

THE
TRUMPET BRAY

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ENGLAND GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY



~ NEGASS Programs ~

Mikado sing-along!

by Laurie Weissbrot

NEGASS is excited to announce our next big event: a sing-along of *The Mikado* on Sunday, January 8, 2023 at 3:00PM at the Wesley Church, 98 North Maple Street, Hadley, MA 01035.

NEGASS Board member Dr. John Dreslin will accompany us on the piano. For more information, visit our website www.negass.org. We will cast the show as people arrive and express an interest in parts. To let us know you're coming, email programs@negass.org.



On October 1, NEGASS members Don Smith, Sue Flint, Martha



Birnbaum, and Ann Ferentz availed themselves of the discounted tickets to attend the **Arlington Friends of the Drama** performance of *Iolanthe*. It was enjoyable being in a group to watch the show.

Two pieces from other operettas were interpolated into the show: Phyllis (Sara DeLong) sang a beautiful rendition of "Why weep and wait" from *Haddon Hall* (Sullivan and Grundy) in Act 1, and Strephon sang "Fair moon" from *Pinafore* in Act 2 (*Why - Strephon has a perfectly good song in Act 2 that is usually cut: "Fold your flapping wings" - ed*).

Another unusual directorial choice was making Private Willis a loose-limbed person cavorting around the stage, whereas that character is normally physically stiff and inflexible.

There were other strong cast members, including A. J. Gaudreau as Strephon and Takaaki Matsumoto as

Private Willis, and the general audience enjoyed the show. For the G&S purists, some of the director's decisions detracted from their enjoyment of the production.

On November 19, another group of



NEGASS members took advantage of discounted tickets to attend the **Savoyards Light Opera Company** 4:00PM performance of *Pirates of Penzance* at the Corey Auditorium, 83 School St, Carlisle, MA. Tickets for NEGASS members were only \$16!! If you are a member, attending just a few of these events practically pays for your NEGASS membership, plus you get the pleasure of seeing these shows with other avid G&S fans; so **join now!**

During the coming year, NEGASS looks forward to more in-person programs, including group outings to operettas throughout New England, and operetta sings.

Please share your ideas for events with the board. Submit information about G&S happenings to the Trumpet Bray (editor@NEGASS.org). Join NEGASS or renew your membership to support these programs. Please email contact@NEGASS.org if you are unsure of your membership status. The NEGASS Website maintains a list of current events. Events are also posted on our Facebook page.

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GENERAL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS AND REVIEWS
Send to editor@negass.org

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



Future NEGASS events:

- Sunday, January 8, 2023 at 3:00PM *Mikado* sing-through at the Wesley Church, 98 North Maple Street, Hadley, MA 01035.
- March 4, 2023 group outing to Sudbury Savoyards Saturday matinee performance of *The Grand Duke*, followed by dinner.

~ NEGASS NEWS ~

Simsbury Light Opera Company just held auditions for Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer* and *Trial by Jury*.

Performances will be April 22, 23, 29 and 30, 2023 in Simsbury, CT. For information email sloco@sloco.org or visit their website <http://www.sloco.org>.



For the past two issues we have featured **Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society's (CGSS) *H.M.S. Pinafore***. Ralph Sherman, President of Simsbury Light Opera Company, attended their shows and submits the following review:

Conn. G&S Society performs *Pinafore*

The Connecticut Gilbert & Sullivan Society set sail in October with *H.M.S. Pinafore* and gave three audiences a pleasant passage to the land of G&S. Because the show was double cast (as usual), I made the voyage twice (the Saturday matinee and evening performances) so I could see both lineups. A G&S overture, if played reasonably well, gives me the happy feeling that I am about to see something wonderful – a G&S operetta. The 21-piece CGSS orchestra did not disappoint. Conducted by the company's new music director Karen Ciccone, the orchestra was well rehearsed and well balanced. (Karen took over from John Dreslin, who this year served as assistant music director and rehearsal accompanist.)

On the subject of balance, I would be remiss not to mention the typically superb work of Richard Ives as sound engineer. CGSS mics its vocalists, and I think of Richard as the cast member the audience doesn't see. As always the balance and sound quality were first-rate.

