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**The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Sussex**

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

# NEWSLETTER

Summer 2020

Deal All,

Another local newsletter with precious little local news in it. We are all having to get used to doing without our normal concerts, and the pandemic looks like being with us for some time yet. So we are more than grateful to our loyal members who are continuing to pay their annual subscriptions as they become due!

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Our next scheduled concert at Haywards Heath's Birch Hotel on Sunday 18th October is not yet postponed, but is looking distinctly uncertain. Government restrictions do not permit concerts in enclosed spaces, and those involving singing are currently banned. So it does look as if we may have to defer the visit of Lawrence Olsworth-Peter, Elinor Jane Moran and Elspeth Wilkes until some time next year, but a final decision will not be taken until the middle of September.

*Similarly, our concert with Mae Heydorn on 29th November is currently in jeopardy, with postponement a possible outcome.*

## EDITOR'S JOTTINGS

Don't forget to try your hand at Laurence & Clare's G & S Quiz No. 3. Not many of you have so far sent in your answers, and we would like a few more, please.

In order to have something to put in this newsletter I asked our committee members to let me have their thoughts on their favourite operas, and how they first became enamoured of G & S.

Here is Laurence's followed by Clare Samson's. My grateful thanks to them both. Others will follow.

## G & S FAVOURITES - LAURENCE

One is often asked "which is your favourite G & S opera?" and the usual response is "the one I have just seen" or "the one I am currently performing in". As neither of these can apply during lockdown you have to think carefully to come up with a reasoned answer.

In reality, my favourite is easy - Ruddigore. Always was and always will be!

It was one of the last ones I became familiar with - I borrowed the Martyn Green LP set on Ace of Clubs from the Brighton Music Library. I didn't have the libretto and didn't know the story so the first exposure was just the music. I liked the overture but found the opening to be a bit dull but as soon as Dick Dauntless arrived, I thought "Wow!" I love the story of the opera and the story of its "birth" as a theatrical piece, what with all the changes and deleted songs and dialogue. I have only been in it once as a chorus member but it contains two scenes that I have continuously performed for the last 45 years since they were taught to me by Beatrice Elburn (former D'Oyly Carte mezzo) - both the Sir Despard scenes from Act 1 and Act 2 - a great opportunity to overact and "ham it up".

My choice for runner up was more difficult - a decision between The Sorcerer and Iolanthe. I think, though, that The Sorcerer holds the balance of power. Again, I became familiar with through the recording (John Reed) long before I actually got to see it when it came to Brighton when the DC started touring the new Michael Heyland production. It is a fun show with some lovely music, amusing story and good characters. I really like how the chorus are all individuals with their own story rather than just being "Pirates" or "Fairies".

I was lucky enough to see Ralph Mason play Alexis who was, I think, the best "comic" tenor the DC ever had. Again, because of my love of history, I found the backstory to the production fascinating what with the changes introduced into Act 2 for the 1884 revival. It is also interesting in watching and listening to The Sorcerer as you can see some of the first attempts by both Gilbert and Sullivan trying styles of writing and presentation that they would ultimately become famous for:

- the clever story lines
  - the patter songs
  - the double choruses
- to name but three.

Thank you, Bill, for asking the question and making me think and justify my thoughts!

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And **CLARE** - another fan of

Ruddigore! I find Gilbert's spoof of the ubiquitous melodramas from earlier in the 19th century an entertaining idea, with a 'jolly jack tar', a Bad Baron, an innocent damsel, a classic maiden unhinged by love and ghosts and curses galore.

There's the show-stopping hornpipe, when performed by the inimitable Tom Round, 'The Ghosts' High Noon' as sung by the late, great Don Adams and a whole picture gallery coming to life.

Top this all off with plenty of Sullivan's lyricism and Gilbert's wonderful tomfoolery in both story and dialogue and who could resist?

Iolanthe.

This piece, of course, had the distinction of being the first production to be lit by 'the electric light' and is a satire on 19th century politics and the Establishment. How dry that sounds, but for me the songs are among the best Sullivan ever composed, some stirring, some lyrical.

However, the main reason for my second choice are two great pieces of theatre. The first is The Entrance of the Peers in their magnificent brightly coloured robes and wearing their coronets, singing "Bow, bow ye lower-middle classes"! It's a spine-tingler.

Best for last: the tour de force 'Nightmare Song', followed by a gloriously tripping trio (as Peter Pratt described it) "If you Go In", enough to bring the audience to its feet with cries of "Encore" as it always did. Perfection when performed by the 3 irreplaceables: Donald Adams, Leonard Osborn and the aforementioned Peter Pratt.

That's all folks! See you next time. Keep safe and well,

Bill

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

**The Editor, G&S Today, 12 The Platt, Lindfield, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 2SY.**

**Committee Members: Chairman and Publicity: Bill Colbourne Vice-Chairman: Laurence Leng Secretary: Sylvia Nixon  
Treasurer: Edwin Cowley Membership Secretary: Christine Colbourne Designer: Richard Nixon  
Jane Leng Clare Samson**