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[membership@savoyards.ch](mailto:membership@savoyards.ch) is all it takes to get the ball rolling. And by the way, if you have not remitted your dues for this year (which started on 1st July), this would be a great time to catch up.

Bernie MacCabe

## Greetings from G&S president

Since the last newsletter, we have had our annual general meeting and an evening at Bergli Books featuring Meinhard Saremba as guest speaker. To help you decompress after the holidays, we have two fun events coming up in January. And we are very much looking forward to our Annual Dinner Concert, which will take place in the lovely Lindenbergssaal.

At the AGM we had, as usual, a lively discussion on many topics, and enjoyed good food and wine at the same time. Different this year was the fact that we had great participation from persons not on the governing board, one of whom expressed the view that being able to attend such an AGM alone was worth the annual membership fee. I am proud that The Gilbert & Sullivan Society received this comment, which I'm certain is rare for the AGMs of associations.

In many ways, interest in the works of Gilbert & Sullivan qualifies as a narrow interest, and this is certainly one of the challenges that we have in building our membership, which, as you know, is one of our highest priorities. One response to this has been to expand the content of our programs a bit. Last January we were fortunate to be able to offer "Dinner for One" and next month we will have a "Burns Night". In both cases we have had fun finding (or creating) links between Gilbert & Sullivan and the broader content. Having said that, we believe that interest in the works of Gilbert & Sullivan only needs to be kindled. Once the fire has been lit, it will keep burning. Therefore, another response is to find opportunities to introduce people to the music of Sullivan and the songs of Gilbert for the first time. So, if you are still looking for that perfect Christmas present for a friend or relation, why not give the gift of membership in the Society? An e mail to

## Forthcoming Events

### Visit to Pocket Opera

The Pocket Opera Company will perform G&S's highly entertaining opera *The Gondoliers* on 29th & 31st December 2009 and 3rd, 7th, 8th, 9th & 10th January 2010, in the ZKO-Haus, Zürich-Tiefenbrunnen.

Ticket prices; CHF 58, 48 or 38.

After-show aperitif and hors-d'oeuvre; CHF 28 (at the theatre).

Further details and times at [www.zko.ch](http://www.zko.ch).

The Pocket Opera performances are very popular, and the G&S society Basel will organise a block-booking (22 seats) for the final performance on 10th January at 17h00. These will be in the highest price category but for a reduced price of CHF 52

(N.B. this does not include after-show aperitif).

Please reserve your place at this performance by contacting [events@savoyards.ch](mailto:events@savoyards.ch) before December 10th 2009.



### Special Winter Event on Friday 29th January!

For our next event the Society presents "A Night with Gilbert & Sullivan and Burns". Come and celebrate the talents of the English duo Gilbert & Sullivan and the Scottish bard Robert Burns. Join us at this unique, special event to discover what the three have in common and sample the poetry, the music (live), the apéro and the haggis! Please see p2 for details

## A night with Gilbert & Sullivan and Burns!

Date: Friday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010  
Time: 19.00  
Location: Centrepoint, Lohnhof, Basel  
Cost: CHF 20 for G&S Society members  
CHF 25 for non-members

An evening of songs & poetry, apéro & buffet, in the format of a traditional Scottish 'Burns Supper', held by Scots the world over in January each year.



RSVP: contact [events@savoyards.ch](mailto:events@savoyards.ch)  
by Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010

## Review of Lecture Apéro, "Sullivan and Rossini" at Bergli books

On the eve of Hallowe'en, for the Society's first event of the 2009/2010 season we joined forces with the Bergli Bookshop in Basel to present an evening with Sullivan expert, Meinhard Sarembe, a writer, lecturer and radio broadcaster from Mannheim in Germany. This was Meinhard's second presentation for the Society and many will remember his entertaining introduction to Gilbert & Sullivan in April 2006.

On arrival, guests were welcomed with wine & nibbles by the excellent hosts at Bergli, led by Mary Hogan, and copies of the newly published book "Gilbert & Sullivan" co-edited by the guest speaker were available. Society board member David Laurie welcomed everybody and introduced Meinhard Sarembe and then went on to manage the musical clips.

