

THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **Diane Radin**

Thank you to all who have already bought tickets to **The McAdo**! As of writing this article, ticket sales are up from the best pre-covid years and up compared to this time last year. Also up is the number of VIP tickets at \$100 per person. VIPs get a reserved parking spot and recognition in the playbill and from the stage.



Please keep talking up the show. There are still plenty of seats for all nine performances and all seats at the Worley Barton Theater are good seats. Visit our website at www.gilbertsullivan.org to purchase tickets.

As all sophisticated theatergoers know, ticket sales do not cover production costs. GSA is proud to pay all our singers, musicians, and crew as well as the production manager, artistic director, choreographer, and music director. A large part of our production budget is rent for the venue and rehearsal space. Volunteers help in countless ways: providing meals and snacks for our energetic cast and crews, they usher, act as house manager, put out VIP parking signs, sell T-shirts and other merchandise, provide concessions, set up for the gala, create the playbill, arrange publicity, and much more.

If you attend Austin Opera or ZACH or Austin Film Society or any other arts organization, you will notice that there is a long list of supporters in their playbills and on their websites. If you have a connection to any foundations that are sources of arts funding, please share that information with me and GSA will apply for a grant.

The City of Austin Cultural Arts Division had been a generous source of support for many years with funds from the hotel occupancy tax. However, the city has redirected much of its cultural arts funding toward groups that have been marginalized and/or traditionally underfunded. GSA was turned down for the first group of city grants, called Thrive, and will submit a request to the second round of funding, called Elevate, due at the end of June.

We are very grateful for the support of the Still Water Foundation, and we hope that the Texas Commission on the Arts will once again provide us with a grant this year. We also get a grant from HEB that underwrites much of what is served at our opening night gala and some meals for

the cast and crew on those days when they must be at the theater for the entire day. When you see how energetically the cast performs, you will understand why the GSA board is determined to keep them fed and happy.

Rehearsals are well underway, and the cast is excited to be part of this production. **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** has been holding music rehearsals since mid-April. By the time you read this, **Michelle Haché**, Artistic Director, and **Christine Jean-Jacques**, Choreographer, will have arrived in Austin and be busy putting the cast through their paces. Costumes are being fitted and sewn. We can't wait for "load-in" at the theater at the end of May. There is so much that goes on behind the scenes—sets built, lights installed, sound checked, lighting cued, supertitles readied, blocking every move by the cast in every scene. Production Manager **Jennifer Rogers** oversees it all. Their goal: your unbounded enjoyment of **The McAdo**.

I can't wait to see you at **The McAdo**, June 9-18.

GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S
NEW MIKADO

The McAdo



JUNE 9-18
GET TICKETS

2023 Summer Grand Production
Worley Barton Theater, 11908 North Lamar, Austin

Friday	June 9	7:30	Free Gala Buffet after show
Saturday	June 10	2:00	
Saturday	June 10	7:30	Pre-Show Talk (6:30)
Sunday	June 11	2:00	
Thursday	June 15	7:30	Reduced-Price Thursday
Friday	June 16	7:30	Pre-Show Talk (6:30)
Saturday	June 17	2:00	
Saturday	June 17	7:30	
Sunday	June 18	2:00	Gary Hallock Children's Activities Day (1:00)

For ticket information, please visit our website at www.gilbertsullivan.org

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Remembering Gary Hallock and Libby Weed

by Gilbert & Sullivan Austin

Libby Weed and Gary Hallock have been beloved members and leaders of our Gilbert & Sullivan Austin for decades. They passed away due to illness within nine days of one another.

In March and April 1976, Zachary Scott Theatre Center staged a production of Gilbert & Sullivan's **H.M.S. Pinafore**. Enid Hallock starred as Little Buttercup and her son Gary was an Able Seaman in the chorus. In the audience were Libby and Michael Weed. After the show closed, the performers agreed that Austin needed more Gilbert & Sullivan. That was the beginning of The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Austin (now known as Gilbert & Sullivan Austin). Enid was a founding member. Gary and his new bride Chris enthusiastically supported the venture. The following year we produced **The Sorcerer** with Enid as Lady Sangazure and Gary as the Notary.



