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**FOOD FOR JOYOUS LAUGHTER:
CONTEMPORARY PRODUCTIONS OF GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S
*THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE.***

by

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B.A. Murray State University, 2004

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ABSTRACT

The operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance*, is a classic work by Gilbert and Sullivan, a work that continues to be produced frequently despite its Victorian setting and operatic style. For many years the standard performance style of all the operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan was upheld by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, who attempted to perform the operettas as they had originally been done. Though the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company helped stimulate interest in the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, nontraditional productions of G & S operettas produced outside of the company were able to reach larger audiences.

When *The Pirates of Penzance* was produced on Broadway in the 1980's, it was enormously successful. Under the direction of Wilford Leach, the production was more accessible to audiences through its pop-oriented orchestrations, Broadway-style choreography, and cast of rock stars and well-known actors. This significant change in the way *The Pirates of Penzance* was performed inspired several other major productions of the operetta in that style and has now become the standard interpretation of the piece. It is due to these productions that *The Pirates of Penzance* continues to be produced and remain culturally relevant.

It is interesting to note that, while the performance style of *Pirates* has changed significantly over the years, the role of Mabel has remained largely unchanged. In that regard, the role of Mabel continues to fulfill the goals and tradition of D'Oyly Carte while *The Pirates of Penzance* has evolved from an old-fashioned operetta to a popular musical theatre piece.

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INTRODUCTION

This project is an examination of the role of Mabel in the operetta *The Pirates of Penzance* and an analysis of four major productions of the work. The author performed the role of Mabel in the Starlight Theater's production of *The Pirates of Penzance*, which ran from Sept. 21 to Oct. 15, 2006 in Orlando, Florida. Much of the research contained in this project contributed to the performance. The author also used her personal experience with the role of Mabel to guide the research done for this project after completing the run of *Pirates* at the Starlight Theater.

The document consists of four main sections. The first encompasses research concerning the partnership of Gilbert, Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte, the creation of *The Pirates of Penzance*, and a discussion of *Pirates* on Broadway and productions by the Stratford Festival, Goodspeed Opera House, and Essgee Entertainment. The second section is about the operetta's structure, and includes a plot summary, a discussion of the given circumstances, and analyses of the structure, mood, rhythm, and style. The third section focuses on the character of Mabel, and begins with a character analysis, followed by examination of all of Mabel's scenes in the operetta, as well as a discussion of the directorial concept for the Starlight production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. The fourth section is the author's personal journal of rehearsal and performance process. The purpose of the project is to prove that non-traditional productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* have been the key to sustaining the public's interest in Gilbert and Sullivan.

RESEARCH

Introduction

Depending on with whom you are speaking, the mention of “Gilbert and Sullivan” can conjure a variety of different mental images. To a music scholar, melodies and lyrics from *H.M.S. Pinafore* or *The Mikado* might be prevalent, as well as thoughts concerning the D’Oyly Carte Opera Company or the Savoy Theatre. An actor might recall a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta he was once in, and recall the complexities of the music and the seemingly endless lyrics. However, the works of Gilbert and Sullivan are ingrained in English-speaking culture to the point that most everyone, regardless of a familiarity with opera or theatre, has likely encountered a G & S song. *The Pirates of Penzance* alone has inspired a popular 1980’s teen movie (*The Pirate Movie*), a young adult novel (*Gilbert and Sullivan Set Me Free* by Kathleen Karr), the primary musical theme in a horror movie (*The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*), numerous songs on the animated series *The Animaniacs*, sketches on *The Muppet Show*, and the backdrop for a murder in the mystery novel *Vengeance Dire* (Bradley, Oh Joy! 11). Of the creative team’s fourteen operettas, the ones that are the most frequently produced are *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *The Mikado*. From an international standpoint, *The Mikado* has had the most success, as it has been performed all over the world and translated into eight different languages (Bradley, Annotated 555). In America, however, *The Pirates of Penzance* is their most popular work. Contemporary productions of *Pirates* have contributed largely to the enduring popularity of Gilbert and Sullivan’s shows. Although Gilbert and Sullivan’s operettas are viewed typically as classic

examples of Victorian theatre, groundbreaking productions have allowed their works to remain culturally relevant.

Gilbert, Sullivan, and the D'Oyly Carte Partnership

Before the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership began, Arthur Sullivan was a moderately successful composer of oratorios and incidental music, and William Schwenck Gilbert was a writer of humor and criticism for the London magazine, *Fun*. In 1871, after convincing the two to work together, John Hollingshead produced the first Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration, *Thestis* at the Gaiety Theatre (Traubner 153). It was not until their second work that the partners would find success. The person responsible for establishing the team was Richard D'Oyly Carte, the manager of the Royalty Theatre. In need of an *opera buffa* for his theatre, D'Oyly Carte approached Gilbert about creating one and suggested Sullivan as the composer. The resulting work, *Trial by Jury*, received excellent reviews. However, it was *H.M.S. Pinafore* in 1878, "which served notice that a theatrical institution had arrived" (Smith 46). *H.M.S. Pinafore*'s huge success in Britain led to pirated American versions of the operetta. The lack of copyright laws meant Gilbert and Sullivan did not receive any earnings from the early American productions of *Pinafore*. However, because of the runaway success of the American productions, they decided to mount their original *Pinafore* in the U.S. and then followed it with their new operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Part of the success of the early G & S works and the operas that followed was certainly due to recurring themes in Gilbert's writing.

All of Gilbert's plots hinge on coincidence, accident or birth, class-consciousness,

the triumph of young love, and the often over-the-top sorting out of couples. The use of role reversal, and of the appearance being different from actuality, made Gilbert coin the word ‘Topsy-turvydom’ to describe the nature of these themes. (Bell 48)

The topsy-turvy world featured in all of the G & S operas, along with Sullivan’s operatic sensibility in the music, and Gilbert’s elaborate wordplay, helped establish the specific style attributed to the writing team. “Topsy-turvy” is a term used almost exclusively to describe their operas and even serves as the title for Mike Leigh’s 1999 film about the duo (Bradley Oh Joy! 12).

After the American premiere of *Pirates*, D’Oyly Carte organized a syndicate to help finance the building of a theatre in London to house Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. He named the theatre the Savoy, “as the site of the famous Savoy Palace was close by” (Ainger 193). From that point on, the entire Gilbert and Sullivan canon became known as the Savoy Operas. Between 1881 and 1889, the Savoy premiered six Gilbert and Sullivan works: *Patience*, *Iolanthe*, *Princess Ida*, *The Mikado*, *Ruddigore*, and *The Gondoliers* (Randel 887). The relationship between Sullivan and Gilbert had always been rocky, and following *The Gondoliers* in 1889, their collaboration came to a temporary end. They eventually reunited to write *Utopia Unlimited* and *The Grand Duke*, both of which suffered short runs at the Savoy.

The D’Oyly Carte Opera Company was primarily responsible for sustaining Gilbert and Sullivan in the 20th century. Carte’s son headed the company and made a commitment to performing only Gilbert and Sullivan works. He also planned to mount his productions in the traditional style.

The essence of G & S tradition is attention to detail, wholesomeness, and respect for the integrity of the original...for over a hundred years this intriguing mixture of

obsessional attention to detail, extreme moral propriety, pure diction, and studied determination to avoid relevance and innovation was maintained and enforced by the D'Oyly Carte Company. (Bradley Oh Joy! 26)

Through tours, recordings, and Gilbert's copyright, which allowed the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company to be the only British company allowed to mount the Savoy Operas, D'Oyly Carte became synonymous with Gilbert and Sullivan. With the company's long history with G & S, it was assumed that the company strove to present the operas as they had been performed originally. Fans of Gilbert and Sullivan idolized the company and its commitment to authenticity; however, their mountings frequently did not succeed at recreating the original productions, unbeknownst to the company's followers.

The D'Oyly Carte claim to "the tradition" was always deceptive. Doing "Gilbert & Sullivan the way it was meant to be done" was widely understood to mean, "as it had originally been done," but that claim was honored more in the breach than in the observance. (Wren 290-291)

For example, the company made major cuts in *Princess Ida* and *Ruddigore*, but would not allow directors to change Gilbert's original blocking. A lot of the stage business that is now viewed as true to the Savoy tradition was incorporated by the first D'Oyly Carte director, and then was maintained from production to production. "The result was a performance tradition that was increasingly actor oriented and encrusted with business that Gilbert himself most likely would have detested" (Wren 291). One D'Oyly Carte conductor was criticized for taking the "wrong" musical tempos, when the tempos had come directly out of Sullivan's original scores. As it was, the Savoy tradition had changed over the years, and the performance style audiences viewed as

traditional was not true to Gilbert and Sullivan's original intentions.

A significant problem resulting from the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company productions was that the interpretation of Gilbert and Sullivan's works was not allowed to grow and evolve. Gilbert's copyright allowed D'Oyly Carte to be the only British company to perform the operettas. In 1961, however, the copyright expired, and many other companies in Britain were able to mount Gilbert and Sullivan works. They did not begin reinventing the operettas initially, as the desire for "traditional" productions had not waned. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company slowly disbanded and staged its last production in 1983 (Wren 292). A company with the same name was established in 1988, without any ties to the D'Oyly Carte family; it survived only until 2003 (Bradley, Oh Joy! 53).

The Creation of *The Pirates of Penzance*

Eager to write a successful opera to follow *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Gilbert and Sullivan began writing *The Pirates of Penzance* during the summer of 1879 (Baily 59). Scholars have mixed beliefs about what inspired the new piece, as some claim it was Offenbach's *Les Brigands*, which Gilbert had adapted in 1871; others say it was *Our Island Home*, an early work by Gilbert which contains a Pirate King. It is also possible that the pirate idea came solely from the "pirates" who put on unofficial productions of *H.M.S. Pinafore* (Smith 69). Regardless, Gilbert and Sullivan were under a lot of pressure to write an operetta that would match or top the success of *Pinafore*. It was decided early on between the newly formed team of Gilbert, Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte, that they would travel to America to mount an official production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and follow it with

their new work. Perhaps the continued popularity of *The Pirates of Penzance* in the U.S. is due to its American heritage- it is the only Savoy Opera that was composed primarily in America and the only Savoy Opera to have an American premiere (Allen 99).

Gilbert and Sullivan arrived in New York on November 5, 1879 and planned to open *The Pirates of Penzance* on December 31. Sullivan discovered upon his arrival that he had left behind his sketches of the operetta's first act. The mishap began what was to be a very hasty completion of the piece. Sullivan was able to recall the majority of the Act I music except for the daughters' entrance song. Gilbert suggested the interpolation of piece from their early work *Thespis*, which became "Climbing over rocky mountain" for the daughters. Why Sullivan forgot his Act I sketches for *Pirates* yet had the score to *Thespis* with him in America is subject for debate (Allen 99-100).

Working in between rehearsals and performances of *Pinafore*, Sullivan rushed to complete the *Pirates* score, all while suffering a kidney ailment.

His diary records that for three weeks he seldom got to bed before five or six in the morning...He finished the full score at 7 a.m. on the 28th. The next day's rehearsal lasted till 1 a.m. with the composer 'in despair because it went so badly'. Prospects were brighter on the 30th...But at one in the morning he, Gilbert and their friends the musicians Fred Clay and Alfred Cellier all set to work on the overture that would, in sixteen hours, begin the new opera. Sullivan produced the main outline, Cellier filled it in, Gilbert and Clay copied parts. At 5 a.m. it was finished. (Smith 70)

Adding to the stressful completion of the operetta, members of the orchestra threatened to strike,

claiming the new work's score was grand opera rather than operetta. According to union rules they should receive higher pay for playing it. Sullivan thwarted the orchestra's plan to strike by offering to have the Royal Opera House of Covent Garden brought to the U.S. to play instead (Bradley Complete 189).

After the problem of pirated *H.M.S. Pinafore* productions, Gilbert, Sullivan, and D'Oyly Carte were careful to insure that *Pirates* would not suffer the same problem. To keep real pirates from having access to the new piece, *The Pirates of Penzance* was secretly rehearsed and "the orchestra parts were locked in a safe after every rehearsal" (Traubner 161). In order to secure British copyright, an early draft of *Pirates* was sent to England onboard the *Bothnia* and was performed in Paignton on December 30, 1879. Members of the touring cast of *Pinafore* performed the piece after one rehearsal. Directed by Carte's secretary, Helen Lenoir (later to become Carte's wife), the cast wore their *Pinafore* costumes, some with handkerchiefs on their heads to distinguish themselves as pirates. This early version of the operetta contained no "Poor wandering one!" or "With cat-like tread, upon our prey we steal," and ended with a completely different finale, making it a far cry from *The Pirates of Penzance* as it is today. However, the few critics who attended the copyright performance were quick to praise the new work, predicting the success which was soon to come (Allen 102-03).

On the evening of December 31st, Sullivan entered the Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York to conduct the opening night of *Pirates*. Exhausted from spending all night preparing the overture, Sullivan described himself as feeling "more dead than alive," that evening, but wrote that the premiere was a "grand success" (Smith 70). The cast contained many British imports, many of whom went on to receive acclaim in other Gilbert and Sullivan operettas at the Savoy: J.H. Ryley

as General Stanley, Alice Barnett as Ruth, and Jessie Bond as Edith. Mabel was portrayed by an American singer, Blanche Roosevelt, who had studied opera in Europe and had a career there under the name Madame Rosavella. She had been hired to sing Josephine in *Pinafore* at the Opéra Comique, and came to the U.S. from England with Gilbert, Sullivan, and much of the cast. In interviews she claimed the role of Mabel was written for her, but Sullivan's letters indicate that was not the case. Sullivan wrote, "I am inclined to think that Rosavella's voice may be too thin for America... They are accustomed to hear big voices and fine singers" (Allen 104-05). The role was originally offered to Helene Crosmond, who wanted a much larger salary than Carte offered, and so the part was given to the more affordable singer. Roosevelt, who was a general's daughter in real life, received mixed reviews for her approach to the part (Smith 87).

Of her performance that night creating the role of Mabel, the consensus of press comment favored her appearance over her voice and acting ability. "Miss Blanche Roosevelt was the heroine, than whom," in the *Sun*'s opinion "a prettier or more picturesque one could not be found. Her voice is fairly managed, but it is thin in texture and not always true." (Allen 105)

Another critic claimed Roosevelt must have been suffering from a cold (Allen 105).

Though Roosevelt did not receive the best reviews, she left a much more favorable impression than Hugh Talbot as Frederic. According to the *Mirror*'s review:

Hugh Talbot... was not so successful. The gentleman has a weak, uncertain voice, of nasal quality and limited volume, and labored under the disadvantage of not knowing his lines. Mr. Talbot, like a great many other tenors recalled to mind, has an effeminate bearing and a simpering manner, that no doubt would be charming in

a young miss fresh from the confines of a select boarding-school, but on the stage they are loathsome and disgusting. (Allen 106)

Sullivan wrote of his disappointment with Talbot, but the tenor remained with the company for four months. Years later, when asked why Talbot was not fired, Bridget D'Oyly Carte claimed “no other tenor was available” (Allen 106).

Despite the criticism of the operetta's lead actor, *Pirates* received good reviews. There were numerous encores on opening night and accolades for Gilbert's libretto and direction. “Opinions varied as to whether the new entry surpassed the almost notorious *Pinafore*, but no one denied it was a worthy rival. Several critics noted that the two works had somewhat different qualities” (Smith 70-1). Musically, *Pirates* is much more complex, showing direct influences from Italian and French opera.

Frederic and Ruth, in Act I, have a duet right out of Verdi; Mabel's coloratura entrance song is a pastiche Gounod waltz...the very loud “With Catlike Tread,” is directly borrowed from a similar situation in Offenbach's *Les Brigands*...perhaps this was a homage of sorts. (Traubner 162)

These similarities must have been what inspired the orchestra to strike- as *Pirates* is more like grand opera than its predecessors. In addition, Gilbert's work in *Pirates* is also more developed. “Gilbert's supreme credo, that of treating a ridiculous notion with the utmost seriousness, comes into full play in *Pirates*” (Traubner 162). Although the operetta ran only for a few weeks in New York, Gilbert and Sullivan rehearsed three American touring companies, which immediately began performing all over the United States, and the New York cast was transferred to Boston.

Gilbert and Sullivan returned to England and prepared *The Pirates of Penzance* for its

London premiere at the Opéra Comique on April 3, 1880 (Bradley Complete 190). The premiere was almost delayed by an unfortunate accident. Two days before the first performance, a set piece fell and fractured the skull of Harriette Everard, who was cast in the role of Ruth. Actress Emily Cross was contacted immediately and learned the role in the days remaining. Everard did go on to play the role a few months later, but never fully recovered from the accident. She died of consumption two years later (Allen 108-09).

The premiere did take place as scheduled, and the entire cast was well-received. Much of the cast consisted of performers who were already quite popular in London, George Grossmith as the Major-General, Rutland Barrington as the Police Sergeant, and Richard Temple as the Pirate King (Ainger 185). Mabel was portrayed by newcomer Marion Hood, and Frederic was played by George Power, both of whom were praised for their performances, unlike New York's Mabel and Frederic. Of the cast, Rutland Barrington received the most acclaim, and went on to originate roles in all of the Savoy operas that followed except for *The Yeomen of the Guard*. Grossmith and Temple had similar success in Gilbert and Sullivan works (Allen 109).

