

THE AUSTIN SAVOYARD



Mezzo Madness

*"A most melodious madness—
five mezzos in full and glorious voice!"*

Sunday, April 12, 3 pm

Tickets \$75 General Admission; \$125 VIP

Westlake Hills Austin

What could possibly drive a mezzo to madness? Is it love unrequited ... love rejected ... or simply the trials of being the aging diva in a world obsessed with ingénues?

In the topsy-turvy world of Gilbert & Sullivan, the mezzo or contralto is often written as the formidable elder—cranky, commanding, sometimes even fearsome. Yet Gilbert rarely leaves a character quite so simple. Beneath the bluster we often discover surprising depth: a woman wiser than expected, more vulnerable than she first appears, and endlessly fascinating to watch. Think of Lady Jane in *Patience*, Katisha in *The Mikado*, or the maddest of them all, Mad Margaret in *Ruddigore*—figures who begin as comic stereotypes but reveal humor, humanity, and even tenderness along the way. In short, the Savoyard mezzo is never dull ... and perhaps just a little crazed.

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin is delighted to invite Savoyards and friends to a special one-time salon concert, *Mezzo Madness*, on Sunday, April 12, 2026, at a beautiful private residence in Westlake Hills. This charming musical gathering—our third salon concert fundraiser—follows the tremendous enthusiasm for our first two salon events and promises another unforgettable afternoon of music, fellowship, and Savoyard spirit.

This concert celebrates the rich and expressive voice of the mezzo-soprano, featuring a delightful selection of favorite songs performed by beloved GSA artists alongside acclaimed artists who are new to the GSA community. Directed by **Dr. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** and accompanied by **Dr. Andrea Pobanz**, the program showcases an outstanding lineup of mezzos:

Patricia Combs

Jessica Doklovic

June Julian

Annisha Mackenzie

Hillary Schranze

Jessica is making her GSA debut in this salon, and will appear as Lady Jane in this summer's *Patience*; the other four are veteran GSA performers. Dr. Pobanz, also making her GSA debut, is an Austin-area pianist, conductor, and collaborative musician with over 25 years of experience in choral and vocal music.

Guests will enjoy this unique and intimate performance in the elegant setting of a private Westlake Hills home (wheelchair accessible), where the music can be experienced up close among fellow Savoyards. In true salon style, the afternoon also includes light refreshments with a British twist—your ticket includes Pimm's Cups, shandy, trifle, and delicious treats from a British bakery, creating a relaxed and festive atmosphere.

Doors open at 2:30 pm, and the performance begins promptly at **3:00 pm**. Because the event takes place in a private residence, seating is very limited, and our VIP package is especially popular. General admission is \$75. VIP ticket holders (\$125 each) get to select a reserved seat. Tickets are available at www.gilbertsullivan.org. Upon purchasing your ticket, you will receive an email confirmation with the event address.

Whether you are a devoted Gilbert & Sullivan enthusiast or simply love beautiful voices in an intimate setting, Mezzo Madness promises a delightful afternoon of music, camaraderie, and Savoyard sparkle—all while supporting Gilbert & Sullivan Austin.

Join us for this one-performance-only musical treat in the hills—where the mezzos reign, the music flows, and the madness is entirely melodious.

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Our *Patience* Picnic: Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs

Judi and Ronald Barrett's whimsical children's book and animated film lent Gilbert & Sullivan Austin an unexpectedly apt title for our second annual (!) GSA community picnic at the Butterfly Bar and Vortex Rep garden on Manor Road. Meatballs there indeed were in that extensive potluck spread, as well as clouds aplenty.

Last year's event took place in early April and was unexpectedly cold; rain was predicted all day for this year's March 7 gathering, and we had no rain date. The theatre sprites put a hold on the showers before picnic time, so the lively crowd of cast, crew, and friends of GSA was able to enjoy both the comfortable Vortex interior and its pleasant shaded deck.

Meatballs, indeed! Our music director **Dr. Jeffrey Jones-Ragona** brought a big black pot of his homemade Italian meatballs; **Jessica Doklovic** provided large spiced chicken meatballs with a delicious exotic sauce; **Michael Meigs** arrived with medium-sized beef-and-pork meatballs stuffed with pineapple and nibble-sized ones flavored with cumin, mace, and nutmeg.

The tables of savory and sweet were so amply furnished that one challenge after the two-hour afternoon event was deciding where to dispatch all the remaining treats.

Thanks to GSA stage manager and board member **Monica Kurtz** for proposing picnics for the G&S community and for working with the Vortex well ahead of time to find a Saturday afternoon. The Vortex made the venue available free of charge, opening the Butterfly Bar for business two hours early. Vortex

founder **Bonnie Cullum** was there; lingering unobtrusively before the bar were managing director **Melissa McKnight** and her husband **Chris**. Melissa, a performer herself, designed our raven puppet for 2025's ***The Yeomen of the Guard***, and Chris designs lighting for the grand summer productions.

