

# THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD



## Celebrating 45 Years of GSA by Diane Radin

The long-awaited, Covid-delayed Gala celebrating Gilbert & Sullivan Austin's forty-five years of bringing the works of Gilbert & Sullivan to Central Texas is coming April 7th at Chez Zee.



As you can see from the ad above, GSA is once again stretching the reach of G&S, this time into the world of film noir.

The entertainment for the evening will amplify (pun intended) four classic films noir with appropriate songs from the G&S repertoire. It would be fun to try to guess which songs director **Janette Jones** has selected for which characters from *Key Largo*, *Laura*, *Double Indemnity*, and *Sunset Boulevard*. If you have a chance, screen them before the Gala and tell Janette your guesses.



Four outstanding singers will perform for us: **Leann Fryer**, **June Julian**, **Josue Hernandez**, and **Robert LeBas**. **Jeanne Sasaki** will provide the piano accompaniment.

In addition to the entertainment, GSA will take the opportunity to induct four very deserving individuals into our Hall of Fame:

- **Andy Fleming**—long-time GSA performer and Chorus Master who took the baton with a few hours' notice when *Jeffrey Jones-Ragona* had an emergency appendectomy
- **June Julian**—our perennial performer and past president who raised the professionalism and production values of GSA
- **Michael Meigs**—in addition to serving as bursar, his extensive knowledge of theater and his high standing in the Austin theater community have been incredible assets to GSA
- **Jeanne Sasaki**—piano accompanist extraordinaire whose calm demeanor and kind manner bring out the best in the singers

See the article on page 4 to whet your appetite for the silent auction.

Seating for the sit-down dinner is limited, so please make your reservation as soon as possible. When you make your reservation, you will be asked to select your dinner menu from among several entrees.

GSA's 45th Anniversary Gala

Thursday, April 7, at 6:30 pm

Chez Zee 5406 Balcones Dr.

Tickets \$50 VIP Tickets \$100

Reserve at [www.gilbertsullivan.org](http://www.gilbertsullivan.org)

Seating is limited, so reserve early

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## The Sorcerer in Concert 2022

Reviewed by Rick Perkins

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[www.CTXLiveTheatre.com](http://www.CTXLiveTheatre.com)

Every time I've seen a musical production by Gilbert & Sullivan Austin, I've been astounded. They are consistently a first-class operation on every single level, a finely tuned ensemble in performance, supported by meticulous administrative detail. The decorated veterans of this nationally recognized, highly awarded company send you away amazed at their artistic craftsmanship. Saturday's performance of **The Sorcerer in Concert 2022** added to their long list of grand accomplishments.

Director of the production Jeffrey Jones-Ragona was onstage describing the history of Gilbert & Sullivan and **The Sorcerer** as we entered the gorgeous, immaculate Worley Barton Theater. I confess that my knowledge of G&S came from six previous GSA shows, each better and more broadly versatile than the last. W.S. Gilbert & Arthur Sullivan's long reign began in 1871 with a short operetta, the now lost **Thespis**. Their collaborations vaulted them into the super stardom status that their works still enjoy worldwide. Diane Radin, president of the GSA board, thanked the crews, the volunteers, the board, and us, the eager audience safely ensconced comfortably apart, for the company's re-opening after the COVID era. She announced the 45th anniversary gala, finally set for April 7 at Chez Zee, featuring a "film noir" setting.



We were expecting the promised Las Vegas wedding chapel, complete with booming Elvis interpreter. The opening wasn't



an overture; instead, pianist Joseph Choi surprised us with his performance of Chopin's Scherzo No. 2, Op. 31, well known to London's 19th century audiences. The crowd was enthralled by his drama, dynamism and brilliantly subtle technique. Choi, a graduate of Julliard and formerly a student of Anton Nel, is on the faculty of Concordia University. Do yourselves a huge favor and seek him out whenever you can, perhaps with Panoramic Voices of Austin. I'm expecting this young man will grace concert halls internationally.



As for **The Sorcerer in Concert 2022**, where do we begin amidst such talent? Solos, duets, quartets were highlights, and when the full chorus joined in, the collective energies rose gloriously in our socially distanced audience space. Stage and music director Jones-Ragona skillfully managed pacing and blocking, moving action smoothly to each rousing plot point. The story revolves around a stage magician with the love potion—"it's a philter!!!!" (a recurring gag, of which there were many). Holton Johnson was the target of gentle ribbing as lead tenor (well deserved, from this baritone's point of view).



