



THE OLD TAUNTONIANS' ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Special Edition

December 2025

We are always pleased to receive articles for inclusion in the Newsletter, please keep them coming. Any memories of Tauntons or news of Old Tauntonians are most welcome and crucial to the continued future of the Newsletter.

Sometimes the articles we receive are too large to fit the space available, but with careful and sympathetic editing, they are made to fit, without changing the essence of the content. Recently however, an excellent article was received from Terry Hall 1961 -1963 , which upon reading we decided would be difficult to edit. We also thought that it would be of interest to many and therefore decided to send it as a special edition with thanks to Terry - hopefully some may answer his request. The next Newsletter will be out shortly.



Best Wishes

Roger Parsons
Chairman

*Terry Bradnam (understudy for Yum-Yum),
Terry Hall (me as Nanki-Poo) and Trevor Candy (as Yum-Yum).
The Mikado*



Programme covers of

3 stage productions:

'Cymbeline',
'The Yeomen of the Guard'
and
'The Mikado'

*David Hayes (as Elsie Maynard), (me as Colonel Fairfax)
and Peter Robson (as Jack Point).*

The Yeomen of the Guard



The Lost Mikado

Whilst recently rummaging in the attic I discovered an old box containing an assortment of audio cassettes, one of which was labelled '*The Yeomen of the Guard – Taunton School April 7th 1962*' more than sixty years ago.

When I listened to it, it soon became apparent that the passage of years had not been kind to the condition of the tape, which in any case was probably a recording of a recording of a recording. However, although it possessed the worn quality of one of my collection of old 78 records, it still retained vestiges of that school production from so many decades ago and it brought back memories of the stage fright I felt as I stood in the wings, my heart pounding in time to the stirring themes of the overture.

I was reminded of the cast, chorus, musicians and teachers who were involved in presenting this opera. Musical Director, Ian Carswell, who had inherited the role from the recently retired Henry Jenkins, 'Doggie' Collar, the Producer, who also played bassoon in the orchestra as I recall; and a dozen or more other teachers such as Mr Luker, Mr. Gammon, Mr Helsdon, Mr Taylor, Mr Smith and Mr Catchpole who were also involved in this production.

The discovery of the tape caused me to dig out a rather battered photograph album which contained pictures of the cast; David Hayes whose soaring soprano voice and ringing top B thrilled the audiences during that week of performances back in early April 1962, Brian Dunford, the mischievous Phoebe, Peter Robson whose interpretation of the part of Jack Point was full of wit and pathos, Paul Satterly who played the lugubrious Wilfred Shadbolt and David John as Sergeant Meryll. I recall that during one memorable rehearsal the two of us were so convulsed with laughter that we were unable to continue.

I see a picture of myself as Colonel Fairfax and am reminded that Mr Collar decided that I looked too young to play the part (you should see me now!) so that I must *not* remove my beard when masquerading as Leonard Meryl. I also remember not being able to hear the pizzicato introduction to *Free From His Fetters Grim* on the first night. This led me to sing the first verse both sotto voce and in a completely different key to that of the orchestra. To this day I can picture Ian Carswell's look of horror as he faced me across the conductor's podium. For the remainder of the run he boosted the volume of the introduction by adding an ensemble of other instruments.

My photograph album also contains a picture taken at the dress rehearsal of the 1963 production of *Cymbeline*. It shows Brian North wryly watching me as I attempt to sing Ian Carswell's setting of *Hark, Hark the lark*. The song contains the line, '*and Phoebus 'ins arise*'. Brian was adamant that '*ins*' was not an abbreviation of *begins* but referred to an alcoholic eye wash and he urged me to sing this alternative interpretation (using a pirate's accent), '*and Phoebus gins 'r eyes. (arh har)*'. I resisted the temptation. Brian went on to star as the *Mikado* in the school's next production of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera. I see that his photograph in this role is also in my album, as are pictures of Brian Dunford (by now an opera veteran though still a fourth former) as *Ko-Ko*, Alan Hutchinson as *Pooh-Bah* and Trevor Candy as *Yum-Yum*. I recall the panic caused when Trevor injured his foot so badly that it was touch and go whether he would be able to act at all. In fact, one photograph shows a boy called Trevor Bradnam dressed as *Yum-Yum* while Trevor Candy stands forlornly by, dressed in his day clothes. In the event Trevor Candy cast aside his crutches and bravely took to the stage so that Trevor Bradnam's services as understudy were not required.

In a photograph of the side chorus I can spot my second form brother, Kevin, and somewhere in the group is Dominic Muldowney who was destined to become a famous international composer. I wonder what he made of '*the amateur tenor whose vocal villainies all desire to shirk*'? I also wonder if in the present woke climate my photograph of Mr Gibson making up Roger de la Perelle to look Japanese would be frowned upon as an example of racism or cultural appropriation.

**Terry Hall (me as Nanki-Poo),
P Ruddick (as Pish-Tush)
and Brian Dunford (as Ko-Ko).
The Mikado**



Now, to return to what triggered my reminiscing - the old box in the attic. What the box did not contain was a recording of Taunton's School production of The Mikado. Somewhere along the way it must have been lost. I would be interested to hear it again after all these years and wonder if anyone has a tape of the opera, perhaps reel-to-reel, that they would be willing to lend me so that I might make a copy?

In any case I would be interested to hear from anyone who was involved in the musical life of the school in the early 1960s; if not in the operas then perhaps in the chorus of Haydn's Creation, or as one of the twenty or so of us who once a week would rehearse some motet or other choral piece on a Thursday morning and then perform it in assembly half an hour later.

**Terry Hall
1961 - 1963**

**Terry Hall (me as Colonel Fairfax) and
David Hayes (as Elsie Maynard).
The Yeomen of the Guard**

