

THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD



President's Corner

by Diane Radin

Love in the Air

There are two months in which love is traditionally thought to be in the air: February because of Valentine's Day and June because of those June brides. How fitting for Gilbert & Sullivan Austin. **H.M.S. Pinafore** auditions were held in February and the grand production will happen in June.

And love is the theme that steers the ship.

Will Josephine consent to marry Ralph Rackstraw, a lowly sailor? Or will Sir Joseph Porter win her affections? What might be going on between Buttercup and Captain Corcoran?

Does rank and station really matter in matters of the heart?

Love is in the air and in the airs that are sung.

All these questions will be resolved and answered in GSA's grand production of one of Gilbert & Sullivan's biggest hits – **H.M.S. Pinafore**. It ran for 571 performances in its initial London run and then went on the road with two companies taking the show into the provinces. And more than fifty unauthorized productions were soon playing across America.

Where did Gilbert get his ideas for this libretto? It is known that Gilbert loved the sea and sailing. He strived for accuracy in the sets and costumes for **Pinafore**. So, the setting makes sense. But what about the plot?

Gilbert was the author of the **Bab Ballads** which were published in various humor magazines. (They are all available online at gsarchive.net/bab_ballads/bab_home.html, together with Gilbert's charming sketches.) In a nutshell, Gilbert plagiarized himself. (Is that possible?) Several of the ballads contain key elements of **Pinafore**'s plot.

Among JOE GOLIGHTLY's 23 verses we find:

He liked his ship at sea,
He loved the salt sea-water,
He worshipped junk, and he
Adored the First Lord's daughter.
The First Lord's daughter proud,
Snubbed Earls and Viscounts nightly –
She sneered at Barts aloud,
And spurned poor JOE GOLIGHTLY.

The daughter in the ballad is Jane, but it does not take much to rename her Josephine and rename Joe Golightly as Ralph Rackstraw.

continued on page 2

Gilbert & Sullivan's most popular comic opera!



GILBERT & SULLIVAN
H.M.S. PINAFORE
"Love Levels All Ranks..."

Picnic with Pinafore Players

by Monica Kurtz

Creating theater requires a community; a group of individuals who share a vision and a commitment to a work larger than any one person. It's that sense of community that has kept me in this world for over 35 years.



As an organization, Gilbert & Sullivan Austin believes in the power of community. And this spring, we would like to invite you to join ours. On April 5, 2025, we invite you to an afternoon picnic. This free event is an opportunity for the patrons of GSA to join the cast, crew, and designers of our grand production, **H.M.S. Pinafore**. We are planning an array of activities for children and a unique chance for you to interact with the folks that make our shows a reality.

Please join us on April 5th, from 3-5pm at The Vortex, 2307 Manor Road, Austin 78722. It's half a mile east of I-35, between Chestnut and Maple Streets. It will help our planning if you register at www.gilbertsullivan.org

This is a potluck picnic, so please bring a snack to share and get ready to have a rollicking good time! The Butterfly Bar will be open to purchase drinks.

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CAPTAIN REECE, another ballad, reveals in its first two verses characteristics of someone we will meet in **Pinafore**:

Of all the ships upon the blue
No ship contained a better crew
Than that of worthy CAPTAIN REESE,
Commanding of *The Mantlepiece*.
He was adored by all his men,
For worthy CAPTAIN REESE, R.N.,
Did all that lay within him to
Promote the comfort of his crew.

THE BUMBOAT WOMAN'S STORY includes this verse:

A bumboat woman was I, and I faithfully served the ships
With apples and cakes, and fowls and beer, and halfpenny
dips,
And beef for the generous mess, where the officers dine at
nights,
And fine fresh peppermint drops for the rollicking
midshipmites.

And that captain called her Little Buttercup!

Gilbert himself did not think much of these **Bab Ballads**. For him they were a quick way to make a pound or two. But they provided a rich source of material for many of his libretti. In case you were wondering about the name "Bab," it was Gilbert's nickname, short for "Baby," when he was young.

Meet the sailors and the other cast members at the **Picnic with Pinafore Players** on Saturday, April 5, at the Vortex. See p. 1 for details.

Mark your calendar for June 13-22 and bring your loved ones to enjoy **H.M.S. Pinafore**.

