

Volume LI, No. 2 - Issue 276 - Fall 2025

Gasbag

Gilbert and Sullivan Boys and Girls



*We'll murmur forth decorous
joy in dreamy roundelays*

Published by FUMGASS:

Friends of the University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society

Gilbert & Sullivan Puzzle

POOR THINGS!

For some reason several characters in Pinafore use the word “poor” more often than you might expect. Match the personae with their lines to discover what some people might say about this topsy-turvy puzzle. You probably should use a straight edge like a ruler for this!

Boatswain

Buttercup

Carpenter's
mate

Captain
Corcoran

Dick
Deadeye

Cousin
Hebe

Josephine

Sir Joseph
Porter

Ralph

D E Z
A
B X M
A O
N O
S A T
W H I T
L H I
E R M
M N
J A G
V D Y
H K
A W

A Suitor, lowly born,
With hopeless passion torn
And poor beyond denying

Ah, poor Sir Joseph!

Nothin' to say to a poor chap like
you

Cast your eyes on some village
maiden in your own poor rank

You are rich and lofty – and I poor
and lowly

Dark is the night to earth's poor
daughters

That's only poor Dick Deadeye

Which of you two shall my poor
heart obey

The poor bumboat woman has
gypsy blood in her veins

And your fortune poor and plain

Aye, lady – no other than poor
Ralph Rackstraw!

Ah, my poor lad, you've climbed
too high

Humble, poor, and lowly born

The purest gem that ever sparkled
on a poor but worthy fellow's trusty
brow!

A poor fellow's wildest hopes

Who is poor little Buttercup that
she should expect his glance to fall
on one so lowly!



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UMGASS University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society

The University of Michigan Gilbert & Sullivan Society (UMGASS, founded in 1947, is the oldest student-run society nationwide dedicated to performing the operettas of Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan. Each year they bring together students and community members for two fully staged productions of Gilbert & Sullivan operettas, which are performed with orchestra at the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre in Ann Arbor. The quality of their productions sets a high standard for community G&S companies, and their performances are well regarded around the country and the world. If you'd like to be involved in a future production, please email umgassexec@umich.edu or visit www.umgass.org.

FUMGASS Friends of the University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society

FUMGASS are the supporters, friends and admirers of the University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society (UMGASS). FUMGASS is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, and all contributions to FUMGASS are tax-deductible. Contributions are solicited yearly. FUMGASS membership is not limited to natural persons; consider purchasing a membership for your business, pet, or charitable organization.

Benefits of membership include:

- subscription to the GASBAG
- priority ticket selection
- invitation to the Friday post-show Afterglow gathering
- personal satisfaction of encouraging the performing arts

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GASBAG Gilbert And Sullivan Boys And Girls

GASBAG is the FUMGASS newsletter. It is published three times per year. Each issue is sent to FUMGASS members and to other G&S societies who exchange newsletters with us. Copies are also distributed to UMGASS members and are available to interested attendees at UMGASS performances. Our subscribers reside in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Italy and Japan.

GASBAG has four objectives:

- Act as an official record of UMGASS activities
- Entertain Savoyards
- Publish scholarly articles on G&S
- Provide general information on G&S societies elsewhere

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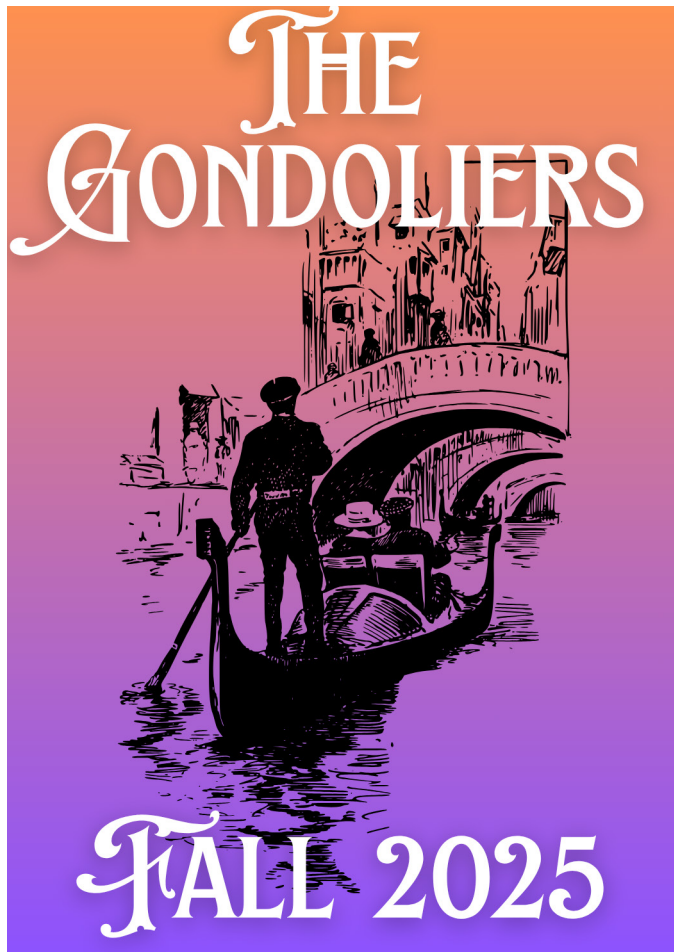
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Please send alumni news, letters, articles, reviews or other contributions to the GASBAG Editor at editor@fumgass.org. The deadline for the next issue is **December 15, 2025**.

Next UMGASS Productions



www.umgass.org

Would you like to advertise in an UMGASS program?

Ad Sizes & Rates

120 character "Shout Out"		\$20	Business card	3.5x2	\$60
1/8 page	1.25x2 in	\$30	1/2 page	5x3.5 in	\$80
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Ads must be in jpg or .pdf format, in black and white.
Please contact Program Editor Dan Peisach at DPeisach@gmail.com.

Letters

Dear Members,

There have been a number of exciting developments since the last issue.

UMGASS may finally be turning a corner. UMGASS is, after all, a student organization and this year we attracted many more students to the cast, orchestra and the board. The UMGASS board is now an all-student board for the first time in many years. Lilya Heidelbaugh, who joined several UMGASS casts while in high school and went on to UM's School of Music, Theatre and Dance, took on the role of Company Promoter and then Secretary. She really drummed up interest in the freshman class for joining the fall production of *THE SORCERER*. Many of those students are now on the board and enthusiastically promoting UMGASS to fellow students (see "The Pinapool: A New Era of Student Involvement in UMGASS" on page 7).

We were fortunate to attract not one, but two fantastic graduate conducting students who shared the role of music director for this spring's *HMS PINAFORE*. In turn, they recruited an all-student orchestra, our first in many years!

Further, our attendance at the shows was up significantly and revenue increased accordingly. And as a cast member, it was great to see and hear so many students in the audience.

One source of FUMGASS membership has been student families who often support us for a number of years. If we can continue to attract students, parental support may once more become a significant factor in our membership.

Given all these factors, FUMGASS is optimistic that this trend will continue.

Speaking of orchestras, FUMGASS has commissioned reduced orchestrations for what we expect will be the entire G&S canon. You can read more about this exciting new initiative in "Our Latest Initiative: Reduced Orchestrations!" on page 12.

Everything is interesting, Tell us, tell us all about it!



This August, FUMGASS sent Melinda Carlisle to Buxton, UK as part of our biennial International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival scholarship program. She was in the IGSF chorus of Savoynet-sponsored productions of *THE ZOO* and *HMS PINAFORE*. This scholarship is intended to promote UMGASS globally and to encourage longer-term participation in UMGASS. A UM School of Music, Theatre and Dance student in music education, Melinda was in the chorus of both December 2024's *THE SORCERER* and April 2025's *HMS PINAFORE*. She has joined the UMGASS board as vice president and will be promoting UMGASS on social media. You may look forward to her engaging report in the next *GASBAG*. Melinda is currently co-director and choreographer of our fall show, *THE GONDOLIERS*.

I am pleased to welcome Dan Peisach to the FUMGASS Board as our first ever Secretary. A long-time trombone player, Dan has played five shows in our pit and been onstage in six. Most recently he was UMGASS Program Editor. He has joined the *GASBAG* and Communication Teams and is keen to bring fresh ideas to the puzzle.

Shea Walsh has joined the board as treasurer. A Michigan native, she is an Albion College graduate in accounting and theater and has a Ross School of Business Master of Accounting. She will be an excellent replacement for Ali Roselle. Thanks to Ali, who recruited her.

