



~ NEGASS Programs ~

Ruddigore Sing-through

NEGASS hosted a sing-through of *Ruddigore* on October 22, 2023 at the Christ Lutheran Church in Natick, MA. Approximately 30 members attended the event, which NEGASS Board member John Dreslin ably accompanied on the piano. The attendees felt it was a great success! A few new folks came to sing. Everyone had a wonderful time. It was good to see roles filled by friends old and new. We're all looking forward to the next sing-through, *HMS Pinafore*.

Iolanthe Outing

Six NEGASS members attended VLO's *Iolanthe*. See the review below under NEGASS News. Cast members were grateful for the NEGASS support of their efforts.

Future NEGASS events

NEGASS continues to sponsor the ever-popular operetta sings, starting with *Pinafore* on January 21, 2024 at the Wesley Methodist Church in Hadley, MA, and discounted group outings to G&S productions for members.

To request a lead role in the just-for-fun sing-through of *Pinafore*, email to elainebcrane@gmail.com by December 30. Preference will be given to NEGASS members (join today!), but all are encouraged to apply. We'll be casting leads (splitting roles by act when needed) as well as covers. Everyone is welcome to sing in the chorus. Bring your score or borrow one of ours. Admission is free! Snacks provided!

Our next outing will be on Sunday, February 25th 2024 to the Sudbury Savoyards' production of *Princess Ida*. In a blatant case of type-casting, NEGASS Treasurer Brad Amidon will play the disagreeable man, King Gama!

NEGASS's 50th anniversary is fast approaching, and your Board is looking for ideas to help celebrate and people willing to do the work to bring about the celebration. Volunteer and/or email your ideas to programs@negass.org.

NEGASS Library

In August we announced the appointment of Matt Tragert as NEGASS Librarian and the moving of about 50 boxes of scores, libretti and other material to a dry storage location at his residence. Unfortunately that space has become unavailable, so we are once more in search of a NEGASS member who would like to take on the duties and responsibilities of caring for these items. Please contact a NEGASS Board member if you would like to volunteer.

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~ NEGASS NEWS ~

Concord Light Opera Company of Concord, NH performed *Ruddigore* September 30 and October 1, 2023. Here is your Trumpet Bray editor as evil Sir Despard Murgatroyd, bad baronet of *Ruddigore*.



The enthusiastic cast mostly comprised people who had never even heard of Gilbert or Sullivan. Still, the



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GENERAL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS AND REVIEWS

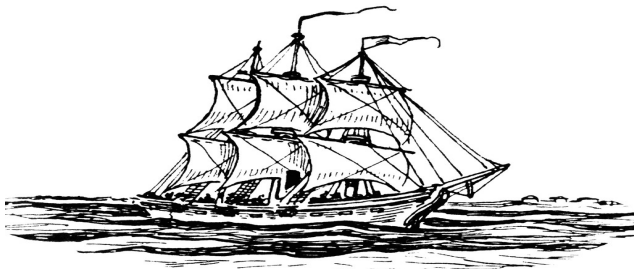
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DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MATERIAL: 15th of the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November.



audience enjoyed a spirited show with piano accompaniment and minimal set.



And here is your editor as Despard Murgatroyd, devoted husband, penny reader, ruler of a national school, and all-around good guy!



The Sudbury Savoyards are planning a winter 2024 production of *Princess Ida*, Gilbert & Sullivan's eighth operatic collaboration, at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, Sudbury, MA

PERFORMANCES:

Saturday, February 24, 2024 at 1:30 and 7:30 PM
 Sunday, February 25 at 1:30 PM
 Friday, March 1 at 7:30 PM
 Saturday, March 2 at 1:30 and 7:30 PM

All 1:30 PM matinees offer a tour of the set following the show.

