



## ~ NEGASS NEWS ~

Welcome, Spring! Trees and shrubs are putting out buds, the crocuses are poking their heads above the soil, the days are getting warmer, and your NEGASS Board is making plans for an in-person celebration of our 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary. While this will depend on the state of the pandemic, we are hopeful that a fall event may be possible. We will be contacting the performing societies to determine their level of interest. Exciting times coming! Stay tuned.

As part of our exploration of NEGASS history, board member Ben Morse has digitized videos of past NEGASS events. We are delighted that the video of the October 1989 meeting, which included a “do-it-yourself” *Princess Ida*, is now available on the NEGASS YouTube channel. You won’t want to miss Marion Leeds Carroll as the Princess, the irrepressible Juliet Cunningham (see interview on page 3) as Cyril, Janice Dallas as Melissa and other old friends. Many thanks to Janice for providing the video for the archives and to Jon Dallas for the original video.

### IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 NEGASS News
- 1 In Memoriam
- 2 Recent Events
- 3 NEGASS Programs
- 3 G & S News
- 3 A Moment in Time
- 4 Cast Spotlight
- 5 Editor’s Corner
- 6 Calendar

## ~ IN MEMORIAM ~

There is some very sad news to report this month. Robert Cumming died March 9 at age 87. Bob founded the Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society in 1980 and served as the Artistic Director and Stage Director for most of its productions for over 35 years. Mr. Cumming worked as a performer and stage director with the Village Light Opera Group and the American Savoyards in New York City. He served as President of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of New York from 1967 to 1969. Bob was also an accomplished writer and editor, serving as Editor of *MUSIC JOURNAL* and *THE WEEKLY READER*.

The Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society has posted a notice on their website and Facebook page, and state “Bob’s spirit and passion will remain with us as we continue what he started in bringing these wonderful shows to delighted audiences.”



Robert Cumming



Volume 45 No. 5

April 2021

#### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Laurence Weissbrot [editor@negass.org](mailto:editor@negass.org)

#### ORGANIZATIONAL STAFF

Brad Amidon, membership coordinator  
Martha Birnbaum, technical support and member outreach  
Elaine Crane, web mistress  
Susan Larson, education outreach

#### NEGASS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ann Ferentz, president  
Ben Morse, vice president  
Elaine Crane, secretary and Past President  
Brad Amidon, treasurer  
Jacqueline Haney, program chair  
John Dreslin, member-at-large  
Aldo Fabrizi, member-at-large  
Carolyn Kelly Schwartz, member-at-large and publicity chair  
Lindsey Soboleski, member-at-large  
Laurence Weissbrot, member-at-large

THE TRUMPET BRAY is published six times a year on the 1st day of February, April, June, August, October, and December by the New England Gilbert and Sullivan Society (NEGASS), PO Box 118, Arlington MA 02476. To contact the editor, see email address above. To contact all others use the email [contact@negass.org](mailto:contact@negass.org)

#### GENERAL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS AND REVIEWS

Send to [editor@negass.org](mailto:editor@negass.org)

MEMBERSHIP: NEGASS membership dues are \$25. Please join NEGASS online at [www.negass.org](http://www.negass.org)

THE TRUMPET BRAY Members receive the Bray as a PDF email attachment. All editions, including the current one are available at [www.negass.org](http://www.negass.org)

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MATERIAL: 15<sup>th</sup> of the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November.



## RECENT EVENTS

*Pineapple Poll*, presented by the Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society. The Amherst Ballet did a beautiful job on this, and even if you are not a ballet fan, it was great fun trying to identify the songs and the shows they came from, and see how they fit this story of the bumboat woman.

The *Gilbert & Sullivan Trivia Night* was more interesting and challenging than anyone could have anticipated. Host Daniel Breen worked G&S trivia into unusual and intriguing questions, to the delight of all who attended.

The Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society (CG&SS) brought on DJ Keith Alan for a *G&S Jukebox Bingo* event. It was fun, but the best part was the appreciation of the host for a music form with which he was previously unfamiliar. If we made a convert, then the night was a success!

