

THE TRUMPET BRAY

NEGASS
The New England Gilbert and Sullivan Society
P.O. Box 367, Arlington, MA 02476-0004

Vol. XXV1 No. 1
- Over the bright blue sea -

PICNIC MEETING
Sunday, August 26 at 2:00 PM/

*** * * R E N E W A L I S S U E * * ***

ANNUAL PICNIC PLUS PINAFORE SING: AUGUST 26, 2:00PM The NEGASS Annual Picnic will be held this year on Sunday, August 26, at the home of **Richard and Ilana Freedman**, 6 Biagiotti Way, North Billerica, MA

People are welcome to arrive at 2:00 to take advantage of the Freedmans' pool and yard. Grills will be revved up by 4:00, so that folks can cook up their own burgers, or steaks, or whatever – bring a main course and drinks for yourself (don't forget your paper plates!), plus something to share.



At 6:00 we'll start a sing-through of **PINAFORE**. If there's a role you'd love to sing, e-mail new Program Chair **Carl Weggel** at carl_weggel@juno.com, or phone him at (978) 474-0396 to ask for a part – or just show up and see what roles are left in the **PINAFORE** picnic basket when you arrive.

Roles in **PINAFORE** (in case you've forgotten):

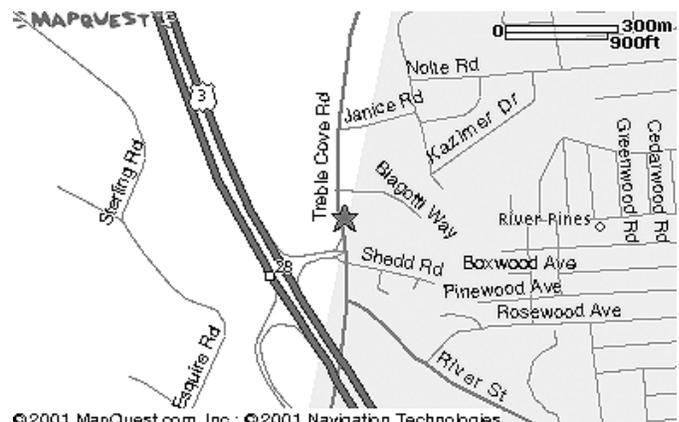
Sir Joseph Porter, KCB.....	patter baritone
Captain Corcoran.....	lyric baritone
Ralph Rackstraw.....	tenor
Dick Deadeye.....	baritone
Bill Bobstay (the Boatswain)..	baritone
Bob Becket (the Carpenter)...	bass
Josephine.....	soprano
Cousin Hebe.....	mezzo-soprano
Little Buttercup.....	contralto

HOW TO GET THERE: 6 Biagiotti Way, N. Billerica, MA NB: *Biagiotti Way is missing from most maps.*

Northbound on Route 3 (coming north from Route 128), take Exit 28 (Treble Cove Road). Turn left at the end of the exit ramp onto Treble Cove Road. Drive a few hundred feet and turn right onto Biagiotti Way (first street on the right). #6 is the first driveway on the right. The house is a moderate way up the hill from the street. Park in the driveway or on the street.

Southbound on Route 3 (coming from Route 495), take exit 28 (Treble Cove Road). Turn left at the end of the exit ramp. Biagiotti Way is the third street on the right. Turn right onto Biagiotti Way. #6 is the first driveway on the right. The house is a moderate way up the hill from the street. Park in the driveway or on the street.

[If you're lost, phone the Freedmans at (978) 362-2140]



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ELECTION/FANTASY MEETING: SUNDAY, JUNE 10 We met at the home of Membership Chair **Janice Dallas**, and enjoyed a nice quick **election**, as usual – although there was a moment when it looked like there might actually be *two* candidates for one of the offices! (The second candidate wasn't present, however, so he was disqualified).

THE NEWLY-ELECTED MEMBERS OF OUR BOARD: **Donald Smith** (re-elected to the post of President), **Dick Freedman** (moving from Member at Large to Treasurer), **Carl Weggel** (our new official Program Chair), **Tony Parkes** (a welcome addition to the Board, as a Member-at-Large), and **Carol Mahoney** (who has been a *de facto* Member-at-Large for the past year or so, and is now official).



