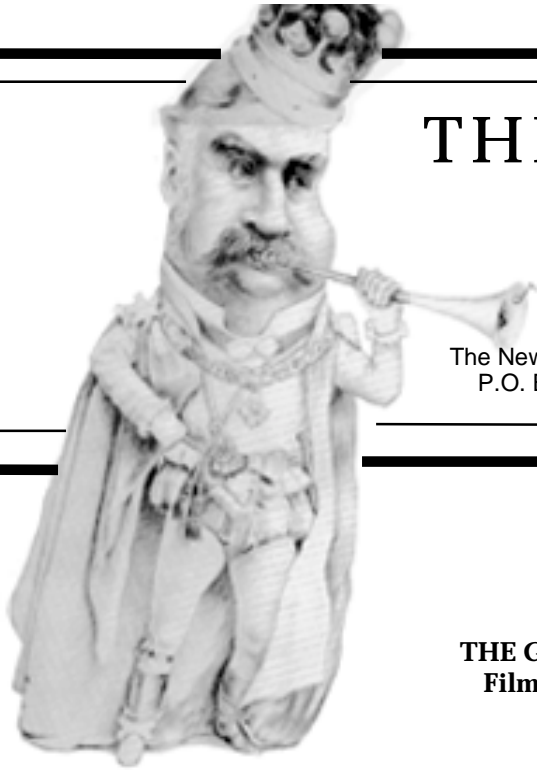


THE TRUMPET BRAY

NEGASS
The New England Gilbert and Sullivan Society
P.O. Box 367, Arlington, MA 02476-0004



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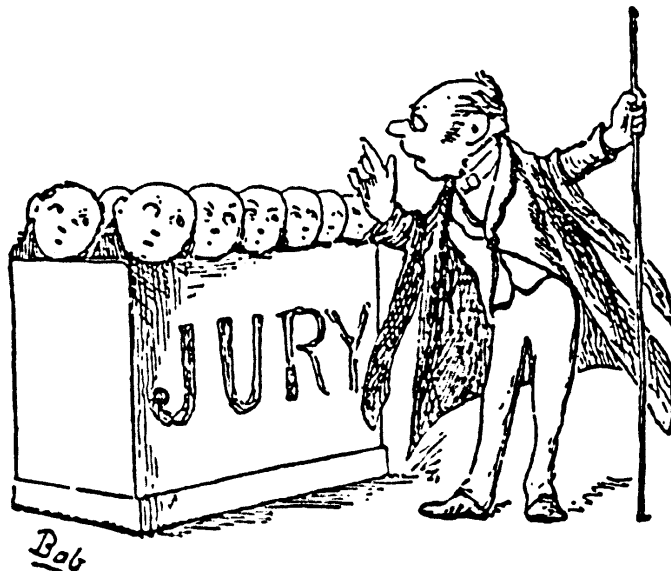
~The doing and undoing~

THE GILBERT AND SULLIVAN STORY
Film showing at Newton Free Library
Sunday, Feb. 4th, 2:00pm

UPCOMING MEETINGS

THE GILBERT AND SULLIVAN STORY

By popular demand the annual presentation of a film at the Newton Library will be a repeat of the popular "Story of Gilbert and Sullivan". This classic film from 1953 stars Robert Morley as W.S. Gilbert, Maruice Evans as Arthur Sullivan and Peter Finch as Richard D'Oyly Carte. While it is a very romanticized and historically inaccurate bio-pic, the performances of many excerpts of the G&S operas by members of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, including Martyn Green and Thomas Round, represent, for many, the manner in which Gilbert and Sullivan should truly be performed.



--J. DONALD SMITH

HOW TO GET THERE: The Newton Free Library is located at 330 Homer Street, Newton Center, MA, across from City Hall. (There's a nice big parking lot belonging to the library!)

From Route 128, take Route 30 (Commonwealth Ave) to the central Newton intersection of Commonwealth Ave., Lowell St., North St. and Homer, which angles off Comm. Ave to the right.

By T: Take the Green Line D-Riverside Car to Newton Highlands, exit the station at Walnut Street, turn right and walk up Walnut Street a little over one mile. The library will be on your left.

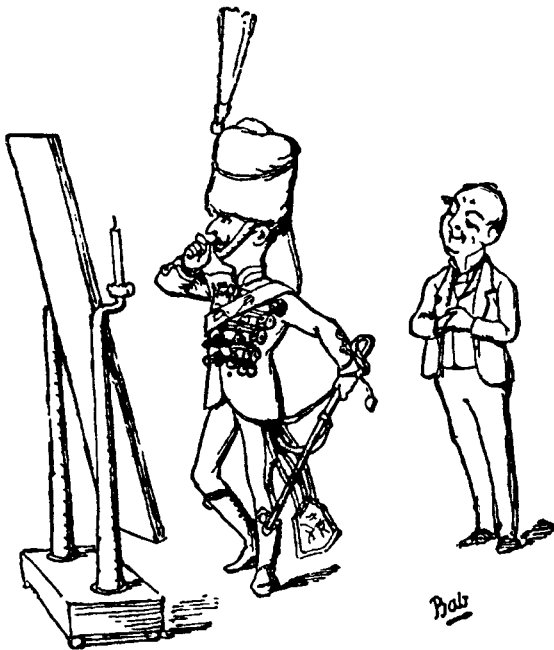
It's worth calling a board member if you'd like a ride; see the masthead for directions. For more info, see <http://mln.lib.ma.us:8036/36map.html>

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Last Minute Light Opera : PATIENCE

We'll hold the annual LMLO on March 18th this year, in our usual location at the Park Street Church, Arlington, MA. I'll be accepting role requests starting on Monday,

Feb. 4th. Casting closes March 11th. As usual, everyone who would like a role is invited to e-mail or phone me (413-584-7725 or aprilcath@yahoo.com).



