

# THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD

## #DiscoverGSA

by Leann Fryer

**#DiscoverGSA** is back in full swing for the new year. Last month we featured 2014's production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. It was actually a repeat from last May, when we first started this program. We wanted to give our new-found audience a chance to catch something they might have missed, and for everyone else to have an opportunity to see this wonderful production again.



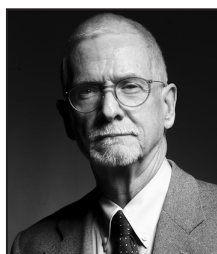
This month we are featuring 2013's grand production of *Princess Ida*. This was the first time GSA ever staged this opera, and it was instantly memorable with its fantastic cast and the magic of Gilbert & Sullivan. **Michelle Haché**, director of our next grand production, *The McAdo*, won a B. Iden Payne award for her masterful performance as the titular character.

March will be a special treat, as we will be showing the 2018 concert version of a unique *Patience*. Aesthetic followers become hipsters and dragon guards are frat-boys in this hilarious adaptation of the classic opera. Set in current day Austin, TX, in front of a food truck, and with some updated words ("Tell me, Major, are you fond of queso?"), this version of *Patience* shows that Gilbert & Sullivan operas are timeless, especially when it comes to satire of a current trend.

In April we will show 2018's production of *Trial by Jury*. After that, we've got something new and exciting in the works.

## A New Take: G&S for the 21st Century by Michael Meigs

Our highly anticipated production of *The McAdo* to be directed by **Michelle Haché** will now not take place until 2022, for the board agreed that our loyal followers wouldn't feel safe attending a performance this coming June. The **#DiscoverGSA** programs we've been streaming have helped fill the gap, but the board decided that GSA, too, could pivot to commissioning new, innovative, and very Austin scenes from the fourteen works of the nineteenth-century gentlemen we celebrate.



GSA participated from the first in the #ATXTheatre coalition, an alliance established in spring of 2020 to deliver the message that theatre in the capital is unique, wildly varied, and exciting. In this time of disruption and closed theatres, we are approaching directors from other Austin companies to collaborate with GSA to produce streaming video programs interpreting our classics in new ways. Our hope is to continue **#DiscoverGSA** with as

many as three one-hour programs in which Austin artists offer different spins on the high-spirited fun we know so well.

Let's call it an intermission or perhaps an entr'acte—GSA is proud of its tradition of authentic Savoyard-style productions helmed by **Rafe MacPhail**, our artistic director emeritus, and we look forward to similar ones after our fun with a *McAdo* set in a mythical Scotland. Meanwhile, in this tempest time of COVID and empty theatres, we plan to have fun playing with new directors and artists and inviting the attention of new audiences. And it's all in innocent merriment!

## Annual Meeting and New Officers

As is our GSA tradition, we held our required Annual Meeting at the start of the sing-along musicale. **Libby Weed** announced the results of the online elections: all nominated Board candidates were elected (and are shown below), and all bylaws amendments were passed.

In accordance with our bylaws, the Board met (virtually, of course) on January 12 to elect officers. Those elected are: **Diane Radin**, President; **Sarah Slaughter**, Executive Vice President; **Dave Wieckowski**, Treasurer; and **Libby Weed**, Secretary. The duties of these four officers are described in the bylaws. Additional duties and responsibilities were distributed among all Board members and a few volunteers, since GSA has no paid staff.



Sue Caldwell



Leann Fryer



Holton Johnson



Janette Jones



Robert O. Kerr



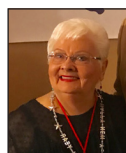
David Little



Michael Meigs



Diane Radin



Sandra Ragona



Sarah Slaughter



Charles Smaistrla



David Treadwell



Michelle Vanecek



Libby Weed



Dave Wieckowski

## In This Issue

The Virtual Sing-Along .....	p. 2
Letter from Our Artistic Director Emeritus .....	p. 2
President's Message .....	p. 3
News of Members .....	p. 3



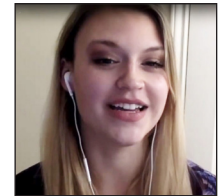
## The Virtual Sing-Along by Mary Hendren

If you are older than 60, perhaps you remember that Dean Martin advised that it's delightful to stay indoors and "Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow." Austin experienced a beautiful snow on January 10, and from the comfort of indoors we enjoyed the Sing-Along Musicale. It was delightful to hear favorite Gilbert & Sullivan tunes along with a few less-familiar selections. Special thanks to **Jeanne Sasaki** for providing the musical accompaniment, to our YouTube for streaming the sing-along, and to **Leann Fryer** for directing and producing the show. Leann pointed out that in this year's virtual sing-along we heard two performers who have moved away from the area and appeared through video, **Emma McNairy** (from Germany) and **Spencer Reichman** (from New Orleans). The show also included songs that were new to most of us. "DeBelville was regarded as the Crichton of his age" was originally part of **Iolanthe**, but dropped, so that only the lyrics remain; renowned record producer **Thomas Z. Shepard** set it to new music of his own composition and performed it for us. **Wayne Davis** performed a comical complaint, "A tenor all singers above," describing the impossibility of doing "proper chromatics with proper emphatics" when one is in love, from **Utopia, Ltd.** Kudos to all the performers for taking advantage of walls, tiled surfaces, and special effects. **Bonnie Bogovich's** dramatic black veil, skull, and paper roses reminded viewers that Mad Margaret really was mad. In this year's sing-along **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** stepped away from conducting to sing—"A wand'ring minstrel, I," then a lovely duet with **Corinna Browning**, "There was a time" from **The Gondoliers**. Thanks to all these performers plus **Leann Fryer, Holton Johnson, Hannah Kriese, Amy Selby, and Susan Johnston Taylor** for their selections and creative videography.