Most of the new NEGASS board
[Photo courtesy of Ron Dallas]

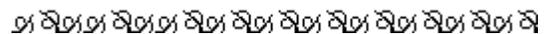
As for the **Fantasy** part of the meeting – well, We failed to write it all down in Our tablets, so We must confess We've forgotten much of it! - But We do remember that **Don Smith** fulfilled his fantasy of singing solo in front of an audience, and really didn't do badly! – and We believe that the splendid young baritone who managed to also sing some splendid tenor music was a new member named **Tom Dawkins** (Did We get that right?!) There were several new and potential members present, and lots of fine singing all around. **Martha Birnbaum**, you were there! – and **Art Dunlap**, so were you! – and **Rebecca Consentino Hains** - and of course **Victor Troll** at the piano - can you remember who else sang what? -- *mlc*



Tentative Meeting Schedule, 2000-2001	
Aug. 26	Picnic Meeting hosted by Dick and Ilana Freedman
Sept. 30 or Oct 7	Lecture? - TBA
Oct or Nov	Group attendance at MITG&SP or HRGASP
Jan or Feb	Video at Newton Free Library
March 17 or 24	Last Minute Light Opera MIKADO
April 28 or May 5	Master Class
June 9	Elections/Fantasy Day

NEXT BRAY COPY DEADLINE: September 2, 2001

Next Bray Stuffing: SATURDAY, September 8 at 3:00 PM. (Yes, Saturday – for a change.) **Call Us** at (781) 646-9115 evenings and weekends, or send email to marion@leedscarroll.com , for directions to Our easy-to-get-to Arlington home.
—*mlc*



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS! IT'S A LONG TIME!

That's right - **YOUR NEW ENGLAND GILBERT AND SULLIVAN SOCIETY IS CELEBRATING ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR** For us new-comers (7 years in my case), it's hard to imagine the impact of the formation of NEGASS, which elicited a feature article in the ***Boston Globe Magazine***. It is a tribute to my predecessors as President, particularly the late **Warren Colson**, and to other Board Members, that the Society has survived and flourished when so many like organizations have disappeared.

To pay fitting tribute to our **Charter Members**, many of whom are still with us, the Board has voted that all surviving Charter Members will be granted dues-free "Honorary Member" status. If there are any Charter Members who, for some reason, have "abandoned the creed of their forefathers" and discontinued membership in NEGASS, we would be happy to welcome them back as Honorary Members.

How shall we celebrate this occasion? "A banquet and a dance..."? Or something less elaborate: "A plate of macaroni and a rusk..." ?

We look forward to hearing your suggestions on how to celebrate NEGASS's 25th birthday. Hope to see you at many meetings this year!

-- **J. DONALD SMITH, PRESIDENT**

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SUGGESTIONS

Some ideas that have been floated so far include a dinner following either the **Last-Minute Light Opera** meeting or the **Master Class** meeting next spring; a professional performance of some kind followed by a dinner; an all-day or all-week-end gala sing-through of one or more operas (the sort of gathering **SavoyNetters** refer to as a *qwerty*, although We suspect a full-fledged *Sing-Out* on the order of **Toronto** or **Rockville** is beyond our abilities this year) – an exhibit of the late **Warren Colson's** photographs of local performing groups has been proposed... anyone have any other ideas? Please be in touch with the Board! -- *mlc*



Who are our Charter Members? According to recent records:

Charter Members

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Eleanor Babikian | Mr. & Mrs. Alan Hopfenberg |
| Harry Benford | Walt Howe |
| Van Pelt Brower | Larry Littlefield |
| Ruth Colson | Leslie Moore |
| Juliet Cunningham | Richard Sewell |
| Dean Edmonds Jr. | William C. Venman |
| Jim Ellis | Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Weaver |
| Alexander Nicoll Gerli | Peter Zavon |



*And now, M'Luds,
to the business of the day*

(by all means!):

It's time to renew your membership!

