

## Newsletter at a glance

News from the board, side	1
Subscription reminder	1
Forthcoming Society Events	1
G&S reviews	2
The Gilbert and Sullivan Society Logo	3
A new name for the Gilbert and Sullivan Singers	3
Solutions to November crossword	3
This month's song, Karaoke link, trivia	4
Su's mystery anagrams	4
Was Gilbert really funny (part 3)	5
Other non G&S Society forthcoming events	6
Riddle-Me-Ree	6

## News from the Board

As this goes to press, we are eagerly anticipating our major event of the year – The Gilbert & Sullivan Society's Annual Dinner Concert, which takes place on 1<sup>st</sup> March at L'Esprit. We are fortunate indeed to have joining us Simon Featherstone, Britain's ambassador to Switzerland, and Alan Chalmers, Honorary British Consul. For those readers who are not joining us for this event, I would like to share Ambassador Featherstone's supportive remarks:

*It is a great pleasure to join the Society for its annual dinner, and I very much look forward to the concert by The Gilbert and Sullivan Singers. I have been a fan of the work of Gilbert and Sullivan for many years, and commend the Society for its dedication to promoting their works in the Basel region. Already the world's most widely performed series of operas, it is pleasing to know that the works of Gilbert and Sullivan can find further appreciation here in the "Dreiländereck". May I wish you every success with this and future events.*

As you will read below, we have 2 further events planned between now and the end of our program year, a "Pirates" sing-along, and our much appreciated Summer Apéro.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind members and non-members alike that we are in a drive to increase our membership. Forty members – which is where we are now – is a very thin foundation upon which to support the programs and services that the Society has been offering over the years.

Word of mouth has been our best source of new members. I urge each and every one of you – if you are not yet a member, join; if you are a member – spread the word, and bring in new members. Nothing is easier than renewing or joining (and hardly anything in life is less expensive). See below for further information.

## To Join the Society or to 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

## Forthcoming Society events

### Pirates of Penzance Singalong, Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April

We are delighted to announce our next Singalong, following the success of our last evening.

It will be held on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April, 19.00 for 19.30 start.

We shall explore this time the delightful music of "The Pirates of Penzance". Singers and non-singers alike join us and enjoy with us the fun of this piece.

Christine Archer (artistic director of the English Seminar Choir) and Helen Lockwood (pianist) will guide and encourage us through the evening. Those of us who attended the last singalong know how much can be achieved in one session under their expert guidance!

There will be a professionally catered apero to begin the evening's entertainment. Music will be provided.

The venue is **Alterszentrum Weiherweg  
Rudolfstrasse 43  
4054 Basel**

**Tram line 1 and 8 Schützenhaus or bus 34 (same stop)**

The cost will be CHF 25 for members and 35 for non members.

The society extends a warm welcome to everyone to what promises to be a most enjoyable evening.

**Summer Apero**

Our summer party will be held on the 13<sup>th</sup> June in the Lohnhof, Centrepoint.

*Summary of dates for your diary*

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May – Sing along

13<sup>th</sup> June: Summer Apero

*Gilbert and Sullivan Reviews*

**Joy and Rapture on the Billowy Waves!**

The quality of Pocket Opera's 2007 production of HMS Pinafore by Gilbert & Sullivan once again made the trip from Basel to Zurich worthwhile.

HMS Pinafore was special for me because the cast really excelled and I have nothing but praise for all the singers. Likewise the 14-piece orchestra, under the expert direction of conductor Howard Griffiths, played with energy and precision from the beginning of the exciting overture to the opera's final chord. Their playing was a joy to hear, and their evident appreciation of the humour added to the cheerful atmosphere.

The opera tells the story of how a Captain's daughter, Josephine, avoids a socially advantageous marriage to the pedantic and tedious Lord Admiral to marry her chosen love, "lowly" sailor Ralph. The Gilbertian twist to the tale is that the sailor turns out to have higher social status than Josephine and her father because he and the captain were mixed up as infants by their "baby farm" nanny. So, in reality, Ralph is "upper crust" and the Captain is of lowly birth. The Lord Admiral feels he must withdraw his marriage proposal because, even though the Captain reminds him that love levels all ranks, the Lord Admiral points out that "it does not level them as much as that." He then presents Josephine to sailor Ralph saying "Take her sir, and mind you treat her kindly."