Meinhard Sarembe's presentation was both fascinating & entertaining and was enjoyed by everyone who was there, including the hosts at Bergli Books. It covered the friendship of the two composers as well as their differences and similarities. With a 50-year-age gap between them, Sullivan (born in 1842) & Rossini (born in 1792) seem to come from two different eras but both were musically well educated - Rossini in Bologna and Sullivan in Leipzig – and when they met in Paris, where Rossini lived, they became friends. In fact Sullivan said that his inspiration on all things theatrical came first from Rossini.

Among the differences between the two composers were their rather different historical backgrounds: between 1815 and 1871 Italy was a place of unrest

and war as its fragmented states moved towards unification. Rossini, with his humorous operas, became the most popular composer of his era and he worked very hard, producing up to four operas per year, but suffered increasingly from depression and burnout. Sullivan's Britain was stable under Queen Victoria but musical circumstances in his country left a lot to be desired. It was a struggle for Sullivan to get opera accepted in a culture with no English language opera, where the spoken word (in plays) was considered more important than the sung word (in operas).

Rossini's priority was "the music first" but in Sullivan's works the words had to have the greater importance. The importance of text in Sullivan's patter songs means that each syllable is written with only one note but in Rossini's writing the words are "chopped into pieces" with syllables often having more than one note each.

In addition to the differences between them, Sullivan and Rossini also had many things in common.



They both lived in the time of the industrial revolution and there was a perception in this era that life was becoming faster and faster. Both composers reflected this in their music. Avoiding the most obvious examples (Figaro's song from Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and the Major General's song from the *Pirates of Penzance*) Meinhard let us hear rapid singing in the act I finale of *The Italian in Algiers* by Rossini and the impressive "Matter, matter" patter song from Sullivan's *Ruddigore*. Other examples of speed and mechanical effects in both composers' music were the finale of the *Barber of Seville* with its sewing machine rhythms and Sullivan's chorus of *Peers from Iolanthe* with its "tantantara tzing boom!"

An important new influence in music in the 19th century was Wagner with his new concept of musical drama and his use of "endless melody". We heard examples by both Rossini and Sullivan of this "endless melody" style in *Tell's aria* from Rossini's last opera *William Tell* and the soprano aria from *The Emerald Isle* by Sullivan. Although Sullivan did admire Wagner's *the Meistersinger of Nuremberg*, Rossini believed in simple melodies and clear rhythm and regarded himself as the last classicist: neither

composer was seduced by the mysticism and unreal sentiment of Wagner's works.

Although the characters in Rossini's works were often taken from the "Comedia dell'arte" tradition and those of Sullivan's operas were rather more "everyday" and believable, the mixture of the comic and the serious was an important element for both. Each composer included serious arias within the framework of comic opera. For example, the heroine's first aria in Rossini's Cinderella and Katisha's tragic song "Hearts do not break" in Sullivan's The Mikado. In Rossini's operas each character usually expresses only one passion whereas in Sullivan's a character can express a number of different emotions.

The final similarity between Sullivan and Rossini is that both composers' operas were neglected after their death with the performed works reduced to only 2 or 3 by each. Happily both have been experiencing a revival of interest in their works and the presentation by Meinhard Sarembe is sure to inspire all those who were there to listen to these great pieces with a new enthusiasm!

Many thanks to Barbara Laurie for writing this review  
PS Meinhard Sarembe very kindly distributed handouts with a bibliography and other relevant information on Sullivan & Rossini. We have 4 spare copies so if anyone would like to have one, please contact us at [info@savoyards.ch](mailto:info@savoyards.ch).

