

Newsletter at a glance

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Items from the Board

Since the winter newsletter came out, we have had 2 extraordinarily successful events, our Winter Apéro and our Annual Dinner Concert, both of which are reported upon in the pages that follow. If you were not at the Winter Apéro, you will be surprised to learn about the rich and varied program obscured by its innocuous sounding title.

This is the final newsletter for our current program year, which ends on June 30th. Looking back, the Board is pleased with the success that our programs have enjoyed. This shows, I believe, that we are meeting many of the expectations of our members. Any board member would be pleased to receive your feedback about expectations not being met or your suggestions for future activities.

Our membership stands at 40 right now. Last year we reported 50, but the numbers are not fully comparable, because last year the memberships included households, and many individual households counted as 2 members. Our revenue from dues is in fact CHF 40 higher than last year, which is the cost of a single membership under the new structure. My conclusion, therefore, is that our membership base has remained stable. While this has a positive side to it (many organisations would be pleased to have a stable membership base), it is not good news for The Gilbert & Sullivan Society. Your Board wants to offer you and the Dreiländereck more: to experience Gilbert & Sullivan in full stage productions with the entire wonderful atmosphere such productions engender. Our membership base is too thin to achieve this. Indeed, it is almost too thin to keep us going at our current level of activity. So, growing our membership base will continue to be a high priority as we enter our next program year.

Our survey at the Annual Dinner Concert showed that word of mouth is our most important source of event

participants. It would not surprise me to find that this is also true for acquiring members. So, I appeal to all of you to inform others about us, and encourage them to join. Our Society is after all “for all who enjoy music & fun.”

Another source of future members, of course, is the younger generation, which was admirably represented at the Annual Dinner Concert by two young ladies who – besides enjoying the music and dinner – contributed greatly to the success of our evening by selling many, many raffle tickets. I would very much like to thank Odile Šobačič and Anna Cowan for their enthusiastic support, and hope that we can continue to count on them.

— For the Board by Bernie MacCabe

Forthcoming Events

Summer Apéro Singalong



Summer apéro followed by a Princess Ida singalong led by conductor Monica Buckland (director of the Universitätsorchester Dresden). Join us for a wonderful evening of music and comedy! Find out what can happen if you were to try to woo your childhood bride, who has forsworn men, by sneaking into an all women university dressed as a female student and were discovered...

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society sing-alongs are for both singers and non singers of all ages and abilities. Come and enjoy the singing or just relax and listen!

Date: Friday 12th June 2009
Time: 19.00 for 19.30
Location: Alterszentrum Weiherweg
Rudolfstrasse 43
RSVP events@savoyards.ch by 8th June
Transport: tram 1 or 8 or bus 34 to Schutzenhaus

Save the date

The Gilbert & Sullivan AGM will take place on Friday 18th September. Location tba.

Visit to Pocket Opera Review

On January 11th a group travelled to Zurich to see this year's Christmas/New Year's production by Pocket Opera at the ZKO-Haus. Instead of the (almost) traditional Gilbert and Sullivan production, Pocket Opera performed Offenbach's *Barbe Bleue* with their usual energy and inventiveness. The plot was full of absurdities, but we have learnt to live with that sort of thing, and the music lively and tuneful. The performance followed, as in other years, by an apero with music by the band. We enjoyed the evening, but were glad to learn that this year's Christmas / New year production will be a return to G&S: Pocket Opera will be putting on "The Gondoliers". More news will follow when we get the performance dates.

Winter Apero Review

The Winter Apero & Theatre Night was our most ambitious (though not our largest) project so far and the success of the evening proved well worth the organisational efforts involved.

The idea, to complement the musical content of our past events with a more theatre-focused evening, came from new board member David Laurie and developed into a two-part event with optional participation.

Drama mini workshop review by Corinna Balfour

We began with a drama mini-workshop expertly led by stage director Angela Robinson of the Semicircle, Basel, which I felt was truly enjoyable for both the participants and the audience.

The mini workshop was in essence a development of the "Singalong" events that we have been running for some time, so that actions were added to the chorus singing. I had thought that I would simply sit and watch but as others volunteered decided I could risk making a fool of myself and joined in.

We warmed up with "When a felon's not engaged in his employment" with soloist Bryan Stone and the rest of us as chorus. Angela Robinson soon got us going with actions that brought out the meaning of the words and we were immediately impressed by her enthusiasm and professionalism, involving the audience as well as those trying to act. "Don't look at

your feet" she said, as we tried to learn the actions that she had prepared for us.

