



NEGASS EVENTS

NEGASS Annual Election Meeting, Sunday, May 20, 2012, 2 - 5 pm, Springstep, 98 George P. Hassett Drive, Medford, MA 01776

Please join NEGASS members and friends on May 20 for our Annual Election Meeting and "Singing Choruses in Public"! We will be electing the following officers: Vice-President; Secretary; Publicity Chair; and three Members-at-Large.

Bring your scores and your singing voice as we sing through some of Gilbert and Sullivan's finest ensembles including "Loudly let the trumpet bray", "With cat-like tread", "Welcome, gentry", and others.

Parking is available beneath Springstep and on George P. Hassett Dr. Springstep is located in Medford Square, across from Medford City hall, adjacent to I-93, Route 60, and Route 16. Directions: <http://www.springstep.org/?q=contact/directions>

NEGASS NEWS

NEGASS Board Nominations Sought

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

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nominations committee will assemble a slate of candidates for the following positions: Vice-President; Secretary; Publicity Chair; and three Members-at-Large. We would love to hear from you! Please send expressions of interest to [pres AT negass DOT org](mailto:pres@negass.org) by April 20.

-Rebecca Hains, President

Here's a First Rate Opportunity!

The NEGASS School Outreach Committee is seeking THREE MEN to read the parts of William Gilbert, Arthur Sullivan, and Richard D'Oyle Carte in a short program to be presented at a local public school, on a Friday this spring (date to be arranged). The program, entitled "The Words or the Music?", introduces elementary school children to Gilbert and Sullivan operas through a dramatized conversation among the three men, illustrated with live performances of songs from "The Pirates of Penzance".



The three readers would not sing solos, but could potentially join in the choruses. If you could take one of these roles, please contact Nancy Burstein ([impresaria AT comcast DOT net](mailto:impresaria@comcast.net)).

NEGASS Job Board

NEGASS is seeking an administrator for our newly refurbished web site. This is a volunteer position requiring a small amount of time while providing an enjoyable experience and a great benefit to NEGASS.

If interested, please contact [pres AT negass DOT org](mailto:pres@negass.org)



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Martha Birnbaum – editor AT negass DOT org

CALENDAR EDITOR

Martha Birnbaum – calendar AT negass DOT org

REVIEWS EDITOR

Stephanie Mann – progchair AT negass DOT org

DESIGN CONSULTANT

Rebecca Hains – pres AT negass DOT org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rebecca Hains, president (pres AT negass DOT org); Thomas Dawkins, vice president (vicepres AT negass DOT org); Tom Weber, treasurer (treas AT negass DOT org); Stephanie Mann, program chair (progchair AT negass DOT org); Martha Birnbaum, secretary (sec AT negass DOT org); Connie Benn, member-at-large (conniebenn AT negass DOT org); Nancy Burstein, member-at-Large (impresaria AT Comcast DOT net); Susan Craft, member-at-Large (susan.craft1 AT gmail DOT com); Vance Koven, member-at-large (vrkoven AT gmail DOT com)

ORGANIZATIONAL STAFF

Martha Birnbaum, editor, *The Trumpet Bray* (editor AT negass DOT org); Marion Leeds Carroll, webmistress (webmistress AT negass DOT org); Janice Dallas, membership (memb AT negass DOT org) & librarian

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), P.O. Box 367, Arlington, MA 02476-0004.

GENERAL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS may be sent to editor AT negass DOT org. REVIEWS may be sent to progchair AT negass DOT org. CALENDAR ITEMS may be sent to calendar AT negass DOT org.

SUBSCRIPTIONS Standard membership in NEGASS pays for a printed copy of each issue of the Bray, plus a password to the current issue of the online PDF version. NEGASS membership dues are \$20, \$30, \$50 and \$100. To join, please contact membership chair Janice Dallas, 63 Everett St. Arlington, MA, 02474-6921 or mail memb AT negass DOT org.