As *The Pirates of Penzance* took America by storm through its touring productions, the London premiere established Gilbert and Sullivan as permanent contributors to British culture. As François Cellier wrote of the London premiere,

The press, now quite assured that Gilbert and Sullivan had come to stay, and were more than likely to achieve further conquests, became less reserved and generous in their critical reviews...the general verdict of the experts was that the last was the best production of Gilbert and Sullivan and D'Oyly Carte. (Allen 110)

Contemporary Productions of *The Pirates of Penzance*

Following the American and British premieres of *The Pirates of Penzance*, the operetta lived on through the American touring productions and through years of D'Oyly Carte Opera Company productions. Between operetta's premiere in 1879 through the 1970's, *The Pirates of Penzance* was performed in a similar fashion to the original production. Following "Gilbert's own direction and bits of business added by early performers," the productions attempted to maintain the performance style of the original casts (Bradley Oh Joy 27). For example, some of the traditional business includes:

The waving of the skull-and-crossbones flag and Union Jack, in opposition, at the end of Act I, the Policemen's use of their truncheons as a kind of trumpet...the Major-General's mounting of his sword as a kind of hobby-horse, at Gilbert's forced rhyme "sat a gee." (Williamson 77-8)

Some of the traditional elements are even more specific, as the Police Sergeant was typically a redhead and enamored by Ruth, for whom he presents a rose in the finale of the operetta (Williamson 77-8). None of these elements are notated or suggested by the script, but have been passed down from production to production. Using all of this stage business along with Gilbert's original blocking and Sullivan's orchestral notes, D'Oyly Carte produced the same production of the piece over and over again. And such was the treatment by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company of all of Savoy operas, not just *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Beginning in 1875 through 1961, this was the only performance style of the Savoy operas in England, as "the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company had a monopoly on the professional

performance of Gilbert and Sullivan in the United Kingdom” (Bradley Oh Joy 27). However, the British copyright did not cover the United States, which began to experiment with Gilbert and Sullivan as early as the 1930’s. According to Allen Woll, in his book, *Black Musical Theatre*, the Federal Theatre Project came up with the idea of modernizing *The Mikado* for an all black cast in 1939. Adding swing rhythms and moving the action to the South Sea Islands, they called it *Swing Mikado*. The show enjoyed a successful run in Chicago, leading to a bidding war between producers who wanted to open the show on Broadway. Producer Mike Todd decided to mount his own swing production, and hired Bill Robinson for the lead. Before that production opened however, the original Chicago *Swing Mikado* arrived in New York. Three weeks later Todd’s version, *Hot Mikado* opened as well, giving audiences two Broadway *Mikados* to choose from (Woll 180).

The Mikado was the first Gilbert and Sullivan work to receive this type of treatment, and the two versions began a trend in Black musical theatre.

Both *Mikados* seemed to engender more publicity than financial success, but they did set a pattern for future black musical shows. Producers sought to swing available classics in their search for theatrical success. (Woll 184)

Hot Mikado was followed by another Bill Robinson project, a swung version of *H.M.S. Pinafore* called *Memphis Bound!* (Woll 184-190). As the titles of these works indicate, there was little left of the original *Mikado* and *Pinafore* in these productions. Later on, directors would find ways to mount G & S works creatively without extensively altering Gilbert’s words or Sullivan’s music. During the trend of “swung” Gilbert and Sullivan, there was no attempt to mount *The Pirates of Penzance* in this style; however, these productions showed that the Savoy operas could be

presented as musical theatre rather than operetta. The “swung” versions of G & S ended up opening doors for more experimentation with the Savoy operas and led to a groundbreaking production of *Pirates*.

In 1981, Joseph Papp’s New York Shakespeare Festival decided to produce *The Pirates of Penzance* under the direction of Wilford Leach in an outdoor theatre. “There was an attempt to freshly rethink the operetta, at once remaining faithful to Gilbert’s libretto while releasing it from the accepted D’Oyly Carte-inspired tradition” (Traubner 163). The score was re-orchestrated so that it was not necessary to use a full orchestra. The new orchestrations relied heavily on synthesizer, which played up the comedy of the score and gave the production a pop-rock feel. The decision to make the score pop-oriented was undoubtedly due to the casting of Linda Ronstadt as Mabel. Ronstadt’s background as a rock belter could certainly be heard in her performances as Mabel, although she did have better control of her soprano range than expected (Rich). The key of “Poor wandering one!” was changed to suit her vocal range, in this case down a perfect 4th from the original key. This caused the top note of her version of the piece to be a high B-flat, as opposed to the typical high E-flat. The key of “When the foeman bares his steel” was changed as well, but the rest of the vocal score was unaltered. Most critics were complimentary of Ronstadt’s performance. New York Times theater critic Frank Rich wrote, “As the ingénue, Mabel, Miss Ronstadt is a curly-headed angel whose coloratura in “Poor wandering one!” somehow merges pure sex with virginal rapture.”

Rex Smith performed the role of Frederic and also sang in a pop style, adding an Elvis impersonation to his rendition of “Oh, is there not one maiden breast.” Although the show was intended to be a vehicle for Ronstadt, the show’s true breakout performance was from Kevin Kline

as the Pirate King. Kline's interpretation was unlike the Captain Hook-like portrayal long established by D'Oyly Carte. His Pirate King was youthful and kooky, with an emphasis on the swashbuckling physicality of all pirates rather than the physicality of a refined, self-important pirate monarch. The silly "Keystone Kops" were played by dancers, headed by the lanky Tony Azito as the Sergeant of Police. Azito contorted his body in all sorts of odd positions, and the entire police chorus performed choreography by Graciele Daniele, in arguably the first G & S production to ever feature Broadway-style dancing. George Rose as the Major-General and Patricia Routledge as Ruth provided more traditional interpretations of their parts. The structure of the show was altered by the interpolation of two Gilbert and Sullivan songs from other operettas.

Several liberties were taken with score- 'My eyes are fully open' from *Ruddigore* and 'Sorry her lot' from *Pinafore* were added to the second act- but there was also a touch of authenticity, with part of the original 1879 New York finale being restored by operetta scholar Richard Traubner. (Oh Joy! 76)

The finale of *Pirates* usually consists of a reprise of "Poor wandering one!" but the finale of the first performance was to the tune of "I am the very model of a modern Major-General," featuring short solos for all the principal characters and explains that the daughters will be married to the pirates (now noblemen!) the following morning (Allen 134-35).

The production succeeded in attracting a new audience to operetta with its cast of celebrities, and was transferred to Broadway. Tony awards for "best musical revival" and Kevin Kline's performance as the Pirate King soon followed. The production ran for 772 performances, and "it marked the only occasion that a Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera had a commercial

Broadway run” (Green 258). A West End production and several tours followed, touting celebrity performers such as Peter Noone, Pam Dawber, James Belushi, and Sarah Brightman. The production was made into a film in 1982, featuring the entire original cast except Patricia Routledge, who was replaced by Angela Lansbury in the role of Ruth. The film was not commercially successful, but it has long been the most easy-to-find recording of a G & S operetta, and has served as an introduction to Gilbert and Sullivan for many people. “Sorry her lot” was removed from this mounting, as well as part of “Stay, Frederic, stay!” “My eyes are fully open” remained, and an extended chase sequence was added near the end, in which the pirates are chased through a theater where a production of *H.M.S. Pinafore* is taking place (The Pirates).

The most important and influential aspect of the Joseph Papp production and the film that followed is the treatment of *The Pirates of Penzance* like a Broadway musical. Papp added and placed emphasis on choreography, an element typically ignored by D’Oyly Carte, but of great importance in musical theatre. He used simplified orchestrations that relied heavily on synthesizer, so that the overall sound of the piece was less operatic. Microphones allowed the cast to sing without projecting and still be heard by the audience. In addition, Papp used the star power of a celebrity cast to help sell tickets, and slightly altered some of the language in the piece, making it easier for Americans to understand. The production proved that *The Pirates of Penzance* is capable of having a much wider audience than just D’Oyly Carte fans.

The Broadway *Pirates*, commonly referred to by G & S scholars as “Papp’s *Pirates*” spawned many imitators. In 1985, the Stratford Festival mounted its own production of *Pirates* that was quite similar to Papp’s. With weaker voices than the Papp version, there was more emphasis on acting and choreography. The scenic elements of this production were very original;

during the overture, the actors unfastened a large steamer trunk which became the deck of their pirate ship. Brent Carver portrayed the Pirate King in the same athletic style as Kevin Kline, and Stephen Beamish performed the Police Sergeant in a similar fashion to Tony Aztio. The major character change in this production belonged to Frederic, portrayed by Jeff Hyslop. Neither good-looking nor a strong singer, Hyslop nasally warbled his way through Frederic's music, unlike other Frederics who sing the role in classical technique. He appeared to be chosen solely for his dance ability which was showcased in balletic sequence added to Act II. This sequence was choreographed to a medley of tunes from the show, and featured pirates, daughters, and police chasing each other.

Caralyn Tomlin performed the role of Mabel, who was visibly too old for role in the video's close-up shots, nonetheless gave a good performance of the role. Her "Poor wandering one!" contained a final cadenza identical to Linda Ronstadt's, although this time it was performed in the original key. Tomlin did not add any notes above the high D-flat already in the score, which was a good choice, as the recording indicates her shaky approach to the upper notes (Olivenbaum). Overall, her characterization was traditional, even in Act II, when she was costumed in see-through *peignoir* worn over period undergarments. She and the daughters, costumed the same way, showed no discomfort in being seen by policemen or pirates in such a state of undress, but this seemed to fit the mood established in this production. Another change was made in the dialogue between the daughters Edith, Kate, and Isabel. In the original script, the girls discuss taking off their shoes and stockings, but in this version, they discuss the pros and cons of removing clothing, eventually taking off their dresses (Stratford).

Unlike the Papp production, the Stratford Festival used Sullivan's original orchestrations.

Though the new orchestrations used by Papp changed the sound of *Pirates*' score significantly, the tempos chosen by the conductor were generally the same as the D'Oyly Carte Company's. In the Stratford version the tempos were rushed to the point that it appeared as if they were trying to make the operetta shorter. With the lyrics flying by, it would seem to be difficult for a first-time viewer of *Pirates* to understand the story. However, the Stratford production proved that operetta does not require "park and bark" staging. With fluid, Shakespearean style staging, as well as balletic choreography, the actors made up for misunderstood lyrics by telling the story through movement. The Stratford Festival went on to produce several other Savoy Operas throughout the 1980's, and "continued to win plaudits from the critics and draw bigger audiences than the Shakespeare performances for which the festival was famed" (Bradley Oh Joy 84).

In 1984, the Joseph Papp production was mounted with the Victoria State Opera, and toured Australia and New Zealand. Starring Jon English as the Pirate King and Simon Gallaher as Frederic, it toured successfully for three years (Bradley, Oh Joy! 77). In 1994, Gallaher formed Essgee Entertainment and mounted *Pirates* himself, using the Papp version as a model. The Essgee version is perhaps the most drastic rethinking of *Pirates* thus far. Gallaher incorporated disco beats into the orchestrations, reduced the daughters to three characters, and interpolated "You understand" from *Ruddigore* (Simon). English and Gallaher were reminiscent of Kevin Kline and Rex Smith in their roles. Derek Metzger seems an odd choice for the Major-General- obviously too young for the part, he used clowning skills in his characterization of the General. Helen Donaldson performed the role of Mabel and sang the part well. Her approach to the upper notes was very free, and she held the high E-flat at the end of her "Poor wandering one!" for an extremely long time. Donaldson's acting was not as strong, but her interpretation of Mabel was

firmly in the D'Oyly Carte tradition, unlike the rest of the cast.

The most drastic change made in the Essgee production involved Major-General Stanley's daughters. The chorus of daughters was completely eliminated, leaving only the daughters with solos and speaking lines, Edith, Kate, and Isabel. The three daughters were referred to as "The Fabulous Singlettes" and were costumed in beehives and short dresses. All of their music was rearranged so that they could sing in three part harmony (Simon).

The curtain call featured a "mega-mix" of most of the songs from the opera, which seemed to thrill the audience. Later Essgee productions of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Mikado* featured mega-mixes as well. Overall, the production was fun and unpretentious. The video of the production is the highest-selling music video in both Australia and New Zealand (Bradley, Oh Joy! 77).

In 2006, *The Pirates of Penzance* received yet another revisionist treatment. Produced by the Goodspeed Opera House, the operetta was directed by Gordon Greenburg with new musical arrangements by John McDaniel. In response to the popularity of the film *The Pirates of Caribbean: the Curse of the Black Pearl* and actor Johnny Depp's portrayal of the character Captain Jack Sparrow, this new production was set in the Caribbean instead of Penzance. Andrew Varela performed the role of the Pirate King in a costume that suggested Captain Jack Sparrow.

By resetting the show in the Caribbean at the end of the golden age of piracy, we hope to capitalize on pirate mythology and the idea of British colonialism to mine humor and address the same central theme -- the fine the fine line between piracy and respectability. Using a pirate curse to drive the story, our desire was to employ Gilbert's signature 'topsy turvy'

style, in which a preposterous notion is posited and followed through to its logical conclusion. (*Director's*)

The production was so successful that it will be remounted at Paper Mill Playhouse in June 2007. Plans include changing the title of the piece from *The Pirates of Penzance* to just *Pirates!* (Rizzo)

Interest in *The Pirates of the Caribbean* film series may likely influence other productions of *The Pirates of Penzance*, especially if the upcoming Paper Mill Playhouse production is popular. In the Starlight production, utilizing ideas from *Pirates of the Caribbean* was discussed by the production staff as a way to attract audiences. The director was highly opposed to this, feeling taking advantage of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* trend was not necessary. In the end, the production did follow the trend to a small degree by costuming the Pirate King in a similar fashion to Jack Sparrow. Though the actor playing the Pirate King, Steve Hurst, was not influenced by Johnny Depp's pirate while developing the character of the Pirate King, he did incorporate some Depp's physicality into the role after receiving his costume. However, there were many similarities between the Starlight production and the Papp version. Starlight utilized dancing policemen, interpolated "My eyes are fully open," and was accompanied by a piano and percussion rather than a full orchestra.

Interestingly, in all of the major productions that featured new interpretations of the characters in *The Pirates of Penzance*, the role of Mabel remains unchanged. Even when performed by rock singer Linda Ronstadt or in the disco-influenced Essgee mounting, Mabel appears innocent, virginal, and ultimately Victorian despite her bizarre surroundings. Perhaps this is because she is a timeless character, an example of a character type that has been in theatrical works forever.

Examining the female characters in the other Savoy operas, there are generally two types: ingénues and spinsters. Though Gilbert's male characters embody a wider range of character types, his female characters fit only into this narrow range of characters. This could be because his works were influenced by the popular Victorian melodramas, such as the plays of Dion Boucicault and Henry James Byron, which featured similar female character types (Brockett 391). Some scholars claim the narrow range of female characters in the Savoy operas is due to Gilbert's chauvinist attitude towards women in real life (Bell 48). Regardless, Mabel is very similar to Josephine in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Yum-Yum in *The Mikado*, Elsie Maynard in *The Yeomen of the Guard*, and all the other female young lover characters in the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. Ruth, on the other hand, fits into the spinster category with the likes of Katisha in *The Mikado* and Lady Jane in *Patience*. Some critics have claimed the narrowness of Gilbert's ingénues have had a negative effect on the operettas.

The weakness of his characterization of women is a flaw in the operas, inasmuch as it stamps them with an age that the freshness of the story and music disguises.

Gilbert's women are terribly Victorian. (Godwin 123)

This fact has certainly contributed to the inability to change Mabel's character traits.

No matter how extreme the productions, companies mounting G & S rarely disturb Gilbert's text. This is probably due to the fact that Gilbert's words are often regarded as the strongest component of the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership. To alter Gilbert's text is a sacrilege similar to rewriting the works of Shakespeare. Thus, the words that Mabel sings and speaks have always remained the same. In the case of the Pirate King, his text indicates that he is proud, but other than that, there is no lyric/or dialogue that dictates the way the character must be played.

Mabel's dialogue and lyrics are much more specific. The formal language used in her songs indicate Mabel's proper upbringing and her innocence. It might be possible to make some of her lyrics tongue-in-cheek, but without rewriting all of her text, her overall character would not change.

Additionally, Mabel is the most vocally demanding role in the operetta, and arguably the most vocally demanding female role in the G & S canon. Mabel's "Poor wandering one!" requires repeated staccato high A-flats and B-flats, and contains a cadenza that reaches a high D-flat. Sullivan's music for his other operettas make use of an occasional high B-flat and in some cases a high C, but *Pirates* is his only work that requires coloratura (Williamson 73). In order to physically hit the notes as written, a soprano playing Mabel must have experience in classical vocal technique. Untrained voices can easily sing the roles of The Pirate King and the Major-General. Ruth and Frederic require more singing ability, but can be sung in a pop or musical theatre style without altering their music in any way. Because of Mabel's difficult vocal requirements, the singers taking on the role are primarily singers and not actors. The casting of Linda Ronstadt, Caralyn Tomlin, and Helen Donaldson in the role of Mabel help support this theory. If Mabel were an easier role to sing, it would be more likely that an ambitious actor-singer would take on the role and find a way to reinvent the character.

