

## *Newsletter at a Glance*

Greetings from the President	1
Forthcoming events	2
Reviews	3-5
Bryan Stones article	6-7
Puzzles, quizzes	7
Adverts for non G&S Societies	8

## *Greetings from the Society's President*

*by David Laurie*

In this new season for the G&S Society, I am pleased to write to you as the incoming chairman of the board.

We have had a great start to the 2011/2012 season already, with a one-day singing workshop in July for group and solo singers, and a scene development course and public concert in September at which enthusiasts entertained us with favourite scenes from several G&S operas.

These workshops and concerts form a key part of our long-term project to work towards a fully staged G&S production. It is a gradual learning process, not only for the performers but also for the stage and musical directors and the 'behind scenes' organisers and crew. Each workshop and concert takes the performance quality to the next level. They are also great fun and we hope you will be encouraged to take part in the next planned workshop in March 2012.

We also plan to build our relations with the Semi-Circle and Panto groups, to draw on their expertise in producing shows and to add our skill-set to theirs.

Of course, we will maintain our social programme and we were pleased with the success of our first foray into G&S film nights in October. The popularity of the screening of a performance of the Pirates of Penzance encourages us to consider similar events in the future.

Our next social event will be a Yule-tide Apéro and Singalong on December 16th at which you can sing your favourite carols and enjoy a pre-Christmas mulled wine with friends. Then in early 2012 we will hold our Burns Night, organized by some Scottish members of the society. This was a very popular event in 2009 and the planned event will be even bigger and better!

And that's only the first half of the 2011/2012 season! I do hope you will come to one or all of the events and that you find something to your taste. Please also bring along your friends and family to introduce them to our G&S Society. New members are always welcome!

All these events take a huge amount of organization and I would like to thank my fellow board members and our retiring chairman, Bernie MacCabe, for their dedication, hard work and enthusiasm. Thanks also to the musical coaches Lisa Wingard, Barbara Laurie and Christine Archer for their commitment in leading our workshops. As the workload for events increases we have begun to exceed our board's capacity so we have started to compile a list of volunteers to help out with small tasks. Please do consider how you might get involved from time to time, and contact us at [volunteers@savoyards.ch](mailto:volunteers@savoyards.ch). Two additional very specific roles that would require some skilled enthusiasts would be a webmaster to manage our website and a graphic artist for posters etc.

A few days ago I had the opportunity to represent the G&S Society at a reception in the Safranzunft, organized by the British Residents' Association in honour of Alan Chalmers who has been the honorary British Consul in Basel for several years. Due to financial reasons, the role of honorary British Consul has unfortunately been recently dissolved. Several eminent local dignitaries, as well as the British Ambassador, spoke at the reception of their gratitude for his dedication and enthusiasm. I would also like to add our Society's thanks to Alan for his support during the years, including acting as MC at several events and liaising for us with the British Ambassador, who attended one of our dinner concerts.

In conclusion, I hope you are as excited as I am about the Society's plans, and I look forward to meeting you at the events in this coming season!

## *Contact Information*

### **The Gilbert & Sullivan Society**

Postfach 405  
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

## Forthcoming Events

### Xmas Aperó & Singalong in December

## Xmas Apéro & Singalong



*A festive social evening with musical entertainment, carolling and drinks !  
Please bring some food for the apero table to share with friends.*

On: Fri. 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2011, at 19:00h  
In: **Foyer Room,  
Im Lohnhof 8, Basel**



Entry: **CHF 20** (members),  
**CHF 30** (non-members)

Please RSVP (by 9<sup>th</sup> Dec) to:  
[events@savoyards.ch](mailto:events@savoyards.ch)

**All welcome.**

Further details at:  
[www.savoyards.ch](http://www.savoyards.ch)



### Burns supper in February

By Ann Mc Clymont

The Basler Herbstmesse is drawing to a close as I write and Christmas is just around the corner. Enough, you may say, to think about! However, the G&S Society is waiting in the wings with its first event of 2012.