The relaxed atmosphere in the ZKO Haus seems to give the audience a sense of participation and involvement which is encouraged by details of the production such as the use of the aisles and central

staircase area as part of the "stage." Characters even interact with the audience occasionally, such as when Buttercup distributes her wares to the audience during her opening solo.

In this production, as in the previous stagings of The Mikado (2006) and The Pirates of Penzance (2005), Pocket Opera solves the problem of staging an opera with witty texts in English for a mainly German speaking audience, by replacing most of the dialogue with an onstage narrator who explains the proceedings in German. The idea is good and works quite well to preserve as much as possible of the humour in the original language and, although the musical numbers are sung in English, the performance seems perfectly comprehensible to the German-speakers in the audience. The narrator gave a lively and humorous performance which I found entertaining, even though I barely understood half of what he said. Judging by the laughter his jokes were well received but I did feel that occasionally he went on too long, as in the case of the over-repeated "missed cues" gag, and his melodramatic eating and drinking was unnecessarily distracting during principals' solos.

The spectacle, costumes and actions were all enjoyable particularly the men's chorus who, in the opening scene, effectively portrayed the rolling of the deck with their perfectly co-ordinated swaying motion. The singing was really the highlight of the performance for me. Both the men's and ladies' choruses looked and sounded exceptionally professional, with well-tuned intonation and articulated diction. Especially impressive was their beautifully co-ordinated rhythmic singing in the Act I finale.

The stars of the show were James Cleverton, who, from his first entrance as Captain Corcoran, set a high standard for the soloists with his confident stage presence and powerful voice, and Jennifer Davison who, as Josephine, was the perfect soprano for this production. Her excellent diction and well-balanced voice were a delight and especially impressive were her high notes which remained velvety and round right to the top with no hint of a shrill or hard edge!

The only unlucky note of the performance (on the night we attended) was that Ulrich Amacher, who played the Lord Admiral, had been struck down with laryngitis and could neither speak nor sing. But "the show must go on," so he acted and mimed his part on stage while the Musical Director sang and spoke for him from the wings. This worked well and we were still able to appreciate the visual effect of the

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salute/handshake mix-up when the Admiral comes on board to greet the Captain.

I'm putting their next performance in my diary again for next December/January – what about you? See you next year at Pocket Opera!

## Review of Carl Rosa's "Pirates of Penzance"

I had the great fortune recently to go to a performance of "The Pirates of Penzance" at the Gielgud theatre in London.

Carl Rosa Opera is a unique national touring company of 65 musicians, singers and technicians producing high quality opera productions.

The performance was slick, cheerful, done in the traditional style and was immensely enjoyable. Jo Brand was inventively cast as the Sergeant of Police and added a whacky flourish to this production. The music was expertly played and zestfully conducted by Richard Balcombe and includes some of Sullivan's most memorable tunes.

The period costumes were beautifully made and very colourful and the set in Act 2's ruined chapel was fantastic with crumbling arches, creeping foliage and midnight mist

I was impressed by the fact that the performance held in the Gielgud theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue was a sell-out and that the sharp humour of Gilbert's text had young and old alike in fits of laughter.

This London season finishes on the 1st of March but the website of the company is:

<http://www.carlosaopera.co.uk/index.asp>

and they are continually touring so it is worth having a look to see what they have planned in their schedule. I can highly recommend a visit to the Carl Rosa Opera!

*Rachel Bunger, the newsletter editor recently attended this performance with her mother in London*

## The Gilbert and Sullivan Society logo

You can see this on the top right hand corner of the newsletter, just above where it says "number 14".