H.M.S. Pinafore Cast

Sir Joseph Porter – **Arthur DiBianca**
Josephine – **Paige Patrick**
Captain Corcoran – **Andy Fleming**
Little Buttercup – **Amanda McCarthy**
Ralph Rackstraw – **Brian Minnick**
Dick Deadeye – **Julius Young**
Bill Bobstay – **Brenham Sean Adams**
Bob Becket – **Ayden Crocker**
Cousin Hebe – **Annisha Mackenzie**

The Chorus: **Carlee Abschneider,**
Alisa Black, Richard Carr, Garrett Cordes,
Leann Fryer, Esther Hernandez,
Chris Karaguleff, Francis Nieves,
Jeff W. Phillips, Paul Provence,
Amy Selby, Brittany Trinité,
Rebecca Harris Tulbah, Kaley Williams,
Kat Ellison Williams, Jay Young

GSA Board Welcomes New Members

As is our GSA tradition, we held our required Annual Meeting at the start of the January musicale. Board nominees present were introduced. The board candidates were elected unanimously. There are two new members on the board:

Janet Forman's exposure to Gilbert & Sullivan's music began at an early age due to her mother's love of it. She was encouraged to sing for her parents' friends when they visited. As an adult, she took the opportunity to take vocal lessons with some amazing mentors and participated with choral groups in Austin since 1999. Janet has been a soprano with Chorus Austin since 1999 and served as a board member of that organization for over 10 years. She has been a loyal attendee of Gilbert and Sullivan Society productions and a volunteer when needed. She enjoyed singing in the chorus of G&S 1996 production of **Ruddigore** and as a participant in **Princess Ida**. She was tapped by some of the elders at her place of worship to lead services.

She has been on the Board of Jewish Women's groups and spent 27 years as a teacher at Congregation Agudas Achim Religious School and worked on children's arts programming. Janet holds a Masters in Special Education from George Mason University.

Linda Johnson is a native of Austin and has been a violist with the GSA Gillman Light Opera Orchestra (GLOO) since 2004. She currently serves as an education policy coordinator with the Texas Education Agency, where her work has recently included research on the impact of extra- and co-curricular participation on student academic outcomes. Previously, Linda taught middle and high school orchestra while also performing as a violist with the Waco Symphony and San Angelo Symphony. Following her work as a teacher, Linda served as principal of an elementary school in the central Texas area.

Note: We do not elect officers of the Board at the Annual Meeting; they are chosen by the Board members at their first meeting after the Annual Meeting. Officers remain the same this year as last; see the list at the bottom of page 6.



GSA 2025 Board of Directors:

(l-r): Janet Forman, Monica Kurtz, Sue Caldwell, Janette Jones,
Aletha Read, Diane Radin, Leann Fryer, David Wieckowski

not shown: Dalton Flake, Bill Hatcher, Michael Meigs,
Linda Johnson, June Julian, Susan Weed Womack

A Joyous January for GSA

by Sue Caldwell

Our Annual Meeting on January 5 began with a cheery welcome from President **Diane Radin**. The first order of business, she explained, was the election of the Board of Directors for 2025. Our bylaws allow 15 members of the Board, and the nominations committee had presented 15 nominees, but one had since dropped out for personal reasons. Diane invited those present to volunteer to fill that slot, but the room was quiet. Then someone moved that we accept the remaining slate by acclamation, and the business portion of the program was accomplished. (See article on page 2 to meet the new Board members.)



Master of Ceremonies **Sam Johnson** began the **Sing-Along** program by playing the role of Sir Joseph in two numbers from **H.M.S. Pinafore**: "I am the monarch of the sea" with **Carlee Abschneider** as Cousin Hebe, and "When I was a lad"; the audience provided the enthusiastic sailors, sisters, cousins, and aunts. Carlee closed the **Pinafore** set with a charming "I'm called Little Buttercup."



Hebe interrupts Sir Joseph

We turned to **The Mikado** with Sam as Ko-Ko singing "Willow, tit-willow." He managed to *gurggle* the bird's final line of "willow, tit-willow, tit-willow"! As laughter died, we became entranced by **Pei-Jun Wang** as Yum-Yum, singing "The sun, whose rays are all blaze."



Willow, tit-willow



The sun, whose rays



Diane, who claims inability to sing, recited a delightful romantic poem by G&S contemporary Edward Lear, "The Owl and the Pussycat." Sam returned us to G&S as **Iolanthe's** Lord Mountararat celebrating "When Britain really ruled the waves" with the audience as fairies and Lords.