Probably anyone reading this review is aware of the persistent shortage of tenors in community theater (G&S or not). The tenor shortage reached a new level of challenge this year for CGSS as the starring role of Ralph was played by the artistic

director, Spencer Reese. He took the role because they were unable to find another tenor. Spencer is a fine singer who can be funny, serious, anxious, or despondent. I hope the audience understood that casting the artistic director in a lead role was a last resort, not the original plan.

Both casts gave us many nice details and moments that deserve mention here. Seeing both casts, I was treated to two versions of almost all principal roles. Aversa Sheldon as Buttercup was rough and flirtatious, while Shira Flowers added a little refinement – except for an occasional growl which she inserted appropriately.

Dave Henderson as usual was fun to see in the chorus and as a principal, Captain Corcoran. When Dave was a member of the crew, he reacted to the main action splendidly, rolling his eyes, laughing knowingly, and gesturing appropriately. As the captain, Dave brought the right amount of military bearing for the commander of a ship called “Pinafore.” His matinee counterpart, Jeffrey Schwartz, did a good job conveying the anguish of a father unhappy about his daughter’s choice of husband.

Cassandra Pease (chorus) brought a lilting presence that touched my heart when she showed her concern over Ralph’s threat to take his own life.

Stealing the show for many at the Saturday matinee was the unexpected performance of David Schancupp as Dick Deadeye. David is best known for comic baritone roles, but his low-key, deadpan delivery of Deadeye was hilariously funny.

Spencer and the chorus delivered a beautiful refrain in “A Maiden Fair to See,” which has some of the prettiest harmonies in the show. Likewise his duet (“Refrain, Audacious Tar”) with Natalie Wood (matinee Josephine) and Sarah Solari (evening Josephine) was exquisite. Natalie did a fine job of showing Josephine’s conflicting emotions in the buildup to the duet. Her evening counterpart, Sarah Solari, gave all her singing a memorable intensity that conveyed passion.

“A British Tar,” though but a trio, was as big as a house, with a wide foundation provided by the ample bass of Mark Callahan (Carpenter’s Mate). John Paul Hammond was a cheerful and energetic Boatswain’s Mate. I would have given this number more bravos if there had been a bit more choreography.

The two Hebes provided another case of two interpretations. Denise Schultzman (matinee) was

more spirited; Joan Toone (evening) was more proper.

Nathan Wise as the evening Deadeye played up the scary side of the role, hunched and creepy like an Igor in a 1930s horror film.

John Freedman as Sir Joseph (both casts) gave a solid impression of imperiousness. John is a nice guy for whom sneering does not come easily. I longed for him to be a tad more snobbish.

Pinafore is far from Sullivan’s best work, but ironically the “bell trio” is one of Sullivan’s best tunes, and it was performed admirably by both casts. Particularly entertaining was Natalie (as Josephine) galloping onto the stage for the second encore.

The CGSS set included a lovely harbor painting for a backdrop. It was lighted well for various moods. In the middle ground was a partial ship, separate from the backdrop, which gave a three-dimensional appearance.

Impressive lighting effects included a nice silhouette of Josephine in her cabin just before “The Hours Creep on Apace.” Also noteworthy was the lighting near the end of Act II, when Buttercup tells the audience that she’s about to turn everything upside down. The rest of the ensemble froze as the lighting on them dimmed; meanwhile Buttercup was brightly illuminated for her stage whisper (“But when is known the secret I have to tell”).

The venue, Valley Regional High School in Deep River, was pleasant, clean, and out of the way for many theatergoers. Good venues can be hard to find. (Pun intended.)

Costuming a show on a small budget also can be hard. Some costumes seemed less than well-conceived. The Boatswain Mate’s jacket looked more restaurantical than nautical; Sir Joseph’s costume brought General Washington to mind.

Both Captain Corcorans had their faces obscured by shadow from the huge hat they wore. It’s a tough problem with a large hat and overhead lights. (I know firsthand from recent experience with a major-general’s pith helmet.)

