

THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Diane Radin

Are you still humming the songs from **H.M.S. Pinafore**? I certainly am – too bad that I can't carry a tune! In any case, I doubt that most of us can match the voices we were treated to at the GSA grand production in June.

The audiences were so responsive and receptive to the cast and orchestra – and that made the show even more fun for those performers. There is nothing like a sharp audience to bring out the best in the cast. I attended at least one act of the seven performances, and they were all outstanding.

In addition to the rounds of applause from our **Pinafore** audiences, we have also been getting new members and much appreciated and needed donations that reflect the value placed on GSA's contribution toward making Austin the music capital of Texas, if not a larger geographic area.

As we head into our 50th year, we are grateful to all those who went over and above the price of tickets in support of GSA and **H.M.S. Pinafore**.

How do we top that grand production? Well, we seem to be able to do that year after year and I have no doubt that **Patience** will be a hit, too. There is so much wonderful talent in the Austin area. And not just singers, but directors, crew, sound and lighting mavens, and musicians. Since **Patience** is a less well-known G&S show, it will take lots of word-of-mouth publicity to get people into the theater. From the audience surveys, it is clear that hearing about a GSA show from a friend is the number one way to bring audiences in the door and singers to our auditions, too.

We will be including bits of **Patience** as "teasers" in three events planned for 2026:

Love is in the Air, the theme of our free annual meeting, is sure to include at least one song from **Patience** since the story is all about love. Kids are welcome to this casual event.

The Patience Picnic, also free, will give the public a chance to meet the cast and crew in the very informal setting of the Vortex Theatre's outdoor space.

Mezzo Madness & Other Follies is an intimate salon concert at a private home. "Silvered is the Raven Hair," for mezzo soprano from **Patience**, will be part of that program. If you are of a certain age, this song will speak to you.

Check our GSA website for details about these and other GSA events. If you plan to attend a GSA event, invite a friend to join you so that they may be welcomed to the world of Gilbert & Sullivan.

Announcing Our 2025-26 Season



The Grand Duke, November 2

Gilbert & Sullivan's 14th and last collaboration, in concert format. The plot hinges on the misinterpretation of an old law regarding statutory duels (decided by drawing cards). The frugality and phoniness of the wealthy classes and the nobility are lampooned.

Love is in the Air, January 11

Hear your favorite (and some new) GSA performers sing their favorite love-themed G&S songs in this free show. Elections for the GSA 2026 board will also take place. A buffet of treats provided by the GSA board and audience members follows.



Patience Picnic, March 7



This fun-filled, family-oriented free event features activities for kids and a chance to meet and greet and hear from the cast and crew of our summer grand production of **Patience**.

Mezzo Madness, April 12

Our third salon concert, held in a private home, will feature a selection of favorite songs showcasing the talents of our mezzo-sopranos. Wine, cheese, desserts and more will deliciously round out that afternoon.



Patience, June 12 – 21



Our summer grand production will be **Patience**, a high-spirited send-up of artistic affectation. It is at heart a comic opera about the heart—love unknown, love unrequited, love of admiration, love of the fashionable, unselfish love, and selfish love, too.

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Sailing Along With H.M.S. Pinafore

by Sue Ricket Caldwell

H.M.S. Pinafore sailed into Austin on June 13 for seven performances. Director **Carol Brown**, who played female lead Josephine in our 2014 production of **Pinafore**, brought a fresh eye and clever innovations into this classic play. Assistant director **Janette Jones**, who has conceived and directed many GSA musicales, has appeared in all of our **Pinafore** productions except the very first. Just as impressive, for this one Janette stepped in with less than 48 hours' notice to perform a chorus role.

The directors introduced the main characters during the overture in a series of silent vignettes before the curtain: romantic leads Josephine (**Paige Patrick**) and Ralph (**Brian Minnick**); secondary leads Buttercup (**Amanda McCarthy**) and Captain Corcoran (**Andy Fleming**); comic lead Sir Joseph Porter (**Arthur DiBianca**) and his entourage of sisters, cousins, and aunts, including his attendant Cousin Hebe (**Annisha Mackenzie**). An unnamed character was introduced: a woman who received upsetting news in a letter, cut off her long hair, and left home to join the navy. As the curtains opened, we observed that new recruit (**Richard Carr**) attempting to fit in with the crew of the *H.M.S. Pinafore as they clean the deck under the watchful eye of the Boatswain (**Brenham Sean Adams**).*



receiving upsetting news

Buttercup was charmingly flirtatious during her self-introduction. In G&S topsy-turvy fashion, earnest Dick Deadeye (**Julius Young**) was berated by the other seamen for echoing their belief that a deck hand like Ralph had no hope of marrying a captain's daughter. The restored duet of Captain Corcoran and Josephine ("Reflect, my child") was humorous (how could she bear the disgrace if the untutored Ralph were to eat gravy from his knife?); it also reflected the father's concern for his daughter. Maestro **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** recreated orchestration for that lost duet. Sir



Joseph appeared with his naval officer's hat on sideways, immediately revealing his ignorance of naval custom even before explaining how he became First Lord of the Admiralty, ruling the British navy without going to sea.