In friendship's name,

Brynn Raupagh
FUMGASS President

Features

The Pinapool: A New Era of Student Involvement in UMGASS

By Melinda Carlisle



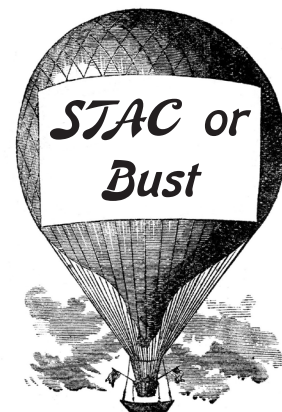
On a cold January day, a Ford Explorer left from Bursley Hall, headed to Mosher Jordan Hall, swung through North Quad, stopped at Martha Cooke, and landed in

the parking lot of the Student Theatre Arts Center. Out of my blue minivan, into the freshly fallen snow, the steps of five Voice department freshmen, Maddie Wright (Josephine), Abby Eagan (Little Buttercup), Lilya Heidelbaugh (Director), Kaitlyn Dolan (Ensemble), and myself (Ensemble) cross the parking lot to HMS PINAFORE rehearsal. This would begin the daily tradition of our student performer crew voyaging to and from rehearsal together in what became known as the Pinapool.

What started as a simple act of carpool to save each other from the perils of riding the Commuter South bus, became our deepest way of connecting as students. We sang along to Barbie music and chattered about our days. Over the hours we spent traveling our pickup route, we moved from acquaintances to friends to each other's closest confidants. The friendships formed through UMGASS are some of the strongest I have ever experienced in my life. We lived our first year of

adulthood while gaily tripping and lightly skipping to the beat of rehearsals and show days. The sidelines of rehearsal were scattered with computers open to Canvas assignments and breaks echoed the melody of Aural Skills practice.

The student comradery didn't stop in the rehearsal room, and continued onto the UMGASS Board, with seven of the eight voting-member roles being won by students, six of which by undergraduate students. This exciting shift shows a dedication to the promotion and longevity of student involvement in UMGASS. Through glowing word of mouth, posters, tabling events and much more, the students of UMGASS are excited to bring in even more student involvement in coming years. But for now we will continue to pile in, buckle up, turn the music on high, and drive the Pinapool home. ☺



Post-COVID Casting, Re-Casting, and Grafting in *THE SORCERER* (with no apologies for the mixing of metaphors)

By Lark Speyer

In contrast with the ever-popular H.M.S. PINAFORE (see “Review: HMS PINAFORE, Spring 2025” on page 10), it was tough for the production staff of the Fall 2024 *THE SORCERER* to keep enough actors in the rehearsal space throughout the fall, let alone enough builders and painters in the shop. *THE SORCERER* (to my admittedly imperfect knowledge) spawned only a single pop-culture homage, the 1957 short story “The Up-to-Date Sorcerer” by Isaac Asimov, whereas other G&S operettas still sneak into children’s subconscious expectations for comedy through everything from afternoon cartoons (Animaniacs’s “H.M.S. Yakko”) to extra-curricular mathematics (Art of Problem Solving’s *Beast Academy* graphic-novels-cum-workbooks).

Artistic Director Kate Azanov (a third-year SMTD undergraduate) admitted early in the fall that she had never yet been part of a show that did not require someone to step in for an absence on the stage. However, with a grand total of four chorus members (one male and three female) against nine major and minor principals, it simply wasn’t an option to prepare understudies comprehensively.

Then, twenty-six hours before opening the show, the spouse of one of our secondary leads Doug Burgoyne (Sir Marmaduke Poindexter) tested positive for COVID. Although Doug himself was testing negative, not everyone was comfortable with him still coming in.

So the director and the UMGASS Board spent the final dress rehearsal beating all possible bushes, starting with people who’d done a *SORCERER* or any UMGASS production, before extending in

all directions.

Fortunately, around here you don’t have to extend your search far at all before you hit the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance. Our replacement Sir Marmaduke (fourth-year undergraduate Xavier Perry) sounded fantastic from the first we heard him open his mouth on Thursday afternoon. Nonetheless, he had not sung or even seen the show. Before 8pm opening night Xavier had literally no more than:

- ☞ 90min one-on-one with Musical Director Jordan McKay,
- ☞ 45min with the cast on stage reviewing blocking, and
- ☞ 15min with the orchestra and his compatriots in small-group numbers.

Every moment I saw him off-stage that evening and night, Xavier’s face displayed a perfect “deer-in-the-headlights”/“overstimulated-infant” shock.

On-stage, however, he was a delight. The audience was very forgiving of him having to carry a script, and he was clearly well-trained to react to his fellow performers. It was proposed we call him Savior rather than the standard pronunciation of his name, and Jordan pointed out that having saved this show will be quite the talking point for Xavier’s interviews and auditions over the rest of his career.

It was heartbreaking to lose our original Sir Marmaduke, Doug, who was among the two



Xavier Perry (right) as Sir Marmaduke during the Friday performance, with Carly LaForest as Lady Sangazure



Doug Burgoyne (center) as Sir Marmaduke during the Tuesday dress rehearsal, with Evan Phillips (left) as Dr. Daly and Carson Arcuri (right) as Alexis



Friday night (L-R): Director Kate Ivanov as Aline, Carson Arcuri as Alexis, Evan Phillips as Dr. Daly, Xavier Perry as Sir Marmaduke, and Heather Nordenbrock as Mrs. Partlet

most animated people on the stage. But the show went on ... for opening night.

On Friday night, for the second performance, as each cast member trudged in through the back door, they were met by whomever hadn't already had the chance to share yet: "Have you heard?"

{sigh} "... What?"

"Ellie can't sing tonight."

Eleanor Steinmetz, our lead soprano (Aline), is a fully trained opera singer easily capable of filling the entire Mendelssohn theater with perfectly focused sound. As I heard it, Artistic Director Kate actually started to throw up her hands and plan to cancel the performance, but the UMGASS ultra-veterans such as Lori Gould (with more than 50 semesters' involvement under her belt) overruled her. Kate was told, "Make it work."



Eleanor Steinmetz (center) played Aline for the other performances

So she played the part herself.

And it turns out she has a sweet soprano voice! None of the vocal acrobatics we'd come to expect, but given what we now know she can do, it was



At the Friday performance, the role of Hercules (the Sorcerer's Apprentice) was split between Hugh Finnigan (left) and Hayden Steiner (right), with Steiner playing the role alone at the other performances. Ryan Buyers (center) played John Wellington Wells



Ryan Buyers as the titular sorcerer. In silhouette: Music Director Jordan McKay

quite a surprise to several of us that Kate hadn't even once joined the cast for warm-ups over the course of rehearsals.

Therefore, the exciting part for the cast of the Saturday performances was that we finally did not have a brand-new person on the stage.

Theater people are the best, aren't they? Almost regardless of anything else going on in their lives, they will always do their best for the rest of us.



Theater people are the best!

Review: HMS PINAFORE, Spring 2025

By Lark Speyer



Buttercup (Abigail Eagan)

is fantastic, the jokes are funny, and the setup and plot twists are entirely ridiculous. As such, repeat audience members such as myself expect an “old favorites” experience.

Artistic Director Lilya Heidelbaugh tugs the PINAFORE setting forward into the 1910s. The era is lightly distinguishable by Marilyn Gouin’s costumes, Laura Strowe’s sets, and by Little Buttercup (Abigail Eagan)’s wares. The sailors eagerly “buy of [their] Buttercup” pins and sashes apparently without taking any notice of the “Votes for Women!” slogans. This slots in well with the book of the play: characters speak pointed social commentary on multiple occasions, but always without any hint of peeking below the surface of their views. Dick Deadeye (Rory Scott) sonorously proclaims the predominant assumptions about class hierarchy in an ugly tone of voice exactly so that his



Captain Corcoran (Matthew Grace) and Dick Deadeye (Rory Scott)

What to say about HMS PINAFORE? It’s wonderful and everyone loves it! It’s no coincidence that the audience, cast, and production team are all more filled-out than in many other semesters. My husband and I used UMGASS’s previous production of PINAFORE to introduce our older kids to Gilbert & Sullivan— what could be more characteristic? The music

fellow sailors can dismiss the ugliness as Dick’s, clinging all the

more passionately to received “wisdom.” Were an intrepid suffragette to attempt lecturing the crew of the H.M.S Pinafore on women’s rights, she might be booed off the deck: by playing up her face, as Buttercup does, she sneaks in an actual idea before anyone thinks to object.

The crew are more than happy, in contrast, to listen to the advice of Sir Joseph Porter, K.C.B. (Richard Knapp), because he embodies the wisdom they expect to receive. As a Member of Parliament, he “never thought of thinking for himself at all,” demonstrating how “British tars” are to get ahead in life. Besides, Sir Joseph is attended by his many fawning relations: surely such popularity must be deserved.

