



The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Sussex

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NEWSLETTER

Winter 2020

Dear All,

What a disappointing and depressing year we are going through! Tragic and frightening though it is for many unfortunate people, even for most of us 2020 is a year to forget.

We have been unable to hold any concerts since our enjoyable Annual Luncheon in February. So just when we will be able to resume our normal activities is anybody's guess, but we pin our hopes on the recently announced vaccines. Perhaps the Spring of 2021 will launch our recovery!

EVENTS REPORT

Godalming Operatic Society with Ruddigore on 26th April, our AGM and Mae Heydorn concert on 14th June, Lawrence Olsworth-Peter, Elinor Jane Moran and Elspeth Wilkes on 18th October, and Mae Heydorn's rearranged visit on 29th November have all had to be cancelled due to this dreadful pandemic. What promised to be a great year has been a complete washout..

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Our Annual Luncheon at Haywards Heath's Birch Hotel scheduled for 21st February 2021 is an early casualty of covid19. We had invited the National G & S Opera Company patter man Richard Gauntlett along as our principal guest, and he had accepted. One or two people may not be familiar with his name, but he was the brilliant Ko-Ko in that outstanding production of The Mikado we took a party to at Hastings a while back. Perhaps in 2022?

In April we were looking forward to another visit from our friends from Godalming, this time with a concert version of The Pirates of Penzance. But sadly they have been unable to rehearse due to the coronavirus restrictions, so their production has been put on hold.

EDITOR'S JOTTINGS

We have set four G & S quizzes for our members this year and they have been fun to do (or attempt), although the number of people brave enough to submit their answers has been low. Eileen & David Hall won two of them, and Nick Bolton won one. The fourth was set for us by Eileen & David, and yours truly emerged the winner. I might set one perhaps in January. Meanwhile, the London G & S Society's John Tritton has set the following, which you might like to have a go at:-

Gilbert & Sullivan Society Christmas Quiz 2020

Q1: Their true identities? What were the real names of:

a. Durward Lely? B. Kenneth Sandford?

Q2: Who smokes like a furnace?

Q3: (2 points) Name two operas which contain words/lines in foreign languages.

Q4: Which G&S character got their name from a popular music hall song?

Q5: (3 points) Who said, and to whom:

a. "Very good house, I wish I'd been in time for the performance"

b. "Now then, it's a one to one, and let the best man win"

c. "Thou hast a feather-brain, but thou'rt a good lass"

Q6: Inside the Company:

Which leading performer wrote an autobiography called "..... by Himself"?

Q7: Name a self-confessed baby stealer who suffers from gout.

Q8: (2 points) Which well-known recording stars sang principal rôles in most of the operas but never appeared with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Co?

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Q9: What was the name by which Grim's Dyke was known before Gilbert moved there?

Q10: Which rank is not recognized at the Lord Chamberlain's office?

How did you get on? Did you manage our 'just for fun' quiz without cheating? Sorry no prizes this time.

If you want to check your answers email John Tritton on tritton405@gmail.com after 2nd Dec

Angie Penn has also let me know about this:-

Sasha Regan's All Male Company have 2 performances of their production of The Pirates of Penzance at The Palace Theatre on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th December at 7.00. This is advertised as a Covid safe theatre and tickets can be booked via www.nimaxtheatres.com/shows/pirates-of-penzance or through the Box Office: 0330 333 4813

You may like to visit their website for more details: www.allmalehms.biz

Opera Della Luna are also hoping to resume operations in the new year - we wish them luck!

The 27th International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival's dates for 2021 are as follows:- 31st July to 7th August in Buxton. 8th August to 22nd August in Harrogate. And 7th September to 11th September in Malvern.

The SavoyNet Performing Group are doing The Grand Duke on the 19th August, and Bus Pass Opera (who are also excellent) are staging Princess Ida the following day.

G & S FAVOURITES - JANE LENG gives us her choice:-

I was first introduced to "Iolanthe", which has come to be my favourite G and S opera, when Laurence was playing the Lord Chancellor in 1983. I remember being so worried for him during performances while he was singing "The Nightmare Song" that I was willing the song to be over even though his renditions invariably went very well. I have since come to love "Iolanthe" for its amusing story, witty libretto, lovely music and underpinning themes which feel quite contemporary.

There is an endearing collection of characters in "Iolanthe" including pompous Lords, diaphanous fairies, Arcadian shepherds and grenadier guards bound together in a story of mortals, half mortals, non mortals and marital laws. Directors are, thus, given plenty of scope for beautiful sets and costumes.

I really enjoy Gilbert's wit which is very evident throughout "Iolanthe" including the exchange between Phyllis and Strephon contemplating marriage:

Phyllis: "We won't wait long"

Strephon: "No. We might change our minds. We'll get married first"

Phyllis: "And change our minds afterwards?"

Strephon: "That's the usual course."

"Iolanthe" has a great overture and indeed much of the music in the opera is highly memorable including the entrance of the Lords, the drama of Act 1 finale and the patter songs of the Lord Chancellor.

Gilbert and Sullivan were clearly fearless in making fun of individuals as well as institutions and I love the satire within "Iolanthe", one of the main targets of which is the House of Lords:

"The House of Peers, throughout the war Did nothing in particular And did it very well."

There is also a critique of the government of the day which might have been written in recent times:

"When in that House M.P.'s divide,

If they've a brain and cerebellum, too,

They've got to leave that brain outside,

And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to."

Since my first exposure to "Iolanthe" I have seen a number of productions and usually really enjoyed them. The only time I was disappointed was in the New D'Oyly Carte production in 1988 when the peers were played in a camp, fey fashion. I feel this interpretation was to miss the point that the humour of the Lords comes from their self-unaware pomposity. Not all "reimaginings" work equally well!

To me, "Iolanthe" shows both Gilbert and Sullivan at their best.

Thank you, Jane! I also invited people to tell me how they first encountered and enjoyed G & S. Here is CLARE SAMSON'S experience:-

My first introduction to Gilbert and Sullivan was 'Patience' - a strange choice for a five-year-old you'd think, except that it did the trick and hooked me for life.

Of course I'd never heard of Oscar Wilde, James Whistler or the PreRaphaelites, but evidently it didn't stop my intense enjoyment, as apparently I went skipping along to school the next day singing "Greenery gallery Grosvenor Gallery", having no idea in the world what it meant - but it shows how excellent the diction must have been!

Thank you, Clare!

That's all we have for you this time folks - keep safe and well, and have the best Christmas you can. Fingers crossed for 2021.

Regards,

Bill.

Items for inclusion in our next Newsletter should be sent to:

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