



~UPCOMING NEGASS MEETINGS ~

**Fantasy Day – Saturday, January 30, 2010, 1 - 4 pm,
MIT Stratton Student Center, Room W20-307 (third
floor), 84 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA.**

A joint NEGASS/MIT G&SP sing of G&S favorites – solos, duets, trios, and ensembles! There is no pre-casting and scores will be available to sing along. If you plan to attend, please bring a snack to share.

Directions:

- Red Line to Central Sq or Kendall/MIT; walk to 84 Massachusetts Ave
- MBTA Bus #1 from Harvard Sq or Dudley Station to 84 Massachusetts Ave

<http://www.negass.org/directions/index.html>

For more help with directions to our meetings, please contact member-at-large Tom Dawkins: 978-225-0522, pooh-bah@negass.org.

**HMS Pinafore Screening- Sunday, February 28,
2010, 2 pm, Waltham Library, 735 Main St., Waltham,
MA.**

A Joint NEGASS/New England Opera Club screening of Opera Della Luna’s innovative video.

Directions:

Mass Pike to Rte 128/95 North; exit 26 to Rte 20 East (Main St); library is approx. 2 miles after Mass Pike exit.

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**The Sorcerer - LMLO – Sunday, March 14,
2010, 3 pm, LynnArts, 25 Exchange St, Lynn, MA.**

A joint NEGASS/Mass Theatrica event, this Last Minute Light Opera is an unrehearsed performance. No auditions – request the role you are interested in by emailing programchair@negass.org. The audience is the chorus; just show up and sing.

Roles:

- Sir Marmaduke Pointdextre, *an Elderly Baronet* (bass-baritone)
- Alexis, *of the Grenadier Guards, his son* (tenor)
- Dr. Daly, *Vicar of Ploverleigh* (lyric baritone)
- Notary (bass)
- John Wellington Wells, *of J. W. Wells & Co., Family Sorcerers* (comic baritone)
- Lady Sangazure, *a Lady of Ancient Lineage* (contralto)
- Aline, *her Daughter, betrothed to Alexis* (soprano)
- Mrs. Partlet, *a Pew Opener* (contralto)
- Constance, *her Daughter* (soprano or mezzo-soprano)
- Chorus of villagers

Directions:

- From Boston, take 1A North to Lynn; take Market St exit on left; right at lights onto Broad St (1A), 1st left onto Union St, 2nd right to 25 Exchange St.
- From North, take 1A South to Lynn, take Market St exit as above.
- Parking on the streets adjacent to and in front of LynnArts and in lot at the rear of the building.

<http://www.lynnarts.org/directions.html>



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NEXT BRAY DEADLINE: February 22, 2010

WWW.NEGASS.ORG

RECENT PRODUCTIONS

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Spontaneous Savoyards - Gondoliers

On November 7, the 'Spontaneous Savoyards' hosted a sing-through of *The Gondoliers* at the Munroe Center for the Arts in Lexington. Daniel Padgett was the very able pianist, and there was a good deal of role interest! There was a fantastic spread of food for those who attended. The singers were:

Duke of Plaza Toro: Brian Bermack
Don Alhambra: Tony Parkes (Act I), Art Dunlap (Act II)
Luiz: Jon Saul
Marco: Brad Amidon
Giuseppe: Tom Frates
Antonio: Ed Fell
Francesco: Jon Saul
Giorgio: Art Dunlap
Annibale: Ed Fell
Duchess of Plaza Toro: Angeliki Theoharis
Casilda: Ann Ferentz
Gianetta: Connell Benn (Act I), Stephanie Mann (Act II)
Tessa: Michelle Markus
Fiametta: Connell Benn
Vittoria: Stephanie Mann
Giulia: Janice Dallas
Inez: Marianne Orlando

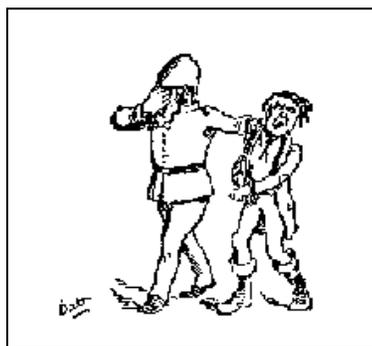
Pirates of Penzance, Valley Light Opera, Amherst, MA, November 6 - 8, 2009; <http://www.vlo.org>

Valley Light Opera's annual fall show at the Amherst Regional High School was *The Pirates of Penzance*, celebrating the group's 35th anniversary. I considered it to be one of the best I have seen there. I've attended twenty-four of their productions since 1978. It is always satisfying to see G & S performed as it should be, fully staged with great costumes and scenery, excellent leads, a skilled 27-piece orchestra, and enthusiastic supporting players.

