



THE
TRUMPET BRAY

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW ENGLAND GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY



NEGASS NEWS DIGEST



Former NEGASS President **Thomas Dawkins** will be a soloist in a *Messiah* sing to be held at 51 Walden in Concord, MA on December 20, 2015 at 2 pm. See www.51walden.org, the FOPAC (Friends of the Performing Arts in Concord) for more information.

On October 18, **Angela Jajko** was among featured artists in a New England Light Opera/Boston Singers' Resource program that featured the music of Leonard Bernstein. The program was part of the Hancock Concert Series.



Elaine Crane (right), shown with her daughter Paige in their costumes in VLO's recent production of Brigadoon.
(Photo from VLO website.)

Paige Crane played the female lead as Jean MacLaren while NEGASS member **Elaine Crane** (Paige's mom) was cast as Fiona (Jean's sister) in the recent Valley Light Opera production of Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon*. The musical was mounted at the Academy of Music in Northampton on November 7-15. Paige has been a VLO member for several years while Elaine has performed with the group several times in the past.

Eight NEGASS members were a part of the recent Savoyard Light Opera Company production of *Once Upon a Mattress*. Stage direction was by **Donna DeWitt** and musical direction was by

Katherine Engel Meifert. Appearing on stage were **Tom Frates, Carolyn Schwartz, and Jon Paul.** In the men's and ladies' ensembles were **Tim Daughters, Larry Millner and Ann Ferentz.**

Due to the occurrence of a wealth of editorial material which could not all be fit into the December issue of *The Trumpet Bray*, a special issue of the newsletter will be issued in the beginning of January.

NEGASS SCHOOL OUTREACH

***Pirates of Penzance* program opens fall semester at Medfield and Holliston schools**

NEGASS and Young Audiences in Massachusetts (YAM) are teaming together again to present abbreviated *Pirates of Penzance* productions at elementary schools in Massachusetts. At present our school shows have two upcoming performances:

- 11/23 Columbus School in Medford, MA
- 12/7 Sam Placentino School in Holliston, MA

We are honored to be on the performing roster of Young Audiences of Massachusetts. Each performance is fully funded by the hosting school. NEGASS members are welcome to attend upcoming shows. Please contact [education AT negass DOT org](mailto:education@negass.org) for the details!

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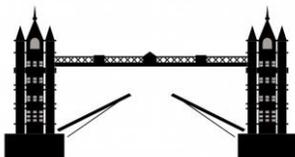
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GENERAL NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS AND REVIEWS may be sent to editor AT negass DOT org.

MEMBERSHIP NEGASS membership dues are \$25. Please join NEGASS online at www.negass.org, or contact memb AT negass DOT org.

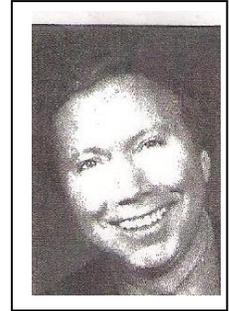
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DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MATERIAL: 15th of the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November.



Robert E. Cumming, CG&SS founder to retire; becoming artistic director emeritus

Robert E. Cumming, the founder, artistic director, and producer of the Connecticut Gilbert & Sullivan Society has announced his retirement at the end of the 2015 season. Mr. Cumming has directed and produced nearly all CG&SS shows since its founding in 1980.



For 35 years he has been tireless in promoting G&S and CTG&SS, attracting audiences, donors and quality talent. As a result, CG&SS has thrived in a challenging financial climate.

After retirement, Bob will serve as artistic director emeritus as well as act in an advisory capacity to the yet-to-be named 2016 artistic director. He will also serve as an advisor to the production staff involving the many tasks he has been involved with since the Society’s founding.

A grand gala honoring Bob for his many contributions is scheduled on Sunday, January 10, 2016, from 12 noon to 3:30 pm at The Riverhouse at Goodspeed Station in Haddam, CT. For more information you may contact Ed Kerrigan at 860-466-9175 or edk0915@yahoo.com.

