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## Greetings from the Society's President

Welcome to The Gilbert & Sullivan Society's final newsletter of the calendar year. We are well into our programme year, which runs from July – June, and I am very pleased to report that we got off to a very good start in building our membership. With 41 members, we are 50% ahead of where we were last year at this time, and already at 90% of last year's final number. Increasing our numbers continues to be a high priority, because we see that as an enabler to achieving our goals, which include sponsoring at some future date a full-scale Gilbert & Sullivan opera! If you have not yet renewed (or joined), nothing is easier: just transfer CHF 40.00 to our postal account, and it's done. If you are new to the Society, please send an email to [membership@savoyards.ch](mailto:membership@savoyards.ch) to share the good news with us and add your contact information for our records.

For the first time in the Society's history, we are offering a workshop for those who would like to sing and perform. It will be led by professional singers Barbara Laurie and Lisa Wingard, and the product of the workshop will be a concert on 13th February, around which the Society will organize its first event of the new calendar year. We have heard from many of you that an opportunity like this is something that you would very much like to have the Society organise, and we are very excited to achieve this milestone. Please spread the word to friends and acquaintances who might be interested in this opportunity. It is open to non-members as well as members (but anyone who does the math will join the Society to take advantage of the advantageous tuition offered to members). See below for details. At the AGM, Gert Venghaus announced that he would be pleased to donate 26 DVDs of G&S performances that he brought back from Buxton. Sure enough, a week later the DVDs came trooping gaily via Rachel Bunger, and we are now the proud

owners of a wonderful collection. I would like to heartily thank Gert for his generosity. Your board is currently sorting out the best way to make these available to everyone. We will eventually publish the list on the website for reference.

Gert also provided the entertaining review below of the AGM. One addendum: the minutes of last year's AGM, which were not locatable for this year's AGM and which were therefore approved in abstentia, have now surfaced. Anyone who wishes to have a copy may send a request to [contact@savoyards.ch](mailto:contact@savoyards.ch), and you shall receive one.

Finally, I would direct your attention to the article below on obtaining copies of "The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert & Sullivan" at a very attractive price of CHF 20. This book could be a welcome addition to your own personal library, or make a great gift for Christmas or any other gifting occasion.

By Bernie MacCabe, G&S Society President

## Forthcoming Events

### ENSEMBLE SINGING AND CONCERT PERFORMANCE WORKSHOP

Professional singers Lisa Wingard & Barbara Laurie offer you an intensive (BUT FUN!!!!) 4-day journey designed to improve your vocal technique, music interpretation & stage presence /performance skills, comprised of 3 "rehearsal" workshops, concluding with a public concert on the 4th day.

**DATE:** February 2011

- Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>, 19:30-22:30h
- Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>, 19:30-22:30h
- Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>, 10-14h
- Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>, 15:30h call, 17h Concert



**LOCATION:** Panto Keller, Sperrstrasse 67, Basel

**COST:** CHF 90 for G & S Society members  
CHF 150 for non-members

**For more information and/or registration** please contact [workshop@savoyards.ch](mailto:workshop@savoyards.ch), or L. Wingard at 079.359.8026, by **5<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

Following on from the success of our recent sing-alongs, the Gilbert & Sullivan Society wants to move to the next level and provide a chance for singers of all abilities to develop their performing skills. A four-day ensemble-singing workshop is therefore planned for February 2011, focusing on voice production and stage deportment. Leading this Gilbert & Sullivan workshop are two professionally qualified and experienced teachers and performers, American soprano, Lisa Wingard and Scottish mezzo soprano, Barbara Laurie.



Lisa Wingard has a BFA in Theatre and a BA in Music Education. She has taught music and drama for several years in the USA and Switzerland, and was assistant musical director for the Geneva Amateur Operatic Society (GAOS).



Barbara Laurie has a BA in Music Performance and LRAM for music education. She has extensive experience as a vocal coach and piano teacher in UK, Switzerland & France, and ran successful Gilbert & Sullivan Singing Workshops in Basel in 1999 & 2000.