Joseph Sabol, directing at VLO for the first time, demonstrated his competence right away in the overture. VLO treats the overture seriously by closing entrance doors so that no one is shuffling around looking for seats. Then there is a period where lights go on and latecomers can be seated before the show itself begins.

Matthew Roehrig, a VLO veteran, played Major-General Stanley. His excellent diction and somewhat moderate pace allowed the audience to hear every word clearly in "I am the very model of a modern Major-General." **Elaine Crane**, a

NEGASS member known to many in the group, did a superb job as Mabel. Her beautiful voice capably handled the high notes and cadenzas in "Poor Wandering One." Frederic was nicely interpreted by **Michael Holt**. He was especially good in the banter and singing of the "paradox" exchange. The interplay and expressions between him and Elaine were fully believable. The pirates were led by **Michael Gondek**. He and his lieutenant Samuel (**John Healy**) handled their parts and songs creditably. The policemen were properly awkward and bumbling. When I first saw and heard **Steve Morgan** as their sergeant, I wondered if his voice would project adequately. Those fears were soon allayed, however, as his song "A policeman's lot is not a happy one" came through quite well. **Courtney Sylvain** did very well as Ruth, though I considered her too attractive to be characterized in song as "plain and old." General Stanley's daughters, all of whom were in fact beauties, had elaborate costumes and their movements were well choreographed.



VLO's signature program, on a single sheet of heavy paper 17 inches high and 24 inches wide when opened up, was filled with all kinds of information and named countless volunteers in a myriad of tasks.

Listed in addition to the pirates, Stanley daughters and policemen were eight women with positions in the Stanley household, such as "riding mistress" and "elocution mistress." This group came onstage at times and served to bolster the choral singing.

An addition to the cast was Her Majesty the Queen played by **Elaine Fligman**. She strolled onstage in a regal manner, with one retainer, just before the final curtain and took some of the lines usually spoken by others. Finally, Mabel and Frederic climbed into the basket of a hot air balloon and were thus transported off stage left. After the usual curtain calls, supporting staff members also trooped onstage. The conductor mounted the stage and directed all in a reprise of "Hail Poetry." I don't know if they did this every time or because this was the final performance (of six). Regardless, it was a glorious conclusion to a performance that would have warmed the heart of any true Savoyard.

-**Bob Lingner**

Pirates of Penzance, Valley Light Opera,
Amherst, MA, November 6 - 8, 2009
<http://www.vlo.org>

Normally I avoid opening nights of shows (unless I'm performing in them!); I like to give the cast and orchestra time to settle into their parts before I see and hear them. But opening night of Valley Light Opera's *Pirates of Penzance* was the only performance I could work into my schedule. I decided to go anyway, and I'm glad I did.

The two biggest questions in my mind about any production of *Pirates* are, first, "How over the top is it?" and then, more specifically, "How much does it owe to Joseph Papp's version?" *Pirates* is more broadly parodic than most Gilbert & Sullivan - it's virtually a send-up of grand opera - and can stand a good deal more hamming than, say, *Iolanthe* or *Yeomen*. But to me, it's all the funnier when the slapstick is reined in and the inherent comedy in Gilbert's words and Sullivan's music is allowed to emerge. And although Papp deserves praise for looking at the show with fresh eyes, some of his ideas have gone stale through mindless copying over the past three decades. This is particularly true when an amateur company fails to give the essential energy to the pirates' swashbuckling, or the required discipline to the policemen's intentionally inept marching.

So I was greatly relieved to find that rather than rely on shtick, VLO's directors had decided for the most part to let Sullivan and Gilbert speak for themselves. Stage director **Graham Christian** had obviously coached his performers to adopt a natural style of speaking and moving; Gilbert would have approved. Music director **Joseph Sabol** kept things lively with a sure hand and well-chosen tempi.

All of the principals were no less than very good - an impressive score for an all-volunteer production - but two stood out in my mind. **Elaine Crane** was an effervescent Mabel whose smile lit up not just the stage but the whole auditorium. Her energy level and the quality of her singing felt to me like a challenge to the rest of the cast, to which they fortunately rose. **Matthew Roehrig** was simply the best Major-General I've ever seen. He played the part not as a doddering old fool but as a human being with a measure of dignity. The famous patter song was taken at a brisk but not rushed tempo; every word was crystal clear, and Roehrig achieved a fine air of self-importance - but as General Stanley saying "See how much I know," not as an actor saying "See how well I can deliver this."

