On the first Sunday in January, our fervent crowd of supporters will gather again for the year's first musicale. We will begin with the election of the Board of Directors for 2018 (see article on page 3). Then we will enjoy a variety of singers performing their favorite Gilbert & Sullivan songs.

In addition to our G&S "karaoke," we couldn't pass up the opportunity for a sing-along. Our multi-talented and charismatic Wand'ring Minstrels director, **Robert Schneider**, will be there to lead the audience in song. G&S Board members will also entertain us with ebullient dialogue from well-loved scenes from *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Iolanthe*, and our upcoming summer show, *Ruddigore*.

We look forward to seeing you all and celebrating another joyous year of G&S! As usual, please bring munchies to share.

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Gilbert & Sullivan's Haunted Houses by Rosa Mondragon Harris



Gilbert & Sullivan Austin presented a charming Halloween-themed musicale on Sunday, October 29 at 3 pm. About 100 people gathered at the Bachus Conservatory Performing Arts Center.

President **Libby Weed** served as the afternoon's narrator. After welcoming the audience, she introduced the cast, each representing a cast member from either *The Addams Family* or *The Munsters*. The Addams Family included **Robert Schneider** as Lurch, **Patricia Combs** as Morticia Addams, **Andy Fleming** as Pugsley Addams, **Teri Johnson** as Wednesday Addams, **June Julian** as Grandmama, and **Janette Jones** as Cousin Itt. The Munsters included **Sarah Manna** as Marilyn, **Sam Johnson** as Herman Munster, **Rosa Mondragon Harris** as Lily Munster, **Bruno Barbosa** as Eddie Munster, and **Brittany Trinité** as Grandpa.

The musicale was set in Old TV Land, and began with a street brawl between fans of the TV shows *The Addams Family* and *The Munsters* who, like their favorite TV characters, were sworn enemies. A gong was heard and Lurch appeared, kicking off the



Robert as
Lurch

show with a Shakespearean poem telling of the two divided households. He then sang the afternoon's first offering, "When the night wind howls" from *Ruddigore*. Studio heads of the 1960s intervened and declared that further breach of the peace between the families would be punishable

by cancellation of the shows. When Gomez Addams asked who had "set this ancient quarrel new abroad," Cousin Itt replied that it was Eddie Munster. Morticia Addams inquired about her son Pugsley's whereabouts and declared she was glad that "he was not at this fray." She then stepped up and offered "When our gallant 'Munster' foes" from *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

Later, TV heartthrob Ricky Nelson spoke to Herman Munster about going steady with his niece Marilyn, but Herman asked him to wait another two seasons to do so and invited him to attend his planned Munster Ball. Lily Munster and Grandpa tried to persuade Marilyn to accept Ricky's pin. When Lily asked her niece Marilyn about her "disposition to go steady," she replied, "It is an honour that I dream not of." Marilyn next sang "If somebody there chanced to be" from *Ruddigore*.



Libby Weed as
Narrator



Patricia as
Morticia



Sarah as
Marilyn



Andy as
Pugsley

from *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Persuaded by Cousin Itt and his sister Wednesday, Pugsley headed off to the ball at the Munster house in hopes of meeting his beloved Patty Duke.



Sam and Rosa as
Herman & Lily



Sarah and Andy as
Marilyn & Pugsley

Meanwhile, Cousin Itt spoke with his cousin Pugsley about his recent depression, and asked "what sadness lengthens Pugsley's hours?" Cousin Itt discovered that it stemmed from an unrequited infatuation for a girl named Patty Duke, another one of Herman's nieces. Pugsley offered "Free from his fetters grim"



Teri and Janette as
Wednesday and
Cousin Itt

To kick off the evening, Herman welcomed his guests and encouraged all in attendance to have a grand time. He and Lily next sang "Welcome joy, adieu to sadness" from *The Sorcerer*. Soon after, Pugsley, Wednesday, and Cousin Itt arrived at the ball. In a twist of fate, Pugsley forgot about Patty Duke and instead, instantly fell in love with Marilyn. When Pugsley asked a servant about her, Marilyn's cousin Eddie recognized Pugsley's voice and became enraged that Pugsley had sneaked into the ball. Herman tried to stop Eddie from calling Pugsley out because he did not want fighting in his home, but Eddie stated "I'll not endure him" and sang, "Oh why am I moody and sad" from *Ruddigore*.



