

Newsletter at a glance

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News from the Board

At the Society's recent annual general meeting – our third! – I was elected to serve as chairman for the next year, and am honoured to do so.

For the first three years of the Society's existence, Barbara Laurie led a very committed and very active governing board to bring to you and to the tri-state area a variety of musical, informational, and social events in the pursuit of making the music of Gilbert & Sullivan available to all of us who know it and love it, and with the intent of expanding the circle of the initiated. Barbara has done a tremendous job, and I would like to thank her for her efforts.

Our Society has now reached a stable existence in which we are able to offer a variety of programmes each year to our enthusiastic members and guests. The governing board believes, however, that our membership base needs to grow in order to achieve a sustainable existence. This, next to maintaining an attractive program of events, is our highest priority for the coming year.

How do we plan to achieve this? The answer, dear reader, is through you! If you are already a member, encourage another person to join the Society. If you are not yet a member, please join us today. Details on how to renew your membership or join are included below.

-- Bernie MacCabe

Forthcoming events

Visit to Pocket Opera

Some of you may have already enjoyed one of Pocket Opera's very successful Gilbert & Sullivan productions at the ZKO-Haus in Zurich. This year, for the third season running, they've chosen a G&S work for the Christmas season: the production will be "HMS Pinafore". Details of the cast and dates can be found at (runs between 28/12/07 and 6/1/08)

http://www.chambermusic.ch/index_lowsize.php

The Society has reserved a block of tickets for the last performance, which will be on Sunday 6th January 2008, at 17.00. The tickets cost CHF 53, a reduction of 10%. If there is enough interest, we will also make a group booking on the train (leaving the SBB at 15.07).

If you would like tickets for the show, please let us know as soon as possible, but not later than the end of November, by mailing membership@savoyards.ch or calling Joanna Lonergan, 061 691 2875.

Dinner Concert

Please reserve the 1st March in your diary. The Gilbert & Sullivan Singers will once again provide a spectacular evening of entertainment for us.

Summary of dates for your diary

Sunday 6th January – Pocket Opera

Saturday 1st March – Dinner concert

Third Annual General Meeting

Our third AGM took place on September 21st. As noted above, Bernie MacCabe was elected to succeed Barbara Laurie as chairman of the Society's governing board. The Society ended the year with a pretty much break-even financial result (small net loss of CHF 63.30). Florence Hood and David Laurie were newly appointed to the governing board. The current members of the governing board are: Corinna Balfour, Rachel Bunger, Florence Hood, Barbara Laurie, David Laurie, Joanna Lonergan, Bernie MacCabe, Ann McClymont, and Valerie Walder.

How Much Wine Can You Sample and Still Pilot a Venetian Gondola?

Review of the Gilbert & Sullivan Wine & Cheese Evening on 26 October by Bernie MacCabe and Ann McClymont

If you were looking for the answer to that question, you would have been disappointed at the first wine tasting event organised by the Gilbert & Sullivan Society. If your goal was to learn about and taste a number of good wines while enjoying the music that defines our Society's existence, then both your time and modest contribution were well spent.

Bobby Katic, of the WeinForum (Bottmingerstrasse 27, Oberwil, vinoforum@bluewin.ch) introduced us to a number of wines from Spain and Italy. This was intertwined with music, from the Gondoliers (mostly), which takes place in Italy and Barataria, but involves some important personages from Spain. We began with white wines from both countries and then moved on to imbibe and learn about some of the red wines in each country, beginning with the simpler ones and moving up the scale of complexity and price. Accompanying the wine was a sumptuous buffet of cheese, bread, crackers, fruit, and hors d'œuvres prepared by Ann McClymont.

No Gilbert & Sullivan evening would be complete without some musical tidbits to accompany the gastronomical theme. "Hail Poetry" (Pirates of Penzance) and "Dance a Cachucha" (The Gondoliers) were chosen as sing-along pieces. Angela Robinson gave a splendid rendition of "On the day when I was wedded to your admirable Sire". Bryan Stone donned his royal apron and delighted us with "Rising early in the Morning". We are grateful to these talented entertainers who are able to interpret the music and text with such ease.

Su's Mystery Anagrams

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

HET KADIMO

BURIT YA RYLJ

The answers to the anagrams in newsletter 12 are:

EDURORIDG = RUDDIGORE

MADATS TANCALE = CASTLE ADAMANT

This month's song "Love feeds on many kinds of food, I know"



"Oh my name is John Wellington Wells, I'm a dealer in magic and spells"

Alexis

Love feeds on many kinds of food, I know,
Some love for rank, and some for duty:
Some give their hearts away for empty show,
And others love for youth and beauty.
To love for money all the world is prone:
Some love themselves, and live all lonely:
Give me the love that loves for love alone –
I love that love – I love it only –
I love that love – I love it only –
Give me the love that loves for love alone –
I love that love – I love it only!

