THE TRUMPET BRAY
A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ENGLAND GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY

NEGASS Programs

From the President

50 years and still singing choruses in public…

In October 1976, the first issue of The Trumpet Bray announced the formation of the New England Gilbert & Sullivan Society and invited readers to become charter members. Fifty years later, we find ourselves still aglow with happiness from the glorious NEGASS 50th anniversary sing-out in Concord, MA. Those of you who were able to attend know that it was 48 hours packed with song and merriment and opportunities to meet and sing with G&S enthusiasts from all corners of the United States and all walks of life. An estimated 250 people came and went over the weekend, over 70 singers sang roles, five accompanists covered 12 operettas, 12 conductors kept us together, and 28 able instrumentalists supported a rollicking rendition of *The Gondoliers* on Saturday night. We ended with *Pirates of Penzance* and a reprise of "Hail, Poetry!" that shook the rafters and made this writer tear up a bit, truth to tell.

Immense gratitude to everyone behind the scenes who made the weekend possible: the planning committee, food coordinators, set-up and clean-up crews, registration volunteers, and others who stepped in wherever and whenever they saw a need.

Needless to say, NEGASS leadership doesn't have another big event planned any time soon. But we are looking forward to an outing to the **Maenad Theatre Troupe's** *HMS Pinafore* sing- and read-thru in November (role requests due by October 21st below). Hope to see you then!

- Ann Ferentz

Upcoming NEGASS Events

♫**Outing to *HMS Pinafore* Sing – November 18, Stoughton, MA**

A NEGASS group will be attending the **Maenad Theatre Troupe's** sing of *HMS Pinafore* at 6:00 PM at the Trinity Episcopal Church, 414 Sumner Street in Stoughton, MA. NEGASS board member Lee Ellis is the founder and artistic director of the Maenads. Depending upon the interests of participants, we may go out before or after the sing-through. Email **programs@negass.org** to sign up for the outing! If you are interested in a role, please submit this role request form to the Maenads by October 21st: https://forms.gle/zDhKXcy5QtbLJJF17. The troupe is open to non-traditional casting, so all are welcome to request any role they desire!

♫**Outing to Sudbury Savoyards *Pirates of Penzance*, MA**

A NEGASS group will attend **Sudbury Savoyards** production of ***The Pirates of Penzance*** at the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, 390 Lincoln Road, Sudbury, MA 01776 in late February, 2027. We will have more details in the December issue of The Trumpet Bray.

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THE TRUMPET BRAY
A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ENGLAND GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY

Volume 51 No. 2 **October 2026**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Laurence Weissbrot **editor@negass.org**

ORGANIZATIONAL STAFF
Brad Amidon, membership coordinator
Martha Birnbaum, technical support & member outreach
Elaine Crane, web mistress
Ann Ferentz, Librarian **librarian@negass.org**

NEGASS BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Ann Ferentz, president
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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**

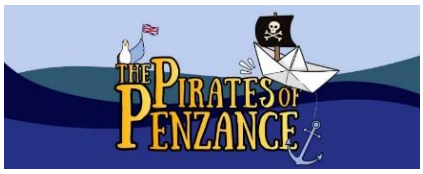
NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS AND REVIEWS
Send to **editor@negass.org**

MEMBERSHIP:
Annual NEGASS membership dues are $25.00
Please join NEGASS online at **www.negass.org**

THE TRUMPET BRAY: Members receive the Bray as a PDF email attachment. All past editions, and the current one, are available at **www.negass.org**

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

NEGASS NEWS



Sudbury Savoyards will hold auditions for **named roles in** *The Pirates of Penzance!* on Wednesday, October 14, 7-10 PM and Friday, October 16, 6:30-10 PM. Callbacks (if needed) will be Saturday, October 17, beginning at 2:00 PM by appointment. We will contact individuals directly with their time slot.

