

THE
TRUMPET BRAY

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ENGLAND GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY



NEGASS EVENTS

***Gems of Victorian Operetta*, January 14, 2012, 2 pm, Munroe Center for the Arts, 1402 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington, MA**

Please join us on Saturday, January 14, 2012, for a *Gems of Victorian Operetta* recital featuring NEGASS members **Rebecca Hains** and **Thomas B. Dawkins**.

This program will provide a look at some Gilbert & Sullivan as well as arias that influenced them, mostly from the Victorian era, including operetta by Johann Strauss, opera by Michael Balfe and Jacques Offenbach, and dramatic oratorio by G.F. Handel. The recital will be at the Munroe Center for the Arts, 1402 Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington, MA at 7:30pm.

While this is a free concert, reservations are requested and can be made by emailing saturdays@munroecenter.org so that accommodations can be made for all who wish to attend. Donations are encouraged to promote the continuation of the concert series.

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NEGASS NEWS

NEGASS School Outreach Committee Seeks Volunteers

In accordance with NEGASS's mission to attain broader appreciation of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, a committee has been formed with the intent of developing a **school-based model** for increasing young people's knowledge, interest, attendance, and performance of G&S operas. Current committee members are Nancy Burstein and Susan Craft, both Members-at-Large of the NEGASS Board. Additional members are sought.

Committee members will work with liaisons from both (a) local G&S performing groups and (b) local schools, to bring presentations into the schools that will include sample scenes from upcoming productions.

Depending on the interest of the performing groups and the schools, students could also be offered: invitations to attend a dress rehearsal, discounted or complimentary tickets for performances, and an opportunity to learn one or more choruses from the operetta.

If this project interests you, please send an e-mail to: Nancy Burstein ([impresaria AT Comcast DOT net](mailto:impresaria@comcast.net)) or Susan Craft ([Susan.Craft1 AT gmail DOT com](mailto:Susan.Craft1@gmail.com)).

Calling All Parent and Teachers

Can you spare three minutes to help the NEGASS School Outreach Committee (see item above) begin to assemble a data base? If so, please send an e-mail to [impresaria AT Comcast DOT net](mailto:impresaria@comcast.net) with the following information:



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

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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

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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.

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

- Name of school
- Town
- Grade level of school
- Public or private?
- Your relationship to the school
- Does the school perform any G&S?
- Does the school engage in any other G&S-related activities?
- Who are the music and drama teachers?
- Can we use your name in contacting school personnel?

Thanks for your help!

NEGASS/Opera Comique Joint Production

The Opera Comique will be visiting the U.S. from England in August 2012 as part of its celebration for the group's 35th anniversary and director Kevin Sivyver's 50th anniversary as a performer. (Those who attended the NEGASS Sing-Out may recall Kevin Sivyver's fine conducting of several operas that weekend.) During the Opera Comique's trip to New England, they will perform *The Pirates of Penzance* and *H.M.S. Pinafore* in Mystic, CT. These will be narrated versions of the operas, with no dialogue; all music will be performed off-book.

Kevin Sivyver has invited NEGASS members to join the Opera Comique as chorus members and in a small number of principle roles. The rehearsal and performance period is August 23-26, 2012; complementary accommodations will be provided in Mystic, CT.

Would you be willing to spend August 23-26 in Mystic, CT, preparing and performing these shows with our international colleagues? If so, please send an email to director Kevin Sivyver (kevinsivyver@btinternet.com) expressing your interest by the end of December. Be sure to mention that you are a NEGASS member.

New NEGASS Members

NEGASS welcomes new member **Barbara Engel**, who got involved with Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas after daughter Kate Meifert Barbara and her son were chorus members of several G & S productions of the Summer Savoyards in Binghamton, NY. Barb participated in the **NEGASS 35th Anniversary Sing- Through** in Concord this spring.

RECENT PRODUCTIONS

**Ruddigore, Connecticut G & S Society,
October 29, 2011, Middletown High School,
Middletown, CT**

On the afternoon of October 29, as the quartet of soloists was singing "Winter still is far away", the famous pre-Halloween snowstorm was already raging – for real. It had caused a power outage before the Richard-Despard duet, but the Connecticut G & S Society was soldiering on.