What man for any other joy can thirst,
Whose loving wife adores him duly?
Want, misery, and care may do their worst,
If loving woman loves you truly.
A lover's thoughts are ever with his own –
None truly loved is ever lonely:
Give me the love that loves for love alone –
I love that love - I love it only –
I love that love - I love it only –
Give me the love that loves for love alone –
I love that love - I love it only!

Karaoke, sing along with "Love feeds on many kinds of food, I know"

http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/sorcerer/web_oper_a/kar/sorc11.kar or

http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/sorcerer/web_oper_a/midi/sorc11.mid

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

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Sorcerer Trivia

The Sorcerer was first produced at the Opéra Comique, a charming little theatre in the Strand, on November 17, 1877. At that time D'Oyly Carte had an ambition to develop an English form of light opera that would displace the bawdy burlesques and badly translated French operettas that then dominated the London stage. He assembled a syndicate and formed the Comedy Opera Company, with Gilbert and Sullivan commissioned to write a comic opera that would serve as the centrepiece for an evening's entertainment.

Gilbert found a subject in one of his own short stories, "The Elixir of Love," which concerned the complications arising when a love potion is distributed to all the residents of a small village. The leading character was a Cockney businessman who happened to be a sorcerer, a purveyor of blessings (not much called for) and curses (very popular). Gilbert and Sullivan were tireless taskmasters, seeing to it that *The Sorcerer* opened as a fully polished production.

For a full synopsis of this lesser known Opera, please use the following link (it will also help you answer the crossword clues at the end of the newsletter!)

http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/sorcerer/html/plot_summary.html

Was Gilbert really funny? (The second of three articles on Gilbert's life and work)

Continuing my biographical notes on Gilbert's life and humour, it is tempting to run on and give more examples of an extremely creative and inventive mind, a master of word-play and pun, a satirist and an expert in repartee. But if Gilbert had gone through life doing only this, brilliant as he might have been, he would have been forgotten, as were countless other funny men and pantomime stars. Unfortunately too we have another Gilbert, one who was very strict with himself and all around him, who quickly felt a grudge, who entertained and scorned the courts for many years with irate actions for imagined slights or insults, and who felt always, or so it appears, that others, and even Sullivan, looked down on his, Gilbert's, undoubted gifts. I think this disappoints us further today than

the undoubtedly real questions of his often exaggerated, and not always funny, cruelty, ('my snickersnee', 'it was the 'cat'', mock and threatened executions) and his unkindness to certain of his fellows, especially the ugly (Dick Deadeye), mad Margaret, and the aging (Katisha).

It has been claimed that he had monotony in his plots, of the 'Deus ex Machina', babies exchanged at birth, of wealth, class and noble poverty and of idealised but ridiculous affections. Yes, they all come up, repeatedly, but it is worth considering that they are not themselves the humour, they are only the scaffolding from which the audiences get their reference. That is important for his context, for he was a man of the stage and the theatre, writing far more plays than comic operas and many of his plays, from slapstick to high drama, failed. He knew that the popular and middle class audiences of his day were used to caricatures, puns and gags of pantomime-like vulgarity, which he refused to give, and he used, as did even Shakespeare or Dickens, a familiar gallery of figures recognisable on sight as comic or tragic. Some of these 19th.C conventions, including the vulgar dames, have survived in the curiously English pantomime tradition. Then there is context: 'Patience', for example, with its romping parody of aestheticism, lovesick maidens and burlesque Heavy Dragoons, was only one of a whole blossoming of widely performed satire on the subject, so topical that even Oscar Wilde once remarked that he hoped that Gilbert and Sullivan would at least do better than had some before them. They did! And but for 'Patience', the whole wildfire epidemic of aesthetic affectation would today be forgotten.

