

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Libby Weed

Perhaps you have just joined the merriment of Gilbert & Sullivan Austin in recent months or years. Or maybe you've been a part of our band for decades. Either way, you participate in something rather special.



Long-timers recognize that our group has grown stronger and more prominent on the local cultural scene in recent years, as evidenced in numerous ways:

- ♪ Our summer grand productions, their directors, and their cast members are honored regularly at the B. Iden Payne award ceremonies and recognized as some of the best in local musical theatre.
- ♪ We present a complete season that includes concert versions of G&S operas, Texas premieres of one-act Victorian comic operas and other scripts, and imaginative musicales that feature some of the best voices in central Texas.
- ♪ We have a board of talented and hard-working G&S aficionados who are determined to keep these marvelous works alive and continuing to bring joy to our community.
- ♪ Our plans for the future involve continued growth, new offerings, and gala events.

At a recent board meeting, members agreed that, having reached such a position of strength, we have no desire to rest on our laurels. We plan to pursue our mission of entertaining and educating audiences with the topsy-turvy humor and joyful music of Gilbert & Sullivan in new and exciting ways. With this in mind, we believe we could use more good leaders and supporters in our efforts.

Do you have an interest in being a working member of our board of directors? GSA board membership is not an honorary position; it is a task-driven role. Each of us takes on a specific responsibility—publicity, financial activities, office management, publications, grant-writing, coordination of volunteers, etc.—and sees that all tasks in that area are completed at the highest level. Prior experience in most posts is a plus but is not necessarily needed.

If this opportunity appeals to you, please contact the chair of our nominating committee today. (See Notice of Elections on page 4.) We would like to learn about your talents and expertise and discuss the contributions you could make as a member of the board.

A slate will be presented to the membership for voting in January.

Yours for innocent merriment,



## GILBERT & SULLIVAN AUSTIN

PRESENTS

NAME THAT

# CHARACTER!

Join us on Sunday, November 10, at 2 pm for our next performance—a FREE musicale at Worley Barton Theatre at Brentwood Christian School. In *Name That G&S Character*, G&S storylines will be turned upside down in the format of an uproarious musical game show. This hilarious musicale will quiz our contestant about lost stories (OK—we made them up!) of popular G&S characters. Try to guess the correct character along with our contestant, and hear some of your favorite G&S songs performed as “clues.” We also promise a hefty measure of “topsy-turvy” twists that would make even William S. Gilbert proud, as creative new stories will be spun which tie together characters from different G&S shows.

The fabulous singers who will bring you the musical clues by performing classic G&S songs include **Bryce Bartu, Bonnie Bogovich, Jennifer Conte, Garrett Cordes, Chrishawn Michelle Floyd, Leann Fryer, Mary Elisabeth Kettlewell, Jim Newsome, Linda Grace Perez, Taylor Rawley, and Jay Young.** The cast will also feature **Dave Wieckowski** as the Game Show Host.

This musicale is co-written and directed by **Janette Jones** and **Dave Wieckowski** and produced by **Leann Fryer.** **Jeanne Sasaki** is music director and accompanist.

Don't miss your last chance to enjoy Gilbert & Sullivan in 2019!

**November 10 at 2 pm**

**Worley Barton Theatre at Brentwood Christian School  
11908 N. Lamar**

## In This Issue

|                                                     |         |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Princess Ida in Concert</i> .....                | pp. 2,3 |
| <i>The McAdo</i> : Addressing Controversy .....     | p. 4    |
| Notice of Elections .....                           | p. 4    |
| <i>Name That Newsletter</i> Contest Results .....   | p. 4    |
| Too Much Toffee .....                               | p. 4    |
| Who Might You Meet at a G&S Production? ...         | p. 5    |
| B. Iden Payne Nominations for <i>Iolanthe</i> ..... | p. 5    |
| Wand'ring Minstrels .....                           | p. 5    |
| Gilbert & Sullivan Lecture Series .....             | p. 5    |

## Princess Ida in Concert

by Mary Hendren



Considering the humor in *Princess Ida*, Gilbert and Sullivan outdid themselves. Did these gentlemen ever in any other of their operettas put together such a comical assemblage of characters—contentious kings, cowardly soldiers, flaming idealists, dutiful neophytes, conflicted lovers—then embroil them in a collegiate crisis?