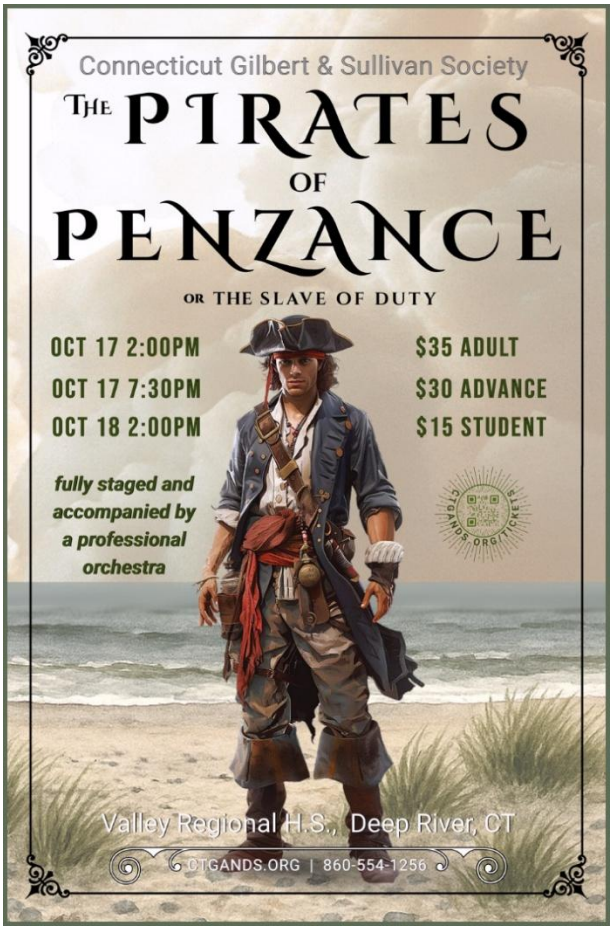
Location for Auditions:

First Baptist Church - Sudbury
162 Landham Road
Sudbury, MA

Performances are at the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School on
Sat, February 20, 2027 1:30 PM & 7:30 PM
Sunday, February 21, 2027 1:30 PM
Friday, February 26, 2027 7:30 PM
Sat, Feb 27, 2027 1:30 PM & 7:30 PM

Interested? Please click for **More Info**.

The **Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society** will perform *Pirates of Penzance* in Deep River, Connecticut on October 17th and 18th.



Simsbury Light Opera Company is pleased to announce auditions for our 2027 production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Gondoliers*.

Audition Dates
Sunday, November 15, 2026 — 6:00–9:00 PM
Tuesday, November 17, 2026 — 7:00–9:00 PM

Location
SLOCO Headquarters — "Basingstoke"
5 Herman Drive
Simsbury, CT 06070

Register for auditions:

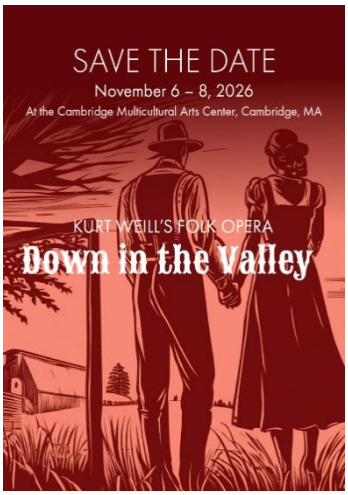
https://forms.gle/XP5iYNGsVHngAg8N9

Our 2027 performances will take place April 3–4 and April 10–11, 2027.

Whether you're a longtime SLOCO performer or interested in joining us for the first time, we'd love to see you at auditions. Additional audition information will be shared as we get closer.

Please share with anyone who may be interested in joining us for The Gondoliers this spring.

We know it isn't, but . . .

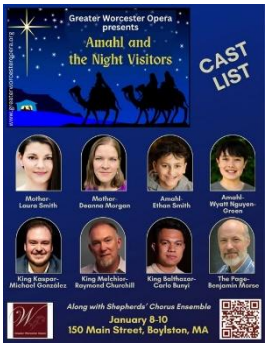


NEGASS stalwart Martha Birnbaum's **Opera Cambridge** will present *Down in the Valley*, Kurt Weill's poignant and tragic American folk opera. It is a story of young love, corrupt elders, and social injustice in small-town America.

