

May 2015

# Review of the Year

by President Brenda Southorn

## Abbots Langley Gilbert & Sullivan Society SPRING/SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Since last year's newsletter ALGSS has put on two productions, 'Will and Art Together and Apart' in June 2014 and The Pirates of Penzance in January 2015. Both productions were critically acclaimed.

In Will and Art we had the opportunity to sing music by Sullivan which most of us had never met before from operas such as The Rose of Persia, The Grand Duke and Utopia Ltd alongside popular favourites from Gondoliers, Pirates and Iolanthe. The reviews were good:

*"The audience was stunned by the strong and vibrant voices and every piece was a gem."*

*"Cox and Box was so good and so cleverly staged that the audience would like to see it revived and added to the current day repertoire at the Palace."*

*"Again the Abbots Langley Gilbert and Sullivan Society took the initiative and produced the absolutely unexpected with flair."*

Having decided to 'tread the boards' again myself in this show I can say that it was a most enjoyable and interesting experience for the company particularly for all the fascinating anecdotes from Gilbert and Sullivan expert Peter Joslin, the clever staging from Director Emma Stratton and the challenging and unusual music directed by Peter Jones.

[Continues on page 2.](#)

### Inside this months newsletter:

Forthcoming events	page three
News from the Chairman	page four
The G&S family increases	page eight
Forthcoming production	page five
The Prompt, the tea Lady and the presidents husband	page six

Abbots Langley Gilbert & Sullivan Society.

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## Review of the year (contd)

On October 17th we held our launch evening for Pirates with a presentation of many of the well known songs from the show. Our chosen charity was the RNLI and during the evening we were treated to a most informative, entertaining and witty speech from one of their very elderly volunteers who brought the house down. The raffle and the proceeds from their own merchandise raised over £100 on that evening which was a good start to the fundraising for them.

On November 8th the society shared a concert at All Saints, Kings Langley with the KL Community Choir. Once again we used this to showcase The Pirates of Penzance and all but one of the principals were able to sing their roles. Andy Taylor very nobly learnt the Major General's Song for the occasion in Geoffrey's absence. The concert was very successful and raised over £800 for the church funds and was a great opportunity to publicise the show.

In January our publicity officer Sue O'Neill tried something different and organised a 'Flash Mob' in the Harlequin Centre (sorry Intu). This was well supported by the company and as David Southorn started 'When the Foeman bares his steel' an interested crowd began to gather and as more and more of our members joined in the singing the sound grew and echoed around the shopping centre earning many compliments from the Intu management and rapturous applause from the considerable crowd.



The Pirates of Penzance was performed the following week and it was an artistic and financial success. Abbots Langley Gilbert and Sullivan Society has recently introduced a Patrons Scheme and for the first time were able to greet invited guests and patrons to a champagne reception on the first night of the show. Our guests included Jane Lay, Chairman of the Abbots Langley Parish Council, Joy Mann, local district Councillor and Mr Brian Doble and his wife from the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. They were joined by some patrons, Director Mike Monk and Musical

Director Susana Tierney and some members of the cast notably the Modern Major General, Geoffrey Farrar. The guests were then taken to their seats.

We had good audiences and everyone who came seemed to enjoy it thoroughly. The chorus singing was of a particularly high standard and remarked on by many people. The principals excelled themselves, adding clever touches as the week progressed without deviating from the Director's intentions but adding much to the enjoyment of the audiences.

The Watford Observer said: *"Funny, fresh and frolicsome. A great illustration of why G&S endures: long may it continue."*

Since the end of Pirates a cheese and wine launch night was held for Seussical and that show is now in full swing.

## Forthcoming events involving members

Radlett Centre, Radlett 13th – 17th May 7.45 and Sat mat at 2.30

Radlett Light Opera Society presents CHILDREN OF EDEN by Stephen Schwartz

Melanie Riseam, Jan Taylor and Julian Ardouin, Val & Bill Penketh and Malcolm Cotsworth are in the cast.

Tickets from Radlett Centre 01923 859291 or at [www.radlettcentre.co.uk](http://www.radlettcentre.co.uk)

Concerts in aid of St Lawrence Organ repairs

The costs of the repairs will be £20,000 so in May there will be a series of Saturday morning concerts. 10.30 refreshments then the concert from 11.00-12.00

May 9th – Southorn/Stratton family – ‘All Things S’ - Musical Theatre songs

May 30th – Katherine Bunting – Song recital

Tickets are £5 on the door. Further details will be sent by separate email. Please support these events if you can.