*King Gama, King Hildebrand, Hilarion, Cyril, and Florian*

College, for most people, is a step on the way to fulfilling one's dreams. For Hilarion, however, college was in the way of his dreams. His long-affianced bride, Ida, had taken up a meaningful mission minus himself. Predictably, everyone—King Gama (**Reagan Murdock**), King Hildebrand (**Sam Johnson**), Hilarion (**Holton Johnson**), Cyril (**Taylor Rawley**), and Florian (**Trinidad Agosto**)—had an initial plan to rein her in: “Humbly beg and humbly sue, she may deign to look at you, but your doing you must do most politely, most politely, most politely!”



*King Gama looks askance  
at sons (l-r)  
Guron (Jay Young),  
Arac (Julius Young), and  
Scynthus (Jake Jacobson)*

Some of the show's comic highlights featured King Gama's three sons (**Julius Young**, **Jay Young**, and **Jake Jacobson**). They rose to the occasion of intellectual lightweights who were truthful about their wits but not about their valor. “Politics we bar, they are not our bent; on the whole we are not intelligent.”

King Gama, like his sons, suffered from character confusion. “Yet ev'rybody says I'm such a disagreeable man! And I can't think why!” Well done, Reagan, persevering through the whole show in the king's whiny voice.



*new “students” at Princess Ida's  
college: Florian, Hilarion,  
and Cyril*

In the role of Hilarion, Holton carried off some serious inanity. He was as greatly delighted in, “Today we meet my baby bride and I,” as in his ridiculous plan to invade Castle Adamante with its devoted students (**Jennifer Conte**, **Ellie Mellen**, and **Janette Jones**). Could anyone have found more outrageous wigs for the guys in disguise: the foppish for Cyril, the curled for Florian, and the sleek for Hilarion?



*Princess Ida, Lady Psyche, Melissa, and Lady Blanche*

Hard to forget **Corinna Browning's** stunning voice as Ida beseeched Minerva, then shared her great pearls of wisdom: “Let hairpins lose their virtue...the bashful button modestly evade the embraces of the button-hole.” What about the fascinating curriculum laid out by Lady Psyche (**Sarah Manna**), Melissa (**Amy Selby**), and the ambitious Lady Blanche (**Patricia Combs**), “The Is, the Might Be, and the Must.” And how lovely was the four-part harmony performed by Corinna, Holton, Taylor, and Trinidad, “The world is but a broken toy.”



*Stage Director Michelle Haché*



*Bonnie Bogovich and Jeffrey Jones-Ragona*

*Princess Ida* was a sparkling production as everything came together. Thanks to music director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, the leads, and the choruses of Courtiers and Girl Graduates for the preparation and practices. Thanks to stage director **Michelle Haché** for imaginative staging and stand mike choreography. Thanks to **Jeanne Sasaki** for her excellence at the keyboard; she was assisted by page-turner **Hanna Akita**, a student at Anderson High. Thanks to **Bonnie Bogovich** for choral assistance.



*Libby Weed*

Speaking for those who are hard of hearing, thanks to the folks who do sound and prepare the captions. President **Libby Weed** sums it up by saying that the GSA “team works



*Jeanne Sasaki and  
Hanna Akita*

together seamlessly, and the cast is so talented and conscientious.”



*the finale: happily ever after*



**GSA's *Princess Ida* in Concert in September 2019**

*photos here and on p. 2 courtesy Steve Schwartzman*

see more at [gilbertsullivanaustrin.smugmug.com](http://gilbertsullivanaustrin.smugmug.com)



*the Battle of Castle Adamant, as Princess Ida's students and professors fend off King Hildebrand's soldiers*



*Princess Ida at last consents to wed Prince Hilarion*



*students Sacharissa (Jennifer Conte), Ada (Janette Jones), and Chloe (Ellie Mellen)*



*King Hildebrand's soldiers: Jim Newsome, Ian Stilwell, Chris Cregeen, Garrett Cordes, John Groves, Matthew Leary, and Jeffrey C. Brister*



