



THE HAPPY DISPATCH

The Official Newsletter
of The Durham Savoyards, Ltd.

NOVEMBER 2019

durhamsavoyards.org

Patience: Gilbert and Sullivan's Poetical, Aesthetical, Comic Operettical

When it premiered in 1881, *Patience* enjoyed what was then the longest initial run of any G&S operetta (later surpassed only by *The Mikado*). Despite this early popularity, the work fell out of favor in later years because of the supposed datedness and inaccessibility of its setting and themes.

As early as its first London revival in 1900 there were already doubts that modern audiences would appreciate the libretto's setting during the Aesthetic Movement and its saga of competing "Fleshly" and "Idyllic" Poets.

But its themes of fleeting fashion, fads, and shallow fame are grounded in perennial human foibles that are always ripe for satire. And Gilbert was relieved to comment to Sullivan way back in 1900 that "the old opera woke up splendidly."

Waking up old operas. It's what we do.

During my eighteen-year tenure as Artistic Director for the Savoyards it has been my mission to discover and rediscover the inherent truth and timelessness of each of Gilbert and Sullivan's collaborations. To challenge expectations. To kindle renewed excitement among our company members. And to constantly keep these classic works fresh and timely for our modern audience here in the 21st century.

So we've staged *The Mikado* on a catwalk, *Princess Ida* in outer space, and *H.M.S. Pinafore* in a circus tent.... And, while we may shake things up a bit, we do so to honor and promote the original work. To keep it vital. Engaging. Awake.

Theater is, after all, a living art form. And tales that are worth telling will stand the test of time — and interpretation.

So.

Way back in 2006 we updated *Patience* to the 1960s; changed the dueling Aesthetic poets to a Beatnik and a Hippie; and found that it was pretty darn groovy.

The success of that production encourages me to embrace a similar approach this time around. Of course we're still in the very early stages of planning. And we haven't even begun casting. So things may certainly change. But you just might see a few elements from that previous production: the world's largest bongo!; *Patience* on wheels!; one of the most energetic and unexpected entrances of a male chorus in recent memory!; ice-cream follies a la Ziegfeld!; and, to be certain, enough living, breathing, creative energy to pay homage to the fact that *Patience* was the first theater production in the entire world to be lit by electric lights!

— Derrick Ivey, Artistic Director

This will be my final production with The Durham Savoyards. It has been a wildly rewarding eighteen years but, in the interest of renewal and vibrancy, I feel it's time for someone else to take the helm. I'm extremely proud of the work we've done together. And I look forward to seeing what the future holds!

Producer's Perspective

JANELL LOVELACE

I was delighted with the rendition of *The Mikado* that we put on this year. I want to particularly thank our artistic director/choreographer, Derrick Ivey, for his brilliant imagining of *The Mikado* within a fashion show setting, and music director Jackson Cooper for his wonderful job of integrating the actors and orchestra into a delightful whole. As you know, this is a time of transition, with Jackson leaving for a new job in Seattle, and Derrick stepping down after *Patience* to work on other projects. We wish them both the very best in their new endeavors! Don't miss the final opportunity to see a show directed by Derrick Ivey for The Durham Savoyards--*Patience* will be onstage at the Carolina Theatre March 26-29, 2020.

It's also a personal time of transition with our son going off to college, and for that reason my husband and I are updating our wills. Part of that is setting up bequests, including one for The Durham Savoyards, Ltd. Some of you may know that in addition to wonderful annual support from our

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Auditions: Sunday, December 1st, 2-6pm
and Tuesday, December 3rd, 6:30-9:30pm

Call-backs: Thursday, Dec. 5th

All auditions held at Durham Arts Council
(Duke Power Room, 2nd floor)

Gilbert and Sullivan's
Patience,
or, Bunthorne's Bride
presented by

The Durham Savoyards, Ltd.
March 26 to 29, 2020

The Carolina Theatre
Downtown Durham, NC

Signing up for
auditions is simple.
Go to <http://bit.ly/DSL-Auditions>



Financially Speaking

Kim Kingsley

Financially speaking, the past year was encouraging for this business manager. Thank you to all of our wonderful and generous patrons as well as the amazing people who make up the membership of The Durham Savoyards, Ltd. It may sound redundant, but we wouldn't be around without your support!

