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NEWSLETTER

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EVENTS REPORT

On Sunday 12th October we welcomed 'A Pair of Old Cartes' - Jane Metcalfe (mezzo soprano) and Barry Clark (tenor), accompanied at the piano by former D'Oyly Carte musical director Fraser Goulding. They gave us a super afternoon of G & S fun and good singing, including costumed excerpts from the operas. Barry dazzled us with his verbal dexterity in the Nightmare Song and My Name is John Wellington Wells, as well as demonstrating his still beautiful tenor in songs like Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes. Jane gave us a brilliant Mad Margaret among other gems. A memorable concert!

On Sunday 7th December our own members and friends let their hair down in an Olde Tyme Music Hall. This was organised and accompanied at the piano by Christine Colbourne, and proved extremely popular with our audience. Our own BBC actor John Samson was the traditional Chairman, and a very good time was had by all. Contrary to earlier plans we staged just the one performance, in the afternoon, and this worked very well.

By the time you receive this, our Annual Celebrity Luncheon will probably already have taken place. Like Pooh-Bah "I wasn't there," but I feel sure that Richard Suart will have proved a thoroughly entertaining guest speaker.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS AT THE BIRCH HOTEL

On Sunday 15th March we shall welcome back the inimitable Martin Milnes, "The Falsetto," in a completely new programme. A singer, actor, director and writer, this young man is talented in so many directions. He made his name by his uncanny ability to sing anything from baritone to high soprano, and his performance at the Brighton Festival Fringe earned him an award and this tribute from The Brighton Evening Argue_ "Martin Milnes received a deservedly ecstatic reception of joy and rapture unconfined." He has recently been appointed Head of Drama at the MAAD Studio - a performing arts studio run for professionals by professionals in central London. Don't miss him!

On Sunday 12th April we present "The Magic of the Menezes," the brother and sister team of David Menezes (tenor) and Elizabeth Menezes (soprano). Christine and I saw them as Alexis and Aline in Oxford University's Sorcerer at Buxton several years ago, and they impressed us then. David has sung

for us before, as a last-minute substitute for Stephen Brown. He studied Classics at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, (spending most of his time there singing G & S) then did a postgraduate certificate in performance at the Royal College of Music. Since then he has established himself as a principal tenor with a number of opera companies, both here and abroad. Elizabeth studied Classics and French at St. John's College, Oxford, and Singing at Trinity College of Music. Thereafter she joined Carl Rosa Opera and toured Australia, New Zealand, America and Canada with them, playing several G & S soprano roles. She has sung in grand opera, and is also a professional violinist. Adelightful afternoon is in prospect!

For both these concerts the usual arrangements apply, i.e. send your cheque (for £4.50 if a member and £9.50 if a non-member,) made payable to G & S Today, to Edwin Cowley at 37, Hill House Close, Turners Hill, Crawley RH10 4YY No need for SAE - simply arrive in good time and collect your tickets at the door. The concerts begin at 2.45pm., and interval refreshments are included. For those of you who like to lunch at The Birch beforehand it is advisable to book a table in advance on 01 444 451 565, mentioning the G & S Society.

PROPOSED GROUP VISIT TO GILBERT'S HOUSE AND GARDEN ON SUNDAY 5TH JULY

Our Chairman, Melvyn Tarran, has offered to arrange a coach trip to Grim's Dyke, Harrow Weald, the home and garden of Sir W S. Gilbert. We would have a guided tour, a full afternoon tea, a professional G & S entertainment, and a coach with commentary about life at Grim's Dyke in Gilbert's day. The Society has agreed to subsidise this event, thus keeping the inclusive cost down to £29 per person. Grim's Dyke is a four-star hotel these days, and they do these things very well. The coach would leave Haywards Heath around 1.00pm., and arrive back around 6.45pm. You may wish to take a late brunch at home, or bring something to eat on the coach, it is up to you. But remember that after the guided tour you will have a lovely afternoon tea and entertainment at 4.00pm. The tea will include various open and finger sandwiches, plain scones, fruit scones, clotted cream and strawberry jam, cakes, and tea or coffee or fruit juice. This event can only take place if enough people want to come, so will be open to members and their guests. All details are subject to confirmation. We do hope you will decide to take advantage of this splendid opportunity! Please let either Melvyn or Edwin Cowley know by 1st February. Melvyn is on 01273 841570, and Edwin's number is 01342 715709.

