



The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Sussex

Presidents: Valerie Masterson C.B.E and Melvyn Tarren.

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

Lifetime Members: Christine Colbourne, Edwin Cowley, Clare Samson

NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our nearly back to normal edition post Covid 19.

EVENTS REPORT

On Sunday 20th February at Haywards Heath's Birch Hotel we held our Annual Celebrity Luncheon. A very pleasant occasion it was, too - The Birch staff did everything they could to make us comfortable, and the meal was well received. Richard Gauntlett our Principal Guest, spoke for over an hour and was always interesting and entertaining.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

We are looking forward to welcoming Godalming Operatic Society on the 24th April, with a concert of Ballads Songs and Snatches. This is to be staged at The Adastral Hall in Hassocks to enable us to offer more seats to our guests and to ensure that, as last time, no one will be turned away due to lack of space. Our AGM is to be held on the 3rd of July and we are delighted that Bruce and Caroline Graham have agreed to entertain us at the beginning of the afternoon. Further delights will follow in September and November.

REVIEW: An Evening of Gilbert & Sullivan at The Ropetackle Arts Centre, Shoreham. Friday 21st January, 2022.

A wonderful evening once again from this annual event, where the sweet tones of soloists Yvonne Patrick and Louise Crane, joined the badinage from Tristan Stocks, Richard Woodall and Ian Belsey (in his trademark dragon embroidered jacket, befitting the town of Titipu). Accompanied deftly by Simon Gray (Southwick Operatic Society among the many strings to his bow), who whisked us between London, Cornwall, Venice, Japan and other places in between. The seamless links between songs, passages of libretto, comedy (including a topical swipe where Private Willis was off for a drink with Boris Johnson), props, and snippets of information from the eleven operas on offer thrown in, all added to the enjoyment.

It was lovely to hear among the old favourites, some songs from The Yeoman of the Guard, Princess Ida, Iolanthe and Patience. Even The Sorcerer and Ruddigore got an airing, with Mad Margaret calming herself with the words Devil's Dyke, to give it a local touch and recall her to her saner self!

Sadly the small G&S Chorus of Shoreham-by-Sea had very little to do, but made a stalwart effort with songs at the start and end of the first (Trial by Jury's Hark the hour of ten is sounding / Act 2 finale of HMS Pinafore) and second (Act 2 finale of The Mikado) half; and the odd interjection (We sail the ocean blue from HMS Pinafore / When the foeman bears his steel from The Pirates of Penzance / Comes a train of little ladies and Three little maids from The Mikado). It certainly got the delighted, almost packed, audience swaying in time to the music and occasionally joining in under their masks! I know I was in full voice come The Gondoliers Cachucha and the encore of Once more gondolieri.

I can hear you all singing along right now.

FACEBOOK:

Exciting times. The Society was launched on Facebook on the 28th January, encouraging people to join. Among other things, we can advertise future events and support other Societies.

We already have over 70 followers, why not take a look? You can visit it by searching on Facebook: Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Sussex

Or using the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/669301470931963>

[Please note: our new email address is gandstodaysussex@gmail.com](mailto:gandstodaysussex@gmail.com)

Welcome to Pennie who is our co-opted Membership Secretary she has woked wonders on Facebook (please take a look).

BIO:



Hello, I'm Pennie Ingram, your new co-opted membership secretary.

My passion for music came at an early age, performing in musicals since junior school, but my first encounter with G&S happened when I went to Brighton and Hove Sixth Form College and joined The Wandering Minstrels Operatic Society, founded there. My first show in 1976 was Ruddigore (still my favourite), helping with props; but then I took the plunge and sang soprano in Iolanthe the following year.

For many years I went onto performing all their operas with the WM's, (with the exception of Thespis, but did do Sullivan's The Zoo) sometimes more than once. Along with concerts, our show repertoire expanded to include other operas like The Merry Widow, Die Fledermaus, Orpheus in the Underworld, Cavalleria Rusticana, I Pagliacci, Dido and Aeneas and Hugh the Drover to name a few. I also served on their committee as secretary for several years.

Although the WM's no longer exist, several of us have carried on the tradition we started decades ago, of singing carols throughout December. Joined by singers from other Societies, we stand freezing on the platform of the Bluebell Railway entertaining the dining revellers on the train.

Over the years I have sung with other groups in many concerts including Brighton Festival Chorus (Verdi Requiem); and with Burgess Hill based Cantemus (operetta and musicals, travelling to Germany, and participating in A Night of 100 Voices...also serving on the committee).