I liked the physicality many actors brought to this production. Josephine (Madeleine Wright), the romantic lead, sighs and flounces onto the stage, collapsing with trenchant melodrama onto the stairs before her character is even introduced. In a second-act showstopper, “Never mind the why and wherefore,” Sir Joseph is the 2025 champion of stamina, and it falls to Captain Corcoran (Matthew Grace) to call the third encore to a screeching halt: “Some of us are



Sir Joseph Porter, KCB (Richard Knapp)



“Never mind the why and wherefore” L-R: Captain Corcoran (Matthew Grace), Josephine (Madeleine Wright), Sir Joseph (Richard Knapp)

old!” Even before the singing starts, during the introduction to the opening number, crew member Doug Burgoyne raises the audience’s expectations with one-hand push-ups.

When Josephine, in a fit of pride and duty to her class, refuses the suit of Ralph Rackstraw (Anthony Davis), he leaps to the conclusion that his next step should be suicide with an alacrity that would be callous if it weren’t so obviously unconsidered. This Ralph can’t even figure out how to jump off the ship! The heightened physicality of Ralph’s failing attempts to hoist his leg over the set supports the characters’ see-sawing feelings and judgments, and likewise shores up the audience’s participation in the unwritten rule of all Gilbert & Sullivan productions: “Leave your logic at the door.” The audience knows to dispense with all rationality because the characters model this for us.

All three of the named female characters were played by actresses debuting on the UMGASS stage: Eagan, Wright, and Zoe Spencer as Cousin Hebe. Davis was likewise a first-timer. I wish we may all enjoy more performances from them. Wright’s voice is young and pure, and her character shares a sweet and clearly trusting



Ralph (Anthony Davis) attempts to leap overboard

relationship with Grace’s as the captain, her father. Eagan portrays a canny and worldly-wise Buttercup who learned from her mistakes “oh, many years ago.”

Musical Director Francisco Fernandez led the orchestra in a nimble rendition of the music. As in other recent semesters, FUMGASS commissioned

a “reduced” orchestral arrangement from David Jenvey to ease the actors’ jobs of making themselves heard, and to permit better compensation for the hardworking musicians. For the ever-popular HMS PINAFORE,



Cousin Hebe (Zoe Spencer)

the full company can hold their own against orchestral volume, as can some virtuoso performers, but this new system is kinder to the many talented but developing or less-trained performers -- the amateurs! -- who are the backbone of a student/ community organization. Thank you to UMGASS and all participants! ☘



A Big Big D!



Our Latest Initiative: Reduced Orchestration!

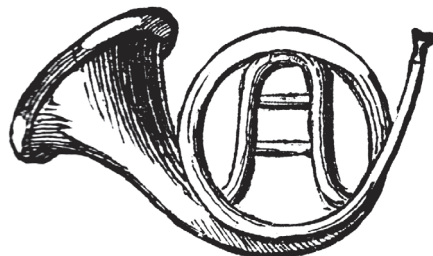
By Brynn Raupagh

Over the past few years, FUMGASS and UMGASS have discussed the possibility of using reduced orchestrations to help reduce production costs. UMGASS has been committed to full orchestrations as one of its signature features. However, the orchestra is the single largest production cost at over one-third of the budget. If we could reduce the number of musicians without compromising the quality of the production, it would make a significant difference.

We considered renting existing orchestrations, but the quality of existing orchestrations was unappealing and the idea of repeating expenses each show did not make economic sense. Gilbert & Sullivan scores have been in the public domain for many years. UMGASS has been fortunate to own full orchestration scores for every G&S show (except *THE SPIS* for which no original exists) for decades, which has been a significant savings.

Fortunately, David Jenvey, who has played trumpet and cornet in our pit for many productions, is also an experienced and outstanding arranger. FUMGASS has commissioned him to create all-new reduced orchestrations from Gilbert's originals. In addition, David meticulously consults Kalmus and Schirmer orchestral and vocal scores to ensure that his arrangements are compatible.

Our test case was the December 2024 fall show, *THE SORCERER*. We followed up with *HMS PINAFORE* this spring. *THE GONDOLIERS* is planned for December 2025. The orchestrations are intended for 16 musicians: two Violin I, two Violin 2, two Viola and one of each of the other instruments. This is a reduction from 23 musicians used in full orchestrations.



What are the benefits?

- ☞ The overall cost of the orchestra is lower.
- ☞ We can raise the pay-per-service to be more in line with market value. UMGASS's pay-per-service has been very low for at least a decade, which has made it hard to attract musicians to the pit. This is particularly true for orchestral students who can make more playing for other organizations.
- ☞ A smaller orchestra, particularly in the brass and woodwind sections, means that the cast is not overpowered. In fact, audience members have commented that they could actually hear the words without having to resort to reading supertitles.
- ☞ The quality of the orchestrations is very fine. Though the sound is not as full, no instruments have been omitted so the harmonies remain intact.

Together, FUMGASS and David plan to rent these orchestrations. They will be appealing to organizations with limited budgets and smaller orchestras such as high schools and G&S societies. We have mutually agreed to join forces to promote them figuring we will be able to reach a larger potential audience. Because there are few high quality reduced orchestrations available, we think they may become popular. This spring, we rented *THE SORCERER* to Northeastern Illinois University through a former UMGASS member now on the faculty at NEIU and received positive feedback. We expect many former UMGASSers who have made their careers in music to be interested.



It will take a few years complete the full repertoire, but we hope to complete three orchestrations each year. If you know any organizations who may be interested, please send them our way.



An Endorsement of UMGASS's Reduced Orchestrations

I've been directing operatic works at a small state college for the last three years, and choosing which works to do with a very limited student body is always a challenge. As an UMGASS alum, I naturally have a soft spot for Gilbert & Sullivan, and I was excited to realize that our available singers this past year were a pretty perfect fit for *THE SORCERER*. That being said, something else that is limited in a program like ours is money for orchestral musicians!

I've created my own ad-hoc reductions before, but especially because the parts for *THE SORCERER* that are published are difficult to read, and expensive, it seemed like a lot of hassle just to have more hassle. I reached out to see if we could rent parts from FUMGASS at a lower rate than a national publisher, and was so excited to hear that FUMGASS was not only starting to create reduced orchestrations of G&S shows, but that miraculously *THE SORCERER* was the first one that was ready!

We rented the parts and conductor's score for our spring 2025 production and were absolutely thrilled. The balance of instrumental texture and color was phenomenal without drowning out the singers, the parts were clean, bright, and easy to read, and I was, of course, also thrilled to be able to get a great product while supporting the organization that, without exaggeration, made me the artist I am today.

I highly recommend anyone considering a more modest orchestration of G&S to rent these versions. There's no discernable difference in the end musical quality than the full published orchestration, the parts themselves are in FAR better shape than anything that's been hanging around the Kalmus offices for decades, and the price was excellent. Thank you, FUMGASS!!

Claire DiVizio
Northeastern Illinois University

RUDDIGORE Memorabilia for Sale

Ten vivid watercolors of costume designs are among the highlights of an offering of RUDDIGORE memorabilia up for sale by a Gilbert and Sullivan collector in Dearborn, Michigan.

The watercolors, from a circa 1970 production, are the work of Beverly Jane Thomas, a former faculty member at Florida Atlantic University and the author of *A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO COSTUME DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION*.

The oldest items offered for sale are libretti from the 19th century, two of them dating to the original RUDDYGORE version of the operetta.

Some of the dozens of other items in the collection are a 1920 poster, programmes, cast photos, books, trading cards, ephemera and vinyl records. Complementing the records are two rare sets of the first recordings, from 1924 and 1931.

Details are available by emailing David Good at dgood42@yahoo.com or phoning 313-622-3997. Prices are negotiable.



Basil Hood and Edward German: MERRIE ENGLAND and More

By Ben Urish

Despite the numerous pleasures we've been graced with by the collaborations and separate projects of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, greedy fans (such as myself) still yearn for more. But the men only produced so much, and only some of that is available. It is not all that surprising that no one could quite replace them. But, of course, many librettists and composers were working in the comic opera idiom, and several even in a clearly G&S inspired style. A few of these also paired at various times with the masters themselves. If there ever were any viable successors to Gilbert and Sullivan, it would have been librettist Basil Hood and composer Edward German.

As has been well-documented, both Gilbert and Sullivan produced comic operas with other collaborators, to varying degrees of success, artistically and financially. Before teaming up, both men between them had created several one-act comic operettas and even a few multi-act comic opera productions with other partners. And during their notorious break-up of 1890-1893, they also worked with others, and in fact, continued to do so during their reconciliation of 1893-1896.

However, the financial failure of, and the lackluster public and critical response to *THE GRAND DUKE* (1896) was not recoverable and would be their last joint effort. The two would not work together again, and Gilbert, though constantly working on new theatrical and literary projects, would not attempt another comic opera for over a decade.