The workshop will conclude with a public concert of the ensemble music; this concert will also be an opportunity for any participants who may wish to perform solos or duets they have already prepared. For non-singers the concert provides a chance to enjoy a programme of Gilbert & Sullivan music with friends and family. Refreshments, as always, will be available!

## *Reviews*

### **G&S Society AGM**

*By Gert Venghaus*

Initially, one had the distinct feeling of entering a mysterious underground world of conspiracy and secrets when passing through the nondescript door of Sperrstrasse No 67 and climbing down the narrow stairs – but then one was greeted by the friendly faces and laughter of folks who have, among other things maybe, one interest in common - the works of Gilbert & Sullivan. The underground venue is, of course, the Panto-Keller, a spacious and pleasantly renovated room where this year's AGM of the The Gilbert & Sullivan Society was held. With 16 of the 45 members present, the attendance of 35% of the membership was actually quite impressive. A

beautiful variety of delicious snacks and drinks helped set the scene for a productive and interesting AGM.

The AGM's agenda was relatively quickly dealt with. Everyone agreed that the Chairman, the Board members and the auditor had done a wonderful job throughout the year and were we now in a theatre this would be the moment to applaud all their energy and dedication. Even the issue of the missing minutes of last year's AGM was quickly resolved. Just as the judge in 'Trial by Jury' marries Angelina himself to solve the court case, it was unanimously decided to approve the minutes in absentia – a brilliant solution resulting in continued speedy proceedings. From the Chairman's report and the deliberations of the Board members and the auditor we learned that the state of the Society was a healthy one. The member base was small but had shown a slight and much welcome increase, the finances were equally limited but in good order and – as the Chairman put it – the Society was living within its means - something very few organisations can say these days.

2010 had been a busy year with loads of interesting and most enjoyable events and the Society was planning an equally exciting 2011. One highlight of the evening started with Rachel having brought back a very up-to-date Koko's 'Little list' by Patrick Dawson of the Grimsdyke Players (please see pages 4 and 5). Before Bryan Stone skilfully recited this updated list he presented a very entertaining and truly interesting analysis of Gilbert's subtle humour and word play that can be found particularly in the various patter songs.

The second half of the AGM was dominated by two very exciting topics: One was the exciting plan to stage a Gilbert and Sullivan production possibly by 2012. As our Society is obviously too small to bear everything connected with a full scale production, a proposal was discussed to create a kind of umbrella organisation for this purpose made up of the Basel Gilbert & Sullivan Society with other interested performing groups. A possible production could be staged at the 'Scala' with 360 seats and apparently good stage and lighting facilities and rather good acoustics. Naturally, this provoked an enthusiastic discussion and virtually everyone was very excited about this prospect. As every great idea starts with a dream – why not dream along and get things moving. In this energetic spirit, the membership present moved a motion for the Board to seriously consider such a production for 2012 and officially enter into the necessary negotiations with other partners. One overriding factor is obviously the organisation and the financing of such an event. It goes without saying that

such an undertaking would require an independent and experienced production manager and musical director. On the other hand, many amateur groups at the International G&S Festival in Buxton/UK prove that some excellent stage productions are possible with even a minimum of actors and musicians. However, such an activity as well as the Society's regular events would greatly benefit from significantly enhanced sponsorship and everyone is encouraged to come up with ideas as to how to increase the financial support to the Society.