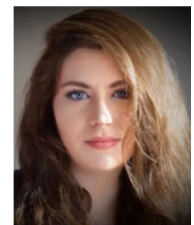
CAST

Princess Ida	Maria Bozich & Sydney Pérez
King Hildebrand	Matt Tragert
Hilarion	Michael Gonzalez
King Gama	Brad Amidon
Florian	David Smyth
Cyril	Thai Johnson
Lady Blanche	Sara DeLong
Lady Psyche	Danielle Shevchenko
Melissa	Sara Mitnik
Arac	Blair Eig
Guron	Matt Garber
Scynthius	Santo Mammone
Sacharissa	Eliza Howells
Chloe	Kai Fay
Ada	Mei Lin Po



Princess Ida Stage Director, Rebecca Graber is a lifelong fan of Gilbert and Sullivan. She has previously directed *Iolanthe*, *The Mikado*, *Utopia Ltd.*, and *H.M.S. Pinafore* with the MIT Gilbert and Sullivan players, and been onstage or building the stage for several others.

Princess Ida Music Director, Stephanie Beatrice currently serves as Music Director of the Cambridge Chamber Ensemble and is the newly appointed Music Director of the Choral/Orchestral Ensemble - Calliope.





The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Maine, bringing the works of Gilbert & Sullivan to Downeast Maine since 1976, will perform *The Sorcerer* at The Grand, 165 Main Street, Ellsworth ME March 8-10 & 15-17, 2024.

This satire on polite English society in the vein of *The Importance of Being Ernest* and *Downton Abbey* will delight the whole family!

Meet the Cast!

Sir Marmaduke Pointdextre:	Roland Dube
Alexis:	Rogan Winch
Dr. Daly:	Pepin Mittelhauser
Notary:	Joe Marshall
John Wellington Wells:	Aidan Pasha
Lady Sangazure:	Debbra Hangge
Aline:	Celeste Mittelhauser
Ms. Partlet:	Sara Phillips
Constance:	Alexandria Winch

Want to sing in the chorus? No audition needed! Just email info@gilbertsullivanmaine.org to sign up. Rehearsals will be at The Moore Center (125 State Street, Ellsworth) on Tuesdays (7-9 pm), Saturdays (1-5 pm), and Sundays (2-5 pm) starting January 2nd.

On a somber note, long-time Sudbury Savoyard and NEGASS member Tony Parkes, one of the most knowledgeable G&S scholars in all of New England, has recently been diagnosed with a grade 4 glioblastoma. He will be undergoing chemo and radiation therapy in the coming weeks, but looks forward to gathering with friends for food, drink, and song on December 9th at 1 PM at the home of Jane Graham and Graham Daley in Sudbury (address to be shared later on Facebook). He would love to hear from NEGASS friends (text 978-670-9333). For medical updates follow <https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/tonyparkes>

≈ REVIEWS ≈

On October 28, the **Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society** opened their production of *Patience* with a matinee featuring the “Comique” Cast (whereas the “Savoy” Cast would be featured later that evening.) The lobby displays of raffle items, company information, and cheerful staff set a tone of excitement to the event from the start. In this age of digital media and QR codes, the quality paper program was welcome, and laid out very well.

The overture, under the baton of Maestro John Dreslin (NEGASS Board member) set the tone beautifully as the fine orchestra played in a spirited and tuneful manner. It is always a treat to experience a show with a full orchestra, and the excellence of the playing made the experience all the richer.

The curtain opened to reveal a beautiful backdrop of a garden with simple, elegant arches standing in front of it on either side, and some added stone benches. The set never changed, but it was so lovely (and functionally complete) that it felt quite sufficient to frame the entire show.

The ladies’ chorus entered, wearing gowns of mixed period fashion in pastel colors. With the exception of a bit of anachronism in the wearing of modern eyeglasses and some inconsistent hair styling, the look was generally effective. There was a typical mix of ages and abilities in the chorus, with some lovely acting by a few standouts, and the overall look and sound was quite pleasing.

The dragoons took their charge comically, with a very entertaining kick line in the middle of their opening number. Though one may have preferred the savvier dancers to be in the middle, the majority of the platoon discharged their duty with aplomb, and delivered a very funny re-worked verse in the “If you want a receipt” number that had the audience in stitches.