Gary, Katharine Shields, Enid



Gary's love of word play attracted him not only to Gilbert's clever lyrics but also to organized competitive punning. He helped found and emcee Austin's annual O. Henry Pun-Off World Championship not long after the founding of Gilbert & Sullivan Austin. Gary won the Pun-Off in 1989 and produced it from 1990 to 2015. A talented craftsman, Gary joined his parents and brothers in constructing and managing The Old Homestead apartments in north Austin. He applied that talent to creating props for our shows and guided us in publicizing them.



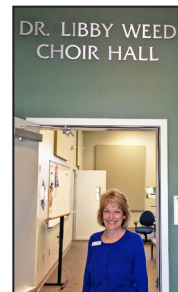
(photo courtesy Martin Luecke)

We struggled to produce our single show each year. Meanwhile, we enjoyed discussions and sing-alongs at members' homes or in church community rooms. Enid and Bruce Hallock's home was generally the setting throughout the 1980s. As the 1990s progressed, we began to organize occasional musicales and mini-productions, sometimes in homes, sometimes in theaters.



Libby and Michael Weed attended the occasional show and became members in 1990. Libby and daughter Susan were in the chorus of our 1994 **H.M.S. Pinafore**. Libby joined the G&S board in 1994 and served as President from 1996 through 1999. She remained on the Board through 2004 and then took a few years off. She returned in 2008 and was elected president in 2009, a position she held through 2020, a tenure of twelve exciting years.

Dr. Libby Weed, née Mary Elisabeth Summerlin, earned a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from UT. She served as principal at Brentwood Christian School for thirty years, retiring in 2014; they named their choir hall in her honor. Her calm demeanor, astute judgment, and exceptional organizing ability were precisely what our growing G&S group needed. She was also a gifted author, creating the **Read-N-Grow Picture Bible** and, with her husband Michael, the **Bible Handbook: A Guide to Basic Bible Learning**. For us, she wrote delightful newsletter columns often profiling our members. Under her leadership, the quality and number of our productions rose. Artistic director Ralph MacPhail, Jr. and music director Dr. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona were the dream team for creating our grand summer productions of consistently high quality.



Gary in *The Sorcerer* 2001;
Libby in *H.M.S. Pinafore* 2000

Libby appeared on stage again in the chorus of our 2000 **H.M.S. Pinafore**. Gary reprised his role as the Notary in the 2001 staging of **The Sorcerer**. The next generation joined us. Susan Weed was Fiametta in our 1995 **The Gondoliers**. Andrew Hallock performed in the choruses of our 1998 **The Mikado** and 1999 **Patience**; in 2001 he joined his father onstage in **The Sorcerer**. Andrew also directed music for two mini-productions: our 2002 **The Grand Duke in Concert** and (with proud grandma Enid in the chorus) the 2003 **Iolanthe in Concert**.

Remembering Gary Hallock and Libby Weed, *continued*

Libby's engaging personality brought a sense of excitement to everything she did. She happily became the on-stage presence of GSA for our meetings and productions and for KMFA interviews.



Reba Gillman welcomes
Libby into the GSA
Hall of Fame 2011



From 2003 onward Gary applied his wit and genius for innovation to establishing the tradition of a children's activities day as a regular feature of our grand productions. He guided youngsters through an "Orchestra Petting Zoo," where they saw and learned about the instruments. Then he brought them up on stage to learn a dance routine from the show. Additional activities depended on the show and sprang from his creative juices: a magician performed before ***The Sorcerer*** and children assembled fairy wings before ***Iolanthe***. Gary constructed the broad, colorful signs we posted each year to guide people to Brentwood Christian School's Worley Barton Theater, which is nestled in the woods. Some folks might not have found it otherwise!