Ticket sales for this year's show, *The Mikado*, increased over those for *Ruddigore* by 329, and comps were up slightly by 14. This boost in sales translated to a box office growth of more than \$9,000.00 over last year. Sales of videos for the production also grew and, in conjunction with the sale of archive videos in the lobby of the theatre which we introduced two years ago, our merchandise sales have also improved.

We began soliciting for program advertising and web sponsorships this year and were successful in providing enough income to offset the cost of the program. We plan to solicit more ads but will discontinue web sponsors due to a lack of visibility on our web page. Another bonus this year was an increase in our Fletcher Grant given by Durham Arts Council, which grew from \$2,820 to \$3,687.

Our Friends' donations exceeded expectations this year. Direct contributions were slightly less than last year, but a huge rise in matching gifts and additional donations through Facebook Fundraisers, AmazonSmile purchases, as well as other contribution methods gave us over \$28,000. Thank you to everyone one who gave financially in some way this year!

Additional thanks go to those wonderful volunteers who spend their free time working tirelessly to build our production from scratch. Your labors of love keep our expenses down and ensure that we can continue to create magic on the stage.

After several steep increases, our theatre rent and deposit amounts have remained static for the last three years; however, we cannot expect this gracious consideration to continue. The relative simplicity of the

set helped us to reduce theatre labor and equipment costs this year, but box office and credit card fees are dependent upon ticket sales and they increased accordingly.

Set expenses were minimal compared to previous years, as most of the platforms were reused. It will be time to invest in new materials and paint for *Patience*, however, and we can expect to see an uptick in spending. We were most fortunate that most of our properties were donated by our very talented props mistress this year.

One of the cost-saving attempts this year concerned the size and make-up of the orchestra. We used a reduced orchestra, which necessitated the rental of an alternatively orchestrated score. An anonymous donor, however, covered the cost of the score. The results of this endeavor were mixed, and we will consider other options in the future.



Three little maids from school are they: Farren Hilliard, Lauren Hussey, and Mary Elisabeth Hirsh in the 2019 production of *The Mikado* (photo: Mark Welker)

After our previous warehouse site was sold and we were given 60 days to vacate, we incurred a significant amount of expenses moving first to an expensive temporary location then searching for and finding our second more reasonably priced but smaller home. The search and downsizing, which required disposal of non-essential items, necessitated a lot of volunteer hours and effort. Many, many thanks to those who helped with all the details of our 10-month warehouse saga.

Finding the "Right"

Jackson Cooper

"Right" implies nothing goes wrong. I define it as the moment when everybody is focused and performs to the best of their abilities so that the audience in the seats will be moved. My time with The Durham Savoyards has led me to that "right." It was a perfect marriage of cast, orchestra, director, and conductor for all three shows I did. Rarely will a production--let alone THREE--spoil a music director so much he will spend the next decades of his life consuming gallons of coffee just to find the high, the "right" that the Savoyards gave to me year and year.

I am lucky to have been your music director, and to create with you some of the happiest memories I will cherish forever. On the other hand, I am quite begrudged that

I will continue to hold people and productions to the high standards you all set. And to think, I was ready to go to a new city and enjoy new arts! Not any more, I guess.

My favorite movie of all time is *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, a film where upper-class French citizens are taken away from their dinner party by a number of surreal diversions, thus being trapped endlessly trying to enjoy themselves. Now, having been spoiled by you, I do not think I can do anything except spend the rest of my life huddled in my apartment watching and re-watching productions of The Durham Savoyards, subjecting myself to an endless litany of woe. Alas, I must

go on. As do you. I am thrilled about Jo's appointment as Music Director; she will serve as a dynamic leader for the company.