Bruno as
Eddie

During this exchange, Pugsley worked his way over to where Marilyn was standing and took her hand. After reciting text that ended with "And palm to palm is holy partner's kiss," Pugsley and Marilyn sang "I know a youth" from *Ruddigore*. Grandpa Munster then swooped in and sent Marilyn off by saying that her aunt was calling for her. Pugsley was shocked and dismayed to discover that Marilyn's aunt was Lily Munster, which meant that Marilyn was also a Munster herself!

continued on page 3



Thing
(present,
silent)



Patty Duke
(not
present)

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Herman announced the end of the ball. Everyone had left with the exception of Grandpa and Marilyn. Marilyn asked him to inquire about Pugsley: "What is yon gentlemen? Go ask his name." Grandpa did so and informed Marilyn that Pugsley was "an Addams; the only son of your great enemy." He then proceeded to tell her of how the enmity began as the Addams family members were descendants of the Murgatroyds with "Sir Rupert Murgatroyd" from *Ruddigore*.



Brittany as
Grandpa

Pugsley's cousin and sister had spirited him away from the ball, but he soon sneaked back in over the fence. Cousin Itt stated that Pugsley had jumped the fence due to love, and Wednesday scoffed at Pugsley's feelings of affection as she sang "Still brooding on his mad infatuation" from *Patience*. Pugsley hid in the Munsters' yard and overheard Marilyn at her window as she vowed her love to him in spite of her family's hatred of the Addams family. Pugsley made himself known to her and they agreed to go steady.



Teri as
Wednesday

When Pugsley arrived back home the next morning, Grandmama Addams confronted him: "Our Pugsley hath not been in bed tonight." Pugsley admitted that it was true, and Grandmama asked him if he was with Patty Duke. He stated that he had forgotten her, and that "his heart's dear love" was now set on Marilyn, his enemy. Grandmama hoped to reconcile the two families through their children's union and offered her help to Pugsley. The next day, Pugsley and Marilyn were secretly pinned. Pugsley was sent off to hide while Grandmama sang the "Incantation" from *The Sorcerer* as she created a magic potion that would put Marilyn into a death-like coma.



June as
Grandmama

When The Munsters discovered Marilyn appearing dead with a note explaining that she loved Pugsley and couldn't continue without him, they were stricken with the realization that the feud shouldn't go on any longer. They offered peace to The Addams Family, who were also heartbroken when they found out that Pugsley had run away, explaining in a note that he loved Marilyn and couldn't go on without her. The two families agreed to end the feud, making the TV networks and fans equally grateful. Pugsley then returned to waken his dear Marilyn with a kiss. At long last, peace was restored in TV Land and Herman and Lily led everyone in singing the "Finale" from *Iolanthe*. The Narrator ended the musicale with these words "Was there ever a story less ugly / Than this of Marilyn and her Pugsley?"

Libby thanked the cast, accompanist **Jeanne Sasaki**, her page turner **Bailey Adams**, producer **June Julian**, and director **Janette Jones**. Janette also thanked Libby for serving as the program's narrator. To conclude the afternoon, Robert Schneider led the cast and audience in singing "Hail, Poetry" from *The Pirates of Penzance*, followed by "Now to the banquet we press" from *The Sorcerer*.