Roles in PATIENCE:

- Colonel Calverley, bass or baritone
- Major Murgatroyd, baritone
- Lieut. The Duke of Dunstable, tenor
- Bunthorne, baritone
- Grosvenor, baritone or second tenor
- Bunthorne's Solicitor (nonspeaking role)
- Angela, mezzo
- Saphir, soprano or mezzo
- Ella, soprano
- Jane, contralto
- Patience, soprano

~*~*~ RECENT MEETINGS ~*~*~

MIT SING-IN, DEC. 9th.

There was a large turn-out both of NEGASS members and MITG&SP regulars at our joint sing on Dec. 9th. at the MIT Student Center.

We sang through excerpts from Iolanthe, Pirates of Penzance, Patience, and Ruddigore,



accompanied by Mike Bromberg at the piano. Many enthusiastic singers went on to Gondoliers after a break for refreshments. (The food was great, too, and some thoughtful soul from the MIT side of the party had made Sally Lunn cake.)

There were many excellent performances and the two groups showed great camaraderie. Dare we hope this will become a yearly tradition?

—FAINT LILY

Meeting Schedule, 2007	
February 4	Annual Newton Library video
Mar 18	LMLO: <i>PATIENCE</i>
Apr 22 or 29	<i>ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN</i> / play-reading day
June 3	Election/fantasy day

NEXT BRAY COPY DEADLINE: Feb. 25th, 2007

Next Bray Stuffing: Sunday, **March 4th**, 3:00 pm, at the home of **Janice and Ron Dallas**, 63 Everett Street, Arlington, MA., 02474-6921. E-mail or phone for directions: (781) 643-2537, membership@negass.org

~*~*~

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome We new member **Aaron Weiss** of Boston! He writes, "I don't sing, or play, or paint, or direct, or make costumes. Sorry. I just like G&S." [*An audient! Sir, we shall all be delighted to make your acquaintance.--Ye Ed.*]

~*~*~ SAD TIDINGS ~*~*~

T. SKYLER WRENCH

NEGASS newsletter editor, member-at-large, and stalwart organizer **T. Skyler Wrench** passed away in December. He is greatly missed. **Marion Leeds Carroll** writes:

FAREWELL TO TSW

It happened too quickly. Trumpet Bray editor T. Skyler Wrench wasn't feeling too well over the summer, but that wasn't surprising: his demanding new job had him on swing-shift hours, his long commute took up too much time, and he still wanted to stay in touch with his many friends, while keeping up his responsibilities to NEGASS and others - so, in addition to a flurry of medical appointments, he put in extra hours helping people and their pets, cheering people with games and music, going to meetings and parties, auditioning and rehearsing for MITG&SP's fall production of *SORCERER*, posting messages to his LiveJournal accounts...

He finally saw a new doctor in September. And suddenly he was in the hospital. And there was surgery, and radiation, and talk of chemotherapy... but it was already too late.

On Dec. 18, 2006, we gathered at the First Parish Unitarian-Universalist Church in Watertown, MA to share memories of our friend Skyler, who died on November 30, 2006.

The non-denominational memorial service was organized by Lisa Ferretti, Susan Sarkes, and Skyler's sister Jaime Sanders, but many others helped out. You can download a program with the music, the speakers, and a list of people who made this gathering happen by visiting < <http://leedscarroll.com/skyler.html> >, but here are some of the highlights:

We began with music: Lisa Gay and The Quilisma Consort played a recorder trio, *Ma bouche rit* ["My mouth laughs" - a good description of Skyler], by Ockeghem, and then Nancy Ferretti accompanied us in the hymn, *All creatures of the earth and sky*.

Next Skyler's college friend Lisa Ferretti spoke, welcoming us and telling how the gathering had been planned. Through her, we learned how much music meant to Skyler.

More music followed: *In principio*, a lovely *a capella* piece by Patricia Van Ness, sung by Paula Downes, Lisa Ferretti (director), Rebecca Burstein, Ann Ferentz, Allegra Martin, Lyra O'Brien, and Bina Joy Pliskin.

April Grant, NEGASS's program chair, who has also

taken on the role of Bray editor, and who had gathered most of the musicians for this service, movingly shared her thoughts about the person she had known for such a short time.

Next, Paula Downes sang *With darkness deep* from Handel's *Theodora*, accompanied by Nancy Ferretti, and then Tony Parkes led us all in Skyler's favorite, *Sighing softly to the river* from *PIRATES*, accompanied by Isabel Leonard.

The Reverend Jaime M. W. Sanders, Skyler's sister, spoke of his surprising return to Christianity by way of Buddhism, and of his desire, stated long before there was a hint of illness, to spend eternity among angels playing harps.

More music followed: *The 23rd Psalm* in a setting by Michael Isaacson, sung by Marion Leeds Carroll and accompanied by Isabel Leonard.