The logo was created by Alison and Franz Metzger, in collaboration with the Board of the Society

*Alison has created a range of animated holiday greeting cards. These can be downloaded, personalised and sent by e-mail or MMS to friends and family. Alison has been designing her own unique and evocative holiday greeting cards for many years. Here she writes about the G&S Logo:*

The logo is the result of several brainstorming sessions during meetings with the Board as well as development work at home. As we wished to include various different elements, we needed a frame: a suitably characteristic and attractive shape is the fan, which appears in several of the operas, most notably *The Mikado*. From contemporary pictures, we drew simplified portraits of Gilbert and Sullivan, emphasizing distinguishing facial features to make them instantly identifiable and allow black and white printing without half-tones. Some musical elements being clearly essential, we inserted a bar and notes at the top, as well as a treble clef below, which also serves as the "and" in the name of the Society. The word "Savoyards" in the music bar at the top indicates the origins of the performances of the operas, which were first staged at the Savoy Theatre in London. The word was also chosen for the e-mail address of the Society: [info@savoyards.ch](mailto:info@savoyards.ch). We chose a font that would fit the design and also reflect the contemporary style.

## A new name for the Gilbert and Sullivan Singers

I would like to announce that we have changed the name of our group to *The Umbrella Singers* to reflect the broader repertoire of British music which we will focus on in the future and we like the subtle reference to the famously changeable British weather! We remain a professional ensemble and will continue to sing the wonderful music of Gilbert and Sullivan. The Gilbert & Sullivan Singers thank you all for your loyalty and support in the past and we look forward to bringing music and humour to your special events in the future as *The Umbrella Singers - the sunny side of British Music!*

*We wish Barbara Laurie and her group much success*

## Solutions to November G&S newsletter crossword "The Sorcerer"

### Across

- 4 Wellington
- 5 Notary
- 7 Sangazure
- 11 Pointdextre

### Down

- 1 Aline
- 2 Alexis
- 3 John
- 4 Wells
- 6 Marmaduke
- 8 Constance
- 9 Sir
- 10 Doctor

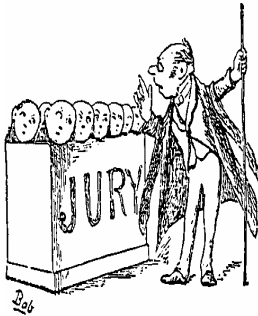
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## This month's song "Oh Gentlemen, Listen, I Pray"



"Now  
Jurymen,  
hear my  
advice—All  
kinds of  
vulgar  
prejudice"

### Defendant.

Oh, gentlemen, listen I pray,  
Though I own that my heart has been ranging,  
Of nature the laws I obey,  
For nature is constantly changing.  
The moon in her phases is found,  
The time and the wind and the weather,  
The months in succession come round,  
And you don't find two Mondays together.

Ah! consider the moral, I pray,  
Nor bring a young fellow to sorrow,  
Who loves this young lady today,  
And loves that young lady tomorrow.

### Bridesmaids. (rushing forward, and kneeling to Jury)

Consider the moral we pray,  
Nor bring a young fellow to sorrow,  
Who loves this young lady today,  
And loves that young lady tomorrow!

### Defendant.

You cannot eat breakfast all day,  
Nor is it the act of a sinner,  
When breakfast is taken away,  
To turn his attention to dinner;  
And it's not in the range of belief,  
To look upon him as a glutton,  
Who, when he is tired of beef,  
Determines to tackle the mutton.

Ah! But this I am willing to say,  
If it will appease her sorrow,  
I'll marry this lady today,  
And I'll marry the other tomorrow!

### Bridesmaids. (rushing forward as before)

But this he is willing to say,

If it will appease her sorrow,  
He'll marry this lady today,  
And he'll marry the other tomorrow!

## Karaoke, sing along with "Oh Gentlemen, Listen, I Pray"

<http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/trial/webopera/tbj10.mid> or

<http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/trial/webopera/tbj10.kar>

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

## Trial by Jury Trivia

On 25th March 1875 *Trial by Jury* opened at the Royalty Theatre, and the very witty, tuneful and "English" piece was an immediate hit with Londoners.

It is quite short, only forty minutes, and alone of the operas contains no spoken dialogue. There are many people who consider it to be the most perfectly constructed of the whole series and it is indeed a little gem of wit, sentiment and charm. The absurdities that can come from a breach of promise case, when the sensibilities of the jury and the judge are affected, were just the sort of subject to inspire Gilbert, and the libretto he produced in turn inspired Sullivan to write some of his most sparkling music.