This subject gradually led to the second highly interesting and principal topic of the evening: The relevance and the future of the Society. In other words are we not restraining ourselves, the scope for increased membership and the possibility of increased financial support by limiting the interests of the Society to Gilbert and Sullivan's operatic works rather than expanding to more general aspects such as "British music". Naturally, there are pros and cons and the resulting debate was at times very passionate. Members obviously hold G&S very dearly and are happy with the Society's focus. On the other hand, a wider scope focusing on British music, composers, theatre, etc. would likely attract more public interest and support particularly in Switzerland and Southern Germany where G&S are known only to relatively few. This would also allow the Society to "spread its wings" to the rest of Switzerland rather than limiting itself to the Basel region. It would also facilitate collaboration with other theatrical companies in Switzerland, for instance in Geneva, thus enhancing co-operation and potentially increasing membership. Regardless of the future territorial and topical focus of the Society, it was felt that a more pro-active PR approach could help the Society. For that purpose, it might be useful to develop a presentation kit containing discussion topics, some interesting musical or film extracts, some pictures, etc. With such a kit, the Society and specific members could approach the media, TV, radio, etc to promote the works of G&S. Furthermore, the Society could benefit from exploring new and so far unused technologies, such as YouTube



## Quiz evening

By Joanna Lonergan

On November 5th we met at the Lohnhof for our autumn event, a Quiz and Fancy Dress evening.



Timekeeper "Morticia" and Quizmistress "Katisha"

Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the nineteen participants preferred to come conventionally dressed, even though prizes (unspecified) had been mentioned. Only the three members of the Quiz team turned up on the night in fancy dress. While this made the competition for the best costumes redundant, it certainly added style to the quiz element of the evening to have the questions announced by characters of legend.

The evening started, of course, with drinks and refreshments, including a delicious pumpkin soup produced in a triumph of logistics in the Lohnhof's mini-kitchen. An initial game of Find-Your-Opera, sorted the company into three completely random teams; 'The Mikado', 'HMS Pinafore' and 'The Gondoliers', setting friend against friend and spouse against spouse.



Quiz teams hard at work

The Mikado team won the first prize of the evening for speed of mutual recognition, and then the quiz began in earnest. Rounds of general knowledge

alternated with G&S questions. While the Mikado and Gondoliers teams did better in the general knowledge questions, it was Pinafore's far superior performance in the G&S rounds that led, in the end, to their edging their way into first place in a tight finish. The final scores were Gondoliers 19, Mikado 25, and Pinafore 26.5, and the winning team members each received a prize of a small bottle of bubbly!



*"Katisha" and "KoKo" with his executions list!*

Many thanks to all involved in a fun evening, especially Ann and Tom McClymont for the catering, especially the soup, and to the Quiz team, Katisha, Koko and Morticia (alias Barbara and David Laurie and Wendy Bucknall), for all their work in setting the questions and chairing the quiz.

## *The Nightmare*

*By Bryan Stone*

Once again I take up the challenge of interpreting those references in Gilbert's texts which slip through so easily, but which we often have no reason to understand at all! So it is with the patter songs. Last time we took examples from 'Patience' and looked at 'Pinafore' and 'Iolanthe'. Gilbert's skill is, in part, that having set a scene, he at first embellishes it with all sorts of plausible detail, makes it convincing, and then it becomes a vehicle for further mischief. However, there is another element which plays a role: audiences saw the patter song coming, heard Sullivan's introduction, and knew they could sit back and be entertained. A perfect example is the 'Nightmare' song in *Iolanthe*, with its confiding recitative, 'Love, unrequited, robs me of m' rest....' Poetic it is, until, after a short romantic accompaniment, the suspense is broken, and the rhythmic '1-2-3-4' bars set the mood of the whole song, actually in a compelling, no-relief 6/8 time: 'When you're lying awake with a dismal headache.....' Just listen to the Lord Chancellor as he laments his sleepless love-sick night. First he tells you what it's like to lie awake, and we know it, 'as the bedclothes conspire, of usual slumber to plunder you'.... 'the blanketing tickles'... 'and you're hot, and you're cross, and you tumble and toss till there's nothing twixt you and the ticking'.... Beds have changed in 140 years, too. Ticking is the bag to hold the feathers of a mattress, but only for the wealthy! But what are your

