



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

NEWSLETTER

Melvyn Tarran

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in 2010 Richard and I decided to visit Sheffield Park and after having tea in the café we saw a notice in a small window asking for volunteers to help at a Gilbert & Sullivan Museum, and to call this number. We went home phoned the number and spoke to Melvyn, the following week we started helping out at the museum and this was the beginning of our friendship.

We loved the museum, showing visitors the letters and telegrams from Gilbert to the cast of the D'Oyly Carte opera company and one in particular when he cancelled his dental appointment while suffering badly with toothache. There were magnificent costumes, programmes signed by original cast members of the D'Oyly Carte, the piano that Sullivan had composed some of his music on and the beautiful Grand piano which was a gift to one of his favourite female admirers "so to speak" and so many other treasures all collected by Melvyn over many years.

It was at the museum that Melvyn and I talked about starting up a G & S Society of Mid Sussex and agreed to contact people that we knew shared our love of Gilbert & Sullivan and so our society was born and is still going strong, however we are now known as the G & S Today Society of Sussex. The Society was originally based at the Birch Hotel in Haywards Heath and Melvyn had to have everything perfect including top class concerts with only the best artistes and an excellent menu for our Annual Luncheon together with entertaining guest speakers.

In 2013 Melvyn sold the building at Sheffield Park and he decided that he should list all of the items he had accumulated over the years in the hope that one day they would be put on show again (which we now hope will happen), his sister Wendy helped him initially to get started, then Melvyn asked us if we would help him on a regular basis as Wendy had returned to France, he said this would only take about 6 months. Well six years later we were still listing things. It was like Aladdin's cave he would open a box and tell us how and when he acquired the items. We also got to touch the items, such as delicate embroidery of Lady Gilbert's handkerchiefs and the programmes that Melvyn had waited patiently outside the theatre in the early years to get autographed. This last year we thought that we had come to the end of the boxes but no, Melvyn would find another one from somewhere and the list went on. It was a great pleasure to work with Melvyn we will miss our weekly visits and most of all we will miss Melvyn and the wealth of knowledge this lovely man had.

Rest in peace Melvyn.

By Sylvia and Richard Nixon

Continued

Godalming Operatic Society: "Ballads, Songs and Snatches." 24th April.

What a wonderful afternoon's entertainment from Godalming Operatic accompanied by Eralys Fernandez and her magic fingers on the piano.

For the first half, we were treated to excerpts from *The Gondoliers*, *Patience*, *Ruddygore* (with Mad Margaret being soothed with the word Basingstoke!), *Princess Ida*, and ending with audience participation with *The Mikado*.

After the interval it was on with *Yeoman*, then a selection of different songs: Katie Plummer and Zoe Avern sang *Barcarolle* (The Tales of Hoffmann) / Simon Wilson, *Stars* (Les Misérables) / Alex Lawrence, *But Not For Me* (Girl Crazy) / Tim Dutton, *Spread a Little Happiness* (Mr Cinders) / Katie, *I Can Give You the Starlight* (The Dancing Years) / Richard Arthur, *Simon the Cellarer* (John Liptrot Hatton). It all ended (too soon) with the audience joining in again, this time with part of the finale to Act 1 of *The Pirates of Penzance*, culminating in a rousing, *Hail Poetry*. Marvellous! We look forward to them coming back in the not-too-distant future.

Bruce & Caroline Graham: "In Their Own Melodious Way." 3rd July.

To the audience delight, Bruce and Caroline Graham, with William Godfree guiding the proceedings effortlessly on piano, treated us to a mix of songs, various passages including G&S, snippets, anecdotes, reminiscing and bad press! Opening with Sondheim's: *Gods of the theatre, smile on us* (The Frogs: A New Musical), the concert flowed on with: *Tell Me Pretty Maiden* (Florodora). *When a merry maiden marries* (Gondoliers). *The air is charged with amatory numbers* (Sorcerer... where Bruce will weave his magic with it again at the Former D'Oyly Carte Members performance: Together Again, 12th Aug, Harrogate). *Tis done! I am a bride!* (Yeoman of the Guard). A Bad Night Of It (going to Thomsons' at Weybridge) from Babs Ballads, invoked the Lord Chancellor *Love, unrequited* patter song (Iolanthe). The first half closed with *This helmet, I suppose* (Princess Ida).