## From the NODA Conference: Do you just belong?

Are you an active member- the kind who would be missed?

Or are you just content that your name is on the list?

Do you attend the functions and mingle with the crowd?

Or do you stay at home and grumble long and loud?

Do you take an active part to help the society along?

Or are you satisfied to be the kind that just belong?

Do you ever come along or information seek?

Or leave the work to just a few and talk about The Clique?

There's quite a programme scheduled that means success is done

And it can be accomplished with help from EVERYONE.

So why not come along and help with hand and heart:

Don't be 'just a member', but take an active part...

Think this over, Members- are you right or are we wrong?

Are you an 'Active Member' or do you 'Just Belong'?

## Personal News

Our condolences go to Rob Milner and Peter Jones on the recent loss of their fathers.

# Looking to the Future by Chairman Philip Joslin

Welcome to this spring newsletter from ALGSS. Many thanks to Brenda for compiling this update that I hope you will find an enjoyable and informative read.

Once again the committee has been busy developing plans for the coming years. The fact is that societies are still finding a struggle to sell enough tickets to make their productions viable, unless they have income from other sources. We have been fortunate once again to be awarded a grant for our summer production from the local PCC, this time for Seussical. We are extremely grateful for the award and indeed for the recognition that we provide something of great value to the community.

I have already mentioned in a previous email the major procedural change to our calendar. Many different strands have coincided that make this a sensible change; the change to our membership fees, our charitable status and therefore our ability to 'gift-aid' our membership subscriptions. Claire will be distributing membership forms in June with all the relevant details and our AGM will now be held in September.

This brings me to the other announcements I promised.

We have had some excellent preliminary conversations with the Watford Palace Theatre. There has been a change of management recently and I believe that with the departure of Watford Operatic Society they seem more keen to help the remaining amateur societies (Cassio and ourselves) continue to perform at this wonderful venue. This support is critical. Although we had good audiences for Pirates, they were nothing like the numbers we had the last time we performed the piece (when we made £10,000). This time we managed to make a profit of around £2800, but this was with substantially reduced expenditure. With this in mind we have looked at what will help us put some more money in the coffers to allow us to do new and interesting works in the years to come.

So, this is the draft plan for the next 3 years:-

- 2016 Watford Palace production: Mikado - this was the overwhelmingly popular choice of our audience survey this year. We will include another audience participation survey that highlights what we are planning for January 2017 and asks for feedback.

- 2016 Summer Production - to be confirmed
- 2017 Watford Palace production: January - non G&S, based on feedback from our audience in the survey
- 2017 Watford Palace production: - June - Gondoliers
- 2018 Watford Palace production: Ruddigore or Sorcerer

You'll notice that we have a June date at the Palace in 2017. This is an exciting new possibility that is yet to be confirmed, but, as mentioned earlier, the Palace is showing a keener interest in what we do and we would like to take advantage of this. The details need to be worked out of course, but a summer G&S in the Palace would be a great deal of fun, and we believe we would keep our current audience and probably gain more because of the lighter evenings. With our bank balance looking healthier by 2018 we also think we could venture to put on one of the lesser known G&S shows, many of you have been talking about doing.

This year we celebrate 65 years of our existence! And so we thought we should celebrate. More details will be coming soon, but we're looking to do a social of sorts in the summer. Watch this space!

Finally, I do hope that we will see you at our forthcoming production of Seussical the Musical. Rehearsals are very enjoyable and progressing well. It's a fun, zany show, with a great deal of heart. A lovely evening's entertainment that you won't want to miss.

With best wishes to all,

Philip

# The Cat in the Hat is coming to Abbots Langley

In a musical that is perfect for the whole family we are presenting Seussical this summer from June 10th – 14th. Involving local children as the 'Whos', Seussical takes us into the world of Dr Seuss, revisiting some of his favourite characters, The Cat in the Hat, Horton and the Whos, Gertrude McFuzz, Mayzie la Bird, Jo Jo and many more in this crazy tale about the power of imagination and belief in yourself. The music is delightful.

