

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

If you were not in the audience for our concert production of *Patience* on Sunday, September 16, you missed a very special and rather unusual event.

The event was *special* for many reasons: It drew a large crowd, it was a one-time-only performance, and it was full of the topsy-turvy humor and joyful music of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan (true, that is always the case, but it was still special).

The event was *unusual* because it departed from our usual practice of presenting the works of Gilbert & Sullivan in the traditional manner—something to which we have been dedicated since our founding in 1976. Instead of being set in 1880s Britain, it was set in 2018 Austin—Act I at an East Side food truck and Act II in Pease Park. It included all the Sullivan melodies and most of the Gilbert words, but some words and allusions were changed to accommodate the new setting.

Why did we present something so different from our usual fare?

Back in 1999, when he directed the music for *Patience* for the first time, our music director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** thought about how much fun it would be to lampoon contemporary pretentiousness and vanity through this opera. This year, when he and **Janette Jones** were preparing to direct a concert version of *Patience*, he approached cast member **Garrett Cordes**, whom Jeffrey considered to be a little more in touch with today's hip culture, to get his thoughts what would be the best way to do this. They decided it would be great fun to have the aesthetes and military men transformed into hipsters and fraternity guys, and they made the suggestion to Janette. She loved the idea and her brain started churning immediately, so the directors asked the board if they might do a bit of updating and adapting in this style.

Because of our society's commitment to producing the works of Gilbert & Sullivan in the traditional manner, the board felt some reluctance at first. But when Janette and Jeffrey stressed how careful they would be to keep any changes consistent with what they took to be Gilbert's intent (for example, substituting upscale Austin men's clothiers for upscale London ones), the board said to go ahead, with careful monitoring. Read **Rosa Mondragon Harris's** article on page 2 to get a full picture of how this fascinating event played out.

According to the survey responses we received, a substantial majority of the large audience present that Sunday enjoyed the updated show immensely. Here are a few of the comments made:

- "Enjoyed the energy, enjoyed the Austin references."



- "Loved it—very clever! Would like to have more like this."
- "Hope there's going to be a DVD—I can't imagine being without this AMAZING adaptation!"

Two responders said that they strongly preferred the traditional manner, and to them we say: Don't worry! We are still committed to producing shows with the original scores and libretti and with Gilbert's intentions for staging. To those hoping for a DVD, we say: Sorry, no DVD; but you can find a YouTube video of the show on our YouTube channel.

Our March 2019 concert production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and our June 2019 grand production of *Iolanthe* will definitely be presented in the manner that is our hallmark. But in the meantime, we would enjoy hearing from some of the rest of you about whether we might consider doing another updated concert version from time to time. Check out the YouTube video, if you didn't attend the show, and send us your thoughts at info@gilbertsullivan.org.

Yours for innocent merriment,

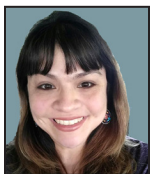
Libby Weed

Notice of Elections

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin will elect members of the board for 2019 at the Annual Meeting, to be held Sunday, January 6, at 2 p.m., at Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Boulevard. If you have an interest in serving on the board, please contact nominations committee chair **Charles Smaistrle** at (512) 461-4636 or CJS@laweconomics.com. Charles and committee members **Byron Arnason** and **Sarah Slaughter** will prepare a nomination slate to be published in the December newsletter. Our board is an outstanding 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.

In This Issue

GSA presents <i>Patience in Concert</i>	pp. 2,3
English DVD on Producing G&S	p. 3
<i>Iolanthean Babs</i>	p. 4
B. Iden Payne Nominations for <i>Ruddigore</i>	p. 5
Winners of <i>Ruddigore</i> DVDs	p. 5
News of our Members	p. 5
Wand'ring Minstrels	p. 5



Gilbert & Sullivan Austin presents *Patience in Concert*

by Rosa Mondragon Harris

This season, GSA decided to take a different approach to delivering Gilbert & Sullivan to their audiences.

Previously, themed musicales were peppered in with the annual meeting, mid-season, and grand productions. The board often heard that too much time would pass between productions, causing G&S favorites to go unseen for years. On September 16, over 300 people gathered at the Worley Barton Theater at Brentwood Christian School to see the first of two scheduled concert productions this season, *Patience in Concert*. In only six rehearsals, the cast and crew had collaborated and created an unforgettable, funny, and updated retelling of one of my top three G&S operas.

