

THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD



The Grand Duke

Sunday, November 2, 3 pm

The MacTheatre

McCallum Fine Arts Academy

5600 Sunshine Drive

see map on page 4

Comic mishaps put a wandering theatre troupe in charge of the government for a day. Their good intentions turn the duchy upside down, and the Grand Duke is nowhere to be found!

What happens when clowns take charge? A conspiracy, a duel, a wild card and a surprise happy ending!

John Wolfson's artful edit of the last of Gilbert & Sullivan's comedies restores Gilbert's original plot; stage director **Allison Price** and music director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** deliver Austin's professional staged concert version of this overlooked comic gem with a full cast of Gilbert & Sullivan Austin regulars.

John Wolfson is the author of ***Final Curtain: The Last Gilbert and Sullivan Operas***, about ***The Grand Duke*** and ***Utopia, Ltd.*** In his introductory note for this libretto, he explains:

In 1896 Gilbert and Sullivan produced their last opera, ***The Grand Duke***, at the Savoy Theatre. The initial production was not a success, and if one examines Gilbert's original libretto closely, it is difficult to imagine how it could have been. It is overcrowded with incident. It has an abundance of minor characters who take on major significance and a storyline which Gilbert all but abandons in the second act. These weaknesses, however, crept into the original libretto as a result of circumstances which were, to a large extent, beyond the author's control.

While Gilbert was putting the finishing touches on his libretto for ***The Grand Duke*** he learned that three of the actors for whom he had been preparing specific

roles, George Grossmith (Grand Duke Rudolph), Richard Temple (The Prince of Monte Carlo), and Jessie Bond (The Princess of Monte Carlo) would not be available to play them. The result was that Gilbert cut their roles down and, to compensate, built up the parts of two other actors in his company, Rutland Barrington (Ludwig) and Ilka von Palmay (Julia). His libretto suffered tremendously from these changes.

The total impact of these last-minute revisions becomes plainly obvious when the libretto of ***The Grand Duke*** is compared with Gilbert's original plot sketches for it. Gilbert's outlines of this opera are preserved at the British Library (ADD. MS. 49290) and they suggest that the humourist had a far more specific plan for the adventures of Pfennig Halbpennig than he realized in his final libretto.

The present revisions have been executed strictly along lines suggested by Gilbert's own plot sketches. No sequence has been added to the libretto unless some justification could be found for it in Gilbert's notes. No sequence has been eliminated unless little or no reference to such incident appeared in Gilbert's outlines. In this way Gilbert's original story of Ernest Dummkopf and Grand Duke Rudolph at last becomes clear, and the many faults and complexities which have long plagued productions of ***The Grand Duke*** no longer interfere with the public's enjoyment of the opera.

Mr. Wolfson's version was originally produced by the Light Opera of Manhattan, and has since been presented in England, Scotland and Australia. It has been enormously successful with audiences whenever produced.

GSA is delighted to offer this Austin premiere, and is grateful to Mr. Wolfson for allowing us to use his libretto for this production.

THE GRAND DUKE OR THE STATUTORY DUEL

Libretto by

W. S. Gilbert

Music by

Arthur Sullivan

Original Libretto Revised by

John Wolfson

Based on material in W. S. Gilbert's plot book
(British Library Add. Ms. 49290)

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Meet the Director of *The Grand Duke*

Allison Price (they/them) is a multi-hyphenate director, deviser, and nonprofit leader based in Austin, TX, with a focus on works that are intimate and have a bite; specializing in new work development, queer performance, and audience activation. Recent credits include *Angels in America Part 1: Millennium Approaches*; *Little Shop of Horrors*; *Big Love*; *Peter and the Starcatcher*; *A League of Her Own*; *A Collective Noise*; and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Their opera credits include *Il Giuoco del Quadriglio*, *Cendrillon*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Carmen*. You may also remember their work on the "Patter Trio" for our *Fresh Takes on G&S* project in 2021, when Covid closed down live theater and GSA turned to the internet to share our love of G&S.



Their recent new work development credits include *Acanthus*, *OUT*, and *A League of Her Own*. They have been awarded the ATAC award for Best Direction of a Comedy and Best Comedy (*Peter and the Starcatcher*), BroadwayWorld Austin Best New Play (*A League of Her Own*), a B. Iden Payne Award for Outstanding Technical Integration (*A League of Her Own*), and Stage Directors and Choreographers Fellowship (Kennedy Center).