The cast is as follows:

Jo-Jo: Sophie Stevens and Evie Lilley

The Cat in the Hat / Yertle the Turtle :  
Gareth Edwards

Horton : Philip Joslin

Gertrude McFuzz: Emma Stratton

Mayzie La Bird : Julie Lilley

Sour Kangaroo : Sue O'Neill

Wickersham Brothers : Tim Eccleshall,  
David Sutherland and Colin Walker

The Bird Girls :

Lisa Matthews, Melanie Riseam &  
Cheryl Aughton-Clark

Mr Mayor : David Southorn

Mrs Mayor : Wendy Morelli

Vlad Vladikov/ Court Clerk: Mandy  
Carr

General Schmit: David Sutherland

A promotional poster for the musical 'Seussical'. The background is blue with a white cloud. At the top, it says 'A musical perfect for the whole family...' in white. Below this is a red and white striped cat hat. The title 'Seussical' is in large, yellow, stylized letters with a blue outline. Above the title, it says 'Based on the works of Dr Seuss'. Below the title, it lists the music by Stephen Flaherty, lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, book by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty, and co-conceived by Eric Idle. The dates '10th - 14th June 2015' are prominently displayed. The venue is 'Henderson Hall, Abbots Langley WD5 0AR'. Ticket prices are listed as £12, 16 & under £7, with concessions for Wed, Eve, and Sunday Matinee. Ticket booking information includes the website 'www.algss.ticketsource.co.uk' and the box office phone number '07502 426721'. Social media icons for Twitter and Facebook are shown. At the bottom, it thanks Abbots Langley Parish Council and mentions the production is by arrangement with Josef Weinberger Ltd. on behalf of Music Theatre International of New York.

**A musical perfect for the whole family...**

Abbots Langley Gilbert & Sullivan Society presents  
[www.algss.org.uk](http://www.algss.org.uk)

Based on the works of Dr Seuss

**Seussical**

Music by **STEPHEN FLAHERTY** Lyrics by **LYNN AHRENS**  
Book by **LYNN AHRENS** and **STEPHEN FLAHERTY**  
Co-conceived by **ERIC IDLE**

**10th - 14th June 2015**

**Henderson Hall, Abbots Langley WD5 0AR**  
7.30pm and Sat & Sun Matinee 3pm

Tickets £12, 16 & under £7  
(concessions £10 Wed Eve and Sunday Matinee Only)

Book Tickets at [www.algss.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.algss.ticketsource.co.uk)  
Box Office: 07502 426721 [boxoffice@algss.org.uk](mailto:boxoffice@algss.org.uk)

@algss ALGSSOPSOC

With thanks to Abbots Langley Parish Council for it's support.  
This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Josef Weinberger Ltd.  
on behalf of Music Theatre International of New York

The Whos:

Grace Carson, Kimberley Covey-Crump, Liberty Hobbs, Ellie Williams, Amber Blow, Grace Blow, Bella Tierney, Morgan Prytherch, Zeya Agboke, Tori Tointon, Holly Jefford, Rhema Agboke, Lauren Cousens, Phoebe Steven

The Production runs from Wednesday 10th to Sunday 14th June.

Wed-Sat evening performance 7.30pm and 2 Matinees Sat and Sun 3.00pm

Tickets can now be booked online at this link [www.algss.ticketsource.co.uk](http://www.algss.ticketsource.co.uk)

or email [boxoffice@algss.org.uk](mailto:boxoffice@algss.org.uk) or phone 07502 426721



# The Prompt, the Tea Lady and the President's Husband

*"What do you see, you people looking at me?  
Only a doll on a music box that's wound by a key"*

So runs a song from Chitty, Chitty Bang, Bang and it occurred to me that as so many new members have joined the Society over the last few years they probably have no idea, when they see the elderly people attending rehearsals and helping out from time to time just what they contributed over the years and how instrumental they were in building the society that we now enjoy

## The Prompt ( Life Member Lennie Self)

Who is that old lady in the corner "on the book"? Is she something to do with the society? The answer is yes; my husband Colin and I joined the society in 1973 for "Trial by Jury" and "HMS Pinafore" and thus began a very happy association where we met many of our friends. I was fortunate enough to be cast as a bridesmaid in that production and in later years Colin played The Judge several times. The following show was "Guys and Dolls" when I was a Hot Box girl and he was Rusty Charlie. We were hooked and for many years we were in the shows, me usually in the chorus, or a dancer (highlight was playing a Cell Block Girl in "Chicago" )and Colin was often a principal and patter man,