Lisa Ferretti spoke again, remembering her long friendship with Skyler, discussing his varied interests and talents, and sharing remembrances from others who were not able to stand before us to speak.



Isabel Leonard accompanied the next two pieces: *Orpheus with his lute*, a verse from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* with music by Sullivan, sung by Marion Leeds Carroll, and *Try we lifelong* from *GONDOLIERS*, sung by Rebecca Burstein, Art Dunlap, April Grant, Allegra Martin, and Tony Parkes.

Skyler's brother, Paul F. Wrench, told the story of the adventurous and merry child who grew up to be the Skyler we all knew, bravely running ahead and assuring those behind that there was nothing to fear.

Isabel Leonard conducted us in *Hail, Poetry* from *PIRATES*, and then Lisa Ferretti, who had told us of Skyler's late-blooming delight in baseball, led us in a surprise "Recessional": *Take me out to the ball-game*.

We all went downstairs after the service, to see a photograph & remembrances montage arranged by Ann Ferentz, to satisfy ourselves with catered refreshments arranged by Susan Sarkes, and to share more memories and comfort.

Skyler was a hub: he made friends out of circles of strangers. We are all richer for having known him.

To learn more about Skyler, visit <http://community.livejournal.com/mixedbordernews> and read recent messages by his friends, as well as his own last few postings.

-MLC

Samuel Silvers writes:

I knew Skyler in college, and he was the excellent stage manager for a show I directed for the Barnard Gilbert and Sullivan Society. [...] 25 years saw many changes in Skyler, but unchanged was his positive attitude, good heart, common sense and sense of fairness. Please let my friends at NEGASS know that his old NY friends will miss him too!

Rest well, T.S.W.

--SAM SILVERS



MARY HOWE SHEPHERD

Mrs. **Holly Fulton** writes:

Dear NEGASS, Tuesday, November 28, 2006.

I write with the sad news of my mother's passing. **Mary Howe Shepherd** used to host NEGASS picnics at our sea-side home in Bristol, RI back in the late 80's (I think) and in the 90's. She left us Monday morning, November 27th.

I continued to sing G&S songs to her every time I visited her at the nursing home, and I often saw a smile and bobbing head as I sang to her. She was 89 years old.

Her funeral will be in Bristol, Rhode Island on December 14th at 10 am. "None Shall Part Us From Each Other" will be sung at the funeral as it was my mom and dad's love song. The first two sentences from the song are on their gravestone. Thanks for prayers for and thoughts about her. She so loved G&S and NEGASS.

My husband and I will be moving to the Salem, MA area, and we will be searching for a G&S group. I'm hoping there's one not too far away. We have so enjoyed The Empire Lyric Players out here in Denver. If anyone is ever in Denver in early June check out www.elps.org. Last year was Iolanthe, this past year was The Gondoliers, and next June will be Mikado.