Michael Gondek's Pirate King was something of a hybrid: younger- and fitter-looking than the traditional D'Oyly Carte portrayal, but less manic



than Kevin Kline's take on the role for Papp. Gondek came across as very much the authority figure of the pirate band: genial and smooth, but with steel under the velvet when necessary. **Steve Morgan**, sporting an impressive set of side whiskers, was a world-

weary Sergeant of Police, who had seen more than his share of human failings but could still be philosophical about life. **Michael Holt** as Frederic was a bit overshadowed by Crane's incandescence but furnished the right amount of boyish naïveté for a duty-struck pirate apprentice. **Courtney Sylvain** as Ruth and **John Healy** as Samuel sang well and played their parts refreshingly straight.

I was surprised to see Edith, Kate, and Isabel listed with the other chorus ladies, all of whom were named (Alice, Minnie, Septima, and so on). The reason became clear as the show progressed: their sung lines and dialogue were divided among half a dozen of the daughters. As all the soloists seemed equally gifted in voice and stage presence, I thought this was a nice way of giving more of them a chance to shine. Mabel made her first entrance just in time to sing "Yes, one"; this meant that she hadn't heard the words "homely face and bad complexion," but knew only that a handsome young man was offering himself to her sisters and they were spurning him – a thoughtful interpretation.

The male and female choruses were each divided into two groups. The women comprised nine daughters (not counting Mabel) and eight tutors and servants. The daughters entered first and had the stage to themselves for "Climbing over rocky mountain," giving them plenty of room for their delightful choreography (director Christian is also a scholar and teacher of historical dance). The pirates and policemen, eight to a side, stayed in their characters throughout, with no pirate basses joining the police force in Act Two. This made for a rather thin sound in the first few pirate choruses, but visually was quite satisfactory. The police were a bit clumsy in the Keystone Kops manner (as in the Papp production), but not obtrusively so. At the end, the pirates paired off with the daughters and the policemen with the chaperones.

Elaine Walker's costumes were gorgeous, particularly the daughters' dresses. I'm no fashion expert, but as it was emphasized in the program that the action takes place in 1873, I assume the dresses were true to the period. My only regret is that some of the lighting effects, notably the moonlight at the beginning of Act Two, washed out the lovely colors.

Chris Riddle's sets were simple but effective, with less clutter on stage than in many *Pirates* productions. According to the director's notes, the designs were inspired by 19th-century engravings, especially the ubiquitous Victorian toy theater sets sold for "penny plain and tuppence coloured." The sets were definitely "penny plain," in black and white outline like an unused coloring book; the effect was a bit jarring at first, but one got used to it, and it kept the sets from pulling focus away from the players. Less effective was the clock, with changing time, projected on the wall next to the stage. The notes told us it was supposed to show "that time moves swiftly and slowly, but never as we expect." I found it merely distracting, and in one case it served to underscore an existing problem: early in Act Two, Frederic says his men will march at eleven, although we have just heard sung "The midnight hour is past." The clock sided with Frederic by standing at ten. One wondered why "midnight" wasn't altered to "twilight," as was done by the old D'Oyly Carte company for many years.

Speaking of textual choices, Christian opted to restore several passages of dialogue that I had never read or heard before; they don't appear in either Reginald Allen's *First Night G&S* or Ian Bradley's *Complete Annotated G&S*. With the aid of the Gilbert & Sullivan Archive website, I learned that they are from the license copy of the libretto filed with the Lord Chamberlain (the censor of plays in Victorian times) before the original production. It was fun to hear the old lines, but there were no hidden gems among them that I would urge future directors to include; they added nothing to the plot and very little to characterization.

Two other additions stand out in my memory. A very convincing Queen Victoria appeared near the end of Act Two, when her name was invoked; she sang some of Ruth's and General Stanley's lines. The General made his first entrance in a hot-air balloon (a giant black-and-white cutout, like the rest of the scenery), which reappeared during the finale for Mabel and Frederic to sail away in. It was a fine visual effect, but I could have done without the realistic "blower" soundtrack, which nearly drowned out the music during the finale.

All in all, this was an exemplary *Pirates*, well conceived and well executed. It was definitely a traditional production, but not in the sense of mindlessly repeating old stage business just because it was funny years ago. (That sort of slavishness is just as easy to fall into with Papp as it

is with D'Oyly Carte.) Rather, directors and performers appear to have taken a fresh look at the piece and decided that it's funniest when played straight. I heartily agree, and judging from the reaction of the audience, so do a lot of other people.

- **Tony Parkes**

The Sorcerer, Harvard-Radcliffe G&S, Agassiz Theater, November 5 - 15, 2009

<http://www.hrgsp.org/happeningnow.htm>

I recently had the pleasure of going to see the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players' production of *The Sorcerer* in November. The entire cast, orchestra, and staff is made up of students at Harvard, mostly undergraduates, and a few recent alumni. The only exceptions in this show were three members of the orchestra roster, and the man playing John Wellington Wells. As such, the youthful group has a lot of energy and exuberance that makes the overall experience literally breathless!