We had great fun in those days with innumerable parties (one lasted eight nights going from house to house) I remember David and Emma Southorn and Jo and David Williams being born and we have watched them growing up, and I remember a 15 year old Wendy Clarke (Morelli) joining and years later her little girl, Lisa at rehearsals . In those days we performed our spring show at the Abbey Theatre in St. Albans, and for several years after "The Match Girls" a raucous crowd would walk around St. Albans park between the Saturday performances singing the 'Lah di Dah' from Match girls

I was secretary on two occasions for a total of seven years. There were no computers or mobile phones in those days and after auditions the secretary had to phone everybody with the results. In 2005 I was asked to be Chairman, a position I held for three years. I think everyone should spend some time on the committee to appreciate how much time and energy is spent behind the scenes. I was also a NODA rep for several years and had the opportunity to appreciate the work of many of the local societies. We had many happy years singing and performing, but the best thing was the long lasting friendships we made and still cherish. At our Golden Wedding Party in 2013 many of our ALGSS friends celebrated with us. The Bride, from that first "Trial" in 1973 is with us from Scotland at the moment. Many of our G&S friends are now in their eighties and too many have died. We may not have late parties but we still see each other a lot, and now have our own choir. I am proud of my Society especially after that splendid "Pirates of Penzance" and long may it flourish with the new generation of talent.

Oh, by the way, the rumour is true. The lovely young Annie Rycroft, who was playing the lead role Eurydice in "Orpheus in the Underworld" did appear topless in the publicity photo in the Watford Observer sitting in a bath wearing only her trousers (hidden), some bubbles and a strategically placed arm!



## The Tea –lady (Vice President Anne Rycroft)

Anne started singing at the age of ten years. Her potential was discovered during early piano lessons. Her teacher, whom she adored, gave her guidance and encouragement. In her teens she studied under Kathleen Joyce and played her first G&S lead at sixteen which was the Plaintiff in “Trial by Jury”; this was closely followed by Mabel in “Pirates” with Christchurch Operatic Society

At eighteen Anne entered nursing and was a Nurse Manager prior to retirement in 1998.

Alongside being a mother she found time to play many leading roles for several groups.

The parts included the Mother in “Hansel and Gretel”, Marcellina in “The Marriage of Figaro”, Adele in “Die Fledermaus”, Margot in “Desert Song” and Gianetta in Gondoliers.

For ALGSS Anne played Eurydice in “Orpheus in the Underworld”, Nettie in “Carousel”, Rosalinda in “Die Fledermaus” and she also played the following G&S roles Casilda x 2, Josephine, Princess Ida, Phyllis, Elsie, Kate and Aline. Anne played frequently opposite her then husband, Bryan Rycroft. She declines to appear on the stage now-thus the title of this article.

She feels deeply indebted to all the people who have participated in the life of ALGSS for the joy, pleasure and the opportunities she has had. She has also sung in many concerts and performed in Westminster Cathedral and the New Gallery. She recently retired from St Lawrence Choir in our village.

Anne believes that music brings people together like nothing else, and that the lasting friendships that are made are as precious as anything in life. She feels they have certainly enhanced her life along with some wonderful memories

## The President’s Husband (Life Member Norman Southorn)

Norman joined Abbots Langley G & S Society 60 years ago in 1955, having recently moved down from his home town of Leicester. He played his first principal part of Sgt Meryll in 1956. He soon became the company’s principal baritone and with tenor Derrick Phoenix covered the local area playing G & S roles and singing in oratorio. In 1963 he gave up his job as an engineering draftsman to train as a teacher for two years at St Paul’s College, Cheltenham studying Music and Art. During this time he had many opportunities to pursue his singing. Returning to this area in 1965 he was given the role of Robin Oakapple in Ruddigore followed by the first of his three Pirate King roles. Over the years roles have included:



*Pirates – Pirate King X 3, Sergeant of Police, Mikado – Pooh Bah, Mikado*

*Patience – Grosvenor x 2, Ruddigore – Robin Oakapple, Roderick x 2, Old Adam*

*Iolanthe – Lord Mountararat x 3, Gondoliers – Giuseppe x 3, Grand Inquisitor*

*Princess Ida – Florian x 2, Arac, The Sorcerer – Sir Marmaduke x 2*

*Trial by Jury – Counsel x 3, HMS Pinafore – Dick Deadeye x 2*

*Yeomen of the Guard – Sergeant Meryll x 6, Cox & Box – Cox, Sergeant Bouncer,*

*Orpheus – Styx x 3, The Boyfriend – Lord Brocklehurst, Half a Sixpence - Chitterlow*

