

Pirates of Penzance: 29th October 2017

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Before I don my critic's black cap and pass to judgment, let me state firmly that Ramsgate Operatic Societies production of The Pirates of Penzance made for a very jolly afternoon.

Peter Barnett struck a happy balance between traditional nuances and modern touches with this production, which for the most part worked rather well and his ability to move a company around a limited space should be congratulated. A lovely surprise was being treated to a Pirate Queen played with gusto by Justine Lisa Horne. Her acting was confident and commanding as required. I just feel her costume may have been a little distracting for her fellow pirate companions especially when these roughish men were at sea for such a length of time!

The cast as an ensemble worked incredibly well and gave us a very solid and secure performance throughout. The singing was strong though at times some of the harmonies were lacking. The orchestra ably led by Robert Drywood who stepped into the role of MD only a couple of days before opening night. They sounded superb and the whole company should be commended for dealing so professionally with a last minute change. Choreography by Sarah Matthews was suitable and cleverly executed in a small space. It was a pleasure to see performers of all ages allowed to show their dance ability.

Megan Louise Philpott was well cast as Mabel the beautiful, if slightly self-absorbed, Major General's daughter. Her singing, especially during Poor Wandering One showed her ability to showboat as is required of a Gilbert and Sullivan soprano. Luc Humphries' sweet, light tenor made him a charming Frederic, bringing an appropriate touch of the good-natured head-boy to the Pirate Queen. Sarah Miles and Adrianna Paniak as Edith and Kate respectively appeared to revel in their roles. Sarah's beautiful singing and Adrianna's natural comic intuition really added to the value of their roles. There wasn't a moment when they weren't engaged in the action.

Roger Lee does a nicely understated comic turn as the lugubrious Sergeant of Police, and Gill Baker makes a splendidly gutsy Ruth whose vocals were of an excellent quality. Dudley Gore played the Major-General well with the right balance of authority and mischief. I was a little disappointed that his wonderful patter number didn't contain an up to date topical verse. Terry Bunton as Samuel and Daisy Foster as Isabel supported the company well doing everything that was required of them and the small chorus relished the opportunity to frolic as pirates, policemen, and simpering maidens.