### *This month's song "A Lady fair, of lineage high" from Princess Ida*



*A lady fair  
of lineage  
high*

#### **Lady Psyche**

A Lady fair, of lineage high,  
Was loved by an Ape, in the days gone by.  
The Maid was radiant as the sun,  
The Ape was a most unsightly one,  
The Ape was a most unsightly one  
So it would not do  
His scheme fell through,  
For the Maid, when his love took formal shape,  
Express'd such terror  
At his monstrous error,  
That he stammer'd an apology and made his 'scape,  
The picture of a disconcerted Ape.  
With a view to rise in the social scale,  
He shaved his bristles and he docked his tail,

He grew mustachios, and he took his tub,  
And he paid a guinea to a toilet club,  
He paid a guinea to a toilet club  
But it would not do,  
The scheme fell through  
For the Maid was Beauty's fairest Queen,  
With golden tresses,  
Like a real princess's,  
While the Ape, despite his razor keen,  
Was the apiest Ape that ever was seen!

He bought white ties, and he bought dress suits,  
He crammed his feet into bright tight boots  
And to start in life on a brand new plan,  
He christen'd himself Darwinian Man!  
He christen'd himself Darwinian Man!  
But it would not do,  
The scheme fell through  
For the Maiden fair, whom the monkey crav'd,  
Was a radiant Being,  
With a brain farseeing  
While Darwinian Man, though well-behav'd,  
At best is only a monkey shav'd!

#### **Hilarion, Cyril and Florian**

For the Maiden fair, whom the monkey crav'd,

#### **All**

Was a radiant Being,  
With a brain farseeing  
While Darwinian Man, though well-behav'd,  
At best is only a monkey shav'd!

### **Karaoke, sing along with "A Lady fair, of lineage High"**

[http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/princess\\_ida/webop/pi\\_midi/pi\\_015.mid](http://diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/princess_ida/webop/pi_midi/pi_015.mid)

#### *Princess Ida*

"Princess Ida, or Castle Adamant" opened on 5th January 1884 at the Savoy Theatre and ran for 246 performances. It is the only three-act Gilbert and Sullivan Opera and the only one with dialogue in blank verse. 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.

Prince Hilarion had been married in babyhood to Princess Ida, daughter of King Gama. The Princess, however, has set up a college for women from which all men are barred. Hilarion and his friends infiltrate the castle and ultimately the men, led by Hilarion's father, King Hildebrand, stage a full-scale invasion. Ida is abandoned by her women and finally surrenders to her Prince.

## Article by Bryan Stone

In our last newsletter I wrote a short piece about the 'Sally Lunn', that Bath teacake which Gilbert picks out for enthusiastic treatment in 'The Sorcerer'. Some of you enjoyed that, and it brought back a conversation with Sue Mouton where she suggested I take up the background of some of the more obscure references. The operas are full of these, even if we set aside the House of Lords (which is certainly obscure to many). Moreover, I will stay with the libretto and ignore some of the traditional stage 'business', tempting though it is to mention the organ-grinder gesture which, in Pinafore, always goes with 'or perhaps Eye-tal-eye-an'. Some of the references are obscure by history; times have changed and no one today 'ships, d'ye see, in a revenue sloop' (Ruddigore) to police the seas, or takes hasty cover when the 'Bold mounseer' 'fires with a thirty-two'. Those would have been at once clear to Gilbert's audience, a small coastguard sailing boat being an absurd match for the French frigate with a 32-cannon broadside. Some, however, are deliberate send-ups and word games and even then (like a good Basler Schnitzelbangg) would only have been for insiders. Ralph's disclaimer (Pinafore, Act II) that he is 'the meanest in the port division' is a real Navy term, where the seamen were assigned to Port and Starboard watch, each watch, or half-crew, taking alternate shifts on duty. But his Admiral, Sir Joseph Porter KCB, the most famous parody of all, was at once spotted as W.H.Smith, the businessman whose chain of newspaper kiosks at railway stations was already well established (and still exists today).