Two years ago the Society launched its first Burns evening of song and verse and a buffet supper of haggis, neeps and tatties. The event was a great success, with many enthusiastic voices asking when the next one would take place.

You may remember that our theme two years ago was "G&S and Burns". This year the theme for the evening is "Burns and Europe" which will be presented through music and verse, with a few surprises up our sleeves! We are excited by the scope of this year's programme and look forward to entertaining you to an evening "chiefly in the Scottish dialect", but with European accents!

An aperitif followed by haggis, neeps and tatties will be served as part of a three-course meal. A vegetarian haggis will of course be available on request. Catering and service will be provided by top chef Abram Araz and his team.

### Burns Supper

Date: Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2012  
Time: 19.00  
Place: Lindenberg 8, 4058 Basel

Entry: CHF 50 (members)  
CHF 65 (non-members)  
CHF 30 (under-16s)

RSVP: [events@savoyards.ch](mailto:events@savoyards.ch) by the 25<sup>th</sup> Jan  
(please state if vegi haggis preferred)



Apero followed by a 3-course traditional dinner, Scottish music, poetry, singing and entertainment

### Performance workshops in March

#### Performance Workshops

Dates: Sat 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2012 (chorus)  
Sun 4<sup>th</sup> March 2012 (soloists)

Time: All day  
Place Basel (location tbd)

Cost / day: CHF 75 (members)  
CHF 100 (non members)

RSVP: [workshop@savoyards.ch](mailto:workshop@savoyards.ch)  
by 14<sup>th</sup> February 2012

"Integrating acting and singing into a complete performance"



## Reviews

### AGM 23<sup>rd</sup> September

As usual with the G&S Society, the AGM held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September combined business with pleasure, in that there were opportunities to eat, drink and socialise as well as the more formal part of the meeting.

Highlights from the AGM itself were:

- In the Annual Report, as well as describing the events organized during the year reported on in the newsletter, Bernard MacCabe referred to the pleasing increase in membership, from 45 to 61.
- The financial position of the Society is healthy; a surplus of income over expenditure allowed the build up of reserves for future projects.
- Proposed amendments to the ByLaws, to bring them in line with current practice, were agreed.
- The following members were elected to the Board: Corinna Balfour, Stephen Brown, Wendy Bucknall, Rachel Bungler, Joanna Lonergan, Barbara Laurie, David Laurie, Bernard MacCabe and Ann McClymont. David Laurie will take over from Bernard MacCabe as Chairman.
- An appeal was made to members to help with events, as their growing number and complexity means that there is too much work for Board members to do without support from members.
- Board members were thanked for their work during the year. Special thanks were due to Bernard MacCabe for his work as Chairman for a number of years. Also special thanks to Lisa Wingard, who had run the workshops (with Barbara Laurie) and who had been a catalyst in attracting new members.

Full minutes of the meeting are available on request.

### Singing workshops

#### The Gilbert & Sullivan Workshop – September 2011.

##### A Personal View.

So there I was sitting at home one day around about the middle of July and I get this phone call. 'Hello Peter – Lisa Wingard here. Do you remember me? (we had met once) can you/ do you sing!' I replied that the last time I sang had been some 50 years be-

fore in the school choir before my voice broke. I also suggested that she contact Christine Archer and ask for a résumé of my singing prowess. Usually this was restricted to the 3<sup>rd</sup> row of the chorus in the Christmas Pantomime where I could do as little damage as possible. Christine had heard me from this position a number of times so I felt fairly safe in her opinion of my vocal qualities. Unfortunately for me, said Archer was of the opinion that I probably could sing so my fate was sealed.



The next step was to go out to Lisa's and attempt to follow her up and down the piano. I thought 'Ha – the game is up now!' I was considerably surprised to find out that not only could I follow Lisa but that I could actually do it in tune. I was also informed that I was a tenor. I very nearly laughed at this but decided that discretion was the better part of valour and that Lisa was the expert. I did quietly think to myself at the time that she was under serious delusions but again I kept that to myself. The next step was to choose a song. 'I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major General' was selected. The next surprise was that I was informed that this was to be my solo! I went back home in somewhat of a daze not sure whether to laugh out loud or gently subside into a jelly.