Jeanne Sasaki

Attendees recessed to the lobby to enjoy refreshments, lively music and time with the cast and audience members. This was the first time that GSA had presented an October musicale with a spooky theme, and many agreed that it should remain a tradition. The last musicale of the year was a success, and GSA anticipates a strong entry into 2018 with the annual meeting in January, followed by *Trial by Jury* in March. Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season!

photos courtesy Steve Schwartzman

see more at gilbertsullivanaustrin.smugmug.com

Notice of Elections

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin will elect a board of directors for the coming year when we gather on Sunday, January 7, at 3 pm in the Fellowship Hall of Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Blvd. All members who are current in their dues will be eligible to vote.

The following people have agreed to have their names placed on the ballot to serve on the board in 2018:

Rosa Mondragon Harris	Sarah Slaughter
June Julian	Charles Smaistrle
David Little	Kent Smith
Michael Meigs	David Treadwell
Diane Radin	Libby Weed
Robert L. Schneider	Dave Wieckowski

The nominating committee includes **Charles Smaistrle**, Chair; **Sarah Slaughter**; and **Allan Longacre**. Please contact Charles at Austin.GilbertandSullivan@gmail.com if you wish to have your name added to this slate or to nominate someone else. In accordance with our by-laws, officers are elected by the Board during their first meeting after the Annual Meeting.

After the elections, we will enjoy a delightful—and delightfully participatory—musical planned by Janette Jones and June Julian. Expect a most enjoyable winter day!





Richard D'Oyly Carte: He Had a Dream by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Several weeks ago, I visited my favorite thrift store. It's run by Mennonites in Harrisonburg, it's lovely to visit, and when I shop there I usually add a CD or two to

my audio opera library for a dollar or two.

During that recent visit, I found some real treasures (to me): five CD reissues of original cast recordings of "Golden Age" American musicals (from the '40s and '50s), including a couple by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

I have never been a great fan of these shows, preferring the brittle irony and wit of Gilbert and those I think of as his sophisticated successors (Gershwin, Hart, Porter) to the sometimes (to me) soggy sentimentality of R&H.

Years ago I read or heard an interview with either Richard Rodgers or Oscar Hammerstein II; he admitted that he and his partner had been accused of excessive sentimentality, but he noted that they worked in the formula they knew best and found most congenial. What he didn't say (nor did he have to!) is just how successful that formula had been.

So in my old age, I've come to acknowledge the great and deserved success and stage worthiness of these shows, and the delight they've brought countless people over generations (though I'm still waiting to hear of my first R&H society).

Listening to my new if used CD of *South Pacific* reminded me of another strength of these musicals: they usually contain a rather hard-hitting, philosophical lyric quite different from the others. *South Pacific* has a biting song against racism ("You've Got to Be Carefully Taught"), but the lyric that captured my attention is sung by "Bloody Mary," originally conceived as a Tonkinese (Vietnamese) woman, though in performance she often comes across as a Pacific Islander.

The Bloody Mary lyric that caught my attention was "Happy Talk," which includes this:

"You've got to have a dream—
If you don't have a dream—

How you gonna have a dream come true?"

... and I was reminded of two things: in February of 2013, Bill and Nan Hatcher and I attended the Georgetown Palace production of *South Pacific* where we saw award-winning GSA soprano and director Michelle Haché in her wonderful characterization of Bloody Mary.

Second, it gave me the genesis for this article about our mid-season show, *Trial by Jury*. You see, that ground-breaking dramatic work all grew out of a young man's dream.

His name was Richard D'Oyly Carte, and in the early 1870s, he was a concert manager and operatic impresario. He produced Offenbach's operetta, *La Périchole*, translated into

English of course, and he needed a short work to round out the evening's entertainment.

D'Oyly Carte's dream was to continue producing operettas, but rather than bowdlerized versions of imports from scandalous France, he wanted to produce new works by English librettists and English composers based on English subjects that were appropriate for his audience.

A happy circumstance brought him into contact with William S. Gilbert, a young dramatic author who'd also made a name for himself as a writer of light verse. Several years before, he had expanded a one-page contribution to the humor weekly *Fun* called "Trial by Jury" into a libretto for a one-act opera, but the project, due to the death of the leading soprano, was pigeonholed. Gilbert suggested this to Carte, who loved the idea and sent Gilbert to see Arthur Sullivan.