The cast included **Carol Brown** as Patience, **Brenham Sean Adams** as Reginald Bunthorne, **Andy Fleming** as Archibald Grosvenor, **Jay Young** as Colonel, **Garrett Cordes** as Major, **Collie E. Roland** as Duke, **Iona Olive** as Angela, **Leann Fryer** as Saphir, **Chantal Freeman** as Ella, **Rosa Mondragon Harris** as Jane, **Patricia Combs** as Arianna, **Amy Selby** as Amber, and **David Kaufman** as Mr. Bunthorne's Solicitor. **Bonnie Bogovich** and **Sarah Manna** rounded out the Chorus of Hipster Women. The Frat Boys were **Lee Moore**, **Jim Newsome**, **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** (who also served as Music Director), and **Ian Stilwell**. Pianist **Jeanne Dayton Sasaki** provided her masterful accompaniment.

Originally, *Patience in Concert* was slated to be a pure concert performance, without set design or costumes, and mostly without theatrical interaction between singers. But as rehearsals ensued, Artistic and Stage Director **Janette Jones** and hipster dramaturg **Garrett Cordes** came up with so many ideas regarding the theme that the production eventually became semi-staged with costumes and creative, colorful sets designed by **Andy Heilveil**. While



the traditional *Patience* satirized the "aesthetic craze" of the 1870s and '80s, this updated production by GSA satirized the "hipster subculture." Both acts were set in familiar Austin settings – a food truck on the East Side, brilliantly named "Bunthorne's Trendy Food," and Pease

Park. Some dialogue and lyrics were also changed to support the theme and setting. The Dragon Guards became university frat guys, the poets became hipsters, and Patience, the milkmaid, became a dairy department manager of a grocery store.



Hipster Women

Much of the charm of this production came from references to Austin. From the food truck, complete with strings of colored lights to adorn it, to the characters of the "UT Frat Boys," audience



The Frat Boys

members were sure to relate to the changes offered in this production. My favorite update was to the dialogue in Act 1 when Duke arrived and spoke to Colonel, Major, and the other Frat Boys: "Tell me, Major, are you fond of queso?" Changed to "queso" from the original "toffee," this question was one that drew a great response from the audience. While I'm not certain how members of the audience felt, I can guarantee that many in the cast did not agree with the Colonel's statement of queso ever becoming "monotonous"! One memorable moment was when fraternity brothers Colonel, Major, and Duke donned hipster attire and used selfie sticks for Act II's trio, "It's clear that Instagram filters." My favorite musical moment was the change of fanfare for the Duke's final entrance and declaration of a bride, which became UT's spirit song, "The Eyes of Texas."



Duke, Major, and Colonel
(Collie E. Roland, Garrett Cordes, Jay Young)

As a member of the "Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Facebook" group, I am consistently impressed with the creativity that I see Savoyards share of their show productions from around the world. Some of the most interesting ones I've seen include *The Outer Space Mikado* (set on Planet Pitiyu) and *The Zombies of Penzance*. During the rehearsal process, I was delightfully intrigued to find that



Patience in Concert cast (l-r): Brenham Sean Adams, Amy Selby, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, Sarah Manna, Ian Stilwell, Chantal Freeman, David Kaufman, Leann Fryer, Jay Young, Rosa Mondragon Harris, Collie E. Roland, Iona Olive, Garrett Cordes, Patricia Combs, Lee Moore, Bonnie Bogovich, Jim Newsome, Carol Brown, Andy Fleming

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin presented a concert version of *Patience* in September 2018

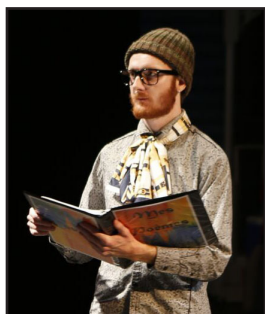
photos here and on p. 2 courtesy David Treadwell

see more at gilbertsullivanaustrin.smugmug.com

another group had recently done *Patience* in a similarly-themed fashion. LOPsOC (University of Southampton Light Opera Society) brought their version of *Patience* to the 25th International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival at the Harrogate Theatre this past August. Their twists included being set in a 21st century coffee shop with Patience as a barista, hipsters as aesthetes, and their Dragoon Guards as rugby lads. LOPsOC's restyling received multiple award nominations, and they are preparing for their spring production of *Princess Ida*,

which will be set in early medieval England with The Hildebrands as rulers of an Anglo-Saxon kingdom and Gama as the Jarl of a local Viking settlement.

Across the pond and back in Austin, planning is already underway for a concert performance of *H.M.S. Pinafore* next March. GSA audiences will not need to wait long before getting their next opportunity to enjoy more of the wit and merriment of Gilbert & Sullivan!