My best,

Holly Fulton

~~~~~LETTERS/ERRATA~~~~~

Following on last month's review of an excellent "Hot Mikado" in Derry, NH, Ms. **Beth Ann O'Hara** of the **New Thalian Players** writes:

Hello,

As director of the New Thalian Players' production of "Hot Mikado" in Derry, NH last month, I want to thank the Luxners for their wonderful review. I wish they had made themselves known to me as I'd love to have met them and have had an insight into NEGASS. I am so happy that representatives from your organization came to NH to see our show. We worked very hard on it and were mighty pleased that it was well-received.

Interestingly enough, only a few people in the cast had ever heard of *The Mikado* at all, much less *Hot Mikado*, so the show was a revelation to them. We started out the rehearsal period with some videos of original *Mikado* productions from several past decades so the actors would have a good, solid base upon which to develop their characters.



Thank you for printing the Luxners' letter; it was really meaningful to get a good review from people who really love Gilbert & Sullivan.

If I may add a small correction: there are no DVDs of "Hot Mikado" available, however, a wide selection of photos can be made available through our website, [www.newthalianplayers.org](http://www.newthalianplayers.org), or by emailing me at [baojjo@aol.com](mailto:baojjo@aol.com). Would you be so kind as to mention this in your next issue of Trumpet Bray?

Again, many thanks for the kind words.

Beth Ann O'Hara

Director, *Hot Mikado*, 2006

Founder, New Thalian Players, 1983

### RECENT PRODUCTIONS

#### The Pirates of Penzance at Goodspeed Opera House

Seldom has a production caused as much controversy among the local G&S community as the fall production of **Pirates of Penzance** at the picturesque Goodspeed Opera House, located on the banks of the Connecticut River, in East Haddam, CT. Goodspeed is famous both for its revivals of vintage musicals, and for premiering new ones, many of which, such as **Man of La Mancha**, **Annie**, and **Shenandoah** to name a few, have gone on to be Broadway hits. In its early years it often offered Gilbert and Sullivan productions, but this is the first one in over 25 years. The question becomes when does **Pirates of Penzance** cease to be **Pirates of Penzance** and become something entirely different. This one may have entered that zone. The production was in association with Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey, which means that it very well move onto that venue.

First of all it must be said that the professional cast and seven-piece orchestra were first rate. Particular standouts were **Ed Dixon** as the Major General and **Andrew Varela** as the Pirate King. The diction and choreographic moves were flawless from top to bottom. The controversy comes in with what was done to the plot and music. About half of the dialogue and lyrics were new; almost all of the music was altered in one way or another, either with new harmonies or altered rhythms, or both.

The whole scene of action was transferred from Cornwall to the Caribbean, to take advantage of the Johnny Depp tie-in (the Pirate King made up to resemble him). The word "Penzance" was never mentioned at all! A whole new plot element of a "pirate curse" was introduced (explained to the tune of Dame Hannah's aria in

**Ruddigore**), which held that no pirate could survive for long on land unless he married a virgin. Much of the plot revolved around this idea. So Ruth's deception of Frederic does not turn on the fact of her age, but rather that she has obviously been having relations with the entire pirate band. [*How different, how very different, from the home life of our own dear Queen. --Ye Ed.*]



*Bab*

The show opened with a pirate raid on a sleepy Caribbean seaport leading into the celebration of Frederic's birthday, followed by Ruth's song (reset as a waltz). Then came the "curse" number, and the Pirate King's song (1<sup>st</sup> verse done as a recitative, 2<sup>nd</sup> verse all new lyrics). The pirates sail away leaving Ruth and Frederic, who finds that even after his engagement to Ruth he is still feeling the effects of the "curse". They sing "Oh False One" and she retires to the nearby tavern.

Meanwhile the daughters (there were 6 of them, all in blonde wigs), happen by looking for Mabel. Frederic decides to follow them, and off they go singing "Into the Jungle" which of course is "Climbing Over Rocky Mountain" altered to fit. As they go they take off various outer layers of clothing, only to be confronted by Frederic who is shocked by their moderate state of undress. He did do a version of "Oh Is There Not One Maiden Breast", the second verse accompanied with mildly suggestive body language. Mabel (a brunette) then dropped in on a balloon which descended during her opening cadenza. A shortened version of "Poor Wandering One" then ensued, most unfortunately in a lower key without the final cadenza – although I am sure **Farah Alvin** who sang the part could have handled it easily. As it was, the number wasn't the show stopper it usually is - I surmise they thought the real thing was too operatic.

"How Beautifully Blue the Sky" was relatively straight and well done, with the pirates creeping in at the end. They see in the daughters the virgins that they need to free them from the curse and prepare to carry them away, when the Major General arrives on cue.

Once again only the 1<sup>st</sup> verse was true to the original lyrics, which he did encore at a truly incredible speed. The pirates' plans are of course thwarted by the Major General's plea of being an orphan, and the act ended with a very truncated finale ending in a full cast version of "Away, away". At least "Hail Poetry" was retained intact, and sung very well (though because the men outnumbered the women, it was a little overbalanced against the melody).

The 2<sup>nd</sup> act opened with the sexually frustrated pirates laying waste to the whole Caribbean, and the Major General (who it turns out is the Governor of the area with the responsibility of keeping them under control) having sleepless nights. So of course what should be the first number of the act, but a much altered version of the **Iolanthe** Nightmare Song?