CG&SS also gave us *Yeomen of the Guard* on their YouTube channel, presented as part of their Take 2 Review series. Your NEGASS Board was well represented, with John Dreslin conducting the orchestra and Laurie Weissbrot playing the role of Wilfred Shadbolt.

will present a discussion of  
**Darwinian Woman:**  
The Evolution of *Princess Ida*  
by John Dreslin

Saturday, March 27, 2021 at 7:00 pm US Eastern Time  
on Zoom

On March 27, NEGASS Board member Dr. John E. Dreslin presented an illustrated talk entitled "Darwinian Woman: The Evolution of *Princess Ida*". He discussed the original 1850 poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Princess: A Medley*, and how W. S. Gilbert subsequently adapted it, first in his 1869 play *The Princess* and later in 1883 as an opera libretto *Princess Ida*, to be set to music by Arthur Sullivan. John's entire program, plus some material from *The Three Princesses Project*, will soon be available on the NEGASS YouTube Channel.

## ❧ NEGASS Programs ❧

Gilbert's one-act farce *Allow Me to Explain*, his first "straight play," opened on November 4, 1867. NEGASS will present a Zoom reading of it on Saturday evening, May 15, 2021, at 7:00PM.

The play is set in a hotel corridor, where three men are living: John Smith, John Smith, and John Smith. Mr. Cadderby arrives with his wife, daughter, and nephew, looking for John Smith, and is pleased to find that he has his choice of three. It seems that James Smith, a distant relative of Cadderby, has settled property worth £300 a year on him for as long as James Smith's nephew, John, lives; and Mr. Cadderby wants to check up on this nephew, since his income depends on John Smith's remaining alive.



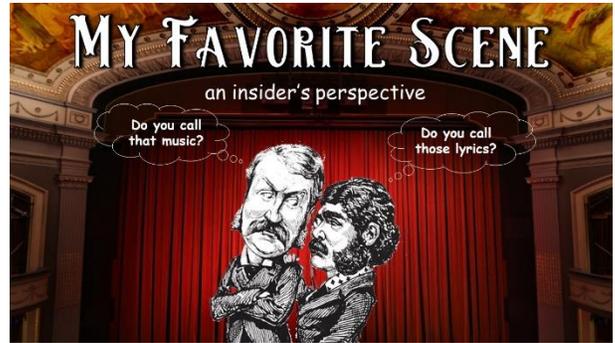
The cast includes four men and three women. There will be two or three Zoom rehearsals in the first half of May. Prospective cast members should have a webcam and a spot to sit at the computer without light behind them. If you are interested in a role, please contact the Program Chair at [JacquelineHaney@yahoo.com](mailto:JacquelineHaney@yahoo.com). A synopsis and script are available from the G&S Archive at [https://www.gsarchive.net/gilbert/plays/allow\\_me/allow\\_me.html](https://www.gsarchive.net/gilbert/plays/allow_me/allow_me.html). NEGASS will present this event live on Zoom on May 15, 2021 at 7:00 PM at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81718224024?pwd=N1cwTjNhTkI5d2NlMVRtbWExVUJWZz09>. It will be available on the NEGASS YouTube channel a few days after the performance.

## ❧ G&S NEWS ❧

The Connecticut Gilbert & Sullivan Society has been very active putting out programs to keep their membership active and involved. The latest is "My Favorite Scene. An Insider's Perspective." This will be an original virtual performance, featuring five of their cast members. Each person will present one of his or her favorite scenes from the G&S canon. They will describe the scenes, then discuss why it each interesting – the character, the lyrics, the music. They will then close with a video clip of the scene from one of the CG&SS performances.

The cast members will be Allan Church, Karla McClain, John Freedman, Tim Throckmorton, and

Kathleen Thompson. Judy Kerrigan will do the introduction and closing of the video.



The video can be viewed online or downloaded to computer, cell phone, or tablet. The premiere event will be available at 8:00pm on Saturday, April 24, 2021. After the premiere, the video will be available to watch at any time. A link to the video will be accessible on the "Events" tab at [facebook.com/ConnecticutGilbertAndSullivanSociety](https://facebook.com/ConnecticutGilbertAndSullivanSociety), or by going to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and entering ConnecticutGilbertAndSullivanSociety in the search box at the top of the page.

## ❧ A MOMENT IN TIME ❧

**An interview with Juliet Cunningham**

**by Martha Birnbaum**

**Q:** When did you join NEGASS and what was it like in the 70's?

**A:** I was at the initial meeting, hosted by Warren Colson, our first president, and his wife Ruth, and



attended by Leslie Moore, who was running weekly summer G & S sings on the Cape. I had come to Warren's attention because of my membership in the BU Savoyards, where I was an original member, both singing and playing piano. Warren used to come to our performances and take pictures.

After the initial planning, we obtained halls for meetings.