In the history of *Pirates* productions, Mabel's consistency as a character is not necessarily a bad thing. In this regard she is doing a great service to D'Oyly Carte. Their attempt to preserve traditional interpretations of the Gilbert and Sullivan canon may have died when the company disbanded, but it lives on through Mabel. Though the standard in which *The Pirates of Penzance* is

performed has changed dramatically due to experimental productions, the fans of D'Oyly Carte can always look to Mabel to fulfill their desire for tradition.

STRUCTURE

Plot Summary

The Pirates of Penzance is the story of Frederic, a young man who has been apprenticed to a band of pirates. The play opens as the pirates are celebrating Frederic's twenty-first birthday and the end of his apprenticeship. Frederic's nursery maid, Ruth, explains that he was bound to the pirates through an error- his father asked Ruth to apprentice Frederic to a pilot, and Ruth misunderstood thinking his father said "pirate." Frederic explains to the pirates that he will not be staying with their band, but will instead return to civilization. In addition, his duty will be to exterminate the pirates; hence the operetta's second and perhaps more accurate title, *The Slave of Duty*. Frederic also points out that the pirates have not been very successful at attacking anyone, due to the fact that they refuse to "molest an orphan" as the pirates are orphans themselves (Gilbert 21). Because of this, many of the pirates' would-be victims claim to be orphans in order to escape. The pirates claim they shouldn't be "absolutely merciless," and wish Frederic well. The Pirate King sings about his dedication to his profession in "Oh, better far to live and die" as Frederic departs. Ruth begs Frederic to marry her, but he quickly refuses when a group of young women arrive on the coast. Frederic tells the girls of his departure from the pirates and claims he would be willing to love even the plainest of the women. The girls are disgusted by Frederic's lack of tact as Mabel arrives. We learn the girls are all sisters, and Mabel, the youngest sister, criticizes them for not having pity for Frederic. Mabel offers her love to Frederic, after which the pirates attack the girls. Mabel warns the pirates that their father is Major-General. The Major-General arrives and

turns out not to be much of a threat. He claims he is an orphan, and then the pirates set him and his daughters free.

Act II begins as the Major-General reveals to Frederic that he lied to the pirates about being an orphan. Frederic gathers the police to fight the pirates. After the police depart, the Pirate King and Ruth arrive with news for Frederic. His birthday happened to be in a leap year, so he's actually not twenty-one. This forces him to still be bound to the pirates. Frederic reveals the Major-General's lie, and the pirates decide to attack the Major-General's castle. Frederic tells Mabel of his plight, and they swear to be true to each other until he turns twenty-one in 1940. The pirates attack, the police attack back, and the police ultimately win by charging the pirates yield in the name of Queen Victoria. The pirates claim "with all their faults, they love their queen" (Gilbert 203). The Major-General tells the police to take the pirates to prison, but Ruth stops him, announcing that the pirates are "all noblemen who have gone wrong" (Gilbert 204). With this new information, Frederic and Mabel are reunited, and the Major-General allows the pirates to be set free and marry his daughters.

Given Circumstances

Determining the specific year in which *Pirates* is set can be a challenge given the conundrum of Frederic's birthday. It is obviously set in the Victorian age, as there are direct references to Queen Victoria, and *H.M.S. Pinafore*. The exposition reveals it is Frederic's birthday, Feb. 29, which causes the play to be set in a leap year. 1879, the year *The Pirates of Penzance* premiered, was not a leap year and, as Frederic explains in Act II, he will not turn

twenty-one until 1940. If Frederic has done his math correctly, he was born in 1856, so the play must be set in 1877 (Bradley, Complete 244). The setting of the first act is on the coast of the county Cornwall in England. Act II takes place at the Major-General's Tremorden Castle, in his ruined chapel. It can be assumed that the castle is located in Cornwall as well, since Mabel refers to herself as a "Cornish daughter" (Gilbert 124). The "Penzance" of the show's title refers to the real community of Penzance, "a well-known resort town on the southwest tip of England," in the county of Cornwall (Benford 53). Penzance is a location frequented by tourists, an important fishing market, and "the terminus of the main West Country railway line from London" (Bradley, Complete 192). The libretto describes the area as rocky, which is consistent with the real Penzance, and the presence of tourists in the real location might have inspired Gilbert to choose the locale for the Stanley daughters' play day. We never really see the town of Penzance, but the play's settings indicate the town is nearby, and most likely the location of the "doctor of divinity who resides in this vicinity," so often referred to in the libretto (Gilbert 70).

The Major-General and his daughters are obviously educated, as indicated by the lyrics to "I am the very model of a modern Major-General," where General Stanley reveals his knowledge of topics ranging from binomial theorem to Aristophanes (Gilbert 75). The daughters' education is clear in the vocabulary they choose. For example, Edith sings, "Propriety, we know, says we ought to stay, while sympathy exclaims, 'Free them from your tether...'" (Gilbert 57). Her use of these particular words reveals that she is well-read. With the General Stanley's interest in all things scholarly, and the daughters' excellent command of language, it is clear they were exposed to the literature, music, art, and theatre of their time. Henry James was a popular British novelist, the Impressionist movement was taking place in the art world, and the music of Brahms, Tchaikovsky,

Wagner, and Bizet would all have been a part of the Stanley's lives (Grun 436-437).

The pirates are not as educated, although with the proper British nanny, Ruth, onboard their ship, they have had more exposure to culture than a stereotypical band of pirates. It is also acknowledged that the Stanley family knows the early works of Gilbert and Sullivan, as *H.M.S. Pinafore* was enormously popular at the time. The Major-General refers to whistling *Pinafore* in his patter song-- a funny joke for Gilbert and Sullivan to refer to themselves in one of their operettas-- however, it is completely realistic that the General Stanley and his daughters would have heard or seen *H.M.S. Pinafore*. "PINAFORE MANIA!" was a frequent headline in London, as performances of *Pinafore* were selling out nightly at the *Opéra Comique*, and music shops "sold ten thousand copies of the piano score in one day" (Baily 53). Unfortunately, the reference to *Pinafore* does not go along with the theory that the operetta is set in February 1877, as *H.M.S. Pinafore* did not premier until May 1878 (Baily 52). This is a detail that Gilbert was probably unaware of when constructing his libretto.

Structural Analysis

The Pirates of Penzance is a two-act play. If one follows Aristotle's model for the structure of a play, one finds *Pirates* complicated to analyze because it contains several plot lines. Aristotle believed plays should only have one plot, and ultimately, the plot of *Pirates* concerns Frederic and his journey to rejoin civilization after growing up with pirates. The other storylines in the piece are a part of the rising action.

The major theme of *The Pirates of Penzance* is that a pirate can be respectable and

sometimes a respectable person can also be a pirate. The operetta uses the word pirate literally, by having pirate characters, but thematically, “pirate” also refers to a person’s bad deeds, such as lying. This theme is presented in many ways: the pirate band’s respect for orphans, the Major-General’s choice to act like a pirate by “telling a terrible story,” Ruth’s lie about her appearance, Frederic’s ability to be pirate one minute, then a gentleman, then a pirate again, and then finally go back to being a gentleman, and the revealing of the pirates as noblemen at the end of the operetta (Gilbert 87). *The Pirates of Penzance* is also a satire on the Victorian notion of duty, which is showcased by Frederic’s willingness to make ridiculous choices because it is his “duty” to do so.

The diction of *The Pirates of Penzance* is a combination of song and prose. The operetta holds to the convention that breaking into song and dance is normal. *Pirates* does require the suspension of disbelief in order for the audience to believe that a character singing an “aside” cannot be heard by the other characters on stage. The operetta does not require or rely on spectacle, but there are opportunities for spectacle if desired by the director. Many contemporary productions of *Pirates* create spectacle by using a pirate ship as a part of the set, having the pirates execute complicated swordplay, or having the police perform dance numbers.

The songs in *The Pirates of Penzance* serve many purposes. Some of the songs introduce characters, such as “I am the very model of a modern Major-General,” which introduces the Major-General, and “Oh, better far to live and die,” which introduces the Pirate King. “When a felon’s not engaged in his employment” and “Away, away! My heart’s on fire” are examples of songs that comment on the action of the play. Most of the songs, however, progress the action, such as “Stop, ladies, pray!” “Stay, Frederic, stay!” and both the Act I and Act II finales.

Following Aristotle's model, Frederic serves as the play's protagonist, whose goal is to exterminate the pirates. The Pirate King is the antagonist, who does not want to be exterminated, and wants Frederic to stay with the pirate band. The exposition of the play is presented succinctly, as Samuel sings, "For today our pirate 'prentice rises from indentures freed," which establishes that Frederic is no longer a pirate apprentice (Gilbert 15). The exposition further clarifies Frederic's background and relationship with Ruth in "When Frederic was a little lad." The inciting incident occurs when Frederic reveals to the pirates that he is leaving them and returning to civilization. We learn that Frederic has a strong sense of personal duty when he claims it his duty to exterminate the pirates. His sense of duty will affect the rest of the choices he makes in the show.

Numerous complications and discoveries that form the rising action occur after the inciting incident. Frederic rejects Ruth, meets and falls in love with Mabel, witnesses the Major-General escaping the pirates, discovers the Major-General's lie, and rejoins the pirates band after finding out he is not really twenty-one. All of these scenarios serve as the rising action. The climax occurs when the Pirates and Police attack each other- the Police are trying to protect General Stanley, and the pirates want the general dead. The complications are resolved when Ruth reveals that the pirates are actually noblemen, and they are freed. This allows Frederic to be reunited with Mabel and leave the pirate band forever. The denouement takes place immediately after the resolution, as everyone celebrates their own happy endings.

In examining the other characters in *The Pirates of Penzance*, each one can be analyzed as having their own Aristotelian structure within their own storylines. However, each character's climax and denouement takes place during the same scene: the finale of Act II. The pirates

attacking the police in this scene serves as the climax for all the major characters, and the celebration that follows is their denouement.

The character of Ruth has an interesting journey in the play. The exposition of her story takes place in “When Frederic was a little lad.” Ruth’s initial goal is to marry Frederic. She believes she has succeeded when Frederic takes her with him to civilization. Then Frederic sees the Stanley daughters and accuses Ruth of lying about her appearance. He rejects Ruth and abandons her in “Oh, false one, you have deceived me!” which serves as Ruth’s inciting incident. Ruth pleads for Frederic to take her back at the end of Act I, but Frederic rejects her again, beginning Ruth’s rising action. Some of Ruth’s complications and discoveries take place offstage, where she returns to the pirate band, discovers that Frederic is technically still a pirate apprentice, and makes the decision to approach Frederic with the information. Her action continues when she and the Pirate King sing “When you had left our pirate fold,” and “Away, away! My heart’s on fire.” Her climax occurs when the pirates and police attack each other, and, in order to save the pirates, Ruth reveals the pirates are “all noblemen, who have gone wrong” (Gilbert 204). At this point, Ruth is no longer interested in marrying Frederic, as she finds love with some else in the finale (typically the Police Sergeant, but not notated in the script). Ruth has her own denouement in the final scene along with the other characters.

The structure of the Pirate King’s plot begins in the dialogue following “When Frederic was a little lad.” The exposition of his story is in this dialogue, which describes the Pirate King’s softness for orphans and continues into “Oh, better far to live and die.” The Pirate King’s goal is to survive, as he fears extermination by Frederic. Frederic’s departure from the pirate band serves as the Pirate King’s inciting incident. His complications and discoveries include attacking the

Stanley daughters, setting them free, discovering Frederic's true age, letting Frederic know of his duty, and discovering the Major-General's lie. While trying to get revenge on the General during the climax, the Pirate King decides to give up being a pirate in order to survive, as the realization that he is actually a nobleman allows him to make that choice. He celebrates his life and upcoming marriage to a Stanley daughter (typically Edith) in the denouement.

The Major-General's goal in the play is to protect himself and his daughters. His exposition occurs in his song, "I am the very model of a modern Major-General." His inciting incident is when he lies to the pirates about being an orphan. His rising action is made up of discoveries and complications such as: his successful escape from the pirates and his reveal to Frederic that he is not really an orphan. His climax occurs when the pirates attack him, and the Police set him free. The Major-General gives away his daughters to the pirates as part of the denouement.

The Police Sergeant does not appear until Act II, so his storyline begins in "When the foeman bares his steel." His goal is to lead the police in attacking the pirates. His exposition takes place in "When the foeman bares his steel" and his background is further explored in "When a felon's not engaged in his employment." The Sergeant's inciting incident occurs when Frederic asks for his assistance in exterminating the pirates, which occurs offstage. His major complication happens when Mabel tells the police that Frederic will not lead them, so the Sergeant decides to continue the expedition without him. The Sergeant's climax is during the pirate attack, and he charges the pirates "yield, in Queen Victoria's name!" (Gilbert 202). He celebrates his success with the police and other characters during the denouement.

For the character Mabel, her inciting incident occurs when she arrives and meets Frederic.

Expositional information about Mabel is presented later, when the daughters reveal they are Mabel's sister in "What ought we to do" and when Mabel explains that her father is a Major-General in "Hold, monsters!" Mabel's goal in the play is to marry Frederic. Her complications and discoveries include the pirates' attack on the daughters, her father's objection to "pirates as sons-in-law," Frederic's duty to return to the pirates, and Mabel's personal duty to see Frederic as her foe (Gilbert 83). After the pirates attack the police, it is revealed that the pirates are actually noblemen, which allows Frederic to leave the pirate band and marry Mabel.

Within the overall Aristotelian structure of the operetta, Mabel serves an important purpose. Initially, the presence of Mabel and her sisters keeps Frederic from marrying Ruth. As the play progresses, Mabel and Frederic fall in love. Their relationship causes Frederic to be conflicted about returning to the pirate band in Act II. Ultimately, Frederic has to choose between love and duty, and he chooses duty. However, he is able to return to Mabel in the end. For an actor playing Mabel, an understanding of this structure can enhance her portrayal of the character. Mabel must show a strong attraction to Frederic, followed by deep love for him. Her love causes Frederic to be conflicted about returning to the pirate band, which drives the majority of Act II's scenes. Frederic's journey in the play indicates his strong sense of duty, which Mabel must recognize and respect. Mabel's respect for Frederic's duty is what allows her to swear faithfulness to him until 1940. These dynamics between Mabel and Frederic create most of the dramatic urgency in the operetta.

Mood, Rhythm, and Style

As with all Gilbert and Sullivan works, the music and language greatly affect the mood, rhythm, and style of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Gilbert's lyrics and dialogue are the largest contributions to the humor of the piece. One of the show's funniest scenarios is the "often/orphan" sequence, in which the Major-General asks if the Pirate King knows what it is like to be an orphan, and the Pirate King responds "often." The Major-General believes the Pirate King has just repeated the word "orphan," and this escalates into an argument. Gilbert exhibits humor further by way of misunderstood words in Ruth's aria as well, when she admits to confusing the word "pilot" with "pirate." Gilbert's wordplay in "I am the very model of a modern Major-General" consists of odd rhymes and silly puns, which clearly define the character of General Stanley. In contrast, Gilbert's lyrics are completely without humor when necessary. An example of this is Mabel's solo in "Stay, Frederic, stay!" as she sings "Ah, leave me not to pine alone and desolate" (Gilbert 161). His wordplay also contributes to the rhythm of the show, as in the chattering of the daughters in "How beautifully blue the sky," the Major-General's patter, and the marching quality of "When the foeman bares his steel."

Sullivan's music helps to determine the mood and rhythm of the show. Sullivan contributes musical humor in numbers like "With cat-like tread, upon our prey we steal," with which Gilbert's lyrics indicate that the pirates are claiming to be quiet in their attack. The music, however, is loud and brash. Sullivan often used the strategy of composing overly serious music to silly lyrics, with the humor found in the juxtaposition of the two.

'The humor of the music lies in fact in its serious imitation of grand

opera....’ Even when humor was intended, sometimes the composer, perhaps not knowing his own strength, inspired a serious response....Perhaps some of the uncertainty is natural. Gilbert, after all, wanted his works played absolutely straight, as if the performer were oblivious to their absurdity. (Smith 78)

Sullivan, like Gilbert, does not play everything for humor; particularly in Mabel’s solo in “Stay, Frederic, stay!” which “conveys an aching misery that transcends the silliness of Frederic’s dilemma to achieve emotional resonance” (Wren 79). Here, the music is just as touching as the lyrics Mabel sings.

The ballad of Mabel and Frederic in Act II, “Ah, leave me not to pine alone and desolate,” which, in spite of a “churchy” hint in the harmony of the “Fa-la” refrain for the two voices, has a melodic simplicity, plaintiveness, and serenity that are in the most beautiful earlier English tradition. (Williamson 72)

Rhythmically, Sullivan helps set the pace of the plot and develop the characters; the music is fast and furious when the pirates attack, bouncy with the daughters arrive, and sad when Major-General contemplates his lie to the pirates.

The style of *The Pirates of Penzance* is, of course, operetta. Every element of Gilbert and Sullivan’s writing for the piece fits within that style. Although G & S scholars claim the writers were more successful at the style later in their career, *Pirates* is still an excellent example of its genre. Additionally, Gilbert and Sullivan are often considered to be the true creators of operetta, as their works are quite different from the bawdy French *opera buffas* that preceded them and the

romantic American and German operettas that followed them. It is for this reason that the names Gilbert and Sullivan are synonymous with operetta.

ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE

Character Analysis

The characters of Mabel and Frederic carry on the tradition of the “young lover” characters found in many theatrical works. They are young and innocent, and willing to do whatever is necessary to be together. As characterized by Gilbert, Mabel is very much a Victorian woman, following all the Victorian ideals of female behavior. She is prim, innocent, and proper (Godwin 123-25). In the Starlight production, both the director and the choreographer (who staged the majority of the show) chose not to modernize the production, but instead incorporated some contemporary elements, most likely for the sake of humor and audience comprehension. Many of these choices affected my characterization of Mabel. For example, in the Starlight production, Mabel and Frederic shared a kiss. In Gilbert and Sullivan’s day, Mabel and Frederic would not have kissed onstage, as, at that time, it would have been considered inappropriate for a young unmarried couple to kiss. Mabel also shook her hips in “Poor wandering one!” and smacked the behind of the Police Sergeant in “When the foeman bares his steel.” This mild sexual suggestiveness helped make Mabel not only a parody of a Victorian lady but also a female to whom contemporary audiences would find humorous.

It is debatable whether the daughters of General Stanley are his legitimate children. Though they are referred to in the script as daughters, Mabel calls them “wards in chancery” as well (Gilbert 72). The Starlight production had a cast of ten daughters and the Broadway production had eight (Gilbert). Though it is possible that General Stanley had 8 to 10 children,

especially given the Victorian setting, the daughters are usually in the age range of 17 to 20 years old. It is hard to believe that the widowed Stanley would have so many legitimate children this close in age. As the custom of taking in wards was common at the time, and Mabel refers to her sisters as wards, it is most likely that some of the daughters are legitimate and that some are wards. It is my belief that Mabel is a legitimate child of Stanley as well as his youngest child. Mabel feels a connection with her ancestors, as she mentions in Act II, “Oh, family descent, how great thy charm, thy sway how excellent!” (Gilbert 168) Additionally, she swears her loyalty to Frederic by “all the Stanleys, dead and gone” (Gilbert 163). This awareness of her heritage makes sense only if she is truly a Stanley herself. Mabel has a strong relationship with her father, one based on being his favorite child, and the baby of the family. This is indicated by the numerous interactions between Mabel and the Major General in the show- he rarely interacts with any of his other daughters. Though not noted in the published version of the script, the programs from the original productions of *Pirates* refer to Mabel as General Stanley’s youngest daughter (Allen 112). Although her age is not revealed, she is most likely seventeen. Frederic claims that a man of his age normally seeks a “wife of seventeen” (Gilbert 26). Since Mabel is his perfect match, it seems safe to assume she meets his age requirement.

Mabel’s status as the favorite and youngest daughter arouses jealousy in the other daughters. Mabel gets what she wants when she wants it and is not shy about criticizing her sisters. However, she does this politely and with love, which forces her sisters to refrain from judging her. Mabel appears to be the type of girl who is annoyingly perfect. She does not realize this herself, of course, but to her sisters she is irritating yet respectable at the same time. “Poor wandering one!” serves an example of this dynamic. In Mabel’s recitative, she scolds her sisters for not having pity

for Frederic. The daughters question her motives; “The question is, had he not been a thing of beauty, would she be swayed by as keen a sense of duty?” (Gilbert 50). However, they do not argue with her, instead, they listen attentively to her aria. The daughters might be annoyed by Mabel’s preachiness, but they still respect her. In many ways, Mabel uses “Poor wandering one!” to show off her vocal ability, in an attempt to attract Frederic. Again, some of the daughters might find her vocal frills to be irritating, but they do not comment on it- they respect her talent.

When Mabel and Frederic meet, it is love at first sight. Mabel is attracted to his looks and innocence. In addition, she finds his story of leaving the pirate band admirable, but at the same time is drawn to the danger and adventure of his former pirate lifestyle. “He and Mabel are made for each other. She too, in her way, is enslaved to duty, though, as her sisters shrewdly remark, her sense of duty is inspired by Frederic’s beauty” (Smith 74). Although it was Frederic’s looks that first attracted Mabel, she hears his story of his pirate upbringing, as well as noticing his tactlessness as he sings to the other daughters. In her eyes, these are character faults she can help change. Her desire to “save” Frederic drives her attraction.

It is also likely that Mabel has not encountered many young men in her life. As indicated in “Climbing over rocky mountain,” the daughters are ecstatic to be outdoors and to have the freedom to take off their shoes and stockings at the beach. One would assume by their enthusiasm that the girls have lived a sheltered life. Having no brothers, and a father who is an aging General, the men Mabel has met in the past were probably curmudgeonly military men like her father. Supporting this idea are General Stanley’s actions in the operetta’s finale, when he allows his daughters to marry the pirates. If the daughters had any acceptable suitors, their father would not give them

away to the pirates. Therefore, Mabel is drawn to Frederic because he is one the only young men she has ever seen.

As the opera progresses, Mabel reveals more of her character. Her sense of duty has grown stronger, as she is willing to stay true to Frederic until she can marry him in 1940, though initially she begs him to stay. She is true to her father as well, and tries to comfort him in his sorrow. Mabel even risks her life in an attempt to save her father in the play's finale. Throwing herself in front of the Pirate King's sword, she asks if the Major-General is "to die, unshriven, unannealed?" asking the Pirate King to let her father confess and receive his last rites (Gilbert 198, Benford 60). Her feelings are conflicted about Frederic's treatment of her father, as Frederic believes it was wrong for the Major-General to lie about being an orphan.

The opera's most characteristic outlook on duty is provided by Mabel. She finds Frederic's earnestness charming and even admirable, but by the second act she also clearly finds it irritating. Her "Oh, Frederic, cannot you...reconcile it with your conscience to say something that will relieve my father's sorrow?" suggests that Frederic has been criticizing the Major-General's "terrible story" (as he might be expected to), and that she wishes he wouldn't. (Wren 89)

Mabel reveals herself to be a bit tough in this act, which, combined with her innocent demeanor, can be very humorous. In "When the foeman bares his steel," Mabel leads her sisters in a chant to inspire the policemen as they depart to fight the pirates. Knowing the pirates are much more threatening than the timid police, Mabel sings, "Go, ye heroes, go to glory! Though ye die in combat gory, ye shall live in song and story" (Gilbert 123). With sadistic glee she sings of their slaughter, which supports the theory that Mabel is excited by danger. When Frederic discovers he

is still bound to the pirate band, Mabel gives him a logical reason to stay- “They have no legal claim” (Gilbert 159). However, Frederic convinces her it is his duty to go back them, and she supports his choice, even though she is heartbroken. As Frederic departs, she is tempted to follow him, but decides it is her duty to support the police. In a line that was cut after the debut of *The Pirates of Penzance*, but was included in the Starlight production, Mabel explains how she feels to the Police Sergeant: “If it was *his* duty to constitute himself my foe, it is likewise *my* duty to regard him in that light” (Gilbert 172). She tells the Police Sergeant that Frederic will not be leading the police, and that he has acted nobly by returning to the pirates.

The role of Mabel does fit requirement of the stereotypical ingénue. But, her journey in the opera is dramatic- she must show bravery in face of pirates, fall in love for the first time, be abandoned, support police who might kill her loved one, and then be joyously reunited with him in the finale. It would be easy to portray her as vapid and boring, but she has numerous character traits that show her to be otherwise. Playing all of her character traits with the utmost seriousness is what makes Mabel funny, and what makes her an excellent figure in comic opera.

Analysis of Each Scene

Mabel enters the show mid-way through the first act, at the end of Frederic’s aria, “Oh, is their not one maiden breast.” She makes her presence known by announcing her name in a lengthy, complicated cadenza. Frederic’s aria is firmly in the key of D-flat Major, and Mabel begins her vocal line in this key as well, but modulates to A-flat Major as her recitative continues. She continues by criticizing her sisters for not having pity for Frederic, and then launches into her

aria, “Poor wandering one!” The wandering one of the title refers to Frederic. It is also in the key of A-flat major. Mabel’s recitative is in 4/4 time, but switches to 3/4 at the beginning of “Poor wandering one!” which instantly establishes the piece as a waltz. In the aria, she tells Frederic he has strayed from being the best he can be- by being a former pirate as well as calling the daughters homely. She asks him to retrace his steps and to use her love to help purify him.

One of [Sullivan’s] great achievements is Mabel’s ‘Poor wandering one!’, which is both parody and showstopper. It is most slyly effective when performed seriously, as a chance for the soprano to show off her technique- just as we would expect Mabel to do. But Sullivan composed what he called his ‘farmyard effects’ tongue-in-cheek, and though the song is rousing enough on its own to close the opera, its take-off of *bel canto* excesses of the Italian and French opera is a complete triumph. (Smith 74-75)

“Poor wandering one!” is Mabel’s most difficult number from a vocal standpoint, and though it is a parody of opera arias of the time, the coloratura sections can be viewed as Mabel’s attempts to impress Frederic with her vocal ability.

Mabel certainly requires a high soprano of coloratura substance and training; in an earlier cadenza a top D flat is called for, a very high register to be demanded by Sullivan, although he makes use of top B in most operas and C in a few cases. Technically the aria is not perhaps as difficult as it seems; the high notes are usually staccato....More difficult to acquire is a smooth legato in ascending scales and in the lower reaches of some cadenzas; ideally, Mabel should have this. (Williamson 73)

Lyricaly, Mabel establishes herself in this song as educated by using formal language. Phrases like “tho’ thou hast surely stray’d,” indicate she is choosing her words carefully, like a proper Victorian lady would (Gilbert 51). The use of “thou,” “thy,” and “thine,” alone demonstrate the difference between Frederic and Mabel, and, on a broader level, the difference between the Stanley family and the pirates. Though Frederic and the pirates have a much better vocabulary than what would normally be expected of pirates, they do not use such formalities as “thou” and “thine.” The lyrics to “Poor wandering one!” help clarify the difference in social class between Mabel’s family and the pirates. Though Mabel describes herself in the aria as having a “heart of grace,” she is quick to refer to her love as “poor” (Gilbert 51). Essentially she is saying her heart is pure, but by claiming her love is poor she could be admitting she is inexperienced at love. It might also be an attempt to show Frederic they are alike, by using the same adjective repeatedly- he is the “poor wand’ring one” and her love is also “poor.”

At the end of the aria, the daughters decide to let Mabel and Frederic get to know each other better by leaving them alone. As Mabel and Frederic flirt coyly, the daughters pretend to ignore them while singing about the weather in “How beautifully blue the sky.” This piece can be difficult to learn, as the daughters’ vocal line is in 2/4 meter, but Mabel and Frederic’s line, which is sung simultaneously, is set in 3/4. The piece begins in the key of B Major and stays in that key through the end of Mabel and Frederic’s first section of music. As Frederic begins his solo line, the key has modulated to G Major. The chorus of daughters continue to sing in G Major following his solo, but the key moves back to B Major as Mabel and Frederic sing a duet over the chorus to complete the piece.

Lyricaly, the song helps to establish Frederic and Mabel’s new-found love. Over the girls’

chattering chorus, Mabel sings to Frederic of her new-found happiness: “Did ever a maiden wake from dream of homely duty to find her daylight break with such exceeding beauty? Did ever maiden close her eyes on waking sadness to dream of such exceeding gladness?” (Gilbert 60-61). Here, Mabel lets Frederic know that she finds him attractive by referring to his “beauty.” She also implies that she has been unhappy in the past, as she normally wakes up to “sadness.”

At the end of the piece, Frederic realizes the pirates are probably approaching, and suggests the daughters should hide. He is too late, however, and the pirates promptly grab the girls. Then it is Mabel, not Frederic, who is brave enough to try to stop the pirates. In recitative, set in g minor and common time, Mabel warns the pirates that their father is a Major-General. It is interesting to note that when the pirates attack, they continue to sing in a Major key. It is not until Mabel’s recitative, “Hold, monsters!” that the key becomes minor. And in this case, the move to minor is very brief. Before the end of Mabel’s recitative we have returned a Major key: B-flat Major. This is most likely an attempt to keep the pirate scenes light-hearted and comical, for if the pirates’ attack was accompanied by darker, sadder music, the pirates might seem legitimately scary, which does not fit with the overall tone of the opera. However, the fact that Mabel sings briefly in a minor key indicates that she takes the situation seriously. This is in keeping with Mabel’s persona in the play as one of the more serious and realistic characters. The lyrics of her recitative are as follows: “Hold, monsters! Ere your pirate caravanserai proceed, against our will, to wed us all, just bear in mind that we are wards in Chancery, and father is a Major-General!” (Gilbert 72). Her choice of words again is very formal, as if she is trying to establish authority. “Caravanserai” is an odd word for her to use, as caravanserai is defined as “an Arabian hostelry with a large courtyard for caravan beasts of burden” (Benford 54). It is possible that Gilbert choose this word because it

was the only word he could find to rhyme with “Wards in Chancery.” However, it seems that Mabel is not really referring to an Arabian hostelry but rather the gathering of pirates in a caravan. She is quick to threaten the pirates with her Major-General father, and the fact that she and the other girls are wards of the court. This implies there might be severe consequences for the pirates if they were to marry Wards in Chancery.

Luckily, before the pirates can go any further, General Stanley arrives and introduces himself with his patter song. Through dialogue, Mabel tries to get her father to approve of Frederic by explaining he is no longer a pirate, but the Major-General misunderstands in the confusion resulting from the pirates’ attack. The multi-sectioned Act I finale begins, which features the entire ensemble. In the first section, set in F Major and common time, Mabel and the other daughters play along as the Major-General claims to be an orphan in order to be freed by the pirates. In an aside, the Major-General explains that he is “telling a terrible story” (Gilbert 87). The piece has now moved into 6/8 time and is in D Major. The Pirate King admits he is not “void of feeling” and launches the chorus into a somewhat random 4/4 *a capella* section on the glory of poetry. Now that he knows the Major-General is an orphan, the Pirate King makes the Major-General an honorary member of his band, and they are all set free. The key modulates to F Major and moves back to 6/8 time as the chorus sings “Hurrah for the orphan boy!” (Gilbert 96-99). Mabel and Frederic celebrate and sing of how they will be married. She tells her sisters they will all be bridesmaids, but the happy ending is interrupted by Ruth, who has returned to claim Frederic. Frederic rejects her as he did earlier in the play, and the celebration continues.

In the last sections of the finale, Mabel sings as part of a sextet, which sings “Oh, happy day, with joyous glee we will away and married be” and then is echoed by the entire chorus

(Gilbert 100). As the finale concludes the piece moves to G Major, with Mabel carrying the top line of music, singing of a doctor of divinity (who will presumably marry Frederic and Mabel) on a string of high A-flats, B-flats, and Cs.

Act II takes place several days later in the ruined chapel of the Stanley estate. The daughters try to comfort their weeping father in “Oh, dry the glistening tear.” The song is a quiet ballad in E-flat Major, set in 6/8 time. Mabel sings a solo, asking the Major-General why he is out of bed, “when happy daylight is dead and darksome dangers low’r?” (Gilbert 116) Her descriptive wording of the nighttime is poetic, but not likely to cheer up her father, with its emphasis on the deadness of daylight. She seems to be trying to convince General Stanley to go back inside more than attempting to make him feel better. One lyric in Mabel’s solo is inconsistent with the passage of time within the world of play. Mabel sings, “the midnight hour is past,” yet in the dialogue that follows the song Frederic clearly states that he will attack the pirates that night “at eleven, and before midnight” (Gilbert 116-118). According to *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan*, “since 1930 the D’Oyly Carte Company has substituted ‘twilight’ with ‘midnight’ in Mabel’s song to make chronological sense of this apparent paradox” (Bradley 228). In the Starlight production, “twilight” was used as well.

When the daughters cannot console General Stanley, Mabel asks Frederic to help, saying, “Oh, Frederic, cannot you, in the calm excellence of your wisdom, reconcile it with your conscience to say something that will relieve my father’s sorrow?” (Gilbert 118). This sentence describes many of Mabel’s feelings about Frederic, now that some time has passed and she has gotten to know him better. Firstly, she refers to Frederic’s wisdom, which shows that Mabel believes Frederic is smart. By describing his wisdom as calmly excellent, she seems to be saying

that Frederic is quietly wise and restrained. The second half of the line, “reconcile it with your conscience,” implies that Frederic disagrees with General Stanley’s choice to lie about being an orphan. This is consistent with Frederic’s ‘slave of duty’ nature. Mabel asks Frederic to ignore his opinion about her father for a moment in order to comfort him. The wordiness of this particular line was made into a comic bit in the Joseph Papp *Pirates*. In the Papp version, Mabel delivered the line, and Frederic responded with, “Huh?” Mabel’s response was a dumbed-down synopsis of what she was trying to say: “Cheer him up!” (The Pirates). Though the Starlight production utilized many of the additions from the Papp production, this extra dialogue was not used.

After explaining his remorse over lying to the pirates about being an orphan, the Major-General is finally comforted when the police arrive to be led by Frederic in an expedition against the pirates. As the police arrive, they describe their discomfort with doing their job in “When the foeman bares his steel,” a large chorus number in C Major and set in common time. Mabel tries to cheer them on but is a little too truthful when she sings, “Go to death, and go to slaughter; die, and ev’ry Cornish daughter with her tears your grave shall water. Go, ye heroes, go and die!” (Gilbert 123-124). Mabel sings her melody over the police’s “tarantara”s to close out the piece. The police, daughters, and Major-General depart, and Mabel says goodbye to Frederic.

