

Items from the Board by Barbara Laurie

This 12th edition of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society Newsletter sees us completing our third year since the inauguration event in 2004! How time flies! We have tried to make our events varied and interesting over the past three years in order to attract as many new members to our young society as possible and in continuation of this theme we are planning a new look to the events calendar for the coming year. The forthcoming AGM on 21 September will see some changes as I will be stepping down as current Chair to allow a new person the chance to lead the society and to bring new energy to its activities. I am aware that "AGM" has rather unattractive connotations for most people but I think it should stand for "A Great Meeting!" If you have never been to a Gilbert & Sullivan Society AGM, I can recommend it because we have done all we can to make our past AGMs both enjoyable and productive by keeping the business items short and sweet and by providing professionally catered refreshments for those who attend.

The evening of the AGM is attended by the society's board members and interested members and is a great opportunity for us to share ideas for the continued success of our Gilbert & Sullivan Society. The AGM is your chance as a member to contribute to all aspects of what we do and how, so if you have suggestions and ideas for events please come along and share them with us. Even if you are just interested in what we get up to at the AGM and would like to come along and see, you will be made most welcome. We look forward to seeing you there!

Forthcoming events

AGM: 21st September

19:00 hrs, Friday 21st September 2007
At the offices of Ernst & Young
Aeschengraben 9, Basel
Current Gilbert & Sullivan Society members will shortly receive their invitation by post. We hope to see many of you at the AGM and you are asked to RSVP by 14 September 2007 to the usual contact email: info@savoyards.ch

Gondoliers Wine tasting- October 26th (Save the Date)

The story of the Gondoliers, as many of you will

recall, is that two just-married Venetian gondoliers are informed by the Grand Inquisitor that one of them has just become the King of "Barataria", but only their foster mother, presently at large, knows which one. As Barataria needs a king to put down unrest in the country, they travel there to reign jointly, leaving their wives behind in Venice until the old lady can be interviewed. It turns out that the king was wed in infancy to the beautiful daughter of the Spanish Duke of Plaza Toro, and so it seems he is an unintentional bigamist. Of course, the beautiful daughter is in love with a common servant! When the young Spaniard and the two Venetian wives all show up wanting to know which of them is queen, complications arise ...

The Wine Forum in Oberwil specializes in Spanish and Italian wines. The Gilbert & Sullivan Society have invited Bobby Katic, the proprietor of the Wine Forum, to introduce us to some of the wines he has in his assortment. We shall do this while enjoying the music of The Gondoliers. Details will follow, but be sure to mark your calendar now!

Summary of dates for your diary

Friday 21st September AGM
Friday 26th October – Gondoliers Wine tasting

The Sun's Rays Ablaze on a Wet Friday Evening! A review of the summer Apero party by Barbara Laurie

Despite the wet weather on the evening of Friday 15 June, there was no stopping the guests on their way to the Gilbert & Sullivan Society's third annual Summer Apero Party. This year the event was held at a new venue in Weiherweg, near the Schutzenmattpark which was ideal because the room there has a grand piano. Why the piano? Well, that was for a surprise musical item in the programme! The Summer Apero has always been a popular event for the Society but this year we had record attendance of over 30 people! No doubt part of the attraction is the array of tempting G&S-themed British snacks, including Iolanthe's Dip, Ruddigore's Demons, Pirate Tarts and Strawberry Shortcake, created by Susan Mouton-Liger and Ann McClymont. Thanks to both Su and Ann, and also to Bernie MacCabe, who organised the delicious wines, Event Co-ordinator, Corinna Balfour, and all the other members of the team, Rachel Bunger, Joanna

Lonergan and Valerie Walder who made this event such a success.

This year the Gilbert & Sullivan Society board decided to add some live musical entertainment to the party so Barbara Laurie, President, took charge of organising the musical programme and gathered together a group of 10 singers plus professional pianist Boris Chnaider.