The simple set contained all of the required elements: a couple of painted flats, a small cottage, and two benches evoking a small English village. Most other items were small carried-on set pieces or props. The orchestra was led by Music Director **Jesse Wong**, a sophomore, who despite a few minor tics ran a tight ship. Some of the recitatives didn't link to their arias – a very minor point, but one that caused slight flags in energy from time to time. These lapses in continuity notwithstanding, Wong's music direction is solid. It will be interesting to see how he does with *Pirates* in the spring, as from a musical perspective, *Sorcerer* is a much more difficult opera to pace.

Out came the three chorus women and four "men" (one of whom was an alto in trousers). Mrs. Partlett (**Amrita Dani**) and Constance (**Megan Savage**) then took possession of the stage, and we started to laugh. From the very start, it could easily be determined that Constance was not a well woman, and her opening aria "When he is here" was delivered in a pleasant warbling voice reminiscent of the early Disney princesses. Her acting was straight-up "lovesick maiden" crossed with "bel canto mad scene" and it was tremendously amusing. At the beginning of Act Two, she was turned into a chorus member for balance, and I wish she had sung with them before since her voice strengthened the upper part considerably. Her "Dear friends, take pity on my lot" had the appropriate infatuation and insanity as well.

When Dr. Daly (**Rob Knoll**) entered, watering a pantomime garden in the orchestra pit in his red vicar's garb, she began to fuss with her hair and dress and during his aria she and Mrs. Partlett's pantomime of

making her up and dousing her with perfume tended to upstage the singer, which was a pity since Mr. Knoll has a very sweet baritone voice. His "Engaged to So-and-So" was wistful if not particularly frustrated. He didn't actually play his stage flageolet, but the piccolo in the orchestra was excellent.



If you were to call down to central casting and ask for somebody to play the role of "overly self-assured tenor character" it would surely be somebody like **Benjamin Nelson**, whose Alexis clearly thought a

great deal of himself and his beauty. His character work began to come out in earnest during his scene in which he proposes to drug the entire village; the only time he stopped looking down his nose at Aline was when he was brushing back his shock of blond hair to accentuate his beauty, and his frustration at Aline's misunderstanding (the word is pronounced in the Bostonian dialect as "fill-tah") was palpable. Mr. Nelson's tenor is a little quiet and throaty to carry well, but it has a distinctly British drawing room character that goes perfectly with the acting.

As Alexis' father Sir Marmaduke, **Michael Yashinsky** didn't seem quite all there in the head or body and was delightfully awkward. I haven't the slightest idea how he stayed upright walking like that, but it made his disapproval of the "modern way of lovemaking" that much more ironic, and the yellow tights! His chemistry with **Sofia Selowsky** as Lady Sangazure was sublimely ridiculous, and in their duet the two danced the gavotte, Marmaduke escaping to cling to the proscenium arch during his "apostrophe like this" and Sangazure clinging to a frozen-in-time Marmaduke! It is difficult to find a contralto, but Ms. Selowsky possesses the ideal instrument, full-voiced and evenly produced throughout the registers. Her duet with John Wellington Wells was probably the best singing of the evening, and they were both able to *sing* the low Gs at the end.

Aline (**Marit Medefind**) sang a pretty version of "Happy young heart," robbing the chorus women of their flowers and then scattering them about the stage in operatic lover's ecstasy. Her dress also had the dreaded soprano's poofy sleeves, which suited the character very well. She plays Aline as deferential to her husband-to-be, but not a total pushover. She objected to the use of sorcery, and in the second act looked appropriately disgusted as Alexis pushed her around the stage and waltzed

with her during "It is not love." Her "Alexis! Doubt me not" was presented as another "mad" scene, Aline getting more and more drunk as the philtre takes effect and eventually passes out on a bench on stage, face down.

As the Notary, **Max Sabor** was stuffy and slow, and in the second act he took his line up an octave since the aria was in the lower of two possible keys. Why haven't I ever thought of that? The bass line is low enough in the high key!

As John Wellington Wells, **Nathaniel Koven** was not what one expects from Gilbert's sketches. No tailcoat and top hat but rather an Eastern-influenced black and gold frock coat, a great gilded and faux ivory staff instead of a magic wand, and gaunt makeup. His commitment to character was very strong indeed, and tiny ad-libs like his figures for how much to deduct since Alexis is a member of the Army and Navy Stores strengthened his portrayal. He succeeded in being menacing without resorting to too many stock moves, and his diction was impeccable in both his patter and the incantation; the aforementioned duet with Lady Sangazure was spectacular, and his delivery of the name "Ahrimanes" practically shook the stage.