Admired and beloved emeritus bass-baritone **Russell Gregory** settled at a table in the middle of the room, surrounded by friends and admirers, including director **Carol Brown**, GSA president **Diane Radin**, and GSA jack-of-all-trades **Bill Hatcher**.

Vortex box office manager **Alex Cogburn** lent a hand by scavenging in the Vortex storage areas to come up with a coat tree saved from a dumpster, so that GSA could display and sell the ***Patience*** T-shirt designed by our friend **Barb Jernigan**. The shirt with the exotic abstract design of garden leaves and flowers is available in two styles (crew unisex or women's fitted style) and two colors (light blue and two shades of gray). GSA provides the shirts to cast and crew at cost. Sales to the public (and to members of the board of directors) are priced to raise funds for the company.

This year the picnic came after the very first week of music rehearsals with Jeffrey Jones-Ragona. Thanks to the many signups at auditions, the cast of ***Patience*** features lots of new faces. We heard admiring comments from first timers about the confidence and accuracy of singing displayed from the very first notes on the piano. That's evidence of the professional quality of GSA singers; it's also a reminder that Gilbert & Sullivan Austin isn't just a performing organization. Our people keep coming back. We're a community, whether onstage or mingling at the Butterfly Bar!



Diane Radin and June Julian greet guests



Russell and June



Monica uncovers Jeffrey's home-made meatballs



*Loel Graber shows off his new *Patience* T-shirt*



one of the Vortex resident cats keeps watch over the proceedings



the Butterfly Bar offered delicious drinks



the potluck tables were filled with salads, entrees, ...



and of course, desserts!

Gilbert & Sullivan Austin presented *Picnic with Patience Players* on March 7, 2026

photos by June Julian and Sue Caldwell

see more at gilbertsullivanatx.smugmug.com



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



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Diane Radin

G&S Through the Ages

Who do you identify with in Gilbert & Sullivan's shows? Has that changed over the years?

Reviewing the beautiful songs in *Patience*, I realized that there are songs that mean more to me at different stages of my life. And that each time we attend a performance or listen to a CD of a G&S comic opera, what touches us at that time is not the same as what was meaningful a few years ago and those may be different in the future.

Perhaps this is one of the enduring appeals of these masterpieces – at whatever age we may be, there is a song that resonates for us at that age.

The young lovers in the shows are appealing in their youthful ardor and playfulness; their love songs may have spoken to me when I was younger. Now from perspective of my 80th birthday, the duet between Sir Marmaduke Pointdexter and Lady Sangazure in *The Sorcerer* is more meaningful.

We know that the children in the audience often see things more simply. I have a friend whose middle-school son thought the lovers in *H.M.S. Pinafore* were too “mushy.” But their younger daughter loved the costumes and playfulness and the happily-ever-after ending.

Sung by Lady Jane in *Patience*, the following lyrics are more meaningful to me now than they were when I first started listening to G&S in my twenties. I laughed at them then, and do so now, too, but today I can acknowledge how well Gilbert understood the human condition at all ages.

Silvered is the raven hair,
Spreading is the parting straight,
Mottled the complexion fair,
Halting is the youthful gait,
Hollow is the laughter free,
Spectacled the limpid eye -
Little will be left of me
In the coming by and by!

Fading is the taper waist,
Shapeless grows the shapely limb,
And although severely laced,
Spreading is the figure trim!
Stouter than I used to be,
Still more corpulent grow I –
There will be too much of me
In the coming by and by!

Lady Jane will be performing this song at the *Mezzo Madness* salon concert on April 12. Seating is limited, so purchase your tickets today.

Whatever your age, you will find a song that resonates for you when you come to see *Patience* at the MacTheatre in June. There are lots of seats, all of them excellent, at the seven performances.

A Note from *Patience* Director Carol Brown



GSA's Golden Season celebrates the return of *Patience* in a production that treats the source material with all of the melodramatic attention it deserves, and then some. With a spectacular cast of new and returning talent to the GSA stage, this delightfully witty show will spotlight the text of

Gilbert at the height of his wordsmithery, paired with some of Sullivan's richest, and often overlooked, musical moments, all illustrating how the culture of aesthetic admiration and fandom never loses relevance.

Set in the height of the Victorian Aesthetic Movement, *Patience* could easily hold a mirror up to modern groupies (think Beatle Mania or Swifties), or today's influencer culture seen on social platforms, where devotion is thrown left and right to whoever is getting the most “likes.” When two rival poets show up and turn proper ladies into rapturous maidens and town Guards into bumbling imitators, it will take the humble curiosity of the village milkmaid, *Patience*, to help them (and herself) sort out passing fancy from genuine devotion.

