

Savoyardage

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE MADISON SAVOYARDS, LTD.

Madison Savoyards presents
Gilbert & Sullivan's

Iolanthe or, The Peer and the Peri

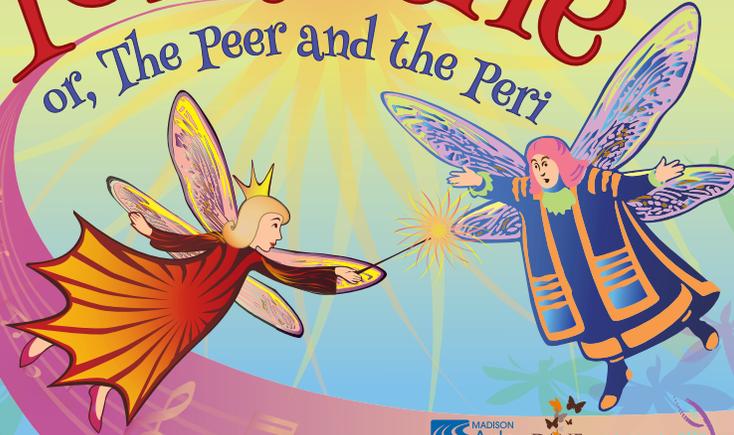
a foray of
frolicking
fairies & fools

Aug 1 • 8
at 7:30pm

Aug 2 • 3 • 9 • 10
at 3:00pm

Bartell Theatre
113 E Mifflin St
Madison, WI

Tickets:
608-661-9696
bartelltheatre.org



Artwork by Ingrid Kallick

COMING SOON: IOLANTHE

Performances:

August 1 & 8 at 7:30pm

August 2, 3, 9 & 10 at 3:00pm

Bartell Theatre

113 E Mifflin St, Madison, WI

Tickets: bartelltheatre.org or

Bartell Box Office: 608-661-9696

Ticket Prices include box office fees:

\$36 General

\$34 Senior

\$21 Student / Youth

FREE Children's Pre-Show

Saturday, August 2 at 1:00pm

Iolanthe questions answered here!

What is a fairy? What is a Peer? What is the fairy rule and how can we change it?

Visit the actors and our backstage!

Summer Greetings, Savoyards! We're so excited about our upcoming performance of *Iolanthe*, which was Madison Savoyards' first ever Gilbert & Sullivan performance in 1963.

Set in a world where fairies and Parliament collide, *Iolanthe* follows the story of a fairy who breaks the law by marrying a mortal. Twenty-five years later, her son—half-mortal, half-fairy—falls in love with a mortal woman. That too is a crime punishable by death. As tensions rise, *Iolanthe* takes a daring stand to challenge tradition and protect her son's future.

With its effervescent score and razor-sharp wit, *Iolanthe* skewers the British aristocracy, lampoons government bureaucracy, and slyly nods to Queen Victoria and Prime Minister William Gladstone. The production brings together a remarkable cast of singers and musicians for a delightfully irreverent experience the whole family can enjoy.

Don't miss this iconic blend of farce and fantasy from the beloved duo behind *The Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore*.

J. Michael Bruno,
***Iolanthe* 2025 Stage**
Director

Picture it...

The Time: Summer 1971

The Place: Madison Area Technical College in downtown Madison

The Show: *Iolanthe, or The Peer and The Peri*

I was in between my Sophomore and Junior year at Edgewood High School when I decided to audition for my first Gilbert & Sullivan operetta.

I heard about Madison Savoyards from some fellow actors who were in *Pirates of Penzance* the previous summer and they encouraged me to join the fun.

Luckily, I had worked with stage director Richard Harrison and musical director David Crosby at Madison Theatre Guild on several musicals, and POOF! I was cast as a singing and dancing Peer of Parliament! Tan tan tara...TZING BOOM!



Fast forward to Summer of 2025 and I find myself returning as Stage Director for Madison Savoyards' production of *Iolanthe*. How can that possibly have occurred in only 54 YEARS? Time flies...

I had the privilege of stage directing *Patience* last summer and am excited to work with this amazing company of talented thespians again this year. There are many returning cast and crew members from last summer's show and I'm excited to work with some very talented newcomers this season.

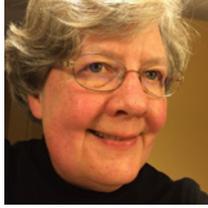
My production team and I have dreamed up some new fun and fanciful features for this production that include balletic fairies, tap dancing peers with classic Gilbert & Sullivan patter songs and political skewering!

Strap yourselves in and prepare to laugh and cheer with the fabulous Queen of the Fairies, a pompous Lord Chancellor, a love-struck shepherd and shepherdess couple, a once banished fairy arising from a swamp and a chorus of singing and dancing fairies and peers of parliament.