*the ladies of Castle Adamant: Janette Jones [Ada], Bonnie Bogovich, Erica Hernandez, Ellie Mellen [Chloe], Jennifer Conte [Sacharissa], Sarah Manna [Lady Psyche], Amy Selby [Melissa], Linda Grace Perez, Chrishawn Michelle Floyd, Leann Fryer, and Patricia Combs [Lady Blanche]*

# The McAdo

A NEW BEGINNING JUNE 2020

## Addressing Controversy

by Dave Wieckowski



In the last newsletter I reported some basic information on our upcoming June 2020 grand production of *The McAdo*, which will mostly follow the G&S classic *The Mikado*, but with a change of setting to Scotland. In this issue I'll discuss the *Mikado* controversy, and our response at GSA.

We last presented *The Mikado* in 2011. During that run, the Austin City Council forwarded to us a disapproving letter they had received from a group of local Asian-American university professors. The authors strongly objected to *The Mikado* as a "yellow-face" misrepresentation of Japan, and questioned the City's support for the production through Cultural Arts Division grants. The writers also circulated their objections in the media and the internet.

We weathered that storm in 2011, but it really did take us by surprise. We knew very little at that time about the objections to *The Mikado* that were rapidly growing among some in the Asian-American community. In the ensuing years, we watched closely as *Mikado* productions from Seattle to New York, San Francisco, Harvard, Portland, and elsewhere were all subjected to sharp criticism and protest.

Based on our production rotation, we knew we were due to present *The Mikado* again in 2020. We also knew that we couldn't ignore the issue. In August 2018, I formed a *Mikado* committee to explore how to proceed. It consisted of myself as chair, Charles Smaistrle as vice-chair, and fellow board members David Little, Michael Meigs, Sarah Slaughter, David Treadwell, and Libby Weed. In our initial meetings we laid all options on the table, from presenting the show unchanged to dropping it altogether. We knew we needed to be responsive to the concerns of those in the Asian-American community who were upset due to what they felt were hurtful representations of Japanese characters and culture. But we also knew that the show was just too good to abandon.

Those familiar with *The Mikado* will recognize the characters and dialogue as quite British; but even knowing that, we concluded that it's not wise in our current environment to present those characters in Gilbert's Japanese disguise. We eventually came to the decision to continue the show, but the setting would have to change. We ultimately decided on two guiding principles for our new production:

1. All references to Japan need to be removed, but the new setting and time period should still support the plot of the story. Ideally, the new locale should reflect the true nature of the characters, who are British.
2. We should accomplish #1 with the minimum possible amount of change to the libretto and score.

We believe we were able to stay true to those principles in our creation of *The McAdo*. The show will be set in Britain (Scotland, to be specific), and we achieved that change with minimal edits to the libretto. In the next newsletter, I'll talk more about the new show and our community outreach leading up to it.

## Notice of Elections

The Society will elect members of the board for 2020 at the Annual Meeting, to be held Sunday, January 5, at 2 pm, at Genesis Presbyterian Church, 1507 Wilshire Boulevard. If you have an interest in serving on the board, please contact nominations committee chair Michelle Vanecek at (512) 789-8075 or [czech64@gmail.com](mailto:czech64@gmail.com). Michelle and committee members Jean Smootz and Charles Smaistrle will prepare a nomination slate to be published in the January issue of *The Austin Savoyard*.

## Name That Newsletter Contest Results

We have a winner! The GSA newsletter has, for over four decades, been named merely *Newsletter*. But our recently announced contest brought a total of twenty-two suggested newsletter titles from four readers. From that long list, one entry struck the judging committee, and then the full Board, as the perfect name: *The Austin Savoyard*. This name, submitted (as we learned after selection) by our treasurer, Dave Wieckowski, will appear in the masthead beginning with the January 2020 issue.



## Too Much Toffee \*

By Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Since returning to Virginia after *Iolanthe* in Austin this past summer, Alice and I have been busily packing our home in preparation for a move this fall to a cottage in the Bridgewater Retirement Community. We were finally able to put our home of 45 years on the market about a month ago. And we can't wait to be in our new home.

Last weekend while our son and his family were visiting, we asked Alexander and Karin, both Episcopal priests, to, with their children Peter and Maggie, help us inter, upside down as per strict instructions, a small statuette of St. Joseph, which is, according to conventional wisdom, sure to lead to a successful home sale.