children with crafts at ***Patience*** 2012,
learning a dance before ***Iolanthe*** 2019,
playing ghost at ***Ruddigore*** 2018



at GSA's Got Talent in January: (clockwise from lower left) Chris Hallock,
Tomas Kardos, Gary Hallock, Andrew Hallock, Loel Graber, Libby Weed

Health concerns led Libby to turn over the GSA reins to Diane Radin in 2021. (She also had us pass a change to the bylaws to say that no President could serve more than six consecutive terms. We belatedly recognized the toll that position takes.) Libby continued to support us and attended shows and rehearsals when she could. She was involved in our reconceptualization of ***The McAdo*** and looked forward to seeing those plans come to fruition. Although she did not see ***The McAdo*** in 2022, which was canceled after only a single performance due to Covid (her tickets were for a few days later), she had enjoyed attending a rehearsal and proudly wore the production T-shirt.

Libby and Gary surprised and delighted us all by attending our ***Gilbert & Sullivan and Sondheim*** show in March. Both were under close medical care. Gary had to check himself out of the hospital to join us!

We will ensure that their legacies endure. They are two of the most vital figures in the history of Gilbert & Sullivan Austin.

In honor of Libby Weed's significant contributions as an educator and long-term Board president, we made the decision last year to name our scholarship program for her and announced that at our 45th anniversary gala. We paid tribute to her in ***The McAdo*** 2022 playbill, and we retain that section of the playbill this year. Our tribute to her has become more poignant and even more meaningful.

We honor Gary by designating the Gary Hallock Children's Activities Day.

Gary Hallock died on April 25, 2023. He is survived by wife Christine; sons Andrew (partner Tomas) and Thomas (partner Antonia); and granddaughters Sonia and Fern.

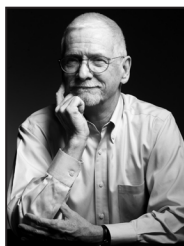


Libby Weed died on May 3, 2023. She is survived by husband Michael; children and spouses Susan and Patrick Womack and Jonathan and Amber Weed; and grandchildren Mary, Hannah, Daniel, Luke, Natalie, and Anna.

Gary and Libby are loved and missed by all their GSA friends.

The McAdo's Metafictional Delight by Michael Meigs

One of the comfortable delights about Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado* is the way that characters often draw laughs by pointing out precisely that they are not Japanese and the setting is not Japan. Scholar Gayden Wren, whose *A Gilbert & Sullivan Christmas Carol* we will present in January 2024 (a belated Christmas present!) points this out in his G&S survey *A Most Ingenious Paradox: The Art of Gilbert and Sullivan* [Oxford University Press, 2001]. Having established the action in the mythical Japanese town of Titipu, the libretto



shatters the apparent 'realism' of their Japan with playful abandon. For example, "The Japanese equivalent for 'Hear, hear, hear!' breaks the tacit agreement that audience members will assume that the characters are speaking Japanese, even though they hear it in English.

Wren notes that the opera "has literally dozens of such moments" and comments that nowhere else in the canon do G&S use this comic technique. Actors improvised some of the jokes in rehearsal, and Gilbert, normally somewhat severe with such antics, kept many. This "meta" technique is related to but not the same as the early modern "theatrical aside" in which a performer directly addresses the audience, thereby "breaking the fourth wall" (a coinage of French philosopher Denis Diderot, 1716 - 1784).

A theatre audience accepts an implicit contract with the company for suspension of disbelief (a term invented in 1817 by British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge) and is jolted into laughter when a performer or novelist reminds them of that fact. *The Mikado* certainly wasn't the first to use the technique. Cervantes employed it in *Don Quixote*, as did Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* and William Makepeace Thackeray in *Vanity Fair*. In the mid-twentieth century so many English-language authors were jolting their readers by reminding them of the artifices of the novel that in 1970 American critic and novelist William Gass invented the term "metafiction" for the approach.