WH Smith PLC



The connection was that Smith, who had 'stuck close to his desk and never gone to sea' was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in Disraeli's government. He enjoyed all his life the nickname 'Pinafore Smith'. Nautical terms were much more a part of speech in the 19th C than today in the 21st. 'Pinafore' makes hay with them, in sailors' names, Dick Deadeye being named after a wooden block used to tighten shrouds on a sailing ship, Capt Corcoran can 'hand, reef or steer, and ship a selvagee' (this is a stout plaited rope, used as a strap or binding) ; and then there is 'the cat', two supremely funny songs in Act II using the cat o'nine tails and punning on 'It was the cat'. This however was a

means of the cruellest punishment, a whip with nine lashes used in both Army and Navy. The expression 'no room to swing a cat' refers to this narrow space on board ship and not to a furry feline. Gilbert uses such 'jargon' in each context to keep us in the mood of the opera. This is, in fact, a part of the innate authenticity as in 'Yeomen', for example, which is filled with historical details but where, however absurd the treatment, the setting is always straight-faced and plausible. It is a safe bet that no one now or then catches the meaning when Mr Wells ('The Sorcerer') says that the spell on the villagers, can only be raised if he offers to 'yield up his life to Ahrimanes'. This is, in Early Persian, Zoroastran theology, the personification of evil, that is, a circumscription of the Devil. Gilbert has deliberately buried it so obscurely that his audiences will not get to the bottom of it. So not all gags were to be enjoyed 'on the night'; Gilbert had his private fun too.

Some of the points he makes are a little contrived. For example, in 'Gondoliers' the heart of the plot involves Casilda, married as a baby by proxy to the infant heir to the King of Barataria. This young prince was abducted to Venice and is now a gondolier.



Gilbert spells out the reason in a curiously pointed line, that the King 'became a Wesleyan Methodist of the most bigoted and persecuting kind'. Now that this 'Methodist monarch and all his Wesleyan court' have been killed in an insurrection, the Prince can return as King. One wonders why Gilbert chose to incorporate such a fiercely critical turn of phrase. He was a lifelong but placid Anglican, but we do not know whether this was his chance to get back at some zealous religious criticism of his work or humour. We know that he saw himself as a model of propriety and appeared to live it out. Or is there here real anger which he wanted to air? The line always gets a laugh even today, but it contains a curious anachronism; Wesley's conversion came about too late for the Prince's infancy and, more specifically, 'Wesleyan' as a distinguishing branch was not defined until 1858. Here Gilbert obviously didn't care: he wanted his line to sit. Whilst dealing with religious references there are three in the operas to a Doctor of Divinity; in 'Sorcerer', act II, in 'Yeoman', act II (with 'comes a Bishop may be, or a solemn DD') and in 'Pirates'; when all are to be 'parsonified, conjugally matrimonified, by a Doctor of Divinity who is residing in this vicinity'. Apart from these glorious linguistic gymnastics, the DD is an academic degree for Anglican clergy which has long ceased to exist. Of course, I can't here treat all the splendid verbal humour of Gilbertian side-swipes, but must round off

this short insight. First comes 'Mikado' and the punishments which, as Gilbert suggests, should fit the crime. How about, 'By Bach interwoven with Spohr and Beethoven at classical Monday pops'? Spohr is virtually forgotten today, but, as a classical composer, could then be listed in one breath with Bach and Beethoven. Monday pops were classical concerts arranged by Chappell, the publishers, every week in St James' Hall, Piccadilly, and were always packed out. And what of the railway vandal, then as now, whom 'we only suffer to ride on a buffer, on Parliamentary trains'? This was a real punishment; for in 1844, after the early railway companies had shown a reluctance to carry 3rd class passengers at low fares, Parliament legislated that on every line of public railway at least one train a day should carry 3rd class passengers in covered accommodation, stop at all stations and charge no more than 1d per mile (for 'd' read present 'p'). The companies responded by doing just that, often leaving at 4.30 in the morning and taking all day. It was public service, but only just.

Finally, 'Iolanthe', Act I. Where is 'Seven Dials', where true love apparently flourished? It was a very insalubrious part of Monmouth St., London, notorious for squalor and petty crime. But for sustained comic intent, Act II has this, at first sight, sheer nonsense as the Fairy Queen talks of passion, at first invoking Ovid and the love she must herself conceal.



Then she continues:  
'On fire that glows, with heat intense, we turn the hose of common sense, and out it goes, at small expense!' We must maintain our fairy law: this is the main on which we draw – In that we gain a Captain Shaw! Oh, Captain Shaw, type of true love kept under, could thy brigade with

cold cascade quench my great love, I wonder!'