The Board's decision several years ago to create extra categories of membership is still in effect - please bear in mind that the majority of our members are still "Yeomen," but that those who wish to contribute more to NEGASS have the opportunity to do so, in the following increments:

\$15 **Yeomen** (basic membership)

- | | |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| 25 | Daughters of the Plough |
| 50 | Bucks and Blades |
| 100 | Flowers of Progress |

*(On the other hand, if even the \$15 basic membership is a problem, please talk to Membership Chair **Janice Dallas**.)*

Lacking the means for a Display of Fireworks in the Evening, We celebrate these friends by printing a yearly list of Members Extraordinary - those who chose a category higher than Yeomen for the previous year. Here, forthwith, is the list of 2000-2001 Extraordinary Memberships (*Bow, bow, ye Lower Middle Classes*):

Daughters of the Plough

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Anonymous | Neil McCormick |
| Lisa Berglund (Connecticut College) | Mr. & Mrs. Erwin Miller |
| Peter Cameron | Dr. & Mrs. Daniel Miller |
| Judith Chasin | Meghan Monahan & Carl Hampe |
| Ruth E. Colson | Tony Parkes |
| Janice Dallas | Lee Patterson |
| Philip Drew | Lonnie Powell |
| Barry E. Garden | Ruth Roper |
| Rebecca & Tyler Hains | Larry Seiler |
| Dale Hall | David Stieber |
| Melissa Hirshson | Jonathan Strong |
| Sheldon & Alice Hochman | Victor Troll & Nell Wright |
| Charlee Hutton | William C. Venman |
| Alessandra Kingsford | Fred Ward |
| Steven B. Levine | Tom Weber |
| Ernest V. Loewenstein | Carl Weggel |
| Stephen Malioneck | Dr. & Mrs. Charles Wilder |
| Robert L. Manninen | Stephen Zydofsky |

Bucks and Blades

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Mike Bromberg | Walt Howe & Hope Tillman |
| Dean S. Edmonds Jr. | Arthur & Jean Koykka |
| Nancy and Philip Burstein | Miles Cary Leahey |
| Richard Freedman | Richard H. Lent |
| Michael Halperson | Larry C. Littlefield |
| Robert & Ursula Haslun (College Light Opera Co.) | Jim Parmentier & Beth Fowler |
| John N. Howard | J. Donald Smith |
| | Betsy & Kincade Webb |

Flowers of Progress

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Bill & Nancy Burdine | Fred Hughes |
|----------------------|-------------|

Whichever category suits you - please send the enclosed Renewal Form to Membership Chair **Janice Dallas**, 63 Everett St., Arlington, MA 02474-6921 with what dispatch ye may! --- *mlc*

&&& PIRATES AT TURTLE LANE [*Dafydd offered this review to SavoyNet and Us simultaneously - and of course all were eager to hear the news! - mlc*] The **Turtle Lane Playhouse** in Auburndale (Newton, MA) is in the midst of performing **PIRATES**, and I felt it my, er, duty, to report on it.

The house and stage are quite small, but this group is quite experienced at making the most of limited space. Simply-painted flats and small set pieces gave us the locales. Costumes varied from the traditional dresses and police uniforms to a rather wild amalgam of pirating outfits - apparently these noblemen-gone-wrong had put them together from anything that suited their fancies, including, for one pirate, a horned Viking helmet.

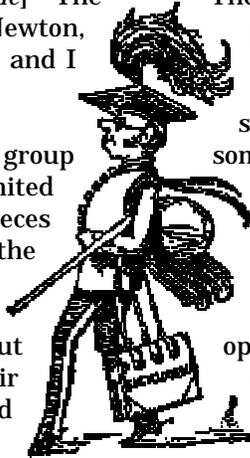
As for performance, the principals were something of a mixed bag. **James Tallach** maintained a wonderful Tim-Curriesque swagger as the Pirate King, but his voice was strained and scratchy and wavered into falsetto when he got excited. **Jim Jordan** was the very mo... was well cast as the Major-General, and his diction in the patter song was admirable. **Susan Walsh**, as Ruth, struggled a little vocally, but was otherwise very well indeed.

Chris Mack gave a wholly different interpretation of Frederic than I have seen before, having traded in the traditional gentlemanly naiveté for a nasty sarcasm. It's obvious that he disdains Ruth long before he discovers the Daughters; it's also obvious he considers himself superior to all the other men in the show put together. Alas, this vain-and-arrogant-bastard Frederic had a truly awful singing voice, and wailed nasally, loudly, and off-key throughout the show.