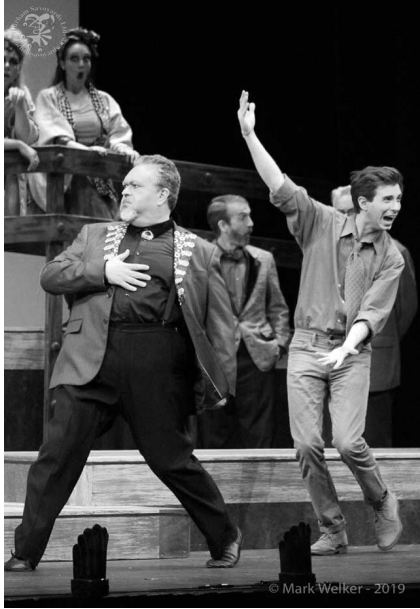
I have never and will never be as proud of the work I do and as happy as when I was with this company. Hail Poetry!

The Savoyards wish Jackson success in Seattle in his new job with Pacific Northwest Ballet.

Life is Made Up of Interruptions (Patience)

Michael Rowe

As Heraclitus said around 500 BC, the only constant is change. Despite wishing for a respite after two successful but trying warehouse moves in one year's time, we now face dual artistic dilemmas amid the



Michael Rowe as the Mikado, Brady Delvecchio as Nanki-Poo in DSL's spring production (photo: Mark Welker)

normal slew of changes any group experiences. not in Durham, as he had expected and hoped, but in Seattle. We were just getting to know Jackson and explore his many talents but wish him well in his new endeavors for the Pacific Northwest Ballet. Unfortunately, the timing required us to say goodbye in early October.

In addition to those two directorial changes, July's Annual Meeting Election brought John Paul Middlesworth, who has a variety of theater experience, to the Board. Technically that change meant the Board lost Marcia Bridges; however, she has signaled a willingness to stay involved with the good works she initiated in 2019 including DSL singing the National Anthem at a Durham Bulls game and a mini socializing-fundraiser at Beer Durham. Thankfully, HD Welker stepped forward as our new Volunteer Director when Scott Sino relinquished the role he helped revive. If you have ever volunteered at the DSL Warehouse, then you will have seen HD in action and know we are in good hands. If you haven't visited the warehouse recently, come by and see the many improvements Ben Morgan and Mark Welker have made to our new space.

I am happy to report that after a 25-year absence, DSL returned as performers to Durham's annual celebration of the arts at CenterFest. Noelle Paull, as Informal Performances Director, shepherded us ably through that as well as concerts at Carol Woods and the Cedars. Mary Guy propelled the Board's update of the DSL Trifold, which helps promote DSL year-round.

We continued last year's work of updating/creating policies on

handling sexual harassment and warehouse safety. We have accepted the Chicago Theatre Standards, which will introduce changes to our rehearsal process and ensure that we remain a safe and welcoming group. We formally adopted the DSL mission and are continuing to build a stable financial future.

As you may have heard, Derrick Ivey, our Artistic Director of 18 years, announced that *Patience*, March 2020, will be his last Savoyards' production. His leadership, talent, vision and passion will be missed. Indeed, his third interpretation of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Mikado*, was met with fantastic feedback. And of course, excitement is building for his second rendition of *Patience*, so we have time to bid adieu.

Additionally, Jackson Cooper, our Music Director of two years, revealed that new adventures await him,

More work is needed, which means more change to come. I invite you to be part of the change by:

- providing artistic director recommendations at search@durhamsavoyards.org
- lending us your time on or off the stage
- paying your dues
- donating your hard-earned currency via check/online/AmazonSmile
- designating DSL as a beneficiary in your Will
- giving us your attention as an audience member who brings a friend
- encouraging your local businesses to buy ads in the show program
- purchasing our show DVDs or customizing a shirt at Zazzle: <http://bit.ly/DSL-Zazzle>
- identifying grant opportunities
- pinpointing concert locations
- connecting new members
- serving on the Board

and most importantly, sharing your ideas on any aspect of this group's 57-year mission, which states:

As a musical theatre community, we embrace and celebrate the timeless melodies and merriment of Gilbert and Sullivan to engage, educate, and entertain the people of Durham and beyond.