Mabel and Frederic meanwhile have hatched a plan to destroy the pirates, but have only been able to recruit the down and outers of the island, who did a very funny calypso "When the Foeman Bares his Steel", complete with West Indies accents. The next few numbers and dialogues actually came rather close to the actual text and music. Only the middle narrative section of "Paradox" was altered (to make the point more understandable?), the middle of "Away, away" was also cut, as well as the "So here is Love" section that ends the Mabel/Frederic scene. The chanting of the police was cut and the lyrics of the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of "Policemen's Lot" completely changed. And so it went...

When the Major General was finally captured and the police defeated in a rather lengthy balletic sword fight, he was saved by the girls agreeing to marry the pirates (no Queen Victoria, no House of Peers). All except the Pirate King who decided to keep Ruth and thus go on living under the "curse", ending with a reprise of "I am the Pirate King".

Now I don't mean to imply this production wasn't great good fun, because it was indeed. Some of the ideas and alterations were very imaginative. But was it truth in advertising to call it the **Pirates of Penzance**?

What has bothered a lot of us is that people unfamiliar with the real thing will actually think this is what it is all about. Real Gilbert and Sullivan is good honest G rated entertainment that you can bring children of any age to. Not so this one, which at least would deserve a PG rating. There is a great deal of sexual innuendo in dialogue, lyrics, and movement. Ruth is portrayed as a piratical

harlot, and there is an extended scene between "Poor Wandering One" and "How Beautifully Blue the Sky" during which the ladies chorus conjectures on the meaning of "fornication" among other things. My personal feeling is it should have simply been titled *Pirates*, a musical comedy loosely based on the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta.

--JOHN E. DRESLIN

### **Trial by Jury and H.M.S. Pinafore, Harvard-Radcliffe G&S Players**

I attended the Harvard double bill near the end of their run, longer than usual because of their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary festivities. This production was a credit to HRG&SP's long tradition.

The first thing I noticed, entering the auditorium of Agassiz Theater, was that the space usually devoted to an orchestra pit had been taken over, instead, by an extension of the stage. It came to a point in front, like the prow of a ship, and provided an opportunity for the singers to be much closer to the audience than usual. Of course the trade-off was that the orchestra was not as prominently placed, but I felt the innovation worked well. I noticed video monitors mounted on the front of the mezzanine, providing the singers a view of the conductor.

After the traditional *God Save the Queen*, the performance began with the introductory music for **Trial by Jury**. The chorus entered from the wings, intricately choreographed to perform greetings, nods, and other minor social business in small groups, usually pairs, but with the composition of the groups constantly changing as the choristers followed different paths. They convincingly portrayed a chaotic crowd which somehow, almost unbelievably, were in position in time to sing.

The Usher, **Evan Siegal**, herded them into place with an entertaining physical presence, leaning in such a manner that he frequently seemed on the verge of falling over. The Defendant, **Roy Kimmey**, was a brash and defiant youth, and expressed his surprise and dismay at the early display of bias. He took the opportunity, during "When first my old, old love I knew," to charm the Bridesmaids. The Learned Judge, **Ado Hill**, entered and did a fine job of explaining how he came to be a judge.



The Usher issued his call for "Angelina," echoed by Counsel for the Plaintiff, **Melinda Biocchi**. Rather than repeating the call with a deep bass note, he repeated the call in a strong falsetto. Angelina, **Christine Bendorf**, entered and proceeded to win over every male present as she skillfully and fetchingly flirted with the Gentlemen of the Jury and the Judge.

The story proceeded to its satisfactory ending, but with impressive displays of intensity from all. The singers left their seats on several occasions to spread out across the stage and express their outrage, or passion, or satisfaction, or whatever emotion happened to be appropriate at the moment. My wife remarked that she did not remember ever having seen such an energetically performed *Trial*.

As the first show ended, we learned that the ingenuity of the set designers was not limited to the display we had already seen, of filling the orchestra pit with a quarterdeck. We saw the jury box and judge's bench quickly removed, and the stage transformed into the front half of a ship. It's fairly common for a *Pinafore* set to have stairs on each side leading to an upper deck, with the space between them occupied by the front of the cabin. But the cabin is usually too far back, or there is too little room in front. Here the cabin was not too far behind Agassiz's usual stage line, and the extended stage still allowed plenty of room in front. The orchestra was set up on the upper deck, space that is usually wasted. My compliments to co-designers **Courtney Thompson** and **Blase Ur**.

The chorus continued to display the energy they had shown in *Trial*, as they introduced themselves and greeted Buttercup, **Raquel Toledo**.



Then a bit of distraction occurred. Ralph, **Noah Van Niel**, made an impressive entrance climbing down a rope ladder into the center of the stage. Unfortunately, owing, I presume, to safety rules, the ladder had to be lowered and clamped into fixtures on the deck, and Ralph wore a safety harness from which he had to be disengaged when he alighted. Then the ladder was unclamped and hoisted up again. It's a tough call, how much distraction is worth enduring for a nice effect. (Later in the show the ladder was again lowered and clamped to the stage, and Ralph climbed and sang from halfway up, but this time without the harness.)