The 30-minute selection of Gilbert & Sullivan favourites included both ensemble pieces and solos from six different Gilbert & Sullivan operas: The Pirates of Penzance, Patience, The Mikado, Trial by Jury, Iolanthe and The Gondoliers. The singers, who ranged from musically experienced society members to first time guest singers, each gave a great performance and it was obvious from the audible appreciation of the jokes that the humour in the texts, particularly of Bryan Stone's "The Law is the True Embodiment", came across well to many in the audience.

The feedback we received on the night for this event was very positive and we hope to include such musical programmes again in future events. If you would be interested in singing a solo, duet, or a group piece, please contact us at info@savoyards.ch so that you can be contacted for future events.

Barbara Laurie thanks all the singers for the work they did beforehand on the music to ensure the success of the performance. The singers were: Corinna Balfour, Wendy Bucknall, Florence Hood, Bettina Kassanke, David Laurie, Joanna Lonergan, Ann McClymont, Janet Montgomery, Susan Mouton-Liger and Bryan Stone.

Su's Mystery Anagrams

The anagrams below are scrambled versions of titles of two Gilbert & Sullivan Operas:

EDURORIDG

MADATS TANCALE

The answers to the anagrams in newsletter 11 are:

TELIOHON = IOLANTHE

PER OSOSHEW LO GOFFTERRS = THE FLOWERS OF PROGRESS

Riddle-me-ree!

My first is in home and also in house,
My second's in animal and in mouse.
My third's in saxophone not in lyre,
My fourth is in steeple and also in spire.
My fifth is in find and also invent,
My sixth's not in camp but find it in tent.
My seventh's in vanish and disappear,
My eighth's not in horror but is in fear.
My ninth is in orange but not in plum,
My tenth's not in gin but it is in rum.
My last is in worse and also in better -
Now what is the name of this operetta?

The solution will appear in the next G&S newsletter!

Time to Pay Dues for 2007-08 (or Join the Society!)

The principal resource that your Society consumes is the time contributed by interested and active members. Nevertheless, cash is indispensable for some of the more worldly aspects of running an organization. As our fiscal year closed on June 30th and the new one began on July 1st, it is time for members to pay their dues. Members enjoy special prices for the Society's events, and of course your dues make it possible for the Society to carry on at all. Dues are used for only 2 things: to cover the administrative costs of running the Society (web-site, postage, and bank fees) and to subsidize programs to the extent possible. Full details are provided at the Annual General Meeting (this year on Friday, September 21st), but any member may have the financial statements any time upon request.

Existing members and new joiners can pay their dues by transferring the appropriate amount (CHF 50 for individuals and families, and CHF 20 for individual students) to our Swiss postal account (40-333742-6, The Gilbert & Sullivan Society, 4002 Basel). If you live outside of Switzerland, you may also pay your dues in cash to one of our board members. For those who prefer paying at the post office, this is also possible, either by completing a blank red postal payment slip, or waiting for your invitation to the AGM (existing members only), which will arrive by post and also have a red postal payment slip from The Gilbert & Sullivan Society enclosed (you can also use this slip to pay through your own bank). Please be advised that for each cash payment made at the post office, the Society has to pay a fee. Transfers cost us nothing.

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And by the way, don't you know someone else who would like to join our ranks? Please do invite him or her to do so!

This month's song "Now wouldn't you like to rule the roast"



Attractive woman in long flowing gown whose train is being carried by a courtier

Melissa.

Now wouldn't you like to rule the roast
And guide this University?

Blanche.

I must agree,
'Twould pleasant be,
(Sing hey, a Proper Pride!)

Melissa.

And wouldn't you like to clear the coast,
Of malice and perversity?

Blanche.

Without a doubt,
I'll bundle 'em out,
(Sing hey, when I preside!)

Both.

Sing hey!
Sing hoity toity! Sorry for some!
Sing marry, come up, and her/my day will come!
Sing Proper Pride
Is the horse to ride,
And Happy-go-lucky, my Lady, O!

Blanche.

For years I've writhed beneath her sneers,
Although a born Plantagenet!