Members receive the Bray via US mail or as a PDF email attachment. To receive the Bray via email, please send a request to memb AT negass DOT org. All editions except the current edition are available online. The current edition is available online to NEGASS members only.

ARCHIVES Past issues of *The Trumpet Bray* can be read or downloaded from <http://www.negass.org/bray>
BETWEEN-BRAY ANNOUNCEMENTS Members can sign up to receive our special *Between-Bray emails* at <http://www.negass.org/join/email.html>

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MATERIAL: 15th of the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November, 2011.

www.negass.org

SLOC Honors Connie Benn

In 1988, SLOC established the Savoyard Light Opera Company "Gallery of Ancestors" to honor members who have made outstanding contributions to their organization. At their Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 29, 2012 SLOC gave NEGASS Board of Directors member **Connie Benn** this special award and the title of "Ancestor". We congratulate Connie on this honor.

NEGASSers on SLOC Board

Newly elected to the Savoyard Light Opera Company's Board of Directors are NEGASSers **Connie Benn, Tom Frates** and **Jim Miller**, along with Brian Harris and Julie Cornell. Re-elected were Sally Harris, and Larry Millner. They join Philip Drew and Linda St. Francis. Leaving the Board are Elizabeth Hoermann and Alan Rohwer.

New NEGASS Member

NEGASS welcomes new member **Andrew Gabriel** of Beverly, MA.

Peter Aron Stark - A Celebration of His Life

I learned about Peter's fatal car crash after the funeral in January had already taken place, so it was a bittersweet pleasure to be able to join his friends at the memorial service hosted by the Sudbury Savoyards on March 11. I knew Peter as a performer and director, most recently of the haunting J.M. Barrie play, "Mary Rose"; the program brought together his other talents and interests..

We heard recordings of Peter himself singing several comic Yiddish songs; his colleagues spoke of his gifts as a teacher at the Solomon Schecter Day School; and the Gilbert and Sullivan connection was well-represented by performances by Kathy Lague, Tony Parkes, Donna Dewitt, Kathleen Larson Day, Ed Fell, and Dennis O'Brien. Peter's cousin Scott and others spoke movingly about their memories of him, and we were able to join in a recital of the Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. The program closed with a rousing performance of "When I good friends was called to the Bar" by Dennis, in which the assembled multitude chimed in as chorus. Peter's death is a great loss to the theatrical and educational communities of which he was a part..

- Nancy Burstein

UPCOMING PRODUCTIONS

Pirates of Penzance, Benefit Concert, May 12, 2012, Wiggin Auditorium, Peabody City Hall, Peabody, MA

NEGASSERs **Rebecca Hains**, our President, and **Tom Dawkins**, our Vice-President, will present a benefit for the Peabody Institute Library, a concert performance of *The Pirates of Penzance* to be held on Saturday, May 12, 2012 at 7:00 pm in the Wiggin Auditorium of Peabody City Hall. The Wiggin Auditorium was built as a real Victorian opera house, including beautiful parquet raked stage and

marvelous acoustics. Rebecca and Tom have assembled an outstanding cast, many of whom are NEGASS members.



Mabel - **Rebecca Hains**; Edith - **Connie Benn**; Kate - **Susan Craft**; Isabel - **Kaori Emery**; Ruth -

Angeliki Theoharis; Frederic - **Ethan Butler**; Pirate King - **Tyler Hains**; Samuel - **Brad Amidon**; Major General Stanley - **Tom Frates**; and Sergeant of Police - **Miles Rind**.

The suggested donation is \$25 and \$20 for seniors. Tickets are available for purchase at the Main, South and West Branch Libraries. Please call the library at 978-531-0100 for more information.