Captain Corcoran (**Arlo Hill**), Josephine (**Chelsey Forbes**), and Sir Joseph (**Brian Polk**) were all convincing and effective, although I had the sense before Sir Joseph's first song and dance that he was singing because his music was about to be played. One of the G&S directors I most revere has taught me that the music should occur because a song is coming, not the other way around. That is, the singer's acting should "make the music happen." Oh, well, it was only a very minor problem, and only for his first song.

Dick Deadeye, **Jay Musen**, made a surprising entrance, coming out of a hitherto unrevealed hatch in the deck, which also provided an exit later for Ralph to go off to his dungeon cell. He gave a lively characterization of the misunderstood unfortunate's role.

There was an especially convincing chemistry between Ralph and Josephine. They produced an especially funny scene, as well. When Ralph announced his plans to take his leave of life, he didn't hold a gun to his temple. He put it in his mouth. Josephine called out, "Ah, stay your hand. I love you!" His responsive, "Loves me?" mumbled around a mouthful of gun-barrel, brought down the house.

All of the cast gave a performance that HRG&SP could take great pride in. Even though it was a double bill, it left me regretting the ending of the evening.

—RICHARD FREEDMAN

### **Hack Night for Trial by Jury and H.M.S. Pinafore, HRG&SP**

My wife and two daughters and I had the pleasure of viewing the double bill of *Trial by Jury* and *HMS Pinafore* performed by the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players at the Agassiz Theater in December. This production was directed by Charlie Miller, with musical

direction by Ben Green.

The semicircular seating arrangement of the Agassiz has always been elegant and intimate; for this production, a thrust stage in the shape of a ship's prow brought the actors out into the middle of the audience. The thrust stage enabled Dick Deadeye's hatch to be placed where it belongs, on the deck in front of the action. The orchestra, displaced from the pit by the thrust stage, was transplanted to the rear of the HMS Pinafore's quarter-deck. This seemed to work well once the curtain was drawn for Pinafore, although it had the unfortunate consequence that the orchestra was invisible throughout Trial by Jury, and there were a few minor details (such as steps and doors) that I know this company can do better.

We chose to see this production on Hack Night. Having seen Princess Ida on Hack Night in the spring of 2005, we were at least somewhat prepared for a performance that was (presumably) quite different from what was presented to other audiences. For example, in Trial by Jury, "C. I. Miller" substituted for **Roy Kimmey**, but when he entered ("Who are you?" "I'm the understudy for the defendant"), his singing voice so agonized everyone on stage that he ended up pantomiming nearly all of his part with duct tape over his mouth. The Plaintiff appeared to be at least eight months pregnant; **Christine Bendorf** waddled onstage very convincingly in this role. At the end, the Finale was cut short when the Judge sentenced the Defendant to death, but the Defendant's last request was to hear him sing the entire score of HMS Pinafore, making a neat segue to the set change.

Even more violence (literally) was done to HMS Pinafore. Although **Jay Musen** played Dick Deadeye with a traditional hump and twisted stance most of the time, he initially entered in a black cloak and face paint, and was introduced as Lord Voldemort, the sailors not merely recoiling but falling to the deck in terror at the sound of his name. ("I'm twelve-cornered too, ain't I?" "You are rather dodecagonal.")



Just when he was supposed to enter by descending a rope ladder from above, Ralph Rackstraw (played by a stuffed sailor's uniform) plummeted to his death; he was

immediately replaced by the *second* smartest lad in all the fleet, Ralph (pronounced "RALF," as in Cramden) Rackstraw, played by **Noah Van Niel**.

**Raquel Toledo's** Little Buttercup was not merely mysterious, but positively ghoulish. She illustrated "scissors and watches, and knives" by brandished a large knife, which she was again carrying at the start of the second act while carrying off the body of yet another sailor who had fallen to the deck from aloft. And in "A Many Years Ago," it turns out her former activity was baby-*eating*; she had devoured "Ralf" and replaced him with a Frenchman. "And by the way, I also switched the Captain and Dick Deadeye."

**Daniel Kroop** played a very openly gay sailor with great panache ("Ah, it's a queer world!" "You said it, sister!"). **David Jewitt** as Tom Tucker, Midshipmite wore black horn-rimmed glasses and engaged in stage business that reminded me of Sergeant Bilko, the first time I can remember actually noticing this role during a performance.

In the end, "Ralf" Rackstraw returns from the dungeon very French (with a mustache, beret, and accent). **Captain Corcoran** and **Dick Deadeye** reappear, having swapped uniforms, posture, hump, and face paint, a rather more dramatic effect than Gilbert's switch; it seems almost a shame this doesn't fit the original story line. Josephine does not want a Frenchman, but "Ralf" and the gay sailor happily pair up, and when Sir Joseph rejects Hebe a second time, Josephine happily accepts her.

The performance employed numerous unorthodox sight gags such as the substitution of a five-foot stuffed tiger for the cat o' nine tails, and references to films including Young Frankenstein ("Wasn't your hump on the other side before?"), the gagged defendant in Bananas, the "riding" style of the knights in Monty Python and the Holy Grail, "flying" on the bow of the Titanic, and probably others I missed.