A highlight of the sing-along was the tribute to our now-*emeritus* Artistic Director **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** The tribute was written by **Libby Weed**, read by **Janette Jones**, with comments by Holton Johnson and Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, all skillfully put together.

Through the tribute we all learned more about Rafe, and that increased our respect for his work. It was well summed up in the phrase: he was a "giant in our history." Jeffrey stated that Rafe was congenial to work with and had "an ear for good music." In the roles of Music Director and Artistic Director they worked together "without a disagreement or a cross word." One of the strengths Rafe brought to GSA was a thorough knowledge of Gilbert & Sullivan culture, gleaned by his study of original G&S scores. "He knew in great detail...the authentic style of the original." Holton stated that Rafe "had a very special place in my heart," and speaking on behalf of fans he added, "Thank you for all you have taught me."

Libby set a gracious tone in thanking everyone for loyally supporting Gilbert & Sullivan Austin in a difficult year. She confirmed that **The McAdo** would be postponed another year. The efforts, energy, and grants, however, will go toward free YouTube presentations benefiting the community. In looking forward, Libby reminded everyone "Together we are stronger."



performers (l-r, top to bottom):  
Leann, Emma, Spencer,  
Wayne, Bonnie, Amy,  
Susan, Holton, Hannah,  
Corinna, and Jeffrey  
[one more picture, page 4]



**RALPH MACPHAIL, JR.**

129 ROSEWOOD CIRCLE

BRIDGEWATER, VIRGINIA 22812 • 1738 U.S.A.

January 10, 2021

I wish to thank Gilbert & Sullivan Austin for that lovely tribute to my association with our organization that was webcast earlier today. To say that it was gratifying and touching to look back over the past 22 years would be an understatement.

I also wish to thank the casts, orchestra members, backstage crews, and all others associated with these productions through the years, noting especially Jeffrey, Bill, Monica, and all of the other creative people who worked under their leadership, all so ably supported by Libby and her remarkable boards of directors.

My long association with GSA has been the highlight of my life with Gilbert & Sullivan, and I will always treasure memories of our work on these timeless theatrical masterpieces. I am honored to be named your Artistic Director Emeritus.

As Gilbert & Sullivan Austin begins its next chapter of production in the capital city, I send my warmest wishes for successes "in endless series." Under recently-elected President Diane Radin's leadership, I am confident that GSA will continue to excel in its noble mission of "spreading the topsy-turvy humor and joyful music of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan."

Most sincerely,

*Rafe MacPhail*



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Diane Radin

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin has weathered 2020 and is ready to take on the challenges of 2021. We hope that all our readers, members, donors, and volunteers have made it through these difficult months and will find the time and energy to help us thrive.



The GSA board of directors was elected at our virtual annual meeting and met to elect the Executive Committee and determine the roles that each board member will play. GSA has no paid staff, so it is the board and other volunteers who make it all happen. A complete list of the board members can be found on page 1. I am honored to have been elected President of the board. Filling **Libby Weed's** shoes will be possible only because Libby is staying on the board along with so many others.

Most of the previous year's board has returned and three others have joined. Before I introduce the newest board members, a big THANK YOU is due to **Robert Schneider**. Bob stepped off the board but will continue to lead the Wand'ring Minstrels as he has done for ten years, bringing the joys of G&S songs to schools, nursing homes, assisted living centers, private homes, and many other venues. Thank you, Bob, for all you have done and are doing for GSA.

New to the GSA board, but not to GSA audiences, is **Janette Jones**. Janette has appeared in many GSA grand productions, both in principal roles (Mad Margaret, Buttercup, Lady Jane, and others) as well as in the chorus. Most of the recent musicales you have enjoyed were written and directed by Janette. In her day job, Janette is a Customer Service Manager for a software company. She has a degree in Music History from UT and has performed in Austin's Melodrama Theatre, the Light Opera of Manhattan repertory company in NYC, Austin Opera, and Broadway Ala Carte, among other companies. She is a member of our Wand'ring Minstrels. Janette will be reaching out to schools in Central Texas looking for ways to bring G&S into the classroom. If you have any connections to music teachers or schools, please let Janette know.