On the other side of the spectrum, Mack's wife, **Diana Doyle**, was a beautiful and utterly charming Mabel, with a gorgeous soprano voice to boot. Her cadenzas and melismas in "Poor Wand'ring One" sounded clear, lush, and effortless.

The smaller roles were well-cast, particularly **Jinny Sagoni** as Kate, with her pretty red hair and delightful smile, and **Thomas Andrews** as the Sergeant of Police, who looked every bit the portly constable, down to the (admittedly American) doughnut.

Music Director **Wayne Ward** and his seven-piece orchestra played quite well, though there were times Ward's electronic piano drowned out the other instruments. Ward and his players followed the singers on stage admirably, as the orchestra pit at Turtle Lane is, in fact, underneath the stage, so the conductor and orchestra cannot see the actors and vice versa.



Director **Paul Farwell**, on the other hand, deserves to be taken to task for the overload of gags in this production.

The entire opera was so stuffed with sight gags, bits of physical or sexual humor, and extended "ad libs" that the humor inherent in the script was virtually lost and the story became hard to follow, even for someone like me who already knows it. By the finale, some of the chorus had even dropped their characterizations and were just having fun as themselves on the edges of the stage.

All in all, I am glad I attended this production; I just hope that, if Turtle Lane puts on another G&S opera in the future, they will actually trust the script to be funny without such meddlings.

-- **DAFYDD MAC AN LEIGH**

[*You can still catch this show, which will run 'til August 19 - mlc*]

&&& PIRATES AT THE PUBLICK THEATRE We haven't received a review of this production, directed by **Jessica Kubzansky** (no conductor credited!), but We did see the very positive review **Jeffrey Ganz** wrote for the **Boston Phoenix**. He comments, "This is piffle, of course, but Kubzansky treats it as if it were Shakespeare, giving us poignance as well as pratfalls." He continues, "Even during the overture, she has a bobby in the aisle writing up audience members (for illegal 'parking?'); meanwhile on stage 'Duty' goes after Frederic with that birch rod." Did any NEGASSer see it? Comments? - *mlc*

&&& PIRATES AT OSLO [RI] I recently attended **Ocean State Lyric Opera's** performance of **PIRATES**. It was very well done, and an effort was made to make it more interesting to children, which my five-year-old son and I really appreciated. (They sold pirate hats, opera glasses, activity books... all kinds of stuff that kids like.) However, I was distressed to find that they changed the ladies' dialogue in the first act so that instead of merely threatening to take off their shoes and stockings and being interrupted by Frederic, we see them gradually decide to take off item by item until they are wearing only their Victorian underwear and playing beach ball. All this Frederic watches with interest until his recitative: "Stop ladies, pray!" I was terribly offended. I brought my son to this performance because I "knew" that G&S was good wholesome stuff. I really objected to my son being exposed to this. I was also offended, because I don't appreciate it when Gilbert's librettos are tampered with. I spoke to a member of the OSLO board and he said that he first saw that innovation on **PBS!** The educational director saw "nothing vulgar" in what was done and I have yet to hear from the artistic director. Is there a precedence for this "innovation"? I would like to find out if this kind of thing is generally accepted. Is there a G&S chat room? {*Sort of - We sent her to SavoyNet!*} I'd like to

speak to some people who love Gilbert and Sullivan as I do, and find out how they feel about such changes to the libretto. I can't believe that I'm the only one who didn't appreciate the change. Did anyone from the Gilbert and Sullivan Society attend OSLO's production? [*In a later message, she added: Aside from that change, it was an excellent production. (Such wonderful voices!)*]

Please if you can, let me know. I feel that if there are enough people who feel as I do I can try to prevent this kind of thing from happening again. I want it to be safe to take my son to the opera. Thank you for your help.

-- **CHRISTINE RATHIER**

&&& PINAFORE AT FIDDLEHEAD Some months ago I noticed in the **Bray** that **PINAFORE** was being presented at the **Fiddlehead Theater** in Norwood [MA]. As I have some business contacts nearby, I decided to have my wife, Janet, meet me there after a workday and we would make an evening of it.

Little did we know that we were about to be transported to the yesteryear of G&S and see (or more correctly 'live') a most enchanting display of talent and pure entertainment.

