



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, Kay Tarran.

NEWSLETTER

Chairperson's Remarks

Now that we have moved into autumn the fun has continued with an excellent concert called Time Flies ..., a festive musical tour, on 26th November with Barry Clark, Janet Cowley and Simon Gray.

The Topsy Turvy Two committee organised another concert on 22nd October 2023 in memory of our dear friend Melvyn Tarran in aid of cancer research and raised £3,500 for this excellent cause. The concert itself was truly magnificent and fun, packed with ex-D'Oyly Carte members singing and reminiscing about their time with the company. A full chorus also added to the fantastic afternoon. The event was held at The New Bury Theatre in Hurstpierpoint which we found to be a first class venue. I do hope that most of you got along to see it. There are more details further in this newsletter and a full review is anticipated to be in the Spring issue of G&S News.

I thank you for your continued support of our Society and I can assure you that our next year will continue to be just as exciting.

Seasons Greetings
Sylvia

Since our last newsletter, we've been spoilt for choice for Gilbert and Sullivan events and a number of our members attended some of these and have reported back:

International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival July & August 2023, Buxton

We spent two weeks at the G&S Festival. Although some people stay for the whole fortnight, many visit for just a few days. It was good to see some other Sussex G&S members there. Buxton Opera House is in a lovely peaceful setting adjacent to beautiful gardens, and mingling with other G&S enthusiasts before shows and during the intervals is very enjoyable.

There were performances in the Opera House every evening (with a few repeated) and some matinées - a mix of professional and amateur shows with participants from several countries. The amateur cast of Brussels Light Opera Company, for example, was made up of 17 nationalities with 10 different native languages.

Some performances were strictly traditional in style, though there is always scope for slight variations in the delivery of dialogue, or actions on the stage. In some other performances the G&S operas were interpreted in a more innovative or imaginative way, perhaps set in a different era, and this can be successful provided Sullivan's music remains unaltered and Gilbert's words are generally adhered to and spoken or sung clearly. Slight adjustments to the dialogue, if judiciously and sympathetically made, can enhance the experience for audiences, most of whom are familiar with the standard presentation of G&S and welcome some variation. If all shows were rigidly standardised, regular festival-goers would perhaps lose some of their enthusiasm for watching them.

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This year, all 13 operas were performed except for *Patience* and *Princess Ida*. The Festival also encourages young people to participate: four university G&S groups performed shows, and there was also a youth production for under-18s (an average age of 12), helping to promote interest in G&S in future generations.

After the evening shows there was further late-evening entertainment in the Festival club in the Pavilion Gardens café area, next-door to the Opera House. Sometimes performers from that evening's opera presented a cabaret, or on some evenings there was a sing-through of one of the operas, at which anyone could join in the singing of the choruses.

Buxton is a pleasant town in beautiful surroundings. One can walk to limestone caves or up onto the hills overlooking the town, or drive out to nearby moorland, reservoirs and rugged countryside. On the wet days, of which there were plenty this year, there were G&S-related talks in a nearby clubhouse in the mornings on a wide range of topics, and some afternoon performances in the smaller Arts Centre Theatre close by. There were also lunchtime recitals and occasional organised coach outings. Anyone interested in spending a few days at the Festival next year may like to note that it will run from 27th July to 10th August 2024.

Eileen Hall

Express G&S. 15th - 18th August 2023, Wilton's Music Hall, London

For those that haven't seen it, *Express G&S* is a delightful and ingenious whirlwind murder mystery riddled with quotes and songs (with some changed lyrics) from all of the G&S operas, telling of a crime committed on board the train.

David Eaton (MD and lyricist), along with Matthew Siveter, Catrine Kirkman and Matthew Kellett (the detective who quickly solved the case) played a multitude of characters, all with some nifty prop/scene changes.

Who "killed" (the) D'Oyly Carte? Well that would be giving the ending away, so you'll just have to go and see for yourself next time it pulls into your local train station!

Pennie Ingram

ENO's Gilbert and Sullivan walking tour. 17th & 18th August 2023, London

Starting outside the Savoy Hotel, director John Savournin greeted us at the D'Oyly Carte Monument as Richard himself, singing a "Little List" of what we could expect on the 90-minute tour. Wearing special headsets, we travelled between different G&S-related landmarks, such as the Sullivan Memorial, the Gilbert Memorial and New Scotland Yard, and we were treated to some wonderful singing and a wealth of G&S information from our excellent guide. As we moved from site to site, we were accompanied by overtures and excerpts from the operas by the ENO Orchestra.

Towards the end of the tour, our very own Vice President, Richard Suart, presented as Sir Joseph Porter at Admiralty Arch to sing *When I Was A Lad*. Rounding off at the Coliseum, we encountered Celia and Leila who finished the tour with *Tripping Hither, Tripping Thither*.

If you didn't get chance to go on this sold-out event, then you can download their app. You can follow the map and listen to the dialogue and music even in the comfort of your own home, by going to this link:

<https://app.smartify.org/en-GB/tours/enos-gilbert-sullivan-walking-tour>

Pennie Ingram

The Best of Gilbert and Sullivan. Friday 15th September 2023, The Ascension Church, Haywards Heath

What a lovely time we all had listening to Coro Nuovo Voices, who were raising money for 'Hope and Homes for Children: Ukraine', as part of a week-long programme for The Haywards Heath Arts Festival.