Though small, the chorus impresses. There was dancing and movement galore, all of it sharp and precise. In the finale to Act One, the entire cast was bouncing up and down in a more and more drunken fashion until they all collapsed. The opening to Act Two was also boisterous and well-sung. The finale was presented effectively as a country round dance, chorus and soloists singing together for a very full sound.

Harvard gave us a great evening at the theatre, and what the young voices may lack in volume is more than made up for in energy and enthusiasm.

-Tom Dawkins

Pirates of Penzance, Connecticut G&S Society,
November 6-8, 2009, Middletown, CT,
<http://ctgilbertandsullivan.org>

The Connecticut G&S Society is one of the most dependably delightful performing groups in New England. I've been a fan ever since they premiered my performing version of *Thespis* twenty years ago, so I may be prejudiced but my opinions seem seconded by the enthusiastic following and devoted membership. Won't some Connecticut NEGASSer give us a first-hand report of next fall's production? In lieu of a live-witness to this year's "Pirates," and having been unable to make the trip south myself, I can act as "virtual" reviewer and say that on the basis of the beautifully

produced DVD (check out JustShootMeVideo.com) CG&SS has done it again.

Pirates may be the most surefire of all the Savoy operas, but it does take some real operatic singing to bring off the extent of the parody, and along with **Kathleen Thompson's** splendid coloratura and **Carol Connolly's** solid contralto, the opera's heart and soul were provided by **Bill Sorensen's** Frederic. He's been playing the juvenile hero for well over two decades, and what's most amazing is he still looks and acts the part! More importantly, he sounds it. From his ringing "However plain you be" to his delicate pianissimo "He loves thee" he's got to be the best tenor in regional G&S. He "created" my version of Sparkeion in 1989, and his voice hasn't lost an iota of its lustre.

I noted with sadness the death of **Pearce Beskin** (Mars in "my" *Thespis*) who had presided over the CG&SS for fifteen years and to whom this production was dedicated. He's left quite a legacy. As always, **John Dreslin** conducted a crisp band of seventeen musicians and made them sound like thirty-four, and **Bob Cumming** gave us traditional staging with any number of clever touches that never broke the spell. The sets, designed by none other than **Bill Sorensen**, reversed the usual views so that we got the sea's horizon and the graveyard (I noted the gravestone of a certain Tolloller), and the costumes (especially Ruth's in Act II) contributed brightly to the stage picture. Rounding out the cast were a robust King (**Hal Chernoff**), a droll Sergeant (**Mike Reynolds**), and a sprightly Edith (**Renee Molnar-Haines**), and the chorus contained enough spirited younger performers to give the company a bright future. So if you live in reach of Middletown, go see next year's offering and give us an eye-witness review!
-Jonathan Strong

Pirates of Penzance, Savoyard Light Opera Company (SLOC), November 13 - 22, 2009
<http://www.savoyardlightopera.org>

There were many reasons the Savoyard Light Opera Company's production of *The Pirates of Penzance* was well worth seeing -- and hearing. For starters, there was the orchestra under the direction of **Steve Malioneck** which provided music that was arguably worth the price of admission in its own right. Then there were the leads, who were solid and confident, and sang remarkably well. Having mastered their roles, they were in a position to embellish them with some very amusing bits.

Lonnie Powell seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself as Pirate King. He was believably intimidating and funny at the same time -- which is not the easiest thing to do -- at one point, (inevitably) thrusting his sword menacingly toward the audience (threatening, as it happened, to skewer Maestro Malionek), while at another getting tangled up in the rigging of a wrecked sailing vessel. **Laura Schall Gouillart**, similarly, seemed to be enjoying herself as Ruth; her gestures and expressions all very natural and appropriate to the caricature, and very entertaining.

While Lonnie and Laura are familiar to local audiences, tenor **Ethan Butler** is new to the Metro West G&S stage. In any case, he did an exceptionally good job as Frederic. In addition to his consistently strong singing, his convincing upper class accent, combined with a calm and politely urbane demeanor, served as the perfect counterpoint to those around him, particularly in the more emotionally charged scenes -- yet he had no difficulty exhibiting strong emotions himself where called for, as in "O False One You Have Deceived Me" and his duets with Mabel. Mabel, herself, by the way, was played by **Diana Doyle**, whose effortless coloratura was really something to hear.