Melissa.

You're much too meek,
Or you would speak
(Sing hey, I'll say no more!)

Blanche.

Her elder I, by several years,
Although you'd ne'er imagine it.

Melissa.

Sing, so I've heard
But never a word
Have I e'er believ'd before!

Both.

Sing hey!
Sing hoity toity! Sorry for some!
Sing marry, come up, and her/my day will come!
Sing, she shall learn
That a worm will turn.
Sing Happy-go-lucky, my Lady, O!

Karaoke, sing along with "Now wouldn't you like to rule the roast"

http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/princess_ida/webop/pi_midi/pi_017.mid

This will work on some but not all computers depending on how your computer is set up.

Princess Ida Trivia

"Princess Ida, or Castle Adamant" opened on 5 January 1884 at the Savoy Theatre and ran for 246 performances. It was produced between *Iolanthe* and *The Mikado* when its creators were at the height of their powers. The score is Sullivan at his best, and some people consider that Gilbert's libretto contains some of his funniest lines.

Gilbert: Was he really funny?

While there are many books, comments and monographs on Sullivan and his work, there is much less on Gilbert. Jane Stedman's biography, OUP 1996, and Hesketh Pearson's little book of 1935, my edition Penguin 1954, do the best for him.

Sullivan was to his peers an artist, a musician, a man of society; Gilbert was a writer, a theatrical. Victorians and Edwardians, knew the difference, as at the Command performance of the *Gondoliers* at Windsor Castle for Queen Victoria, where the programme names composer, but no author. Gilbert knew it too; 'the army, the navy, the church... and the stage', made that clear enough. Sullivan was knighted early, for his services to music; Gilbert was knighted almost grudgingly, near the end of his life, and felt it.

We all have a picture of Gilbert as witty. Anecdotes of his biting humour, in the theatre and in society, are widespread. His quick mind and ingenuity with words are legendary. 'Dear Mr Gilbert', gushes the society lady in America, 'I love Beethoven... is dear Beethoven still composing?'. 'Well, no, madam, Dear Beethoven is now decomposing'. Or at the theatre, when a party takes him for the commissioner: 'My

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man, please call me a cab' 'Very well, sir, you are a four-wheeler'. 'What do you mean?' 'Well, you asked me to call you a cab, and I could hardly call you handsome (i.e hansom, a small single-horse cab)

There is always pungency, always a riposte. Mr Gilbert, so funny and inventive, was not easy company. That is perhaps not surprising. He had half his life been a failure, a hack, writing buffoonery for comic journals and the London popular theatres. His early career as a barrister had brought neither fame nor income, though it inspired *Trial by Jury* and a good song for *Iolanthe*, and so, having no other means, he lived by his wits. Was he a happy man? That seems in doubt. Victorian England put him intellectually and socially in the shadow of Sullivan, who was to be the English Mendelssohn. His plots were often grudgingly accepted and his remarks and writings often show resentment. And then there were those extraordinary caricatures among his characters, especially his, by our standards, cruel portrayal of decaying female beauty. 'A very nice girl you'll find her, She might very well pass for 43, in the dark, with the light behind her', already in *Trial by Jury*, and 'I've got to take under my wing, tra-la, a most unattractive old thing, tra-la', in 'The Mikado', do not exactly radiate that love and respect for our elders which, as young people, we were taught to show. 'Nothing will be left of me, in the coming, by and by'...Comic, but indescribably cruel. And yet he was always excessively, stiffly, proper and would permit no vulgarity or innuendo in private or stage life. He loved his wife and his home, was right to the end a very private person, and had no taste for the exuberant immorality of Sullivan with his gambling and personal affairs.