But Sullivan was game and found success with another comedic-oriented librettist, Basil Hood. Hood was fresh from a series of well-received efforts with composer Walter Slaughter which included musical comedies and children's musical fantasies. Sullivan had recently been battered by the failure of *THE BEAUTY STONE* (1898), a romantic drama and the biggest operatic flop of his career.



Basil Hood (left) and Edward German (right)

Their first collaboration was *THE ROSE OF PERSIA* (1899), with Hood decidedly and purposely in a Gilbertian vein. It was a hit, and the duo planned to continue their collaboration. In 1999 the release of a new high-quality recording and performance of the operetta renewed interest in the work, and for the next decade and a half, it had occasional performances and looked to be taking a place as the go-to variant when producers wanted to tap into a G&S audience with something new and unexpected. Regrettably, the last 15 years have seen *THE ROSE OF PERSIA* encounter challenges and complaints similar to those mounted against *THE MIKADO* (1885), and productions have resultingly dropped off considerably.

The pair followed up their hit with *THE EMERALD ISLE* (1901), a much less Gilbert-inspired comic opera celebrating traditional Irish culture. Sullivan had only finished two songs and sketched out some of the major musical elements and themes when he passed away. Edward German, who had achieved a solid reputation for incidental theatrical pieces and light concert compositions was brought in to complete Sullivan's fragmentary score. The production was another triumph with both audiences and critics, so the new collaborators, with backing from the Savoy, embarked on their first totally original collaboration.

It was to become *MERRIE ENGLAND* (1902) and was a solid enough hit despite the changing tastes of audiences which had largely abandoned comic operetta in favor of musical comedy. The original production ran for a sufficiently respectable 120 performances, followed by a fourteen-week tour, and then another 56 performances.

The main plot involves Sir Walter Raleigh's romance with Bessie Throckmorton, Queen Elizabeth

I's Lady-In-Waiting. A love letter he sends to her ends up in the hands of his rival, the Earl of Essex, who passes it off to the Queen as a letter meant for her. As her intimates know her as "Queen Bess" she presumes that the "Bessie" of the letter is her. Essex hopes the resulting misunderstandings and embarrassments will eliminate Raleigh from the Queen's affections, leaving the field open to him. His plan works, and the hurt and angered Queen sentences various characters to execution, banishment, and house arrest. Further developments ensue, but a couple of theatrical performances celebrating May Day stir the Queen's patriotism and enlighten her romantic perspectives with Raleigh and Bessie earning her blessing as she turns her amorous leanings to Essex.

Hood had a real knack for intriguing and intelligent wordplay, (especially puns) and quirky characters. He could turn out solid patter songs (three of them in *MERRIE ENGLAND*), and tight, efficient dialogue. But in this work at least (*ROSE OF PERSIA* is better), straightforward plotting and strong supporting characters were not his strong points. Sub-plots and tangential sequences spin out of the main narrative, and, amusing though they are, situations and characters can get confusing and jumbled.

Even so, *MERRIE ENGLAND* is a real joy. It moves quickly despite the overly complex plot and numerous characters who appear but have little to do. German's music is spritely when it needs to be, and serious but not too solemn where appropriate.

The opera itself saw many productions in the first 50 years after its inception, culminating in increased popularity during the early years of the reign of Elizabeth II. It was also further revived during her various Jubilee years. Several of its musical numbers became favorites and were known outside of the opera at least until the 1950s.

"O Peaceful England" is sung by the character of Queen Elizabeth I and became a popular patriotic number. The Queen sings of her watching over the country as it safely enjoys a peaceful sleep, knowing

she is on guard. The song is preceded in the opera by "The Yeomen of England," a martial number performed by the Essex character and the full chorus. He extols the virtues of the free-fighting men of England who have been nurtured on the freedom of the country and are therefore unmatched in bravery and fortitude, making them the envy even of their foes. German's trumpet fanfares are well-placed in this number and it can easily be imagined what a show-stopper the number could be. The romantic ballad "Dan Cupid Hath A Garden" (aka "The English Rose") sung by the character of Raleigh, also became something of a staple. It praises the virtues of a particular female character in the work, but out of context was easily generalized to all English women. German's melody swells appropriately and properly buttresses the emotions of Hood's poetic lyrics without overshadowing them.

But a comic opera needs to be comic, after all, and *MERRIE ENGLAND* does not disappoint. "I Do Counsel" is an amusing treatise where the character Wilkins sings that British naval songs and hornpipe dances are what Shakespeare's plays such as *Hamlet* are lacking—though he does admit that the Bard may not agree with that assessment. Essex, Wilkins, and a character named Simkins sing the joint patter-song "When A Man Is A Lover" which ends with a clever self-referential comment about how the song is doing the very thing it is proposing. There's a gleeful silliness to the rhymes with one section stating "But if love blows its nose, it can't do it in prose, It must have a poet to blow it." Wilkins and the mixed chorus have another bouncy number "King Neptune Sat On A Lonely Throne" which becomes a colorful and rapid litany of all the sea life that goes off in search of a worthy bride for King Neptune, including even "the fish you boil, and the fish you fry." The perfect woman turns out to be Queen Elizabeth I, naturally.

A fun number in the second act is "The Big Brass Band" performed by Wilkins and Simkins. As might be expected, German uses the brass section to good effect here and it is an energetic number. Essex is joined by a trio chorus of Bessie, the character Jill-All-Alone, and Raleigh

Continued on page 18 →

Daphnedoric

By Amy Vail

Amy Vail is a former Assistant Professor of Classics in the Honors College at Baylor University. She has been singing Gilbert and Sullivan off and on since the age of twelve.

At the beginning of the first act finale of Gilbert and Sullivan's *PATIENCE*, a chorus of rapturous maidens trip onto stage in a merry procession. Gilbert's stage direction: "They are dancing classically, and playing on cymbals, pipes, and other archaic instruments." If you imagine them as a living picture by Walter Crane, you won't go far wrong. They urge one another on:

*Let the merry cymbals sound,
Gaily pipe Pandaeon pleasure,
With a Daphnephoric bound,
Tread a gay but classic measure.*

Like all of Gilbert's female figures, the chorus of rapturous maidens, when it comes to Classics, are talking through their hats. The pleasures of Pan's devotees are utterly unsuitable for members of a light-opera chorus. I will not go into detail, but if sordid curiosity moves you, just look up what Pan did to the moon goddess Selene. There are other stories, too, but they are not suitable for chaste eyes.

Yet the rapturous maidens cannot be expected to have had a thorough grounding in the history of ancient religion. It seems only fair to absolve them of "erudition sham." Their sources for understanding of the classical world are necessarily at several removes. They are thinking musically and poetically only.

"Pandaeon" is an uncommon word, really a coinage. The Pandaeon pipes most likely come from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *THE MASQUE OF PANDORA*, which had been published in 1875. *PATIENCE* dates from 1881, by which time, Longfellow's works already had a great deal of currency in the British Isles. The poems of Longfellow, especially *EVANGELINE*, were considered firmly respectable reading, suitable for the parlor. In *THE MASQUE OF PANDORA*, Hermes, en route to Phthia in Thessaly, announces:

*I will fly so swiftly
That my caduceus in the whistling air
Shall make a sound like the Pandaeon pipes.*



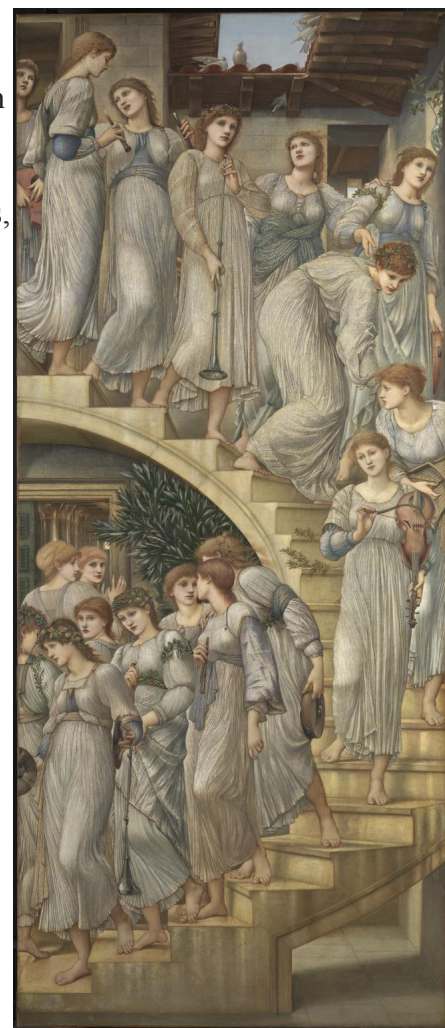
DAPHNEDORIA by Lord Leighton, 1876

Hermes is on his way to bring Pandora as a bride to Prometheus' stupid brother Epimetheus. Certainly, there's a nuptial reference here, but it's reversed; the chorus of rapturous maidens are bringing the poet Bunthorne, bound in garlands of roses, to raffle him off as a bridegroom. They aren't thinking of the implications of the scene: Pandora turns out to be a terrible wife, while anyone looking at the scene from a rational perspective knows instinctively that Bunthorne, with his monstrous ego, will not be an easy husband for anyone. For the happy ending a light opera requires, it will be absolutely imperative that nobody will end up as Bunthorne's bride.