Kurt Weill is famous for *The Threepenny Opera*, but he wrote smaller operatic gems, and *Down in the Valley* is one of his best!

Tickets on sale soon.

NEGASS Board member Elaine Crane's **Greater Worcester Opera** has also been busy, preparing for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Scan the QR code or visit www.greaterworcesteropera.org for ticket and performance date/time information.



NEGASS member involvement in non-G&S opera seems to be a thing. Newest Board member Lee Ellis' Maenad Theatre Troupe will perform "*ANTIGONE: An Audio Drama*" in the fall/winter of 2026. This is in addition to their plans to host an *HMS Pinafore* sing/read through.

Follow them on Facebook.

G & S NEWS

The above picture of the 2026 Savoynet performing Group in Buxton, England last month includes Marc Shepherd and NEGASS member Don Smith, both of whom attended our 50th Anniversary event. Looking forward, Marc posted the following to Savoynet:

The SavoyNet Performing Group Steering Committee has authorized me to post this call for a creative team for *The Gondoliers* at the 2027 International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival in Buxton, England. Specifically, we are seeking a **stage director** and **musical director**. If you are a candidate, or potential candidate, we would appreciate an indication of interest from you by **Monday 28th September**. Applications will be due by **Monday 5th October**.

…

Your application should include:

1. A resume of your qualifications for the position;
2. Your approach to *The Gondoliers*;
3. Your approach to producing a show in a week, and whether you have done so before;
4. Your prior Festival experience, … in any capacity.

A stage director and a musical director desiring to work together may apply as a team, but both must submit the items listed above. Make clear whether the team proposal is a preference or a requirement.

The group does not have set or costume construction shops. Generally, costumes are hired, and the group uses traditional sets available from the Festival at no charge. Any additional requirements need to be approved by the Steering Committee as to both practicality and expense.

Candidates whose work is not familiar to us may be asked to submit an online video and may be asked for references. If this applies to you, please start making immediate arrangements to get your video(s) posted online at a publicly accessible site, such as YouTube, if they are not there already. We prefer samples of complete acts from two separate productions, but if you do not have that, a single complete production is acceptable.

Every production is planned in detail over the Internet, with the Company gathering at the Festival venue for rehearsals roughly a week before the date of the show. The success of the production depends on a year of intensive planning.

The production team is expected to announce auditions as soon as possible, with the aim of casting the show by January. It is important to cast the show promptly, due to the time frame of other groups that draw on many of the same performers and the need for performers to book scarce accommodations. Key decisions on sets, costumes and props also need to be made by the end of the year, so that these items can be sourced in time.

Stage and musical directors generally send out detailed notes well in advance, so that the cast can prepare during the spring and early summer. All principals and chorus are expected to arrive entirely off book. Advance preparation is essential if the week of rehearsal is to be productive. The production team is expected to appoint an assistant musical director, assistant stage directors, a choreographer, and/or dance captains, so that there can be multiple parallel rehearsals during the week.

PLEASE SEND ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO ME AND I WILL CIRCULATE THEM TO THE COMMITTEE. If you don't receive an acknowledgment within 48 hours, please resend your email.

Marc Shepherd **oakapple2@gmail.com**
for the Committee

BaltiQWERT #25 will take place all day on Saturday, November 7, 2026. By then, Erica Rome and Michael Blum will be back from their much-appreciated trip to the NEGASS 50th Anniversary event, where Erica accompanied *Trial By Jury, Utopia Ltd, The Sorcerer,* and *The Grand Duke*, and Mike conducted *Patience*. Michael also provided flageolet accompaniment for Dr. Daly in *The Sorcerer*, which was one of the highlights, if not *the* highlight, of the show.