Carpenter, Boatswain, Ralph

There were so many delightful details to savor. During "A British tar" trio plus chorus, I loved watching the Carpenter's Mate (**Ayden Crocker**) use gestures to convey pitch as they sight-read the music. In the Act I finale, the sudden reprise of that song in the midst of celebrating Josephine and Ralph's

engagement was explained as Hebe's quick initiative to conceal the news from the Captain and Sir Joseph. I appreciated Hebe's expanded role, including added and restored dialogue placing her in a discussion between the Captain and Sir Joseph,



followed by her solo ("When he is here," borrowed from **The Sorcerer**). Her considerably enhanced role justified her becoming Sir Joseph's bride at the finale.

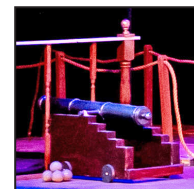
In the Bell Trio ("Never mind the why and wherefore"), the steward (**Garrett Cordes**) earned applause when he caught all three glasses tossed at him after a toast—and laughter plus applause on the night when he glared at Sir Joseph when obliged to retrieve one from the deck. Dick Deadeye struggled to carry the ship's anchor up to Ralph to encourage the hero's intended suicide—then the Boatswain carelessly tossed it overboard after Josephine and Ralph were united. The midshipmite (12-year-old **Sagan Bradley**) performed with the aplomb of the seasoned performer he is.



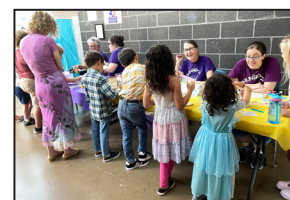
This was our first show in McCallum High School's MacTheatre, a wonderful experience for all. We hope this will be only the first of many such collaborations. There was some concern that in the new configuration the **Gillman Light Opera Orchestra** might overwhelm the singers, but the sound crew led by **Kenneth B. Gall** assured that all of us in the house heard every note from singers and orchestra. An added delight was the opportunity to observe the GLOO throughout.

Great job by Production Manager **Jen Rogers**, who kept the teams on schedule. Stage Manager **Monica Kurtz** and assistants **Adam Gunderson** and **Dr. Hannah Neuhauser** were indispensable.

Kudos to **Andy Heilveil** and his team (**Scott Hicks**, **Richard Carr**, **James "Woodstock" Laljer**, **Ben Stennis**, **Eric Johnson**, **Pixie Avent**, and **Daniel Boothe**) for the excellent set. I loved the cannons and neatly stacked cannonballs port and starboard. The masts seemed ready to unfurl the sails and set out.



Many thanks to **Kaye** and **David McKee**, Executive Director and Board Chair of A Spacious Place nonprofit, and to their daughters **Arielle** and **Bethany**, for leading children's day activities for us.



Gilbert & Sullivan Austin presented *H.M.S. Pinafore* on June 13 - 22, 2025

photos here and pages 4 & 6 by Erich Petersen

see more at gilbertsullivanaustrin.smugmug.com



the Gillman Light Opera Orchestra shows off instruments on Children's Day



"Fair moon, to thee I sing"



Dick Deadeye warns the Captain of his daughter's planned elopement



Sir Joseph rejects swearing: "Go, ribald, get you hence"



Josephine is thrilled by Ralph's offered ring



the Boatswain, left, berates Dick, right, for his (common) opinion



"Carefully on tiptoe stealing" as the elopement proceeds



Ralph arrested for running off with Sir Joseph's intended bride



"Nevermind the why and wherefore"



"Things are seldom what they seem"



"A maiden fair to see"



"Stick close to your desks and never go to sea, and you all may be rulers of the Queen's Navee!"