nightmares like? I had a bad cold recently and my nightmares, however inconceivable, were very real as I tossed and turned, until I dozed off again, and then they were off again. Gilbert catches it perfectly: But you'd very much better be waking, For you dream you are crossing the Channel and tossing about in a steamer from Harwich', actually on the North Sea but never mind! *Iolanthe* opened in 1882; steamers had operated for 20 years from Harwich to Antwerp and Rotterdam. Both Gilbert and Sullivan travelled frequently to the Continent, Sullivan having studied in Leipzig. The nightmare steamer was something between a large bathing machine and a very small second class carriage'. A bathing machine was for prudish Victorians on the beach, a small cabin on wheels, in which you changed to bathe and climbed directly into the sea, without undue immodesty. I last saw them at Weymouth. A second class carriage is railway, of course, when there were three classes, the extremely wealthy, officers, bishops\*, government functionaries would travel 'first', most of the middle class went 'second', and 'third', with hard seats, often unlit, and very cramped, was for the great unwashed. During the 1880s seconds were abolished, and thirds (somewhat improved) took their place. British trains continued some 90 years with firsts and thirds (think of Betjeman, or T.S. Eliot's sleeping car cat) until it was sorted out. Continental railways retained three classes until 1957. A supremely comic line follows; 'and you're giving a feast, penny ice and cold meat, to a party of friends and relations' (Gilbert liked this; in 'Trial by Jury' the Defence Lawyer talks of restoring many a burglar to 'his friends and relations'.) 'They're a ravenous horde, and they all came on board at Sloane Square and South Kensington stations', which are on the London Circle Line and certainly not served by ships from Harwich, except in nightmares. Then you meet 'Your attorney, who started that morning from Devon' (yes, he could in 1880, on the first morning express, Plymouth to Paddington), but 'He's a bit undersized, and....he tells you he's only eleven'. This continues, playing apparently blackjack, while the ship becomes a four-wheeler (a variety of hackney carriage cab) and very shortly, 'You're as cold as an icicle, in your shirt and your socks, the black silk with gold clocks' (I cannot find this explained anywhere) 'crossing Salisbury Plain on a bicycle'. The next bit is happy lunacy, as the attorney and crew ('on bicycles, too, which they've somehow or other invested in'....) are planning a new business where you 'plant a small tradesman' so that 'his legs will take root, and his fingers will shoot, and they'll blossom and bud like a fruit tree'. So each gives its fruit, the greengrocer, the pastrycook, apple puffs and three-corners (an early Danish pastry) and Banburys – note the spelling, plural of a proper name! Banbury cakes are pastry filled with currants and spice. But disaster! The penny shares are

snatched up by Rothschild and Baring (two hugely wealthy private banks, of which Baring was bankrupted by a Hong Kong trader some years ago). And just as they get to you, 'You awake with a shudder despairing'. The next bit is musically priceless but needs no explanation – unless you are called to sing it. Then it's a twist in the tail.

The Nightmare song never fails, if well performed, to please. I last sang it in a public but modest 'Iolanthe' 18 years ago, and it's challenging, but really rewarding. One rule is to sing the commas, for they are meaningful; another is to tell it as the story it is, and sort out the breathing. It is also very musical, and you must have all the shifts and moods of Sullivan's music, which he obviously enjoyed too, in your mind. But it really portrays a nightmare, and the night gets worse, until suddenly, with the dawn, 'the night has been long – ditto ditto my song – and thank goodness they're both of them over!

## *The Patterman from Grim's Dyke*

*by Patrick Dawson*

Grim's Dyke was the home of W S Gilbert from 1890 until his death at the infamous lake in the grounds in 1911.

The Manor House Grim's Dyke is now a hotel and on Sunday evenings throughout the year stages a G&S opera with dinner. The opera company, predictably known as Grim's Dyke Opera, perform in other venues throughout the London area.