Producer's Perspective, cont. from p. 1

Friends, one reason our organization stayed solvent through the past decade as other local theatre groups have failed is thanks to a couple of generous bequests that we've received. Since funding for the arts may not improve in the next few decades, please consider including The Durham Savoyards when you are doing your estate planning. It would be lovely for this topsy-turvy fun to continue for another 57 seasons, or more!

The Savoyards welcome new Music Director **Joanna Sisk-Purvis** and new Assistant Music Director **Chelsea Huber** for our upcoming production. Joanna has played flute in our Durham Savoy Opera Orchestra for nine shows. She has a Doctor of Musical Arts in Flute Performance with a concentration in Conducting. Chelsea has been the assistant conductor for White Iris Light Opera for several years and teaches music at Southern Alamance Middle School.

Perform, Entertain, Educate, Perpetuate

Noelle Paul

It's been a fairly busy summer for concerts! We did a very well received program at Carol Woods in concert, conducted by Scott Schlesinger, accompanied by Betty Romani, with charming emcee work done by Steve Dobbins.

We presented a "G&S Sampler," a rendition of our concert season program. It includes an array of songs that can be added or substituted according to the singers available. Our August concert at The Cedars in Chapel Hill was conducted and emceed by Jackson who shared interesting back stories about many of the selections. It was our first concert at the Cedars; we thank Mary Freedman for putting us in touch with the programming person there. I hope we'll be invited back!

On October 20th, we sang at the Durham Friends Meetinghouse as part of the Durham 150 Celebration. The concert was a combination of Gilbert and Sullivan, Broadway selections, and a few surprises including a jazz piano improvisation by Cole Swanson.

Thanks to everyone whose participated in the concerts--everyone worked hard and it paid off in appreciative audiences! VERY special thanks to Kim Kingsley who does an enormous amount of work organizing the music books! Thanks to Marcia Bridges and Jackson for writing the grant application for the Durham 150 celebration.

Please help us connect with schools,

social clubs, retirement communities, and any other interested public or private groups by contacting Informal Performances Director, Noelle Paul, at gs-singers@durhamsavoyards.org or (919) 246-4362.



Interested in having the Savoyards sing at your event? Go to <https://bit.ly/DSL-Concerts>

Your contribution is tax deductible

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Welcome, New Board Member

John Paul Middlesworth



I came to be an avid fan of G&S when I was teaching at a community college in the 1980s and got to perform *Ko-Ko* when they presented *The Mikado*. There followed a long hiatus where I had to get my fix chiefly by attending Durham Savoyard shows. A change in my work schedule allowed me to be onstage with DSL, and in short order I won enough fans to be elected to the Board.

I've been an actor in plays in the Triangle for years, but I find nothing quite compares to the challenge and thrill of working up a full Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, with an orchestra and a beautiful old theatre to perform in. Thanks for such merry opportunities.

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Visit us on the Web!

This project is supported by the NC Arts Council, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources; the Durham Arts Council's Annual Arts Fund; and the Manbites Dog Theater Fund.



Manbites Dog Theater Fund



North Carolina Arts Council
Fifty years of leadership

Our shows are also made possible by the generous donations of time, money, and expertise of our members and supporters. **Thank you!**

Become a Friend of the The Durham Savoyards, Ltd.

Please fill in the information below and RETURN THIS FORM along with your tax-deductible contribution.

Name _____
(as you would like it to appear in our main stage production programs)

I prefer to remain anonymous. _____ Amount of gift \$ _____

Address _____

Matching gift? _____ Business name _____

Please make check payable to **The Durham Savoyards, Ltd.**
120 Morris Street, Durham, NC 27701

There are many ways in which you can be a Friend of the Savoyards. Please consider the following options:

- Mikado** \$1000 and over
- Sorcerer** \$500-\$999
- Lord High Admiral** \$250-\$499
- Pirate of Penzance** \$100-\$249
- Gondolier** \$50-\$99
- Peer** Up to \$49