When I got home I told my partner (Penny Tuckwell) what had happened. Bless her – she did not collapse on the floor in a heap but I did notice a small quivering of the lip from her direction. About 3 or 4 days later a whole raft of music arrived. It was then I discovered that more than a solo was involved (Including the role of 'Arac' from 'Warriors') –

this was also a complete surprise to me as I cannot read music. 'Ah well (I thought) that will get me out of it!' Not a hope in hell's chance.

My other major problem is line learning – my lack of skill in this area is legend among the directors in Semi-Circle and Pantomime. Suffice to say that after a lot of practice and hard, concentrated work from Lisa and Barbara Laurie ably backed by Christine Archer on the piano, the day of the concert arrived. In the end I did not fluff the lines too much and was able to bring a comic element to the song that seemed to be enjoyed by those present. During the course of the workshop, we became a tight little group who supported each other and had a lot of fun. This, I am sure, came over to the audience at the concert. A very creditable performance was given by all and the evening was very enjoyable.

As to me personally, I would now recommend that others try this course – you may be very surprised at what skills you have lurking beneath the surface of humming along with the radio or singing in the bath.

*Many thanks to Peter Hilton for his contribution*

## 'Concert: "A Harvest of Songs" '

The Savoyards' autumn concert on 18th September this year was hugely entertaining, not just because of the singing but also the staging. It's not every concert where you see the ladies and gentlemen of the choir correctly and soberly clad in black, but then adorning themselves with shawls, ties, helmets or what have you, and using all kinds of props and by-play to give a real mini-performance of each piece. And they used the space available in the Lindenbergssaal to full advantage, often coming "on stage" through the audience, which gave a nice intimate atmosphere.

Pieces were taken from six of Gilbert & Sullivan's most well-known works, and I was delighted to hear three of my favourite pieces. "When I was a lad" from "HMS Pinafore" was beautifully presented by one of the Savoyard regulars, David Laurie, stalking up and down as to the manner born as the admiral who'd never gone to sea. Then from "Pirates of Penzance", "I am the very model of a modern major-general", a hilarious performance by Peter Hilton, not word perfect but very funny (and maddening for the pianist to follow).



From the same opera came "When a felon's not engaged in his employment" sung with great enthusiasm by Rory Macfie and the other four male singers as policemen in helmets, on the march and wielding paper cudgels. Very impressive.

The ladies – thirteen of them, most of whom also took solo parts as needed – were a lively crowd and did a wonderful job, both vocally and visually. Ann McClymont, who has long experience of G&S, shone as Lady Psyche in "Patience" and in other roles. It was a pleasure to hear and see Tatjana Stöcklin, a newcomer to this type of music, as Patience ("I cannot tell what this love may be"), and Steve Brown as Grosvenor ("A magnet hung") in the same work. A couple of colourful scenes from "Iolanthe" had all the ladies really looking very much like fairies with lots of floating shawls ("Tripping hither"), followed by "Strephon's a member of parliament", a highly amusing rendering with Strephon (Ash Chumber) busily lobbying everyone he could see (including members of the audience).



The finale was, appropriately enough, "There's a little group of isles" from "Utopia, Ltd" with the entire cast. This was a fitting end to a very diverting evening, which also included a short break from wall-to-wall G&S with solos & duets from other composers. It was great to hear "The Vagabond" from Vaughan Williams again – the last time I heard it must have been decades ago. Afterwards there were refreshments, which gave the appreciative audience and the thirsty singers a chance to socialize.

This concert evening was the climax of a six-day workshop for amateur singers under the expert tuition of American soprano Lisa Wingard and Scottish mezzo Barbara Laurie, with the invaluable support of Christine Archer at the piano - all experienced teachers and performers. This is the second such event, and hopefully not the last! Congratulations to everyone who took part!