As we entered the cozy (514 seat) theater, the dark blue curtain was strikingly illuminated by a spotlighted outline of an anchor displayed from stage to ceiling, thus setting the nautical flavor of the evening.

When I started to read the playbill, I thought, "Oh, oh, only 10 instruments, and only ONE violin??" What could this orchestra possibly sound like? When the overture started, I almost shuddered at the rather small sound. But wait. As the crescendo built, the sound was pure magic! Was this, after all, was the way Sullivan might have wanted it? - small orchestra, but with each instrument crisp, clear, precise, together, and with careful tempo. A nice feature was that the orchestra and conductor (**Michelle Alexander**) were hidden in a pit carved out of stage front, so as not to cause any distraction to the audience. It is too bad we never had chance to see these wonderful musicians.

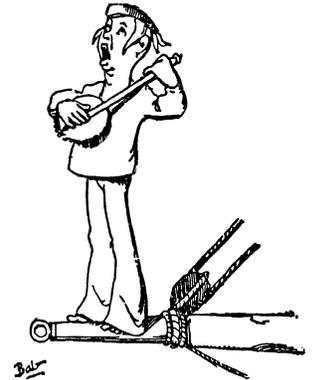
While the overture was still playing, the curtain opened and there was an audible gasp from the audience and then a round of applause for the stunning, mahogany brightwork scenery of the Pinafore deck. The huge wheel, wheelhouse, and raised poop deck were off to stage right, not in the usual center, as WSG had diagrammed. This provided more room for the players at stage center especially during the lively dances. This arrangement also made the entrance of Sir Joseph and others from the stage center, which, I think, is more dramatic. The picture of HMS Victory at anchor was seen in the background, as

Gilbert had specified. Kudos to Set Designer **Laura McPherson**.

Although there were only nine sailors, the sound was adequate: the voices were full, in tune, and clear.

Buttercup (**Katherine Engel Meifert**) was believable with her coquettish manner and saucy eyes, as well as a clear and ample voice. (Where was the rubber chicken?) Dick Deadeye (**Rick Copeland**) was excellent with his hunched back, crooked arm, deep rough voice, and artistic eye makeup, which gave a more sinister appearance than a full eye patch.

Ralph Rackstraw (**David Lockwood**) had a full, clear, strong tenor range and held the audience spellbound in his slow, carefully sung "Nightingale".



When Captain Corcoran (**John Murelle**) arrived on the upper deck, his costume, military bearing, and sonorous voice, "My gallant crew, good morning" had some of the audience responding with a similar greeting, it was so realistic. He WAS the Captain! He could have put more emphasis on the "hardly ever"s.

As Josephine (**Kaja Schuppert**) was spotlighted, we were treated to a blonde beauty with a bell-like, wide ranging voice, with full-bodied high notes. Her presence immediately captivated the audience.

Most of the vocals in the opening scenes of **PINAFORE** are somewhat tedious, as we know. But the excellence of the voices made these songs sound like operatic arias, and were spellbinding because of the nuances, tonal quality, and body movements of the performers.

The entrance of Sir Joseph (**Ray O'Hare**), with not too many sisters, cousins, and aunts, was done in good taste, with just enough fanfare. So many times this entrance includes too much pomp, but this was just right.

As Sir Joseph went on, his actions became subtly more hilarious, culminating in "Never mind". There were 3 encores for this. As Sir Joseph became increasingly exhausted, Josephine became increasingly exuberant, resulting in a wonderfully contrasting performance.

When Ralph was to be "loaded with chains", a real set of chains would have been welcome, instead of the small leather handcuffs which were used.

"A many years ago" was done slowly, deliberately, and with apprehension so realistic that the audience was on the edge of their seats awaiting the revelation. This was the only time I saw the conductor's hands extending from the pit to carefully control the action.

An especially outstanding performer was Sister Patience (**Katie Long**, daughter of stage director, Todd Long and choreographer/Sister Mabel, **Aroostine McDowell Long**). Although only 8 years old, she almost stole the show with her mastery of every movement. Her high point was when she shoved Deadeye overboard and, with an impish grin, wiped her hands together after doing this deed. We should watch this youngster as she grows into stardom.

The costumes were so realistic that we hardly even noticed them. After all, we felt as though we were actually on deck and in the action. This should be taken as a supreme compliment to Costume Mistress **Carol Salemi**.