RECENT PRODUCTIONS

Haddon Hall, Valley Light Opera, March 17, 2012, Amherst Regional High School, Amherst, MA

On Saturday, 17 March, Valley Light Opera (VLO) in Amherst, MA presented a single concert performance of *Haddon Hall*. Known as a "SWOG", for "Sullivan With Out Gilbert", this is one of half a dozen theatrical works that Sir Arthur Sullivan wrote with librettists other than Gilbert – in this case, Sydney Grundy. This 1892 piece falls fairly late in the Sullivan timeline. By 1892, he had already composed all but two of the works he was to write with Gilbert, the most recent having been *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1888) and *The Gondoliers* (1889). His one grand opera, *Ivanhoe*, had been produced the preceding year (1891). There's a definite family

resemblance between *Haddon Hall* and these other late-period works, a full palette of rich musical colors.

With the exception of *The Rose of Persia* (1899, with Basil Hood), the SWOGs have not been revived and produced as fully staged shows because the librettos are generally considered weak; it would require substantial cutting and some judicious rewriting to make them play well.

However, in recent years there has been increased interest in the Sullivan music in these works, sparked in part by scanned replicas of the vocal scores being made available free for download from the online Gilbert & Sullivan Archive, and in part by a series of recordings sponsored by the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society in England.

In 2005, under the baton of **William (Bill) Venman**, Valley Light Opera began a series of concert performances of the music from these little-known works, going beyond the piano-only presentations some societies had done to performances with the full orchestrations for which they were originally scored. Orchestration was always one of Sullivan's great strengths, and hearing this music the way he intended it is a revelation.

The *Haddon Hall* performance was a straightforward concert-format presentation of the music with brief connective narrative (neatly skirting the problem of the weak playscript). There was a full 27-piece orchestra and a good-sized and good-sounding chorus as well as the principals. Most G&S works were scored for 25-piece orchestra; the additional instruments, a second bassoon and a third trombone, were also added to his later works with Gilbert, and add fullness and weight to the bottom register in particular.

It was a joy and a delight to be able to hear the piece "live" with orchestra--a first for this continent, it's thought. It's not an easy orchestral score, but the VLO orchestra had patently attacked it with a ready will, and it showed. Lively tempos did not daunt them, and Bill got a great deal of expressive range from the orchestra. Out of a full-length evening (there's a *lot* of music in *Haddon Hall*, and as it was they skipped the Scottish dance), there were only a couple of very minor spots where something went slightly off; quite remarkable!

The singers were well cast. The audience had been provided with a printed libretto, which I needed to refer to only when the textures got thick, but many people were following along (one could hear the

simultaneous page turns!). I think this added a certain authenticity to the experience, in light of the fact that 19th century audiences usually did have the libretto to follow during a performance of a new work.

Lovely solos, and lovely small-ensemble work. The Madrigal, which many know even if we don't know the rest of the work, was especially well done. So was "Rice and Rue", a trio that's a personal favorite of mine, on the same theme as Josephine's "God of love, god of reason" *scena* in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and all the duets. The sequence for the senior Vernons, which encompasses both the contralto solo "Queen of the Garden" and the exquisite little duet for the older married couple, was beautifully rendered. The Puritans and That Scotchman (I refuse to call him a "Scotsman" because it's a stock stage figure) got their laughs...and had me thinking that this is entirely too appropriate a piece to be done in this particular election year, as the Puritans sounded uncomfortably like some of the right-most rhetoric.

For me, though, the evening was about enjoying the musical textures in live performance, and that richly rewarded my trip from New Jersey. The audience thoroughly enjoyed it, and gave Bill a well-deserved standing ovation at the end.

I'd still like to see a full costumes-set-dialogue presentation of this work just once to see how the whole thing runs, but based on this, I'd say that *Haddon Hall* definitely does merit concert-performance-with-orchestra treatment elsewhere, if a group that has a good orchestra wants to offer its patrons something other than the regular flavors of G&S toffee. A very enjoyable evening in the theatre! Congratulations to everyone at VLO, and thank you!

