

# NORTHWEST WEEKLY

MARCH 17, 1996

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focus in medicine

By Diana Brown  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

When researchers at Win-  
chester Hospital learned  
that asthma rates were  
particularly high among  
children in Medford, Stone-  
ham, they launched a pro-  
gram at a local pediatrician's  
office to work one-on-  
one with youngsters  
who frequently end up  
in the hospital.

Breast cancer is a  
leading killer in towns  
such as Winchester,  
Reading and Woburn,  
so the hospital con-  
sultants at local salons last  
year armed them with information  
brochures to give out to clients.  
Breast cancer is be-  
coming a concern at



Jim Parmentier of Lincoln, John Covert of Acton and David Larrick of Maynard (front to back) re-

GLOBE PHOTO BY BETHANY VERSOY



# Gilbert & Sullivan: a burst of fun

## GILBERT & SULLIVAN

Continued from Page 1

play and sublime operatic  
Gilbert & Sullivan brought to  
al comedy.

Parmentier plays a noble  
t in the Sudbury production of  
"Princess Ida," which runs March  
at Lincoln-Sudbury High

day, Parmentier is a scientist  
Lexington pharmaceutical firm,  
he develops treatments for ar-  
thritis and multiple sclerosis. For  
nights this week he will be  
on stage, dueling in his long-

As a scientist, this is the other  
"of your brain," the 52-year-old  
resident said of his affinity  
Gilbert & Sullivan's High Victori-  
an jinks.

"This is silly. You get to bang  
your head on your knees in your red  
wigs."

The comment has been made  
because the pun is the lowest form of wit  
and wit is wit. There is slapstick in  
Gilbert & Sullivan, but it is witty,"  
Marion Leeds Carroll of Arling-  
ton, editor of the New England Gil-  
& Sullivan Society newsletter,  
said.

any Gilbert & Sullivan lovers  
are over young, as teen-agers or  
college undergraduates, by the clev-  
erly worded tomfoolery of the op-  
era said Carroll, who was given her  
Gilbert & Sullivan record at 12  
and taught herself to type by tran-  
scribing the libretto of "Iolanthe."

It catches you early, a liking to  
with words rather than footballs  
though our King Hildebrand is  
inspired in a softball league," said  
Carroll, who is stage-directing the  
Sudbury production of "Princess

At a recent rehearsal of "Prin-  
cess Ida," there was a sense of the  
brothers doing Masterpiece  
Theater.

There's a virago!  
There's a termagant!  
Length and sharpness go for  
everything,  
You'll want no sword while you  
are wag your tongue!

King Gama, father of Princess  
Ida, on discovering his daughter's  
method, Prince Hilarion, had  
led into her women's academy,  
and in due time snatched her away



GLOBE PHOTO / BETHANY VERSOY

### Neil McCormick of Framingham takes a break during rehearsal.

And weighs a lot,  
As many a guardsman knows,  
So off that helmet goes.

Princess Ida - portrayed by so-  
prano Ellen Spear of Boxborough  
with the sword-wielding, mock-Brit-  
ish-accented hauteur of Shelley  
Long's erudite "Cheers" barmaid  
Diane playing Joan of Arc - upheld  
the genteel Victorian tradition of  
Florence Nightingale after her  
brothers were vanquished:

Ladies, my brothers all lie  
bleeding there!  
Bind up their wounds - but look  
the other way.

Part of the appeal of the Gilbert  
& Sullivan operas lies in their acces-  
sibility, with many singing parts  
suitable to amateurs of average vocal  
range. Auditions are not required to  
join the chorus of the Sudbury Sa-  
voyards, whose inaugural show 35  
years ago, "Trial by Jury," was per-  
formed in choir robes to raise money  
for a Methodist church building-  
fund.

"Anyone who wants to be in the  
chorus can be in the show," said Par-

mentier, "fighting is a dance you perform with  
metal objects in your hand," said  
Sudbury Savoyards chairman Larry  
Seiler of Boylston, dressed for a re-  
cent rehearsal in Prince Valiant-like  
tunic and tights.

"You train the people so they're  
always one foot back and one foot to  
the side," he said.

A significant number of local Gil-  
bert and Sullivan devotees are sci-  
entists and engineers, who depart test  
tubes and microchips to cavort as  
19th-century Jack Tars, English  
maidens, plume-hatted generals, and  
Japanese courtiers named Nanki-  
Poo and Yum-Yum.