IN MEMORIAM

As has been happening more frequently, but understandably for your editor's age group, there have been a few deaths reported recently. Robert Sutton, co-founder of Boston Light Opera, passed this along:

I'm not sure if the news has reached the right folks up there, but Skip Baas passed away last month on his 81st birthday. Those who were performing in the '70s (i.e., are "in" their 70s), would remember him as having performed in a host of productions in the area -- Boston Light Opera, BU Savoyards, at MIT, and probably Harvard as well. He was well known for performances of the bass-baritone roles (Pirate King, Dick Deadeye, etc.) and a wonderful feel for the parts to go along with an excellent voice. Departing from his G & S roots, his portrayal of Alfie Dolittle in "My Fair Lady" garnered numerous spontaneous encores. Displaying remarkable versatility, he appeared as Juan Peron in a Boston production of "Evita" and as a soloist in "Man of La Mancha."

Skip was a great friend of mine, an usher at my wedding, a poker buddy, and we sang together in dozens of performances in the mid-'70s along with a number of "regulars" who may still be NEGASS members – if Skip was the Pirate King, I'd be doing Frederic, that sort of thing. I hadn't seen him for years when we got together to see a Red Sox game in the early 2000s while I was up there on business.

Jane Ellen (Tiemer) Croft, 91, of Weatogue, died peacefully on Monday, August 10, 2026. Born in Summit, New Jersey on March 27, 1935, she grew up in Wilton, Connecticut and attended The Northfield School in Massachusetts. She graduated from Skidmore College in 1957. In 1977 she and her former husband (the late James S. Croft of Brunswick, Maine) moved their young family to Simsbury, where she resided for 50 years.

Jane was a member and ardent supporter of the **Simsbury Light Opera** for over 40 years. She performed in multiple cycles of all the Gilbert and Sullivan Savoy, comic operas. She was on the Board of Directors, a Patron, Chair of the Sponsors Committee, and an enthusiastic volunteer to a multitude of committees, including set painting, program, telephone sales, and patron receptions. Wherever there was a need Jane was there to roll up her sleeves and lend a willing hand. In addition to her G & S onstage performances, Jane enjoyed singing with the Company's choral group, the Choristers, whose concert audiences included many venues in the Farmington Valley and Hartford. Her most memorable experience, however, was performing in Connecticut Opera's production of Aida. A memorial service will be held October 17th. Details forthcoming.

EDITOR'S CORNER

The New England G&S Society (NEGASS) sponsored a "Sing-Out" over the the Labor Day weekend in Concord, Massachusetts, to celebrate our 50th Anniversary. This column will be my memories and musings about the event, featuring as many photos as I can match to the narrative.

The facility, 51 Walden in Concord, MA, was the perfect size for the number of attendees, although parking was limited. It offered handicapped access, and had a kitchen area with some room for standing or sitting and eating. We put about 175 chairs out on the floor for onlookers and general chorus, with another 50 or so on stage for principals and those people singing chorus who wanted contact with the conductor. So there was ample room to spread out.

As I have observed in the past about these types of events, performances ran the gamut from timid to Met opera quality. That's not only idle chatter. Tenor Clay Hilley, who conducted *Utopia* and played Alexis, the Duke, and the Second Yeoman, makes his Metropolitan Opera debut as the lead in *Samson et Dalila*, sung in French, which opens November 27, 2026.

And there is more clowning around than you will find in a staged show. In *Yeomen* we were treated to "Hark, what was that sir? Why an octopus farted on the wharf." Followed shortly by "Who sired that fart?" Ah, sophisticated humor!

Besides NEGASS members, we had G&S enthusiasts from all over the country, and were graced by the presence of the inimitable William Remmers who, when he wasn't conducting *The Grand Duke* or portraying Robin Oakapple or The Costumier or Francesco or Annibale or Mr. Blushington or young Strephon (all adorned by appropriate costume changes), might pick up a triangle, a tamborine or a drumstick to add timpani to the piano accompaniment.

Marc Shepherd wrote on Savoynet:

Over 48 hours (spread over 3 days), you could sing (or watch) all 13 G&S operas. Principal roles were precast; chorus was open to all. The operas were performed with piano accompaniment and without dialogue, except for *The Gondoliers*, which was given complete and with orchestra. About 150 people attended all or part of the event.

The format was modeled on similar events held every five years in Rockville, Maryland. … Some groups have performed all 13 continuously, or with dialogue, or on a two-day schedule instead of three. This schedule here struck a good balance between madness and sanity.