Tom Frates as Major-General Stanley maintained a vigorous military bearing and ram-rod posture throughout. This wasn't the charmingly vague, somewhat senile sort of Major-General we've been accustomed to see in so many other productions, but rather a younger, more fit and, in the end, more completely demented gentleman. It worked very well, and meant Tom's performance was highly entertaining.

Another entertaining comedic job was turned in by **Mike Lague** as Sergeant of Police. Although other productions of *Pirates* I have seen have incorporated elements of Keystone Kops slapstick, in *this* production -- in "When the Foeman Bares His Steel," etc. -- *it was all about* Keystone Kops slapstick, and Mike's Sergeant was completely over-the-top.

The other leads in this strong cast were **Susan Craft** as Kate, **Robin Farnsley** as Edith, **Connie Benn** as Isabel and **Rick Barnes** as Samuel. The members of the women's and men's choruses played their individual parts in the success of the show as well; creating believable characters of their own, and not just fading back into some amorphous mass. In this, as in so many other respects, the knowledgeable and deft oversight of stage director **Donna DeWitt** was in evidence.

There was very good work on the tech side as well. In addition to the wrecked sailing vessel previously referred to, the set designer and builders had

created the view of a long line of rocky cliffs trailing off into the distance, which, I believe, is what much of the coastline around Penzance in fact actually looks like. Credit must also be given to the costume crew for a job well done -- particularly with respect to the attire of the women's chorus in Act I. Major-General Stanley's daughters were clad not in some sort of period hiking or picnicking garb (as is almost always the case), but rather in very authentic looking nineteenth-century ladies' bathing costumes. A great deal of work had clearly gone into making them.

The residents of Boston's western suburbs, and of eastern Massachusetts as a whole, are fortunate to have groups such as the Savoyard Light Opera Company and the Sudbury Savoyards in their midst. It's too bad they each only do one show a year.

-Art Dunlap

Pirates of Penzance, Savoyard Light Opera Company (SLOC), November 13 - 22, 2009
<http://www.savoyardlightopera.org>

This was truly a great show. Granted, it was *Pirates*, a favorite in the G&S canon. But this production maintained an extraordinarily high level of energy from the moment the orchestra struck up the overture until the curtain calls. The cast had a fine sense of physical humor: **Lonnie Powell's** Pirate King, who can fight off the whole gang but whose swagger is caught short by an inconveniently placed halliard; **Tom Frates'** Major-General, whose dreamy capers seemed at times to be channeling Groucho Marx; **Robin Farnsley's** (Edith's) impression of a mermaid's tail; **Mike Lague's** long-faced, shuffling, trembling Sergeant of Police, proving that white-gloved hands holding a truncheon can be exquisitely expressive; and too many other instances to count.

It seemed most of the action was highly choreographed, never boringly repetitious or forced but often requiring impeccable timing. For example, Frederic at first finds it quite difficult to woo Mabel -- or even to approach her -- as she keeps breaking out unaccountably in song at the most inconvenient moments. The subtlety of the choreography was illustrated in the second act when the policemen and pirates wove obliviously through each others' ranks in order to exchange hiding places (a fine tribute to Gilbert's impossible plot elements, I thought); but this was so well coordinated with the main action at center stage that at least one member of the audience did not notice the swap. The cast knew when to stop

moving, as well, such as for the picture-perfect group pose during “Hail, Poetry.”

The voices of the principals were well cast. Without disparaging the other fine performances, I have to note here that **Diana Doyle**, in Mabel’s entrance, combined an air of naïveté, egotism, and musical virtuosity that was at once hilarious and stunning. Under **Steve Malione**’s direction, the orchestra made an enjoyable interpretation of the score, notably the “catlike tread,” in which an exceptionally sharp sforzando and the exaggerated step forward of the entire pirate crew all struck as one blow.

Corey Auditorium is a small venue, providing a certain intimacy between actors and audience, but even using the aisles and the wings of the orchestra pit, it takes some ingenuity to fit a cast of 31 on stage. Two-dimensional rocky mountains made effective scenery in this space, particularly as the addition of a few paintings of columns and arches transformed them into a ruined chapel.

I encountered some welcome surprises. Frederic’s second appeal to the maidens is ... unappealing, after all. The General’s daughters seem much more willing to be abducted by pirates than they admit – just as well, considering their ultimate fate – and the General is quickly captivated by Ruth, a subplot that has to be acted in mime since it seems completely absent from the libretto. As a result, it seems everyone is happily paired off at the end, a very tidy result. Moreover, there is a rare cameo appearance by Queen Victoria herself. There were a few less welcome distractions – the stage has no space for two people to cross it behind the backdrop in a hurry, and a life preserver is a stick weighted with lead – but the main problem is the high bar this sets for the company’s next production. All in all, it was among the most enjoyable theater I’ve ever experienced.