Teenagers with Dreams

The Roots of the Madison Savoyards

by Esther Cappon Gray, based on her 1963 *Iolanthe* Diary



The first meeting of the aspiring teen Madison Savoyards was held on **Friday, July 5, 1963** at the home of Ellen Davis, the instigator of our original Savoyards performance. I had met her in Madison's Youth Summer Theater program, where we were performing shows for children at school playgrounds and parks. Among the opera recordings in the Public Library, we especially loved Gilbert and Sullivan. We were delighted with the ways that Gilbert's catchy lyrics fit Sullivan's dynamic music, and *Ruddigore* was our favorite. We had been inspired earlier that year when West High students Tom Rarick and David Lawver founded the classical orchestra, L'Orchestra da Camera, without adult leadership, and we wanted to perform *Ruddigore* with others our age and without the management of adults.



L to R: Cathy Crow (*Iolanthe*), Dave Westly (Strephon), and Esther Cappon (Phyllis)

The earliest Savoyards included Ellen, Tim Lewis, Gilbert Peterson, Jeannette Lawver, Cathy Crow, Sharri Joos, Randy Young, Tom Rarick, and me. At that first meeting in early July, our enthusiasm ran high, and our confidence was bold, yet we ironically felt the need to find an experienced adult advisor. When called, many possible mentors declined, but then we phoned Karlos Moser. To us he was the fascinating man with a black beard who had conducted the UW Opera Workshop performances we had seen, while accompanying them on a harpsichord. He responded to our goals with curiosity: "What do you want

to perform?" "Have you an orchestra conductor?" Our cautious but energetic responses triggered friendly laughter from him, and we were surprised and delighted when he proposed that Ellen and Tom and I meet with him the following afternoon, **Saturday, July 6** at 1:30 p.m.



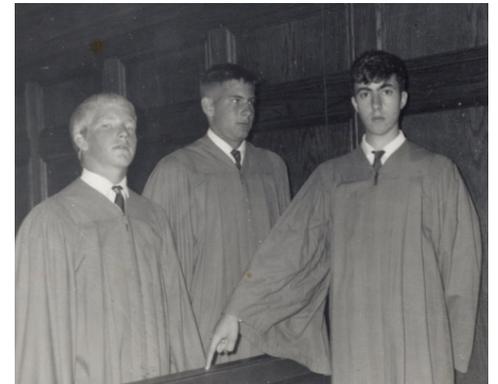
L to R: Ellen Davis (Leila), Susan Kinne (Fleta), and Judith Sanstadt (Celia)

After the meeting was set, Tom became instantly stern: "We have to be serious if we're to do this! If we're going to see Mr. Moser tomorrow, we have to have financial backing or he'll throw us out on our ears! I respect the man too much to waste his time!" Though we didn't have financing, Mr. Moser guided our early planning with respect and enthusiasm, calling us "teenagers with dreams." In our meetings he assigned tasks to each of us, for example, "look into getting the music, find a hall, look for possible sets, costumes," and we would come to the next meeting to report our progress, discuss strategy, and accept new assignments. After several productive weeks, he told us gently that we didn't have time to prepare a full production. I remember the warmth and encouragement of his tone when he said: "Do something that you can do well. Do something this year that will make people say, 'My, how clever!!' – and then do your big production next year when you have established yourselves."

We were fortunate to attract our director, Michael Birkley, an actor, conductor, and composer who was active in Madison's Theatre Guild. Intrigued with our ideas, he cautioned us that he didn't want to be away from his kids every evening, but added that if principals would rehearse at his house, he was interested. *Ruddigore* music was unavailable, and we embraced *Iolanthe* after he said, "It's a scream any way you look at it, and it can be taken on

six different intellectual levels!!" He sent me to each Madison paper with a letter I had written, and, on Wednesday, July 24, announcements of our tryouts appeared in the *Wisconsin State Journal*, *The Capital Times*, and the *UW Daily Cardinal*. Interested teens from all the Madison high schools and Sun Prairie came to audition. Elizabeth Gould at the WSJ followed our progress all summer with articles. Ward-Brodt Music trustingly let us order vocal scores on credit, to be paid off after our ticket sales.

On **Sunday, August 11**, at our first rehearsal, we read excitedly straight through Act I and skimmed Act II. Chorus/ensemble practice took place four days a week in the First Congregational Church dining room. Accompanist Randy Young took Sullivan's demanding rhythms and frequent key changes with pizzazz, and Marie Sieker served loyally as page-turner. We rehearsed Tuesdays and Thursdays in Mr. Birkley's small house, where the three Birkley children watched, wide-eyed, and Mrs. Birkley often stood smiling from the kitchen. On **Sunday, August 18**, the Act I finale began to truly sound like Gilbert and Sullivan.