🌀 G&S EVENTS 🌀

VLO to present a “last chance” to see a comic opera in 2015 with *Cox and Box*

Valley Light Opera will present F.C. Burnand and Arthur Sullivan’s *Cox and Box* on New Year’s Eve. As part of Northampton’s First Night program, the one act comic opera will have two performances the evening of December 31 at 4 and again at 5 pm. If you miss this event at Theater 14 on the Smith College campus you will be out in the cold crying, “Oh, goodness! my chop!” See www.vlo.org for more info.

RECENT PRODUCTIONS

The opinions of the reviewers are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the New England Gilbert & Sullivan Society or its newsletter, *The Trumpet Bray*.

Untraditional setting of *Ruddigore* in 1920's New Orleans was "impressive" and "bold"

By Emma R. Adler, Class of 2016, Harvard

Poor, beleaguered *Ruddigore*: reviled by critics, subject to extensive revision, a perennial weakling (financially speaking) for the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company.

But watching the Harvard-Radcliffe Gilbert & Sullivan Players' production of the opera you wouldn't have a clue. During its run at the Agassiz Theater from October 30 to November 8, this version of *Ruddigore* did much to redeem the opera's spotty legacy.

The most impressive aspect of the production was arguably its untraditional setting. Director **Guan-Yue Chen**'s choice to set the opera in 1920s New Orleans was a bold choice (the opera typically unfolds in nineteenth century Cornwall), but ultimately a successful one. It was clear that the evocative time and place had provided the cast with a compelling foundation from which to build their characters; Music Director **Sean Rodan** also embraced the updated setting, successfully highlighting elements of the score that resonate with



Sir Ruthven is confronted by the spectre of Sir Roderic in Act II. (Photo courtesy of Guan-Yue Chen, class of 2017 at Harvard College.)

modern jazz. On occasion, specific references and patently Victorian turns of phrase clashed with the aesthetic; but while the adaptation sometimes did a

disservice to individual lines, its consonance with the overarching themes of the opera – superstition and spookiness for starters – overshadowed these rifts.

Standouts among the cast included **Arianna Paz**, whose rendition of "If Somebody There Chanced To Be" made clear that she is a singer for whom interpretation of a song is all-encompassing: from the modulation of her bell-like soprano, to the modulation of her facial features, she was Rose through and through. **Jake Corvino**'s portrayal of Ruthven Murgatroyd (aka Robin Oakapple) was also impressive – carried by his strong, steady baritone, and strengthened by the obvious chemistry between him and his costar. Junior **Alex Raun** (an impressive Frederick in the HRG&SP's most recent production of *Pirates of Penzance*) performed the role of Richard "Dick" Dauntless with seaworthy aplomb. Raun's stirring tenor is as plangent as Dick Dauntless is grating – a fitting juxtaposition that bolstered the paradoxical statements with which Dick's speeches are rife.

Perhaps the least strong component of the production was the female chorus. As a vocal unit, the chorus lacked strength as well as coordination. Due to their slight discord, as well as their softness, it was often difficult to make out their words. On occasion, spirited acting compensated for this lack of technical skill, but their gestures often mirrored their singing, and weren't cohesive.

These shortcomings stood out, in part, because of the strength of the male chorus – all members of which seemed perfectly at home on stage, and inhabited their roles with charm and enthusiasm. Theirs was the rare chorus that managed to be both perfectly in sync, and highly variegated: each chorister was distinct, but from beginning to end, they were united in their exuberance, and in their commitment to their characters.

Credit is also due to the production designers, whose embrace of the Big Easy resulted in a truly stunning aesthetic. Master painters **Barra Peak** and **Susan Li** demonstrated a wide range of skill, delivering striking backdrops that stood up to the vibrancy of the performers, and portraits of the deceased Bad Baronets that were equal parts stately and ludicrous. **Kat Zhou**'s thoughtful light design provided a steady complement to shifts in tone – a particularly helpful touch, when characters' emotions are liable to sudden fluctuations. Zhou and Chen also deserve credit for their deft handling

of the famed shift from portraits to ghosts at the start of Act II. The production did not shy away from this truly frightening moment: when the prior Baronets supplanted their portraits - grave faces bathed in yellow and black light - the effect was truly chilling.