Next came some dialogue from the "Gondoliers". After the budding actors had been through the passage once Angela asked the audience what they could tell from what they heard about the characters. Not a lot was the answer (except it was pointed out that two of them were Scottish). However, after some suggestions from Angela it became much clearer as to what was going on; simply by altering the tone of voice and adding a few gestures the dialogue came to life.

Finally there was a chorus from the "Pirates of Penzance" where the pirates are trying to capture the maidens ("Here's a first rate opportunity to get married with impunity"). Copies of the music were rapidly dropped as it became clear that it was impossible to hold the scores and perform the actions that Angela had worked out for us. Luckily a CD helped us to keep going. Piratical headscarves were provided for the men, who grasped the ladies round the waist, only to receive a slap on the face. The group gradually came together and became more proficient as Angela made us repeat the various actions.

Rather to my surprise I much enjoyed myself and it was clear that others did too, as under Angela's direction we all found it possible to join in without feeling out of place. She also has a great gift for involving the audience, so that they weren't just observers but participated with the singing even if they had not volunteered to act as well. It was interesting to see how soon even a few simple actions could enhance the music, but also clear why any real production needed six weeks' rehearsal.

Theatre Night Review by Barbara Laurie

In a short break to let every-body top up on refreshments, our stage crew efficiently set the scene for the play and transformed the space into an elegantly candle-lit dining-room ready for the second part of the event, the one-act play "Dinner for One" presented by Alison & Franz Metzger of Theatre 13 in Nuremberg.



Alison and Franz, in full costume and make-up, held the audience enthralled as "Miss Sophie" and "Butler James" celebrating the 90th birthday dinner with "the same procedure as last year".

Their performance was polished and professional and the (absent) guests in their specially written version for our event included Sir Arthur, Major General "S" and Mr Gilbert, all of whom toasted Miss Sophie by proxy with the help of James the Butler who had increasingly interesting encounters with "Tigger" the rug. At the end of the dinner when Miss Sophie and James retired (same procedure as every year) the enthusiastic applause brought the actors back for two curtain calls and the evening was rounded off with more refreshments and lively conversation.

If you attended this event please tell us what you liked best so that we can plan even more entertaining events for you in the future by sending your opinions to feedback@savoyards.ch. If you were unable to attend, I hope you will join us at our forthcoming event in June which will also offer optional audience participation. See the announcement and our web site for more details.

What G&S means to me by Margaret Horne

I believe it was my grandfather, a non-conformist minister, who first introduced his seven children to Gilbert & Sullivan. As a consequence, whereas he himself applied his poetic talents to writing hymns for the Congregational Hymnal, his offspring, without exception, developed a taste for comic verse, composing, singing and acting their own Gilbert-style operettas as a form of home entertainment. Perhaps not surprisingly, Kenneth, the youngest son, later became a popular, part-time radio comedian. My earliest recollections of G. & S. operettas are of listening of an evening to some of the D'Oyly Carte recordings in my parents' collection on an HMV-type gramophone



(a handle on the side had to be wound up vigorously to get the turntable moving, and needles had to be changed frequently). Occasionally, too, we as a family would gather behind my mother at the grand piano and sing the odd G. & S. lyric with great gusto. Continuing the family tradition, my father used to write plays for us at Christmas-time. The plots were as topsy-turvy as Gilbert's, full of topical and family allusions. The cast consisted of my two brothers and

myself, three older cousins who lived with us, my father and sometimes one or other of our school-friends or a house guest. The verses were almost invariably set to Sullivan's music and my mother accompanied us on the piano. The trouble about having my father in the cast was that, having written the play himself, he didn't feel he had to learn the words and sometimes started to ad lib to the consternation of anyone waiting for a specific cue to come in! The plays tended to end with my father assuming the role of Santa Claus and distributing presents all round. Although these "Christmas" plays had nothing to do with Nativity plays, our local Congregational minister and his wife, as friends of my parents, were always invited and once we gave a "public" performance for other members of the congregation - only as many as our drawing-room would hold - with a collection for charity.

Another memory I have is of a visit by the D'Oyly Carte company to Aberdeen in the early years of the war. My parents knew two members of the troupe - one of the leading singers and his wife, a member of the chorus (and one of the larger fairies!) - and they came to see us at home. This visit prompted my parents to take us for the first time to the theatre. I think the performance was "Iolanthe" but my younger brother says it was "The Mikado". Whatever. A friend of my father's, who happened to be sitting nearby, told my father afterwards that he was distracted from following what was happening on stage by watching the excitement and joy on our faces as we recognised tune after tune.