Well she might. Captain Massey Shaw was the Chief of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and the museum fireboat Massey Shaw, now in St Katherine's Dock, is named after him. But Gilbert obviously knew that he was a key witness in a 'scandal' in which a Lady Campbell, estranged from her husband, was known to have been seeking the illicit friendship of prominent men, including Massey Shaw. He gave evidence and confessed his undeclared sympathy for the unfortunate lady. 'Type of true love kept under'. He was also, presumably by arrangement, at the first night. ... yes, Gilbert loved his jokes, and so do we.

*Many thanks Bryan for contributing this article*

## *What Gilbert & Sullivan means to me by Peter Hilton*

A long time ago on a planet far away ..... at least that is what it feels like when I remember my first experience of Gilbert & Sullivan!

I was at school in Glasgow at the time and listening to my small transistor radio (remember them?) in bed under the pillow. This had the additional spice of being after "lights out" plus not being allowed to have the said "radiophonic device" in the dormitory. I remember this particular description rather well as I was once discovered and had to write 100 lines as punishment. I used to listen (and still do) to Radio 4 and a programme came on about Gilbert & Sullivan which not only gave their history but also played excerpts from the various operettas. This was not exactly the beginning of a lifelong love affair with G&S but certainly the beginning of an association that pricked my interest every time I heard their music or saw advertisements advertising one of their performances.

The next milestone in my G&S history was when I was somewhere between 17 and 18 years old and I think was at the Alhambra Theatre in Glasgow. The D'oyly Carte company were putting on a short season including "Trial By Jury", "Pinafore" and "Pirates of Penzance". I was able to go purely because it was the end of session and it was that amicable time when exams were finished and the last week or two of term were relatively free. I only saw the G&S advert by chance in Glasgow's Kelvin Hall where I had gone to a concert by Johnny Dankworth and Cleo Lane. I remember being impressed as she sang "The Seven Deadly Sins" without any song sheet. Up to this point I had not seen a live performance of Gilbert & Sullivan, so having spent all my money on the ticket for the Cleo Lane concert I had to borrow the money for a Gilbert & Sullivan ticket. I also had to get special permission to be out two nights in a row. This was where serendipity took over. The Housemaster of the boarding house was also a G & S fan and promptly managed to obtain two tickets for that night. This also, by the bye, raised his opinion of a somewhat errant schoolboy who had caused him various problems over the years. I needed all the help I could get so went along with his offer. I met him several years later and he reminded me of that evening. He said "Hilton – there were times when I despaired of your future in the world, but then I thought that anybody who appreciated Gilbert & Sullivan deserved some leeway!"

Anyway – back to the performance. I must admit that after all this time I remember very little of the detail of what was performed. What I do remember seems to

be a riot of colour and music that moved along at a fairly fast pace with strong storyline. I also remember it was "The Pirates of Penzance" which was an ideal introduction to live G&S performances.



Thanks very much Peter for contributing this article

### Puzzles and Anagrams

#### Su's Mystery Anagrams solutions

The anagrams from newsletter 19 are solved as follows:

TELIOHAON = IOLANTHE  
EALOC S&G SEBSITY = BASEL G&S SOCIETY

#### Solutions to Val's brainteasers appearing in the last newsletter

Here is a list of nine colours.

- red
- denim
- green
- violet
- purple
- tangerine
- cinnamon
- turquoise

Take the first letter of one of them, 2 second letters, 3 third letters, 1 fourth letter, 1 seventh letter and 1 ninth letter to make up the name of a G&S operetta.  
(Hint: there are nine letters in the name and you can easily find out the last letter!)

**Answer: Ruddigore**

### Riddle-Me-Ree

My first is in orange and also in pear,  
My second's in earring - one of a pair.  
My third is in dog but not in cat,  
My fourth is in those but not in that.  
My fifth is in purple and also in green,  
My sixth is in actor who loves to be seen.  
My seventh's in ink but not in pen,  
My eighth is in now and also in then.  
My last is in grumble and also in grouse,  
My whole is a village - not a house.  
A colour is there and a letter is missing  
From what men may catch when they go fishing!