Loel Graber chose the role of Don Alhambra in **The Gondoliers**, singing "There lived a king," which warns that "When every one is sombodee, then no one's anybody!"



There lived a king



Julius Young embodied a very bad Sir Despard from **Ruddigore**, lamenting "Oh why am I moody and sad" as the audience provided bridesmaids, bucks, and blades. **Leann Fryer**, director and producer of the **Sing-Along**, was Patience singing the hauntingly beautiful "Love is a plaintive song" from **Patience**.

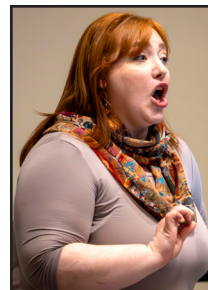


All too soon, it was time for our traditional closing songs. Sam was the Pirate King for "Oh, better far to live and die" and "Hail, Poetry" (**The Pirates of Penzance**), with pirates and the Major-General's daughters in the audience. Everyone sang "Now to the banquet we press" (**The Sorcerer**).



Diane was joined by all in expressing thanks to our beloved pianist, **Jeanne Dayton Sasaki**.

And then we did indeed press on to the banquet, and quite a feast it was. Members brought many items to share, supplemented with some from GSA. We had a special treat as Sam, Loel, and Julius performed "A British tar" from **Pinafore**. It was a delightful afternoon of renewing contact with old friends from G&S and meeting new ones!



I'm called Little Buttercup



When Britain really ruled the waves



the unflappable Jeanne Sasaki

Sing-Along photos by David Little
see more at gilbertsullivanaustrin.smugmug.com

H.M.S. Pinafore Sails With New Directors

by Michael Meigs

Like the Royal Navy, G&S Austin is prepared for every contingency, including unexpected rough seas. The veteran hands of the production team discovered in mid-December, 2024, that the **H.M.S. Pinafore** had lost its captain. Not Captain Corcoran, father of dear Josephine in the story, but the talented **Jenny Lavery**, who'd signed on to direct the grand summer production. Family matters had arisen that meant she couldn't participate.



The production team quickly put together a list of experienced, highly qualified stage directors, contacted them, and gathered 'round the capstan to confer. The choices were unanimous. We brought on board a stage director and assistant director who not only had long histories with GSA but had even appeared in leading roles in our 2014 production of **H.M.S. Pinafore**.



Stage Director Carol Brown appeared as Josephine, the female lead in that production, and received a B. Iden Payne theatre award nomination for it. Carol's beginning with GSA was nautical as well; her debut with GSA was as Mabel in the 2008 **The Pirates of Penzance**. She has been in many GSA productions since.

Carol also performs with Austin Opera, One Ounce Opera, LOLA, Density512, and Inversion Ensemble, for which she has composed and has managed productions. She produces other concerts and events and composes and performs for CTC Music Publishing. Carol earned her B.A. in Vocal Performance at UT Austin.

Assistant Stage Director Janette Jones

appeared in the 2014 **H.M.S. Pinafore** as Mrs. Cripps ("Little Buttercup," the peddler woman infatuated with Captain Corcoran). Jan has been a constant presence and frequent principal performer for GSA. She performed for three years with the Light Opera of Manhattan before relocating to Austin. Her inventive imagination and directing skills have been huge assets for the themed musicales she crafted for us. Jan brought G&S to schools and retirement communities with our Wand'ring Minstrels, and she co-directed last year's production of the G&S-themed **Esther the Clever Queen** by Ira Forman.



Keeping the ship musically on course is—of course!—**Dr. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** (a.k.a. Napoleon Jones-Ragona), who has directed and conducted the music for almost every GSA annual grand production since 1994. Winner of a B. Iden Payne award for music direction of **The Pirates of Penzance**, Jeffrey continues to be intensely engaged in Austin's classical music world and has taught at three universities. He received his DMA in Conducting from the University of Texas in 2006.

photos from our 2014 production; credits to Cecily Johnson

One Ounce Opera:

Songs My Mother Taught Me

GSA member and Hall of Fame honoree **Jeanne Dayton Sasaki** invites you to a special concert, **Songs My Mother Taught Me**, at 4:00 pm on Sunday, April 6, at Covenant Methodist Church, 4410 Duval Rd. in north Austin, with four extraordinary sopranos, including two of our favorite and familiar GSA performers, **June Julian** (current board member and Hall of Fame honoree) and **Bethany Naef Ammon**. Also contributing their exceptional talent are Austin sopranos Icy Monroe and Maureen Broy Papovich.

