



The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Sussex

President: Valerie Masterson C.B.E.

Vice Presidents: Stephen Brown, Simon Butteriss, Barry Clark, William Colbourne, Bruce Graham, Donald Maxwell, Cynthia Morey, Michael Simkins, Richard Suart.

Honorary Members: Christine Colbourne, Edwin Cowley, Clare Samson, Kay Tarran.

NEWSLETTER

Welcome everyone to our winter Newsletter. We have so many exiting things happening next year which are all itemised below and we hope you will be able to attend.

With our new website and our excellent facebook page we are attracting a lot of interest and we hope that these people will eventually join our society as G & S is having a revival.

I won't take up any more space as there are so many interesting items for you to read in this edition.

Sylvia

25th September 2022

What a wonderful concert we had featuring Lawrence Oslworth-Peter and Elinor Jane Moran accompanied by Elspeth Wilkes. This event was originally scheduled to take place two years ago but was well worth the wait. We were treated to a lovely programme, including some favourite pieces from *The Gondoliers*, *The Mikado* and *HMS Pinafore* but also some less familiar pieces from *Ivanhoe* and *The Contrabandista*. The quality of singing from both Lawrence and Elinor was inspirational but Elspeth also contributed a great deal, in her own right, for example with her playing of the *Marriage of Figaro* overture. She also revealed a fine bass baritone voice!

We were reminded of the sharp and enduring wit of WS Gilbert with the inclusion of some dialogue from the operas which was delivered really well by Elinor and Lawrence. The Little List, as performed by Lawrence, could also hardly have been more topical and was highly amusing. Neither shall we forget in a hurry the singing lesson from *The Barber of Seville* in which our own Laurence Leng had a "starring" role as the sleeping (and snoring!) doctor.

Lawrence, Elinor and Elspeth all gave us confidence in the future of Gilbert and Sullivan as an important and life-enhancing musical tradition.

One of our members, Eileen Hall, spent time in both Buxton and Harrogate for the Festival. See what she had to say about her time there.

Gilbert & Sullivan Festival 2022

We enjoyed the G&S Festival in August – held in Buxton (8 days) and then in Harrogate (11 days), most shows being performed in both places. In Buxton with its wonderful opera house, both aesthetically and acoustically pleasing, we mingled with fellow G&S enthusiasts outside the opera house before shows and during the intervals. In Harrogate that isn't possible because noisy through-traffic passes right in front of the Royal Hall seemingly non-stop.

This year there were three new productions by the professional National G&S Opera Company: *Iolanthe*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *Utopia Limited*. Their *Iolanthe* was excellent and was described by one member of Sussex G&S that we met as a 'really joyous performance'. *Utopia Limited* was also very well presented, and it was nice to see a show that is less often performed.

Continued over page

Continued

There was a production of *HMS Pinafore* by Opera della Luna, a professional company renowned for 'innovative, usually zany and irreverent, small-scale productions' (according to their publicity).

Charles Court Opera, another professional company, presented three shows: *The Mikado*, *Patience*, and a show called *G&S Express*, a spoof murder mystery that cleverly included songs from each of the 14 G&S operas plus *Cox & Box* and (I think) *The Zoo*, with a few changes of words to fit the storyline. Another professional company from London, Forbear! Theatre, performed *The Gondoliers*. *Together Again* was a special 40th anniversary performance by former members of the D'Oyly Carte Company. All the shows had good-sized audiences, which is encouraging.

Whereas the G&S Festival in its early years consisted of mostly amateur shows, nowadays it is mostly professional productions. This could be considered a good thing, given that professional shows tend to be of a high standard, but sometimes the sheer enthusiasm of gifted amateurs can outshine some professional shows in terms of audience enjoyment. And audiences composed of mainly G&S enthusiasts who have seen the operas many times appreciate fresh interpretations and settings that bring new life to old favourites.

Amateur shows at Harrogate included *Princess Ida* by Bus Pass Opera, all participants being over 60 and from various parts of the UK. Although good, it didn't seem quite as polished as some of their past shows; some songs were sung right at the back of the stage, which lessened the impact.