**Answer: Rederring**

### Other G&S events planned for 2010

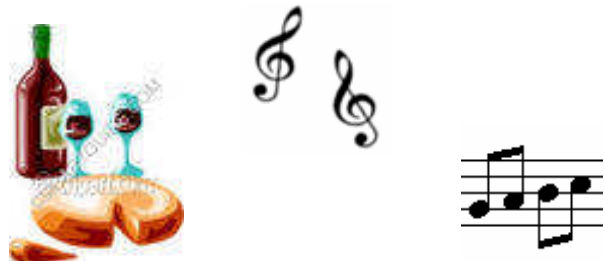
#### Annual Dinner Concert

With the Umbrella Singers  
Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March  
In Lindenbergssaal, Basel

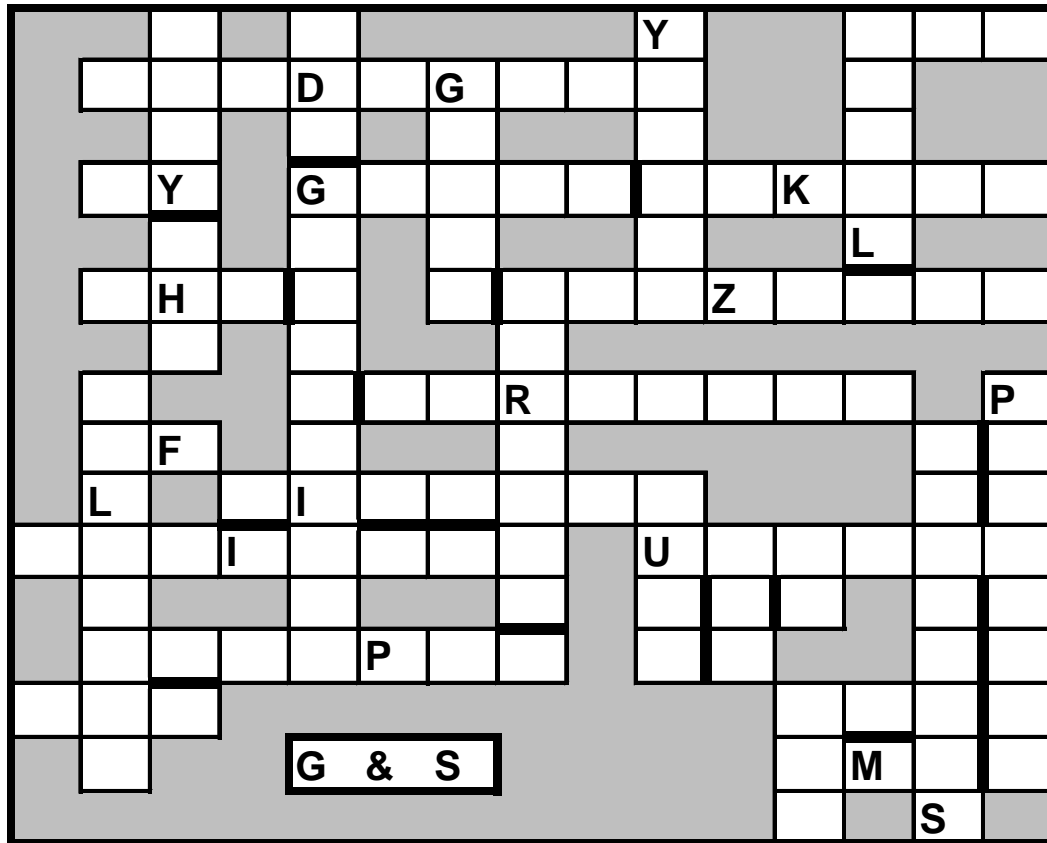


### Summer event

Sing-along, apero, event will be held the last week of May or the first week of June.  
Further details available in forthcoming newsletters.



## Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Quiz



This puzzle contains all the G&S operetta's.  
There are 7 "The's" in the titles, so 7 "The's" in the puzzle.  
Some letters are filled in to help you out  
Fill in the missing tiles