Several scenes pass and Mabel returns, finding Frederic in tears. In recitative she sings, “It cannot be that lion-heart quails at the coming conflict?” (Gilbert 157). Mabel reveals her respect for Frederic’s bravery by referring to him as “lion-heart.” Frederic explains it is not battling the pirates that has upset him but the discovery that he is not yet twenty-one, and therefore still bound to the pirates. Frederic’s sense of duty is what causes him to return to the pirates, but Mabel disagrees with his logic.

When that sense of duty actually leads him to desert her, Mabel tosses duty to the winds: To Frederic's call of duty, she responds "They have no legal claim, no shadow of a shame will fall upon thy name"- true enough, but irrelevant from Frederic's point of view. (Wren 89)

Mabel makes her argument in the duet "Stay, Frederic, stay!" By "They have no legal claim," Mabel is referencing the pirates, whose contract with Frederic is probably not legally binding. In addition, she feels that if Frederic ignores his obligation to the pirates it will not tarnish his reputation- this is expressed by the lyric "no shadow of a shame will fall upon thy name" (Gilbert 159).

"Stay, Frederic, stay" has four distinct sections. The first section is in g minor, common time, and is marked *allegro agitato*. It contains Mabel's reasoning for why Frederic should stay, as well as Frederic's desire to follow the call of duty. The key modulates to its parallel Major (G Major) and moves to 3/4 time as the second section begins- a ballad, marked *andante*. Here Mabel sings of loneliness she will feel while he is gone; "Ah, leave me not to pine alone and desolate; no fate seemed fair as mine, no happiness so great! And nature day by day has sung in accents clear this joyous roundelay, 'He loves thee- he is here'" (Gilbert 161). Her first tactic for getting Frederic to stay was to reason with him in the first section of the piece. Now she describes her emotions poetically in another attempt to get him to stay. The third section is recitative, back in common time, in which Frederic explains that he will be twenty-one in 1940 and at that time he will return to marry Mabel. Within this serious scene there is one opportunity for comedy, as Mabel responds to Frederic's promise to claim her in 1940 with, "It seems so long!" (Gilbert 163). Mabel swears "by all the Stanleys, dead and gone" that she will be true to him until then. This line

makes reference to the scene's setting, which is a chapel on the Stanley estate containing several tombs. As the Major-General reveals at the top of the act, the ancestors in the tombs are only Stanley ancestors by purchase, but it is obvious that, like her father, Mabel takes the presence of the tombs very seriously.

After swearing to be faithful, Mabel and Frederic celebrate their love in the fourth section of the duet, marked *allegro vivace*. In this section the meter has changed to 3/4 and the key has modulated to the relative Major of g minor- B-flat Major. Together they sing, "Oh, here is love, and here is truth, and here is food for joyous laughter: he/she will be faithful to his/her sooth, till we are wed, and even after!" (Gilbert 164). Lyrically, this section plays up the idea of a "happy ending," although Mabel and Frederic won't truly have their happy ending until later on in the story. It is consistent with Gilbert's topsy-turvy world for his young lovers to become so elated about getting married in sixty-three years. As Mabel sings "he will be faithful to his sooth" she explains that Frederic will honor his pledge to return to her (Benford 59). The humor in this line can be found in "till we are wed and even after." Mabel and Frederic are thrilled they will both be faithful until their marriage, but sing "and even after" as if being faithful after marriage is just an added bonus. Perhaps this is Gilbert's way of poking fun at the young lovers' ideal of being together forever.

At the end of the piece, Frederic departs, and Mabel is left alone. She is tempted to follow Frederic, but stops herself: "No, I am brave! Oh, family descent, how great thy charm, thy sway how excellent! Come, one and all, undaunted men in blue, a crisis now, affairs are coming to!" (Gilbert 168). With this recitative in C Major and in common time, Mabel makes a choice not to allow herself to be afraid of the upcoming events. Looking upon the tombs of her ancestors, she

realizes her own duty, and calls to the police. The reference to her ancestors in this scene implies her family has a history of bravery. This idea was explored further in the first performance of *Pirates* in Paignton, England. In the original version of the script, Mabel had an aria in which she spoke of one her relatives and his commitment to duty. “Although he loved his mistress much, he loved his duty more. And I will not discredit such a glorious ancestor. Ancestral hero deathless shade (if such a shade there be) with strength inspire a simple maid great possibility” (Bradley Complete 246). This aria was cut before the New York and London premieres, however, it helps to explain why Mabel respects Frederic’s sense of duty.

The police arrive singing their “tarantaras,” and the piece ends with a section in which the police sing a chant-like recitative underneath dialogue from Mabel. It is odd that Mabel has a large section of dialogue in this scene, as her only dialogue in the show so far has been one short line in Act I, “All except this gentleman, who was a pirate once...” and her “Oh, Frederic, cannot you...” at the top of Act II (Gilbert 83, 118). It is inconsistent with the style of operetta and how the character of Mabel has been established in the piece for her not to deliver these lines in recitative. Interestingly, in the Joseph Papp production, this dialogue was delivered as recitative in the same chant-like style as the police. Though it was in keeping with the style of piece for the dialogue to be sung, it was hard for the listener to understand. Regardless of whether it is sung or spoken, this scene provides a revelation for Mabel.

MABEL: Sergeant, approach! Young Frederic was to have led you to death and glory.

CHORUS OF POLICE: (sung) That is not a pleasant way of putting it.

MABEL: No matter. He will not so lead you, for he has allied himself once more with his old associates.

CHORUS OF POLICE: He has acted shamefully!

MABEL: You speak falsely; you know nothing about it. He has acted nobly.

CHORUS OF POLICE: (sung) He has acted nobly!

MABEL: Dearly as I loved him before, his heroic sacrifice to his sense of duty has endeared him to me tenfold; but if it was *his* duty to constitute himself my foe, it is likewise *my* duty to regard him in that light. He has done his duty; I will do mine. Go ye and do yours.

CHORUS OF POLICE: (sung) Right oh! (Gilbert 172)

In the beginning of this dialogue, Mabel mentions death and glory again to the police as she did earlier in “When the foeman bares his steel.” This time, the police admit to her that her choice of words is distasteful. Mabel takes no time to ingest this comment, as she the news she has for the police is urgent. As she explains that Frederic can no longer lead the police, she refers to the pirate band as his “old associates.” This is possibly Mabel’s way of making the pirates sound more professional, and making Frederic’s choice to return to them sound noble. The police think Frederic has acted shamefully, but are quick to change their minds and agree with Mabel when she criticizes them for not knowing the situation. Mabel then professes that she loves Frederic more now because of his “heroic sacrifice” than she did before. Her next line is her realization that Frederic it now her foe, and that it is her duty to treat him as such. Had the aria from the Paignton performance remained in the operetta, this realization would have occurred before the police arrived, but in the script’s current state, the revelation occurs here. Fully embracing her new duty, Mabel tells the police to do their duty, and leaves them to start their expedition.

A little while later, Mabel and the other daughters discover the Major-General has gotten out of bed, and they find him roaming about the castle grounds. He has just finished singing “Sighing softly to the river,” which begins the long musical sequence that serves as the Act II

finale. The Major-General's ballad in 6/8 and F Major moves to 4/4 when the daughters come in, singing, "Now what is this, and what is that, and why does father leave his rest at such a time of night as this, so very incompletely dressed?" (Gilbert 194). They rush to him to try and take him inside, but the pirates attack. Mabel sees Frederic and, now forgetting her duty to see him as her foe, calls out for him to save them all, but he says he cannot. The Pirate King grabs the Major-General and is about to kill him when Mabel, showing her bravery, tries to stop them, asking, "Is he to die, unshriven, unannealed? Will no one in his cause a weapon wield?" (Gilbert 198, 199). It is most likely that Mabel wants Frederic to wield a weapon in her father's cause, as he is the only person present, besides the Stanley wards, who might be willing to do so. Just in time, the police arrive, but they too are thwarted by the pirates. Still, the Police Sergeant charges them to yield in the name of the queen, and the pirates do so. Ruth reveals that the pirates are noblemen who have gone wrong, and the Major-General asks for their pardon. Mabel and Frederic are reunited, and she sings a reprise of "Poor wandering one!" (in its original key and meter- A-flat major and 3/4 time) this time directed at all of the pirates. Her sister Edith joins her in singing, and this time, the daughters do not wish for the pirates to "take any heart but ours!" (Gilbert 55). Eventually the entire cast begins to sing their happy ending, "Take any heart- take ours!" (Gilbert 209).

Director's Concept

The director of the Starlight Dinner Theater production of *The Pirates of Penzance* was David Gerrard. Gerrard's background with piece included performing the role of Major-General,

directing the piece numerous times, as well as having directed productions of *The Mikado* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*. His concept for the production was based on the Joseph Papp Broadway production, as well as being influenced by the Stratford Festival production. His goal was to stay pay homage to the traditional, D'Oyly Carte interpretation of Gilbert and Sullivan while adding contemporary humor that would appeal to today's audiences.

Many elements in the Starlight production were inspired by the Broadway version of *Pirates*. "My eyes are fully open" from *Ruddigore* was added to the production, and there was heavy choreography for the chorus of police. Gerrard cast an extremely tall actor, Kyle Harden, in the role of the Sergeant of Police, who was reminiscent of Tony Aztio in the role. Additionally, a reduced version of the score was performed by pianist, so a full orchestra was not used.

Percussionist Don Sanderson created his own arrangements for the percussion, which played up the humorous elements of the operetta and gave the pit a pop/rock sound by using a full drum set, rather than typical orchestral percussion. In the role of Frederic, actor Alex Johnson sang in musical theatre style instead of classical, as well as Christine Perez in the role of Isabel, who belted her solo in "Climbing over rocky mountain." Other elements from Papp's *Pirates* included the Major-General's costume of a safari outfit with a pith helmet, the Major-General's "really fast" reprise of "I am the very model of a modern Major-General" as well as the inclusion of "rode a horse" in that number, in order to help the audience understand the lyric "sat a gee."

My interpretation of Mabel fit neatly into Gerrard's concept, and he allowed me to make many of my acting and singing choices completely on my own. Knowing I played the role before at Murray State University, Gerrard trusted me to bring my own ideas about Mabel into the production. Both of us viewed Mabel as a role that could be silly as well as serious, but would not

stray too far from Gilbert and Sullivan's original intentions for the character. She has a strong sense of her own duty, is a leader, and a romantic. These qualities of the character were reinforced by Gerrard's direction in combination with my research and personal acting choices.

My portrayal of Mabel also included elements from Papp's *Pirates*. I used the same final cadenza as Linda Ronstadt in "Poor wandering one!," except that my cadenza was sung in the aria's original key. I also included a high E-flat at the end of the cadenza, which added one more note to the cadenza than Ronstadt's version. The cadenza was sung as a "call and response" with a flute solo, much like the Papp version, although the Starlight production featured one of the Stanley daughters as the flute soloist, playing the flute in character on stage.

The Starlight production also featured some of the traditional D'Oyly Carte stage business. The Police Sergeant and Ruth ended up together in the finale, with the Sergeant presenting Ruth with flowers. At the end of Act I, a skull-and-crossbones flag waved; however, the traditional Union Jack did not appear until Act II, with the entire cast (including the pirates) waving individual Union Jacks on the line "with all our faults, we love our queen" (Gilbert 203). The most traditional element in the Starlight production was that the operetta was performed without microphones.

Had the Starlight production attempted to be more experimental than it was, it would have presented many challenges for me in the role of Mabel. I cannot imagine how to approach singing "Poor wandering one!" in a style other than classical. If this had been David Gerrard's intention, the key of the piece would have to be lowered significantly, and the cadenzas cut. It seems nearly impossible to heavily alter the characterization of Mabel, which would also be a stumbling block. Had the operetta been changed to the extent of the Essgee production, it would have been

confusing to Starlight's primary audience, which is mostly made up of retirees. Many of the audience members were familiar with *The Pirates of Penzance* and would not have liked it if the plot or music was severely altered.

The Starlight *Pirates of Penzance* ended up being a mix of contemporary, Papp-style elements and D'Oyly Carte traditions. However, the production was more heavily influenced by Papp's *Pirates* than D'Oyly Carte. The mixed styles were appreciated by the audience and helped make the production successful. Generally, the audience was most responsive to the contemporary aspects of the performance. If I were to direct *The Pirates of Penzance*, I would definitely direct it in a modern style. However, I prefer the piece to be sung classically and to be performed with the original orchestrations, if possible. I certainly see the advantage of using minimized orchestrations, as it is much less expensive, but I find the original orchestration to be more exciting. In addition, using pop or musical theatre singers can make *Pirates* easier to cast, but the music is more effective when sung classically. In regards to the acting, staging, costuming, and scenic elements, I prefer contemporary productions to the D'Oyly Carte style. Fluid and creative staging can help tell the story more successfully. A contemporary approach to the acting can make the story easier to understand and help make the operetta more humorous. Overall, contemporary productions of *Pirates* are more accessible to today's audiences, and that is why I would choose to direct *Pirates* in a contemporary style.

CONCLUSION

The overwhelming positive response to *The Pirates of Penzance* on Broadway proved that Broadway audiences could enjoy Gilbert and Sullivan, but there has only been one other Broadway production of a Savoy opera since then; a short-lived version of *The Mikado* in 1987 (Singer 304). Productions of the Savoy Operas today are mounted predominantly by regional and educational theatres. Yet, there are numerous companies dedicated to performing only the works of Gilbert and Sullivan.

There are at least 200 groups that perform exclusively or primarily the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, scattered through the United States, Canada, England, Australia, South Africa, even the Caribbean. This is remarkable; only one other body of theatrical works anywhere in the English speaking world can claim such universal popularity and that is the plays of Shakespeare. (Wren 3)

In addition, the Savoy Operas are more popular now than when they were written. Works like *Ruddigore* and *Princess Ida*, which were seen as failures when they premiered, are now considered classics.

So why have the works of Gilbert and Sullivan lived on, particularly in the United States? They contain satire of British issues unknown to Americans, poke fun at Victorian ideals, and contain complex music. The works of Gilbert and Sullivan are not nearly as accessible to Americans as the works of Rodgers and Hammerstein, and yet Rodgers and Hammerstein do not

have companies dedicated to performing only their works.

Innovative productions are accessible to modern audiences, though they may be drastically different from the turn-of-the-century originals. It can be argued that the continued appeal of Gilbert and Sullivan lies in their beautiful music, witty lyrics, and their sense of satire. Although the satire is derived from 1880's England, much of it still holds true today. A standard target for parody in the Gilbert and Sullivan works was opera, a style that is still relevant in our culture. The character types embodied in works like *The Pirates of Penzance* remain humorous years after they were created. New productions that hold onto these elements are going to be successful, even if they may be a far cry from what Gilbert and Sullivan originally intended. In addition, because Gilbert and Sullivan's works are old enough to be public domain, productions can be mounted inexpensively.

It is unfortunate that, in the history of music and theatre, Gilbert and Sullivan are remembered as the writers of patter songs and not much else.

When one spoke of "a Gilbert & Sullivan sort of song" in the 1880's, it might be a patter song, a ballad, a chorus, or one of Sullivan's beloved intricate ensemble numbers. By the 1920's, however, it would definitely have been a patter song.

(Wren 297)

Gilbert and Sullivan were pioneers in the field for writing multi-sectioned finales, making political and social satire acceptable in the musical theatre, placing emphasis on lyrics, and changing the "aria" into the "ballad." The history of musical theatre would not have progressed the way that it did without the Savoy operas. The continued interest in Gilbert and Sullivan ensures their works won't be forgotten, even if their contributions are.

The 1981 *Pirates of Penzance* was an early production that cast a pop music star in order to help attract an audience, a concept that is heavily relied upon today. The characterizations created by Kevin Kline, Rex Smith, and Tony Azito are seen now as the standard interpretations of the Pirate King, Frederic, and the Sergeant of Police. These interpretations were expanded upon in the productions mounted by the Stratford Festival and Essgee Entertainment, further establishing the new standard to which *The Pirates of Penzance* is performed. The Starlight Theater mounting is another example of this, as a small dinner theater in Orlando took on *Pirates* in the same Joseph Papp style. And perhaps this standard will change again, taking inspiration from the Goodspeed's *Pirates of the Caribbean*-style production.

Even in the face of this change, Mabel remains as representative of the original Gilbert and Sullivan style, maintaining the tradition of D'Oyly Carte. In G.K. Chesterton's introduction to a book on Gilbert and Sullivan, he claims the best and most Victorian work of the Victorian age was "its satire upon itself" (Godwin vii). He argues that the works of Gilbert and Sullivan will live on for that reason and are the most adaptable to changing times. "As things stand, the Victorian monument which best supports and survives the change of fashion, is not the Laureate ode and office any more than the Albert Memorial: it is all that remains of the Savoy Opera" (Godwin ix). And it seems he is right. Godwin's book was published in 1926, and yet this introduction serves as an accurate observation of how the Savoy Operas have lived on. And not only did they survive the change of fashion, but particularly with *The Pirates of Penzance*, they adapted to the changes of fashion. Though there are still many productions of other G & S operas, it is arguable that *The*

Pirates of Penzance has reached the most people and will be the opera that will live on if interest in the other operas is to wane. *Pirates* has proven to be a fine example of Victorian theatre, yet it has the ability to be reinvented, and that solidifies its place in contemporary musical theatre.