Pei-Chun Wang,  
Stephen Maus

It seems unfair to choose among so many exquisite moments, but here we go:

- The sweetly yearning duet "Welcome joy, adieu to sadness" between Marmaduke and Lady Sangazure, nimbly voiced by über-talents Stephen Maus and the stunning Pei-Chun Wang.
- Brenham Sean Adams as the magician inciting the riotous romances, racing on with a show-stopping opening number "My name is John Wellington Wells." My eyes practically



Brenham  
Sean Adams



(l-r) Jay Young, Patricia Combs, Pei-Chun Wang, Derek Smootz, Stephen Maus, Iona Olive, Holton Johnson, Sydney Pérez, Andy Fleming, Brittany Trinité, Rosa Mondragon Harris, Brett Hardy, Sarah Manna, Alyssa Muir, Jake Jacobsen, Trinidad Agosto, Garrett Cordes, June Julian, Brenham Sean Adams, Nicholas Ryland, Janette Jones



criss-crossed just trying to read the syllables flying across captioned supertitles. I couldn't keep up; I'm still dizzy from that ride. Compared to this F1 race, "I am a model of a modern major general" from **The Pirates of Penzance** feels like a nap on the couch!

- Holton Johnson as Alexis, that tormented tenor, poised and confident, seemed to have no need of a body mic.
- The "Oh joy, oh joy" quartet with chorus in Act II, is a fun fast frolic. Johnson, Sydney Pérez in her live debut here (she and cast member Nicholas Ryland appeared in Helen Park's video **Fresh Take of Princess Ida**), shining delight Alyssa Muir, and welcome GSA veteran Jay Young provided a giddy time with the powerful chorus bringing it all triumphantly home.



Jay Young, Alyssa Muir  
(Notary, Constance Partlet)



Sydney Pérez, Holton Johnson  
(Aline Sangazure, Alexis Poindextre)

- GSA Hall-of-Famer Janette Jones, an Austin stage legend since the late 70s and now on the GSA board, provided drive and colorful energy as narrator. She slyly commented on the action of our confounded consorts and romantic entanglements. Her comic timing was well played and welcomed at each subtle utterance.



Janette Jones

Production Manager Bill Hatcher assembled a tech team well versed in G&S. Jennifer Rogers's various lighting designs were tastefully tacky, meeting our expectations for a drive-thru wedding chapel and a Las Vegas honeymoon. Kudos go to stage manager Monica Kurtz for keeping the trains running. All her cats were herded quite well.

Set designer Andy Heilveil used a technicolor projection of Vegas landmarks to great effect. His truly gaudy arbor set piece was a fine addition to midnight Vegas revelry where Trinidad Agosto was the singing Elvis justice of the peace. Its good gaudy measure added a hunka hunka buncha love potion.



This concert version reimagines the G&S satire of the old chestnut version of musical romance. It's a wonderful romp, an evening spent in a live setting, something we've long been missing. This reviewer can hardly wait for the GSA June offering of **The Mikado**, now set in Scotland as **The McAdo!** Men in kilts and this superb Austin arts company will provide a treasure trove sure to thrill the adoring fans they so deserve.

GSA, you've all made Austin proud yet again. Thanks to this visionary company for breaking us out of the Covid blues by again sharing the joys of live theatre!

**The Sorcerer in Concert 2022**  
photos on pages 2-3 courtesy Alex Labry  
see more at [gilbertsullivan.austin.smugmug.com](http://gilbertsullivan.austin.smugmug.com)



Holton Johnson, Sydney Pérez, Brenham Sean Adams  
" 'Tis twelve, I think"



Patricia Combs, Alyssa Muir  
(Mrs. Partlet, Constance Partlet)



Jake Jacobsen  
(Ahrimanes) Brenham Sean Adams  
(JW Wells)



Garrett Cordes  
(Hercules)



June Julian, Brittany Trinité, Iona Olive, Sarah Manna, Rosa Mondragon Harris  
"With heart and with voice"



Sydney Pérez, Holton Johnson, Patricia Combs, Stephen Maus, Trinidad Agosto  
"I rejoice that it's decided"



## At long last, *The McAdo* by Dave Wieckowski Chair, GSA Mikado Committee

In June, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin will present *The McAdo*. This show will largely stay true to the original, *The Mikado*, but the setting will be moved from Japan to the highlands of Scotland. I wrote a series of articles in 2019 that explained our process. That was in anticipation of a scheduled June 2020 production, but we all know what happened then. After two years away from the live stage due to the pandemic, we are excited to finally bring you this show! So I'd like to give a brief refresher of our *McAdo* process, and how we got here.