Three *Pinafore* essentials were missing from both performances: Ralph had no gun with which to convince us he was about to kill himself; Dick Deadeye was not thrown overboard with a splash; and there was no cat o’ nine tails in sight.

I also would have felt more “convinced” if I had seen Ralph and Josephine show a trifle more physical affection toward each other. They might

have taken each other's hands more frequently, for example.

Several musical numbers were taken at a tempo that seemed too slow, but *chacun a son gout*.

Two matters of group staging were somewhat disconcerting in both performances. Near the end of Act I, Ralph calls the crew on stage by singing, "Messmates, ahoy! Come here! Come here!" It's clear he's calling the men, but it was the women who entered first, followed by the men.

In Act II, Sir Joseph orders that Ralph be put in the ship's dungeon: "Then load him with chains and take him there at once!" It's a dramatic moment. But in both performances, everyone just stood there and waited for the orchestra to start the next number. We needed to see one or more sailors start immediately to lead Ralph away.

During all the musical numbers, CGSS projects supertitles on a small screen above the stage, so the audience can read the lyrics as they are sung. But the supertitles need to be proofread by someone in the company who knows Gilbert's words. Just one example: In Act II, Sir Joseph sings that he does not tolerate bad language. The supertitle said he hasn't any sympathy for "ill-bread [sic] taunts." Anyone for gluten-free?

I enjoyed *Pinafore* and look forward to next year's production of *Patience* by CGSS.

To give a behind-the-scenes look at the show just reviewed, here is an article sent by CGSS's publicity director, Richard Tecca:

What It Takes to Produce a G & S Show

Actors, Artistic Director and Story Line are the prominent subjects when promoting a Gilbert & Sullivan show. The "Back-Stage Talent" is often taken for granted. Yet it is a key foundation for it all. "Back Stage Talent" includes Set Construction, Sound Design, Lighting Design, Costumer, Hair and Make Up, Choreographer, SuperTitle Projectionist, Stage Manager, "Front of House" staff, and an up-beat effective "Rehearsal Program."

To get a feeling for back-stage talent, three people from CGSS offered to tell their stories. They are the Costumer, the Sound Designer, and an Actor in "Rehearsal Program" mode. All three were involved with *H.M.S. Pinafore*, our October 15 and 16 show in Deep River, Connecticut.



Pat Nurnberger lives in Woodbury CT. She is a professional costume designer with a degree from the Rhode Island School of Design, and a Master's Degree in Costume Design from the University of Connecticut. Initially working in fashion design in New York City, her career shifted to costume design for theatre. In 2015 CGSS became one of her first clients, and she has worked with the Society ever since. She is also Costumer for Monmouth University and a professional ballet company in Hartford.

Costume designs for *H.M.S. Pinafore* began when she started researching ideas. She discovered watercolor renderings at the Victoria and Albert Museum for one of the original productions of *Pinafore*. They were so lively and youthful that she was immediately attracted to them for Josephine and for the sisters, cousins and aunts. She reproduced them as exactly as possible. The design for the cousins called for a short jacket and mid-calf flared skirt decorated with colorful yellow stripes. She worked out designs based on this suit in natural cotton duck (very nautical) and variations of the jackets, with each costume decorated in different colored ribbons. Internet searching yielded European men's sailor costumes which were both period and appropriate. The ship's Officers wore elaborate, period naval uniforms.

Richard Ives is a Mechanical Engineer graduate from Carnegie Mellon and a mechanical design/project/quality engineer by trade. The founder of IDEAS Unlimited, he also provides sound engineer services to schools and



community organizations. He lives in Wallingford, CT, and provides professional audio support for his 23rd production with CGSS. Sound was a hobby for Ives until he realized a decade ago that schools needed more mics and sound equipment than they often had. This allows audiences to actually hear the children onstage and the kids to know their voices can be heard. "Give a 5-year old a wireless mic and tell them that's like Broadway, and they light up."