Once more, everything old is new again. But what happens when we move our comic opera from a mythical Japan to a mythical Scotland, transforming *The Mikado* into *The McAdo*?

Some of the jokes lose a bit of punch, for in our theatrical compact with the audience our Scottish characters are already speaking in English—vividly accented English, but still! So "*as I wonder, in my artless Japanese way*" becomes Wynn Somme's "*as I wonder, in my artless schoolgirl way*" and Coco's sally about pocket handkerchiefs may suggest not a cultural clash but instead a bit of snuffy disdain ("*it might have been written on his pocket handkerchief -- but [Japanese/Highlanders] don't use pocket handkerchiefs!*") Tentative conclusion: the power of the comic jolt is a function of the cultural gap to be bridged!

The fun of the familiar silly story is undiminished in the Highlands, for with those wonderful costumes, the gorgeous song and choreography, and the rich language, it is perhaps just as exotic as the original, at least in the eyes of a U.S. audience. And some of the "meta" humor still comes through brilliantly.

After all, as *The McAdo* admonishes us in dismissive, lofty, and entirely "meta" style, *I'm really very sorry for you all, but it's an unjust world, and virtue is triumphant only in theatrical performances!*

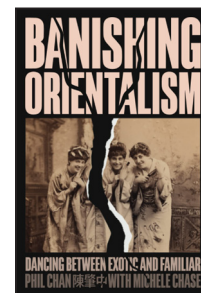
Briefly Noted, #1

Banishing Orientalism: Dancing Between Exotic and Familiar by Phil Chan with Michele Chase

Reviewed by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

This is not a Gilbert & Sullivan book, but it will be of interest to Savoyards wishing to take a deep dive into "cultural appropriation" (defined by the author as "claiming and benefitting from the stories of others")—a movement that has led to innovative productions of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado*, such as our own *The McAdo* this summer.

The book is almost entirely centered on classic Western ballet, particularly the many with Eastern stories or elements, and the ways they have been stereotypically presented in the West. This book discusses the roles of "tradition," predominantly White male choreographers, Westerners' "understanding" of Eastern art and culture, and other issues that need attention. And he offers positive ways these ballets can be kept in the repertory, after the challenging work of re-thinking and re-conceptualizing. He is under no illusions that change will be easy or fast, but makes a convincing case that these changes must be made for the art form to survive.



Several brief references to *The Mikado* are confined to two pages (143 and 171), associating it or its music with well-known operas and two short-lived ballet performances and acknowledging Gilbert's use of Orientalism to mock the English. I found it ironic that an iconic "three little maids" photograph is reproduced in the text—and the same photo is featured on the cover, but torn in two—a visual metaphor for the author's thesis.

Phil Chan, *Banishing Orientalism* (Yellow Peril Press, 2023) is available from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

News of Members

GSA Board member **Derek Smootz** is co-directing (with his wife **Rebecca**, also an alum of multiple GSA productions) **9 to 5: The Musical** at the Gaslight-Baker Theatre in Lockhart. It will run July 15 to August 6. For more information, go to mygbt.org.

Derek continues to produce his podcast, "The Community of Theatre," exploring the world of local, amateur, and not-for-profit theatre. Episodes are usually released on the 1st and 15th of each month. The eighth episode, from February 15, 2023, features our own **Michael Meigs** discussing the role of journalistic reviewing and criticism in the community theatre world.

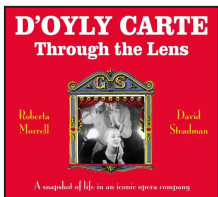
D'Oyly Carte Through the Lens **by Roberta Morrell** **and David Steadman**

Reviewed by **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**



The subtitle on the dust-jacket of this treasure-trove of photographs reads, “A snapshot of life in an iconic opera company,” which is something of an understatement, for this nicely produced, large-format “coffee-table book” contains several hundred snapshots, about half in color, of generations of Savoyards and staff personnel that supported them on their annual 48-week tours taking Gilbert & Sullivan to audiences far and wide.