Although *The Mikado* is still much loved throughout the world, we determined that it is simply no longer appropriate to present these British characters in their Japanese disguise. In recent years, production companies in major cities throughout the US have tried to present the original *Mikado*, and ran into intense headwinds due to what many felt were hurtful representations of Japanese characters and culture in the show. In addition to this, we determined that presenting a traditional *Mikado* would expose us to negative media, loss of grant funding, and more. We convened a committee to explore our options for performing the show, and 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 quickly agreed that the ideal new setting would be a mythical, medieval town in Scotland. This allowed us to portray the characters in accordance with their true British nature, and also keep the libretto largely intact. To ensure inclusiveness, we then held a series of meetings with influential members of the Austin theater community, the Asian-American community, and the Scottish community, to convey our plans and solicit feedback. Although they were generally opposed to us staging a traditional *Mikado*, we were thrilled to hear their unanimous enthusiasm for *The McAdo*. We knew we were on the right track!

So what exactly is different in *The McAdo*, and what remains the same? The most notable changes will be in the costumes and sets, which will reflect Scotland instead of Japan. Regarding the libretto, I think you'll be amazed at how few changes are required to the actual spoken text. We tackled those changes in 2 categories: character names, and other spoken words and phrases. For character names, there will be only 3 substantive changes: Nanki-Poo becomes Nanky Doug, Yum Yum becomes Wynn Somme, and the town of Titipu becomes Ballydew. All other character names either remain unchanged, are spelled in a Scottish style but are pronounced exactly the same way (e.g. Katisha becomes Katishagh), or are listed in the playbill but never spoken on stage.

We were also very pleasantly surprised at how few changes were required to other spoken words and phrases. In the entire spoken libretto, there are only 14 occurrences of the words "Japan" or "Japanese." These are easily replaced by Scottish themed words such as Gaelic, Highlander, and Clan. In addition, there were just 4 phrases that we felt evoked a Japanese theme, and they were edited as well (e.g. "With many a screen and fan" becomes "With many a tartan grand"). So that's it! Out of the entire show, aside from the 3 character names mentioned above, there are a total of only 18 spoken changes to words and phrases required.

Last, and possibly most important, is the musical score. Perhaps Sullivan's most recognizable music, I hear passages from *The Mikado* regularly in movies, television, and other media. I'm happy to say that this wonderful score will remain virtually intact for *The McAdo*, so you'll be able to enjoy all the great songs you love. The only change will be in the *Miya Sama* section, which has a decidedly Japanese feel to it in melody, orchestration, and lyrics. But all other music in the production is assured to remain unchanged.

*The McAdo* will run June 10-19 at the Worley Barton Theater. Tickets go on sale in April.

I think you'll find that everything that makes *The Mikado* such a fabulous show will also be found in *The McAdo*. See you there!

## Gala Silent Auction The Most Eclectic Shopping in Central Texas

Thoughtful individuals and businesses have generously provided many items for you to browse, bid for, and buy at the Silent Auction at the GSA Gala on April 7th.

From glass to masks, from jewels to silk, from wine & cheese to restaurant gift certificates, from art to a quilt – this will be the most eclectic shopping you will get to do all year. We will accept cash, check, or credit card so that you can take home a treasure while you support Gilbert & Sullivan Austin.



A big THANK YOU to all who contributed and special thanks to organizer **Saundra Ragona**. Some of the items available are:

- from **Austin Fiber Artists** – silk jacket
- from **Chuy's Restaurant** – gift certificate
- from **Leann Fryer** – quilt
- from **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** – breakfast basket
- from **Monica Kurtz** – wine & cheese event
- from **Melanie Lewis** – blue art glass bowl, Italian music mask
- from **Eileen Pestorius** – framed watercolor
- from **Saundra Ragona** – crystal bowls

But wait ... there's more! Come see for yourself at the Gala!