They were invited to participate in the Kerrigan and Lowdermilk Mad Ones Lab where they created an interactive music video for the musical *The Mad Ones*. Allison also serves as a co-producer for Queer to Tell Austin, an LGBTQIA+ advocacy group that produces local queer autobiographical stories. Allison has their MFA in Directing from Texas State University. Allison is an associate Stage Directors and Choreographers Society member.

Outside of theatre, Allison is a published author (*Just Another Dead Daughter*) and co-host/producer of an educational queer podcast called Simply Sapphic. Allison is also the Program Director of the Hill Country Ride for AIDS, Central Texas's largest fundraiser for HIV/AIDS care. (allisonpricedirector.com)

The Director's Vision for *The Grand Duke*

Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Grand Duke* is a sharp satire that explores themes of performance, pretense, and the roles we assume to achieve our desires. In this concert presentation, we highlight the comedy's enduring relevance by framing it through the lens of everyday life with a traveling theatre group, where pretending and role-playing remain central to human experience. The play also cautions us, however, that excessive pretense and manipulation can lead to chaos and unintended consequences, suggesting that the masks we wear and the roles that we step into may hinder rather than help us.

GSA Seeking Board Members

The GSA board will have three positions open for 2026. If you are interested in joining this dedicated and fun group of volunteers, please contact Nominating Committee Chair Diane Radin at diane@gilbertsullivan.org.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Diane Radin

We all love Beethoven, right? But do we want to hear nothing but the Fifth and Ninth Symphonies, as majestic as they are? Don't we also want to hear a string quartet or a piano trio or some even more obscure piece that that classical

genius composed?

Replace Beethoven with Gilbert & Sullivan, replace Fifth and Ninth symphonies with *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Pirates of Penzance*. Then replace string quartet with *Patience* and the trio with *The Yeomen of the Guard*. And what about the "obscure piece"? Well, replace it with *The Grand Duke*.

And now you know why Gilbert & Sullivan Austin is staging a concert version of *The Grand Duke* on November 2 at the MacTheatre (where you saw *H.M.S. Pinafore* last June). If you are a fan of G&S, then you want to have the opportunity to enjoy all their works. GSA did an abbreviated version at Westminster Senior Community 23 years ago. But the time has come to give it a staged production, with a piano accompaniment and minimal sets and costumes. We have been granted permission to use a highly regarded revised libretto by **John Wolfson**, thanks to the intercession of **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.** We have secured **Allison Price** to direct. Music Director **Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** is excited to premier this work, which is new to him, too.

We hope you take this opportunity to see this underappreciated work by G&S. It includes clever tuneful lyrics, a silly story, true love, inept people wanting to take over the government, and more. Mark your calendar for Sunday, November 2 at 3 pm. The MacTheatre has only 450 seats – be sure you reserve yours soon. And invite a friend or two to join you!

More McAdos

Our McAdo has legs under that kilt! We've learned of three more upcoming productions of *The McAdo* in the first half of 2026: in Madison, Wisconsin; at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor; and in the seaside resort town of Eastbourne, East Sussex, UK, directly south of London. Those will bring the total to six McAdos, for which GSA provided extensive material at no charge: four in the United States and one each in Alberta, Canada and in Eastbourne, UK.

News of Members

GSA's **Leann Fryer** and **Sarah Manna** have been cast in the original production of *Lara Stone and the Lost Relics of St. Nick*. It's Indiana Jones meets Christmas Special in this globe-trotting comedic musical filled with combat, dance, and a little bit of Christmas spirit. The show runs December 5-21 at the Scottish Rite Theater. Details can be found at crowntheatre.org.

Join Us!

We encourage you to join GSA to help keep the joys of Gilbert & Sullivan alive. Membership starts with basic member at \$30 per year. To join, renew, or donate, visit www.gilbertsullivan.org/join/.

The Lost Heirs: The Rise and Fall of the D'Oyly Carte Dynasty By James W. Stebbings

Reviewed by **Ralph MacPhail, Jr.**



Dame Bridget D'Oyly Carte was known for her shyness and desire for privacy, and discouraged authors from writing about her family. However, the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company folded in 1982 and Dame Bridget passed in 1985. In 2015 the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company sold an archive of documents for £400,000 to the British Library, and these materials also included personal family letters, diaries, photographs and other material that have made James W. Stebbings' *The Lost Heirs* possible. This new book focuses on the lives of Lucas D'Oyly Carte, Richard's older son by his first wife, and the son of Richard's second son Rupert, Michael. Lucas and Michael are the "lost heirs" of the book's title, and this new study offers much new information on them and their families, including more than a few aspects (divorce, homosexuality, suicide) of her family's history that Dame Bridget evidently strove to conceal by discouraging potential biographers.