- Andi Stryker-Rodda

***Ruddigore*, Sudbury Savoyards, February/March, 2012, Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School, 390 Lincoln Rd., Sudbury, MA**

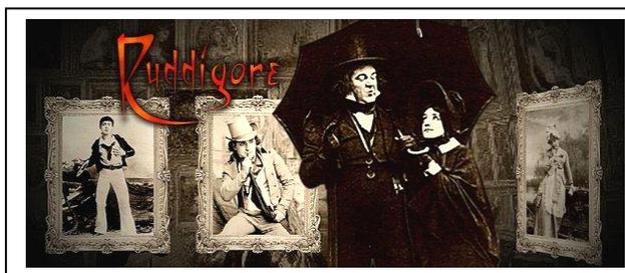
Peter Stark's posthumous *Ruddigore* was unabashedly aimed at the Inner Brotherhood. Even so, this very successful production was received with joyous shout and ringing cheer by a wide-ranging audience, despite surprises for those of us used to standard versions. Peter's stated goal was to unwrap all the original plans that were put aside in the course of polishing the final product. Some of Peter's innovative recreations worked, some didn't, but he provided a lot to think about.

The opening was the first surprise: Dame Hannah

(**Pamela Ryba**) appeared on the balcony, singing the story of the Murgatroyds, before the overture began. She sang *part* of the song; the rest was left for its usual moment in the show. Did this work? It had its plusses and minuses: it was a good frame for the story, but left a thin moment where Dame Hannah's full aria usually sits.

After a fine rendition of the overture led by Music Director **Kate Meifert**, we found ourselves in a strange Reddering. Peter's goal was a single, re-usable set, but the unrealistic unit (which took up most of the upstage area) limited the playing area and resulted in some textbook-level bad staging.

The bridesmaids made the most of the cramped stage, and the dancing of both Dick Dauntless (the fine **Peter Boettcher**) and the girls was good throughout. Peter added an unusual interpretation, which, as far as I know, was entirely his own: Ruth, the one-line character (**Kerry Teman**), swelled into a full-time, ongoing rival with Zorah (**Connell Benn**)



for the affections of Dick. My reactions alternated between amusement at the depth gained by both characters and annoyance at the distraction from the main story.

The entrance of Despard and his men suffered from the cramped stage area, but the use of **Tony Parkes** in Peter's added "Old Horatio Goodheart," Despard's answer to Old Adam, was a treat.

I was surprised, given Peter's plans to point out Gilbert's parody of melodramatic style, that Despard did not employ standard melodramatic line readings. When presented with the correct mustache-twirling villainy, Despard gets a big laugh - but **Ed Fell**, otherwise a very fine Despard, read his opening lines rather simply.

Sir Despard and Mad Margaret (**Kathleen Larson Day**) were favorites of the enthusiastic audience. I assumed that their Act I melodrama, added by Peter, came from the original script. Their interactions in this scene satisfyingly informed their characterizations throughout the performance, while leading me to understand why Peter had cast a vocal

and physical "Dame Hannah" type in the young-lyric-mezzo role of Margaret. I was glad it was included in his version. Looking at my copy of *First Night Gilbert and Sullivan*, however, I see no sign of the dialog or the music, so Peter either made this up out of whole cloth, or found it in the bottom of Gilbert's trash barrel.

Musically, the Act I Finale was the one instance of a misjudgment. That number has to start much more slowly than you'd expect in the middle of a light comic opera, if you want the parts to fall into place smoothly. It started too fast, and it took a while for things to shake out. But I enjoyed the charming English country dance (by choreographer **Barbara Finney**) for the wedding - by then, the tempo was just right.

Act II showed the purpose for that mountain in the middle of the stage: a set-up for the picture gallery. This worked much better than Act I, and looked very handsome. The act featured the LONG intro to the ghost's scene and the annoying gag about tickling as the final torture. The original version of Robin's "Away, Remorse" and the revived dialog in the scene among Despard, Ruthven and Margaret were a treat to hear. I was glad that all the ancestors got to revive, as in the original version.

Congratulations to **Dennis O'Brien** (with **Laura Gouillart's** help) for taking over as Stage Director and doing a remarkable job of bringing Peter's plans to light. Praise, too, for the Robin of the always-excellent **Tom Frates**, and the promising Rose of **Kate Harper**; for Sir Rupert Murgatroyd (**Randy Davinski**), and for the various versions of Old Adam (**Mike Lague** and **Tom Ostrowski** in addition to **Tony Parkes**), and for the various speaking ancestors, including **Fred Hughes** in his moment of glory ("Fallacy somewhere, I fancy!").