To this day, although often confused as to which words apply and unable to identify the particular operetta, I still get a nostalgic thrill from Sullivan's music. Only latterly, particularly after buying "The Complete Gilbert and Sullivan", have I come to appreciate and admire the brilliance of Gilbert's wit and the genius he displayed in finding rhymes for everything. Incidentally, I have found four small volumes of Gilbert's plays in my attic. If any G. & S. fan would like to have them, they are here for the taking (tel.: 061 7312074)

We are really grateful to Margaret Horne for submitting this article

Dinner Concert Review by Ann McClymont

The Annual Dinner Concert of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society was held on Saturday 28th March in L'esprit, Basel.

Guests were warmly welcomed with an apero, hosted by the society. In his introductory remarks our Society's President, Bernie MacCabe, reminded us that this was our fifth dinner concert and that we looked forward to seeing the coming year bringing us new members. He also welcomed a special guest, the Honorary British Consul, Dr. Alan Chalmers, who represented HM Ambassador J R Nichols. The ambassador was unable to attend, but sent a message to the society:

A message from the British Ambassador

"I am sorry I am not able to be present for the Gilbert & Sullivan Society's Annual Dinner Concert in Basle on 28th March. Gilbert and Sullivan was very much part of my musical upbringing – one of my earliest experiences in the theatre was a D'Oyly Carte performance of 'The Gondoliers', in the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires in the late 1950s. I am delighted that the Society is continuing to promote these immortal works in the "Dreiländereck" – I wish you every success, not just for March, but also for the future."

His Excellency HM Ambassador
J R Nichols

The musical entertainment was provided by the Umbrella Singers.

Geraldine Cassidy
Barbara Laurie
Will Wood
Boris Chnaider

Soprano
Mezzo- Soprano
Baritone
Pianist



The Umbrella Singers treated us to an imaginative programme of nine Gilbert & Sullivan works entitled "Gilbert & Sullivan – The Student Years" as well as music by Mendelssohn, an important influence in Sullivan's musical training. We are fortunate that this talented group of professional musicians promotes G & S music with enthusiasm and humour, bringing to life for us the wit and wisdom contained in the music.

Geraldine's lyric soprano suited her choice of "Oh, Happy Young Heart" (Princess Ida), and was lovely in her two Mendelssohn pieces "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges" and "Ich wollte Meine Liebe Ergösse Dich". Barbara delighted us with her warmth and precision in "There Grew a Little Flower" (Ruddigore) and Ruth's Song (Pirates of Penzance). Will sang "Fair Moon to Thee I Sing (HMS Pinafore) with pleasing range and interpretation. Not to be outdone by the singers, Boris played Mendelssohn's "Song Without Words" "Venetian Gondolier", an excellent choice for the evening's programme.

We were left wanting more when, as their finale, the group had our feet tapping to "Dance a Cachucha" (The Gondoliers), then stamping to a swirling flamenco display by Barbara.



Thanks must be extended once again to the L'esprit team for their hospitality. Their venue and dinner were greatly appreciated.

We must also thank Bergli Books and Fenwick's for their kind donations to our raffle, which this year fell into the capable hands of two young ladies, Odile Šobačič and Anna Cowan. They encouraged everyone to dig deep into their pockets and made this part of the evening a huge success.



The final part of the evening was given over to a new item on our programme this year: an auction of a very special kind. The Grim's Dyke Hotel (the former home of W.S. Gilbert) made the generous donation of two concert and dinner tickets for one of their G & S opera productions. The auction was placed in the hands of Tom McClymont who surprised everyone, but especially himself, at the generosity of the sum raised. Thank you to all who entered into the spirit of this new event!

The fifth Dinner Concert was a huge success, the best yet. We are looking forward to seeing you all at the sixth. This will be held on Saturday 13th March 2010.

Many thanks to Ann McClymont for writing us this great review

This month's song "I am the very model of a Modern Major General"



I am the very model of a modern Major-General

General

I am the very model of a modern Major-General,
I've information vegetable, animal, and

mineral,

I know the kings of England, and I quote the fights historical
From Marathon to Waterloo, in order categorical;

I'm very well acquainted, too, with matters mathematical,
I understand equations, both the simple and quadratical,
About binomial theorem I'm teeming with a lot o' news –
With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse

All

With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse,
With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse,
With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse –
With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse.

General

I'm very good at integral and differential calculus;
I know the scientific names of beings animalculous:
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

All

In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
He is the very model of a modern Major-General.

General.