As for the "Daphnephoric bound," this may have something to do with Lord Leighton's painting *DAPHNEPHORIA*, hung at the Academy in 1876. The painting had attracted a lot of attention, and it proved popular over the following decades. *DAPHNEPHORIA* depicts a sacred procession held every nine years in Thebes. The central figure in the procession is a young boy called the daphnephoros, or laurel-bearer, who carried a staff entwined with laurel, sacred to Apollo. A choir of girls follows the daphnephoros, singing a hymn to Apollo. Our ancient sources for this rite include Pindar, Proclus, and Pausanias. In the original ritual, nobody did any bounding whatsoever. Nor is there any jumping about in Lord Leighton's vision of a Daphnephoria. In the painting, although Apollo himself is on center stage, flourishing his lyre, nobody else is playing any instruments. There is an easy explanation for the cymbals in *PATIENCE*, though: the choir of women and girls is followed by a group of three mostly-nude male figures bearing pieces of golden armor, and the round shield one of them is holding aloft does look—to the casual gaze—a lot like a single cymbal.

Still, for the purposes of operetta, there does need to be some dancing, and the instruments add a lot of visual appeal. Maidens playing antique instruments were firmly in people's minds when thinking of the Pre-Raphaelite Art: Edward Coley Burne-Jones' *THE GOLDEN STAIRS* had been exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1880, the year before *PATIENCE* opened at the Opera Comique in London. Indeed, this painting may be where the "merry

cymbals" come from: the figure at the bottom left of the painting is holding a pair of medium-sized cymbals, and plainly knows how to operate them. Someone else, about five ladies back, is actually brandishing a tambourine, but she has prudently muted this obnoxious instrument in the folds of her skirt. There's another tambourine further up the steps, similarly muted. Instruments depicted include a vielle, a long trumpet, a couple of renaissance recorders, and what appears to be an autoharp. These would make a strange ensemble; it's a good thing most of the ladies aren't actually playing.



THE GOLDEN STAIRS by Edward Coley Burne-Jones, 1880

It may be that Gilbert had never heard any details of the historical daphnephoria of Thebes, and had looked at Leighton's painting only in passing. He had received a good classical education at the Great Ealing School, where he took prizes for verse translations of poems by Ovid and Horace, but Pindar, Proclus, and Pausanias were most likely not on the syllabus for schoolboys. When crafting the phrase "daphnephoric bound," he might just have been thinking of the story of Apollo and Daphne from Book 1 of Ovid's *METAMORPHOSES*. The rapturous maidens of *PATIENCE*, too, might be thinking of Daphne, bounding away through the forests, hotly pursued by Apollo. If so, they are not, however, making an important logical connection: the last thing Daphne wants to do is get married.



*“Basil Hood and Edward German: Merrie England and More”-
Continued from page 15 ↓*

for “When Cupid First The Old World Trod” which is arguably the strongest melody in the work. Essex tells the story of how Cupid learns modern ways and must now wear clothes and in fact, works in a shop selling love songs to spur romance among couples. It’s quite an amusing and whimsical number with one of Hood’s better puns where a fiduciary Cupid entangles romantic couples in love’s “netts” (as opposed to its grosses, one assumes). Hood’s intriguing wordplay is also evident in a duet of Wilkins and the May Queen near the end of the opera when things look bleak for our principals. The characters and chorus speedily sing “Oh, here’s a to-do, to die today at a minute or two to two, A thing distinctly hard to say, But a harder thing to do.” The opera has many other engaging pieces.

Hood and German continued with their next opus, the whimsical Faerie story *A PRINCESS OF KENSINGTON* (1903). It proved to be a decidedly smaller success, but still a success nonetheless. However, changing audience tastes and financial constraints made this production the last of the new Savoy operas, and though there were revivals and non-operatic productions, with *A PRINCESS OF KENSINGTON* an era pretty much came to an end. Hood and German kept creating, but no longer together, and both abandoned comic opera---with one intriguing exception for German.

W. S. Gilbert, having not written a comic operetta since the disappointing *THE GRAND DUKE* in 1896, adapted one of his previous blank-verse works into an opera libretto, and, perhaps with the successes of Hood and German in mind, called upon Edward German to set it to music. German agreed and the result was *FALLEN FAIRIES* (1909). Production issues hampered it, the public evidenced little interest, and the critics were underwhelmed and generally not amused. Plans for further Gilbert and German collaborations were allowed to die of benign neglect, and that was that when it came to comic opera for both men.



But we do have the four worthy efforts provided by Sullivan, Hood, and German, and all can be found on a variety of decent and reputable recordings. Each work has its joys and merits and while they won’t take the place of Gilbert and Sullivan, (nor were they intended to), they provide strong supplements to their canon, with solid comedy, vibrant characters, heartfelt ballads, tuneful melodies, and rousing airs. Such pleasures are rare enough that they should not be overlooked, and any readers of this publication will likely find much to like in those four endeavors.

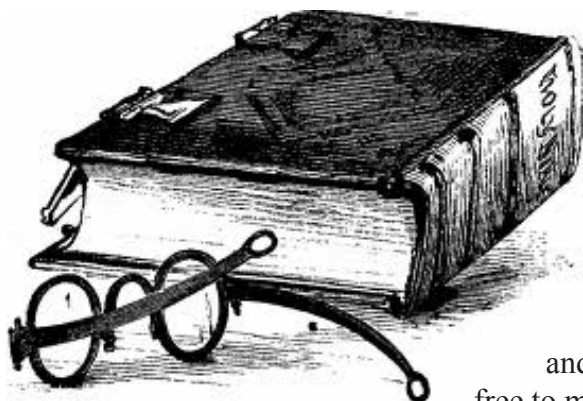


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Support UMGASS: Buy a Book or Two or Three!



FUMGASS has a large repository of books about G&S donated by Harry Benford and Karl Zinn to sell for the benefit of UMGASS. We want to find homes for them and would be pleased to add them to your G&S home libraries.

A spreadsheet listing each item in alphabetical order with a suggested purchase price is available at tinyurl.com/BZitemlist. The suggested price is based on a survey of comparable items available for sale at AbeBooks, Amazon, and eBay. For some items there was no information found. Feel free to make an offer.

By pre-arrangement, books can be picked up at Cozy Corner in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre lobby during the Fall and Spring shows. We can also send them via USPS or UPS, your choice. We accept cash, checks, PayPal or Venmo. PayPal and Venmo have transaction fees.

Please contact president@fumgass.org if you are interested, and spread the word among your G&S friends. ☞

Support UMGASS: Retired Costumes for Sale!

The UMGASS costume closet contains hundreds of items amassed over the decades. Most are handmade and are used and reused in show after show. Our collection was noticeably expanded with the acquisition of costumes from the Tracy Collection. We recently tossed worn-out items and purged duplicates and those we knew we would not reuse. We thought some of you might be interested in owning some of these, to rekindle fond memories or to wear to cosplay events or costume parties.

A selection will be on display at Cozy Corner and can be purchased for a nominal sum to support UMGASS.

Please contact president@fumgass.org if you are interested. ☞



FUMGASS Board Updates

By Brynn Raupagh

Meet our new Treasurer: Shea Walsh!

A long-time theatre lover, Shea recently discovered the world of Gilbert and Sullivan while completing her Master of Accounting degree at University of Michigan. She previously studied Accounting and Theatre at Albion College, where she was a member of the costume department staff and worked backstage on productions. Shea is currently an accountant at Pantera Capital and previously held positions in Ernst & Young's Assurance practice. She's based in NYC, but regularly returns to Michigan to visit family and catch an UMGASS show. 🍷



Daniel Peisach as Old Adam Goodheart, RUDDIGORE 2023

Meet our new Secretary: Daniel Peisach!

Dan is our first ever Secretary. A long-time trombone player, Dan has played five shows in our pit and been onstage in six. Most recently he has been UMGASS Program Editor. He has joined the GASBAG and Communication Teams and is keen to bring fresh ideas to the GASBAG puzzle. 🍷

Help Revitalize FUMGASS!