The finale was standard G&S and too short to get the audience aroused.

Perhaps "He Is an Englishman" could have been sung much more andante and molto fortissimo, with hats being thrown into the audience, balloons dropping, cannons firing on both sides of stage, huge flag unfurling (*a la Boston Pops*), smoke on stage. THIS would bring the audience to their feet for a well-deserved standing ovation for the entire production.

Although there were many curtain calls, we were disappointed not to see the director, conductor, and orchestra members recognized on stage.

All in all, though, it was an enchanting evening for us. I look forward to seeing more Fiddlehead productions.

-- ALLEN J. COHEN

&&& MIKADO IN RI The Mill River Dinner Theater in Central Falls, Rhode Island did **MIKADO** this summer. Beth and I drove down from north of Boston, as I personally never tire of **MIKADO** (donning asbestos armor).

Beth says that dinner theater is often not a very good example of either. I decided that the proper way to approach the evening was to expect nothing in particular beyond an adventure, and to be pleasantly surprised if parts of it turned out to be good. Well, parts of it were very good indeed, and unlike the curate's egg, the rotten bits didn't spoil the good ones.



The dinner and show are given in a small nightclub-like space with a rather large dance floor (the "stage") and two tiers of tables, one at floor level. We were seated on the upper level and were still close to the action. That night, audience and cast were evenly matched at twenty-four to a side.

For US 28.50, you get a choice of roast beef, chicken, fish, or veggie lasagna, with soup, pot & veg, dessert, and coffee or tea. Drinks, hard or soft, are extra, but the prices are no worse than you'd see in a neighborhood restaurant: 3.00 for good beer, 4.00 for a glass of house wine. We had the fish and lasagna, and judged both very good. Over all, I'd say the evening represented good value for money. (Except for a shortened Overture, the show was given uncut.)

The scenery and costumes were simple and attractive. The single set, consisting mostly of backcloth, suggested the ambiance of both courtyard and garden. One nice touch was a sign over a door reading "Ko-Ko the Tailor," with the last word crossed out and "Lord High Executioner" written in.

The chorus was larger than I'd expected: six men, eight women. The men walked among the tables for part of the opening chorus; their voices carried well no matter where they stood. The chorus were obviously well-drilled on diction and projection, and they moved well, particularly the women. Unfortunately, one or two strong sopranos sang their high notes half a tone flat.

The stars of the show were unquestionably Ko-Ko, Pooh-Bah, and Pitti-Sing. (They were played by **Ted Mitchell**, **Ken McPherson**, and **Lori Manney** -- does anyone recognize the names?) Pooh-Bah really woke things up with his entrance: he had a fine voice and great stage presence, and delivered his lines with relish and a good sense of comic timing. His performance was broad but not over the top; as such, he made a good foil for Ko-Ko, who was quite literally all over the place, physically and histrionically. Pitti-Sing was appropriately saucy, and the three of them coalesced into a fine team in Act 2.

Paul Morin and **Nicole Davis** made an attractive pair of (genuinely) young lovers: he fresh and earnest, but sly when dealing with Ko-Ko; she petite and lovely, but arch when called for. There was good chemistry between them, and their kissing in the duet raised the room temperature several degrees. Pish-Tush looked good but seemed unsure of himself; Peep-Bo was more than adequate in an unrewarding part.

Katisha was fascinating. She really was advanced in years, and moved with difficulty. She had obviously had a fine voice at one time, and the remnant was true, if a bit wobbly. She handled the pathos well, but lacked the energy to be truly menacing. (Katisha was double-cast, and at no time were we informed who was "on." A trifle rude, I thought, particularly as the powers-that-be did find the time to admonish us repeatedly that "gratuity is NOT included in the price of the dinner & show." Given the lighthearted nature of the evening, I would have liked something along the lines of "Our servers cheerfully accept insults" -- but that might have drawn undue attention to the fact that the gratuity, by definition something freely given, has become a species of "protection money." End of rant.)

The Mikado was a disappointment. He had the size and facial features to be a commanding figure, but he acted almost apologetic to be taking up floor space, and his voice was all but inaudible. He was also stage director, and had obviously done a fine job of coaching the others; alas, it appeared no one had coached him. Similarly, the music director got some quite decent singing from most of the company, but his piano playing was hit and miss. On the positive side, most of his tempi were apt, and he kept the show moving.