The lead cast did an admirable job in their roles and bespoke a group of seasoned veterans. Colonel Calverley (John Freedman) had a great accent and was lots of fun to watch in his appropriately blustery role. The Duke of Dunstable (Jeff Schwartz) handled his role deftly. Though it seemed a touch of sickness compromised his voice, still he soldiered on and performed engagingly. Ladies Angela (Rebecca McFarland), Saphir (Elizabeth Boucher) and Ella (Denise Schultzman) lent a touch of subdued elegance, while Lady Jane (Amber Woodward) gave a broadly boisterous presentation, leaving the scenery well-chewed and the airwaves ringing. Grosvenor (David Henderson) gave a solid performance, delivering his songs with a lovely voice. His delivery of the “Amazon Prime Young Man” in the Magnet and Churn song was very funny.

The two standouts of the “Comique” cast production were Ephraim Mosher (Bunthorne) and Grace Murphy (Patience), who played their roles beautifully and with vocal and dramatic excellence. Mr. Mosher, in his blue velvet costume, looked and acted the part of the droopy poet to perfection. His voice was well suited to the role, tuneful and sporting excellent diction. His mannerisms were droll, funny, and

delightfully entertaining. When he came on stage, you looked forward to his every move and word. Ms. Murphy performed the titular role with a charming Yorkshire accent that immediately set her apart and charmed the audience. Her crystalline voice was pure, beautiful, and exactly on pitch. The early music quality of her singing lent yet another “not like everyone else” layer to a sweet, lovable, and altogether lovely *Patience*. Bravi to both of these outstanding singing actors.

Supertitles are a mixed blessing. They do call attention to themselves and away from the stage action. When the diction is unclear, it allows the audience to understand what’s being sung, but when the diction is well produced, it’s better to simply watch and listen, rather than reading. Also, when the supertitles are off by a slide or two (which happened several times during the show) it becomes a distraction, to see when they will get back in sync, which pulls the audience out of the story.

The sound design of the show by Richard Ives was excellent – everyone was heard well, the mics were invisible, and there was no feedback or distortion. It served the story very well and was really quite impressive.

Many of the lighting effects of the production were truly beautiful. Two memorable moments were the wash of color during “Hey Willow Waly-O” and “Love is a Plaintive Song,” both moments enhanced by the lovely lighting choices.

One final special treat was the orchestra playing “walk out” music after the bows. It was lovely to feature their playing once again, and leave us with those tunes ringing in our ears.



Cheers to CTG&S for bringing traditional G&S productions to the stage in all their intended glory. The music, drama, sets, costumes, lighting and all the other technical aspects, combined with the singing, dancing and acting of the dedicated folks onstage, beautifully accompanied by a full orchestra, all made for a feast for the senses and a grand feeling of enjoyment.

- Elaine Crane

Last minute obstacles did not stop **Valley Light Opera** from successfully presenting a delightful rendering of *Iolanthe* at the Academy of Music in Northampton, MA, over the first two weekends of November. I attended the Friday evening performance during the second weekend, on November 10. Things got underway with a masterful rendering of what has to be one of the best overtures in the repertoire, one written by Sullivan himself, under the baton of Maestro and fellow NEGASS Board Member Aldo Fabrizi. He was handicapped by the absence of his string bass player, and also of his regular first flute. To compensate, he had one of the two cellists play the bass part, whenever she could in the proper bass octave. He was also fortunate enough to find a substitute flautist who was able to sight read the part to perfection. The overture was followed by a complete blackout of the stage and pit as, in silence, first one fairy and then another and another appeared flitting across the stage in the darkness, illuminated only by the LED lights on their costumes and glow stick wands. This was an absolutely magical effect. Gradually the lights came up as the introductory music commenced and the full chorus of fairies appeared. Led by the trio of Donna Griffin, Heather Williams, and Cassidy Pawul they did a very sprightly version of the opening chorus, complete with



appropriate stomping in the final iteration. This led into the introduction of the Queen of the Fairies who was portrayed magnificently by the imposing Kathy Blaisdell. *Iolanthe* was summoned out of a make-believe waterfall. The regularly scheduled Buff Neill did the part on this second weekend; however, she was not feeling well the opening weekend. Fortunately, VLO was able to find a replacement in Aversa Sheldon, who has performed featured roles with both Simsbury Light Opera and Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society. She undertook the role after just one rehearsal, mainly for blocking and dialogue, and by all reports did an excellent job. Another NEGASS Board Member, Brad Amidon presently appeared as an elfin Strephon. Following the departure of the fairies, who should appear but yet another NEGASS Board Member, Elaine Crane (by this point they had used up all the available NEGASS Board Members!). Elaine, as always, was thoroughly delightful as Phyllis. I



especially loved her cadenza in the Act 1 finale, when she accuses Strephon of being untrue.