The repertoire for this concert is all-Mozart. Though it was written 100 years before Gilbert & Sullivan, Mozart's music is rich with beautiful melodies and musical drama, sure to please your ears and elevate your emotions. All proceeds from the ticket sales will benefit one of GSA's arts partners, One Ounce Opera. Tickets can be purchased at the concert, or in advance by going to oneounceopera.com and clicking on **Songs My Mother Taught Me**, which takes you directly to the ticketing page.

Songs My Mother Taught Me is a concert series created in honor of Jeanne's vocally talented mother, Patricia Findley Freund, who inspired her to pursue a career working with singers. "At a young age, I learned numerous arias and songs, including Gilbert & Sullivan favorites," says Jeanne, "while accompanying my mother on her piano. Every rehearsal in preparation for this concert brings back memories of making music with her, especially as I use many of her vocal scores, include several of her favorite arias, and rehearse with her Yamaha grand piano at my home."

Jeanne, June, and Bethany hope you join them for this one-time event!

Songs My Mother Taught Me
Mozart Edition

Sunday, April 6, 2025 at 4:00 PM
Covenant United Methodist Church

Proceeds benefit
One Ounce Opera

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in May; the deadline for submissions will be in mid-April. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

Spotlight Your Business & Support the Arts!

Looking for a way to reach an **engaged, loyal audience** of thousands while supporting live theater? Consider promoting your business in our **playbill** or becoming a **sponsor** of our grand production!

Ads come in several different shapes and sizes, all at reasonable rates. Ads should be 600 dpi, but we will accept as low as 300 dpi, black and white (B&W) except for back page in color. Early Bird rates are available until April 15:

ONE Back Cover (Color) 4.5 x 7.5 \$600 (\$540 Early Bird)

Full Page Ad (B&W) 4.5 x 7.5 \$400 (\$360 Early Bird)

Half Page Ad (B&W) 4.5 x 3.75 \$200 (\$180 Early Bird)

Quarter Page Ad (B&W) 4.5 x 1.875 or 2.25 x 3.75
\$100 (\$90 Early Bird)

Invite the people with whom you do business to purchase an ad and help support this production.

You can see previous playbills on our website (www.gilbertsullivan.org): Click Shows, then select a show under Past Productions and click on the Playbill.

To reserve ad space in the playbill for **H.M.S. Pinafore**, or to ask questions and get more information, please contact ad manager **Aletha Read** at media@gilbertsullivan.org.

The deadline for ad commitment (both size and format) is May 1, and final copy is due by May 15.

GSA Offers Scholarships for 2025-26

GSA is pleased to offer \$1,500 scholarships for up to four music students in the 2024-25 academic year: two each of the *Dr. Robert O. and Mary Ann Kerr Music Scholarship*, named in honor of two devoted, longtime members of GSA, and the *Gilbert & Sullivan Austin Libby Weed Scholarship*, funded by GSA and by the proceeds from Ralph MacPhail, Jr.'s *Only Idle Chatter*.

Recipients will also be invited as honored guests to our grand production of **H.M.S. Pinafore** in June, where they will be recognized during the curtain speech.

Applicants must: be at least a graduating high school senior; be pursuing a professional career in music or musical theater (preferably vocal performance); be enrolled or enrolling in a professional course of study in the United States; and have resided, studied, or performed in the Central Texas area (Travis and adjacent counties).

Preference will be given to applicants who have performed Gilbert & Sullivan. At least two scholarships will be specifically designated for members of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community. Payments will be made directly to the student's school of study or program. GSA reserves the right to modify the amounts and number of recipients based on the recommendation of the GSA Scholarship Committee.

To apply, please visit our website, www.gilbertsullivan.org, select **About**, then **Scholarships**. Applications must be submitted by **April 23, 2025**.

