



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FUNDS and FUN by Diane Radin

I hope you enjoyed our efforts to present alternate takes on G&S songs and scenes in Episode 1 of **Fresh Takes on Gilbert & Sullivan** last month. Episode 2 runs through September 15, and Episode 3

will begin later in September. Each 45-minute episode contains several unique presentations of G&S favorites.

We are proud to have infused more than \$24,000 so far into the Austin area arts community through **Fresh Takes** by supporting directors, singers, musicians, videographers, sound technicians, choreographers, artists, graphic designers and more.

Orchestrating all this has been practically a full-time job for GSA board member **Michael Meigs** with the help of production manager **Bill Hatcher**. Thank you to both Michael and Bill. We are also grateful to **Michelle Haché** for suggesting this project during the pandemic and getting us started with helpful introductions.

Two things have stood out for me in all the emails that have flown through the air (or wherever emails fly). First, the huge amount of thought, imagination, effort, and care that have gone into creating works of such high production standards. Second, that everyone seems to have had so much fun doing all that work! I know I always find viewing a G&S production a lot of fun, so I am very happy that that fun has been part of the process for so many artists.

If you don't believe me, here are some quotes from those emails:

Sebastian Vitale: We'll have some great pieces to feel proud about. It's been great working with you... I hope we can work together in the near future. Big hug for everyone.

Allison Price: Thank you all for such a lovely project. Hopefully we can collaborate again in the future.

Jonah Fujikawa: Thank you for letting me collaborate on this project with you all. Truly a pleasure and I'm glad you all enjoy it!

Lisa Scheps: This was a fun project.

Marcelo Teson: Very excited to get this going!

Margaret Jumonville: I'm happy to be a part of this production! The singers and I had a great time doing Gondoliers work. This project has been so much fun for me! I'm also glad you reached out to Helen... she's excited to get started.

Density512: We're really excited about this project and are already moving forward with our creative process!

Rudy Ramirez: So thrilled that you like it!

Susan Johnston Taylor: Very excited about this!

I hope you have as much fun viewing **Fresh Takes**! And at the same time, you can take pride in being part of an organization that has supported so many community artists.



Fresh Takes Episode 3

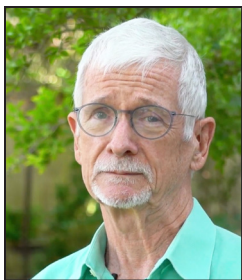
Here are some surprises yet to pop out of GSA's **Fresh Takes** box: **Pirates**, an extended riff on **The Pirates of Penzance** by improvisers from American Berserk Theatre and Austin contemporary music group **Density512**; **Margaret Jumonville's** reset of **The Gondoliers** to an Austin swimming pool; and **Marcelo Tesón's** ironic paean to colonialism and military force with the trio "A British tar is a soaring soul" from **H.M.S. Pinafore**. And—of course!—another "Little List."

Fresh Takes Episode 3

September 18 to October 18

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Behind the Curtain by Michael Meigs

"There are so many moving parts — we'd better give ourselves another week!"

In fact, the **Fresh Takes on G&S** project seems to have more parts than a Rube Goldberg invention.

Since getting the green light in February, we've contacted thirty-two directors, of whom seventeen signed on with GSA. Episodes 1 - 3 are projected to feature a total of 56 performers, including the three who do versions of Ko-Ko's "Little List." In addition, we've employed a graphic designer (the talented **Jennifer Rose Davis**), two composers, a choreographer, more than a dozen musicians, and two audio engineers (one of whom is also a videographer and editor). Only six of these more than 90 artists had worked with GSA before.

Episode 2 was particularly rich in directing talent:



- **Sebastian Vitale** directed the three ***El Buque Parasol (The Good Ship Parasol)*** scenes and appears as the captain. Sebastian arrived in Austin after a twenty-year career in long-run musical productions in Buenos Aires — just before COVID shut down our theatres. Thanks to

Alex Pedemonte for recommending him.

- **Allison Price**, alumna of Texas State University, directed the "Patter Trio" in the ten days between her return from directing ***Don Giovanni*** in Turkey and her departure for another project in Florida. Thanks to **Kaitlyn Hopkins**, head of the Texas State musical theatre program, and faculty member **Tom Delbello** for suggesting Allison for our **Fresh Takes**.