*Many thanks to Anitra Green for her contribution*

## Fun at the Film Night

Thanks to Gert Venghaus, who very kindly donated to our Society his Gilbert & Sullivan DVD collection, we hosted our first film night on 21 October 2011. Board members Wendy Bucknall and Steve Brown transformed the Lohnhof Foyer into a cinema for an eager audience of around 30 members and friends. The G&S Society provided snacks and glasses for this "free entry" event and guests brought their own drinks to share.



A festival award winning performance of the Pirates of Penzance was chosen and the audience were soon enthralled by a lively and humorous production with high standards of singing and acting.



By the second act a number of the singers from our September workshop were even singing along with the policemen's chorus. A combination of the relaxed, friendly atmosphere, the attentive guests and an excellent G&S production made our first ever event in this format a resounding success.

Review by Barbara Laurie

## Charles Court Mikado

I was thrilled to discover that the Charles Court Opera was staging a performance of "The Mikado" during my most recent visit to London. The production was staged at the Rosemary Branch, a 50-seater space above a good straightforward Hackney pub.

It was a delightful production delivered by a troupe of splendid singers whose high spirits had a contagious effect on the audience. John Savourin, who was the show's director and choreographer, also portrays an

excellent multitasking "born sneering" Lord High Everythingy Poo-bah of "pre-Adamite ancestral descent" This production of the Mikado featured a cast of only nine. It was minimal in terms of set but quite the contrary in relation to the exuberance on display and the very high musical standards.



If you are in London when they stage a production, I could really recommend taking the time to go and watch. It was as good as any larger production I have ever seen and the intimacy of the theatre really made one feel as though you were right in Titipu itself! Verdict; brilliant: when you come out feeling as though you are dancing on air and that everything is well in the world then Gilbert & Sullivan have worked their magic once again.



This review was written by Rachel, the newsletter editor (partly taken from official reviews)

## *Rederring, and a witch's curse (Part the first, ha-ha...)*

By Bryan Stone

Gilbert used Cornwall as a setting in the Pirates of Penzance, but there was another too. The 'Fishing Village of Rederring' is the scene of Act 1 of that opera which always hovered between success and failure, 'Ruddigore'. It opened at the Savoy on Jan 22 1887 as 'Ruddygore'. The middle class found this name offensive; Gilbert, already in high dudgeon with

Sullivan and Carte, could nevertheless not risk that. With a disaster in the second Act, where the scenery in the great picture gallery of Ruddygore Castle failed to function as planned, and the audience already restive after an 85-minute first act, the first-nighters were less than euphoric; boos and whistles were heard for the first time at a Savoy final curtain. There was a crisis meeting next day. Let's start with the new Act 1. 'Ruddygore' became 'Ruddigore', the ghosts of ancestors had their second appearance cut, several songs were shortened or dropped, and a shaky start turned into a modest success. Following 'The Mikado', which ran 672 performances, 'Ruddigore' with 288 was a failure. As Gilbert said later, having netted £4,000 from it, still a huge sum, 'I could do with a few more such failures'. The 'Yeomen of the Guard' which followed ran to 423 performances, and was almost always in the later repertoire; 'Ruddigore' had to wait until 1920 to be performed again. Let us not be put off. 'Ruddigore' is tremendous fun, full of brilliant insights, sensitive songs and stories, musically fully at the height, despite Sullivan's progressive health problems. It is a glorious send-up, as the names and settings at once show. Names like Sir Ruthven and Sir Despard Murgatroyd, and innocents like Rose Maybud, tell us that we are in Victorian melodrama, a black art very popular in its day, hissing the villain, cheering the heroine. Gilbert once called it 'Transpontine Melodrama', meaning not Italian art, but debunking those blood-and-thunder dramas played in theatres south of the Thames, 'over the bridge'. Gilbert had a model: Harrison Ainsworth's drama 'Rookwood' of 1834, which was played long into the 1890s. This too begins with a family curse, and two brothers, virtuous and villainous. Gilbert added a sailor and more. Rederring is idyllic, Mousehole, Polperro, St Just all in one, Rose's cottage on the cliff, the harbour nestling round the bay and chestnut trees beyond. Rose appears, demure and pure. The chorus sings. . But wait! All is not what it seems! Why should the chorus be bridesmaids? A 'pious charity', it seems, has endowed them to sing and attend daily while awaiting a wedding; but alas, no-one comes to marry. Hannah, Rose's aunt, explains. The first Baronet of the Murgatroyds had persecuted witches, and one, burned at the stake, had condemned him and all his successors to commit a crime each day, or die in fearful agony. That is the witch's curse. Each one has finally renounced evil, died horribly and passed on the burden. Rederring is cursed too.