Join the FUMGASS Board!

We're so pleased to welcome Dan Peisach as Secretary and Shea Walsh as Treasurer. We still need to fill the following positions and would love to welcome you to our merry band.

Vice President

- ☞ In the event of the resignation or inability of the President to exercise the office, become President of FUMGASS with all the rights, privileges, and powers thereto as if they had been duly elected President.
- ☞ Preside at all meetings of the Board and of the membership as Chair in the absence of the President.
- ☞ Co-chair the Entertainment Team. Make arrangements for meetings and parties on behalf of Alumni, Community, Donor and University Engagement committees and as part of marketing efforts. Organize the FUMGASS Afterglow.

Marketing Specialist

- ☞ Manage development of the FUMGASS strategic marketing plan.
- ☞ Develop marketing databases and integrate into UMGASS/FUMGASS Customer Relations Management (CRM) systems.
- ☞ Co-chair the Marketing and Publicity Team with UMGASS Company Promoter.
- ☞ Determine and recruit staff for the FUMGASS marketing team.
- ☞ Oversee, coordinate and participate in marketing projects and events including design and production of marketing materials, press and media releases.
- ☞ Create and maintain marketing budget.
- ☞ Meet and correspond with outside vendors and internal contributors.
- ☞ Connect with influential media outlets and journalists to place stories about company news and other initiatives.



Join One of Our Teams!

In our last issue, we described our new UMGASS/FUMGASS Team Framework. We seek volunteers to make our new teams a success. FUMGASS needs new and existing initiatives to expand awareness of Gilbert and Sullivan in general and UMGASS in particular. Though we are somewhat biased, we think this will be both rewarding and fun. If this sounds appealing, we'd love to hear from you or have you suggest someone who might be the perfect fit. Please contact board@fumgass.org. We are currently particularly in need of members for:

- ☞ Donor Engagement Team
- ☞ Community Engagement Team

Book Review

“Only Idle Chatter from Gilbert and Sullivan Austin” by Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

By Mitch Gillett

Only Idle Chatter from Gilbert & Sullivan Austin (2023) is a unique book for the Gilbert and Sullivan world. Over the past two decades we have had new biographies of Gilbert, the D’Oyly Cartes, various DC opera company members, and various reassessments of the operas. Only Idle Chatter, first and foremost, is a tribute to its author, and his place in the hearts of the Gilbert and Sullivan Austin company.

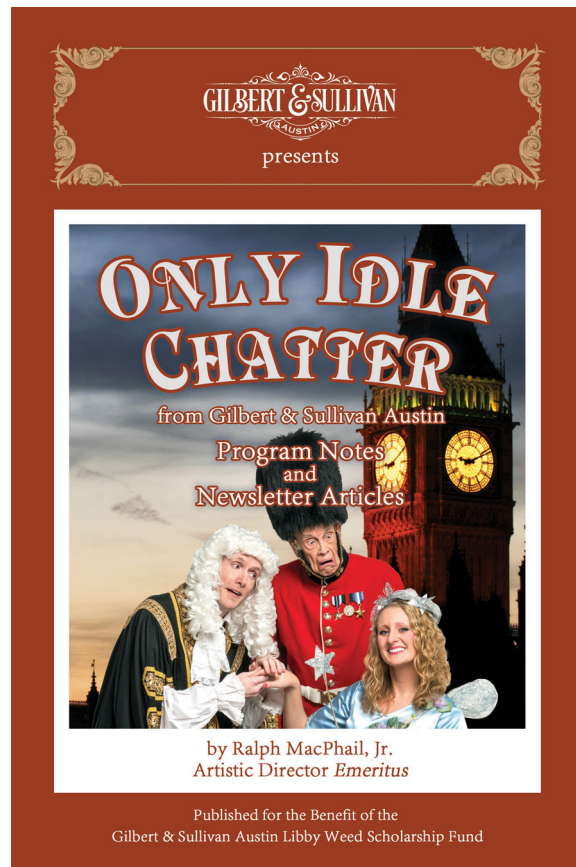
Ralph (Rafe) MacPhail, Jr. began as a professor and director of theatre at Bridgewater College in Virginia, already infused with a childhood love of G&S. He staged G&S productions, contributed articles to *GASBAG*, *The Savoyard*, and theatre journals, along with reviews, symposia, and conferences. Though, for many international G&S lovers, he is best loved as one of the listowners of SavoyNet, the international Gilbert and Sullivan email listserv, once it was moved to Bridgewater College, that spread G&S discussions to the ends of the earth. This is how I met Ralph and how we have corresponded off and on for over twenty years.

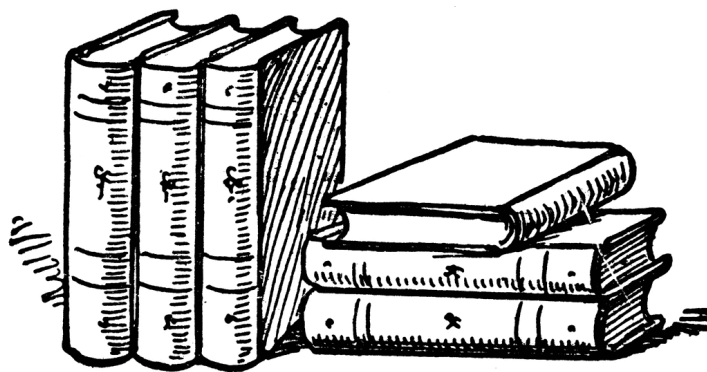
Ralph began directing productions for Gilbert and Sullivan Austin (GSA) in 1998 and continued until 2019, and during that time he would write

program notes, audition notes, and articles for the GSA newsletter. He would later become Artistic Director of the company and Artistic Director Emeritus in 2021.

This volume contains sixty-five or so program notes and articles of varying lengths, organized chronologically, 2010 to 2020, allowing you to dip into a decade of the company’s production history. It is not my intention to review each show’s material (they average three pieces per year, sometimes many more!) but to give you a feel for some of Ralph’s approaches and style.

The Gilbert and Sullivan productions covered are: THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD (2010), THE MIKADO (2011), PATIENCE (2012), HOW TO WRITE YOUR OWN GILBERT & SULLIVAN OPERA (2012), PRINCESS IDA (2013), TRIAL BY JURY (2014), H.M.S. PINAFORE (2014), THE ZOO (2015), THE SORCERER (2015), VERY TRULY YOURS, GILBERT & SULLIVAN (2016), COX AND BOX (2017), THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE (2017), TRIAL BY JURY (2018), RUDDIGORE (2018), H.M.S PINAFORE IN CONCERT (2019), IOLANTHE (2019), A DAY AT THE SAVOY THEATER WITH MR. JERICHO (2020). Also included as a bonus are director’s notes/introductions from two productions by the Gilbert and Sullivan Society





of North Louisiana, Gilbert's *ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN* (2007) and *SWEETHEARTS* (2009 & 2010).

You will note that there are a few productions that aren't quite G&S operas! Unique among them was a cabaret of G&S selections, and a showing of Anna Russell's hilarious parody of a Gilbert and Sullivan show (*HOW TO WRITE YOUR OWN GILBERT & SULLIVAN OPERA*), the musical play by Gayden Wren *VERY TRULY YOURS, GILBERT & SULLIVAN*, the Sullivan without Gilbert *COX AND BOX* and *THE ZOO*, and the non G&S curtain raiser *MR. JERICHO*.

Each Gilbert and Sullivan opera section contains, as noted, essays, program notes, newsletter updates, and uniquely, audition notes. "But Mitch", you ask (and so politely, too), "are the selections good?" to which I reply with a resounding, "Yes!" Mr. MacPhail imbues each with his obvious love of the G&S canon, his knowledge, and well-researched opinion. He also ties in his family's experiences over the years, from he and his wife's experiences seeing both Anna Russell at the Kennedy Center (and correspondence with her) and the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company performing *THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE*, to his son performing the Major General at college and discovering his father performed in *Pirates* while he was in school.

Of all of these, I really appreciated the audition notes. In these (published in the Gilbert & Sullivan Austin newsletter, I believe), Ralph lays out the story of the opera, the characters, their voice ranges, then descriptions of the characters themselves. These run from three short sentences (rare), to full descriptive paragraphs. While they give the basics, they also


show how he thinks the character fits into the show, and so hints of how he is approaching the whole show. It is a little bit like a masterclass of how a show is assembled. Plus, they came with a "references" section at the end!



Author Ralph MacPhail, Jr.

Lastly, It gives a little frisson of pleasure to get a small shout out to Gilbert's most popular shorter plays (*ENGAGED* being the most famous full length) and 3 short write-ups on *MR JERICHO* (*Jericho, Jericho, Jericho Jams!*), the sprightly non G&S curtain-raiser for Sullivan's more well known *HADDON HALL*.