I know our mythic history,
King Arthur's and Sir Caradoc's;
I answer hard acrostics, I've a pretty taste for paradox,
I quote in elegiacs all the crimes of Heliogabalus,
In conics I can floor peculiarities parabolous;
I can tell undoubted Raphaels
from Gerard Dows and Zoffanies,
I know the croaking chorus from the Frogs of Aristophanes!
Then I can hum a fugue of which
I've heard the music's din afore,
And whistle all the airs from that
infernal nonsense Pinafore.

All.

And whistle all the airs from
that infernal nonsense Pinafore,
And whistle all the airs from
that infernal nonsense Pinafore,
And whistle all the airs from
that infernal nonsense Pina- Pinafore,



General.

Then I can write a washing bill in Babylonian cuneiform,
And tell you every detail of Caractacus's uniform:
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

All.

In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
He is the very model of a modern Major-General.

General.

In fact, when I know what is meant
by "mamelon" and "ravelin",
When I can tell at sight a Mauser rifle from a javelin,
When such affairs as sorties and surprises
I'm more wary at,
And when I know precisely
what is meant by "commissariat",
When I have learnt what progress
has been made in modern gunnery,
When I know more of tactics than a novice in a nunnery;
In short, when I've a smattering of elemental strategy,
You'll say a better Major-General has never sat a gee.

All.

You'll say a better Major-General has never sat a gee,
You'll say a better Major-General has never sat a gee,
You'll say a better Major-General
has never sat a, sat a gee.

General.

For my military knowledge,
though I'm plucky and adventury,
Has only been brought down
to the beginning of the century;
But still, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

All.

But still, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,
He is the very model of a modern Major-General.

Karaoke, sing along with "I am the very model of a modern Major General"

http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/pirates/web_op/kar/pp13.kar

Pirates of Penzance Trivia

The opera premiered on December 31st, 1879 at the Fifth Avenue Theater in New York with Sullivan conducting, but a single performance had been given on the previous day at the Royal Bijou Theatre, Paignton, England, to secure the British copyright. On December 10th, 1879, Sullivan had written a letter to his mother about the new opera, upon which he was hard at work in New York. "I think it will be a great success, for it is exquisitely funny, and the music is strikingly tuneful and catching." True enough! *The Pirates of Penzance* was an immediate hit and takes its place today as one of the most popular and enduring works of musical theatre.

Article by Bryan Stone

Never mind the Why and Wherefore! Savoy Operas at Grim's Dyke

Across the middle of England, from Harrow, north of London to Oxfordshire and again in Hampshire, are groups of earthen walls, sometimes several km long and sometimes double or nearly parallel. Popular legend has named them Grim's Dyke or Ditch, a name also appearing on Ordnance Survey maps, but there is no evidence that they are continuous or associated, or that the name is more than legendary. They date from the late Bronze or early Iron Age down to 300 BC and seem not to have been defensive, though many other structures were, so perhaps denote boundaries.

On Harrow Weald, little is to be seen today, though legend makes it the site of Boadicea's suicide after her revolt. However, the name was given to a large timbered country house designed in 1870 by one of England's leading Victorian Gothic architects, Norman Shaw, and built in 1872. After two earlier owners, this house was purchased in 1890 by William Schwenk Gilbert, who lived there until his death in 1911. Kitty, as he knew his wife, lived there until her death in 1936. It was a very luxurious home. Valued by Gillow's in 1905 at £12'692, the contents included much ornament, Flemish and Italian paintings, some 5,000 books, a suit of armour, Morris tiles, many Persian rugs, and there were also five cottages for servants. Gilbert made many changes internally and in the garden he planted the woodland park and

orchard and had the boating lake excavated, in which, at the end, heart failure would follow his assisting a young swimmer in difficulty. These features are there today.

For Gilbert's Grim's Dyke, now 137 years old, is still a very real place. After Lady Gilbert's death it was purchased by the County Council and later used as a tuberculosis rehabilitation home for women. It was used as a military centre in WW II / and then, in poor repair, often for film-making. In 1970 being declared a building of special architectural and historic importance saved it from speculative plans for demolition and it was carefully converted into a hotel. It is today a Grade II listed building (not to be tinkered with) and regarded as one of Norman Shaw's finest surviving works. Today it is greatly valued for its style, accommodation and catering, its superb setting and its suitability for special events, such as weddings. It is less than 20 km from London's West End. What it still needed though was Savoy Operas, and in 1997 an opera company was formed, which performs now throughout the year, setting out to achieve performances as authentic as possible regarding the original libretti, musical settings and enactment. These are very successful and sought after occasions. There is also a programme of other theatrical performances and country house events, which are advertised (see below this article).