- **Lisa Scheps**, co-artistic director of Ground Floor Theatre, and **Brian Cheslik** of Deaf Austin Theatre produced the memorable musicals ***Next to Normal*** and ***Fun Home*** in



2018 and 2019 with both singing and signing performers, and they quickly accepted our invitation to reinterpret the Katisha-Ko-Ko courtship.

How did this extraordinary pivot get started? Leadership and networking!

In late 2020, even before the board found itself obliged to postpone **The McAdo** a second time, director **Michelle Haché** proposed reaching out to other Austin performers to push the boundaries and create performances that were more contemporary and inclusive. She stressed that high-quality audio recording would be vital.



Michelle recruited our very first director, **Christie Jean-**



Jacques of Creative Action, and Christie in turn connected us with her colleagues **Marcelo Tesón** and **Fadeelah Muhyee**. Fadeelah, a celebrated hip-hop artist from Oakland, California, with her own band, is also known by her stage name Queen Deelah. She graciously

welcomed the GSA's succession of new directors and performers to her top-quality recording studio and took a personal interest in the project.



Marcelo Tesón



Fadeelah Muhyee

During the recording session for the Patter Trio (**Alex Aponte**, **Kaitlyn Huston**, and **Ryan Scarlata**), there came a moment when I knew we'd hit the sweet spot. Fadeelah, working the controls during trio's fast version of **Ruddigore's** "My eyes are fully open," smiled and complimented them that it was practically a hip-hop performance!

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/

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in mid-October; the deadline for submissions is October 1. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

New Adaptations of Savoy Operas

by Robert Bromley Davis

Reviewed by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



Since their original production in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Gilbert & Sullivan operas have been adapted by others. This country saw "church-choir *Pinafores*," black-face minstrel versions of

The Mikado, and countless others running at the same times their inspirations were holding the boards in London. In the twentieth century, international copyright kept the operas "safe" from such treatment in the United Kingdom until the expiry of Sullivan's copyright in 1950 and Gilbert's in 1961. In the United States, however, such strictures never held and led to countless adaptations, the most famous in theatrical history, perhaps, being *The Swing Mikado* and *The Hot Mikado* of 1939.

But with the expiry of the original copyrights, and thanks to on-demand self-publishing, new versions are appearing in England, most prolifically from Robert Bromley Davis since 2018.

They are, in alphabetical order:

Brexit Iolanthe:

Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* Reimagined

The Euro Mikado:

Gilbert and Sullivan's masterpiece
Reset in the European Union

H.M.S. PetitFour:

Gilbert and Sullivan's masterpiece *HMS Pinafore*
Reset on a New Aircraft Carrier

The Pirates of Peckham:

Gilbert and Sullivan's Masterpiece
The Pirates of Penzance
Set in Peckham south London

The Women of the Guard:

Gilbert and Sullivan's
'The Yeomen of the Guard'
Reset in today's Wormwood Scrubs Prison

It appears that Mr. Davis ideated his conceits, downloaded online librettos, and quickly "updated" the dialogue and lyrics of each opera treated. These adaptations show signs of haste in editing, but perhaps the most important thing they teach us is what a masterful versifier W. S. Gilbert was, for Mr. Davis, in his updating of lyrics, often clearly gave up any real attempt to consistently preserve Gilbert's rhymes, schemes, and cleverness in his "updates": words often don't rhyme, nor do the lines always come trippingly on the tongue.

Mr. Davis also aspires, of course, to see productions of his works, but a quick Google search suggests that these have not yet materialized, nor have (at this writing in August 2021) the promised new works from Mr. Davis's computer, *Trial by Media* (set in a reality TV show), *Princess Ida and the Grammar School*, *Ruddigore Hospital NHS*, and *The Uber Taxis* (his take on *The Gondoliers*).

The works already published remind us of the sturdiness of the originals so treated.

The books are nicely printed, if poorly edited, with attractive and amusing photographs for covers, and their prices are refreshing when considering recent prices for scholarly books on G&S. But save your money! These libretti are recommended only for the Savoy bibliophiles who must have *everything* (I am one), but for no one else.



[If you must read these, Davis's adaptations are available for purchase at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). And remember that if new versions are what you want, GSA's *Fresh Takes on Gilbert & Sullivan* are free, and the forthcoming GSA production *The McAdo* should demonstrate how Gilbert & Sullivan can be adapted without vandalizing the original libretto.]