What Gilbert did so masterfully then, was to take a few outstanding and potentially attractive, social and political themes of his day, known to the 'average' informed theatre-goer, and within them use his repertoire of stock characters and standing jokes to create a vehicle for dramatisation. This first thematic choice was completely uncompromising. Few others of his day would have dared to ridicule the Peerage or the Monarchy and its critics, especially after Victoria's mourning for Albert had come close to provoking a constitutional crisis. Gilbert was serious. Then he clad each of the roles, true to the characters the audience came to know, in new, penetrating and scathing dialogue on the main theme. But there was also the Shakespearian in him too; his comic

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libretti have, though all were treated as ridiculous, their nobles and their rogues and imposters. Falstaff is everywhere. Gilbertian actors were often not the best of singers, but the character parts had to sit. They crop up over and over and are always funny again in the next opera's context. This was the stuff of success and, for the expectations of his time, of brand loyalty and we play it out still today though we no longer have his sense of context. But of course, greed, cowardice, posturing, pomposity, boasting, venal insinuation and even such genteel lust are as recognisable today. Experience still makes fresh-faced naivety look absurd in such readily-parodied virtues as noble values, a sense of duty, patriotism, dignity and propriety. So the magic, remarkably, still works, but to get at it you have to grasp the posturing and try to follow or intone the wickedly ingenious words, something about which contemporary entertainment, where songs don't have rhymes or diction or tunes, is less patient.

So here Gilbert is subversive and a revolutionary and a craftsman before he is a humorist. He takes an issue, seeing its vulnerability and potential building each time an edifice around which the humour of the ridiculous is brought to bear on the theme, but even more upon those to whom the theme is dear. It doesn't always work. When it does, it has us spellbound. This, I contend and not just the playing with words and gags, which Gilbert could always do, is what, paradoxically, 'makes sense' out of Gilbert's topics. It is at heart why the operas have to be performed to be funny and exhilarating, even when it is Sullivan's tunes which we whistle after the show. When we go to the theatre we encounter this top-down structure inevitably 'bottom-up'. The curtain opening on the set, opening dialogue, the first song, and the characters we already really know too, are what we see, but how long do we need to realise that 'Pinafore' is scarcely, at heart, about ships, any more than 'The Gondoliers' is about Venice, or 'The Mikado' about Japan? Gilbert points us further, at the audience and the world of assumptions, of human weakness which they know, but Sullivan's music, in this evaluation, remains firmly in context nautically, on the Grand Canal or in Titi-Poo.

Mind you, Sullivan does not compose blindly just to create good tunes. He has many running gags, musical teasers and gentle parodies of his own, often in the scoring and accompaniments,

brilliantly creating mood. Just compare the music of 'Ruddigore' with 'Pinafore' to take two examples. But there is also a Handelian chorus in 'Pinafore' where comic sailors proclaim that 'He is an Englishman'. That is one of Sullivan's little jokes. The music always reinforces the play, so that throughout, as each of the familiar buffoons, rascals, sweethearts and heroes sings their character songs, we again get closer to what Gilbert really wants us to see. That's what I mean by bottom-up.

Gilbert is supremely funny though not always consistent. He is never funny just to be funny. If you don't follow through to what he is telling you, about life, yourself, institutions, attitudes, he has failed. You have to think. Sometimes he does fail and those are the operas for which not even Sullivan's most buoyant tunes can bring back to life. And there remains that puzzle, of what he wanted to say through the beautifully crafted story of 'The Yeoman of the Guard'. The 'Yeoman' did not fail as some did. But it's different. Is it 'only' a historical pageant? Is it, as I always felt and as Sullivan treats it, a tragedy, lightly veiled in humour and some light buffoonery? Is life a boon?

Next time we'll look at how Gilbert tried to grow old gracefully and didn't quite manage.

We are very grateful to Bryan Stone for researching and writing this article for us

Riddle-Me-Ree

My first is in poppy but not in rose,
My second's in heated but not in froze.
My third is in twenty and also in thirty,
My fourth's not in clean but it is in dirty.
My fifth is in pepper but not in salt,
My sixth is in nothing and also in nought.
My seventh's in chicken and also in cock,
And my last is in key but not in lock.

The answer's the name of somebody's bride
And also a virtue these sentences hide.

The solution for the Riddle me Ree from newsletter 12 is HMS Pinafore!

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Review of Buxton festival

A Report on HF Holidays' Buxton G&S Festival from Janice Whipple a guest at the Summer Apero courtesy of Corinna Balfour. "It was great being with you!"

I'm a newcomer to G&S; just two years ago, on a "Classic Walking" holiday with Holiday Fellowship (HF), I met a couple who introduced me to the idea of the "HF" G&S week. I can thoroughly recommend this as a most enjoyable, intensive and energizing experience.

The Buxton Festival, now in its 14th year, ran from 28th July 2007 until August 19th. Our HF week began on Saturday August 4th and we were based in Newton House, Dovedale. The house is located in beautiful countryside with lots of sky, only a half hour's drive away from Buxton. All meals are provided as part of the holiday.