JOURNAL

Rehearsals

Sept. 5, 2006

Today was the first *Pirates* rehearsal. It was interesting day, because today was also audition day at the Starlight Theater for *Singin' in the Rain*. This meant that the music director was busy holding auditions and much of the cast (including me) were coming and going due to the auditions. I was surprised when Dustin (my fiancé, and the actor playing the Major-General) and I arrived at the theatre at the amount of cast members who showed up early and the amount of cast members we didn't know. My biggest concern was meeting the director and the actor playing Frederic for the first time. The director, David Gerrard, was not present at my audition for the show, due to a death in his family. My audition (along with the other girls who auditioned for Mabel) was videotaped for him to see. Dustin worked with David on *Nunsense AMEN* and had a good time, so I trust his judgment.

I was pleased to hear from the rumor mill that David has directed *Pirates* before, and that he has played the Major General in the past. I think productions of Gilbert & Sullivan's works are always better when the director has an understanding of their style. My concerns about the Frederic are as follows: Mabel spends almost all of her time onstage with Frederic, so he and I had better get along or this production will be a nightmare. Secondly, I am planning to sing my role in the *bel canto* technique- so if he sings Frederic in pop-style our duets will sound very odd. The

actor playing Frederic is named Alex, and he seemed nice enough today. I will not get to hear him sing until tomorrow. Of the other actors, I was pleased to see some nice folks who were in the production of *Oliver!* with me, and I was shocked at how young looking the male chorus appeared.

Once everyone arrived, we all introduced ourselves and the actors new to the theatre took a tour of the space. After everyone came back, we read all the dialogue in the script, which only consists of a few pages. I was glad to hear that most of the readings were strong. David dismissed the people interested in auditioning for *Singin' in the Rain*, and after I was finished auditioning, the costumer measured me. He and I discussed interesting things like pantyhose sizes and my "colors." When I returned to the rehearsal room, things were lax. David dismissed everyone except Frederic, Ruth, Samuel, the Pirate King and the Major-General. I stayed around because I had ridden with Dustin, which ended up being good because they ran some scenes where I have lines. I could tell that David is going to focus a lot on directing the General and the Pirate King, more so than the other characters, as we did not get as many notes. I did feel that David likes me and feels confident about my ability. Once everyone was dismissed, Dustin and I went to lunch with the actor playing the Pirate King. It was good to get to know him a little bit better. I am looking forward to singing tomorrow, and hearing the other singers.

Sept. 6, 2006

I am worn out from today's rehearsal. We began at 10:00 am and worked on the Act I finale for the entire morning. This consisted of very little solo work for Mabel, but as one of the few girls who has done the show before, I am carrying the soprano section for the moment. At

times rehearsal was a bit monotonous, given that I already know all the music, although I discovered a few mistakes I must have made before and I was able to correct them. I worry that there are not enough men in the show to fill out the vocals. They sounded very wimpy today. Frederic was not singing out by any means, and I wonder if that is what he sounds like all the time. However, it fun to sing the music again. This production will not have a conductor, which is going to be a challenge. There was a matinée of *Nunsense AMEN* going on during part of the rehearsal, so we were told to sing very quietly in order to keep the sound from bleeding through during the performance. This is probably what ended up fatiguing me, given that I always get more tired from attempting to "mark" than when I sing out. Repeatedly singing fortissimo high B-flats and Cs probably didn't help either, but such is the nature of this show.

When we broke for lunch, I invited the cast out to eat which was good way to chat with some of the people I haven't worked with before. Upon returning, we learned the Act II finale. I was impressed with the singer playing Kate (who is singing the vocal part normally assigned to the character Edith), as she nailed the harmony I sing with her on the first try. I was dismissed about an hour early, because the rest of the afternoon was spent staging "Climbing over rocky mountain" and going over the men's numbers. It was nice to come home a little early. I spent some time reading some of the G & S books I ordered online.

Sept. 7, 2006

I got to the theatre early today because of Dustin's *Nunsense* matinée. I spent the extra time reading *Oh Joy! Oh Rapture! The Enduring Phenomenon of Gilbert and Sullivan*. Rehearsal

began at 2:00, and consisted of all musical work on my part, although some numbers that I'm not in were staged today. We reviewed the Act I and II finales, and learned all of the female numbers. I've been in good shape musically, making almost no mistakes. It's been six (gasp!) years since I did the part, and it is still as fresh as ever. I think I am relieved to the music director who has to spend too much time banging out notes.

The actor playing Frederic, who just played the role at Big Fork Summer Playhouse this summer, is making some choices that I find strange. In the aria "maiden breast", he sang a G instead of the high B-flat that is written at the climax of the song. The music director asked him if he could do the B-flat, and he said he had never tried. What was the music director at Big Fork thinking by not at least having him try to hit this note in a few rehearsals? That's like not singing the high E-flats in "Glitter and be Gay"- everyone knows how it is supposed to go and it sounds ridiculous if you sing otherwise. I find all of this very strange. All I know is that I would not have been cast as Mabel if I could not hit the high D that is in the score.

The woman playing Ruth is soprano who is trying desperately to show off her voice by raising half Ruth's music up an octave! I can't believe that. Here I am, spending all of this time reading about the flawlessness of the G & S canon, and about how G & S fans are appalled by actors/directors changing up the music- and I'm wondering- has this woman done her research? Why would she do a thing like that? It's not as if she can't hit the notes as written (I have no low notes and I can sing the role of Ruth). I just hope that this bothers David Gerrard as much as it does me. Anyway, the ensemble sound is good so far, given that the cast is not that large. It might, however, fall to pieces in Act II, when many of the pirates become policemen, making the pirate band vocally sparse. The chorus appeared to start enjoying the music today, which I think is great.

Sept. 8, 2006

A long day. Music review in the morning and choreography all afternoon. I was worn out but a throat coat tea revived me, and I sang one of my best high E-flats ever while practicing the Act II finale. We moved to the stage and began work with the choreographer on "Stay, we must not lose our senses" through the end of Act I. The choreographer is young and named Meaghan. She was in another production of *Pirates* that David directed, which I am assuming got her this job. In my opinion, there is no need for a choreographer for this show, and I'm surprised that Starlight is paying for one, given that they are always scrimping in order to save money. It is hard for me to judge Meaghan's work at this point. "Climbing over rocky mountain" and "I am the very model of a modern Major-General" look pretty good, but the other numbers contain a lot of straight lines.

During the times I was not being staged, I got to spend a lot of time talking with Alex/Frederic. Although I am still a little skeptical about his singing, his acting seems to be fine and he is very nice. I am thankful for that, because an obnoxious Frederic would make this show unbearable for me. I had fun working with him today. I have become a person that the rest of the cast comes to with questions about the theatre and I have also become a little bit of a social organizer for the group, which is a new role for me. It is very easy for me to withdraw myself socially, or to rely on Dustin to make friends for me. I am making a conscious effort to stop being like that, and it seems to be working. Of course, it helps that I have a respectable role in the show and new group of people around me.

The theatre allowed the cast to come see *Nunsense* for free, so I saw it for the third time. Tomorrow I have the day off, and then on Sunday, David will begin working with us.

Sept. 10, 2006

The day off gave me some much needed rest. During the music review this morning, I was singing much better than I was on Friday. We sang through much of the show for David, and then we spend the rest of the day tweaking the blocking Meaghan had given us. David fixed many of the problems in the blocking, although he completely restaged "modern Major-General" which seemed unnecessary. Of the pieces Meaghan staged, I thought the Major-General's song looked the best. Now Dustin has plenty of things to do during the piece, but the chorus just stands there. Meaghan at least has us doing head bobs and bounces as we listened. Dustin is completely freaked out by one of David's new additions, a part where two of the pirates lift the Major-General up on their shoulders. It does look cute, but Dustin is terrified that he will hurt someone (or himself) in the process, and I don't blame him.

Overall, I did not have much to do today but stand around. The director and music director must have a lot of faith in me and Alex, given that we still have not worked the long Mabel/Frederic sequence in Act II. This is supposed to happen tomorrow morning. I was released early, and the Pirate King, Frederic, and Ruth stayed to work their numbers. The Pirate King is going to be missing four days of rehearsal this week, which is a little scary. He is on top of his stuff, but the Ruth/King/Frederic trios were in shambles the last time I heard them. Perhaps their work tonight will make everything all right.

According to the theatre's staff, *Pirates* is not selling well. *Nonsense* has been a big seller for them, but that has not encouraged people to go on a buy *Pirates* tickets. I think part of this is because the theatre does not effectively advertise their shows, and I am hoping that the low sales will encourage them to buy an ad in the paper. I also hope that *The Sentinel* will review us, because I think we would most likely get a good review, and that would boost sales. Unless the turnout for *Pirates* ends up being good, I doubt the theatre will tackle G & S again. That is sad because there is so much for actors to learn from G & S, the operas are hysterical, and they are cheap to produce. It is also hard to think that I might be putting all this time and effort into a show that won't be seen by very many people.

Sept. 11, 2006

This morning I came to rehearsal at 11:00. Frederic and Ruth had already been working for an hour on "When Frederic was a little lad" and "Oh false one!" The staging looked good for those two numbers, and Ruth seemed to have better attitude, although she is still doing some odd things vocally. We blocked "Poor wandering one!" even though the daughters had not arrived yet. Most of the blocking I am happy with, except on the staccato sections, where Meaghan and David have me doing hip shaking that is a little too contemporary and very repetitive. Frederic and I sang through our Act II music, which went okay. I had trouble remembering my line when our parts crossed, but I few sing-throughs fixed it. I was in very good voice today.

When we broke for lunch, I had to change clothes and prepare for a callback at the Orlando Repertory Theatre. I went and did my callback at 2:00, and returned to Starlight at about 3:30.

Everything was disorganized when I got back- David was asleep while the policemen were running their numbers. Everyone else was scattered about the theatre, killing time. Once David woke up, we cleaned up the Act I finale. After rehearsal was over, Dustin and I went to another cast member's house for dinner.

Sept. 12, 2006

My call for rehearsal today was at 2:00. It was nice to have the morning off, although it didn't seem to help my voice. Being around smokers last night made me dry and full of phlegm today. This morning, David blocked the three trios featuring Frederic, Ruth, and the Pirate King, even though the Pirate King was gone. I saw them run the blocking and I think it is the best in the show so far. I feel as though we are a little behind, but that actually does not seem to be the case. We ran Act I today, and cleaned much of it. What's left to block consists of the Mabel/Frederic duets in Act II, "Sighing softly to the river" and the Act II finale. I believe we are blocking all of those numbers tomorrow.

I was disappointed with my singing today. I wasn't able to sing my cadenzas in one breathe as a normally do, and my high E-flat was the weakest it's ever been. I think part of it was that I was trying to remember my blocking and I wasn't thinking about supporting. I heard Frederic ask the music director about whether or not to keep the high B-flat in "maiden breast," which he has been singing in falsetto the last few days. The music director told him to just sing a G instead. I thought he was getting better at the B-flat every day and I think he should really keep working on it. The G sounds odd does not help the song reach its climax. I have been asked to sing

high E-flats at the end of “Poor wandering one!” and in the show’s finale. I am not completely comfortable singing high E-flats in public because they are not as consistently strong as my other high notes. However, I am doing them without argument because I believe singing them everyday will help them become consistently strong.

I was told today that I am going to serve as the props master for the show, in order fulfill my internship contract. It will be a hassle, but I also think it will be fun. At least I am organized enough to make sure everyone has what they need. I will get to go up into the props attic and look for things soon- which I am excited about, even though there are apparently rats up there.

Sept. 13, 2006

Frederic and I arrived at 2:00 today to block our Act II duets. I rode to the theatre with the music director because Dustin had an early matinée. It was good chance to get some feedback from him about the show. Mainly he was just concerned about Frederic’s weak singing. He later approached Frederic about this in rehearsal and didn’t get much of a response, although I did notice Frederic starting to sing out more. Frederic voiced his concern about the Mabel/Frederic duets, complaining that they are high and he is always tired by that part of the show. The music director said there is a possibility of lowering the key, and I cringed at that thought. I don’t think it will happen, though.

The staging for the numbers went quickly, and served as good rehearsal time for us. The show is coming along, but I have to admit that am constantly bothered by some of the staging and character choices. When I played the role of Mabel at my college, the director knew the show

inside and out (having directed it about 15 times). His staging was very strong and the overall production was strong. I knew when I was cast in this role again that I would have to let go of any fondness of the other production in order to work well with the cast and the director. I have tried to do as such, but there are so many things in this production that I think are weak, and I find myself thinking about how it was done better at my college. “Stay Frederic, stay!” is not staged nearly as well in this production as it was at my college. As we began running it today, I wanted to alter the staging to what I think feels right, but I had to fight that impulse.

Sept. 14, 2006

I found out today that Elizabeth Maupin from *The Orlando Sentinel* will be coming to the preview performance on Thursday (a week from today). I am glad to hear that a reviewer is coming because I think a review will help ticket sales, but I am not thrilled that she is coming on Thursday. I doubt that all of the kinks in the show will be ironed out by then, and I worry that will cause a poor review. I am particularly concerned about the lighting and costumes. I don't think there is any way that the light cues will be in good shape on Thursday, and I know from doing *Oliver!* at this theatre that the costumes will not be completely finished. Perhaps the pressure of knowing when the reviewer is coming will force the staff to get everything done.

Today's rehearsal was grueling. Dustin had a matinée, so I rode over with him and then took his car to UCF so I could hang up *Pirates* posters. I returned to the theatre early to work on props and fill out tax paperwork for the theatre. I made the props list yesterday, and I started digging through the theatre's storage rooms for appropriate items. Luckily, I found almost

everything we need. I did have a nasty run-in with the technical director, who I approached in order to explain that I would be helping with props. He seemed quite irritated that someone new was going to be doing props and no one had told him. By this evening, however, he was in better spirits and helped me find a few things.

The music director decided to dress up in one of the pirate costumes and hand out *Pirates* flyers to all of the patrons attending *Nunsense*, hoping it would encourage them to buy tickets. I think it was a good idea, which certainly couldn't hurt our sales. He was able to recruit two cast members to come to all the rest of the *Nunsense* shows and do the same thing.

We began rehearsal at 4:30 and did not break for dinner, so I had to bring sandwiches for Dustin and I to eat. We began working on numbers from Act II. The Mabel/Frederic scenes went pretty well, except for a few musical mistakes. We cleaned several of the numbers and ran Act I. By the time we got to "Poor wandering one!" it was almost 9:30 at night and I had been singing nonstop for several hours. Thus, "Poor wandering one!" did not go well for me vocally. When I started to sing my first cadenza, I felt that things weren't working right and I began to tense up, which was about the worst thing I could do. By the end of the piece, I was so tense that I barely hit the high G and E-flat. I know that at least Dustin and the music director could tell I was tired. I was embarrassed, but we went on with the act. I really need some good rest, but I'm not going to get any for another day.

Sept. 15, 2006

This morning's rehearsal time was taken up with trying on costumes. My first act costume is a long white dress that is quite flattering, although it is a little plain. I am supposed to be getting a bonnet to wear with it, which will help fancy it up a bit. My Act II costume is a another long white dress that looks like a fancy night gown, even though it is really an evening gown. I certainly got the best of the costumes, as the other daughters are wearing 80's prom dresses.

One of the other girls, Tara, plays the flute, so I spent some time with her working on a fun bit for the show. In the Joseph Papp production of *Pirates*, Linda Ronstadt finished "Poor wandering one!" with a cadenza that echoed a flute solo. The music director liked this idea and wanted me either to sing that cadenza without the flute part or to echo the piano instead. Tara volunteered to pop up play it on her flute onstage, so we figured out the notes in the correct key and sang though it several times. I got rest most of the morning because of the costume fittings, but after lunch we ran Act I. I wasn't really feeling better vocally, but I was prepared to sing all my material anyway. When I began to make my first entrance the music director told me to mark it, and I told him that "marking" fatigues me more than singing out. Then he told me to rest and not sing. I started mouthing the words and then one of the daughters started to sing my part. I was little annoyed but the girl who did it, but she is only eleven years old, so I guess I can't blame her. She did okay with it, but I was prepared to sing the final cadenza so that Tara could play the flute part, and the girl kept singing and sang a different cadenza than the one I do. I guess what bothered me the most was that this occurrence surely got the cast talking about my voice, and if was losing

my voice, and so on. I am just glad that I get tonight and all day tomorrow off, so I can regain my stamina.

Sept. 17, 2006

Rehearsal was from 10:00 am to 4:00 today and was very productive. The pianist who will be playing to show was there today to start learning the cues and so on. The percussionist was also there for a short time and it was great to hear the music start to come together. The rest did me a lot of good and I was in very good voice today. I am not vocally tired now, and I think it is a good sign that I will make it through this week okay.