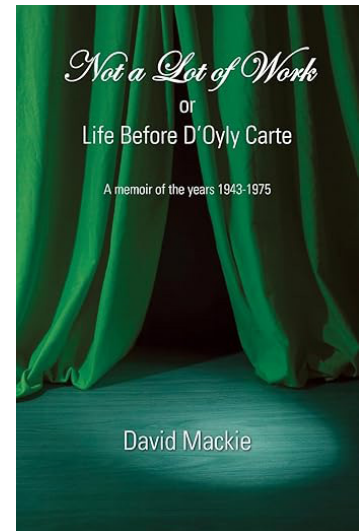
In summary, *Only Idle Chatter* really has something for everyone, from the novice to the well-read Savoyard. Ralph modestly notes that, "The following pages don't break new ground in Savoy opera scholarship," but I feel that most readers will encounter something new by reading these selections because of his well-grounded scholarship, and it is a chance worth taking. This is a book that doesn't need to be read straight through, but like a fine wine to be sipped and savored. I sipped my way through, and I hope you will, too.

Copies of *Only Idle Chatter from Gilbert & Sullivan Austin* are available, printed on demand, from Lulu.com, \$21.95 plus shipping. 

New Releases

Not a Lot of Work, or Life Before D'Oyly Carte by David Mackie
Grosvenor House Publishing Limited, 2025

Not a Lot of Work is a prequel to *Nothing Like Work* and *A Bit More Like Work*. It tells of the author's early life in Greenock, his education there, his student days at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and a short period of teacher training at Jordanhill College of Education. This was followed by four years of school teaching which in turn was followed by two further periods as a full-time student, first of all at Glasgow University and then at Birmingham University, before his seven years with the world-famous D'Oyly Carte Opera Company from 1975 to 1982.



UMGASS Alumni Corner

Alumni are listed by first UMGASS appearance.

Alumni Notes

As mentioned in the President's Letter (page 6), FUMGASS funding enabled **Melinda Carlisle ('24)** to perform in choruses of the Savoynet productions of *THE ZOO* (Sullivan without Gilbert) and *HMS PINAFORE* at the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival in Buxton, England in August 2025. Other UMGASS alumni participating in these productions include: **Marc Shepherd ('78)**, **Ali Roselle ('07)**, **Jon Roselle ('08)**, **Sarah Robinson ('10?)**, **Audrey Ditri ('17)**, **Laurence Cox ('21)**, **Lauren Cupples ('21)**, **Chazmond Peacock ('21)**, and **Jane White ('21)**. (If we missed you, please let us know!)

Marianne Orlando ('81), who illustrated the GASBAG with Harry Benford, has been working as a freelance illustrator doing home, pet, and people portraits for the past 9 years. Project milestones include a calendar for the Thoreau Society, Concord, MA, a wall mural for a Walmart in Lapeer City,

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www.facebook.com/groups/umgassalumni



MI, the illustration of 4 books (one of which was just released), and the design and layout of a retirement gift (18x24 drawing, 35 sketches) for the CFO of an international healthcare company. She also designed the show logo for the Sudbury Savoyards February production of *RUDDIGORE*. In addition to her career accomplishments, Marianne was recently the recipient of a kidney transplant. The donor was her husband. "It's been a wonderful ride! Other than singing with UMGASS, this is probably the happiest chapter of my life."



One of Marianne Orlando's ('81) pet portraits from 2023



Jeffrey Willets ('85) pictured with one of his former students, Brittany Coleman, who went on to perform on Broadway

☞ **Jeffrey Willets ('85)**, who has previously sung Ernest in *THE GRAND DUKE*, Frederic and the Pirate King in *PIRATES*, and Richard Dauntless in *RUDDIGORE*, is one of three Ann Arbor Public School teachers to receive the University of Michigan Department of Music Education's prestigious Phyllis Kaplan Leadership Award for Excellence in Mentoring General Music Teachers. This award is a symbol of Jeffrey's contributions to music teacher education in the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. For an interview with Jeffrey about the philosophy behind his music program at Eberwhite Elementary School and how music came to be such an important part of his life, please visit news.a2schools.org/jeffrey-willets-eberwhite-elementary-music-teacher.

☞ The Dexter Community Players recently experienced an invasion of UMGASS alumni in their July 2025 production of *JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT*. Performers included **Beth Ballbach ('89)**, **Heather Nordenbrock ('17)**, **Rosie Pahl Donaldson ('23)**, and **Nick Seguin ('25)**. Thank you for generously sharing your gifts with our neighbors!

☞ After nearly a decade at HBO/MAX, **Ali Roselle ('07)** has returned to her musical roots as the CFO of Concord Theatricals! Concord Theatricals provides services to artists and producers, including theatrical licensing, music and script publishing, and album records. Notable catalogs include Rogers & Hammerstein Theatricals, Samuel French, Tams-Witmark, and the Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection, among others. Whether onstage or off, it is most fitting and most pleasing to see Ali in the theatrical realm. Congratulations, Ali!

☞ **Ann Marie Lawson ('23)** has received an official notice of an award from The NIH that her F31 pre-doctoral fellowship titled "NXF2-mediated RNA transport in the male germline" has been funded! This means that her PhD research is fully funded by the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development for her remaining time at the University of Michigan. Huzzah!

If you do something interesting (or want to report that another UMGASS alum has done something interesting) like perform in a show, start a new job, get married, or find out you were switched at birth and suddenly have to make a career change, please send an update to editor@fumgass.org. Your friends and your fans await your news! ☞

*Dear Gasbag, I have
been sentenced to death
for both flirting
and sorcery...*



In Memoriam

Charles “Charley” Hudson (‘70)

April 8, 1947 - July 28, 2023

hansenmortuary.com/obituaries/Charles-Tracy-Hudson?obId=28645406

Charley’s first UMGASS production was the 1970 production of THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD, as a part of the publicity crew. Afterwards, he was a frequent UMGASS chorus member and also a longtime member of the FUMGASS board as a mailer.



David Owens (‘85)

July 22nd, 1940 - September 29th, 2024

tributearchive.com/obituaries/33296800/david-hatfield-owens

David’s first show with UMGASS was THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD in December of 1985. He was involved in a total of twenty UMGASS shows. At his celebration of life, a small group performed the PINAFORE Act II Finale as well as “Hail Poetry”.

Before his passing, David wrote a bio documenting his life and activities (including his time with UMGASS). It can be read at pasty.net/~dowens/DHOBio.htm

James Nissen (‘88)

May 12th, 1961 - April 27th, 2025

niefuneralhomes.com/memorials/james-nissen/5589281

Jim was the music director for five UMGASS shows in the late 80s and early 90s, including all of the “big three.” He was well-known for his love of the University of Michigan and the city of Ann Arbor, and he will be dearly missed.



The Bab Ballads

The Bab Ballads is a collection of poems and drawings by W.S. Gilbert, originally published as columns in the magazine *Fun*, for which Gilbert served as drama critic. Some of the ballads served as source material for characters, songs, and plots in Gilbert's librettos.

The Modest Couple (1868)



When man and maiden meet, I
like to see a drooping eye,
I always droop my own—I am
the shyest of the shy.
I'm also fond of bashfulness,
and sitting down on thorns,
For modesty's a quality that
womankind adorns.

Whenever I am introduced to any
pretty maid,
My knees they knock together,
just as if I were afraid;
I flutter, and I stammer, and I turn
a pleasing red,
For to laugh, and flirt, and ogle I
consider most ill-bred.

But still in all these matters, as in
other things below,
There is a proper medium, as I'm
about to show.
I do not recommend a newly-
married pair to try
To carry on as PETER carried on
with SARAH BLIGH.

Betrothed they were when very
young—before they'd learnt to
speak
(For SARAH was but six days
old, and PETER was a week);
Though little more than babies at
those early ages, yet
They bashfully would faint when
they occasionally met.

They blushed, and flushed, and
fainted, till they reached the age
of nine,
When PETER'S good papa (he
was a Baron of the Rhine)
Determined to endeavour some
sound argument to find
To bring these shy young people
to a proper frame of mind.

He told them that as SARAH was
to be his PETER'S bride,
They might at least consent to sit
at table side by side;
He begged that they would now
and then shake hands, till he was
hoarse,
Which SARAH thought
indelicate, and PETER very
coarse.

And PETER in a tremble to the
blushing maid would say,
"You must excuse papa, MISS
BLIGH,— it is his mountain
way."
Says SARAH, "His behaviour
I'll endeavour to forget,
But your papa's the coarsest
person that I ever met.