Sir Despard and Richard Dauntless

But Rose has another problem. She has a book of etiquette (very popular in the 1880s) and it allows no kind of temptation. That too makes a comic song, 'If somebody there chanced to be', sung with all the demure musical delicacy which Sullivan can conjure. So too is the poignant comic courting song of Robin and Rose, but aha! Robin is also a villain. He is the present baronet, hiding as an open-hearted peasant, and his younger brother Despard has been forced to take the title and the curse. There comes now another Murgatroyd, Richard, with a supremely comic sea song. 'I shipped, d'ye see' about how to fight and run away, a parody which raised dust in both the Royal Navy (alleging cowardice) and in France (insulting gallant captains). 'And I'll wager, in their joy they kissed each other's cheeks, (which is what them fur-riners do)...' And Sullivan gives it one of his three or four joyously musical hornpipe tunes, based on the traditional 'Jack's the Lad'. For others, try Pinafore and Mikado.

Robin, however, first sings another little jewel of Gilbertian observation, to explain his shyness. It is the hymn to the advertiser, with a romping 6/8 refrain, a rhythm loved by both Gilbert and Sullivan for such songs:

'If you wish in the world to advance, Your merits you're bound to enhance, You must stir it and stomp it and blow your own trumpet, or trust me, You haven't a chance!' Robin explains that he has every kind of quality and virtue, and no failings, save one: 'A diffident nature's the worst'. In all London's city, There's no one so witty, I've thought so again and again', and then, just as in he does in 'Patience', out comes Gilbert's fun, 'As a poet I'm tender and quaint, I've passion and fervour and grace, From Ovid and Horace to Swinburne and Morris, They all of them take a back place!' Ah, what a trial it is to be so modest.

It is a big jump to Sir Walter Scott, and 'Heart of Midlothian', one of his most popular Waverley novels. Straight from those pages comes now the volatile Madge Wildfire, whom Gilbert takes for his Mad Margaret. The stage directions require that she is dressed in 'picturesque tatters, and is an obvious caricature of theatrical madness'. She should be played, not as a raving lunatic, but as a person distraught: for so she will turn out to be, and in love with Sir Despard. But now we can hiss, because Despard comes on as 'the supreme caricature of the stage villain' and should be dressed accordingly. He and Margaret are out to kidnap Rose. The bridesmaids are horrified, and scatter theatrically at his appearance.



Mad Margaret and Sir Despard

The scene is now set where Act 1 brings a first unravelling. Richard reveals to Despard that not he, but Robin, is the true carrier of the Murgatroyd curse; that Robin is none other than the villainous Sir Ruthven in person, and Despard is free. For Robin there remains, after a happily comic line, 'When I'm a bad Bart (i.e. Baronet) I'll tell taradiddles'...a future in evil-doing. Despard can now marry Mad Margaret, and Rose and Richard can seal their vows, sung along by the chorus of bridesmaids. It's all very jolly, except for Robin: and the curtain closes on him as he sings: 'Oh, wretched the debtor whose signing a deed, and wretched the letter that no-one can read, But very much better their lot it must be, Than that of the person I'm making this verse on, Whose head there's a curse on, Alluding to me!' Act 2 is spoof grand opera. Sullivan had just come from performing his oratorio 'The Golden Legend' and some rubbed off. Gilbert thought it too solemn by half. It stayed; and that gives us a magnificent song. Read about it here next time.