This morning we ran most of the show's group numbers to set tempos with the pianist. We broke for lunch, and when we came back, we ran the whole show with almost no stops. It was great to run the show all the way through for the first time, and feel that my part is in good shape. Frederic and I added a few things to some of our scenes today, and I think that by Thursday we will be comfortable with all our interactions. He is disappointed that we were not given more to do during "How beautifully blue the sky." I can certainly relate, as I wish some parts of the show had been directed differently as well. The director is very laid back, and I think Frederic and I can add whatever we want and he won't mind. I think, ultimately, Frederic just wants the blocking from his old production, which, again, I can understand. The final performance of *Nonsense AMEN* is tonight, so after the show closes, the *Pirates* set will be built on the stage. That will make for a very interesting rehearsal tomorrow.

Sept. 18, 2006

Today we were supposed to do a run through from 5:00 until 10:00, but it ended up being a cue to cue that was only moderately productive for the actors. Dustin and I had a stressful day. We spent the morning buying a sofa bed, so that when my dad comes to see the show this weekend he will have a place to sleep. We had to rent a U-haul to move it to our apartment across town. The combination of returning the U-Haul and rush hour traffic cause us to be a little bit late to rehearsal. I was surprised upon our arrival to the theatre that the set actually looked good. The theatre borrowed several Styrofoam rocks and rock archways from Osceola Center for the Arts. The technical director painted them nicely and they are very functional. The stage is painted the color of sand and it looks great. For some reason the theatre's owner has been very hesitant to allow the stage to be painted, and she normally left the stage painted a glossy black. The black stage looked extremely silly during *Oliver!* and sucked up all of the lighting. Now that it is painted for *Pirates*, the lighting is much more effective.

Dr. Steve came to sit in on the rehearsal, but he didn't get to see very much. David focused on getting the lighting set and spacing. He wanted us to use the space more and utilize the rocks to create levels. The atmosphere of the rehearsal was a little tense, but it was more organized than many of our past rehearsals. I was in good voice, but I didn't do a whole lot of singing. We started "Poor wandering one!" and then stopped, but I did get to sing through the bulk of Act II.

Sept. 19, 2006

Today we did two run-throughs of the show. Before rehearsal, Dustin and I went to Madge Elaine's World (a costume shop) to buy parasols for the show. After a long debate on the phone with the theatre staff about whether or not we could spend \$100.00 on parasols, we were able to place an order. There were five parasols already in stock, so we got those today and ordered seven more, so that all ten girls will eventually have parasols, with two spares left over. I was angry at the fact that the additional parasols will not arrive until later in the week, which means some of the girls will have to do the first couple performances with prop parasols I found at the theatre that don't match and don't open. I would have ordered the parasols last week, but the theatre staff wouldn't tell me if I could spend the props budget on them. Luckily, nearly every prop the show needs I was able to find in the prop attic.

Both run-throughs of the show went well. I was curious to see how my voice would handle two shows back to back, and I was pleased that I did fine. This means I should do okay during the actual run of the show, where we will do two performances on Saturdays. The costumer gave me a bonnet to wear with my costume, so I wore it during the first run through to get used to it. It covers my face a lot, so that when I am in profile the audience cannot see my face at all. I also don't like the fact that it covers my ears. I have decided that the only way I can make the bonnet work is to sew hair combs into it so I can push it farther back on my head. That way my face can be seen and I will be able to hear. Sewing the combs in will be a project I will have to do myself, because there is no way the costumer will get to it.

Sept. 20, 2006

Dress Rehearsal took place today. I am actually quite happy with my costume. In the first act, I wear a long sleeved white dress that has a lace overlay on the skirt. I am also wearing a pair of my own white gloves and the bonnet. I sewed the hair combs into the bonnet today and they worked great. I think the costume looks nice, although it is very hot to wear onstage. My second act is another long white dress, except it has an empire waist and short sleeves. It has a mobcap to go with it. I am wearing tan character shoes with both costumes at the costumer's request. I hate tan character shoes and I think costumers only like them because they are easier to find than period shoes and most actors will buy them for themselves. My tan character shoes are a half size too small, so they are extremely uncomfortable to wear. I went ahead and ordered a new pair, but they will not arrive until next week.

It is interesting that this show takes place in February (as explained in the leap year/Frederic's birthday discussion in Act II) and everyone is prancing around at the beach. I also find it odd that the daughters are running around outside in their nightgowns around strange men. That does not seem to be an accurate depiction of Victorian women. However, it is comedy and not to be taken as a serious depiction of Victorian England. Dustin discovered today that the costumer still has not made an Act I costume for him, so he has decided to make one himself. That is going to be a stressful project for us later tonight.

Robert Dutton came in and took a few pictures to submit to the Orlando Sentinel and to put on the theatre's website. He took one of me, Frederic, and the Major General, looking dour in our Act II costumes. We ran the show once and got notes, and then we were sent home early. I think

we are ready to open from a performance standpoint, but there are still set and costume problems that will not be resolved by tomorrow. Elizabeth Maupin is coming tomorrow, and I hope she doesn't judge the show by its technical problems. However, I think that the knowledge of her coming tomorrow lit a fire under much of the production staff, so we are much more prepared for our opening than we would have been without the pressure of a reviewer coming.

Performances

Sept. 21, 2006

The opening performance has come and gone. I got to theatre early to press my costume and curl my hair. I got nervous preparing to go on, but once I got through "Poor wandering one!" I was able to chill out a little. I was in great voice and I nailed my aria. My duet with the flute was shaky, but it was the fault of the flutist, not me. My high E-flat was very strong today as well as my high D. I heard a woman in the audience say "wow" when I completed the aria.

Frederic sounded great too- it was the best he had ever sung. Dustin and I had a sneaking suspicion that he had been marking all through rehearsals and that he would start to sing out once we opened- it turns out we were right. He still does not have a big voice and the part isn't comfortable in his range, but he pulled it off today.

Dustin looked great in his homemade costume and the outfit seemed to complete his characterization. I left the stage after Act I on fire and proud of my work. Once I got to the green room, I was told by the production manager that Elizabeth Maupin didn't show up! I was furious,

but he assured all of the principal actors that she will still come at some point. I was glad that the pressure was lightened for Act II, but it was still frustrating to give a great performance thinking the reviewer was watching and to find out it was a waste. However, the audience really liked the show and it was a good opening. Now that my initial nervousness is gone, I can really enjoy doing the show. I felt great for the rest of the day.

Sept. 22, 2006

I enjoyed having most of the day off to rest and clean house for my Dad's arrival. Tonight's audience was great. It was much larger house than expected- the entire front section was full, as was the much of the right and left sides of the space. They were very responsive and laughed at everything. They even applauded my entrance! The audience was a great boost for everyone in the cast. However, the adrenaline boost that came from such an audience caused all the tempi to rush. "I am the very model of a modern Major-General" just flew! I couldn't believe Dustin got through it. It was neat to listen to it with sincere amazement at the speed- something I've never experienced in that piece because I have heard it so many times.

I tended to push vocally tonight because I was nervously excited. I'm very tired now and I wonder how it will affect my voice tomorrow. My dad flew in from Arkansas tonight, so Dustin and I had to leave immediately after the show to pick him up from the airport. We missed the post-show cabaret and whatever official opening night festivities that took place. That made me feel a little sad. I certainly wasn't planning to sing at the cabaret (I need to rest my voice anytime I can), but I would have liked to spent time with the cast after such a strong show.

Sept. 23, 2006

Today's matinée was somewhat dull. The audience was small and very quiet. My dad was watching, and though I was not at all embarrassed by my work in the performance, I was disappointed that he had to be a part of an audience that didn't laugh at anything. I dropped a line in my duet with Frederic, but it didn't faze either of us. I also accidentally kicked a skull that was hidden behind a rock onstage. It's there so that Dustin can make a *Hamlet* joke, but since the audience saw the skull roll across the stage prior to the joke, they didn't laugh at all. When I first got out onstage, I noticed the tempi dragging. I wondered if the pianist had been scolded for rushing the night before. "Poor wandering one!" was more difficult to sing than usual because it was so slow. I found out later that, unbeknownst to me, the regular pianist was not present and the music director had played the show. I found it odd that the music director, who had set the tempi in the first place, was tending to drag.

The 8:00 show went much better. The regular pianist was back, so those problems were solved. My dad decided to come watch the second show as well, and he liked it better than the first. The evening performance had another big turnout. They weren't as high energy as last night's but they were close. The flutist and I nailed our duet. The cast was informed that Elizabeth Maupin was in audience. That caused me to be more self-conscious of my performance. Everyone was asking where she was in the audience and was she enjoying it, and so on. She did not come through the "meet and greet" line after the show, so I still don't know what she looks like. The pianist said he could see her and that she appeared to have a good time. He also told me that she

smiled broadly when I entered and began to sing. I think there is a good chance that the review will be positive.

We stayed afterward for the cabaret, which was fun. My dad's overall impression seemed to be that the production of *Pirates* that I was in at Murray State University was stronger than this production, which is probably true. Murray's massive set and full orchestra were reasons enough to prefer it to the Starlight version. But I do feel that I am better in this production than I was in the Murray State version- my singing and acting are both stronger now, and I have much better sense of my character than I did then.

Sept. 24, 2006

It was a surprisingly good twilight show today. Usually Sunday crowds are dull, but tonight's was responsive. The percussionist couldn't come to this performance for some reason, so we were without a drummer. This made a few of the louder numbers to be awkward, because we had trouble hearing the piano and keeping the beat. I didn't realize how much we relied on the percussionist and how much he fills out the sound until today. I sang well- the best I have in the last few days, which was amazing given that I was shot after yesterday's double. Tonight had the nice feeling of the show beginning to hit its stride.

After the show, I got a great compliment from an audience member, who said, "You know, I have heard so many sopranos who suck back their words and you can't understand them. But you sounded great and I understood every word." I was flattered to hear that, because diction is a

challenge for me in this show. It is hard to enunciate in my upper notes, which is where this entire show sits in my voice.

Interestingly, the theatre had made a big deal about how the tickets to *Pirates* were not selling, and yet we had an excellent turnout this weekend. It makes me wonder if the theatre exaggerated their description of the poor sales. I do know, however, that their fear of bad sales forced them to put an ad in *The Orlando Sentinel*. I am sure that the ad has helped sell tickets, and they should really do that for every show. The review has not come out, so we'll see how that affects sales.

I am looking forward to my two days off. Tonight we are going to the Pirate King's house for a small get together, which will be a good way to finish off our opening weekend.

Sept. 27, 2006

It was an eventful day. Where should I begin? The review came out in *The Orlando Sentinel* today. Overall, it was a good review. She complimented Frederic, the Pirate King, and me by saying we are a "genial lot" and that we sing beautifully. She made several great statements about Dustin, but didn't say anything about the other principals. She praised the work *Pirates of Penzance* and talked about how funny it is. Her criticisms were that the chorus is like one out of a community theatre (which is true) and that there is a lot of mugging (which is also true, but stylistically appropriate, in my opinion.) The theatre was pleased with the review as was the cast, and we are hopeful that it will help our sales.

Before the matinée, Dustin and I were sent to the clear wire radio station in Maitland to record an interview concerning the show. It took twenty minutes and it was a good chance for me to talk about some of the research I've done on the piece. The interviewer actually came to the Saturday night show, so he was prepared with appropriate questions.

Today's matinée had a very small, but attentive audience. I sang very well, and I think it is sad that I will probably always sound my best on Wednesdays and Thursdays, which tend to have the smallest houses. I wore a new pair of character shoes on stage, and I was so relieved to ditch my painful old pair. It was nice to walk around on stage without my feet hurting. At intermission, the cast was told that Dori (the theatre's owner) wanted to speak with all of us after the show. I guessed it was going to be either about a problem with our paychecks, or possibly about canceling tomorrow's performance. It turns out my guesses were not even close. Dori handed out our checks and told us she had some bad news. She is canceling the final week of *Pirates* performances. Because the sales have been poor and have not picked up, she decided to cut her losses. *Singin' in the Rain* is selling very well, so the weekend will be replaced by *Singin'* performances. As per the contracts, the *Pirates* actors will not be paid for that week.

Now as far as the pay is concerned, I am not worried about it. I have already been offered a role in *Singin'* for the same pay rate I am getting for *Pirates*, so the cancellations won't affect my pay or my internship at all. I also do not have any family, thesis committee members, or friends who were planning to attend that week. However, I am very disappointed about the whole situation for several reasons. First of all, this is a very important and sentimental show for me. It is my first lead in this area as well as my first professional acting job in the area. I would like as many people as possible to see me in this role. Secondly, I have worked very hard on my part and

I know I am doing a great job. I would like to keep performing the role because it is gratifying for me. Thirdly, theatre people are lazy. Most of my classmates and peers who would consider coming to see the show probably would have put off seeing the show until the last minute. Now that the final weekend has been moved up a week, they may not come at all.

On the other hand, Dori gave plenty of advance notice about the change by telling us today, and I have already written everyone I know about the change. Moreover, in the end, I want the Starlight to be successful and continue to be around so that Dustin and I can work there. Anything that will help keep the theatre afloat will be helpful to my career. The cast reaction was lackadaisical, but I wonder if they will act differently tomorrow. I doubt any of them are as emotionally invested in the show as me. At the same time, I am handling it well. I have not cried or gotten upset about the situation. I know that the cancellations have nothing to do with me. Dori even said that she thought this show was the best they've put on. I still have many more performances, and it is likely that due to the cancellations, the houses will be large. All in all, it is probably a good change for the theatre, and that is all that matters.

Sept. 28, 2006

The atmosphere at the show today was more somber than usual. There was more disappointing news. It was not "officially" announced, but the percussionist, Don, will not be playing any of the performances past this weekend. He said that the theatre told him that they couldn't afford to pay him for that many performances when the sales are so poor. This is terrible news. He really holds the music together, particularly when you can't hear the piano very well. In

addition, the percussion helps fill out the sound and makes up for the fact that we do not have a band. I think the show will not sound as good when it is only accompanied by piano. Don is upset about it because he created the percussion part himself. After all of his work, he will not get play it after this weekend.

What I don't understand is that the canceled performances will enable the theatre to keep all of the *Pirates* actors' pay for that week. You would think that in the money they will be saving from canceling performances they would have enough to pay the drummer for two more weekends! The whole thing is silly and not fair to anyone. Thankfully, most of my thesis committee is coming this weekend, so they will get to hear it with drums. I am going to try to convince Dori to videotape the show this weekend so that the percussion will be on the tape as well.

Today's performance was not as high-energy as it has been in the past. With all this craziness going on, I can understand why the energy was down. I sang very well again today. My solo in "Oh, dry the glistening tear," which has always been tough for me, is getting easier and easier to sing. I am also doing a better job with my diction on "When the foeman bares his steel." It is interesting that I am singing so well, because I actually have a slight cold. I am getting very comfortable in the show and not sweating nearly as much.

There is one part in "Poor wandering one!" that is supposed to be funny, but never gets a laugh. In the middle of the song, I sing to Frederic and then quickly turn away, hitting him with the parasol. Frederic suggested that we work on it backstage to see if we could make it better. We now have it set up where I hit him in the face with the parasol, instead on the shoulder, where it was landing before. I was concerned about hurting him in the process, but he insisted that it would be

fine. We seemed to execute it successfully today, but still no one laughed. Perhaps it is just a lost bit.

Sept. 29, 2006

David Gerrard called Dustin and me today to tell us about something interesting. Some friends of his from Tampa received a call from the theatre telling them that the final weekend of *Pirates* (which the Tampa folks had tickets to) was being cancelled. The theatre's reason for the show cancellation was "kitchen renovation." Now that is hysterical, given that we know the kitchen is not being renovated. The scenario gets more interesting since the word on the street is that *Singin' in the Rain* actually will not be opening early. So, basically, the shows were canceled for no other reason but poor sales, yet the cast and the public are being told otherwise. I am not happy about how this will effect my paychecks, since I was expecting to get paid for performances of *Pirates* at the same time I would be getting paid for *Singin'* rehearsals, but it seems like that won't be the case, due to the new schedule. I have a secret hope that the ticket sales for *Pirates* will pick up and Dori will add the last weekend of *Pirates* back on the schedule, but I know that is wishful thinking.

We had a good crowd tonight. During the run every show at Starlight, Dori assigns one Friday performance as "Industry Night," where other actors and theatre professionals can see the show and have dinner for \$25. This is a great deal, because the normal price for dinner and the show is \$49. I sent an email out to everyone I know about the Industry special (and about the changes in the performance schedule), hoping that some of them would come, but none of them

did. However, we still had a good turn out, and I saw few familiar faces in the audience. The energy was good and I was still in great voice. After the show, I hung out at the cabaret for a while and chatted with much of the cast. It was nice to get to take part in some cast bonding time, given that I had to miss all of these events last weekend. Several people in the cast suggested a trip to IHOP after the cabaret. Even though I knew I needed to rest for the double tomorrow, I decided to go because I was starving. I had a good time, and the outing allowed for some much-needed venting about the show cancellations.

Sept. 30, 2006

These double days are killing me! *Pirates* is not a show that should be sung twice in one day- it is way too tiring for the principal singers. If you look at an opera companies' schedule, they never do two performances in a day, and in many occasions, they have a day off between every performance. *Pirates* is an operetta, and it is not written to be sung again and again and again. Hence, all the principals are completely worn out about halfway through the second Saturday performance. I am not the only person who feels this way, as I have heard all of the other principals complain about the situation as well. However, we can't change the schedule, and given the show cancellations, I'm glad that we've still got plenty of performances left.