Congratulations and thank you to NEGASS for putting on an event that ran so smoothly. Meticulous preparation paid off. The planning, organization, and logistics were all just about perfect.

There is one thing that I believe could be improved in the format for future events. It would help if the organizers clarified the role of the conductor. Every opera has an assigned conductor. Some of them seem to believe that their role was mainly to conduct the ensembles and to provide soloists with help when they require it. Others feel it is their role to shape the entire opera, as a conductor would in a regular production. This setting does not allow for rehearsal, which means there is no time for the conductor to set an artistic vision. Where a soloist shows up prepared, and has clearly learned the piece in a particular way, there is simply no opportunity for the conductor to suggest they perform it some other way. A competent pianist will follow a soloist and does not need to be told how to do so.

Most of the conductors at this event understood that, but there were some who did not. I think that perhaps this is something worth clarifying at future Sing-Outs.

John Dreslin commented:

I agree with Marc. As a veteran of all the Rockville sing-outs, plus the 35th NEGASS Anniversary, and several others here and there, which I both conducted and accompanied, I can attest that it is much better if the conductor does not try to micromanage the soloists. An experienced accompanist does much better by just following the singer; that is what we are trained to do in solo recitals. I had discussed this beforehand with my conductor for *Pinafore*, who was also my accompanist for *Yeomen*, so we were on the same wavelength, and it worked well.

Sam Silvers adds:

I agree with all that Marc says about the Sing-Out, except that I suspect there were more like a total of 250 people there at some time over the weekend, because the audience held at least 150 people, it was pretty full sometimes, and the audience changed a lot from day to day. Plus, there was the whole orchestra for *The Gondoliers*, and anywhere from about 20 to nearly 40 singers on stage for the popular operas.

I certainly agree with Marc's analysis re: conductors' roles at these unrehearsed singalongs. It is not helpful at all for a conductor to battle soloists on tempo and phrasing, or even

(this happened!) to ignore a strong soloist and continue conducting a different tempo, leaving the pianist to have to decide whom to follow. The organizers should suggest to conductors that they give soloists who are clearly prepared some leeway. The best conductors basically got the number started and then let the confident soloists communicate with the pianists during their solos. Of course, some soloists were less secure, and then the conductor needed to help lead them, and of course the conductor needed to lead soloists into choral or ensemble parts.

One more idea I heard some people say, and I think I agree, is that instead of stating that singers may choose to sing either onstage or from the audience, it might be better to encourage everyone singing with a score to come up on stage to sing, as it would enhance the choral sound and cohesion.

I join in these congratulations to NEGASS on a very smoothly-run event, which was so much fun for all of us, whether from near or far.

One more thing about sing-out conductors. I think it would be better for the conductor to be situated next to the piano. Having them in the center of the stage on a big platform made it difficult to see the singers at times and inhibited their ability to move around and interact with each other.

In a separate message directly to us, Sam says:

Thank you, gallant NEGASSieri

I was at your 35th Anniversary sing-out, and this was even more spectacular. Everyone had a blast, and your committee did a wonderful job organizing all the logistics and communicating with people.

Thank you, and Happy Birthday, NEGASS!

Sam Silvers, NYC

Both Marc and Sam mentioned how well the event was organized. The organizing Committee and volunteers (Martha Birnbaum, Lindsey Bucccella, Sara DeLong, John Dreslin, Blair Eig – who MC-ed the whole weekend – Ann Ferentz, and Jacqueline Haney, did an amazing job, including taking care of some things not usually expected at a G&S event. When a clogged toilet presented a problem, our president, Ann Ferentz, and her trusty sidekick Jacki Haney, made an emergency trip to a nearby Home Depot. Problem solved. There were chairs to put out, then clear from the floor when it was all over. Pre-ordered food had to be accepted from the caterers, brought into the kitchen, and delivered to the proper participants. We even had gluten-free desserts!

Ruth Colson gave us a short description of her late husband (and NEGASS founder) Warren Colson's extensive Gilbert & Sullivan collection. She wanted to see sale of these items to good homes to support NEGASS. Treasures from the collection were available for acquisition at the sing-out on tables at the rear of the auditorium.