Gilbert loved the absurd, and had a lifelong gift for puns and plays on words, and wildly eccentric 'topsy-turvydom' which as a young man kept him alive, and which later, as recurring themes in the Operas, drove Sullivan and others to distraction. Yet it was those plots and their characters which were the inspiration to Sullivan's often sluggish muse, as, wracked by kidney troubles, he searched to match the mood of Gilbert's often poetic, satirical, sometimes deliberately trivial and mocking, and wickedly funny verse. The result, as we know, was joyous, dancing, pensive, martial, burlesque, but also classical music, which today has lost none of its power to lift Gilbert's texts into works of art, sung still today with delight.

So Gilbert is more of a challenge than we might think.

He was William Schwenk Gilbert, born in London in 1836. An unenthusiastic scholar, he tried to volunteer for the Crimean War, but it ended; he paid

to be called to the Bar, studying at the Inner Temple, and never had a brief; he secured an income by contributing comic verse to the weekly periodical 'Fun.' His first successful play was 'Dulcamara', a parody of Donizetti's 'Elisir d'Amore'; it ran for 3 months in 1867, and earned him £30.

In 'Fun' there appeared the first signs of the themes we love. Here were the rhymes we know as the 'Bab Ballads', which have, ever since, usually been in print somewhere. Among them are 'The Rival Curates', who re-emerge as Grosvenor and Bunthorne, Captain Reece, the prototype of Captain Corcoran, and others. But what about the sustained insanity of this:

'Strike the concertina's melancholy string!
Blow the spirit stirring harp like anything!
Let the piano's martial blast rouse the echoes of the past,
For of Agib, Prince of Tartary, I sing!

Anyone who thinks the *Goon Show* or *Monty Python* started this sort of thing must remember that Gilbert was a humorist at the time of *Punch*, of Lewis Carroll, of Edward Lear, of 'The Walrus and the Carpenter' and 'The Hunting of the Snark'. And some of the Bab Ballads are touchingly poignant. Just try 'Only a dancing girl', or 'Tempora Mutantur'.

Many of Gilbert's plots do dwell on magic, potions, pills, fairies and mistaken identities. This was not unusual in the popular stage of the day, where audiences rolled in the aisles at a cascade of puns. But Gilbert was more, and a next article will explore his gift of words. For now, I offer another, lesser known but hilarious gem of the Bab Ballads:

'Macphairson Clonglocketty Angus M'Clan
Was the son of an elderly labouring man.
You've guessed him a Scotsman, shrewd reader, at sight,
And p'raps altogether, shrewd reader, you're right.'
M'Clan's gift was piping, but although
'All night and all day he delighted the chieftans
With sniggering pibrochs, and jiggety reels',
he could not play a real tune. Challenged by a noble Sassenach tourist to play an air, he went off in a huff to practise, and finally
'Elicited something resembling an air'.

The rest of the story is too horrible to recount, but you get the general drift. Gilbert could be very funny, but there was a sharp edge to his knife.

(To be continued) Many thanks to Bryan Stone

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What does G&S mean to you?

Kirsten-Louise Puls interviews Barbara Laurie about how she got interested in Gilbert & Sullivan

Expect the unexpected would be good advice to give someone about to embark on a new life overseas, and professional singer Barbara Laurie's experience is a case in point: Scottish born, she now finds herself living in France running both a society and a professional singing group for 19th century English operetta duo Gilbert & Sullivan in Switzerland. Now, how on earth did she wind up doing that?

Perhaps it was fate. After all, it was Gilbert & Sullivan (G & S) that got her started in her singing career. As a 15 year old, she was chosen to play the lead "Mabel" in a school production of G & S "The Pirates of Penzance". She was thrilled. "When I did that, I knew exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life" she beams, dimpling. From there, she (and her dimples) were off to the Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama to study for her career. So did Barbara then come to Basel to meet a clamouring demand for 19C English music? Well, funnily enough, no. She was following her husband David who was offered a position first in Heidelberg, Germany and then in Basel, Switzerland at Novartis. In fact Barbara laughingly describes herself as a "Novartis widow".