Ives's technical approach is very effective. He usually works for the entire production week to learn the show and identify the sources of noise in the theatre. He scans and programs the wireless mics worn by the actors to frequencies that are not affected by radio noise given off by air conditioning units, elevators and other sources. He keeps his

prices affordable, knowing schools and community groups often have tight budgets. He enjoys walking into each job fresh with a new sound challenge, hearing and seeing the results of the rehearsals, and knowing “the crew and cast are happy to see me.”



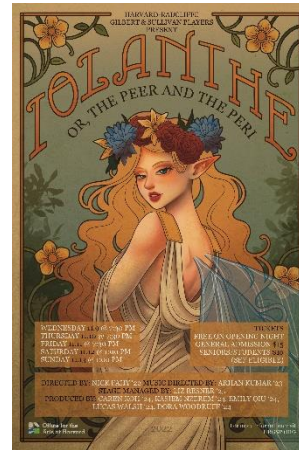
Natalie Wood lives in Hebron CT. *H.M.S. Pinafore* will be her fourth performance in a lead role with CGSS. Her appraisal of the CGSS Rehearsal Program is as follows:

“As a performer, taking part in a CGSS production is the perfect melting pot of talented actors, musicians, directors and supporting staff. Rehearsals are upbeat and fun with the right mix of respect of G & S tradition and creative innovation. It’s a privilege and excellent opportunity to immerse one’s self in the material and have a rollicking good time while doing it. When all members – cast and production team alike – tirelessly share their vast experience and zeal for the production, sparks fly, and I think the audience will really love the finished product. I hope all folks reading this will avail themselves of the opportunity to catch a performance – speaking for all involved, we look forward to providing you with a wonderful treat! Please join us!”

Concord Light Opera Company of Concord, NH now anticipates *Ruddigore* show dates of June 16, 17, and 18, 2023. There will be rehearsals December 6 and 13, then some Zoom rehearsals in January, February and March, then weekly in-person rehearsals resuming April 24, 2023 at 7:00PM at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 274 Pleasant St. Concord, NH. Anyone wishing to join the chorus is welcome. People are needed for ALL aspects of the production. For further information email clcnh@gmail.com.

The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Maine (GSSME) presented a review on Saturday, October 15, sung by an amalgamation of GSSME's best, of G&S selections with piano accompaniment. Approximately 60 people attended the one-hour show in the veteran venue in the Blue Hill, Maine Town Hall. During the third number, the handicapped elevator dinged and opened onto the stage, complete with one of our most beloved, goofy and distinguished past players and partner, to the wonder and delight of the audience. A magic moment, unplanned and unexpected. He was led to his seat amid great applause, and the show continued.

This was a warm-up to finally returning to the full stage with the well-loved *Pirates of Penzance* in March 2023 (exact date still to be determined.) We hope some of you folks from the south will seek out a "destination vacation" on Mount Desert Island and come see *Pirates* in Ellsworth Maine, in March.



We just learned that the **Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert and Sullivan Players** put on a full production of *Iolanthe* at the Agassiz Theater in Cambridge, MA on November 9th through 13th. They had a cast of 16 principals and chorus, accompanied by a 25 piece orchestra. We look forward to showcasing their future performances.

The Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert and Sullivan Players are an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit student theater group, dedicated to performing comic operas. HRG&SP, managed by a [Board of Directors](#) made up of ten to fifteen undergraduates, is primarily supported by their wide circle of [patrons](#) throughout the Boston area.

While they are an undergraduate organization, their productions are open to anyone qualified by audition, and their [casts](#), [orchestras](#), and [crews](#) frequently include students in Harvard’s graduate and professional schools, students from other universities and conservatories, the occasional alum, and members of the Boston community in general. Founded in 1956, they are recognized as one of New England’s leading Gilbert and Sullivan troupes.

Each year, they mount two full productions of works from the Gilbert & Sullivan canon (excluding *The Grand Duke* and, of course, *Thespis*). They also host a Victorian Ball each spring and offer special social events for the community. Visit their website: <https://hrfsp.org/> for more information.