It is not without reason that *Ruddigore* met with less than universal acclaim when it premiered in 1887. The opera is perhaps overlong, and the HRG&SP production does lag on occasion. But on the whole, theirs is a *Ruddigore* that does the canon proud - gorgeous to behold, and, despite the ghosts, brimming with life. Director Guan-Yue Chen and Music Director Sean Rodan should be applauded for having successfully transplanted *Ruddigore* into the twentieth century. And those interested in seeing the company in action should join HRG&SP for their spring production of *HMS Pinafore*, debuting at Agassiz Theater on March 25.

CG&SS' *Iolanthe* was a "wonderful performance" and a worthwhile trip

By Bill Venman

On Saturday evening, October 3, my daughter and I drove from Amherst (MA) to Deep River to see the Connecticut Gilbert and Sullivan Society's production of *Iolanthe*, a trip longer than I usually make to see G&S. I went because I knew that this was the last time we would see **Bob Cumming** at work. Bob is the Founder, Artistic Director and Producer for the Society, which he founded in 1981. Over the years, CG&SS has performed twelve of the fourteen G&S operas; two - *The Mikado* and *H.M.S. Pinafore* - five times.

Our drive to see CG&SS's *Iolanthe* was totally worthwhile. Several things contributed to this - first and foremost, the singing. The principals were uniformly a delight to hear. It is difficult to pick out a single singer, but were I to be pushed to the limit, I'd go with **Ralph Sherman**, who sang *The Lord Chancellor*. I've heard (and conducted) the nightmare song more times than I can count, but Sherman's presentation was top notch. **Betty Olson**, as the Queen of the Fairies, simply commanded every scene in which she sang with her beautiful and resounding contralto voice. **Julie Rumbold**, in the title role of *Iolanthe*, brought a richness to the part both vocally and in her acting, and both she and **Renée Haines**, as *Phyllis*, were wonderful to hear. Renée played with a wonderful liveliness. Her comic timing and her facial

expressions were great. **David Henderson** (*Strephon*) had a strong, clear voice. He played beautifully off of his mother, *Julie Rumbold* and especially the peers. The two lords, *Tolloller* (**Tim Throckmorton**) and *Mountararat* (**Craig Morton**), played off against each other just the way I would have blocked them myself (so how can I possibly criticize them?) Their banter was delightful to watch, and vocally they nailed the roles.

The minor principals, *Celia* (**Kay Pere**), *Leila* (**Daphne Burt**) and *Fleta* (**Erica Folta**) were playful comedic and added wonderfully to the stage picture. **John Freedman**, one of the Peers in Act 1, returned as a wonderful *Private Willis* in Act 2. A great bass voice. The chorus of Peers and Fairies were vocally balanced and had played their parts well. There was a lot of business for the choruses, and they performed their roles with enthusiasm and focus. Finally, the inclusion of **Lori McClain**, a young company member in walk-on roles as both a junior fairy and peer, added wonderful youth to the cast. CG&SS really appreciate the importance of all ages involved in community based productions. She was a charming addition to the show.



Gilbert's Bab Illustration for "Oh, foolish fay."
(The Gilbert and Sullivan Archive.)

Bob Cumming's blocking was active and delightful, and took into account the abilities of his company. It was a moving and well-paced performance, both exciting and entertaining to watch.

Also worth noting was the quality of the orchestra. The musicians who played were top notch, and performed the difficult score expertly. They were a pleasure to hear. As a conductor myself, I took particular delight in listening to them play. **John Dreslin** did a superb job of keeping the whole thing alive and moving. We sat house right, and the bells of the trumpets and trombones were facing across the house away from us, which made for a better blend of instruments.