Not everything came easy at first. Barbara found the German and Swiss lifestyles a little hard to adapt to, such as the rigid rules surrounding apartment living in Switzerland. "I was allergic to white!" she says. All rooms in Swiss apartments seem to be white. Now her house is a rainbow of colour, a different one for each room! I remark that now she is living just over the border in France. She laughs (something she does a lot!) "I'm glad we live here!" she explains. "I'm from a friendly part of Scotland [where] it's normal to smile at people.... I like the fact that in France even quite young children say bonjour".

Barbara began to teach music and make connections first in Germany and then in Basel. Then, 12 years, or "three computers ago", as she puts it, Barbara held a singing workshop on G & S. Bernie MacCabe from the Cornell University Club heard of this. A big G & S fan, He asked her to sing G & S at a Cornell Club function in Lucerne. The Gilbert & Sullivan Singers were born! At first it was just Barbara and Boris Chnaider, her pianist, and then English singer Su Mouton-Liger, but now she is singing with.....you

guessed it..... two more Scots! The baritone Will Wood and soprano Gillian Macdonald. She found Gillian by "funny coincidence" – through flamenco dancing classes. This hobby is more "Barber of Seville" than "Pirates of Penzance" perhaps, but then Barbara has many more strings to her bow than just G & S! The ever persistent Bernie also twisted Barbara's arm sufficiently to get her to help create the G & S Society. There are now around 70 members, of a variety of nationalities, including local Swiss and French. They participate in singalongs, dinners, hear talks and go to performances, including those given by The Gilbert & Sullivan Singers, of course!

I am curious to know the reasons behind the interest in G & S among non-English speakers. The language used by the witty librettist Gilbert is not so accessible even for native speakers, and the themes and jokes in the operettas tend to be Victorian. Barbara thinks much of it is down to Sullivan's music, which she considers underappreciated in its day. "I don't know what happened with English music at that time.....why are we not hearing about Sullivan, as well as Gilbert and Sullivan?" One reason she puts forward is that there was "a great deal of [reverse] snobbery" towards Sullivan after he was knighted. Furthermore, people on the continent seem to be more keen on classical music generally. In Britain, Barbara found that towns would be struggling to form just one choir, but here even in a "wee village" you can find three choirs. "Where do you get all these men to sing?" she exclaims. It is very ironic that after having been initially reluctant to leave her work in Scotland, Barbara finds that there are "lots of job opportunities" in Basel and does not plan to return home, for the moment at least.

And for the future? The singers are now branching out into other British music and recently performed some Elizabethan "catches". Sometimes it's difficult to sell to venues when people had never heard of G & S. "We know what we're selling" Barbara says, but "it's not there on the CD, it's missing the whole visual thing". But fans of G & S can rest assured that performances will continue, and enthusiasts can also join in singalongs held by the Society. In fact there are plans afoot to put on a complete operetta. Stay tuned, and Gilbert would say, let's give "three cheers and one cheer more" for a G & S encore!

Many thanks to Kirsten for contributing this article

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Solutions to May G&S newsletter crossword "The Lass who loved a sailor"

Across

1 Pinafore
7 HMS
8 Corcoran
9 Hebe
10 Captain
11 Sir
12 Joseph

Down

1 Porter
2 Ralph
3 MrsCripps
4 Rackstraw
5 Deadeye
6 Josephine

Other non G&S Society forthcoming events

Opening of new season with the Operissima Company in Schaffhausen

Operissima are pleased to announce an evening of theatre, dance, circus, songs and operetta to celebrate the opening of their new 2007-2008 season.

Thursday 13th September at 20.00

Entry is free and an apero is provided but please contact them well in advance to reserve your place!