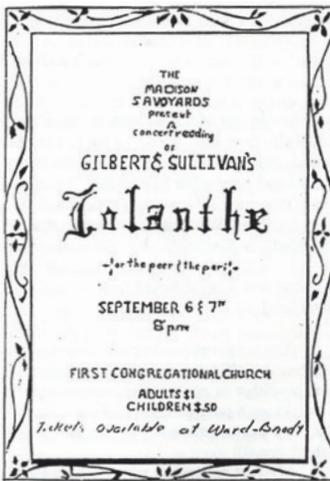


L to R: Tim Lewis (Lord Tolloller), Eric Newhouse (Lord Mountararat), and David Fagin (Lord Chancellor)

A crisis arose on **Wednesday, August 21**, two weeks before opening night. The orchestra music had not arrived, and Tom had warned that if we didn't have it by that day, we could not have an orchestra. When he phoned me that afternoon, it was not about music. Calmly and quietly, he said: "Hello, Esther, I just called to tell you that I won't be working on your production any longer." I froze, in total shock, as Tom continued, "I wish you all the luck in the world, and I'll be coming to see the performance." I learned that Mr. Birkley had expected to conduct the final show, and

that Tom had expected, having organized the orchestra, that he would conduct it. When half of the chorus and all of the orchestra said they would quit if Tom quit, the two of them agreed that Mr. Birkley would conduct the musical drama on stage and Tom would conduct the overture.

The orchestra music did not arrive until ten days later, **Saturday, August 31**. The following **Wednesday, September 4**, we were anxious: new curtains for the stage failed to arrive as promised. Then, **Thursday, September 5**, things miraculously began to fall into place. At dress rehearsal we found gorgeous new curtains on the stage. Fabric-draped chairs defined our orchestra pit. After our dress rehearsal, Frank Featherston of the Theatre Guild appeared and set up special lighting. **Friday, September 6**, OPENING NIGHT, David Lawver (bassoon in our orchestra) and West High teacher Tom Tews set up mikes. As people arrived, more and more chairs needed to be set up.



1963 Poster design by Linda Berigan (Schwehr)

We were thrilled. And we had stage fright! And we felt happily connected because of all the things we had accomplished together to bring our performance to the stage, all 55 of us! And we hoped that enough people would come to cover our bills!! Tickets were priced at \$1 for adults and 50¢ for children, and we took in \$400. A six-member board of directors was elected at the cast party on Saturday night. The following summer, 1964, we presented a more polished and elaborate concert performance, this time *Yeomen of the Guard*, directed by Mary-Kate Tews. Tom Rarick was music director, and in '64 he rehearsed and conducted the show.

~ Esther Gray

2025 Iolanthe Principal Cast



L to R, Top Row: Grady Hayden (Lord Chancellor), Brendin Larson (Fairy Queen), Jesse Harrison (Celia), Stephanie Frank (Iolanthe); **Middle Row:** Mike Brady (Lord Mountarat), Lauren Rowe (Leila), Elena DeMajistre (Phyllis), Roland Beach (Strephon); **Bottom Row:** Samson Akwenuke (Lord Tolloller), Henry Hammond (Private Willis), and QJ Dougall (Fleta)

2024-25 Board of Directors

Phillip Saganski	President
Bradley J. Carter	Vice President
Walton O. Schalick	Secretary
Aimee Teo Broman	Treasurer
Jeremy Dyer	Member at large
Jesse Harrison	Member at large
Pamela Ziemlewicz	Member at large

Madison Savoyards Annual Meeting

Monday, October 6, 2025
6:30-7:30pm on Zoom

- review 2025 activities
- discuss plans for 2026
- elect board members

Please join us! Sign up at
<https://tinyurl.com/MSLAnnMtg25>

Contact Us

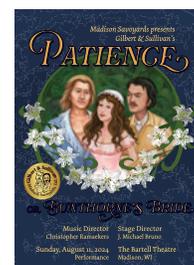
madison.savoyards@gmail.com
voicemail: (608) 616-5706
website: madisonsavoyards.org

Donate

Consider a legacy gift to our Endowment Fund through Madison Community Foundation. Interest from this fund supports Madison Savoyards productions *in perpetuity*.

Gifts to our General Fund are used in their entirety to support administrative and production needs, and are vital in bringing the joy and musicality of G&S to our community every year.

2024 Patience DVDs Available for purchase!



Cost: \$20 plus \$6 shipping
or pick up in-person at the show!

The Madison Savoyards, Ltd.
P.O. Box 1612
Madison, WI 53701-1612

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Madison Savoyards, Ltd. Donation Form

Yes, I wish to ensure more Madison Savoyards productions at the following level:

- Member (\$35 - \$59)
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 Sustaining Member (\$150 - \$499)
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Additional Comments: _____

Please make your check payable to **Madison Savoyards, Ltd.**

Mail your check and this form to: **P.O. Box 1612, Madison, WI 53701-1612**

Madison Savoyards is a 501(c)3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Contributors will be acknowledged in the program and online, unless otherwise requested.

Thank you for your contribution!

Order a copy of our 2024 *Patience*:

I would like to purchase _____ DVDs (\$26, tax and shipping included) of *Patience*. Shipping fee may be waived if pick-up can be arranged in Madison. Email **madison.savoyards@gmail.com** for more information.