At the ceremony, I mistakenly referred to the little plastic statuette as Sir Joseph, and my son the Savoyard burst out laughing, telling me that I really should take a break from Gilbert & Sullivan occasionally!

My gaffe aside, I am pleased to announce that St. Joseph must not have been offended, for he seems to have done his duty well: we expect to sign a contract for the sale of our home later today—five days after the saint's interment.

\*Ed. note: A reference to *Patience*, in which the Duke of Dunstable compares being flattered all the time to having toffee for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Too much of a good thing [even G&S absorption] can be problematic.



## Who Might You Meet at a G&S Production?

by Mary Hendren

When you attend a G&S performance, you expect to enjoy a great show. But often there's an additional and unexpected pleasure of meeting other enthusiasts like **Campbell Gill**, who has volunteered for both *Iolanthe* and *Princess Ida in Concert*. Campbell, a classical pianist, recently performed a recital at Baylor as part of a major competition.



Campbell Gill  
(photo courtesy Michelle Haché)

Campbell is a long time fan of Gilbert & Sullivan. At the age of 12, he found one of Gilbert's *Bab Ballads*. His enthusiasm for the ballads led him to G&S operettas and to Martyn Green's *Treasury of Gilbert and Sullivan*. Campbell said that selections from *Iolanthe* were some of the first G&S pieces he played. Now that his Baylor recital is finished and his college plans for attending UT are in place, Campbell looks forward to being more involved as a GSA volunteer.

## B. Iden Payne Nominations for *Iolanthe*

Our summer grand production was honored once again by the city's theatre community. The June production of *Iolanthe* was recognized with two nominations for B. Iden Payne Awards:

- Outstanding Lead Actor in Musical Theatre – **Arthur DiBianca**, The Lord Chancellor
- Outstanding Featured Actress in Musical Theatre – **Bethany Ammon**, Queen of the Fairies

Congratulations to these nominees; our Artistic Director director, **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**; our Music Director, **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**; our Production Manager, **Bill Hatcher**; and all the other members of the company.

Congratulations to all! Winners of the awards will be announced on Monday, November 4, at the Scottish Rite Theater.

### 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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☐ 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: ☐

## Wand'ring Minstrels

The Wand'ring Minstrels are always ready to perform. 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](http://www.gilbertsullivan.org), for information.



Wand'ring Minstrels Robert L. Schneider, Janette Jones,  
Katie Schneider, and Marti Mortensen Ahern

## Gilbert & Sullivan Lecture Series

by Dave Wieckowski

No doubt you love watching our GSA productions on the stage, but did you ever wish you could learn more about the two men and their shows? If so, **Paul Lehman** (Professor Emeritus – University of Michigan) is conducting an ongoing G&S lecture series that you might enjoy. The presentations are *free* at Westminster's Harris Bell Hall (4100 Jackson Ave., Austin), and occur every 2 months. Each event covers a G&S show, in chronological order. The presentations are very informative and entertaining, feature the D'Oyly Carte cast recordings of selected songs, and run from 7-8 pm. The first two sessions covered *The Sorcerer* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*. The next session is on Tuesday, December 3, and will cover *The Pirates of Penzance*. You'll be sure to see a few GSA regulars there!



Map to *Name That G&S Character* Musicale at the Worley Barton Theater (see page 1).



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

## Coming Events

- Nov. 10 *Name That G&S Character* Musicale (see p. 1)  
 Jan. 5 Annual Meeting and Sing-Along  
 Feb. 1-2 Auditions for *The McAdo*  
 Mar. 7-8 Mid-season production: *A Day at the Savoy Theatre*  
 June 11-21 *The McAdo* summer production (see p. 4)

## Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive around Christmas; the deadline for submissions is December 4. Please send your news to [news@gilbertsullivan.org](mailto:news@gilbertsullivan.org). Thanks!

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NOVEMBER 2019

### 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.

**Annual Grand Productions • Musicales**  
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This project is funded and supported in part by the Cultural Arts Division of the City of Austin Economic Development Department. Visit Austin at [NowPlayingAustin.com](http://NowPlayingAustin.com)



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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