Our programme leader was Alan Dean, who with his wife Joan presented a programme fully packed with words and music, commentary and background stories, with recordings of the operas to hand. Alan was most remarkable in his encyclopedic knowledge and in his most interesting and entertaining presentation. I could understand why he and Joan had a following of people returning year after year. The programme was presented in the morning from 9:15 until about 11:15 after which morning coffee was served. Time passed rapidly!

Had it not been "Just by Chance" I'd be reporting this event without ANY previous experience with "live" G&S, but a friend and I had just attended a Carol Rosa production of "The Yeoman of the Guard" at the Grand Theatre in Blackpool.

During our week we attended four evening performances.

1. Sunday. "Iolanthe" by the Philadelphia Gilbert & Sullivan Union (USA). Quoting from the programme: "The Union's mission is to combine the talents and resources of these Philadelphia organizations (including the Savoy Company (1901), the G&S Society of Chester County, the G&S Players, Rose Valley Chorus and Orchestra, Arden Singers and the Penn Singers) for the sole purpose of mounting a production here in Buxton" ..
2. Monday: "The Pirates of Penzance" by the Liverpool Theatre School and College". The dramatis personae appear to be all or mostly students of the college.

3. Thursday "Princess Ida" by South Anglia Players. Celebrating their 30th anniversary and their 14th year of attending the Festival. Quote: "They come from all walks of life and their ventures are self-financing. There is by design a strong family tradition and younger members are encouraged to participate."
4. Friday: "The Mikado" by the Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company. Quote: "we are very proud of our all singing, all dancing and all professional G&S Opera Company which has been established exclusively for our annual visit to Buxton. We pre-audition and cast at least two new productions each year".

There was also an adjudication process that I hadn't known about. My hearing was off and I didn't hear all the comments, but they were phrased in a positive tone. The younger groups received advice on improving voice projection, which was thought to be related to the modern trend towards microphone amplification.

The coach left the house at 6:30 pm for a 7:30 performance, which allowed us a little time for the shop. In the theatre our seats were in the Upper Circle, with good visibility and handy access to the bar in the interval. The bar at Newton House was open on our return and we could enjoy a chat.

I enjoyed ALL the performances

For anyone interested in attending the Buxton festival in 2008 the HF web site is www.hfholidays.co.uk and that of the Buxton Festival www.gs-festival.co.uk. A HF brochure "Inspirations – Special Interest Holidays" contains a brief description of this holiday and others.

Thanks for your help in introducing me to the pleasures of Gilbert & Sullivan

Many thanks Janice for letting us know about the holidays and her visit to the festival

To Join the Society or Renew Your Membership ...

..simply remit your dues to our Swiss postal account:
40-333742-6
The Gilbert & Sullivan Society
4002 Basel

Dues are CHF 60 for couples or families and CHF 40 for individuals. The student subscription remains at CHF 20.

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What does G&S mean to you?

"Ann, stay behind after choir rehearsal, I would like to speak to you", announced Mr Murray, Head of Music at Dalry High School. The student in the second back row quivered in anticipation. What had she done? She had been attentive during rehearsal, no talking was the rule. She had not been chewing gum, nor passing notes underneath the desk. So what could the music master want with her?

"Ann, we are planning a production of Pirates of Penzance and want you to sing the part of Mabel." Those few words began for me a lifetime of love of music, with special fondness for Gilbert and Sullivan. My only experience of singing till then had been as a chorister in church, or singing along to the latest chart toppers. The idea of singing on stage was a frightening one.

Fortunately, help was at hand. A recent graduate of the Glasgow Academy of Music had joined the school music staff and she took charge of me. She arranged lessons for me at the Academy where I came to appreciate the technical difficulties of singing. Our collaboration lasted until I married and left Scotland to live in Knebworth, Hertfordshire.

Phase two of my journey of G&S musical discovery began when I joined the Lytton Players in Stevenage. This excellent amateur operatic group staged G&S along with Music Hall and a wide variety of concert repertoire. With them I enjoyed the fun of The Gondoliers and as Phoebe in Yeomen of the Guard.

Now here we are in the present, and I am still finding new aspects of G&S music to savour and appreciate. There are moments in school life which influence a student for ever. Such a moment was my meeting with the music master. I will always be grateful to Mr Murray for setting me off on the road of musical discovery. No matter where you are in the world, you will always find music and lovers of music.