Richard is painted as a busy and emotionally neglectful father to his two sons during their early years, though in his later days he was more attentive, no doubt realizing that he needed his sons to learn his businesses (not only the opera company but also the luxurious hotels) if they were to survive as family-led enterprises. The younger Rupert was early recognized as the "business man" of his generation of D'Oyly Cartes, with Lucas showing little interest in the family endeavors. He studied law instead, and was called to the bar.

Both at boarding school and then at Oxford, Lucas had a more than casual relationship with Lord Alfred "Bosie" Douglas, third son of the 9th Marquess of Queensberry, who would be the pivotal figure in bringing down Oscar Wilde in 1895 while the poet and dramatist was at the height of his fame in the much-publicized scandal of his homosexuality. Earlier (in 1893) another potential scandal to the D'Oyly Carte family and their hotel was avoided when Lucas's shenanigans with Wilde and "Bosie" at The Savoy were kept out of the papers.

Lucas died a young man of 36 in 1907 of pulmonary tuberculosis while Rupert carried the various entrepreneurial torches of his family following the death of his father Richard in 1901 and his stepmother Helen in 1913.

In 1907, Rupert married, and the couple became parents of Bridget (born in 1908) and Michael (1911). Michael also died a young man (at age 22) in a motoring accident in Switzerland, leaving Bridget, the last of the D'Oyly Carte line, to run the family businesses. If Bridget was initially a reluctant CEO, she proved ultimately successful in running the family businesses for decades supported by trusted and very effective associates and assistants.

Bridget had been married briefly at age 18 to Fourth Earl of Cranbrook, but the union soon ended in divorce and The Countess of Cranbrook reassumed her given family name. Bridget D'Oyly Carte never remarried and so left no issue.

Mr. Stebbings has done a very effective job of weaving the well-known "public" story of Gilbert & Sullivan under the D'Oyly Carte's family management with new material from the private D'Oyly Carte family papers now at the B.L. But he also draws upon many other sources to amplify and clarify his story, and he is generous to his sources.

The Lost Heirs left me wondering about other secrets that may be hiding in the archive now available to the public, awaiting exploration with the zeal of Mr. Stebbings, at the British Library in London.

The Lost Heirs: The Rise and Fall of the D'Oyly Carte Dynasty by James W. Stebbings is available from Amazon in hardbound and electronic formats. For a more detailed review of this fascinating saga, write to RafeMacPhail@Yahoo.com.

An *H.M.S. Pinafore* Reunion



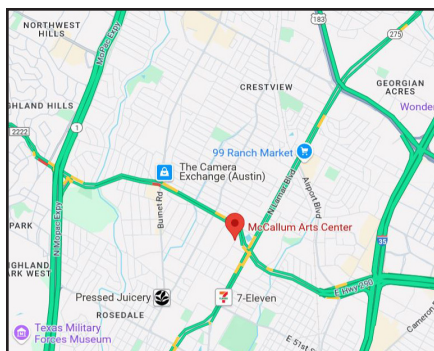
June brought together a number of performers from our 2014 and 2025 productions of *H.M.S. Pinafore*: (l-r)

	2014	2025
Julius Young	Bill Bobstay	Dick Deadeye
David Fontenot	Dick Deadeye	
Arthur DiBianca	chorus	Sir Joseph Porter
Russell Gregory	Sir Joseph Porter	
Carol Brown	Josephine	director
Monica Kurtz	stage manager	stage manager
Gil Zilkha	Captain Corcoran	
Andy Fleming	chorus	Captain Corcoran

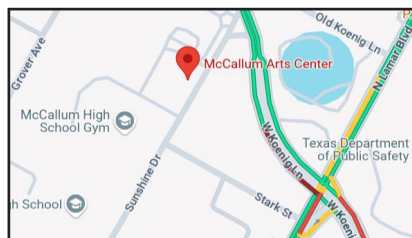
Not shown (busy bustling backstage) are **Janette Jones**, who was Little Buttercup in 2014 and chorus member plus assistant director in 2025, and **Leann Fryer**, chorus member in both shows.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive in late December; the deadline for submissions is December 6. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



how to get to
the MacTheatre



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

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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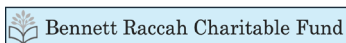
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