One rather expects a dinner show to be played broadly, and this was no exception. The players not only broke the fourth wall, they pulverized it. On the line "I dine with middle-class people on reasonable terms," Pooh-Bah sat down at one of the tables; at "I accept refreshment at any hands," he snatched a drink from another table. When it became clear that someone must be executed at once, Ko-Ko pulled a tape measure from around his shoulders -- once a tailor, always a tailor -- and sized up various audience members' necks. (Surprisingly, he did nothing with "Married men never flirt.") During their verse of "So please you, Sir," the three maids tickled Pooh-Bah unmercifully, and during his verse a couple of chorus girls did a Maypole routine that left him immobilized in cords (oooh! bondage!). In the dialogue scene leading up to "Titwillow," an extremely reluctant Ko-Ko had his "love speech" inked on his forearms (among other places) and read it like a child reciting in class.

There were the usual local allusions, including a couple to the allegedly corrupt sitting Mayor of Providence. Our favorite alteration, from the List song, which Ko-Ko told me afterward was his own:

"And the lady from The Weakest Link, who dresses like a guy,
And who doesn't like your answers, and would rather say
'Goodbye!'"

What any show needs, and a dinner show in particular, is lots of energy. This production had energy to spare, which made up (in our minds) for the few rough spots. I'd recommend this theater as a change of pace for anyone living nearby: it's just north of Providence, about an hour south of Boston. The box office phone is 401-721-0909; there's a Web site at www.millrivertheater.com.

-- TONY PARKES

&&& YEOMEN UP NORTH Teaching summer school at Middlebury College, I discovered that the **Vermont Mozart Festival** was presenting an outdoor concert performance of **YEOMEN**, so off I went to the Basin Harbor Club on the shores of Lake Champlain, where hundreds of picnicking fans had spread out blankets and coolers before a band shell backed by the Adirondacks across the water. Sunset was perfectly timed with the finale of Act I, and as Act II began, "night had spread her pall."

A fully professional small orchestra (nearly all the winds but a mere string quintet), a roster of first-rate soloists, and the **Vermont Gilbert and Sullivan Singers** presented the complete score with near-perfect diction, real operatic voices, and all nicely shaped by conductor **William Metcalfe**, who managed to conduct backwards when he doubled as the Lieutenant! [*An interesting characterization! - the Lieutenant is sort-of the conductor of at least one part of this complicated plot! - mlc*] **Arnold Toback's** Fairfax was lustrous and elegantly phrased; Point and Elsie (**Larry Rudiger** and **Jill Hallett Levis**) were both full-voiced and very touching, though you must imagine a finale in which, during the last "heighdy", Point merely stands rigid in the line of soloists.

But it was a concert version, where Metcalfe supplied the plot through concise summaries, occasionally slipping in some "music appreciation" which to my mind had the effect of undercutting our pleasure rather than enhancing it. (I was with a G&S neophyte who felt she didn't want to be told that *When a wooer goes a-wooing* was an exquisite quartet.) And we had to accept the necessity of miking, which made it impossible to assess the balance of the ensemble while sending Gilbert's words clearly out to the multitudes. And what a pleasure it was to lie back under the stars and let Sullivan's music wash over me.

-- JONATHAN STRONG

&&& A BOSTON/NEW YORK YEOMEN AT THE NEW YORK G&S SOCIETY [*Andi posted this to SavoyNet, and sent a copy to Us for the Bray - so, although We're diffident, modest and shy, We had to print it...*] "Though I say it who shouldn't", since I was the accompanist for last night's [*June 23*] music-only concert of **YEOMEN** at the **NY G&S Society**, I thought I'd post a few comments.

We were working under several disadvantages: (1) working without a conductor, (2) only 1 rehearsal of the cast together, since it was a coalition company of performers from New England and from the New York/New Jersey area, and (3) the hall (the historic Friends' Meeting House) is not air conditioned, and the combination of a few extra degrees of summer heat with exceptionally high humidity created a tropical climate rather like an Amazon rain forest of the sort that makes skin sticky and affects both the felts and wooden parts of piano mechanisms unfavorably.