A small historical curiosity also finds its way into the evening, following suit from last year's well-received added scenes in *H.M.S. Pinafore*: a rarely heard song for the Duke of Dunstable, partially written but cut before the opera's original opening, now restored to give audiences a glimpse of *Patience* as it nearly was.

We look forward to seeing you for this year's grand production of *Patience*; admiration, after all, is far more convincing when publicly displayed.

GSA's Scholarships for 2026-27 Increased!

GSA is delighted to increase scholarships to **\$2,000** each for up to four music students in the 2026-27 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 *Patience* 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, 2026**.

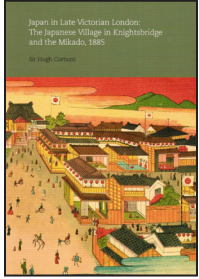
**Japan in Late Victorian
London: The Japanese
Village in Knightsbridge and
The Mikado, 1885**

By Sir Hugh Cortazzi

(with two short updates)

Reviewed by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

In Act II of *The Mikado*, the emperor asks for the current address of his errant son. In the standard libretto, Ko-Ko



responds, "Knightsbridge." The original joke (now lost, and hence always updated in performance) was that this tony section of London in 1885 was the site of The Japanese Native Village, a commercial venture of one Tannaker Buhicrosan, who imported Japanese artisans, performers, and other Japanese citizens to a complex built by the visitors themselves that helped to introduce

Japanese culture, their "manners, customs, and art industries" to the capital city.

Many writers of Savoy history have said that this exhibition "inspired" *The Mikado*, but Sir Hugh's book makes clear that Gilbert and Sullivan were hard at work on what became *The Mikado* well before the Japanese Native Village opened. In fact, this book considers earlier exhibitions and manifestations interest in "all one sees that's Japanese" (as Bunthorne sings in *Patience*) in England. He also affirms the oft' related story that Gilbert did indeed employ a young lady from the Village to coach his Savoyards on Japanese movement, dance, and deportment.

Sir Hugh discusses Japanese reactions to performances of *The Mikado* (not all are negative), as well as other popular theatrical pieces, straight and operatic (grand and comic: *Madame Butterfly* and *The Geisha*) that followed the Gilbert & Sullivan masterpiece.

This book will be a welcome addition to any Savoy opera student's bookshelf. It appeared in 2009, a decade or so before "cultural appropriation" would lead to productions of the comic opera that eliminate its "Japanese" roots and reset it in Scotland, Italy, Outer Space—or elsewhere. Sir Hugh well documents his research, and in addition, the book is beautifully produced, with numerous illustrations, many in color.

Sir Hugh Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Village in Knightsbridge and The Mikado*, 1885. Norwich: Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, 2009. Alas, it quickly went out-of-print, but it is available (at a price!) from the used book trade. See, for instance, Abe.com and Amazon.com.

The Variorum Gilbert & Sullivan I

Edited by Marc Shepherd & Michael Walters

This was the very first book reviewed in this series, 'way back in 2016 (see the April issue, p. 5, in the Newsletter Archive at

April 2026

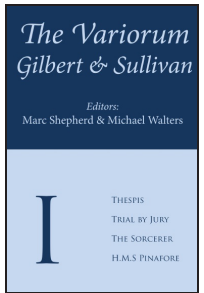


the GSA website, gilbertsullivan.org). The original hardbound edition has now been published in paperback, and as I noted a decade ago, a copy belongs on the shelf of any serious student of W. S. Gilbert. Many Savoyards continue to await with keenest anticipation the next four volumes. (Volume I covers *Thespis*, *Trial by Jury*, *The Sorcerer*, and *H.M.S. Pinafore*.) The book is available from www.lulu.com/shop.

The Ultimate Gilbert & Sullivan Quiz Book

By Huw Watkins

This is the very last book reviewed in this series, 'way back in February. I came down fairly, and fairly hard, on the deeply flawed "first edition" just as the "Revised and Updated Edition" arrived from Amazon. The new version has been extensively revised, but it still contains questions with no correct answers (or incorrect answers), ambiguities, and silly mistakes. Unless you're a "completist," save your money and put it toward a copy of one of the two books mentioned above.



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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:

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\$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 *Patience*, 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.

Send Us Your News!

The next newsletter should arrive about the first of June; the deadline for submissions is May 11. Please send your news to news@gilbertsullivan.org. Thanks!



Gilbert & Sullivan Austin is a proud member
of ATX Theatre



P.O. Box 684542
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Coming Events

- April 12 **Mezzo Madness**
Sunday, 3 pm
Private home (see page 1)
- June 12-21 **Patience** summer grand production
McCallum Fine Arts Center
- October 1 **GSA's 50th Anniversary Gala**
Chez Zee

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 - APRIL 2026

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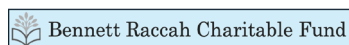
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