Also new to the GSA board is a familiar face to anyone who has attended our grand productions and bought a CD or poster or T-shirt or souvenir. **Saundra Ragona**, mother of GSA's Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**, has been volunteering for GSA for many years. She orders the sales items and sells them, always with a friendly and welcoming smile. Saundra will take over all aspects of merchandise orders and sales. Saundra brings many talents to GSA. She has retail experience, both as owner of a dress shop and as merchandise buyer for many small women's clothing companies. Her primary occupation is as a systems analyst, designing and writing computer programs for state and local governments, major corporations, and small businesses. She is also a musician, playing clarinet and piano.

**David Treadwell** is returning to the GSA board after a one-year absence. David resigned from the board when he moved to Vermont, but continued to volunteer by sending the letters

that thank you and all our donors for their contributions to GSA. When the GSA board meetings went from in-person to Zoom meetings, David realized that he could again be part of our board. David is a chemist and consultant. He also has performed in some of our shows and is especially famous (notorious?) for his rendition at our annual meetings of "The Elements" song by Tom Lehrer.

GSA wishes you and your loved ones a very happy and healthy new year. We look forward to being together in person once again.

## News of Members

**Marge Reiter**, a long-time friend and fan of Gilbert & Sullivan Austin, passed away at age 96 on January 22. In addition to attending all the grand productions and musicales, Marge loved to volunteer at the sales table. She was grateful to her many GSA friends who drove her to GSA events.

**Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** recalls Marge as a lovely human being. Although the last few years presented her with many difficulties, she always had a smile and enthusiasm for whatever project was before her. Jeffrey looked forward to seeing her at the shows.

**Saundra Ragona** remembers that Marge welcomed her to Austin and GSA when she first arrived, after Jeffrey introduced them. Saundra missed her these last couple of performances. She was always so dedicated and delightful to talk with and so full of energy!

**Rafe MacPhail** first remembers meeting Marge at the H-E-B store on Far West: "This lovely 'stranger' looked at this stranger (to Texas) and said, 'Mr. MacPhail?' I replied, 'No, just Rafe.' We counted our friendship from that time." Their last meeting was at Brookdale Spicewood Springs Senior Living. She'd asked him to speak about G&S for an afternoon program. "How could one say 'no' to such a delightful and enthusiastic fan of GSA?"

Marge will be missed. Zichrona liv'racha. May her memory be a blessing.



at Brookdale in February 2018 (l-r): Ralph MacPhail, Jr., Byron Annason, Marge Reiter, Michael Weed, Libby Weed



*at the Virtual Sing-Along: Jeanne Sasaki on piano  
with Leann Fryer, Bonnie Bogovich, Spencer  
Reichman, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, Holton Johnson,  
and our viewers singing "Hail, Poetry"  
[see article, page 2]*



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

## Join Us!

We encourage you to join our Society to help GSA keep the joys of Gilbert & Sullivan alive. We offer many levels of membership, starting with basic member at \$30 per year. To join, renew, or donate, please visit [www.gilbertsullivan.org/join/](http://www.gilbertsullivan.org/join/).

You can also support GSA effortlessly by joining Amazon Smile. Once you sign up on Amazon.com, Amazon will rebate 0.5% of all eligible purchases to the charity of your choice. We hope you choose GSA! Sign up the next time you want to visit [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) by going to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). Sign in as usual and you will be prompted to select a charitable organization. You will find us listed as "Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin Texas Inc."

## RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit  
Organization  
US Postage Paid  
Permit No. 2054  
Austin, Texas



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

**THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD** - FEBRUARY 2021

### 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 • Concert Productions  
Educational/Community Outreach**

**Musicales • Music Scholarships • Newsletters**

Mailing Address: **P. O. Box 684542, Austin, TX 78768-4542**

G&S Office: **310 West 43rd Street, Austin, TX 78751**

Phone: (512) **472-4772** (GSA-GSSA)

Website: [www.gilbertsullivan.org](http://www.gilbertsullivan.org) E-mail: [info@gilbertsullivan.org](mailto:info@gilbertsullivan.org)

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)



Artistic Director Emeritus  
Database Manager

**Ralph MacPhail, Jr.  
Leann Fryer**

Newsletter Editor

**Sue Ricket Caldwell**

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

Music Director

**Jeffrey Jones-Ragona**

### Board of Directors

<b>Diane Radin</b>	President and CEO
<b>Sarah Slaughter</b>	Vice President and Publicity Director
<b>Dave Wieckowski</b>	Treasurer and CFO
<b>Libby Weed</b>	Secretary
<b>Sue Caldwell</b>	Publications / Historian
<b>Leann Fryer</b>	Musicale Coordinator
<b>Holton Johnson</b>	Scholarship Chair
<b>Janette Jones</b>	School Outreach and Musicale Director
<b>Robert O. Kerr</b>	Fund-Raising Coordinator
<b>David Little</b>	Videographer
<b>Michael Meigs</b>	Production Chair and Bursar
<b>Sandra Ragona</b>	Merchandise Director
<b>Charles Smaistrila</b>	Legal Counsel and Grants Manager
<b>David Treadwell</b>	Member/Donor Outreach
<b>Michelle Vanecek</b>	Volunteer Coordinator