-David Karr

The Mikado, MITG&SP, December 4 - 12, 2009
<http://web.mit.edu/gsp/>

Before the baton even dropped, the audience was transported to ancient Japan with the elegant set designed by the MIT staff. As the night progressed, I found that the stage dressing was a symbol for the beauty to be seen on stage that night.

Upon their entrance, the male chorus wooed the audience with their spirited precision fan choreography brought to the stage by **Susannah Gordon-Messer**. The men moved together in a tight ensemble aptly matched by their clean vocal lines and crisp diction. They would prove to be a boon to the leads throughout the

performance, giving subtle yet effective support to the shared scenes. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the female chorus who appeared more interested in projecting and drawing personal attention than in working together.

The part of Nanki-Poo was portrayed by **Barratt Park** who engulfed his happy-go-lucky character with so much sincerity that even when whining about life’s foibles, Nanki-Poo appeared charming.



His performance of “A wand’ring minstrel I” was an innocent and sweet contrast to the brute strength of the male chorus. In comparison Ko-Ko (**Davie**

Rolnick) and Pooh-Bah (a hilarious **Dan Salomon**) appeared downright evil and manipulative. Rolnick’s facial tics and fluster were matched brilliantly by Salomon’s unflappable calm. As a pair, their comedic sparring brought much amusement to the audience and often outshone their colleagues.

Julie Lauren Stevens played the vacuous and coy Yum-Yum. She was well matched by **Ginny Quaney** as Pitti-Sing and **Betsy Flowers** as Peep-Bo. The three maintained a tenuous vocal balance during their trio “Three little maids from school are we” but acted and danced well together in a tight unit. They were believable as three tight friends even if they were not always consistent in their characters. Stevens’ vocal control and agility were revealed during her solo, “The sun, whose rays are all ablaze,” as she effortlessly navigated the soprano vocal line. Her presentation and execution were an admirable display of opera at its finest.

Johari Frasier and **Francesca Giannetti** made a dominating Mikado and Katisha. Frasier transitioned seamlessly from chorister into the character of The Mikado with panache. He clearly defined The Mikado’s ruthlessness and blood thirst in “A more humane Mikado” as he taunted the chorus and ruled the stage. Giannetti has great charisma and stage presence as an actress. This being shared, it was difficult to watch her performance due to her imperfect diction and vocal insecurities. As an actress, Giannetti was capable of playing Katisha but as a musician the role was too heavy and the show suffered.

Also notable is **Jonathan Nussman** as Pish-Tush. Nussman was the most poised and polished musician on stage Friday night. The depth he gave to such a small, one-dimensional character is laudable.

The Mikado was a success: the pacing of the production was steady and well timed; the group numbers were creative and inspiring with their imaginative staging and contagious energy; and the cast worked very well together to create a memorable piece of theater and provoked cheer from their audience. I'm looking forward to more works of such a caliber from MIT and most specifically from the team of stage director **John Deschene** and music director Shawn **Gelzleichter**.
-Katie Drexel

Book Review – The Fabulous Feud of Gilbert & Sullivan, by Jonah Winter, Illustrations by Richard Egielski, New York: Arthur A. Levine, 2009

This illustrated children's book is the fairy-tale equivalent of *Topsy-Turvy*, pitched at the reading level of an eight-year-old. The story is the same: Gilbert & Sullivan get into a fight because Sullivan is tired of setting the same old stories. Gilbert visits a Japanese exhibition and is suddenly inspired. Sullivan agrees, and they write a masterpiece. This is told in about 30 pages, but there isn't much text per page. An adult would finish it in 10 minutes, assuming you don't linger long on the illustrations; but linger you should.

It seems to me that many eight-year-olds' eyes will glaze over when they see the word "opera" on the second page, but the publisher is the same fellow who discovered J. K. Rowling, so perhaps he is a better judge of such things than I.

The jacket blurb says that the author "was inspired to write about Gilbert & Sullivan after auditioning for *The Mikado* with no theatrical experience whatsoever – and he was given the lead role!" So, as the Baroness von Krakenfeld would say, he is new to the position. He doesn't have Mike Leigh's research department, so he makes many factual errors. Some, perhaps, are deliberate simplifications for the audience; but there are enough of them to suggest that he simply didn't know.

None of this matters. The illustrations are witty and lavish. If the book gets some little tykes interested in G&S, it will have done its job. Amazon carries it at \$11.55 (list is \$16.99).

❧❧ ANNOUNCEMENTS ❧❧

NEGASS Board Nominations Sought

We are now accepting self-nominations for positions on the NEGASS board. This spring, the NEGASS

nominations committee will assemble a slate of candidates for the following positions: Vice-President; Secretary; Publicity Chair; and Member-at-Large. We would love to hear from you! Please send expressions of interest to president@negass.org.