I should also mention their use of supertitles. We (the Valley Light Opera) have been using them

since we moved from the Amherst Regional High School auditorium to the Academy of Music in Northampton. The response to them has been uniformly positive, as was my response to the CG&SS use in *Iolanthe*. (I should comment, too, that they were run meticulously by **Monika Dreslin**, John's wife.)

There was, however, one aspect of the production which I found distracting: the principal singers were miked. Given the high quality of the principal voices and the size of the venue, this was an unnecessary distraction, in my opinion. Most notably, the miking disrupted the balance between the singers and orchestra. Also, when the full ensemble was singing, it upset the balance between the principals and the chorus, especially the men's chorus. It also caused distracting feedback when two of the miked singers were in close proximity.

But this was a minor issue in light of the overall excellence of the presentation. All in all, it was a wonderful performance, and I was very happy to have seen it.

The Society is going to miss Bob, but I suspect that he'll keep his hand in when he becomes Artistic Director Emeritus.



The cast of the Connecticut G&S Society's production of *Iolanthe*. (Courtesy of CG&SS.)

Connecticut G&S Society's production of *Iolanthe* remains a flag-waving treat

By David DeVries

The Connecticut G&S Society's offering of *Iolanthe* at the Valley Regional High School in Deep River, CT on October 3 was quite acceptable despite a few glitches and doubtful notes here or there. These shortcomings are far outweighed by the positive experience provided by these troupers.

The twenty-three members of the orchestra conducted by Maestro **John Dreslin** did an outstanding job throughout the performance keeping a very agreeable tempo in the tradition of D'Oyly Carte. The addition of just five more musicians in the pit made for a much richer instrumentation as compared to other companies I have seen with fewer musicians.

Just prior to the curtain going up (and again in Act Two) we were treated to the chimes of Big Ben sounding. In keeping with the original production, the chorus of fairies all had sparkling stars in their head pieces. In continuing with innovation, the Deep River show had the equivalent of "closed captioning" of all the songs and choruses projected above the stage. This is a great idea but I would encourage the inclusion of the dialog as well. (In looking at the production photo, you might see the captioning at the top of the frame.)

After the opening chorus ("Tripping hither, tripping thither"), **Lynn Rossi** as Celia seemed to "have a moment" with her lines but her ability to "carry on" was evidence of her stage presence and professionalism. The entrance of the Queen of the Fairies was punctuated by a bolt of lightning (a strobe light) coupled with a thunderous crash. This special effect was utilized again several times later on in Act One when the Queen was "passing sentence" on the assembled Lords. The lightning and thunderclaps I thought were rather harsh and a general distraction overall.

The Lord Chancellor (**David Schancupp**) was well suited for his role - literally with robes that would have been approved of by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist (see *Trumpet Bray* June 2015). His rendition of "The law is the true embodiment" in Act One and the nightmare song in Act Two showcased his diction and poise and his comfort with the role. Especially when he appeared in his nightclothes armed with his teddy and bear claw slippers! Schancupp should have received an encore for this number. However, the only selection receiving an encore was the trio of the Lord Chancellor and Lords Tolloller and Mountarat "He who shies at such a prize" which culminated in the three dancing from the stage.

"Spurn not the nobly born" by Lord Tolloller was very capably done by **Tim Throckmorton**. Another highlight in Act Two was the patriotic "When Britain really ruled the waves" sung by Lord Mountarat (**Craig Martin**) with the assembled

choruses of Peers and Fairies. I felt as though I should have been waving a Union jack!

Finally, **Greta Moorhead** as the Fairy Queen displayed a rich, low voice and did a splendid rendition of "Oh, foolish fay" which makes reference to Captain Eyre Massey Shaw who was superintendent of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade. His presence in the audience of the first night of *Iolanthe* in 1882 caused the fairy queen in that performance (Alice Barnett) to sing directly to him, "Oh, Captain Shaw... could thy Brigade with cold cascade quench my great love, I wonder!" It is speculated that Captain Shaw stood up and took a bow. He later was knighted by another queen (Victoria) in 1891.