Bill Sorenson's sets and lighting pulled off the Act II effects brilliantly and the cast lived up to its *mise-en-scène*.

Indebted as I am to director **Bob Cumming** and conductor **John Dreslin** for premiering my performing edition of *Thespis* in 1989, I can safely say, without prejudice, that Thespis alum **Laurie Weisbrot** as Roderic delivered a stentorian performance that mellowed nicely when he retrieved his long-lost love, **Betty L. Olson's** charming Dame Hannah. Their duet, far from dragging down the end of the opera, gave it a warm glow.

Mike Reynolds was as bumptious a Richard as one could desire, with his strong tenor and comic flair. **Renée Haines** brought an operatic voice and a doe-eyed gracefulness to her portrayal of Rose Maybud. The production wisely revived the Gideon Crawle transformation along with Robin-to-Ruthven. **Don Shirer's** lanky and trembling good old man seemed just right as a compliment to **Dave Henderson's** new and not-so-wicked self.

Meanwhile I was driving innocently through what I'd never imagined would be a show-stopping storm, so the evening performance of *Ruddigore* had to be called off, and I can only report, via an excellent DVD, that it was a performance not to be missed. Robin/Ruthven is the backbone of this dramatically tricky work, and this one held the piece solidly together.

Hal Chernoff's Despard made a striking Dracula-esque entrance, and **Julie Rumbold** as Margaret delivered, to my taste, the single best performance in an all-round fine cast. Her lovely mezzo voice and

her deliciously droll changes of mood perfectly balanced the sobered Despard's attempts to keep her in line: the patter trio came off (twice) seamlessly.

Bob Cumming populated the stage with a large cast that included an actual Ruth Rowbottom putting in her false teeth, a Gaffer Gadderby relishing his peppermint, and the orphan girl wondering what to do with her snuff. **John Dreslin** was the steady helmsman of a fine band and a large chorus, with flirtatious Zorah (**Suzanne Amaral**) starting things off and landing the tenor at the final curtain. How I wish the snow had not deprived me of my chance to add to the applause.

-Jonathan Strong

Yeomen of the Guard, Savoyard Light Opera Company, November 19, 2011, Corey Auditorium, Carlisle, MA

As usual, SLOC has delivered a production "of near-professional quality featuring full orchestra." There were a number of good voices among the cast; that of **Kim Lamoureux** (Elsie Maynard) was particularly operatic, with a musical beauty that compensated for overpowering the lyrics in one or two numbers. **Tom Frates** played a convincing Jack Point, sneering, smirking, and grinning his way through the play as if his face were made of Silly Putty, with a matching agility of speaking and singing voices (displayed, for example, in the multiple characters he portrayed in "A Private Buffoon"). **Katherine Engel Meifert** (Dame Carruthers) honed her enthusiasm for beheadings to just the right degree. **Lonnie Powell** played Wilfred Shadbolt with a broad accent and naiveté that played as well against **Wendy Parker's** Phoebe Meryll as against **Tom Frates' Jack Point**.



The set made good use of the small stage, with sufficient doors and other entrances to handle all the necessary comings and goings without excessive awkwardness, reserving one door for access to Colonel Fairfax's cell and another for Dame Carruthers' quarters. Four tower

warders--five, with **Randy Divinski** (Sergeant Meryll)--were sufficient for that space, though some of the townspeople also sang in their choruses. The Tower was executed simply, with stones and arrow loops painted on, but with nice touches such as arched doors and the embrasures of the battlements, in which two ravens were discreetly placed, with what appeared to be actual branches peeking over the walls. A scrim backdrop portrayed both daytime

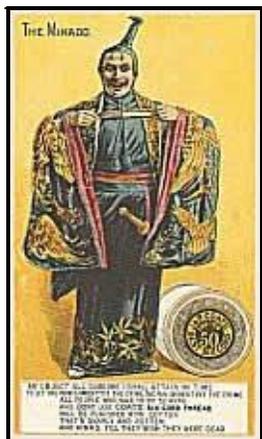
and a moonlit night; a nicely simulated daybreak (via gradual change in lighting) fit the action well at the beginning of the second act. There were no scene changes, unless you count Shadbolt's removal of Phoebe's spinning wheel from the Tower green after the opening scene.