We would start our meetings by singing “Hail, Poetry.” At the request of Management, my husband, Matthew Oliva, and I began putting on Centennial G&S performances for NEGASS on a miniature scale. We started with *Pirates*, finished with *Ruddigore*, and filled in *The Zoo*, *Sorcerer*, and *Pinafore* along the way. This was the beginning of Janus Opera Productions.

**Q:** Tell us about your career

**A:** I sang *Barbarina* in Leverett House’s 1967 production of *Marriage of Figaro*. Tom Weber, long-time NEGASS member, was Figaro, and our directors later became famous – conductor/composer John Adams and director John Lithgow. The Harvard Crimson review said my *Barbarina* was “perfect.” Where can you go from there? In 1970, I sang *Iris*, Goddess of the Rainbow, in the Boston area premiere of Blitzstein’s *The Harpies* and staged a revival of Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti* on the same bill.

My husband Matt and I ran the Janus Opera for many years on Beacon Hill and for First Night-type organizations. Matt did all the costumes, hair, makeup, and sets, and sang tenor roles. I sang or played, and directed; NEGASSers Marion Leeds Carroll and others performed. We did G & S, Viennese operetta, and opera – I remember fondly *Fledermaus* and *Traviata*.

For several summers, I was Music Director for an opera workshop with NEGASSers Marion Leeds Carroll, Nancy Burstein, and costumer Janice Dallas, and sang and acted at Little Flags Theater with the illustrious playwright and director Maxine Klein. I spent several years as a Music Theater accompanist at Boston Conservatory.

**Q:** What are you doing now?

**A:** I am now Music Director at Hyde Park Presbyterian Church, and off-hour Cantor and Organist for two Catholic churches, as well as Music Director for NEGASSer Martha Birnbaum’s opera company, Cambridge Chamber Ensemble. A big accomplishment was reducing Handel’s orchestral score for our production of *Silla* to a four-piece Baroque chamber ensemble.

## ∞ CAST SPOTLIGHT ∞

**Ann Ferentz, President of NEGASS.**

**The Bray:** How did you get involved with G&S?

**Ann:** I first encountered G&S at the age of nine, when I found the LP of *Trial by Jury* in my father’s



**Ann Ferentz as Little Buttercup**

collection. I played it over and over again, singing and acting all the parts in my room. That did not go unnoticed and subsequent birthdays brought additions to the collection: *HMS Pinafore*, *Pirates of Penzance*, *The Mikado*, and *Iolanthe* (my favorite). In seventh grade, my class put on *Patience* as the school’s annual Gilbert & Sullivan. It was a girls’ school and I played a heavy dragoon. Only many years later did I learn that my music teacher was a Savoyard and active in G&S circles. Thank you, Mrs. Nieves!

G&S took a back seat for many years, as there was no active G&S society at college, but there was a small production of *Trial by Jury* in which I played a bridesmaid. Then came a long hiatus for graduate school in chemistry and postdoctoral research in structural biology.

At some point, I came to my senses and discovered NEGASS. I remember my first meeting, an annual meeting and fantasy day, at Ron and Janice Dallas’s house in Arlington. The meeting opened with everyone singing “Hail, poetry!” and I knew I had found my people.

It took some years before I got up the nerve to participate in stage productions. I found the Sudbury Savoyards, who welcome everyone into the chorus without audition. That was just what I needed to start out. I have now performed in eleven productions in Sudbury, as well as many NEGASS sings, and have been honored to have lead roles in many of them.

**The Bray:** What do you love about G&S?

**Ann:** What’s not to love with Gilbert’s clever librettos and Sullivan’s music complementing the lyrics so beautifully?

**The Bray:** What is your favorite G&S show?

**Ann:** *Iolanthe*: The overall beauty of the score! The nightmare song! The chorus of peers! And the Fairy Queen working her magic...

**The Bray: If someone wants to get started in performing or working in back of the house, what would be your recommendation?**

**Ann:** There is room for newcomers in all capacities, and theater people are naturally gregarious, so don't hesitate to ask about anything that arouses your curiosity. There is always a need for more helping hands backstage.

If being involved in a fully staged production seems like too much, come to a NEGASS sing and perhaps offer to sing a role, if that's of interest. Or sing chorus. Or just see what's going on. There is much to learn from seeing what other people do.