## Su's Mystery Anagrams

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

NOHAILET

THESEDRON'I RUBBN

The answers to the anagrams in newsletter 13 are:

HET KADIMO = THE MIKADO

BURIT YA RYLJ = TRIAL BY JURY

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

### **Gilbert: growing old rather less than gracefully**

At Christmas 2007 'The Economist' had an article about the links between Beauty, Intelligence and Success. People have always tried to relate such abstract and ill-defined notions by academic analysis, but in careful research for some years, it appears so, that a statistically significant higher proportion of us instinctively and subjectively relate physical appearance with intelligence and moral values, with measurable impact upon preferment. It's an unjust world, or, as Gilbert wrote, (Mikado, Act II), 'See how the Fates their gifts allot, for A is happy – B is not. Yet B is worthy, I dare say, of more prosperity than A'.

Gilbert was not an academic and might like Scrooge have called it all 'Humbug', but Dick Deadeye, Mad Margaret, and others of his family of figures of ridicule demonstrate that he – and his audience – knew well what was intended. Each is their own caricature, gentle or fierce, comic or cruel. Before we become indignant, let us remember that we do this too; the Pantomime dame, the ugly sisters, the wicked uncle, or in Westerns, the baddies, with black clothes, crouching, and with scowling moustaches, are exactly what we expect, while the hero is tall, clean-limbed, fair-haired and freckled and also gets a better horse.

So Gilbert's parodies, also of the 'goodies', such as Rackstraw, Phyllis, Rose Maybud, and his many other artless 'principal girls', are not politically correct, but are still wickedly appropriate. Indeed, if you know 'Ruddigore' well, this is really what it's about, but as in most of the Operas the subject is the contemporary attention-holder, an object of fun, into which his cast list is then inserted. It is very skilfully done, but it can seem repetitive.

But this would not be Gilbert without his own self-parody, and Jack Point, the central pivot of 'The Yeoman of the Guard', is often seen as a portrayal of himself, the tragic figure, the family fool who cannot always go on being funny, and who lies on the stage, insensible, at the final curtain, while all the characters go their way singing and dancing. 'O thoughtless crew: Ye know not what ye do!' is surely Gilbert himself crying out, as Pagliacci, the clown as the ultimate tragic figure. He illustrates this in a perfect little comic song:

'O, a private buffoon is a light-hearted loon, if you listen to popular rumour; from the dawn to the night he's so joyous and bright, and he bubbles with wit and good humour'

But where does it end?

'Bless your heart; they don't mind, they're exceedingly kind,

They don't blame you – So long as you're funny

It's a comfort to feel, though your partner should flit, though you suffer a deal, they don't mind it a bit,

They don't blame you – as long as you're funny.'

It's a comic song, but it leaves a bitter taste. What follows will show how true it was.

Gilbert became a wealthy man, but he was not a conventionally successful one. The Savoy Operas enjoyed their peak with 'The Gondoliers' in 1889, a triumph with 554 performances, after a period of estrangement between the two masters. The 'Yeomen' of 1888 had run for 423 performances, a great success for its time. Sullivan wanted now to stay with Grand Opera. Carte brought them back together and 'The Gondoliers' was the happiest work, of effervescent music and a plot even to please Queen Victoria, who had the whole company in Windsor for a Command Performance. But Gilbert could not rejoice. After a holiday in India with Kitty, his wife, they returned to a renewal of his chronic gout and to the celebrated quarrel over the front of house expenses at the Savoy Theatre, known ever afterwards as the 'Carpet quarrel'. His temper up, he walked out in fury. Although there would be reconciliation and co-operation, it was never again the same.