We raised over $2,000 from sale of such items as G&S character figurines, G&S related Toby jugs, ephemera (such as commemorative booklets), and plates.

To make it a complete weekend of the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations, Friday night started with "Little Maid of Arcadee" from *Thespis*. Considering that almost nobody knew it and we were sight-reading it for the first time, it came out rather well.

Ruddigore

Ralph Sherman conducting *Ruddigore*.

The Mikado

Three Little Maids from School: Jana Kucera, Mei-Lin Po, and Kari Sherman.

Ben Morse (Ko-Ko) and Amanda Jones (Katisha) sing "There is beauty in the bellow of the blast."

Patience

Lady Jane (Casey Keeler) playing air bass fiddle to open Act 2 in *Patience*.

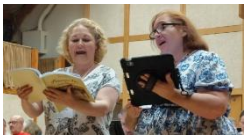
H.M.S. Pinafore

My gallant crew, good morning. Lonnie Powell is Captain Corcoran.

Carpenter, (your editor), Bo's'n (Mike Lague), and Ralph Rackstraw (Robert Vann) struggle with "A British Tar."

Josephine (Jana Kucera) and Ralph singing "Proud lady, have your way."

"He is an English Man!"

Princess Ida

Wouldn't you like to rule the roast? Laura Hull and Susan Weinman.

Sara Duchovnay sang one of the most beautiful Princess Ida's I have ever heard! Here she sings "The World is but a Broken Toy" with Cyril (Brad Amidon), Florian (Andrew Smith), and Hilarion (Peter Boettcher.)

Yeomen of the Guard

John Dreslin conducts "Strange Adventure" with Kathy Blaisdell as Dame Carruthers, Tim Throckmorton as Col. Fairfax, Graham Daley as Kate, and Miles Rind barely visible as Sgt. Meryll.

Hereupon we're both agreed. Blair Eig, our hard-working Master of Ceremonies, is Wilfred Shadbolt getting jester tips from Jack Point (Jay Wolman.)

Yeomen finale. Always brings tears to my eyes.

Gondoliers

The Gondoliers was the only show accompanied by full orchestra, which gave marvelous richness to the sound but scrunched principals and chorus into restricted space.

Gabriel Ellsworth played Marco like a G&S veteran, although he is quite young and new to the genre. "I just copied whatever Tom Frates (Giuseppe) did!" Rounding out the quartet, Danielle Shevchenko was Gianetta and Amanda Jones filled in as Tessa.

Robert Vann (another excellent tenor who graced us with his presence here and in *Pinafore* and *Utopia*) and Sara DeLong were Luiz and Casilda, with Ralph Sherman as the Duke of Plaza Toro (when he wasn't busy conducting Ruddigore) and Elaine Crane as the Duchess. John Freedman was a properly sinister Don Alhambra.

Utopia, Limited

Jeff Mincks, Bradley Carter, and Robert Morrison did a great job on "Sullivan's Revenge," sometimes known as "Wily Brain" or "Private Plot."

A king of autocratic power he, Daniel Bright was King Paramount, here standing beside Kari Sherman (Lady Sophy), Sarah Robinson (Princess Zara), Robert Vann (Captain Fitzbattleaxe), and the rest of the cast singing "Eagle High."

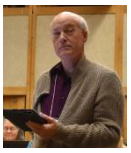
"Society has quite forsaken all its wicked courses," (the tambourine number) with Will Remmers, Jay Wolman, Tom Frates and all the other Flowers of Progress.

Iolanthe

Phyllis (Lucio Faria) must choose between Mountararat (Martin Lehman) and Tolloller (Tim Throckmorton).

Our wrath when gentlemen offend us is tremendous. Lindsey Buccella (Celia) and, Mei-Ling Po (Leila) unnerve the peers.

Take down our sentence as we speak it and he shall wreak it. Casey Keeler (the Fairy Queen) hastens to aid Strephon (Will Remmers, in case you forgot.)



The Lord Chancellor (Ben Morse) eventually sorts everything out in *Iolanthe*.

