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PO Box 10278
ADELAIDE BC SA 5000

info@theatreguide.com.au
ABN : 93 297 960 525

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE, OR THE SLAVE OF DUTY

SALOS

Goodwood Institute
Until 15 September 2007

Review by Stephen Davenport

Eat your heart out Jack Sparrow – the original genteel Pirates of swashing buckles are back! There's a reason Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance" has been performed practically non-stop since its debut in 1879: it's simply entertaining. SALOS presents an energetic, humorous production notable for the zest with which it floods the stage with full-bodied singing.

This is a straightforward production of "Pirates," and naturally includes the now traditional - additional (contemporary) - verse by the Major General in his signature song, "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major General." Director, Pam Tucker admirably adheres to the Victoriana whimsy. Pirates ably led by Aaron MacDonald (Pirate King) pursue the Major General's (Les Nutter) daughters, while craven policemen under the command of their Sergeant (Daniel Martucci) hide.

Kurtys has a pleasing voice and an obvious delight in playing the hero Frederic; the duty bound apprentice pirate. The Major General's daughters (the female chorus) all have decent voices and played their roles with youthful vitality. Danielle Ruggiero as Mabel (the eldest daughter) has a distinctive voice and her duet with Frederic is charming. Sandra Fameli as Ruth is delightfully wicked and 16-year-old tenor, Alex Bond, has an excellent voice. Overall, the quality of singing is pleasing enough to ignore some of the weaker vocals.

This is a production packed with energy, ambition and spectacle. SALOS has shanghaied much of the humour and originality of Gilbert and Sullivan's buccaneer spoof. Every imaginable pirate jest is joyously bundled into a treasure chest in this singing-action-adventure-satire. The mirth is constantly evolving throughout the performance with some amusing banter between the actors and sometimes with the orchestra led by conductor Daphne Harris. It's all high spirits on the high seas with tongue planted firmly in cheek and the cast revel in it.

The scenery's effectively simple and the costumes are colourful enough to make this production a visual pleasure. It's grand operatic fun with solid leads and a wonderful, animated supporting cast. It's too much fun to miss.