GSA's Silent Auction Needs YOU!

GSA's 45th Anniversary Gala will be held February 24, 2022 at Chez Zee. We hope you have marked your calendar for this festive evening of food, wine, song, and a spectacular SILENT AUCTION!

So, what can you contribute? Do you know a business that would donate a gift certificate that we would like to bid on? Do you have a special item that folks would cherish and bid to own? a particular painting? a first edition? Would you create a gift basket of cheeses and snacks with a bottle of wine?

Look around!

We all have special trinkets and treasures that we can pass on and they would bring a welcome contribution to GSA. These items will create a nice nest egg, so to speak, so we can bring you the finest stage productions of Gilbert & Sullivan's brilliant works for your enjoyment. Join in the fun of collecting and sharing, all for the benefit of our wonderful organization!

If your favorite business chooses to contribute, they will be recognized and thanked in our newsletter, on our website, and at the Gala.

Please let our Silent Auction Chair, **Sandra Ragona**, know via email at ssragona@gmail.com; write AUCTION in the subject line, please.

All items must have a value of at least \$25.

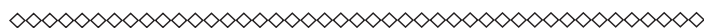
Thank you for your kind attention. We hope you can share.



Watching Fresh Takes 2 by Mary Hendren

As host **Michael Meigs** reminded viewers of **Fresh Takes 2**, the well-loved Victorian originals will always be there, featured in Gilbert & Sullivan Austin productions. In **Fresh Takes**, the originals relinquish the stage momentarily to Innovation with its surprises, zany and courageous.

Pretty courageous to begin the show with an in-Spanish production, **El Buque Parasol (The Good Ship Parasol)**, a parody of **H.M.S. Pinafore**. Congratulations to **Sebastian Vitale**, **Alejandra McGuire**, and the crew of high-energy singers and dancers. Their snappy choreography, nautical costumes, and dockside setting proved from start to finish that "sailing is our joy." Selections were vibrant, energetic, and funny. Did you catch the assortment of goodies in Mariposa's basket or Captain don José Galvan's footnote? Bravo to the crew: **Julian Arizola**, **Benjamin Bazan**, **Raphael de la Cruz**, **Monica Fossi**, **Leslie Gaar**, **Ana Kamarena**, **Anthonio Medrano**, and **Steven Reichel**.



El Buque Parasol (The Good Ship Parasol) based on the opening scenes of **H.M.S. Pinafore**



Sebastian Vitale
Captain don José Galvan



Alejandra McGuire
La Mariposa



crew of El Buque
(in alpha order)

Julián Arizola **Leslie Gaar**
Benjamin Bazán **Ana Kamarena**
Rafael de la Cruz **Anthonio Medrano**
Monica Fossi **Steven Reichel**

songs: "Disfrutamos navegar" ("Sailing is our joy")
"Mariposa"
"Gran tripulación" ("My gallant crew")

director: **Sebastian Vitale**

choreography: **Matthew Kennedy**

orchestra arrangements & recording: **Pablo Pupillo**

The second act took us from dockside to bedside and the Patter Trio. Their theme paired the all-important cell phone that matters so much today with the lively patter about what doesn't really matter. Thumbs up for **Alex Aponte**, **Kaitlyn Huston**, and **Ryan Scarlata**. Their enunciation, diction, projection were excellent. The cell phone, beach toys, sunscreen contrasted the contemporary with the Victorian in gentle slapstick. Remember J. Wellington Wells tubing in San Marcos? The Captain polishing his steering wheel? The dousing of the disagreeable man? In the end, when the pace of the patter picked up, the performers nailed it!

But wait—there's more!