Thank you to Ann McClymont for this contribution

Solutions to May G&S newsletter crossword "Castle Adamant"

Across	Down
3 Hildebrand	1 Ida
8 Cyril	2 Princess
9 Florian	3 Hilarion
10 Ada	4 Melissa
11 Psyche	5 Arac
	6 Blanche
	7 Gama

*Other Non G&S Society forthcoming events***Basel English Panto Group****FRANKENSTEIN - THE PANTO**

It's a hard life for little orphan Heidi in Pumpnickel's Tavern. The greedy innkeeper and his bossy wife treat her like a slave - and up in the castle gormless Count Dracula and his gummy Grandmother are planning a dinner party, with Heidi as the main course!

Luckily she has some friends to help: her faithful dog Kodak, her best friend Frankie Stein and the handsome Prince Ludwig. The forces of evil do not stand a chance - especially when Professor Crackpot turns Frankie into a superhero. The only real horrors are a party of rowdy schoolgirls under the supervision of Miss Nelly, famed pantomime Dame. They study how to create havoc and they are all fast learners

The dates Are: 4,7,8,9,11.12,13,14,15 December at 19:00 with 2 matinee performances on the 9th & 15th at 14:00. Tickets will be on sale at Bider & Tanner from approx. late October.

English Seminar choir

Saturday 8 December at 5pm Christengemeinschaft, 11 Lange Gasse, Basel

Monday 10 December at 8pm, Schoenes Haus, Nadelberg 6, Grosser Hörsaal, Basel

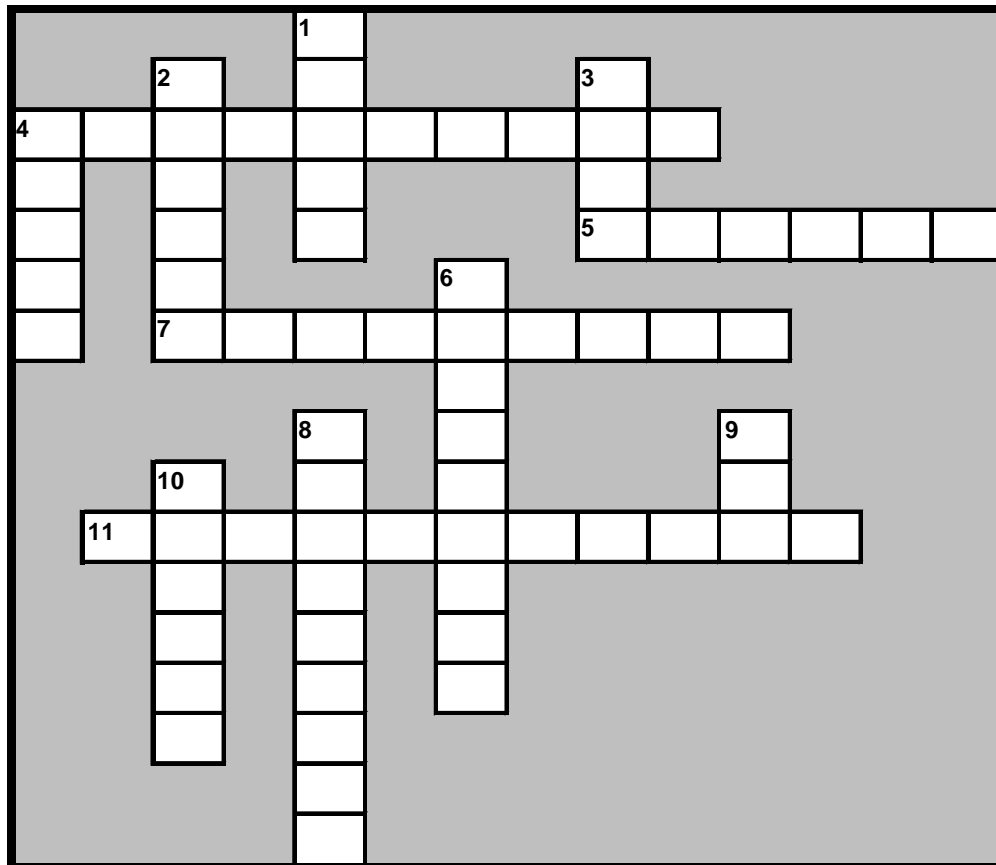
Concerts are one hour long.
Entry is free, Donations appreciated.

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The Sorcerer

To do the crossword, please print out this page



Across

- 4 (10) Type of boot
 5 (6) person of note
 7 (9) Lady of Ancient Lineage
 11 (11) Baronet

Down

- 1 (5) a lady's daughter
 2 (6) a peer's son
 3 (4) Wizard's name
 4 (5) Wizard's last name
 6 (9) Gentleman's first name
 8 (9) Mrs Partlet's daughter
 9 (3) Noble gentleman's title
 10 (6) Vicar's title

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