Bunthorne
(Brenham Sean Adams)



Patience (Carol Brown)



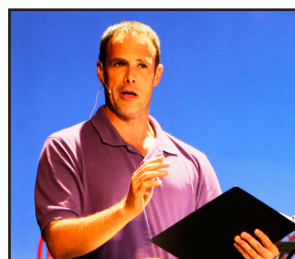
Grosvenor (Andy Fleming)



Jane (Rosa Mondragon Harris)



Grosvenor surrounded
by hipster women



Colonel (Jay Young)



Angela (Iona Olive)



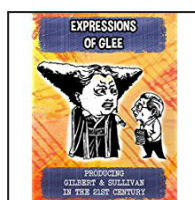
Grosvenor and Bunthorne

English DVD Features GSA's Flash-Mob Publicizing *The Gondoliers*

Reviewed by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Expressions of Glee: Producing Gilbert & Sullivan in the 21st Century was issued in England last year. The DVD features interviews with members of five English performing societies specializing in Savoy opera; with these are combined interviews with Ian Martin, Managing Director of [what's left of] the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, with Ian Smith, founder of the annual International G&S Festival, and with Simon Butteriss, perhaps one of the two busiest free-lancers today specializing in the comic baritone roles.

The interviews were conducted by Michael Fleischer, who edited the DVD. His questions, not articulated on camera, explore the



phenomenon of the continuing stage-worthiness of the G&S works, their appeal to audiences and as well as performers, and how their second century of continuous performance is evolving from D'Oyly Carte "tradition" into new realms of interpretation and adaptation.

Of great interest to GSA—especially our 2016 cast of *The Gondoliers*—is the fact that snippets from the Central Market flash-mob publicizing this show are featured several times through the DVD—not the entire event, but short bits of it. The economically-priced DVD is available from Amazon (see below), and there's a companion DVD containing "The Interviews" (highlights only, evidently) from which the interviews in the main DVD title were cut.

Expressions of Glee: Producing Gilbert & Sullivan in the 21st Century, available from Amazon for \$5.99. *Expressions of Glee: Producing Gilbert & Sullivan in the 21st Century: The Interviews*, \$12 from Amazon. (Note: About two seconds from the flash-mob are in the Amazon.com trailer.)

*Iolanthe*an Babs

by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



Readers of this column will know that Gilbert often sought inspiration for plots and characters for his operas with Sullivan from his earlier works. For instance, *The Sorcerer* was based on a short story; *Princess Ida* was based on an early burlesque; the most memorable scene in *Ruddigore* was suggested by an earlier opera.

The most fertile source for Gilbertian self-plagiarism were his “Bab” Ballads, verses originally written for publication in the weekly humor paper *Fun*, later collected in various editions—and (most of them) still in print to this day. *H.M.S. Pinafore*, as we’ve seen, is based on a remarkable number of them.

For *Iolanthe* (1882), slated for production in Austin next summer, Gilbert used his verses as a source for the overall arc of his plot, for its amusing love-triangle, and also as prototypes for what was to become the longest, most challenging, and most complex patter song in the Savoy operas.

Grab your copy of *The Bab Ballads*, or go to the Gilbert & Sullivan Archive, or Google “Gilbert, “The Fairy Curate,”” and



The Fairy Curate

you will be able to read the embryo of what became the plot of *Iolanthe*. In this amusing verse you will meet Georgie, the son of a fairy and a dull solicitor; these three eventually became Strephon, the son

of *Iolanthe* (a fairy) and the Lord Chancellor of England (who “went to the bar as a very young man”).

Gilbert’s *Iolanthe* plot line went through a number of changes. From the start, the ladies’ chorus was always composed of fairies, but the men were barristers on the Northern Circuit, then members of the House of Commons. Finally he settled on the House of Peers—and Georgie’s father, a solicitor, became The Prime Minister, The Home Secretary, and finally The Lord Chancellor himself. (And of course, as suggested above, Georgie became Strephon, an Arcadian shepherd.)

A highlight of Act II is the wooing of Phyllis by two elderly Lords, Mountararat and Tolloller. Go to Gilbert’s “Old Paul and Old Tim” and “The Periwinkle Girl,” and you can read the seeds of this love triangle.



Old Paul and Old Tim



The Periwinkle Girl

Iolanthe contains the longest and most difficult of Gilbert’s patter-songs. Go to the G&S Archive for “A Bad Night of It” under Bab Ballads and you’ll discover its prototype. “Boulogne” is there, too; it’s a Victorian travel commercial in verse in which Gilbert experimented with the metrical form of “The Nightmare Song,” replete with intricate internal as well as end rhymes.



Boulogne

There’s a mystery in Gilbert’s *Songs of a Savoyard*, a large number of Savoy opera lyrics he published separately and then included with his collected Bab Ballads.