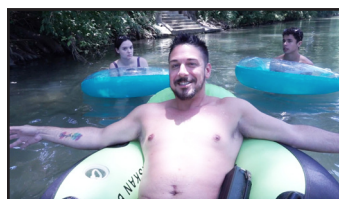
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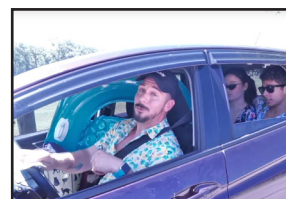
The Patter Trio



(l-r): **Ryan Scarlata**, **Alex Aponte**, **Kaitlyn Huston**
My eyes are fully open (but it really doesn't matter)



John Wellington Wells



polished up the handle



King Gama (on the shore)
receives no attention



rising early in the morning

songs: "My eyes are fully open" [slow] (**Ruddigore**)
"Rising early in the morning" (**The Gondoliers**)
"When I was a lad" (**H.M.S. Pinafore**)
"If you give me your attention" (**Princess Ida**)
"My name is John Wellington Wells" (**The Sorcerer**)
"My eyes are fully open" [fast] (**Ruddigore**)

director: **Allison Price**

piano: **PianoTrax.com** (third and last songs),
Jeanne Sasaki (all others)

captioning: **Jonah Fujikawa**

(continued from previous page)

Thanks to the Deaf Austin Theatre and Ground Floor Theater for the dramatic dream sequence setting for Ko-Ko's passion, sung by **Malysa Quinn**. The signing done by **Xavier Hagans** and **Leila Hanaumi** created multiple layers of emotion. Leila's "Titwillow" was lovely. The singing/signing quartet number was a cheerful integration of ASL and English. The garden, the oven, and the rustic outdoor stage created a dream-like venue for **The Mikado**. In his robust presentation, **Jeremy Rashad Brown** quipped, "I'm an acquired taste."

In swirls of white, pink, purple, and rose red, **Kirk Kelso**, with a touch of the diabolical and assisted by **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** and **Garrett Cordes**, brought out his list of “audience offenders that never would be missed.” The list motif has fascinated Gilbert & Sullivan fans for decades. In reading his list Kirk led with a punch. Some of the worst offenders are “fatheads, like the folks that don’t mute their phones but merely let them ring.” Kirk stepped on lots of toes! But he invited everyone to add more names to the list, because there are “plenty of spectators whose loss will be a distinct gain to the audience at large!”

The Roaring Mikado



**Leila Hanuami and
Malyssa Quinn**



**Xavier Hagans and
Jeremy Rashad Brown**



the bellow of the blast



pondering death by ... oven?

songs: "Alone, and yet alive!"
"On a tree by a river"
"There is beauty in the bellow of the blast"

directors: **Brian Cheslik, Lisa Scheps**

assistant director: **Amber Whatley**

ASL interpretation: **Taylor Flanagan, Faith Perez**

interpreter coordination: **Ploeger ASL Interpreting**

piano: **Jeanne Sasaki**

The Mikado parodies



(l-r): Garrett Cordes, Kirk Kelso, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona

songs: "Acting upon the stage" ("Taken from the county jail")
"As some day it may happen" (a.k.a. "I've got a little list")

collaborative creation by: **Kirk Kelso, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona,
and Marcelo Tesón**

lyrics: **Michael Meigs**

piano: **Jeanne Sasaki**

recording studio: **Queen Deelah's 4TheCltr**

Speaking of lists, many talented men and women are noted on **Fresh Takes 2** screen credits. Thanks for the creative efforts that made for a great show!

Episode 2 *production credits*

host: **Michael Meigs**

editing: **Marcelo Tesón**

production manager: **Bill Hatcher**

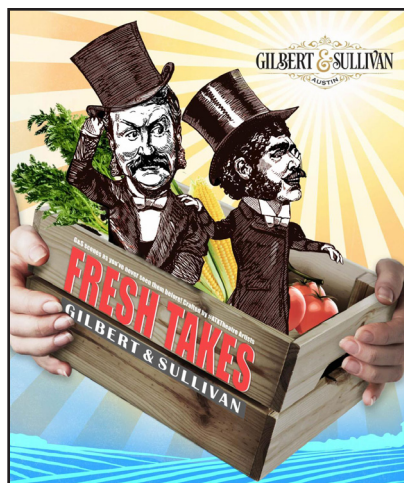
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now playing:
Fresh Takes on
Gilbert & Sullivan



Coming Events

- Sept. 18 **Fresh Takes Episode 3** online for one month (see p. 1)
- November **Back on the Boards : Wish You Were Here**
- Jan. 9 **Annual Meeting and Sing-Along**
- Feb. 24 **45th Anniversary Gala**
- Mar. 5-6 **The Sorcerer in Concert**
- June 10-19 **The McAdo** summer grand production



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