Despite all the above, the performance came off very well, thanks to a very felicitous combination of performers, many of them seasoned G&S'ers. I was also happy to see that the evening drew a larger audience than has been the case for many of the Society meetings recently.

Sam Silvers and **Marion Leeds Carroll**, coproducers, had truly done a sterling job of cast assembly. [NY] Society President **Peter Emery** has a full, strong tenor (he's currently coaching for a Wagnerian role) that gave Fairfax a good manly strength, though Pete's a sensitive musician who can pull it back to blend well, also. **Wilbur Watkin Lewis**, long familiar to area residents, sang Shadbolt. His rich bass-baritone has "settled" fully now with maturity -- like the best Burgundies, these voices need the time to develop their full potential -- and he also has a fine sense of the comic. The role of Point is one of **Sam Silvers'** personal favorites, and since he knows it cold "off book", he enlivened the concert-format proceedings with action. Veteran G&S performer **Ed Ehinger** (Meryll) usually displays a fairly light, graceful baritone (I think of him as Grosvenor and Strephon), but in the company of weightier voices showed a balancing strength that both surprised and delighted me. **Erik Hanson** as Sir Richard Cholmondeley and **Chris Wilkes** as Leonard both held their own with a degree of security and flexibility one would not expect for so little rehearsal.

The ladies matched them. In my opinion, **Marion Leeds Carroll** has a better grasp of the characters of Gilbert's ingénues than 98% of the sopranos I've seen/heard in these roles, and even without the dialogue scenes her Elsie is a multi-layered sensitive portrayal. Phoebe was portrayed by another New Englander, **Rebecca Consentino Hains**, who is actually a light soprano, but she did such a charming job of girlish flirtation that one readily forgave the difference in timbre. **Laura Schall Gouillart's** Dame Carruthers was very well and competently sung -- not a "battleaxe" contralto, but full and solid, a fine voice.



There were some excellent moments, both musical and dramatic, in the course of the evening, but for me (and this is a bizarre comment for an accompanist, since I had little to do with the largely unaccompanied number), the high point of the evening was the *Strange Adventure* quartet, which was perfectly balanced and blended among the four voices and absolutely bang-on pitch throughout.

No mean task in the key of G, which, because of the way vocal ranges lie, tends to be quite susceptible to pitch-slippage in a cappella work. Top honours (sic) go to **Sarah Carson** as Kate; it's usually the soprano who pulls this off-pitch, and Sarah's voice is as true as they come. It was one of the best renditions of this quartet that I've ever heard.

While there were a few minor fluffs and not-clean moments also, they were surprisingly few under the all-but-impromptu circumstances, and I'd say that the "Boston-New York Ad Hoc G&S Concert Consortium" ended the Society's 2000-2001 with a fine flourish.

- **ANDI STRYKER-RODDA**

[Who is Andi? She's a top-notch accompanist, active in the NY area. She does a lot of work with the professional **NY G&S Players**. *NEGASSers* would compare her favorably with our frequent accompanist **Eric Schwartz** - which is saying a lot! - mlc]



☺☺ **Turtle Lane Playhouse** of Newton, MA's current production of **PIRATES** will close August 19. For more information, see the review above, visit <http://turtle-lane.com/> or phone (617) 244-0169.

☺☺ **The Light Opera Company of Salisbury (LOCOS)** will present **MIKADO** 9/1 at 8 PM and 9/2 at 2 PM at the Hotchkiss School in Salisbury, CT. The cast, which includes director **William Brooke** doubling as Ko-Ko, is studded with stars from the roster of the **New York G&S Players**. These performances, for the benefit of Women's Support Services, are dedicated to the memory of **Georgia McEver**, the founder and Artistic Director of LOCOS. Please contact **Sharon Keene** at (860) 435-4956 or the WSS office at (860) 824-1491 for further information.

☺☺ **MITG&SP** will hold auditions for their fall show, **PINAFORE**. 9/5-6 from 7-10 PM in MIT room W20-413. Performances will be 11/9, 10, 16 & 17 at 8 PM, and 11/11, 17 & 18 at 8 PM. For more info, e-mail savoyards-request@mit.edu, visit <http://web.mit.edu/gsp/www/>, or phone (617) 253-0190.