The Grim's Dyke management had offered our society two tickets for a performance of choice during 2009, which went at our Concert to Rory Macfie who now has only to choose the weekend, make the arrangements and enjoy the evening. Rory very kindly offered to let us know all about his visit to Grim's Dyke in a future newsletter.



Forthcoming Grimsdyke G&S productions

May 24 th	Patience
June 7 th	The Sorcerer
June 21 st	The Mikado
July 5 th	The Pirates of Penzance
July 19 th	Trial by Jury
August 2 nd	The Mikado
August 16 th	Iolanthe
August 20 th to 23 rd	Summer festival
September 6 th	Yeoman of the Guard
September 20 th	Patience
October 4 th	HMS Pinafore
October 18 th	Pirates of Penzance
November 8 th	Trial by Jury
November 22 nd	Princess Ida
December 6 th	Mikado
December 20 th	Iolanthe

Other Non Society Events

Invitation to the foundation of the Deutsche Sullivan Gesellschaft on 6th June 2009 with a concert programme

The aim of the Deutsche Sullivan Gesellschaft is to promote performances, the knowledge and understanding of the complete works of Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900), especially in German-speaking countries. This includes his achievements as a composer (opera, choral and orchestral works, chamber music, songs, part songs, incidental music etc.) as well as a conductor and musicologist. As part of this, we would like to invite you to our inaugural event.

Arthur Sullivan and the English Opera, a concert with excerpts from the Emerald Isle

Date: 6th June 2009

Time and location

Bad Schwalbach near Wiesbaden

- 14.00hrs at Opern Akademie, Bad Schwalbach, Parkstrasse 11
- 19.30 hrs at the Kurhaus, Bad Schwalbach

Programme: The Mikado, The Beauty Stone and The Yeoman of the Guard with soloists of the Opern-akademie, Bad Schwalbach

Please could you let us know in advance if you plan to attend. RSVP to:

Meinhard Sarembo
Uhlandstr 31
D-68167 Mannheim
Deutschland

E mail: MSarembo@aol.com

If you are unable to attend but are still interested in Society membership or would like further information, please contact Herr Sarembo or visit his website:

www.sullivan-forschung.de

There is also a CD available of a radio series entitled "The English Composer Arthur Sullivan" first broadcast by SWR in the summer of 2005. Copies can be obtained from SWR Media GMBH, Mitschnittdienst Baden-Baden, Tel: 0049 7221 929 6030

New G&S book on its way!

Sullivan expert, Meinhard Sarembo, has a wonderful new book about Gilbert & Sullivan coming out this summer!

"The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert & Sullivan" by Meinhard Sarembo & David Eden will be published in the summer of 2009 and covers many interesting subjects such as the Savoy Theatre in the 1890s, Patter Songs and the Word-Music Relationship, Motives and Methods in Sullivan's Allusions, Characterisation and Emotion in the Savoy Operas, The Amateur Scene and The Future of the Savoy Operas. The contributors include Mike Leigh (Topsy-Turvy), Meinhard Sarembo himself and Ian Bradley (The Complete Annotated Gilbert & Sullivan). If you go to the link below you will find more complete information about the book including a full list of the chapter titles and authors.

<http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521716598>



Gilbert & Sullivan Festival



A reminder for all G&S enthusiasts that the 16th Gilbert & Sullivan Festival will be held in Buxton from the 1st until the 23rd August 2009. The festival

has captivated audiences from all around the world and every year never fails to delight.

Established in 1994 by enthusiasts Ian Smith and son Neil, the Festival goes from strength to strength, attracting thousands of visitors to the delightful spa town of Buxton. Ian and Neil had one goal; to enhance the knowledge and understanding of Gilbert & Sullivan and ensure that this quintessentially British entertainment continued to flourish.

And they certainly succeeded! The Festival runs for three weeks throughout the summer in the beautiful, Edwardian Buxton Opera House. A highlight is the international competition which attracts groups from around the world performing for a range of prestigious awards. In addition to the competing productions there are a range of stunning, professional performances every weekend. The Festival's very own Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company will be performing four new productions in 2009: HMS Pinafore; Trial by Jury; Princess Ida and The Pirates of Penzance. The Festival Fringe provides dawn till dusk G&S and with around 70 events there is truly something for everyone. Master classes, performances, comedy – there is a fantastic array of G&S favourites to keep even the most dedicated follower spoilt for choice! For further information, please visit the website:

<http://www.gs-festival.co.uk/>

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