Past officers of the New England  
Gilbert & Sullivan Society have in-  
cluded physicists, a college chemis-  
try professor, and an economist.

Science-fiction writer Isaac Asi-  
mov "was an extreme fan of Gilbert  
and Sullivan," according to Bill Ma-  
honey, a retired phone-company en-  
gineer who is billed as "membership  
Pooh-Bah" of the New England G &  
S Society.

"It's the wit. The mentality of  
Gilbert attracts the mentality of peo-  
ple with good minds," said Mahoney.  
"His wit, his choice of words, his

tested male animal, she sings:

He bought white ties, and he  
bought dress suits,  
He crammed his feet into bright  
tight boots -  
And to start in life on a brand new  
plan,  
He christened himself Darwinian  
Man!  
But it would not do,  
The scheme fell through -  
For the Maiden fair, whom the  
monkey craved,  
Was a radiant Being, With a  
brain far-seeing -  
While a Man, however well-  
behaved,  
At best is only a monkey shaved!

The 1883 comic opera "Princess  
Ida" remains topical today, but little  
calculated to please the politically  
correct or the dourly feminist.

Princess Ida, betrothed in infan-  
cy to a prince from a rival kingdom,  
escapes marriage by taking refuge in  
a women's academy, where female  
undergraduates denounce men, "Na-  
ture's sole mistake." War between  
the kingdoms threatens if Ida does  
not marry.

Her boorish fiance, Hilarion, who  
disguises himself as a woman to  
breach the female stronghold, even-  
tually staves off war - and wins Ida's  
willing hand - in a comic duel.

Carroll - who confesses that, as a  
student at Barnard in the early  
1970s heyday of student radicalism,  
she crossed picket lines to attend  
Gilbert & Sullivan rehearsals - takes  
a sympathetic view of "Ida."

"I think Hilarion learns and  
grows, and that Ida learns and  
grows," she said. "It's important to  
see people are people, and you fall in  
love with a person."

Bill and Nancy Burdine of Lex-  
ington, orchestra managers of the  
Sudbury show, said of the un-PC  
"Princess Ida": "You've got to have a  
sense of humor."

► The Sudbury Savoyards present  
Gilbert & Sullivan's "Princess Ida,"  
March 21-23, at Lincoln-Sudbury  
High School, Sudbury. Performances  
at 8 p.m., plus a 2 p.m. Saturday  
matinee. Tickets are \$12, \$9 for stu-  
dents and seniors. For information,  
call (508) 442-8811.

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Part of the appeal of the Gilbert & Sullivan operas lies in their accessibility, with many singing parts suitable to amateurs of average vocal range. Auditions are not required to join the chorus of the Sudbury Savoyards, whose inaugural show 35 years ago, "Trial by Jury," was performed in choir robes to raise money for a Methodist church building-fund.

"Anyone who wants to be in the chorus can be in the show," said Parmentier, a member of the board of the Sudbury Savoyards, which counts some 85 cast and crew members, and donates all proceeds from its annual show to Methodist world hunger-relief efforts.

A certain skill is required when it comes to swordplay. "Stage sword-

Japanese courtiers named Nanki-Poo and Yum-Yum.

Past officers of the New England Gilbert & Sullivan Society have included physicists, a college chemistry professor, and an economist.

Science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov "was an extreme fan of Gilbert and Sullivan," according to Bill Mahoney, a retired phone-company engineer who is billed as "membership Pooh-Bah" of the New England G & S Society.

"It's the wit. The mentality of Gilbert attracts the mentality of people with good minds," said Mahoney. "His wit, his choice of words, his mastery of the language: No one has come close to that."

A bow to Charles Darwin is made in "Princess Ida" by the Lady Psyche, man-hating humanities professor at an all-women's academy, played in the Sudbury production by Kathy Lague of Acton. Of the de-

grows, she said. "It's important to see people are people, and you fall in love with a person."

Bill and Nancy Burdine of Lexington, orchestra managers of the Sudbury show, said of the un-PC "Princess Ida": "You've got to have a sense of humor."

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*For information on the New England Gilbert & Sullivan Society, write to PO Box 367, Arlington, 02174-0004, or check the society's new World Wide Web page, at <http://diamond.idbsu.edu/GaS/Societies/neg-ass.html>*

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