"He plighted us without our
leave, when we were very young,
Before we had begun articulating
with the tongue.
His underbred suggestions fill
your SARAH with alarm;
Why, gracious me! he'll ask us
next to walk out arm-in-arm!"

At length when SARAH
reached the legal age of
twenty-one,
The Baron he determined to
unite her to his son;
And SARAH in a fainting-fit
for weeks unconscious lay,
And PETER blushed so hard
you might have heard him miles
away.



And when the time arrived for
taking SARAH to his heart,
They were married in two
churches half-a-dozen miles apart
(Intending to escape all public
ridicule and chaff),
And the service was conducted
by electric telegraph.

And when it was concluded, and
the priest had said his say,
Until the time arrived when they
were both to drive away,
They never spoke or offered for
to fondle or to fawn,
For he waited in the attic, and she
waited on the lawn.

At length, when four o'clock
arrived, and it was time to go,
The carriage was announced, but
decent SARAH answered "No!
Upon my word, I'd rather sleep
my everlasting nap,
Than go and ride alone with MR.
PETER in a trap."

And PETER'S over-sensitive and
highly-polished mind
Wouldn't suffer him to sanction a
proceeding of the kind;
And further, he declared he
suffered overwhelming shocks
At the bare idea of having any
coachman on the box.

So PETER into one turn-out
incontinently rushed,
While SARAH in a second trap sat
modestly and blushed;
And MR. NEWMAN'S
coachman, on authority I've heard,
Drove away in gallant style upon
the coach-box of a third.

Now, though this modest couple in
the matter of the car
Were very likely carrying a
principle too far,
I hold their shy behaviour was
more laudable in them
Than that of PETER'S brother
with MISS SARAH'S sister EM.

ALPHONSO, who in cool
assurance all creation licks,
He up and said to EMMIE (who
had impudence for six),
"MISS EMILY, I love you — will
you marry? Say the word!"
And EMILY said, "Certainly,
ALPHONSO, like a bird!"

I do not recommend a newly-
married pair to try
To carry on as PETER carried on
with SARAH BLIGH
But still their shy behaviour was
more laudable in them
Than that of PETER'S brother
with MISS SARAH'S sister EM.

☞

G & S Menu of Upcoming Productions

This information is subject to change. Shows are listed by month with US productions followed by international ones. Please send information for inclusion in the next issue to editor@fumgass.org.

November 2025

USA, MA, Amherst

HMS Pinafore

Valley Light Opera

vlo.org

USA, MA, Cambridge

The Pirates of Penzance

Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert and Sullivan Players

hrfsp.org

USA, MN, Minneapolis

Iolanthe

Gilbert and Sullivan Very Light Opera Company

gsvloc.org

USA, MO, St. Louis

The Sorcerer

Winter Opera Saint Louis

winteroperastl.org

USA, PA, Wallingford

The Gondoliers

Rose Valley Chorus and Orchestra

rvco.org

USA, TX, Austin

The Grand Duke in Concert

Gilbert and Sullivan Austin

gilbertsullivan.org

AU, WA, Nollamara

The Mikado

Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Western Australia

gilbertandsullivanwa.org.au

UK, England, Halifax

Princess Ida

Halifax Gilbert and Sullivan Society

halifaxgands.org.uk

UK, England, Worcester

Iolanthe

Gasworcs

gasworcs.com

December 2025

USA, MI, Ann Arbor

The Gondoliers

University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society

umgass.org

UK, England, Bristol

The Pirates of Penzance

Bristol University Opera Society

bristolunioperasociety.com

UK, England, London

HMS Pinafore

English National Opera

eno.org

January 2026

USA, NY, New York

HMS Pinafore

New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players

nygasp.org

CA, ON, Toronto

HMS Pinafore

St. Anne's Music and Drama Society

stannesmads.com

March 2026

USA, IL, Chicago

The Gondoliers

Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company

gsocchicago.org

USA, ME, Ellsworth

Princess Ida

Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Maine

gilbertsullivanmaine.org

USA, NC, Durham

Princess Ida

Durham Savoyards

durhamsavoyards.org

UK, England, Birmingham*Ruddigore*

Birmingham Savoyards

birminghamsavoyards.org.uk

April 2026

USA, CT, Norwalk*Iolanthe*

Troupers Light Opera

wp.trouperslightopera.org**USA, CT, Simsbury***The Mikado*

Simsbury Light Opera Company

sloco.org**USA, DE, Arden***The Pirates of Penzance*

Ardensingers

ardensingers.org**USA, MI, Ann Arbor***The McAdo*

University of Michigan Gilbert and Sullivan Society

umgass.org**USA, NY, New York***Ruddigore*

Blue Hill Troupe

bht.org**USA, NY, New York***Utopia, Limited*

New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players

nygasp.org**USA, PA, Pittsburgh***The Grand Duke*

Pittsburgh Savoyards

pittsburghsavoyards.org**CA, AB, Calgary***Patience*

Morpheus Theatre

morpheustheatre.ca**UK, England, Blackburn***Patience*

Blackburn Gilbert and Sullivan Society

blackburngands.weebly.com

May 2026

USA, MI, Grand Rapids*Princess Ida*

West Michigan Savoyards

westmichigansavoyards.org**USA, MO, St. Louis***The Pirates of Penzance*

Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

opera-stl.org

June 2026

USA, MD, Rockville*Patience*

Victorian Light Opera Company

vloc.org

Editor's Notes

Your Editor Wonders...



Is Dick Dauntless
an orphan? If not,
would he tell the
Pirates of Penzance
he was one?

☞ I'm happy to welcome Daniel Peisach and Allison Hawkins to the GASBAG crew, and I'm sorry to say that this is my last issue as editor of the GASBAG. As you have been able to tell by the frequency with which GASBAGs have been produced lately, I don't have enough bandwidth to continue as the editor. Daniel has volunteered to fulfill this role, and I will still contribute as a member of the GASBAG committee.

☞ I'm happy to welcome several new contributors to this issue. Additional contributions to the GASBAG are always welcome! Do you have observations on a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta that you want to share with the world? Do you want to write a review of a recently released album or book about Gilbert and Sullivan? Would you like to write a most valuable letter full of excellent suggestions? Send them to us at editor@fumgass.org!

☞ If you can't carry a tune but want to support UMGASS, we still have plenty of opportunities for you. FUMGASS and UMGASS are always in need of volunteers for short- or long-term projects, whether it's ushering for a show, selling merchandise, or joining one of our committees. If you're interested, please email board@fumgass.org with your interests and skills.

GASBAG Staff:

<i>Editor of a Scurrilous Paper:</i>	Sarah McNitt
<i>Helper of Unhappy Commoners:</i>	Allison Hawkins
<i>Piratical Man of All Work:</i>	Daniel Peisach
<i>Particularly Correct:</i>	David Goldberg
<i>Leader of Our Fairy Ring:</i>	Brynn Raupagh
<i>Little Child of Beauty Rare:</i>	William S.
<i>Joy-Advancing Throng:</i>	Imogene Q. Happ
	Fred Rico
	Sir Bolivar Kegnastie

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POOR THINGS!

For some reason several characters in Pinafore use the word “poor” more often than you might expect. Match the personae with their lines to discover what some people might say about this topsy-turvy puzzle. You probably should use a straight edge like a ruler for this!

Boatswain		A Suitor, lowly born, With hopeless passion torn And poor beyond denying
Buttercup		Ah, poor Sir Joseph!
Carpenter's mate		Nothin' to say to a poor chap like you
Captain Corcoran		Cast your eyes on some village maiden in your own poor rank
Dick Deadeye		You are rich and lofty – and I poor and lowly
Cousin Hebe		Dark is the night to earth's poor daughters
Josephine		That's only poor Dick Deadeye
Sir Joseph Porter		Which of you two shall my poor heart obey
Ralph		The poor bumboat woman has gypsy blood in her veins
		And your fortune poor and plain
	Aye, lady – no other than poor Ralph Rackstraw!	
	Ah, my poor lad, you've climbed too high	
	Humble, poor, and lowly born	
	The purest gem that ever sparkled on a poor but worthy fellow's trusty brow!	
	A poor fellow's wildest hopes	
	Who is poor little Buttercup that she should expect his glance to fall on one so lowly!	

FUMGASS



c/o Brenda Kerr
2900 Pebble Creek Dr
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

Dates of Note:

THE GONDOLIERS December 4-7, 2025
performances: Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, 911 N. University Ave, Ann Arbor, MI

Buy your tickets at umgass.org

Next GASBAG December 15, 2025
deadline:

Email alumni news, letters, articles, reviews or other contributions to editor@fumgass.org

THE McADO April 9-12, 2026
performances:

Email umgassexec@umich.edu if you're interested in participating



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