It is impressive when a singer is off-book for a role in an operetta. What do you call it when the accompanist plays entirely from memory, as Benjamin Nacar did for *Iolanthe*!

Sorcerer

Dan Kravitz, who also sang Private Willis in Iolanthe, conducted *The Sorcerer*.

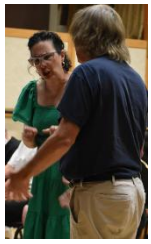
Sir Marmaduke (Anthony Fabyanic) and Lady Sangazure (Opal Hearst) show the youngsters how respectable courting should be done.

Very deaf old man Sam Silvers is having trouble hearing Constance (Lucio Faria).

I have mentioned many times on these pages my desire to sing all the roles in the canon. I got the chance to check off Dr. Daly in *Sorcerer* and King Gama in *Princess Ida*. When the little lady answers "No…Thank you for your kindly proffer …" I slipped a kerchief over my head and slipped my voice into falsetto. Am I really such a disagreeable man?

Pirates

Kathryn Denney conducts the Pirate King (Dafydd Mac an Leigh who earlier conducted *Princess Ida*.)



Frederic (Brad Amidon) is having a little trouble getting around the idea of Ruth's 47 years. It will get worse shortly when he sees all the beautiful young ladies!

Besides Frederic admiring Mabel, Brad Amidon is really impressed by Nicole Burke's beautiful, precise coloratura in "Poor Wand'ring One," as was I.

The end of Pirates marked the end of a wonderful weekend!

We have sent out a survey to everyone who attended. Please complete it and send back your impressions, as it will help us improve (if that's even possible!) for our next significant anniversary event in 25 or 50 years.

Finally, in her President's letter, Ann Ferentz thanked all the people who worked so hard and so well to make this weekend such a success. I want to congratulate Ann on her amazing job leading and coordinating all the many people and tasks required to accomplish this feat. She brought it all together, and has earned and deserves our thanks and love.

- 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, Bruce Moir, Erica Rome, William Remmers, Chris Pollari, Sara DeLong, Elizabeth White, Amy Henderson, Marc Shepherd, John Dreslin, Robert Sutton, Sam Silvers, and Mike Lague.

(Please forgive any omissions!)

CALENDAR

NEGASS Events

The Maenad Theatre Troupe *Pinafore* read/sing-through	Wednesday Nov 18, 2026 6:00 PM	Trinity Episcopal Church 414 Sumner Street Stoughton MA
Sudbury Savoyards *The Pirates of Penzance*	Saturday, February 20, 2027 1:30 PM	Lincoln-Sudbury Regional HS 390 Lincoln Road Sudbury, MA

G&S Events

Auditions for Sudbury Savoyards *The Pirates of Penzance*	Wednesday, Oct 14, 6:30-10 PM Friday, October 16, 6:30-10 PM	First Baptist Church - Sudbury 162 Landham Road Sudbury, MA
Connecticut Gilbert & Sullivan Society *Pirates of Penzance*	Saturday, Oct 17, 2026 Sunday, Oct 18, 2026	Valley Regional H.S. 256 Kelsey Hill Road Deep River, CT
BaltiQWERT	Saturday, November 7, 2026	Towson UU Church 1710 Dulaney Valley Road Lutherville, MD
Auditions for Simsbury Light Opera Company *The Gondoliers*	Sun Nov 15, 2026 6–9PM Tues Nov 17, 2026 7–9PM	Basingstoke 5 Herman Drive Simsbury, CT 06070
Sudbury Savoyards *The Pirates of Penzance*	Sat, Feb 20, 2027 1:30 & 7:30 PM Sun, Feb 21, 2027 1:30 PM Fri, Feb 26, 2027 7:30 PM Sat, Feb 27, 2027 1:30 & 7:30 PM	Lincoln-Sudbury Regional HS 390 Lincoln Road Sudbury, MA
Simsbury Light Opera Company *The Gondoliers*	April 3–4 and April 10–11, 2027	Henry James Memorial School 155 Firetown Road Simsbury, CT 06033