The name was more than a familiar one to Gilbert, who had reviewed the composer's first comic opera, *Cox and Box*, in 1867, and even collaborated with him four years later—on *Thespis; or, The Gods Grown Old*. Designed as a short-running, post-Christmas entertainment during the pantomime season, *Thespis* had a decent run, but it was under-rehearsed. Also mitigating against the future, Gilbert had to tailor his plot and characters to the abilities and "shticks" of the resident company at John Hollingshead's Gaiety Theatre, and Sullivan had to tailor his score to the, um, limited vocal resources of this band of audience-favorites.

So *Thespis* didn't lead to future collaboration, and Gilbert and Sullivan went their separate ways . . . until Richard D'Oyly Carte's dream brought them together again. Clearly the collaborators shared their producer's dream. Gilbert's libretto for *Trial by Jury* was as English as it could be. The plot centers on a "breach of promise" trial in those days when a man extricating himself from a promise of marriage could be sued by the jilted lady. It's set in an English court of law. It concerns English people. And Sullivan seldom if ever wrote anything but the most English-sounding music.

Gilbert's dream was to be a successful dramatist, to rise above his journeyman days of setting lyrics to pre-existing tunes in his operatic burlesques; to be able to stage his own works, select his own players, imbuing them with his theory of comic acting, and setting those works and costuming them in ways that reinforced his creative vision.

Sullivan had a dream, too. The historians and biographers tell us that he wanted to make a living as a composer, and while he set

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He Had a Dream continued from page 4

his sights higher than comic opera (on oratorio, on opera), he came to realize that his strength lay in the works with Gilbert—works that came to support his rather lavish life style.



So three dreams came together for the March 25, 1875 première of *Trial by Jury* at the Royalty Theatre in London. The one-act “dramatic cantata” (as the creators styled it, for it is “through-composed”—an opera, in fact) came to eclipse *La Périchole*, and then enter the standard repertory of the English lyric theatre where it has remained to the present day. (I often recall with pleasure the enthusiasm with which our two performances were received by Austin audiences three years ago—and how much fun we had working on it.)

Perhaps, most important, that first production of *Trial by Jury* was the first step toward making Richard D'Oyly Carte's dream come true. It also reinforced Gilbert's dream of putting his theories of comedy and stage production to work. Since it led to an even dozen further works, all produced by Richard D'Oyly Carte and most of them profitable hits, Sullivan's financial dream was also to come true, a delightful result shared by all three collaborators.

So maybe Oscar Hammerstein's lyric is more than just “happy talk”: if you don't have a dream, how are you going to make that dream come true?

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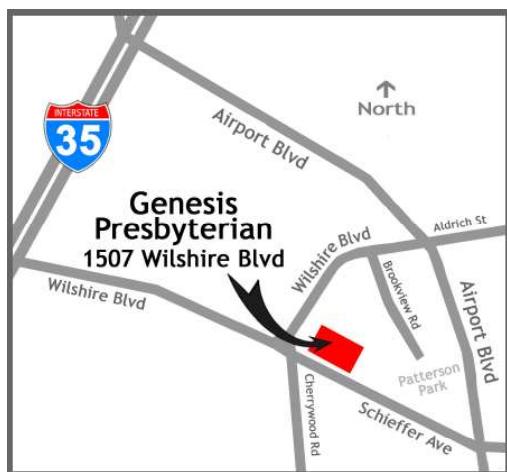
We are proud to list our members in our programs, but if you would prefer NOT to be listed in our programs, please check here: ☐

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels are preparing for their Christmas Show at Westminster on December 20.

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 our web site, www.gilbertsullivan.org, for information.





Map to Annual Meeting and Musicale – details on page 1!



The Gilbert and Sullivan
Society of Austin, Inc.
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Austin, Texas 78768-4542

Coming Events

- Jan. 7 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 mid-February; the deadline for submissions will be January 29. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

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

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