Operissima, Theater im dach
Fulachstrasse 237
8200 Schaffhausen

Telephone for reservations: 052 640 2964

www.operissima.ch

Semi circle "Role Play" By Alan Ayckbourn

Venue: Helmut Förbacher Theatre, Badischer
Bahnhof

Dates: Friday 7th, Saturday 8th, Thursday 13th,
Friday 14th and Saturday 15th September

Tickets on sale from August 2nd at:

Bider & Tanner
Aeschenvorstadt 2
Basel
Tel: +41 (0)61 206 99 93

Price CHF 28 Students: CHF 22

Semi-circle is Basel's English language theatre group. A non-profit making club, Semi-Circle has been staging plays of various genres since 1985,

from musicals to comedies to tragedies to classics. Productions usually take place in the spring and autumn of each year.

www.semi-circle.ch

Grim's Dyke Hotel

The magnificent former country residence of Sir William Gilbert is set in over 40 acres of beautiful gardens and woodlands. A shrine for Gilbert & Sullivan enthusiasts from all over the world, the hotel will be presenting all the G&S Operettas during the 2007 season.

Grim's Dyke Hotel is a carefully restored country house renowned for its special musical events and banqueting. The hotel and grounds have been used as a backdrop for many famous feature films and TV programmes!

Grim's Dyke is only 12 miles from London's West End via the A5 or A41 onto the A410 through Stanmore.

Guests without cars should take underground trains to either Stanmore (Jubilee Line) or Harrow on the Hill (Metropolitan Line), and then take a taxi.

Schedule of forthcoming G&S Operas

Sept 2nd - Pirates of Penzance
Sept 16th - The Mikado
Oct 7th - Trial by Jury
Oct 21st - Pirates of Penzance
Nov 4th - The Yeomen of the Guard
Nov 18th - HMS Pinafore
Nov 25th - Iolanthe 125th Anniversary
Dec 2nd - Pirates of Penzance
Dec 16th - The Mikado
Dec 31st - NYE G&S Celebration

Further information:

<http://www.grimsdyke.com/index.htm>

The funny places where G&S melodies pop up!

At the very end of the film "Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark" one of the characters sings a few bars of a song from HMS Pinafore, "A British Tar is a Soaring Soul". This same song is also sung by Captain Jean Luc Picard in one of the Star Trek films. It is surprising where Gilbert & Sullivan crops up!

Contact information :

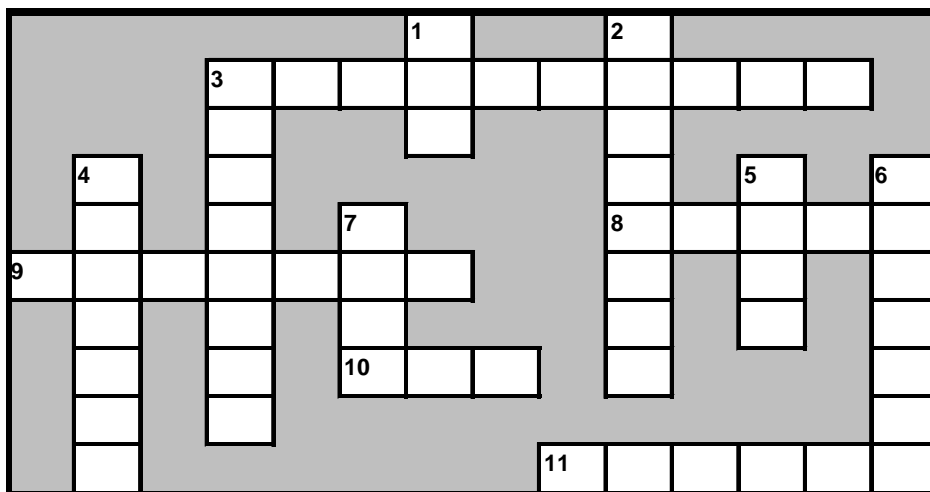
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Castle Adamant

To do the crossword, please print out this page



Across

- 3 (10) King
- 8 (5) friend of 3 down
- 9 (7) friend of 3 down
- 10 a girl graduate
- 11 (6) Professor of Humanities

Down

- 1 see 2
- 2 (8) + 1 (3) Title Role
- 3 (8) son of 3 across
- 4 (7) daughter of 6 down
- 5 (4) son of 7 down
- 6 (7) Professor of Abstract Science
- 7 (4) King