Our very own Treasurer from the G&S Society of Sussex, Laurence Leng, regaled us with snippets from the world of G&S as the compère; and Simon Gray was the MD. We were treated to a wonderful action-packed (imagine swooning maidens and pirates fighting policemen) selection of songs and dialogue from nearly all the operas!

Pennie Ingram

ENO's revival of *Iolanthe*. 5th - 25th October, London Coliseum

Along with excellent music, singing, acting, humour and timing, this production had beautiful 'flower fairy' costumes, impressive scenery and a huge period steam train crashing onto the stage carrying the peers.

Housekeeping was announced by Captain Shaw who made multiple appearances throughout. There was slapstick, multiple encores of *If You Go In*, fairies flying across the stage on wires and *Phyllis* and *Strephon* clog dancing.

There was so much going on as everyone played their own part in a much bigger picture. I'm sure it wasn't everyone's cup of tea but I had a lovely evening and came away smiling and singing *Soon As We May*. Sadly, Keel Watson who played *Private Willis*, passed away suddenly on 8th November.

Pennie Ingram

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Grim's Dyke Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Evening: Ruddigore. 15th October 2023

What a treat we had recently spending a night at Grim's Dyke Hotel, the beautifully restored former home of WS Gilbert and his wife in the Harrow Weald. It is a magnificent building surrounded by attractive gardens and set in 40 acres of woodland, a veritable haven.

We were there for one of the venue's renowned Gilbert and Sullivan opera evenings, held about every six weeks, in which guests sit down for a three-course dinner which is served between acts of one of the operas. On this occasion we saw a semi-staged production of Ruddigore with, among others, Leon Berger as Old Adam, Bruce Graham as Sir Roderic and Janet Cowley, who performed at our November meeting, as Mad Margaret. They were supported by a small but splendid chorus. It was, on all counts, a most enjoyable evening. See the Grim's Dyke Hotel website for details of future such evenings: <https://grimsdyke.com/entertainment/>

Jane Leng

Topsy Turvy Two. 22nd October 2023, Sussex

After more than a year in planning, Topsy Turvy Two, a tribute concert to Melvyn Tarran, took place at The New Bury Theatre in Hurstpierpoint on 22nd October. We had an audience of nearly 300 and on stage a number of performers with an established background in G&S. In addition, we had guest speakers who had travelled from all parts of the UK to talk of their friendship with Melvyn or to share tales of their time on tour with the D'Oyly Carte.

As was to be expected, a few things did not run as expected and due to illness we lost, at short notice, Valerie Masterson, Alexandra Hazard and Jane Metcalfe from the line-up. The Saturday night before involved a number of phone calls and emails which luckily gave us workable options.

With the likes of Barry Clark, Bruce Graham, Stephen Anthony Brown, James Cleverton, David Steadman, Fenton Gray, Louise Crane and Elinor Jane Moran on stage and Linda Anne Hutchison, David Mackie, Peter Riley, Michael Heyland, Michael Simkins and Vera Ryan as speakers, we had an extremely entertaining afternoon which has been validated by some very gratifying and positive feedback from performers and audience alike. The whole event, which was musically directed by Simon Gray, was staged with the intention of generating funds for Cancer Research and the final figure raised was £3,500.

Laurence Leng

Hassocks On Show. 28th October 2023

We were delighted to be one of the exhibitors at the recent Hassocks On Show event at the Adastral Hall which gave hirers of this venue the opportunity to publicise their organisations to the local community. It was a vibrant, well attended event and we attracted a lot of interest, some of which was from people who had not heard of the Society before. We contributed a prize to the raffle which raised £422 for the Teddy and the Big C campaign and the Adastral Hall's Extension Project. Laurence also enjoyed the cake!

Jane Leng

And if all that wasn't enough, just look at what we have lined up for you as events with the Sussex Society over the next year!

We are thrilled that we have managed to re-arrange a new date with Richard, Rebecca and Russell to come to us with their Afternoon of Modified Rapture! This will now happen on 28th January 2024 at the Adastral Hall at 2.45pm.

25th February 2024 - An Afternoon Tea with special guest, Michael Heyland who will talk about his 1970 D'Oyly Carte revival of The Sorcerer.

14th April sees the return of the Godalming Operatic Society to give us a concert version of their latest production, Patience.

N.B. Due to construction work being undertaken at the Adastral Hall, this April concert will be held at the Wivelsfield Village Hall.

21st July 2024 - AGM and entertainment (details to follow) (Back at the Adastral Hall, Hassocks)

29th September 2024 - Simon Gray and Friends

17th November 2024 - A Christmas concert with Katie Plummer and Friends from Godalming

And in January 2025, the main principals from Opera Anywhere will be talking to us about how they stage their presentations.

Chair: Sylvia Nixon, *Secretary:* Jane Leng, *Treasurer:* Laurence Leng, *Members Rep:* Pennie Ingram, *Designer:* Richard Nixon