An unfortunate result of attending only on Hack Night is that I cannot fairly assess the ability of the actors to play Gilbert and Sullivan "straight." For example, I hope that in the other performances **Brian Polk** played Sir Joseph with less wriggling coyness, the sailors did not try to lift his female relations' skirts, and **Chelsey Forbess's** Josephine did not appear spoiled, though these interpretations were very humorous in the context of Hack Night. As he did for Princess Ida, Mr. Miller clearly changed some traditional elements in all performances of



this run, for example by casting **Melinda Biocchi** as a female Counsel for the Plaintiff (at the cost of a slight dilution of the patriarchal imagery of Gilbert's satire), but I wonder whether, in the regular performances, **Blair Harshbarger** (as a female relation) drummed Sir Joseph on board, whether **Evan Siegel's** Bill Bobstay refused to drop his H's, and whether the jurors were quite as rowdy as this lot.

Fortunately, all the cast had the opportunity to show off their vocal talents despite (and sometimes because of) the



numerous changes in the music or parts. **Walter Klyce** (as a Juror) very admirably sang a "voiceover" for Mr. Miller's Defendant, and **Arlo Hill's** Judge downed an entire bottle of wine

during "When I, Good Friends, Was Called to the Bar," remaining amazingly musical (and even mimicking the rich attorney) even as his character's words and thoughts slurred. **Evan Siegel's** Usher as a Jewish rapper (complete with gangsta gesturers) was amusing, though the joke was stretched a bit too thin by the end of the play. "A British Tar" was performed in a contemporary collegiate a capella style on the steps of a gangway—and the list goes on.

The orchestra appeared as technically competent as the orchestras typical in suburban G&S performances I've attended, but in addition to various changes in the score to accommodate some of the changes in vocal styles, they performed numerous musical jokes, for example a remarkable set of extreme tempo changes in rapid succession during "Sorry Her Lot," playing a metrical kind of cat-and-mouse game with Josephine. In addition, they were costumed as pirates, and from time to time shouted "Aarh!"

A few lines were discarded (to the audience's great amusement) due to ad libs; as Sir Joseph demonstrated, "For I hold that on the seas, the expression pretty please with a cherry on top" does not scan according to Sullivan's score. Verses, or even whole songs, were cut for humorous effect, as when Josephine (with two female relations) adapted her part of "Refrain, Audacious Tar" to the style of Diana Ross and the Supremes, leaving

"Ralf" speechless, or when Little Buttercup shouted "Boola boola!" at Captain Corcoran and ran offstage at the cue for "Things are Seldom What They Seem." Some parts were omitted for no reason I could discern, however, notably the first verse of "Oh, Gentlemen, Listen, I Pray" and the entirety of "I Love Him" (up to the finale) in Trial By Jury.

Gender-bending is often amusing, as when the jurors and bridesmaids swapped choruses. But what really brought down the house was when "Ralf" sang the last verse of "The Hours Creep on Apace" in falsetto while two of his messmates pinned Josephine to the deck. (Princess Ida's Hack Night featured an almost identical stunt with the same results.)

A Hack Night performance turns G&S as topsy-turvy as Gilbert turned a 19th-century British courtroom and a frigate, and clearly it is not for G&S purists. It is also not for those who prefer their fellow audience members to refrain from uncontrollable laughter (I'm sorry, that was me). Nor would I recommend it as an introduction to Gilbert and Sullivan; without that background, I'm afraid it would be not much more than broad, sometimes off-color humor. But I've enjoyed two of these performances to date and would gladly see another; my only regret, which was expressed by my companions as well, was that we didn't also arrange to see one of the regular performances and so missed what was surely a very enjoyable "straight" performance.

—DAVID A. KARR

### Ruddigore, Hogwarts Players

It was an eager and intrepid band of Savoyards who met on platform nine and three-quarters, King's Cross Station, to board the Hogwarts Express. All were off to see the Hogwarts Players spring production of **Ruddigore**.

After a very pleasant journey, we settled happily into our seats in the Great Hall. A great burst of cheering and applause greeted the appearance of **Professor Dumbledore**, Headmaster of the school, tonight acting as Musical Director. A collective gasp of appreciation went through the audience as he began the Overture.

The orchestra was an amazing collection of ancient instruments (crumhorns, basset horns and serpents among the few I recognized) which benefited greatly from the lack of actual musicians to play them. The Professor's baton technique was flawless though throughout the evening I found myself occasionally

distracted by the glows, sparkles and smoke emanating from its tip.

The curtain rose on a very naturalistic scene, the glitter of real water in Rederring Harbor. Also seen therein by the discerning eye was the occasional appearance of a **giant squid**, acting as a sort of Greek Chorus behind the action of Act One. It is not my purpose here to give a character by character review of the show. Allow me, rather, to tell you a few of the actors and moments which pleased me most.

**Professor McGonagall** was a most impressive Dame Hannah. The images she produced in the air above the heads of the chorus during her song about the witch's curse were chilling and most effective.



**Miss Hermione Granger** was perfect as Rose Maybud--one could quite easily believe that here was a girl who was never without a book in her hand! **Harry Potter** seemed a bit nervous at

first as Robin Oakapple, but this played well into the character as given us by the author. **Ron Weasley** was a stylish and animated Dauntless. Mad Margaret was portrayed by **Miss Trelwaney**, Professor of Divination. It seemed to me that at times her mind wandered from the action at hand, but perhaps this was a part of her characterization. **Professor Snape** was, without doubt, the nastiest Despard I've ever seen.