-Rebecca Hains, President

New Members

NEGASS welcomes new members **Marianne Orlando** of Framingham, **Janine Gauntt** of Boxborough, **Teresa and Frank Pergal** of Annisquam, and **Ed Piper** of Exeter, NH. Janine and Marianne are in the current Sudbury cast of *Princess Ida*. One day Marianne went to a G&S pep rally to decide between auditioning for Offenbach and Gilbert & Sullivan and arbitrarily said, "I'll pick the one that's in English." Since then, she has performed with the University of Michigan G & S Society and other groups in and around Boston, and draws cartoons for the The GASBAG (Gilbert and Sullivan Boys and Girls).

A Passing of the Editor's Baton

It is with great pleasure that I assume the editorship of *The Trumpet Bray*. Michael Belle, who has passed me his baton, has been engaged to sing in the San Francisco area and the entire Bray staff wishes him well. He has served with flair and energy, and it will be a challenge to follow in his footsteps. He will go and do his duty, and I will do mine! I look forward to bringing our NEGASS members many Brays full of useful, comical, topical, and up-to-date information about our G&S world.

- Martha Birnbaum

Gilbert & Sullivan Resources Online

Marc Shepherd, list manager of SavoyNet, has completed revisions to his edition of *The Grand Duke*, incorporating suggestions/corrections from the recent SavoyNet production.

The handy Performer's Edition, which omits the Introduction and Appendices, is 115 pages shorter than the Full Edition; the latter contains information useful for directors, conductors, and anyone interested in the history of the opera or its text. Both are available free as PDF downloads.

Full Edition: \$21.95.

<http://www.lulu.com/content/paperback-book/the-grand-duke/111595>

Performer's Edition: \$18.95.

<http://www.lulu.com/content/paperback-book/the-grand-duke-performers-edition/7857266>



NEGASS Calendar

<i>Trumpet Bray</i> stuffing Sunday, January 17, 2010 2 pm.	Come chat with friends and share some snacks while we prepare the <i>Bray</i> for mailing.	Email president@negass.org for details on how to attend.
G & S Fantasy Day Saturday, January 30, 2010 1- 4 pm	Joint NEGASS/MITG&SP event We'll provide the accompanist. Bring your favorite G&S songs and we'll sing solos and ensembles at the piano. Want a turn? You'll get one.	MIT Student Center, room 307 84 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge, MA
Screening of Opera Della Luna's <i>HMS Pinafore</i> Sunday, February 28, 2010 2 pm	Joint NEGASS/New England Opera Club event Come join members of the NE Opera Club for a video screening of Opera Della Luna's innovative <i>Pinafore</i> .	Waltham Library 735 Main St. Waltham, MA
<i>The Sorcerer</i> Last Minute Light Opera Sunday, March 14, 2010 3 pm	Joint NEGASS/Mass Theatrica event Leads will be cast in advance; no rehearsal! See this issue, p. 1 for the casting call.	LynnArts 25 Exchange St. Lynn, MA
Outing to Brown University's production of <i>Pirates</i> Spring, 2010	Details pending. Watch this space....	Time and location TBD
NEGASS Elections May, 2010	NEGASS Elections/Fantasy day	Time and location TBD

Upcoming Auditions

<i>Gondoliers</i> MIT G&SP February 2, 3, 4, 2010, 7 pm (Callbacks: Feb. 6, 1-5 pm, room 306) (Show: April 30, May 1, 2, 6-8, 2010)	<u>Singers:</u> Prepare one song in English (accompanist provided) and do one cold reading. <u>Production crew:</u> need Master Carpenter, Choreographer, Makeup Artist, Orchestra Manager, Costume designer/Seamstress/Tailor	MIT Student Center, room 407 84 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge, MA Contact gsp-ec@mit.edu ; http://web.mit.edu/gsp
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Upcoming Productions

<i>Princess Ida</i> Sudbury Savoyards February 20, 21, 25, 26 & 27, 2010	For more information, go to http://sudburysavoyards.org or call 978-443-8811	Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School 390 Lincoln Rd. Sudbury, MA 01776
<i>The Sorcerer</i> G & S Society of Maine February 18-21, 2010	http://www.gilbertsullivanmaine.org 7 pm on February 18, 19, 20; 2 pm on February 20, 21	Grand Theater Ellsworth, ME
<i>Mikado</i> Worcester Opera Works March 13, 2010	http://www.worcesteroperaworks.com 508-930-7062	Worcester State College Sullivan Auditorium 486 Chandler St. Worcester, MA 01602