Thanks so much Bryan for your great article

## Puzzles and Quizzes

### Solutions to summer newsletter puzzle

1: Who does the central figure in the sketch represent? "The Englishman" HMS Pinafore

2: How many Gilbert & Sullivan Operas are there? 14, Thespis, Trial by Jury, The Sorcerer, H.M.S.Pinafore, The Pirates of Penzance, Patience, Iolanthe, Princess Ida, The Mikado, Ruddigore, The Yeomen of the Guard, The Gondoliers, Utopia Limited, The Grand Duke.

3: What was the name of the Mikado's son? Nanki-Poo

4: Who had many sisters, cousins and aunts? Sir Joseph Porter from H.M.S. Pinafore

5: Who described H.M.S. Pinafore as "that infernal nonsense"? Major-General Stanley in Pirates of Penzance

6: In what time according to Gilbert did "Britain set the world ablaze"? In good King George's glorious days- Iolanthe

7: What was Gilbert's full name? William Schwenk Gilbert

8: When did Sullivan die? November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1900

9: What is the alternative title of "The Pirates of Penzance"? The Slave of Duty

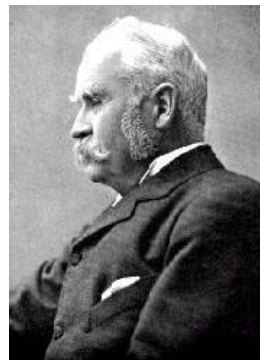
10: Which opera was nearly called "The Beefeaters"? "The Yeomen of the Guard"

### Val's puzzle

Take each of the words listed below and rearrange the letters to form a new word. (Sometimes there are two possibilities for instance from the word "pots" you could create either "post" or "stop"). When you have one newly formed word for each one given, take the 4th letter of each. When you rearrange them, they will form the name of a G&S operetta

Binge  
Large  
Below  
Free  
Ache  
Trade  
Mite  
Pets  
Settler  
Motet  
Nearest

Thanks to Val Walder for this puzzle



Sir William Schwenk Gilbert  
1836-1911



Sir Arthur Sullivan  
1842-1900

## Adverts for non G&S Societies

### The Bells - With Bells Singing and Bells Ringing

The English Seminar Choir presents a programme on Bells, with percussionist Morgane Klein.  
Musical Director: Michel Uhlmann

The Bells | With Bells Ringing and Bells Singing This programme revolves around bells, with live compositions and performances by percussionist Morgane Klein in collaboration with the choir.

Included are pieces about and with bells by Betsy Jolas and Maurizio Kagel as well as meditative moments with singing bowls and other cultic metal instruments. Especially for this project, the composer Michael Winikoff, New Zealand, will re-arrange his piece „Anthem for Doomed Youth“ for bells and choir. At the centre of the spectacle, new creations of sound are explored, with improvisation by the choir and the percussionist as well as elements of the English bell ringing tradition, which reaches far back in time. The programme is rounded off with pieces by Rachmaninov and Anne Boleyn as well as humoristic and satiric pieces like “Das Gläut zu Speyer” by Ludwig Senfl.

Throughout the concert, bells are understood as causing chaos and creating order, and measuring time, mourning and joy.

2 Friday December, 20:00, Basel, Elisabethenkirche  
3 Saturday Dec 19:00, Temple St Jean, Mulhouse

The Basel English Panto Group presents

# Treasure Island



**December**  
Thursday 8th 19:00  
Friday 9th 19:00  
Saturday 10th 14:00 & 19:00  
Sunday 11th 13:30 & 17:00  
Adults: 30 CHF Children & Concessions: 20 CHF

Directed by Peter Hilton  
Script by Richard Liversidge

[www.baselpanto.org](http://www.baselpanto.org)  
[www.ticketino.ch](http://www.ticketino.ch)

**SCALA**  
BASEL  
Freie Strasse 89

Courtesy of Limelight Scripts