I look forward to many more fine productions from the Sudbury Savoyards!
- **Marion Leeds Carroll**

A Tasty Treat for Vegetarian G & S Fans

Meryl Danziger, a New York-based G&S aficionado and vegetarian, sent us a video of his humorous parody of Major General Stanley's patter song. Featuring baritone **Jefferson Osborne** decked in a straw farmer's hat, the song begins:

I am the very model of a modern vegetarian.
I've traded in my haute cuisine for diet more agrarian.
To demonstrate my fervent and unwavering obedience,
I'm always reading labels and examining ingredients.

Osborne is accompanied by a chorus of animal puppets and **pianist Cathy Venable**.

Asked for more information about his background, Meryl writes, "My mother was a G & S singer, so it got early into my soul. Though I have never performed on stage, I was a violinist in a previous life and have played in G & S orchestras. I live in NYC and run Music House (www.nycmusichouse.org), a program I created as an alternative to traditional private music lessons."

To view the video, please visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUzFkWDfzAQ>, or search for "A Modern Vegetarian" on YouTube.



NEGASS Events - 2012

NEGASS ELECTION Meeting	Sunday, May 20 (2 - 5 pm) see page 1	Springstep 98 George P. Hassett Drive Medford, MA 01776
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Upcoming Productions & Events - 2012

<i>G & S Sing-in</i> BUGS	April 14 (10 am - 5 pm) http://students.brown.edu/BUGS/sing-in_form.php	Brown University Alumnae Hall 194 Meeting St. Providence, RI
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<i>Utopia Ltd</i> Blue Hill Troupe	April 20 - 28 866-811-4111 http://www.bht.org	El Teatro of El Museo del Barrio 1230 5 th Avenue New York, NY
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<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> Portland Lyric Theater	April 20 - May 5 207-799-1421 www.lyricmusictheater.org	Lyric Music Theater 176 Sawyer Street South Portland, ME
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<i>Yeomen of the Guard</i> BUGS	April 27, 28, 29 http://students.brown.edu/BUGS	Brown University Alumnae Hall 194 Meeting St. Providence, RI
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<i>The Grand Duke</i> MITG&SP	May 4, 5, 10, 11 (8 pm), May 6, 12 (2 pm) grand-duke@mit.edu	MIT Student Center (2 nd floor) 84 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA
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<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> Rebecca Hains & Tom Dawkins	May 12 (7 pm) 978-531-0100	Peabody City Hall Wiggin Auditorium 24 Lowell St. Peabody, MA
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<i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i> Road Scholar (Elderhostel)	July 8 - 12 led by Rafe McPhail, Ivoryton Savoyards www.campwarwick.com/ElderHostel.htm	The Warwick Center 62 Warwick Center Road Warwick, NY 10990 845-986-1164
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<i>Trial by Jury & H.M.S. Pinafore</i> CTG&SS	September 14 & 15 (7:30 pm), 16 (2 pm) http://www.vlo.org 800-866-1606	Middletown High School Performing Arts Center 200 LaRosa Lane Middletown, CT
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<i>Ruddigore</i> CTG&SS	October 28 (7:30 pm), 29 (2 pm, 7:30 pm) http://www.vlo.org 800-866-1606	Middletown High School Performing Arts Center 200 LaRosa Lane Middletown, CT
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Auditions

<i>Patience</i> Valley Light Opera	May 5 (10am - 2 pm), May 6 (1 - 4 pm) http://www.vlo.org	1 st Congregational Church 165 Main St. Amherst, MA
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<i>Trial by Jury & H.M.S. Pinafore</i> CTG&SS	May 20, 22 (7 pm) http://www.vlo.org 800-866-1606	Church of The Holy Trinity 381 Main St. Middletown, CT
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