“Sleep On!” is the mysterious verse, and Gilbert listed it under “*Iolanthe*” in his table of contents, but I don’t remember reading anywhere that it was ever given to Sullivan to set. If you know *Iolanthe*, you will realize that if it was written for that opera, it was probably an early lyric for what became Private Willis’s “When All Night Long” (“The Contemplative Sentry”) which opens Act II. Instead of musing on the fact “That every boy and every gal/ That’s born into the world alive/ Is either a little Liberal/ Or else a little Conservative!” however, this lyric reflects on the sentry’s awesome responsibility:

Sleep On!

Fear no unlicensed entry,
Heed no bombastic talk,
While guards the British Sentry
Pall Mall and Birdcage Walk.
Let European thunders
Occasion no alarms,
Though diplomatic blunders
May cause a cry “To arms!”
Sleep on, ye pale civilians;
All thunder-clouds defy:
On Europe’s countless millions
The Sentry keeps his eye!

Should foreign-born rapsallions
In London dare to show
Their overgrown battalions,
Be sure I’ll let you know.
Should Russians or Norwegians
Pollute our favoured clime
With rough barbaric legions,
I’ll mention it in time.
So sleep in peace, civilians,
The Continent defy;
While on its countless millions
The Sentry keeps his eye!

Five B. Iden Payne Award Nominations for *Ruddigore!*

Once again this year, our summer grand production was highly honored by the city's theatre community. The June production of *Ruddigore* was recognized with five nominations for B. Iden Payne Awards:

- Outstanding Production of Musical Theatre – *Ruddigore*, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin
- Outstanding Direction of a Musical – **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**
- Outstanding Lead Actress in Musical Theatre – **Corinna Browning**, Rose Maybud
- Outstanding Featured Actress in Musical Theatre – **Shelby Schisler**, Mad Margaret
- Outstanding Ensemble Performance – **Bethany Ammon, Bonnie Bogovich, Hannah Cooper, Chantal Freeman, Leann Fryer, Rosa Mondragon Harris, Janette Jones, Ellie Mellen, Iona Olive, Alexandra Roubinek, and Amy Selby**, Professional Bridesmaids

The number of nominations we received again marked our production as one of the most outstanding musical theatre offerings in the central Texas area for the 2017-18 season. Congratulations to all of these nominees, to our wonderful music director, **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, to our crackerjack Production Manager, **Bill Hatcher**, and to all the other cast and crew members.

Congratulations to all! Winners of the awards will be announced on Monday, November 5, at the Scottish Rite Theater.

Winners of *Ruddigore* DVDs

From the surveys completed at the *Patience* performance, three were drawn. These lucky people will receive a free DVD of *Ruddigore*: **Maria T. Johnson** of Austin, **Leslie Harper** of Pflugerville, and **Laura Ore** of Georgetown.

Thanks to all who completed a survey for providing us with helpful feedback.

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).

Please check a membership category:

- ☐ **Member** (\$30-\$49)
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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

When not conducting – or singing – with GSA productions, our wonderful Music Director, **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, often performs with other groups. *A Haunted Evening: A Recital of Halloween Music*, by Austin Chamber Ensemble, features GSA performers **Katherine Altobello, June Julian**, and Jeffrey, along with pianists **Martha Mortensen Ahern** (of Wand'ring Minstrels fame) and **Stephen Burnaman**. The concert is on Saturday, October 20, at 7:30 p.m., at First Presbyterian Church, 8001 Mesa. For information and to order tickets, visit austinchamberensemble.org

Jeffrey will be celebrating his 25th anniversary in Austin, and with St. Mary Cathedral, with a *Schubertiade!* This is an evening of music by Franz Schubert, performed by the Schola Cantorum, with **Sara Jebaily, Brett Barnes**, and Jeffrey performing solo songs, along with pianists **Timothy Nolt** and **Brooks Whitmore**. The event is Friday evening, November 30, at 7:30 p.m., in the St. Mary Cathedral; free parking is available, with validation, in the Capital Towers Parking Garage at 940 San Jacinto. Tickets will be available online and at the door.

Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels are busy preparing their shows for the coming school year. 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.



The Wand'ring Minstrels performed at GSA stage manager Monica Kurtz's Education Service Center. (l-r: Katie Schneider, Janette Jones, Monica Kurtz, Marti Mortensen Ahern, Robert L. Schneider)



To see what this large audience saw, turn to pages 2 and 3.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive around Christmas; the deadline for submissions is December 3. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



P.O. Box 684542
Austin, Texas 78768-4542

Coming Events

- Jan. 6 Annual Meeting and Sing-Along
Feb. 23-24 *Iolanthe* Auditions
Mar. 2-3 Mid-season production: Concert performance of *H.M.S. Pinafore*
May 19 *Iolanthe's Fractured Fairy Tales* Musicale
June 13-23 *Iolanthe* summer production (see p. 4)

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OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2018

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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