Currently I'm with Brighton Voices at, and under the MD of, All Saints Church in Hove.

Do come and introduce yourself at the events, I would love to meet you all.



SYLVIA'S STORY

My journey into G & S started when I was 4 years old and my Mum took to see my Grandfather performing HMS Pinafore in our Church Hall, I loved it and every year after that I went to see all of the productions until at age of 16 and I was old enough to join the Society myself. The Lewes Road Congregational Church Operatic Society (as we were then called) was very highly respected and entered the Isabel Jay Trophy contest annually and won it most years. The then musical director was Bob Reed who was very passionate about the way G & S was sung and a very hard task master. The Producer was Peggy Joiner and she was a perfectionist and always wanted the choreography performed by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company to be followed to the letter, which was very difficult on an incredibly small stage but somehow we managed it. Along with Richard we have also performed with the Wandering Minstrels and Southwick Opera Company. Whilst performing an updated Trial by Jury with the Wandering Minstrels each person in the production was given a character, I was given Joanne Lumley in Absolutely Fabulous whereby I had to act drunk. We were travelling with this show performing at different village halls and never got to see the stage, at the second venue no one knew that the back of the stage was missing and there was a gapping hole and whilst acting drunk I didn't see the hole and fell straight off the back of the stage, that night I had friends in the audience who asked me how I performed that amazing stunt every night without being hurt!

My first production was Ruddigore which to this day remains my favourite. You will see from Richard's story below how I roped him in. I have performed in all of the operas apart from Utopia Ltd, The Grand Duke and Thespis. After a couple of years I started to take lead parts, my first being Constance in The Sorcerer and then I progressed to Princess Ida which was a lovely part to play. As I grow older my voice lowered and I went on to play most of the leading Contralto roles and my favourite role was Katisha in the Mikado, it is such a dramatic role but also has a softer side so it put both my acting and vocal skills to the test.

My love for Gilbert and Sullivan grew and I love memorabilia and on an outing to Sheffield Park I saw a notice in a window asking for volunteers to help in a G & S Museum owned by Melvyn Tarran. I took the number from the window and called Melvyn who welcomed both Richard & I with open arms and we started our journey promoting and helping out at the Museum. One day when Melvyn and I were talking we thought it would be a good idea to start a G & S appreciation Society for Mid Sussex and we started recruiting people that we felt would like to be involved and we eventually became The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Sussex which we are all a part of today.

We are still working with Melvyn categorising all of his treasures so none will be lost in the future.

RICHARD'S STORY

My journey into G&S began in the 60s. My girlfriend (now my lovely wife) Sylvia, persuaded a very reluctant me, to go and support her grandfather who was in the chorus of Lewes Road Operatic Society's, "The Pirates of Penzance". Up until then the only Gilbert and Sullivan I had heard, to my knowledge, was 'Tit Willow'. Anyway to my surprise I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Sylvia joined the society the following year for their next production, Ruddigore, and I was asked if I would paint the ancestral portraits for them.

The Yeomen of the Guard was next, and it was then that I was finally persuaded to join and in the photo shoot taken of the rehearsal I can be seen trying not to be seen.

The Gondoliers was to follow and again I was asked to paint the scenery but guess who got roped in and ended up being given the part of Georgio. Two whole lines to sing. How nerve racking was that.

My first real part was Bill Bobstay, the Boatswain, in HMS Pinafore and from then I went on to play (not in order); - Counsel for the Plaintiff (Trial by Jury) Major Murgatroyd (Patience), Colonel Calverley (Patience), Antonio (The Gondoliers) Scythius (Princess Ida), The Pirate King (The Pirates of Penzance), The Mikado (The Mikado). (The last four I have played more than once).

I then got ambitious and wanted to direct, and as I had previously worked at Lewes Castle drawing their Archaeological finds, Sylvia decided to ask them if I could put on a production of The Yeomen of the Guard, in the castle moat, to which they agreed.

I directed the principals and Barbara Sayers (also a society member) helped direct the chorus.

The weather was the real concern but all went well until the last day when it started to drizzle towards the end of act one and so the sound system had to be shut down but our brave audience stayed with us. The only concern was that the lovely costumes that had been hired did not get damaged and lucky they didn't.

The next production I directed (again with the help of Barbara directing the Cratchet family scenes) was a semi-musical version of A Christmas Carol, which was performed at the Brighton Art College (The Sallis Benny Theatre).