Gilbert married Kitty, Lucy Turner by birth, whom he loved dearly, in 1867. It was a substantial, comfortable life of writing, riding, travel, yachting and entertaining. He was a generous, apparently genial, host, and, despite the marriage being childless, they had many children's parties at their house in South Kensington. The operas were a source of on-going income with repeats, royalties and sheet music and libretto sales. Gilbert had also written over 70 plays; some of which were also successful and even his Bab Ballads were always in print. During the Quarrel, he bought Grim's Dyke in Harrow Weald. The house still stands. It was elaborately decorated and Gilbert and Kitty filled it tastefully with Flemish art, many books and even a Tintoretto. Persuaded to work with Sullivan again, he got £4'600 from the 245 performances of 'Utopia Limited' in 1893, but there were no more great successes. 'The Grand Duke' in 1896 obtained 6 encores but only ran for 123 nights. Gilbert had sold his rights to D'Oyly Carte for £5'000, so was well served. The 'Mikado' was revived to fill

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the theatre, and closed in 1897 after its 1'037th performance. The collaboration was over. There would be more revivals, but the two no longer met. When Sullivan died in 1900, Gilbert was in Egypt, but wrote a conciliatory letter before leaving, which Sullivan apparently valued.

Retirement with Kitty at Grim's Dyke was shared with many house friends, visitors and animals, and Gilbert was persuaded to become a Justice of the Peace. He was, it appears, both soft-hearted (to victims of misfortune) and uncompromising with those he despised such as motorists who exceeded the then modest speed limits. Fining a particularly arrogant and affluent driver £5 for recklessness, Gilbert said, 'If you were a gentleman I would have fined you £10'. Perhaps we need such magistrates today!

In 1907, he was knighted 24 years after Sullivan, but saw a slight in this which he bitterly resented. Finally, he agreed, but took no pleasure from it. He did try to produce further drama, but was unsuccessful; and on a sunny May 29, 1911, went to assist a guest bathing in his lake at Grim's Dyke. He was retrieved dead and his ashes are in Stanmore churchyard.

He was undoubtedly good and gentle with friends and with Kitty and irascible in public. He had had countless quarrels and court cases and was feared in public debate as on the Magistrates' Bench. He was, up to the last, very funny with a scathing wit, but could be very hurtful too. Near the Savoy Hotel on the Thames Embankment is a memorial to him. A line by Anthony Hope Hawkins is his epitaph: 'His foe was folly, and his weapon wit.'

This closes a series of two biographical articles on Sullivan and three on Gilbert for the Gilbert & Sullivan Society. Principal sources used were Hesketh Pearson, 'Gilbert and Sullivan', first published 1935, Jane Stedman, 'W.S.Gilbert,' 1996, Arthur Jacobs 'Arthur Sullivan', 1986, Percy Young 'Sir Arthur Sullivan', 1971, and Saxe Wyndham's 'Arthur Sullivan', of 1903.

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

## *Other Non G&S Society forthcoming events*

### **Operissima**

Friday 25th April 2008 at 20.00

**"Previously Wounded Souls"** with the psychoanalyst Hanna Hadorn and the Operissima ensemble  
Theater im Dach, Fulachstrasse 237, 8200 Schaffhausen

Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th May at 17.00  
At the Trottentheater Neuhausen am Rheinfall  
**Princess Swallow**

A romantic fairy tale from Carlos Schneider with music from Arthur Sullivan. This will be told, sung and danced by the Operissima ensemble

For further information and details:  
[www.operissima.ch](http://www.operissima.ch)

### **Spring concerts by the English Seminar Choir**

Choir director: Christine Archer

Sunday 18th May 17.00 - Nadelberg 6, Basel  
This concert will help to raise funds for the Make a Wish Foundation

Tuesday 20th May 20.00 - Nadelberg 6, Basel

Both concerts are free, with donations welcome.

We also have 2 outside concerts this year - early afternoon on Sunday 25th May (Lange Erlen Park, Basel) and Sunday 1st June (Kurpark, Badenweiler, Germany).

Please contact Kirstin Barton on  
[kirstbart@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:kirstbart@yahoo.co.uk) for any further information

### **Riddle-Me-Ree**

My first is in chicken and also in cock,  
My second's in shoe and also in sock.  
My third is in music but not in verse,  
My fourth is in medicine but not in nurse.  
My fifth is in biscuit and also in cake,  
My sixth is in do but not in make.  
My seventh's in penny and also in pound,  
My eighth is in earth but not in ground.  
My ninth is in present but not in past,  
My tenth's not in first but is in last.  
My whole (two words) say what G&S  
Created once with great finesse.

*The solution for the Riddle me Ree from newsletter 13 is **Patience***

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