I always remark that *Iolanthe* does not really start until the famous March of the Peers. I have usually seen this number presented as a stately procession, but in this case, the Peers basically swarmed on from several different directions. They were joined in the chorus by Lords Tolloller (Charlie Berrios) and Mountarat (Matt Roehrig), so they had a very robust sound and made an even dozen which enabled some creative formation work. Mr. Berrios, who has appeared with VLO previously, and also with SLOCO, has a magnificent tenor voice. His only drawback is he has a very noticeable Spanish accent, which gets in the way of some of his dialogues. It was especially noticeable in the Act two dialogue with Mountarat. Even though I am very familiar with this dialogue, I still found it hard to follow. Still, he has great stage presence and seems like a most agreeable fellow. Following the March of the Peers, veteran performer Thom Griffin made his entrance as the Lord Chancellor. He did excellent work throughout the show. His diction was precise, a must in that role, and only once was he completely drowned out in the fast final section of the second act's Nightmare Song. With all the major characters introduced, save one, the rest of the first act proceeded smoothly. The multi-sectioned finale was interrupted twice for applause, and involved intricate chorus formations and movement. I especially enjoyed the very audible "k" sounds during the "dark, park, ark" section at the beginning of the finale, not only by the principals, but also by the male chorus.

Act two opened with Robin Parsons presenting Private Willis's solo, "When All Night Long." He made the most of his limited part. He, Elaine, Matt,



and Charlie formed an excellent quartet in the somewhat tricky but well staged number, "Though P'rhaps I May Incur Your Blame." I felt that more could have been done with trio "He Who Shies at Such a Prize," which is often encored, but not in this production. Also, though Buff Neill gave an excellent performance, she did not quite look young enough to be mistaken for a girl of seventeen, which of course is a crucial plot point.

But this is quibbling, as all in all this was an excellent show. A lot of the credit goes to Ted Blaisdell, who served this year as Stage Director, and choreographer Mary Ann Holmes, as well as to Maestro Fabrizi. I especially loved the costuming, which was headed up by Laura Green and Phyllis Jordan. Incorporating the LED lights into the fairy costumes provided an extra touch of magic. Set design was by TR Rosenberg, and

lighting design by Hilary Lang. One drawback was the front illumination in the second act that had the unfortunate effect of casting giant shadows on the backdrop of the houses of parliament. Mary Elmer undertook the responsibilities of producer this year and Katelyn Geary was stage manager. Congratulations all around to the production team, musicians, and cast members for providing such an enjoyable evening.

- John E. Dreslin

∞ In Memorium ∞



It is with great sadness that we at Connecticut Gilbert & Sullivan Society say goodbye to our dear friend Leslie Merwin, who passed away July 27 after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

Leslie had been our accompanist starting in 2013 and was an adored and a cherished member of our extended CG&SS family.

She was a child prodigy who studied at some of New York City's most prestigious performing arts schools, including The Professional Children's School, Mannes School of Music, and The Juilliard School. She received a Fulbright Scholarship, which allowed her to attend the École Normale de Musique de Paris. She delighted concertgoers with performances at Carnegie Hall and accompanied multiple choral societies and symphony orchestras. Leslie shared her musical talent within the theater community, including TheatreWorks in New Milford, the CT Gilbert & Sullivan Society, and the Simsbury Light Opera Company. In one of her final performances, she conducted the Middlesex Hospital Vocal Chords choral group in a 9/11 tribute at the Bushnell Theatre in Hartford.

Providing music therapy in nursing homes inspired a dedication to senior healthcare, and Leslie earned a nursing degree at Naugatuck Valley Community College in 1997. Leslie spent the latter half of her life bringing her nursing skills to seniors, eventually directing nursing services at facilities throughout Connecticut and in Burlington, VT.