I slept in as late as I could after being up for much of the night last night. The matinée house was small and unresponsive. The cast was unfocused- I even forgot to wear my gloves in Act I. I spent much of the matinée thinking about the evening performance, and whether or not I would be in good voice for it. I was stressed out about it because two of my committee members

had tickets for the evening show. After the matinée, I received a call from two of my classmates, saying they were coming to the nighttime show. I was excited, but the idea of so many important people coming to a show where I knew I was going to be tired, was nerve-wracking.

Much of the cast went to eat BBQ during the break between shows, which was fun. I tried not to talk as much in order to save my voice for the next show. I returned to the theatre very early and I prepared for the evening show slowly and carefully. Almost everyone knew about my professors coming and gave me words of encouragement. I got nervous for a moment while I was putting on my makeup, but I was able to calm myself down.

The audience was another good-sized house, and they enjoyed it a lot. There was screw-up at the top of the show, as the pirates pushed their pirate ship into one of the Styrofoam rocks, flinging it center stage. Although I was embarrassed that something like that happened tonight, I was glad that no other major problems occurred. Once I got through “Poor wandering one!” I was able to relax a little. My E-flats were not as strong tonight due to fatigue, but other than that, I sang better than I expected. I felt like my acting was very strong tonight. I even got sincerely weepy during “Stay, Frederic, stay!” After the show, my professors said “good job” to me and left very quickly. I wondered if this was because they were uncomfortable amongst the “meet and greet” that takes place after every show. I was hoping for some feedback about my performance, but perhaps I will get some from them later. My classmates hung around for a short while afterwards and said some nice things. After the cabaret was over, I went home and got in bed early.

Oct. 1, 2006

Tonight's audience was another small crowd. Although this group was actually quite responsive. I sang a little better today than I did last night, but I am glad that I have two days coming up to rest. Tonight was our last performance with the drummer, which was frustrating and sad. Today also marked the halfway point in the show's run. We only have two weekends of performances left. I thought a lot about the cast and the atmosphere of this show today. I have received a lot of support from people in this cast, and I felt that my talents were verified by the cast and production team. That is not something that has happened for me in a long time. Alex, who plays Frederic, has been particularly great to work with. He is a very giving actor and is a comfort to me every time I am onstage. I don't know how I could have gotten through a stressful night like last night without a scene partner who was supportive of me.

I am very proud of myself for being more socially outgoing during this show. I think I did a good job of setting an example of how a principal actor should behave while still being fun to work with. I am going to be sad when this show closes.

Oct. 4, 2006

I felt like I was just "going through the motions" at today's matinée. I still really like doing the show, and usually it feels fresh, even though we are in our third week, but today it just felt stale. At least on my part. However, we did have the largest matinée crowd yet. I hope that is a good sign that our sales will improve. The costumer dipped my dresses in cleaning fluid over the

weekend, and of course, they were still wet when I had to put them on today. I had to spend almost twenty minutes iron the wrinkles out of the two dresses before the show started. However, the damp costumes did keep me cool onstage. I was in excellent voice, which I am learning is typical for me on a Wednesday show. After two days of rest, I am in great shape, but by Saturday night, I am usually tired again. It also seems that I sing better during daytime shows than at night. I think this is probably because at the matinées I have not had time to talk a lot before the performance. I had one bad vocal glitch today. While singing “When the foeman bears his steel,” my voice cracked badly on the word “slaughter.” It was probably caused by a combination of running out of breath and phlegm. I sometimes have trouble phrasing my solo in this piece, because I am trying very hard to punch up the diction. I use so much energy to enunciate on the word “death” that I am out of breath when I get to the word “slaughter.” Now I am very aware of the problem, and it will probably never happen again.

Oct. 5, 2006

Another dull matinée today. The house was small again, but they were very responsive. I felt a lot more connected to my character today than yesterday, which was good. Something is happening now in the show that is starting to annoy me. Braille, who is playing one of the daughters, is eleven years old and has been doing a lot of community theatre. I understand why she was cast in the show, as she has a good legit voice, and has good control over it for a girl her age. However, as the show has gone on, she is constantly trying to find ways to suck focus within the chorus. This basically consists of lingering onstage for as long as possible when it time for her

character to exit and trying to incorporate distracting bits of stage business into every scene she's in. This is the kind of thing the stage manager or director should be giving notes about, but the director has not visited the show in several days, and the production/stage manager rarely does his job. The time that her antics directly affect me, is right before my first entrance. I am staged to appear on top of a rock to sing my first (and very difficult) cadenza. Two of the daughters, one of whom is Braille, are supposed to walk across and step off my entrance rock several measures before I appear. In the last few performances, Braille has been taking longer and longer to step down from the rock, so that she is still standing on the rock when I make my entrance. This not only pulls focus from my character, who is supposed to be the center of attention at that point, but is also causes me not make my entrance on time, because she is in the way. Today when I tried to make my entrance, Braille was being slow as usual, and the flute, which is used later in the number, was on the rock as well. I was lucky I didn't trip. I would like to talk to Braille about the problem, but my contract says very specifically that I am not to give the actors notes. I am going to see if the situation improves tomorrow night, and if not, I am going to approach the production manager with the problem.

Oct. 6, 2006

Overall, it was a great performance tonight. Everyone's energy was up and the audience laughed at everything. It was also a big house. A few people from UCF were there, which I didn't discover until after the show. I sang well, but my phrasing was not at its best. I am a little congested, and I just wasn't getting good breaths. I had to breathe in my first cadenza, which has

never happened before. Although, I have seen many productions and videos of productions of *Pirates* and I am the only soprano who actually does the cadenza in one breath, except for the phenomenal soprano on the D'Oyly Carte recording. Apparently, tonight's performance was videotaped, and I was a little disappointed that the taping occurred on a night when my cadenza was not as strong. However, everyone else thought it was a great night to tape. Frederic had friends in the audience, which made feel a little pressured to be particularly good tonight. There was still a problem with Braille not moving off the rock in time, which I will address with the production manager tomorrow. Dori and her entire family watched the show tonight. They enjoyed it, which is great, and they are always very complimentary of me.

Oct. 7, 2006

I am exhausted! This felt like the longest day ever. After a late night at the cabaret, I had to get up early and prepare for an audition for Mad Cow's concert version of *The Music Man*. I auditioned for them at 11:20, and then went straight to the Starlight for my matinée call. I talked to the production manager about the issue with Braille. When I went to make my first entrance, Braille did as she was told, and began to move from the rock at the right time. Unfortunately, the paper Mache covering the rock was torn on one of the steps, and Braille caught her foot on it. She tripped down the steps, but luckily, she was not hurt. I watched this happen from backstage and all I could think of was Murphy's Law. During the intermission, someone fixed the rock, so it should not happen again. My voice was fine but I was still having trouble getting the good, deep breaths I need to sing this show. Therefore, my phrasing suffered a bit, but it was better than last night.

During the break between shows, the cast went to Sweet Tomatoes to celebrate one of the cast member's birthdays. I spent some time chatting with the Pirate King, the Police Sergeant, and Dustin about the show's various mishaps. When we returned to the theatre early for the evening show, I took my time getting ready. We had another large, responsive house. Frederic had more friends in the audience, and he sang the show better than ever. I was tired vocally, but I got through the show fine. I commented about feeling as if I was not as vocally strong tonight to Frederic, who said he only noticed my fatigue in "Stay, Frederic, stay!" I was very phlegmy in that number, mainly on the "Oh here is love" section. Too bad there is no way to clear your throat and sing at the same time. There was a minor emergency during intermission. One of the pirates passed out when he exited the stage at the end of Act I. The theatre called an ambulance, and the actor recovered. It was decided that he should not go on for the second act. This caused somewhat of a problem, as he plays a police officer in Act II. Without him, the spacing of all of the police dance numbers looked odd. However, I was surprised at how well the other police officers were able to compensate for having him gone. What was very strange was that the actor who passed out did not go home when we was told not to go on for Act II. He hung around backstage, and then stayed for the cabaret and sang several numbers. This made me doubt the sincerity of his emergency.

Oct. 8, 2006

I tried to get plenty of rest today by sleeping in and not talking very much. Dustin and I were a little slow in leaving for the theatre, so we did not arrive as early as we typically do. I still

got ready in time, but I was pushing it. I usually drink several glasses of water before the show, but tonight I made a throat coat tea because I still felt fatigued. I finished the tea right before I had to go onstage. Once I got onstage, I discovered that the tea was not a good idea. I was completely dried out, and the hot tea made me overheated. I wanted a sip of water so badly, but once I enter the stage for Act I, I don't leave until the end of the act. I got through all my solos with no audible problems, but I was extremely tense and dry. My high notes did not have the freedom that they usually have. At intermission, I gulped down as much water as possible. Act II was easier to sing once I was hydrated. My only goof was in "Ah, leave me not to pine." I was singing well, and I was really trying to punch the diction. I got to the line, "and nature day by day has sung in accents clear..." and really punched the "g" in "sung." After doing so, my voice warbled, causing this breathy hiccup sound. It was very odd. It was the kind of sound that singers sometimes make when they crack or don't really hit a note. What was strange about mine was that it happened as I cut off a note, not as I was approaching the note. After that, I sang as freely as possible, and there were no other problems. I was little embarrassed that this little fluke had to happen tonight, because some other actors I know were in the audience, none of whom have really seen me perform before.

Oct. 11, 2006

And so the last week of performances begins. I have not begun to get sad about the show closing, given that there are still five performances left. My mom and brother arrived from Kentucky on Monday. We spent Tuesday at Epcot, and they came to see the show today.

Although I am glad they came to visit and see my show, it stressful for me to have them around while I am doing a show. Dustin and I barely made our 12:30 call as we were having lunch with my family. When I arrived at the theatre, the costumer had washed both my costumes, even though I had not set them out to be washed. They were extremely wrinkled, so I had to spend 15 minutes of what is normally my hair and makeup time, pressing the costumes myself. To make matters worse, I went to get my Aussie instant freeze hairspray from Dustin and discovered that it was empty. I had a spare bottle of hairspray, but wasn't the kind that can actually hold my curls for the entire show. I was livid and snapped at Dustin about it, even though it wasn't really a big deal. I think I was just reacted to the stress of having my family there and running late. I barely got ready in time for my entrance, but once I got out there, I found that I was in good voice. I had rehearsal for *Singin' in the Rain* on Monday, and then a theme park trip on Tuesday, but somehow I managed to get enough vocal rest. The house was small again, but responsive. Mom and Sam enjoyed it a lot. They are coming again tomorrow. Sam is thirteen, obsessed with video games and Green Day, and complained a little about coming to the show, but once he got there, he was mesmerized. That proves the enduring popularity of G & S, if nothing else does!

Oct. 12, 2006

Last night several members of the cast got together to play board games and go see the movie *The Departed*. We were out late, but I was able to sleep in a little bit, so I was still in good voice today. When we arrived at the theatre, there were several buses, which is always a sign of a big house. They were quite large, but quiet. I had plenty of time to get ready today, which was

nice. During the intermission, all of the girls went outside to take a group picture in costume. It was nice to get a few shots. Although we had a photo call the first weekend of the show, it amounted to nothing. The photographer had not seen the show, and did not have a list of shots to take, so he just took random photos of chorus people. I would have liked him to take some nice shots of me and the other principals on the set, but that didn't happen. However, I will be getting a nice recording of the show. Since the show is public domain, it is not illegal to tape and sell copies of it. The theatre hired someone to make a DVD and CD of the show. The person who is doing it has already taped at least two performances. The plan is that he will edit the DVD with different angles and compile the best performances, but I think that will be difficult to do. I was not thrilled with my performances vocally on the days that we were taped, although one of those shows had a very lively house. Regardless, I am happy that a professional recording of my work will be available to me, something that so rarely happens. Anyway, the show was strong today, but uneventful. My family enjoyed it just as much the second time, although they did comment that yesterday's house was having more fun. After rehearsal the production manager announced that the performers in *Pirates* who are also in *Singin'* do not have to attend tonight's *Singin'* rehearsal. I was thrilled to hear that because it allows me more time to spend with my family.

Oct. 13, 2006

I arrived at the theatre today at 10:00 AM for *Singin' in the Rain* rehearsal. I was exhausted all day, even though I had last night off. The rehearsal was long and monotonous. Luckily, I got a decent dinner break and was able to muster up energy for the show. The performance was strong.

The person making the DVD filmed the show again. There was one crazy thing that happened. At the end of Act I, Ruth approaches Frederic and pushes me into a group of pirates. One of the daughters, Rachel, always runs to me and rescues me from the pirates. Tonight, I was pushed into the pirates as usual, and Rachel rescued me as usual. This time, however, as we got away from the pirates, I stepped onto my skirt and toppled to the floor, taking Rachel with me. I landed on my butt and Rachel landed on top of me, which prompted many of the male cast members to tell us later that our accident was “hot.” It turns out that the hem of Rachel’s dress had ripped out in an earlier number, so she tripped on her skirt as well. Neither of us was hurt, but nearly everyone asked if we were okay when the act ended. Of course, this all had to happen while we were being filmed. Oh well. There was another crisis this evening. Patrick, the cast member who “passed out” earlier in the run, was discovered cutting himself during intermission. I was suspicious that something like this might happen, as I saw Patrick take one of the prop swords for the prop area right before “Poor wandering one!” The pirates don’t come on until several numbers later, and I wondered why he was taking the sword so early. It turns out that this was the only sword used in the show that I did not cover in duck tape for safety, because it was incased in a cane, and used only as a cane in the show. Then at intermission, one of the other pirates asked me where the production manager was, because Patrick was seen cutting himself with the sword. I don’t know how the production manager handled the situation, but I do know that Patrick only pulled this stunt for attention. He has a crush on one for the girls in the cast, who politely rejected him, and ever since, he has been doing all kinds of things to get attention. Tonight’s cutting incident was the most dramatic, and I certainly think it was a bad enough stunt to get him fired. However, I don’t know if that will happen, since we only have three performances left.

Oct. 14, 2006

I was very tired last night when I got home late from the cabaret, but I still got enough sleep. I felt rested when I woke up, which has not been the case the last several days. The last member of my committee, Nick, came today and brought Gary Cadwallader with him. Overall, it was good matinée, but I had a couple of problems during the show. When I made my first entrance, I hit the proscenium with my parasol, and it would not stay open for the rest of “Poor wandering one!” Every time I would try to open it, it would close up on itself. This caused much of the physical humor in the number to be lost. However, I was so focused on dealing with the parasol that I didn’t even think about my singing, which made my singing very free. As if the parasol issue wasn’t enough, my left eye began watering during the number as well. Frederic thought I might be crying because of the problems with the parasol, but that was not the case. I think I must have had an allergic reaction to something, as it only affected my left eye. Eye makeup began to run down my face, but Frederic wiped it away at an appropriate moment. Apparently, all the daughters saw my tears as well, because many of them asked if I was okay. I don’t think anyone in the audience could see my eye watering, though. After those initial problems, the show went fine, and I was happy about it. Nick and Gary seemed to truly enjoy the show and I talked to them for a while after the performance. They said that they were surprised that the show was so good, and they were happy to see many interesting directorial choices. Frederic asked if the inclusion of two young pirates bothered them, and they said no. They thought it made sense for there to be a few young pirates, since Frederic was apprenticed to the band at 10 years old. Nick didn’t like the interpolation of “My Eyes are Fully Open” from *Ruddigore*,

because it makes the trio scene so long, but he said it was well performed and the audience really enjoyed it. Gary praised my work and said that I am strong in this performance style. He went on to say I should pursue more opportunities in operetta, like auditioning for Ohio Light Opera and the NY Gilbert & Sullivan players. Nick agreed. It was nice to get some good feedback about the show from people I respect. By the time the evening performance rolled around, I was tired, but I got through the show fine. I got ready early and watched several of the numbers in the show that I had not gotten to watch before. After the show, most of the cast was riled up to go out somewhere, but I was starting to feel sad about the show closing. I went home and got in bed early, in the hopes that I would get enough rest to do a great final performance.

Oct. 15, 2006

I was sad when I went to bed last night, but the sadness of the show closing did not hit me today. I had to get up and be at the theatre early because I was asked to be a part of the movie filming for *Singin' in the Rain*. I was worried it was going to be a stressful day, but it turned out to be relaxing. Most of the day was spent watching the other scenes get filmed, and the scene I was in didn't take very long. Once it was call time for the show, I was able to chill out and really enjoy performing it. I was in fine vocal shape. During the scene where the daughters cry about the Major General being an orphan, Frederic whispered to me, "This is the last time you'll have to do this, at least until you play Mabel again!" I hope I do get to play Mabel again. Dustin actually messed up for the first time ever in the Major General's song, although it was only a tiny mistake. Instead of saying, "and tell you every detail of Caratacus's uniform," he said "and tell you every

detail of Caratacus's *unicorn*." This was the subject of much laughter after the show. I think everyone had a good time tonight. There was nice cast party afterward in the theatre lobby. I am disappointed that several of my classmates from school did not come to see the show. It definitely made me feel that they don't care about endeavors. However, many people did see the show and there was a good buzz about my performance. I am very proud of my work in the show and I had a great time playing the role of Mabel again.

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