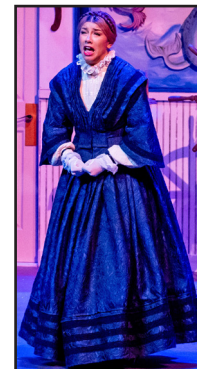


Sir Joseph conducts the reprise of "A British tar"



the cast: (front) Julius Young, Brenham Sean Adams, Annisha Mackenzie, Arthur Dibianca, Paige Patrick, Brian Minnick, Amanda McCarthy, Andy Fleming, Ayden Crocker;
(left stairs from top) Leann Fryer, Amy Selby, Carlee Abschneider, Rebecca Harris Tulbah;
(right stairs from top) Kaley Williams, Janette Jones, Esther Hernandez, Alissa Black;
(back) Jay Young, Paul Provence, Garrett Cordes, Kat Ellison Williams, Francis José Nieves, Richard Carr, Jeff W. Phillips, Charles Karaguleff, Sagan Bradley

Reminder: You can see the **Savoyard** with all these pictures in glorious color on our website, www.gilbertsullivan.org



"When he is here"



"The hours creep on apace"

News of Members

In early June GSA production coordinator and bursar **Michael Meigs**, who regularly reviews theatre at his website www.CTXLiveTheatre.com, presented four of the 23 annual awards of the newly re-established Austin Theatre Critics awards. His sixth literary translation for Amazon Crossing, from Swedish, will be published in November: John Ajvide Lindqvist's *The Writing in the Water*, the first thriller of the "Bloodstorm" trilogy. Two other translations were from German and three were from Spanish, including *All This I Will Give to You* by Dolores Redondo, awarded the biennial Galantière award of the American Translators Association.

GSA's Music Director, Dr. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona, is accompanist for the hit musical comedy *Little Shop of Horrors* at City Theatre Playhouse, August 29 - September 14. For more information and for tickets, go to www.citytheatreaustin.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/.

News Flash

The dynamic trio who brought you *H.M.S. Pinafore* will be directing GSA's *Patience*.

Stage Director **Carol Brown**, Assistant Director **Janette Jones**, and Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** are impatient to begin planning for this June 2026 grand production.

Save the dates: June 12-21.

More views of *H.M.S. Pinafore*



Buttercup reveals her long-ago error in "A many years ago"



The finale: "Three loving pairs on the same day united!" – *Buttercup and Corcoran, Sir Joseph and Hebe, Ralph and Josephine*

Help Wanted: Website Mavens

Let's bring our GSA website into the 21st century.

A few GSA Board members who work professionally in programming and web development are forming a Website Tech & Design Team to update and improve our GSA website. If you have some expertise and would like to volunteer on this team, we would love to have your input and ideas. Contact Aletha at media@gilbertsullivan.org to be part of this important and exciting effort.

Tom Lehrer Remembered by David Treadwell

Tom Lehrer, teacher of mathematics and the twentieth century's greatest master of hyperbolic satirical songs, entered into musical history in July at the age of 97. Emerging in the late 1950s from the bowels of Harvard University's Mathematics Department, Lehrer's music began simply as amusements for his fellow students and an outgrowth of his love for musical theater. The popularity of the songs led first to an independently produced record, then one album, then another, concert tours and world-wide fame, even a gig on a weekly television program, *That Was the Week That Was*. Despite his success, or perhaps because of it, he all but retired from music in the mid-1960s. He returned to his career as a teacher of mathematics and musical theater. Ever the teacher, his later music was educational, writing ten songs for the PBS series "The Electric Company" in the early 1970s.

The true test of great satire: although it might have its genesis in the topics of the day, the message is timeless. Aristophanes is still read and adapted today precisely because his works are still relevant. So too with G&S, and this, in this writer's opinion, is why so many Savoyards have a soft spot for Tom Lehrer. It's why you, dear readers, patiently suffered this writer's three performances of "The Elements" over the years, and for that, he thanks you.

As a personal note, I learned the words to that song as a freshman in high school after I realized that chemistry would be my career path. My science teacher was duly impressed, if only for my dedication, rather than any usefulness in my studies. For the uninitiated, Lehrer set the names of the then-known 102 chemical elements to Sullivan's tune of the "Major-General's Song" from *The Pirates of Penzance*, ordering them to fit the song's rhyme and meter. (Fun fact: the words also scan to the tune of "My Eyes are Fully Open" from *Ruddigore*.) The rapid-fire recitation of this song has remained a parlor trick of mine ever since, precisely because it speaks to my love of both G&S and the periodic table of the elements. It is my personal supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

Great satire skewers potentates and the powerful, roasts the reckless and the rogue, and turns the tables on the elevated and the evil. But it is never mean. Tom's songs were always witty and frequently barbed, some were macabre, laced with double entendre and laughing in the face of absurdity. So very many Savoyards found his tunes and lyrics irresistible. Unlike King Gama in *Princess Ida*, I can think why. I really, really can think why!

**Frederic Sullivan:
The Original Learned Judge
By Elaine Richardson**

Reviewed by **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**



Frederic Sullivan (1837-1877) was Sir Arthur's elder brother, and Elaine Richardson has given him the biography he deserves.

In his tragically short life, he trained as an architect, married and sired eight children, and switched careers to become a well-known and well-loved comic actor/singer before dying at age 39.