Beyond her incomparable skills and her accomplishments as a pianist, Leslie was a warm and genuinely kind person. She was a joy to all who knew her; fun to be around and a true pleasure to work with.

You can find Leslie's obituary at <https://www.neilanfuneralhome.com/.../Leslie-Sixfin...> where you may learn and celebrate so much more the life and passions of this wonderful and extraordinary person.

≈ G&S NEWS ≈

Sam Silvers of New York City sends the following:

I always look forward to the November newsletter from the [International G&S] Festival, which also details an upcoming Festival cruise to the Mekong Delta and a New Year's gala weekend at Grim's Dyke.

The professional shows next summer will be the first four extant G&S operas (*Trial*, *Sorcerer*, *Pinafore*, and *Pirates*), and the last G&S hit, *The Gondoliers*. I love Charles Court and look forward to seeing their *Sorcerer*.

In addition to SavoyNet's *Mikado*, the competing shows will be Philadelphia's Savoy Company (*Grand Duke*), Bus Pass (*Patience*), Edinburgh G&S (*Gondoliers*), Peak (*Iolanthe*), and Grosvenor (*Yeomen*). Good to see Grosvenor back on the main stage!

The Festival is again in Buxton and only two weeks long (15 nights). This seems to be the post-COVID normal. The newsletter does not give any details of the Fringe events, so TBA.

Sam



The SavoyNet Performing group has sent out audition information for *The Mikado*. If you plan to audition, better act fast, as the deadline for submitting material is December 11, 2023. Guidelines for audition material are at

<https://tinyurl.com/SPGMikado2024Auditions> and the form is at <https://tinyurl.com/SPGMikado2024Principals>

If you have questions or problems preparing your audition material, please contact co-producer Marisa Green (marisa.green@gmail.com), stage director Robert Ray (robertray@mac.com), or music director John Ferguson (johnferguson@scotch.vic.edu.au).

≈ EDITOR'S CORNER ≈

Once again I find myself gushing over the many opportunities NEGASS offers its members to sing in G&S operetta events, and feeling sorry for those who do not avail themselves of the fun. The recent sing-through of *Ruddigore* was wonderful, and I can hardly wait for *Pinafore* in January. We had some stellar performances, as well as lesser efforts where, nonetheless, the singers and the audience enjoyed themselves. My opportunities to perform in a full show are waning, but these events satisfy my needs to stay connected to the G&S world.



Also in this issue we mention next summer's Buxton festival, which includes the SavoyNet Performing Group's *Mikado*. I have made two trips to the Festival, and was a peer in *Iolanthe* and the Carpenter's Mate in *Pinafore*. Both were experiences of a lifetime. If you've never been, you owe it to yourself to make the effort. You can't imagine what a joy it is to meet knowledgeable G&S people everywhere you go in a quaint English town. And the friendships you make last the rest of your life.



- 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, John Dreslin, Sam Silvers, Ed Kerrigan, and Elaine Crane.

(Please forgive any omissions!)

Want to see your name here? Send me something!

≈ CALENDAR ≈

NEGASS Events

Pinafore
NEGASS Read-thru

Jan 21st 2024
2:00 PM

Wesley Methodist Church
98 North Maple Street
Hadley, MA 01035

Group outing to
Sudbury Savoyards' *Princess Ida*

Feb 25th 2024
1:30 PM

Lincoln-Sudbury Regional HS
Sudbury, MA

G&S Events

Gathering with
Tony Parkes

December 9, 2023 1:00PM

Home of
Jane Graham & Graham Daley
(see Facebook event)

Princess Ida
Sudbury Savoyards

Feb 24, 2024 1:30 & 7:30PM
Feb 25, 2024 1:30PM
March 1, 2024 7:30PM
March 2, 2024 1:30 & 7:30PM

Lincoln-Sudbury
Regional High School
Sudbury, MA

The Sorcerer
Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Maine

March 8-10, 2024
March 15-17, 2024

The Grand
165 Main Street
Ellsworth ME

30th International
Gilbert and Sullivan Festival

July 27 - August 10, 2024

Buxton Opera House
Water Street
Buxton UK