THE 22nd INTERNATIONAL GILBERT & SULLIVAN FESTIVAL

This hugely popular annual event will take place at Harrogate from 1st to 23rd August, and truly has something for everyone. The programme is only 75% complete at the moment, but already looks very inviting. The Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company now has the word National in front of it, and looks like becoming a second D'Oyly Carte inasmuch as it is to undertake national tours. I am delighted to see that Buxton is no longer out in the cold, as the company will be at the Opera House there from 4th to 8th August with Mikado, Gondoliers and H.M.S. Pinafore. And Cape Town will be there on 7th August with their Mikado. Touring venues confirmed include Truro, Malvern, Wolverhampton, Blackpool, Rhyl and Croydon, with more to come. There is so much going on, and not just in Harrogate: there is a G & S Nile Cruise next month, and a G & S weekend based at the Imperial Hotel, Torquay, in early May. I do urge you to get hold of a copy of the programme - it is amazing! Ring 01422 323252 or visit festivalnews@gsfestivals.orcl

EDITOR'S JOTTINGS

The Isabel Jay Trophy at the Mid Sussex Competitive Music Festival was won this year by seventeen-year-old Polly Beaumont (soprano) singing Sorry Her Lot from H.M.S. Pinafore. She is a pupil of Rebecca Dowden, and she also won several other prizes in the same festival. A talented girl! In addition to the Trophy, Polly was presented with a miniature cup and a booklet about Isabel Jay, by our Hon. Treasurer Edwin Cowley.

Our member Laurence Leng, who delighted us in our Olde Tyme Music Hall, gives illustrated talks on G & S from time to time, and very good they are! One of his recent bookings was for Hurst, Hassocks and Ditchling U3A at Hurstpierpoint on 15th September.

Our membership is very wide-ranging, and one of our distinguished members, Philip Scowcroft, lives in Doncaster where he is the President of Doncaster Choral Society. He tells me that John Cannon's article on Sir Charles Mackerras brought back happy memories of the 1986 Leeds performance of The Golden Legend. As a member of the Sir Arthur Sullivan Society Philip had been invited to the post-concert reception in the Civic Hall, and was one of the first to arrive. Sir Charles was already there, so Philip engaged him in conversation and found him a most delightful companion until other guests demanded their share of the great man's time!

Our member Margaret Amey, who lives in Bexhill, has written an amusing operetta called 'Buxton or Bust.' She describes it as Gilbert and Sullivan meets 'Mamma Mia' sort of. It will have its world premiere in Bexhill-on-Sea from 23rd to 27th June 2015. The music is taken from G & S, but it has a modern plot. The theatre is booked, the score is on the way, the set designed, and the costumes are being prepared. All Margaret needs now is singers and an audience! If you would like to be a part of it, ring Margaret on 01424 842191 - she would love to hear from you. Rehearsals start in January on Monday and Tuesday evenings in the performance venue, St. John's Hall, Victoria Road, Bexhill-on-Sea.

Godalming Operatic Society are celebrating their 90th Anniversary by staging The Mikado. They perform it at The Borough Hall, Godalming, from Tuesday 17th to Saturday 21st February, and at The Leatherhead Theatre from Thursday 26th to Saturday 28th February. The box office is 01252 703376, or email boxoffice@godalmingoperatic.org Prices vary from £11 to £17. You can be assured of a quality production.

As some of you will know, Mike Leigh is directing The Pirates of Penzance for English National Opera in the summer. You can catch it at London's Coliseum between 9th May and 27th June, and the box office number is 020 7845 9300. Alternatively it is being shown "live" at various cinemas around the country.

Our friend Russell Pegler has submitted the following brain teasers. They are tricky, but not too difficult. See if you can identify the disguised characters. If you get stuck, you can always email me for answers. Here they are--

- 1) Sounds like he has a bedtime drink?
- 2) Before Jagger made a fuss.
- 3) A Pope, a Capital British General, and half a Bishopric.
- 4) An officer, but no relation to the artist Spencer.

5) From out of the box came an arrow

We had hoped to feature our Chairman, Melvyn Tarran, in our last issue, but he needed more time to assemble his thoughts. So here is the result of his deliberations:-

MELVYN P TARRAN

Melvyn's first introduction to the world of Gilbert and Sullivan came while he was working in London. He had been studying Hotel & Catering Management and had been advised to continue his training in West End hotels. So he joined the staff of London's Piccadilly Hotel, later going on to the Famous Ritz. At that time Melvyn did not know that Cesar Ritz had been brought to this country by Richard D'Oyly Carte to manage his Savoy Hotel, or that several years later he had left the Savoy under a cloud, yet still went on to set up his own hotels.