Since 2001 I have been the principal patterman for the company and during that time performed not just at Grim's Dyke but at Buxton Opera House, The Stables Theatre Milton Keynes, Bentley Priory (head quarters of the Battle of Britain) and the Inner Temple Inns of Court to name but a few. In 2011 a G&S themed holiday is planned in Tenerife, not quite "from the sunny Spanish shore"!

One of the challenges of any patterman these days is updating the "Little List", something which is now expected by audiences since Eric Idle in the ENO Jonathan Miller production. Quite often a member of the audience will wait after the performance and ask

for a copy of my latest effort. I always decline stating copyright. However, when someone says they have come from Switzerland to your summer concert how could I resist? That was the case when Rachel Bunger came to Grim's Dyke last July.



*Patrick Dawson with the late Patricia Leonard in rehearsal*

I had no idea there was such a following in Europe, something which WSG would have made great use of in his lyrics.

In the coming months I hope to keep you informed of activities at Grim's Dyke and tell you more of this wonderful place where one of the world's greatest lyricists lived.

## **Lyrics from "The Little List"**

As someday it may happen that a victim must be found,  
I've got a little list; I've got a little list,  
Of society offenders who might well be underground,  
And who never would be missed,  
I've got them on the list,  
Those overpaid presenters we see on the BBC  
And Americans who want to sack the top man at BP  
People blowing vuvusulas making  
Such a dreadful buzz  
And that very strange phenomena  
The gambling octopus  
The pathetic England footballers  
Who play as if they're drunk. I don't  
Think they'll be missed; I've put  
Them on the list.

There are all those politicians who are really such a bore,  
I've got them on the list, I'm sure they'll not be missed  
And with this coalition we are in for so much more  
Let's put them on the list, they never will be missed.  
There's the foreign secretary who's got an irritating voice.  
The Chancellor with his cuts who  
Says he'll give us all a choice.  
The PM and his deputy who seem  
More like Ant and Dec.  
And then there is the last lot who left  
Us all in such a wreck.  
But it really doesn't matter who's put upon the list,  
For they'll none of them be missed,  
They'll none of them be missed

The tabloid journalists with tacky  
Newspapers to sell.  
I've got them on the list, they never  
Would be missed.  
And that aging TV compere who  
Says didn't they do well,  
He drives me round the twist; I've  
Got him on the list,  
There's the banker taking bonuses of  
Astronomic size.  
While ordinary workers are denied a  
Modest rise  
Those so-called pop celebrities who  
Make a dreadful noise.  
Then those clergymen who want to  
Keep the top jobs for the boys.  
And that Weakest Link presenter,  
Well I really do insist,  
I've put her on the list; I don't think  
She'll be missed!  
For they'll none of them be missed,  
They'll none of them be missed

(C) P L Dawson July 2010.

### Gilbert and Sullivan Master Class in Tenerife

This is a brief notice to let members know of the first MusicAmici Gilbert and Sullivan Holiday Workshop, in Tenerife in the Canary Islands on July 17th -24th 2011. There will be master-classes, coaching and rehearsals ending with a public performance of "Trial by Jury" and "HMS Pinafore" with a professional orchestra. The tutors will be from the well-known Grim's Dyke Opera Company, with accommodation in the five-star Costa Adeje Gran Hotel, in the south of the island. Numbers are strictly limited.

Further information at [www.musicamici.org](http://www.musicamici.org).

### Contact Information

#### The Gilbert & Sullivan Society

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CH-4016 Basel  
Switzerland

Email: [contact@savoyards.ch](mailto:contact@savoyards.ch)  
Website: [www.savoyards.ch](http://www.savoyards.ch)  
Postal  
Account: 40-333742-6

### Puzzles

#### Quiz

by Val Walder

The following 'verse' combines lines from one of G&S's operettas.  
Can you name it?

Let the merry cymbals sound  
In aid - in aid of a deserving charity.  
And some day we shall get our share -  
Twenty love-sick maidens we.

I cannot tell what this love may be  
Though everywhere true love I see.  
True love must be without alloy  
No idle thoughts of gain or joy.  
That is the love that's pure,  
Love that will aye endure.