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Diane Radin

After two long years of life without live Gilbert & Sullivan, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin finally came out from under cover to present a joyful, surprising, glitzy version of ***The Sorcerer***. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona's imaginative take brightened

the stage and brought new life to G&S's third collaboration. Having attended many of the rehearsals, I know first-hand the care and effort that JJR put into bringing out the best in all the performers. His vision extended to the staging and all the appropriate text changes needed to bring the show to Las Vegas. Thank you, Jeffrey, for giving us a show to be proud of. The cast and crew are to be complimented on their efforts and particularly for their willingness to take multiple Covid tests over that past few weeks.

The video of ***The Sorcerer in Concert 2022*** will be made available on the GSA website before ***The McAdo*** comes along in June.

The world suddenly seems much scarier with Ukraine displacing Covid on our minds. Even climate change (and "change" is a euphemism for "worsening") has been submerged in concerns about Russia and their nuclear warheads. How do we stay in equilibrium when the world seems to be heading to disaster on multiple fronts? My rabbi recently quoted Reb Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810), who lived in Ukraine and had a difficult, and short, life. Reb Nachman said, "To transcend our difficulties we are to constantly bring joy into our life—even if we have to resort to silliness from time to time." I hope that GSA is helping bring about Reb Nachman's wish for all of us. The "silliness" of G&S has a place, even in these dark days.

## Join Us!

We encourage you to join GSA to help 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, 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! You will find us listed as "Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Austin Texas Inc."



This framed watercolor by noted local artist Eileen Pestorius is among the items available in our 45th Anniversary Gala's Silent Auction.

(see article on page 4)

Sixty-Second Book Reviews, #12

## ***Nothing Like Work and A Bit More Like Work***

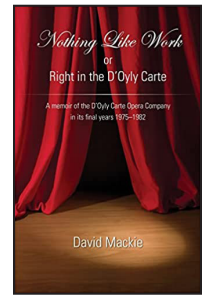
by David Mackie

Reviewed by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.



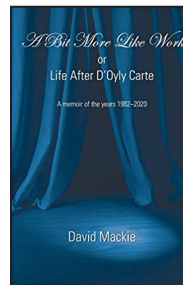
In 2018, David Mackie published ***Nothing Like Work, or Right in the D'Oyly Carte: A memoir of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company in its final years, 1975-1982***.

It was the sort of book I'd been wanting to read for years (and complemented Roberta Morrell's two volumes of reminiscences reviewed earlier), for it is filled with information regarding the nuts and bolts of this touring company that meant so much to Gilbert & Sullivan enthusiasts. David Mackie was at the center of much of it, serving first as repetiteur and then as chorus master and associate music director for the company. He conducted the final full performance of a Savoy opera of the company formed in the late 1870s to perform the works of Gilbert & Sullivan.



David Mackie relied on his comprehensive diaries in reconstructing his experience of seven years, and fans of The D'Oyly Carte will revel in his tales of his colleagues, stories of touring in England and internationally, of London seasons, of a performance at Windsor Castle, and also of the participation of members of the company in the filming of ***Chariots of Fire***.

I met David in London at the time of the centenary celebrations of ***The Mikado*** in March, 1985, and we've been in touch since. I was one of many who encouraged him to continue his memoirs, and this second volume was published at the end of last year: ***A Bit More Like Work, or Life After D'Oyly Carte: A memoir of the years 1982-2020***. Again his detailed diaries were pressed into service in his recollection of nearly four decades of challenging experiences as a freelance musician. There are many engaging memories of his continuing adventures with Gilbert & Sullivan



(my name even pops up several times), but other musical experiences are covered as well as David strives—successfully!—to make a living from his art. This second book, while completing his saga, is perhaps devoted more to listing people and places than the first, necessitated by his subject. It also benefits from an index, sadly missing from the first. But at a time when Savoy opera literature is being published with cover prices in three figures, his books are very reasonably priced and pleasant reading for anyone who can't get too much of Gilbert & Sullivan—and D'Oyly Carte. Each is enlivened with candid photographs that will be new to most Savoyards.

Both of David Mackie's books, ***Nothing Like Work*** and ***A Bit More Like Work*** (Tolworth, Surrey: Grosvenor House Publishing Limited, 2018 and 2021) are available from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



graphic design by Jennifer Rose Davis

## Coming Events

Apr. 7 **45th Anniversary Gala** (see article, p. 1)

June 10-19 **The McAdo** summer grand production  
(see article, p. 4)

## Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive about May 1; the deadline for submissions is April 12. Please send your news to [news@gilbertsullivan.org](mailto:news@gilbertsullivan.org). Thanks!



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**THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD - APRIL 2022**

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

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