For the second half, it was on with *The Floral Dance. When Frederic was a little lad* (Pirates of Penzance). *There is beauty in the bellow of the blast*, and *Alone, and yet alive* (Mikado). From across the pond we were treated to: Rodgers and Hart: *Mountain Greenery* (The Garrick Gaieties); Gershwin: *But Not for Me* (Crazy Girl); Porter: *Just One Of Those Things* (Jubilee); Sondheim: *Anyone Can Whistle* (titular musical). Ending with audience participation, we all went home singing *When a felon's not engaged* (Pirates of Penzance). I bet you're all singing it now. Fantastic fun! Oh, and we did find out how Caroline tricked Bruce in *The Gondoliers* by putting a big weight in a carrier bag (basket)!

Pennie Ingram

Those that attended the AGM will remember that I sought permission to change our bank account. Last November, our current bank, HSBC, introduced a series of charges which would have amounted to approximately £100 per year. I would prefer to spend that money towards events for our members rather than pay a bank. As a consequence, I have now started the process of opening a new account with Lloyds (which imposes no charges) and then will switch our account over. I will notify members when this happens and explain any actions that you may need to do, however, the switching process should be seamless.

Speaking of events, we have some good ones lined up for the rest of the year.

Sunday 25th September at 2.45pm

"Here's A Howdy-do!"

International operatic tenor Lawrence Olsworth-Peter will be with Elinor Moran (soprano with the National G&S Opera Company) in concert, singing songs connected with the theme of lovers, rivals and disguises! Lawrence was due to come to us prior to Covid so it is wonderful to reinstate this concert.

Sunday 27th November at 2.45pm

"A Christmas Concert"

Former D'Oyly Carte and Carl Rosa tenor Stephen Anthony Brown and friends will entertain us with an afternoon of G&S, festive music and readings. Again, this is one of the events hit by Covid last year, so it is good to have the opportunity to present it at last.

Both of these concerts will take place at the Adastral Hall in Hassocks and the box office for both events is now open.

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Please book your seats in advance at gandstodaysussex@gmail.com and purchase your tickets using one of the methods indicated below.

By bank transfer to the account of "G&S Today" at HSBC Bank; sort code 40-18-22 and account number 42194783. The bank will ask for a reference – please can you use your surname followed by either "Lawrence" or "Stephen" as a reference. If you wish to book for both, please reference your payment using your surname followed by "Both" (e.g. "Leng - Both") so we know who has paid. Please email me at gandstodaysussex@gmail.com so that I can look out for the payment – I will acknowledge safe receipt of payment.

If you wish to pay by cheque, please contact me on gandstodaysussex@gmail.com to arrange details, etc.

Tickets are also now on sale (and going fast) for the first of the two Melvyn Tarran Tribute Concerts being organised by our friend, Susan Fleet.

This first concert will be held on 30th October at Wivelsfield Village Hall, Eastern Road, Wivelsfield Green, RH17 7QH at 3pm. Bruce Graham (our recent visitor) and Alexandra Hazard (soprano with the National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company) are headlining the event, and they will be supported by a chorus of 20 under the musical direction of Michael Maine.

The concert goes under the title of "**Topsy Turvy Tea**" and tickets will be £15 each which will include admission, tea and home-made cake! All profits will go to St Peter and St James Hospice, where Melvyn received his end of life care. Tickets will be sold on the basis of being for unreserved seat positions - you are advised to arrive early to secure your preferred seat!

Please purchase your ticket by bank transfer to the account of:

TTT 2022
Lloyds Bank
Sort code 30-98-97
Account number 84339162

Again, the bank will ask for a reference, so please use your surname and email topsyturvytea2022@gmail.com to confirm payment. An acknowledgement of safe receipt of payment will be made and an electronic ticket will be sent out to you.

Again, if you wish to pay by cheque, please seek details by emailing topsyturvytea2022@gmail.com.

Laurence Leng