The solution to this quiz will appear in the autumn newsletter

#### Solution to the quiz in the summer newsletter

First decide which operetta the song comes from.  
Find the letter indicated.  
The answer, in order, is the name of another G&S operetta.

Oh rage and fury! Oh shame and sorrow! (4 or 7)  
Three little maids from school are we, (9)  
Now away to the wedding we go, (5)  
I am a maiden, cold and stately (7)  
When I sally forth to seek my prey (11)  
Fair is Rose as the bright May-day. (1 or 8)  
For riches and rank I do not long (8)  
I stole the Prince, and brought him here. (2 or 10)

Tip: Seek the letters that are given double first.

Solution: The Sorcerer

- 1) Thespis
- 2) The Mikado
- 3) The Grand Duke
- 4) Patience
- 5) HMS Pinafore
- 6) Ruddigore
- 7) Iolanthe
- 8) Trial by Jury

## Non Gilbert & Sullivan Events

### Semi-Circle Musical "Rent"

Semi-Circle will be holding auditions for the award winning rock musical "Rent" to be performed in Switzerland for the first time.

Applications can be made on-line or by post. Please visit the website:

<http://www.semi-circle.ch/rent/sign-up>

or to apply by post:

Rent 2011  
c/o Erika Ver Berne  
Brueglistrasse 34  
4104 Oberwil

All applications for lead and ensemble roles must be received by December 15th 2010.

Rehearsals begin at the end of February and the production will be staged at The Scala in Basel in June.

Full information about the production and auditions is available at:

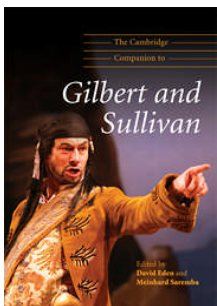
[www.semi-circle.ch/rent](http://www.semi-circle.ch/rent)

## Book Offer

### The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert & Sullivan

In October 2009, Sullivan expert, Meinhard Saremba, a writer, lecturer and radio broadcaster from Mannheim in Germany came to give us a presentation on "Sullivan and Rossini" at Bergli bookshops in Basel. Everyone who went there agreed that the evening was really fascinating.

The Society has a few copies of the book "The Cambridge Companion to Gilbert & Sullivan" which was co-edited by Meinhard.



We are selling these books for CHF 20, which is half the going price in Switzerland. Consider adding this to your library or giving it as a Christmas gift.

Memorable melodies and fanciful worlds – the comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan remain as popular today as when they were first performed. This Companion provides a timely guide to the history and development of the collaboration between the two men, including a fresh examination of the many myths and half-truths surrounding their relationship. Written by an international team of specialists, the volume features a personal account from film director Mike Leigh on his connection with the Savoy Operas and the creation of his film Topsy-Turvy. Starting with the early history of the operatic stage in Britain, the Companion places the operas in their theatrical and musical context, investigating the amateur performing tradition, providing new perspectives on the famous patter songs and analysing their dramatic and operatic potential. Perfect for enthusiasts, performers and students of Gilbert and Sullivan's enduring work, the book examines their legacy and looks forward to the future.

If you would like to buy a copy of the book, just send a message to

[contact@savoyards.ch](mailto:contact@savoyards.ch)

and we will be in touch to arrange delivery

## Cultural Classifieds- members

**Singing Lessons!** Individually-tailored lessons from a professional singer with 20+ years' teaching experience. Learn basic & advanced techniques to help you sing in tune, articulate text clearly, master breath control/support, gain confidence in solo/choir singing and prepare for exams or auditions. In English, German or French.

Contact: Barbara LAURIE, Tel: 00 33 389 69 42 14  
Email: [bl@umbrellasingers.com](mailto:bl@umbrellasingers.com) (In St Louis, 7 mins over the border from Basel)

*Special offer!* 20% off Xmas gift vouchers (2 lessons)