The Methuen Young People’s Theatre staged a very successful performance of *H.M.S. Pinafore* this past September. More importantly, however, they were back to performing a full scale G&S operetta after a two-year hiatus brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw them produce a socially distant video production of *Trial By Jury* and last summer an in-person but non-singing production of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. This marked the first time in the company’s 37 year

history that they had not performed a work by Gilbert and Sullivan.

Fortunately, those restrictions are behind them and they are both relieved and happy once again to be bringing the wonderful music of Gilbert and Sullivan to the young people of the Merrimack Valley and beyond.



The company, which was formed in 1986, rehearses, performs, and operates under the auspices of the historic Methuen Memorial Music Hall. The Music Hall, a work of art in and of itself, is home to 'The Great Organ' of the Boston Music Hall. It

is a marvelous venue for any type of music, but is especially well-suited to the singing of Gilbert and Sullivan.

This year's production featured a cast of 25 young performers from grades four through high school hailing from communities in Massachusetts and nearby New Hampshire, including places as distant as Marlborough and Quincy Massachusetts. Rehearsals were held Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings beginning in June and running throughout the summer, with four performances for enthusiastic audiences occurring the weekend after Labor Day. As with most MYPT productions, they double cast the majority of the principal parts, and four performances gives each young "star" a chance to play the part twice.

MYPT directors Joe Gori and Ben Hellman, along with Music Director Janet Glasser, were thrilled with the results of this year's show and are already preparing for MYPT's 38th season production of *The Pirates of Penzance*, with auditions in early June 2023.

For any questions or more information regarding the MYPT Gilbert and Sullivan program, please contact us at methuenyoungpeoplestheatre@gmail.com

Yes, we know it isn't

NEGASS tech support guru and outreach director Martha Birnbaum, in her capacity as Executive Director of the Cambridge Chamber Ensemble, announces the following:

CCE CAMBRIDGE CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

Join Us For Singing and Sipping at the Lilypad!
135 Cambridge St., Inman Square, Cambridge, MA



You, the audience, sings The Messiah choruses and the carols!

The Messiah
December 9th, 2022 at 7:30 pm
[Download the Choruses!](#)

Carols of the Season
December 17, at 7:30 pm, 2022
Join in the Carols
[Buy Tickets!](#)

∞ G&S NEWS ∞

The 29th International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival will take place exclusively in Buxton Opera House and the adjoining Pavilion Arts Centre from Saturday, 29 July to Saturday, 12th August, 2023.

In 2023 it will be thirty years since we first staged the Festival in the Buxton Opera House. Yesterday, we formally agreed to take the Festival lock, stock and barrel back to this beautiful, welcoming town again.

This decision has not been taken lightly. Sadly, only four days ago, we were finally presented with Harrogate Convention Centre's new costings for next year, which would see our overall costs more than double, making the Festival in Harrogate impossible to stage. With none of the promised compromises forthcoming, we entered into discussions with Buxton Opera House, who pulled out every stop to accommodate the festival, ensuring a sustainable future for this important event.

We are immensely sorry to leave so many fantastic friends in Harrogate and the magnificent Royal Hall theatre.

Buxton is, and always will be, the spiritual home of the International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival. We are

excited to return and look forward to seeing everyone there next year.

We now have much work to do to bring you the detailed programme as soon as possible. We expect this will be mailed to our members by the first week in November at the latest.

- Janet Smith, Int'l G&S Festival

The 29TH International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival will take place in August 2023, and the Savoynet show will be *Ruddigore* on Thursday August 17, 2023 with the following production crew:

Stage Director: Mitch Gillett

Musical Director: Eric Peterson

Co-Producers: Philip Barton, Marisa Green

On behalf of the Production Team, we are pleased to announce principal auditions and expressions of interest for the ensemble. Principals will rehearse every day in Buxton from Wednesday, August 2, through Wednesday, August 9. Ensemble will rehearse Aug. 3 through 9.