If the names of the authors are familiar, it may be because earlier books by Miss Morrell and Mr. Steadman have been reviewed here, Roberta Morrell’s in *The Austin Savoyards* of December-January 2016-17 and April 2021, and David Steadman’s in June 2017. They were both members of the well-loved D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and have used their friendships with their old pals to unearth never-before published photos of their colleagues at work, in preparing for work, and at play. As the authors note in their Introduction: “That so many D'Oyly Carters have dusted off their treasured photo albums to provide material for this book is a measure of the love they share for their time with the company. The camaraderie engendered by the rigors of an itinerant lifestyle away from home and family for months at a time is evidenced by the fun shining out from so many of their personal mementos.”



Indeed it is. Most of the Gilbert & Sullivan literature has been graced by overly familiar publicity photos and studio portraits, ancient and modern, but the emphasis here is different—and welcome. There are photos of company couples’ weddings, sports competitions, backstage

candid, hijinks onstage (and off), members engaged in their hobbies, and so much more. My one criticism of the book is that many of the photos appear so reduced as to be hard on my old eyes (especially those pictures with multiple subjects), but there are few I would have eliminated for lack of room. If all of these delights had been given their due, the book would have been priced unreasonably.

The original D'Oyly Carte closed in 1982, and the appearance of this book so many years later suggests the love that many still treasure for the company and many of the members who made this publication possible. A handy index at the back makes it easy to find favorites among the photos.

I think of it as the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company’s final curtain-call.

Roberta Morrell and David Steadman’s *D'Oyly Carte Through the Lens* (Market Harborough, Leicestershire: Matador, 2022) is available from [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk).

June 2023



Win Bent, **GSA's New House Manager** by **Mary Hendren**

What to do if someone in the audience falls asleep during the show and starts snoring? What if a patron sits in the wrong seat and makes a fuss

about it? What if a person falls and gets hurt during the performance? Is it okay to call an ambulance? Oh, by the way, something’s leaking in the bathroom!

About a snoring patron, professional House Manager Peter Kulock (Majestic Theater) said “I wake him up and remind him of theater etiquette.” Joy Magyawe professional House Manager (Stephen Sondheim Theater) says, “there are always situations that need attention. One day you could be dealing with a leak in the bathrooms, not knowing where it’s coming from. The next, you could be dealing with an unexplained fire alarm in the middle of the night.”

Over the years, the dedicated GSA House Managers have, no doubt, experienced incidents that kept them on their toes and challenged their quick witted-ness. But for the most part the House Manager for Gilbert & Sullivan Austin is a dream job. He or she orchestrates a great audience experience by making everyone feel welcome, safe, and appreciated. **Win Bent** has volunteered to serve as House Manager for upcoming GSA shows. In this role he will find himself lobby center greeting guests, welcoming VPs, engaging in conversation, stowing wheelchairs, helping patrons find seats, maintaining order, and answering questions like,



When will the doors open?

Where are the restrooms?

Can I take my water bottle into the show?

Do you need any volunteers?

Win and his wife Susan Richter moved to Austin in 1996. He “retired” from what he says was a “long and questionable career” in music—“rock, folk, bluegrass, and pit orchestra groups, including multiple G&S productions.” Since retiring, Win has stayed busy coordinating “concerts, festivals, book signings, and the many other events that take place at CPC” (Central Presbyterian Church). Win has spent time “onstage, backstage, front of house” and in the production side of theater, entertainment experiences. It will be a pleasure getting acquainted with Win and hearing his stories. With *The McAdo* coming soon, June 9-18, we’re confident that Win in his personal style will create the ambience audiences have come to love.

The Austin Savoyard

GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S MIKADO

AS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE



P.O. Box 684542
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Coming Events

June 9-18 **The McAdo** summer grand production

For more information, please visit our website at

www.gilbertsullivan.org

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/.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late August; the deadline for submissions will be about August 1. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

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THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD - JUNE 2023

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