I think it be a great idea that if at some future performance(s) of *Iolanthe* a worthy fire chief might also be so honored?



Captain Shaw (left) was a well-known London personage of the time resulting in his being mentioned in *Iolanthe*.

[Note: Two reviews are offered for the CG&SS *Iolanthe* simply because there were personnel differences in the two performances. -Ed.]

REVIEWERS REWARDED

Have you ever wanted to comment on your colleagues' hard work somewhere other than Facebook? Now is your chance! *The Trumpet Bray* seeks peer reviewers for local G&S productions. Plus, write a review that goes to publication, and we'll refund up to \$25 towards your ticket cost. Contact editor AT negass DOT org for more info.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Janice Dallas

Janice Dallas was the long-time NEGASS membership secretary. She is also a professional costumer and has worked with all the G & S companies in the greater Boston area. She and her husband Ron, a stage and lighting specialist, who was the lighting and tech person for all the local companies, have

recently retired and moved to California. Janice writes:



Janice in costume for Sudbury Savoyards' *The Pirates of Penzance* "Steampunk" production in 2014. (Courtesy of Ms. Dallas.)

"My first introduction to G&S was as part of the cast for "A Royal Night at the Strand Theatre," a series of scenes from musicals featuring Royalty that the Metro Area Theatre Arts Group put on. We performed it in the Strand Theater in Dorchester, MA, some time in the mid-1980's. The scene I was in was from the *Gondoliers*. Juliet Cunningham had asked me to sing Tessa, in the part where the two couples come from the church and meet the Grand Inquisitor. He tells them that one of the men is a Royal King of Barataria. I've forgotten who the men were, but Juliet was Gianetta. I got to solo on "When A Merry Maiden Marries," since my voice had become lower with soothing children. Juliet fixed that when I became her student soon after the show, and I got back my upper voice. I found that I really enjoyed the production, so I next got cast in a *Pinafore* at the Mishkan Tefila Temple, mainly because I could drive Juliet, my nearby neighbor, and the show's Director, there to direct the show! For the same reason, I was cast in *Patience* with the North Shore's G&S group that performed at Governor Dummer Academy in Newbury. I've never stopped performing, and costuming, G&S shows since. I'm now going to get involved in the Ventura County G&S Repertoire Company. They're doing a *Yeomen* in March, out here in southern California.

-Janice Dallas

"Where Are They Now?" is an occasional feature spotlighting NEGASS members who have moved away but are still active G & S'ers on stages elsewhere.

Calendar of Events

<p><i>The Gondoliers</i> MITG&SP</p>	<p>December 4-12, 2015 gsp.mit.edu</p>	<p>MIT Student Center Sala de Puerto Rico 84 Massachusetts Ave. Cambridge, MA</p>
<p><i>Pirates of Penzance</i> <i>Princess Ida</i> New York GASP</p>	<p>December 26, 2015-January 2, 2016 May 21-22, 2016 nygasp.org</p>	<p>NYU Skirbal Center 566 LaGuardia Place New York, NY 10012</p>
<p><i>Cox and Box</i> Valley Light Opera</p>	<p>December 31, 2015 info@vlo.org 413-584-9032 x105 See article on page 3</p>	<p>Theater 14 -Mendenhall Center Belmont Avenue Smith College Campus Northampton, MA</p>
<p><i>The Sorcerer</i> Sudbury Savoyards</p>	<p>February 20-27, 2016 http://www.sudburysavoyards.org/ See article on page 3</p>	<p>Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School 390 Lincoln Rd. Sudbury MA</p>
<p><i>The Sorcerer</i> Troupers Light Opera</p>	<p>April 2 & 9, 2016 trouperlightopera.org</p>	<p>St. John's Lutheran Church 884 Newfield Avenue Stamford, Ct</p>
<p>Check individual websites for greater details.</p>		