However, it was while Melvyn was at the Piccadilly that he first made the acquaintance of the Savoy Operas: this occurred when he met a fellow member of staff who had at one time been a member of the D'Oyly Carte Orchestra.

When the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company came to the Golders Green Hippodrome, Melvyn thought he would go along and see what the D'Oyly Carte was all about. The opera being performed was Ruddigore, and from that day on he became a fan! But he could not have imagined that years later most of the principals in that production would come and sing for him in concerts that he would produce, or that some would become very good friends. At that time they were stars of the opera, and the only chance of meeting them was by going to the Stage Door, where numerous fans stood night after night waiting to get a glimpse of their favourite artists, and hoping to get their programmes signed.

Eventually the time came when Melvyn had to serve his two years National Military Service, and this he did in the Army Catering Corps.

Following National Service he joined the John Lewis Partnership as a Manager in the Catering Department of the famous Peter Jones department store in Sloane Square, and it was there that Melvyn met Kay, whom he later married. They brought up four children, and now have six grand children.

Melvyn's career in department store catering flourished, and he was awarded a plaque for his menu designs at the International Hotel & Catering Exhibition Hotelympia, and received several Fellowships from various professional Hotel and Catering bodies.

He was then offered the post of Catering Controller for Allders Department Store in Croydon, Surrey, which became the third largest department store in Europe. This was part of the giant LIDS group, which had over a thousand retail outlets.

He was then promoted to a new position, that of Group Catering Controller, and promptly set about updating all the other department stores and catering facilities up and down the country. But in his free time he was still going to see the D'Oyly Carte whenever he could.

Nine years later he decided it was time to start his own business, so he purchased a restaurant. He transformed it into a themed restaurant which he called 'Suilivans.' Tables were set out in alcoves named after various artists connected with the operas. Photographs and posters festooned the walls,

staff were dressed in Victorian maids' costumes, menus had a G & S theme, and of course the background music was from the operas. He was then given the opportunity to take over the catering at Borde Hill Gardens, Haywards Heath, so he created 'Sullivan's Caterers,' specialising in weddings and functions, not only at Borde Hill, but also in halls, marquees, and the restaurant. 'Sullivan's Caterers' became an approved nominated catering company for Mid Sussex Council's Clair and Martlets Halls. Bentley Wildfowl & Motor Museum were added to the portfolio, and catering contracts were acquired for three department stores: Plummers of Eastbourne, Plummers of Southampton, and Hills of Hove.

The freehold of Oak Hall, Sheffield Park was obtained, and the building transformed into Apartments, Offices, a Banquet Hall, Restaurant, Museum, and a separate Holiday Cottage. The Restaurant catered for the 250,000 National Trust visitors. The Banquet Hall catered for Weddings and other Functions, and also became the venue for regular Sunday afternoon professional concerts featuring artists from D'Oyly Carte, English National Opera and Glyndebourne. It also provided a platform for young up and coming artists such as Alfie Boe, Stephen Brown, and Stephen John Davis.

The Museum started off in a modest way, but over the years grew to become the largest Gilbert & Sullivan collection on permanent display anywhere in the world. It was featured on BBC Television, BBC Radio, in Sussex Life, Sussex Living, and other magazines and newspapers. The collection was also used for research for Mike Leigh's award-winning film 'Topsy-Turvy.'

Melvyn owned Oak Hall at Sheffield Park for almost thirty years, and for a time served on the local parish council. In 2000 he organised a charity Gala of former D'Oyly Carte artists at Crawley's Hawth Theatre, and raised over £5000.00 for Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

Oak Hall was eventually sold to the National Trust, and Melvyn offered to give his collection to the Trust as part of Great Britain's Musical Heritage, but his offer was declined. The reason given was that the Trust was concerned about the cost of its conservation.

In 2011 Melvyn, with the support of several other enthusiasts, launched The Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Sussex, and became its Chairman. He was made a Vice President of the London Gilbert & Sullivan Society, and is currently compiling a Gilbert & Sullivan Cookbook, with Musical Director David Steadman.

Items for inclusion in our next Newsletter should be sent to: The Editor, G&S Today,
12 The Platt,
Lindfield,
Haywards Heath,
West Sussex RH16 2SY.

Committee members:

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