Act Two was spectacular. Young Potter's transformation into Sir Ruthven was striking, the scar on his forehead shading into a lightning bolt of white hair. **Draco Malfoy's** performance as Old Adam, I'm sad to report, was the only major disappointment of the evening. I got

the impression that here was a young man who would much rather be elsewhere, doing--anything else.

The act was saved, however, by the entrance of the Ghost's Chorus. All were played by real ghosts. I recognized the



**Bloody Baron, Professor Binns, and Peaves** among the crowd of the deceased. It was refreshing to see the ghost scene without the annoyance of stage machinery. The Ancestors stepped down, not from their frames, but directly from the canvases!

**Nearly Headless Nick** was a great Sir Roderic. An elaborate Spanish ruff hid the cause of his demise--until, I fear, his final bow. I found myself wanting to see this ghost play Pish-Tush. To hear him deliver the line, "One might succeed in cutting it half off--that would be something"--well, the imagination boggles.

The highlight of the evening (for me, at least) was Roderic's line, "YOU--GO--AWAAAAAY!" whereupon Ruthven instantly Disappeared to the back of the house, where his faint "Yes, Uncle" was met by amazement and hilarity by all.

I should also mention the lovely interpolated interpretive dance during Hannah and Roderic's duet. **Pansy Parkinson** as the little flower and **Rubeus Hagrid** as the great oak made a very moving and effective moment out of what was most likely a bad idea to start with.

I'm afraid it's too late to see the show again this year, but keep alert--they're talking of either **SORCERER** or **IOLANTHE** for next year!

--**JIM DREW** (originally published in "The Gasbag")

☪☪☪ CALENDAR ☪☪☪

☪☪ **Pirates of Penzance auditions in Concord**



Alan Yost of the Concord Players informs us that auditions for their upcoming concert performance of "The Pirates of Penzance" will take place on March 17<sup>th</sup>. They are eager to include a large chorus. See their website, <http://www.concordplayers.org>, or contact Mr. Yost at [alan.yost@comcast.net](mailto:alan.yost@comcast.net), for more information.

☪☪ **Master Class in G&S with Roberta Morrell, Jan. 27th**

**Marion Leeds Carroll** writes in her Between-Bray announcement:

We've uploaded the text to the NEGASS web site: <http://www.negass.org/Pages/sloc-class.html> The important points: - there is no longer a deadline to apply - the class will take place: Saturday, January 27, 2007 First Religious Society Hall Town center, Carlisle, Mass. with Eric Schwartz as accomanist  
- mlc

☺☺ **Operetta Favorites: From Offenbach to Loesser.**  
**Stephanie Mann, Soprano; Thomas B Dawkins, Piano**

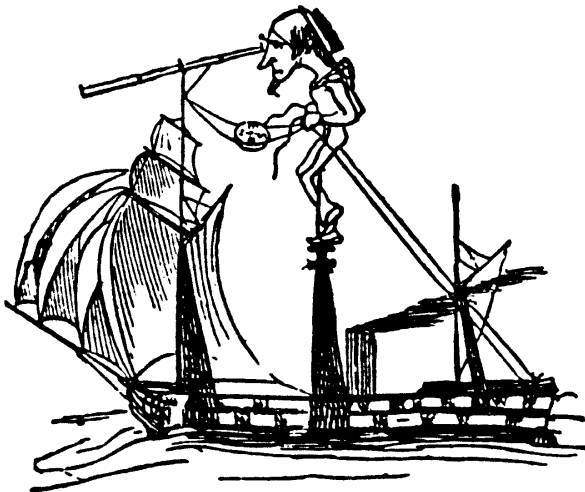
Saturday, February 24th at 2pm, The Lounge at Southgate at Shrewsbury

<http://www.southgateatshrewsbury.com/index.htm>

Stephanie Mann and Thomas B. Dawkins will be offering a recital of Operetta favorites including pieces from operettas by Jacques Offenbach, Johann Strauss, Gilbert and Sullivan, Sigmund Rombert, Victor Herbert, and Frank Loesser. Many timeless favorites will be performed as well as a few pieces from lesser-performed works.

☺☺ **Carl Rosa Tour**

The spring American Tour of the Carl Rosa Opera's production of "The Pirates of Penzance" will be in New England at least on the following dates:



Keene, NH, Colonial Theater, Wednesday, March 6, 2007.  
Concord, NH, Capitol Center, Thursday, March 7, 2007.  
Portland, ME, Portland Center for the Arts, Thursday, March 14, 2007. At

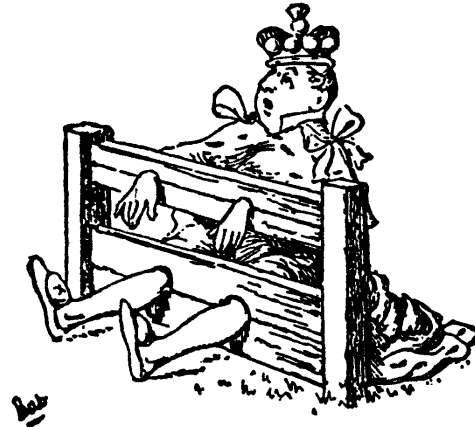
least some of the week between New Hampshire and Maine will be spent in Eastern Canada. Check their web site <[www.CarlRosaOpera.co.uk](http://www.CarlRosaOpera.co.uk)> for further details.

—DON SMITH

☺☺ **Iolanthe in Hancock County, Maine, beginning Feb. 23rd**

The G&S Society of Hancock County, Maine, is presenting "Iolanthe" in an updated version that

accentuates its relevance to our post-millennium lives.



A special treat; they are welcoming back the fine direction team of Daniel Mills and John Haskell. They made

significant contributions to their international awards of years past and are promising to create magic and meaning for us all in their ingenious and contemporary interpretation of this work.

Here are the performance dates and times: Friday Feb. 23, 7:00 pm, Saturday Feb. 24, 7:00 pm, Sunday Feb. 25, 2:00 pm, Friday March 2, 7:00 pm, Saturday March 3, 7:00 pm, and Sunday March 4, 2:00 pm. The March 2 show is for Performing Arts for Children.

I don't have ticket prices as yet. As the event approaches, info will be on-line at: <http://ellsworthme.org/gsshc> All performances at the Grand Theater, Ellsworth, ME. Box Office number is 207-667-9500 or 1-866-363-9500.

Tickets can be ordered on-line there at: <http://www.grandonline.org>

☺☺ The Spring 2007 show at MITG&SP will be **PRINCESS IDA**. It is to take place the weekends of **May 5 and May 12, 2007**.

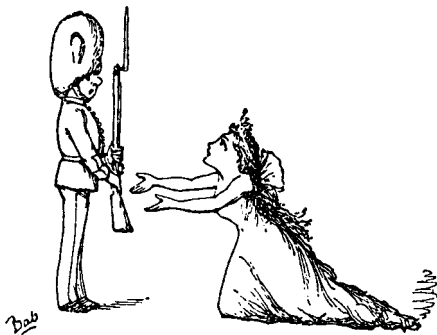
☺☺ The **Montreal West Operatic Society** will present their 68th annual production, "The Yeomen of the Guard"

on May 3, 4, 5 & 6 at Parkhaven Auditorium. Their road trip to the Haskell Opera House on the Border at Derby Line Vermont will take place May 19th Info at [www.mwos.org](http://www.mwos.org). — **Margaret Quinlan**

☺☺ **The Sudbury Savoyards'** 2007 show will be **IOLANTHE**. [The production will feature **NEGASS's** own **Tony Parkes** and **Art Dunlap** as the **Lord Chancellor** and **Private Willis!**--Ye Ed.]

Performance dates: February 23, 24, 25, 28, & March 2, 3, 2007 at the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. Please visit our website, [www.sudburysavoyards.org](http://www.sudburysavoyards.org) or call 978-443-8811 for more information. Thanks!

—**Andrea Roessler, Producer**



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NOTE: To subscribe to **SavoyNet**, the G&S mailing list, send a plain text email to listserv@bridgewater.edu with nothing in the subject line and **SUBSCRIBE SAVOYNET Your Name** in the message body.

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