The play was well choreographed. There was plenty of motion in the musical numbers that allowed it, ranging from the stately dances of "I Have a Song" and "Strange Adventure" to the antics of Point and Shadbolt in their duets. The first act's finale embroiled the entire stage in motion, while Jack and Elsie carried on a heated but unheard argument with the Lieutenant. There were repeated motifs such as Sergeant Meryll's simulation of "cutting his way through fifty foes" and Point's jester's pose. There were some departures from the usual stage directions. Shadbolt helpfully retrieved the book Point left behind, and there was no boxing of ears as Shadbolt and Carruthers claimed their mates, merely deep grimaces by Phoebe and Sergeant Meryll on the words "Is it?" In the final number, Point surprisingly remains standing until all others have left the stage, falling just as the curtain closes. He is evidently not dying, though clearly in deep despair. This is a kinder fate than one expects, and excuses the others for failing to react to Point's collapse. While *Yeomen* is uncharacteristically tragic for G&S, this production made for a very satisfying evening.

-David A. Karr

***The Mikado*, New York G & S Players
(NYGASP), October 30, 2011, Palace Theater,
Manchester, NH**

When Dick and I lived in New York and New Jersey, we enjoyed many NYGASP performances in New York in the 1970s and 80s. If anything, Albert Bergeret, founder, general manager, music director and conductor, and his company have gone from strength to near perfection over the years.



We held our breaths for two days. Would the predicted snowstorm keep us from attending this performance an hour's drive from Stow? Would we have to choose between a terrible drive or a delightful performance by this incomparable company? Happily, we were spared such a choice and were rewarded with a witty,

satirical and beautifully sung and acted show at Manchester's Palace Theatre.



Purists want nothing changed from the original libretto; all references to the politics and fashions of the Victorian Era should remain untouched, even though they make no sense in the 21st century. But, as Mr. Bergeret points out in the program notes: "Pooh-Bah's list of offices, Ko-Ko's list of potential victims and The Mikado's list of punishments are full of arcane references

that no longer have the theatrical or comedic punch which they did at the time of their first appearance [1885]."

He goes on to say that references that are decipherable only by those steeped in G&S "reduce the impact on a modern audience." Since Gilbert himself wrote updates, why shouldn't later producers and directors? All of Mr. Bergeret's interpolations were certainly on the mark for this NH audience. For example, The Mikado announces the punishment for the condemned threesome - "something lingering - like boiling oil or melted lead," to be carried out after a lovely luncheon at the famous local diner in Manchester, The Red Arrow.

All the leading characters came across as distinctive, individual, and with the clearest diction (as Gilbert always insisted upon). Katisha's nails were long and claw-like, Pooh-Bah had the haughtiest demeanor, Ko-Ko's axe was bigger than he, Nanki-Poo was a charming tenor, the three sisters all had their unique personalities and voices, and The Mikado was the proudest and most humane emperor, but with condescension to no-one, not even Katisha. We appreciated the truly in-tune chorus members, 8 women and 7 men, many of whom were members of Actors' Equity, as were all the leading actors and actresses.

The orchestra brought 12 of its usual 16 members from New York, and the trombone player showed us the added tube he needed to play the very deep notes usually performed by the bass trombone.

We were humming and singing the familiar songs to ourselves for a week afterward!

- Ann & Dick Luxner

H.M.S. Pinafore, Harvard & Radcliffe G & S Players (HRG&SP), November 12, 2011, Agassiz Theater, Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA

HRG&SP's fall *HMS Pinafore* production was innovative and refreshing: senior stage director **Ashley Kaupert** shifted the setting to a 1930s cruise, requiring quite different costumes and set. While the new setting rendered the occasional military reference nonsensical, overall the change was quite effective.

Under the music direction of junior **Lucien Werner**, the orchestra was of uniformly superior quality compared to what HRG&SP has mustered in the recent past. Werner's nuanced phrasing, balance, and unusual but inspired tempo changes made Sullivan's memorable warhorse of a score new and interesting to listen to.