PRINCIPALS:

<https://forms.gle/KaqdTKmvtCkkKBeDA>

To audition, please fill out the form above, review the audition materials below, and upload your audition video submissions to YouTube or Google Drive. You may audition for as many characters as you would like, and you can do separate videos for each musical and dialogue selection or combine them - whatever works best. (Note: you only need to submit materials for two characters, even if auditioning for more roles). We will need your response and materials by Saturday, December 3, 2022. Audition materials can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/SPGRuddigore2023>

ENSEMBLE:

<https://forms.gle/iL3Sb8MnBeoEWodJA>

To be considered, please fill out the form above. We will need your response by Saturday, December 3, 2022. There is no formal audition for the ensemble, but we may have to limit participation due to space limitations.

- Mitchell Gillett, Stage Director

- Eric Peterson, Musical Director

English National Opera has updated *Yeomen of the Guard* to the 1950s, and anyone reading this who is a member of Savoynet knows that this has generated more buzz than any story of the last few years. Fairfax is to be hanged as a Soviet spy. The *Ruddigore* "Matter Trio" has replaced "Doleful, doleful" in Act 2. The "critical mass" is active, with praise for the singing/acting quality to invective

against updating in general, re-writing Gilbert, how to reconcile the block and the headsman with hanging, is ENO trying to be D'Oyly Carte, no ENO has a history of updating operas and operettas and changing venues, they play in the enormous Coliseum rather than the traditional small opera houses, ENO caters to a general audience rather than G&S stuck-in-amber loyalists, don't try to be cleverer than Gilbert because you can't, any G&S even bad G&S is better than no G&S, etc., etc., etc.

✧ EDITOR'S CORNER ✧

As this issue is published, I have just passed my 75th birthday. Over the past several months we have lost many of our old G&S friends. Some, like Ian Smith, Bob Cumming, Barry Hilton, Roy and Diana Schatz, were instrumental in bringing the operettas to thousands of people in their regions, countries, or even the world. Others were "only" singers we performed with or saw on stage, the two most recent for me personally being Vikki Willoughby and Nancy Stewart. I guess part of my maudlin attitude is the realization that I could be next.

You may have noticed that I have been spotlighting youth and college performing groups. In June I devoted the entire Editor's Corner to the Chattanooga Southeast Homeschool Gilbert & Sullivan Players and their production of *The Grand Duke*. In this issue I ran articles on the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert and Sullivan Players and the Methuen Young Peoples Theatre.

It is heartening to know that the comic operas of William Schwenk Gilbert and Sir Arthur Seymour Sullivan will continue long past the demise of the stalwarts of my generation who labored so hard to keep the tradition alive.

No, not all the young people currently involved in these productions will go on to produce, direct, act in, sing in, create costumes for, build sets for, or otherwise support the genre, but some will, and I salute them.

We will always have a song to sing, O!

- Laurie Weissbrot

✧ We Have a Little List ✧

The editor wishes to thank those who contributed to this issue of *The Trumpet Bray* including Ann Ferentz, Marianne Orlando, Ralph Sherman, Martha Birnbaum, Elizabeth White, Joe Gori, Richard Tecca, Jon Coffin, and Donald Bilodeau.

(Please forgive any omissions!)

❧ CALENDAR ❧

NEGASS Events

The Mikado
Sing-through

Sunday, January 8, 2023
at 3:00PM

98 North Maple Street
Hadley, MA 01035

The Grand Duke
Group outing to Sudbury Savoyards
show followed by dinner

Saturday, March 4, 2023
Matinee

Lincoln-Sudbury Regional HS
Sudbury MA

G&S Events

Pirates of Penzance
Gilbert & Sullivan Society of ME

Early March 2023

Grand Theater
165 Main Street
Ellsworth Maine

The Grand Duke
Sudbury Savoyards
Sudbury, MA

February 24 - 26, 2023
March 3 & 4, 2023

Lincoln-Sudbury Regional HS
Sudbury, MA

Trial by Jury and The Sorcerer
Simsbury Light Opera Company
Simsbury, CT

April 22-30, 2023

Henry James Memorial School
Simsbury CT

Ruddigore
Concord Light Opera Company

June 16, 17, and 18, 2023

Unitarian Universalist Church
274 Pleasant St.
Concord, NH

GWO sing-through

2023

Worcester, MA