March 2025

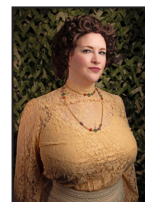
News of Members

The Secret Garden tells the story of Mary Lennox, who is sent to live with her uncle after her parents tragically die of cholera in India. Mary searches for her aunt Lily's secret garden, and in



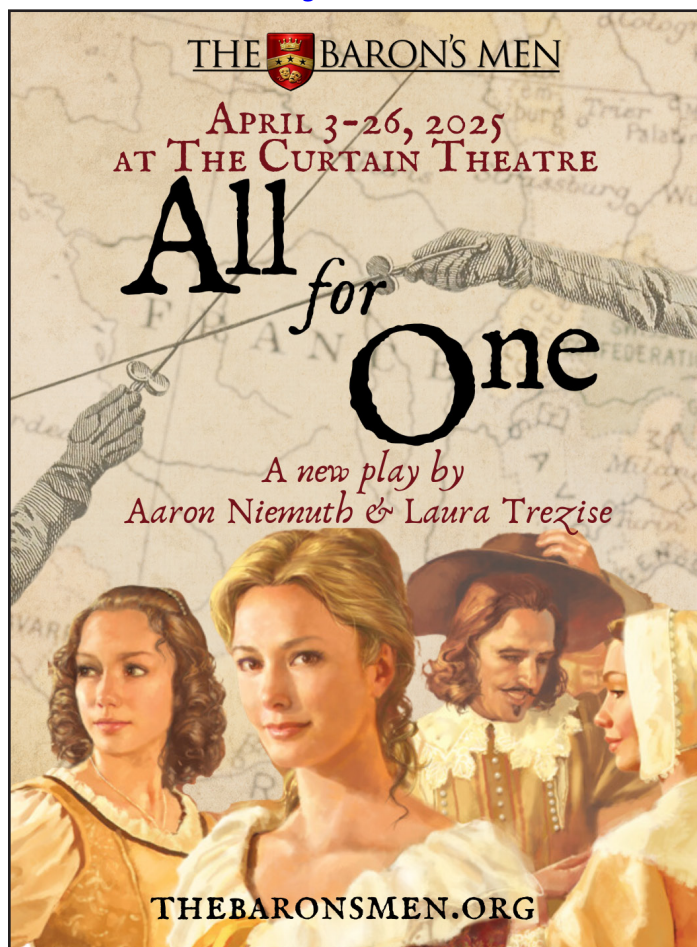
the end finds a new family. Flashbacks show how Rose and Lily's relationship deteriorated as Lily went against Rose's wishes and married Archibald Craven, a hunchback and Mary's eventual guardian. **Micaela Pace**, who joined GSA for **The Yeomen of the Guard** in 2024, played Lily. Long-time GSA

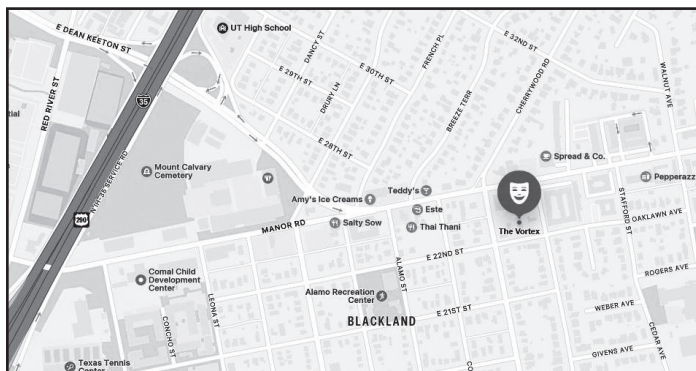
performer and current Board member **Leann Fryer** played Rose Lennox, Mary's mother, and understudied Lily. Leann also spent a significant time on stage as Magical Hedge #5. The show ran in February at the Georgetown Palace Theater in Georgetown, TX.



Another Theatre Treat for Austin

Our friends at The Baron's Men of Austin celebrate their 25th season of presenting Shakespeare in an authentic Elizabethan-style theatre with the premiere of **All for One**, an original swash-buckling tale set in 1630 France. Three valiant women uncover a plot threatening King Louis XIII and defend the monarch in Three-Musketeers style. The Curtain Theatre sits on the banks of the Colorado River west of Highway 360 and the Pennybacker Bridge. Thursdays – Saturdays, April 3 – 12. Tickets are available at www.thebaronsmen.org.





*map to The Vortex, 2307 Manor Road
half-mile east of I-35
between Chestnut and Maple Streets*



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

Coming Events

- April 5 **Picnic with Pinafore Players**
Saturday, April 5, 3-5 pm
The Vortex Theatre
- June 13-22 **H.M.S. Pinafore**
Grand Production
June 13-22
McCallum Fine Arts Center

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/.

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THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD - MARCH 2025

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The
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