Their mother, Mary Clementina Sullivan, evidently kept all the letters "her boys" sent to her, and while they've been at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York for decades, Ms. Richardson's book has brought them to light by incorporating many of them in her biography of the elder Sullivan who, in his early letters referred to his brother as "Arthy" or "Athys."

She has also delved into many primary sources for other facts of Fred's hitherto unchronicled life, showing the same researcher's zeal she used with her earlier (2023) and much larger (it weighs four-and-a-half pounds!) book on Frederic's son and Sir Arthur's nephew and heir (*The Untold Story of Herbert Sullivan*).

What we have is the story of a devoted family, the males of which, father and sons, were endowed with musical talents. Early in his adult life, Frederic became involved in amateur theatricals, even though he trained as an architect. In time, the professional theatre beckoned and welcomed him. "You are an architect, I believe, Mr. Sullivan?" he was asked. "I have been an architect, but am now on the stage . . . you see, I am still drawing big houses."

That sense of humor is what evidently made Frederic Sullivan a popular comic actor. He clearly made Cox in his brother's 1866 comic opera *Cox and Box* one of his signature portrayals. And Ms. Richardson reminds us that Fred also appeared in the first Gilbert & Sullivan production, *Thespis; or, The Gods Grown Old* (Gaiety Theatre, 1871), which was produced by John Hollingshead. The full title of her book of course alludes to the first G&S production produced by Richard D'Oyly Carte, *Trial by Jury* (Royalty Theatre, 1875). Gilbert himself said that Fred Sullivan's portrayal of The Learned Judge was a strong factor in the one-act opera's overwhelming success. One of the great unanswered questions is: had Frederic Sullivan lived, would he have been cast in the comic patter-baritone roles that became the stock-in-trade of George Grossmith? Fred died before production of *The Sorcerer* (Opera Comique, 1877), which became the first of a dozen comic operas that continue to delight.

Ms. Richardson's book fills a gap in the full story of Gilbert & Sullivan, and knowledgeable readers will delight in discovering that Fred and Richard D'Oyly Carte worked together before the latter united Gilbert and that other Sullivan. Other familiar names pop up to remind us that there are surprises to be found in Savoy opera lore: Alfred Cellier, for instance, Richard Temple, and George Grossmith, to name three.



The final short chapter in this short book tells the sad story of Arthur Sullivan's bedside vigil by his dying brother, the circumstance which led to his composition of what was to become his most popular song, "The Lost Chord." Arthur Sullivan promised his brother to care for his family, to "be a father" to his children. This he did, financially, even after most of them moved from England to California. Only Herbert stayed behind with his uncle, and I'm looking forward to finding the time to read Ms. Richardson's other, and much longer, book.

In addition to her careful research, Ms. Richardson has produced a lovely volume with a number of beautifully reproduced photographs of her subject which have not, I believe, been reproduced since the nineteenth century.

Frederic Sullivan: The Original Learned Judge by Elaine Richardson is available from the author; write to elaineatsass@aol.com for particulars. She can also give details as to the availability of *The Untold Story of Herbert Sullivan*.

**What does Oscar Wilde have to do with
Gilbert & Sullivan's Patience?**

Ask AI and what do you get?

Patience, or Bunthorne's Bride is a comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan that satirizes the Aesthetic Movement of the late 19th century, particularly its prominent figure, Oscar Wilde.

If you can't wait to get better acquainted with Oscar Wilde, the Austin Playhouse Theater is presenting his play *The Importance of Being Earnest* from September 19 to October 19. "Wilde's razor-sharp wit skewers social conventions as Victorian etiquette turns into pure comedic chaos." Sounds like a G&S theme but without Sullivan's music.



Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in mid-October; the deadline for submissions is September 24. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!

The Crew That Brought Us *H.M.S. Pinafore*



(front) Monica Kurtz, Hannah Neuhauser, Jeffrey Jones-Ragona;
(back) Adam Gunderson, Richard Carr, Andy Heilveil,
Pixie Avent, Carol Brown, Jen Rogers, Ben Stennis,
Daniel Boothe, Steve Hicks, Janette Jones



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Coming Events

- Nov. 2 ***The Grand Duke in Concert***
Sunday, 3 pm
McCallum Fine Arts Center
- Jan. 11 ***Love is in the Air***
Sunday, 3 pm
St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
- March 7 ***Patience Picnic***
Saturday, 3-5 pm
The Vortex Theatre
- April 12 ***Mezzo Madness & Other Follies***
Sunday, 3 pm
Private home
- June 12-21 ***Patience*** summer grand production
McCallum Fine Arts Center

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THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD - SEPTEMBER 2025

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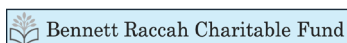
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