

BROS Theatre Company

## **The Pirates of Penzance • March 2000 • Hampton Hill Playhouse**

REVIEW

There was no attempt to update Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* in Clare Henderson Roe and Stephanie Smith's enjoyable production for BROS Theatre Company at the Hampton Hill Playhouse last week, except perhaps for Ruth's ad lib about her cold, slipped in at a strategic point. (Does this reviewer know this show? - Ed).

Hard to believe this opera was first produced 120 years ago since it still comes over fresh as paint, although its parodies have become mostly obscure to modern audiences.

In this traditional, ever-so slightly pastiched version, we heard every syllable of the dialogue, spoken or sung, so every twist of the plot was crystal clear and we knew almost immediately that Frederic, with mark Fallon contributing a mellow light tenor in the role, had been apprenticed by mistake to the pirates but about to be freed at age 21.

He is completely bowled over by Clair Jardella's bubbling, vivacious Mabel, who is also blessed with a captivating singing voice.

As Ruth, the feisty piratical maid, Amanda Stenhouse schemed unsuccessfully to snare Frederic. One of the best musical moments of the evening was 'When You Left Our Pirate Fold' - a most ingenious paradox sung with Frederic and the Pirate King

There were some nicely comic touches from the Keystone Cops-type police dressed in Victorian striped bathing drawers and the less than stouthearted Lieutenant Samuel of Edward Barrett's leading the pirates 'With Cat-Like Tread.'

Heavily disguised in deerstalker and tweeds, Steve Alais, was in impressive command of the 'patter song' - the Very Model of a Modern Major General' and his numerous daughters looked very fetching in song and dance, particularly in 'Oh Dry the Glistening Tear' and 'Stop, Ladies Pray!'

Revelations that the pirates are in fact 'noblemen gone wrong who, with all their faults still love their Queen' ensures a happy ending as the full company joined in the sweetly lyrical 'Sighing Softly to the River'. Great stuff!!

**Jenny Scott**  
**Richmond & Twickenham Times**

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