**The Bray: If G&S is your avocation, what is your occupation?**

**Ann:** I have worked in biopharma in the Boston area for many years, mostly as a writer, but more recently in regulatory affairs, serving as the bridge between the company and FDA or other regulatory agencies around the world. Music and theater provide a welcome balance in my life!

❧ EDITOR'S CORNER ❧

Last issue I introduced the idea that Gilbert had borrowed liberally from Dickens, and asked for feedback. G&S stalwart Ralph McPhail was kind enough to refer me to Jane W. Stedman's article *Boz and Bab* written for *The Dickensian* in 1962. From the article:

Gilbert took the familiar novels along on his travels; they were bedside books. In an unpublished diary for 1878, he mentions reading *David Copperfield* aloud in the evening. Boz therefore infiltrated the works of Bab. The relationship or influence falls into three main groups: (1) miscellaneous casual references to Dickens and/or his characters; (2) assimilation of Dickensian techniques and motifs, probably unconsciously, perhaps in some cases indirectly via the great common stock of Victorian comedy; and (3) full-length adaptation.

The libretti of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas refer to Dickens several times. For example in *Utopia Limited*, a pervasive social satire, King Paramount looks forward to the day when Utopia "may count among our intellectual chickens ... an Earl of Thackeray and p'r'aps a Duke of Dickens." "Narrative powers of Dickens and Thackeray" are also joined in the Colonel's recipe for a heavy dragoon in *Patience*. More significant is the last verse of a song originally intended for *Iolanthe*. Strephon, reforming Parliament with the help of the Fairy Queen, points out that

"crime is no exotic" and develops a modern hypothesis of the importance of early training.

Take a wretched thief through the City sneaking,  
Pocket-handkerchief ever, ever seeking.  
What is he but I, robbed of all my chances,  
Picking pockets by force of circumstances?  
I might be as bad, as unlucky, rather,  
If I'd only had Fagin for a father.

... In *The Pickwick Papers*, Bardell v. Pickwick furnishes an antecedent for Angelina v. Edwin in *Trial by Jury*. Sergeant Buzfuz' opening remarks:

that never, in the whole course of his professional experience never, from the very first moment of his applying himself to the study and practice of the law – had he approached a case with feelings of such deep emotion...

are neatly summed up by Gilbert's Counsel for the Plaintiff:

With a sense of deep emotion,  
I approach this painful case:  
For I never had a notion  
That a man could be so base.

Although both are fond of using legal characters, Dickens sees law as a complicating factor. Perverse and impersonal, its logic and procedures are inhuman and destructive, whereas Gilbert uses it for both complication (the Mikado's law against flirting) and solution (the Lord Chancellor's revision of fairy law), delighting in problems of legality and logic, solved syllogistically. Gilbert's characters are thus much more ready reasoners than are those of Dickens, who generally distrusts reason in favour of instinctive right feeling. Gilbert considers the law merely absurd; to Dickens it is often villainous.

There are a few more examples from this article that I will explore next issue. There are also many I found that she missed, and I'll get to those, too.

– Laurie Weissbrot

❧ We Have a Little List ❧

The editor wishes to thank those who contributed in any way to this issue of *The Trumpet Bray* including Ann Ferentz, Martha Birnbaum, Ralph McPhail, Dick Tecca, Ed Kerrigan, and the CG&SS websites. (Please forgive any omissions!)

## CALENDAR

### NEGASS Events

*Allow me to Explain*  
Gilbert's first "straight play"  
Zoom reading.  
For a role, contact  
[JacquelineHaney@yahoo.com](mailto:JacquelineHaney@yahoo.com)

Saturday evening  
May 15th, 2021  
7:00 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81718224024?pwd=N1cwTjNhTkI5d2NlMVRtbWExVUJWZz09>

NEGASS Annual Meeting  
and Fantasy Day

June date TBD

Zoom

### G&S Events

*International Gilbert &  
Sullivan Festival*

July 31 - August 8 2021  
August 8 - 22 2021  
September 7 - 11 2021

Buxton Opera House  
Royal Hall Harrogate  
Malvern Theatre

*Ruddigore*  
Connecticut G & S Society  
Middlefield, CT

October 2021

*The Pirates of Penzance*  
Valley Light Opera  
Northampton, MA

November 2021

*The Grand Duke*  
Sudbury Savoyards,  
Sudbury, MA

February 2022

*The Pirates of Penzance*  
Connecticut G & S Society  
Middlefield, CT

Spring 2022

*The Gondoliers*  
Troupers Light Opera  
Norwalk, CT

TBD