*Farndale Mikado – the Vicar, Happy as a Sandbag - Churchill*

*Music of Life – Narrator.*

## The President's Husband (Life Member Norman Southorn) continued

Norman was on the committee for many years as Vice Chairman and also Social Secretary (don't mention the 'rubber duck' at Grimsdyke!) and Publicity Officer. He was involved in set building and painting in the days when we made our own scenery for the summer show. He has done an immense amount of concert singing, the most recent being as a member of 4's Company from 2000 – 2005 which raised over £22,000 for charity. He played his last principal role at Buxton aged 80 as Old Adam in Ruddigore and finally appeared as the Narrator in the Music of Life in 2012. He now enjoys seeing Emma and David following in his footsteps in ALGSS particularly when David plays parts which Norman has performed in the past.

## The G & S 'Family' increases

Since our last newsletter when the birth of Bethania Carne was announced we have had a bumper year for babies. Many congratulations to:

Cheryl Aughton Clark and Chris on the birth of Edward last May. (Edward has already helped Mummy by taking part in a radio interview to advertise Pirates in which she played Mabel).

Our former Business Manager Ben Hambidge and his partner Erica on the birth of Adam James Valentine last August .

Katherine Bunting and Steven on the birth of Tobias Robert in October

Former Membership Secretary Catherine and former MD Charlie Wakely on the birth of their twin girls Antigone Constance Harriet and Hebe Patience Verity in February

Our former Production Manager Izabela Blaszczyk and her partner on the birth of Emily Juliette on Feb 28th in Poland.





## St Lawrence Church Flower Festival July 2015 by Patricia Hill

The St Lawrence Church Flower Festival at which ALGSS sponsored a display was a resounding success raising over £2000 for the fabric of the church.

There were some clever and ingenious and yet simple displays. The theme was the First World War with the title taken from the songs of the time “They’ll Never Believe Me”.

The Gilbert & Sullivan Society’s display was theatrical of course taken from Pygmalion (written in 1914) designed to capture both a modern and George Bernard Shaw theme.

The six foot Lady Eliza boasted a gown entirely made of flowers of blue and cream with a bodice of soft mauve. Her stylish hat was crowned with pink roses. Quite a G & S lady!

Thanks are due to Joyce Davies for her very able assistance in producing the outcome. This is the fifth G & S flower display which the company has helped sponsor, the first being the Mikado which was mainly umbrellas of flowers, but you are all too young to have seen or remembered that.

Perhaps some of you caught a glimpse of Lady Eliza and enjoyed her lovely perfume too

(Thank you to Patricia for undertaking to design and arrange the flowers on behalf of ALGSS)

## The Friday Singers

Sometimes a sad occasion can have a positive outcome. The Friday Singers are a case in point. When one of our Life Members, Howard Davies, died last year, his widow Joyce asked if some of us from ALGSS could sing some G & S both at his funeral and at the wake that followed. Colin Self suggested that this group might continue in some way and one participant suggested that we should call ourselves the Crooning Crumblies! However at the inaugural meeting the name of The Friday Singers was agreed. The choir is now made up mainly of older members of ALGSS, St Albans, Radlett and Kings Langley Societies and St Lawrence Church who still love to sing songs without having to “dance about on stage” The choir now numbers nearly 30 including a dozen older ALGSS performers and we meet on the second and fourth Fridays of each month (excluding school holidays) from 1.45 – 3.45 at Abbots Langley Methodist Church Hall to sing for sheer enjoyment.

We sing well known standards such as Rodgers and Hammerstein as well as songs from modern musicals and are gradually building up quite a repertoire. We have given two concerts in our first year and have been able to donate £150 to the. Alzheimer’s Society. Members pay a small subscription to cover the costs of hire of hall and accompanist.

Our ages range from mid fifties to eighties and we would welcome more members. If you would like to sing in a happy relaxed atmosphere with friendly people please come and join us. The Musical Director is Brenda Southorn

For more details contact Lennie Self 01923 266480 or June Parker 01923 676120