The two-story set, designed by **Chappell Sargent** assisted by **Lorin Gu**, was interestingly asymmetric yet gorgeous. Details large and small reflected the new time period, from the whitewashed metal bulkheads to a martini bar. **Joseph Seering's** lighting design was dynamic, ambitious, and superbly executed.

Christopher Wankel and **Natalie Heer's** 1930s costumes worked exceptionally well and added meaningfully to the vision; for instance, Josephine wore high-waisted pants for the first act, and that visual cue tickled a fresh context of emerging independence and women's equality for the character's internal conflict. Props designer **Bryce Gilfillian**, a veteran of HRG&SP's props department, rustled up an interesting assortment of props including a shuffleboard set and martini glasses. **Marit Medefind's** hair and makeup were also top notch, and in particular gave the women's chorus a multigenerational appearance.

Allison Ray played Josephine magnificently. Often with such musically capable actresses one sees them skimp on the actual acting, but Ray had no such difficulty emotionally engaging the audience. Her wonderfully rich soprano voice filled the theater ably, although her diction when singing was troublesome at times. Grad student and HRG&SP newcomer **Joseph Goodknight** took a solid turn as Ralph Rackstraw. Though not quite at the level of his opposite number Ray, he acted and sang capably and interpreted his character with a healthy dose of comedy.

Eric Padilla as Captain Corcoran has a mellifluous and nuanced baritone voice that brought depth and humanity the captain's plight. **Amelia Ross** as Buttercup deserves special notice for her mastery of both the comic and dramatic sides of the character. **Christian Føhrby's** Admiral Sir Joseph Porter, KCB, was quite hilarious, with good comic timing and a canny knack for awkwardness and obliviousness.

Thomas Wilhoit brought an excellent deep bass to Dick Deadeye and played him tragically, cynically, sympathetically, and quite effectively.

Opposite him, **Michael Yashinsky's** Boatswain had hilariously little self-awareness, and the two played off each other whenever they appeared on stage simultaneously. Also noteworthy was their dedication to their adopted accents, which made them all the better of a pair. The rest of the chorus of sailors held up their end very well, both musically and dramatically.



Freshman **Emma Dowd** lent Cousin Hebe a lovely mezzo voice and good stagecraft. The chorus of sisters, cousins, and aunts were especially engaging whenever onstage, and even developed hilariously distinct and consistent characters.

Alas, due to scheduling constraints, HRG&SP was unable to uphold their "Hack Show" tradition (a pastiche of visual and musical gags, non-sequiturs, juvenily mature humor, and clever references to other G&S shows, which replaces the final performance of each run). We hope that the Hack Show tradition might return for next semester's *Princess Ida*.

- **Nathaniel Koven**



Upcoming Productions & Events

<i>The Gondoliers</i> Yale University G & S	December 1 - 3, 2011 gs.sites.yale.edu	TBD Yale College Campus New Haven, CT
<i>The Sorcerer</i> MITG&SP	December 2, 3, 8, 9 (8 pm), 4, 10 (2 pm), 2011 mitgsp.livejournal.com/19895.html	MIT Sala de Puerto Rico 77 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA
<i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> Fiddlehead Theater Company	December 9-11, 15-18, 2011 www.fiddleheadtheatre.com 781-329-1901	Fiddlehead Theatre 619 High St. Dedham, MA
<i>Gems of Victorian Operetta</i> (many G & S pieces)	January 14, 2011 saturdays@munroecenter.org for reservations	Munroe Center for the Arts 1402 Massachusetts Avenue Lexington, MA
<i>Trial By Jury</i> G & S Society of Maine	February 24 - 26, March 3, 4, 2012 www.gilbertsullivanmaine.org	Grand Auditorium 165 Main Street Ellsworth, ME
<i>Ruddigore</i> Sudbury Savoyards	February 24 - 26, March 2, 3, 2012 www.sudburysavoyards.org 978-443-8811	Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School 390 Lincoln Road Sudbury, MA
NEGASS/Opera Comique Joint Production	August 23 - 26, 2012	Mystic, CT details TBA