Brussels Light Opera Company presented an interesting *Pirates of Penzance*. It was impressive that for many of the performers English was not their first language; yet their keenness and vivacity helped them to succeed in achieving a high standard.

SayoyNet Performing Group, with participants from several countries, rehearse intensively for a week before their show. Over the years they have put on all 14 G&S operas at the festival. This year it was *The Grand Duke*, Gilbert & Sullivan's last collaboration. One song was cut from it on this occasion, and the diction could perhaps have been clearer, particularly where the complex plot was explained. The show was very well received by the audience, particularly the second act when special lighting effects were used for the Prince of Monte Carlo's surprise reception.

In addition to the main shows, there were daytime fringe events – performances by York University (*Patience*), Birmingham University (*Iolanthe*), Grosvenor Light Opera Company (*The Sorcerer*), Oxford University (*The Gondoliers*), Newcastle University (*The Sorcerer*), various talks including 'The politics of G&S' and 'Frank Matcham theatres'; also recitals, interviews and workshops. Pennie Ingram

The only downside of the Festival is that Derbyshire and Yorkshire are so far from Sussex – but being there was worth the effort.

Eileen Hall, August 2022

John Cannon's "2 Screen Presentations" return

After the death of John Cannon, Laurence was given access to his slides and notes for his "2 screen presentations". During the winter, a number of the images were digitalised and a taster of what was in John's archive was presented at the G&S Society in London for their AGM in September. The feedback from this presentation was excellent and Laurence has been invited back to give further presentations in the future.

Topsy Turvy Tea - 30th October

What a fantastic time was had at this sold out event, culminating in a standing ovation from an enthusiastic audience. It featured Bruce Graham (sporting some snazzy ladybird coloured spotted shoes) and Alexandra Hazard with over 20 in the chorus, who sang a selection of songs from each of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas.

Laurence Leng, our Master of Ceremonies, guided proceedings between the flowing numbers (that you couldn't help but sing along to), with the aid of Musical Director, Michael Maine.

Tributes from our Society chair, Sylvia Nixon and Jim Tarran, Melvyn's son, reminded us why we were there, to celebrate Melvyn and raise funds for St Peter and St James Hospice. Melvyn would have been thrilled to see so many people enjoying and sharing in his love for Gilbert and Sullivan music, and the wonderful homemade cake! He would have also been pleased to see a small display of his G&S memorabilia at the concert...with a selection of his vast museum collection now destined for D'Oyly Carte Island.

If you would like to see some photos / a video, go to the Topsy-Turvy Tea Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/992313334768535>

continued over page

Continued

G&S Society Events

Keep an eye open for email updates and on the website for details of the Society's forthcoming events.

Forthcoming G&S Events

19th January 2023

Tarantara Productions, which features our Vice President, Barry Clark, is currently touring England with a concert of excerpts. They will be within travelling distance on 19th January 2023 when they visit Chichester for 2 performances.

<https://www.sftw.info/a-gala-celebration-of-gilbert-sullivan>

11th February 2023

An Evening of G&S is planned for The Ropetackle in Shoreham (not advertised yet), and will include a selection of favourites. Organised by Yvonne Patrick, it is rumoured that the other soloists will be Louise Crane, Ian Belsey, Richard Woodall and Tristan Stocks. Look out for a few faces in the chorus that were in the recent Topsy-Turvy Tea Gala.

7th / 8th June 2013

Some years ago, John Wilson conducted a one off performance of The Yeomen of the Guard in Birmingham that was excellent. Next June he is conducting two semi-staged performances of Princess Ida (7th & 8th June) at the South Bank.

<https://oae.co.uk/event/princess-ida-or-castle-adamant>

G&S Society of Sussex Website

Hopefully you will have noticed that our website has now been updated and contains information about our forthcoming events and summaries and pictures from past concerts.

If you haven't looked at it for a while, take a peep.

<http://www.gilbertandsullivantoday.org.uk/>

Laurence Leng

Season's Greetings
to Members and Friends
of the Society