



HOT Season for Young People 2014-15 Teacher Guidebook

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

NASHVILLE OPERA



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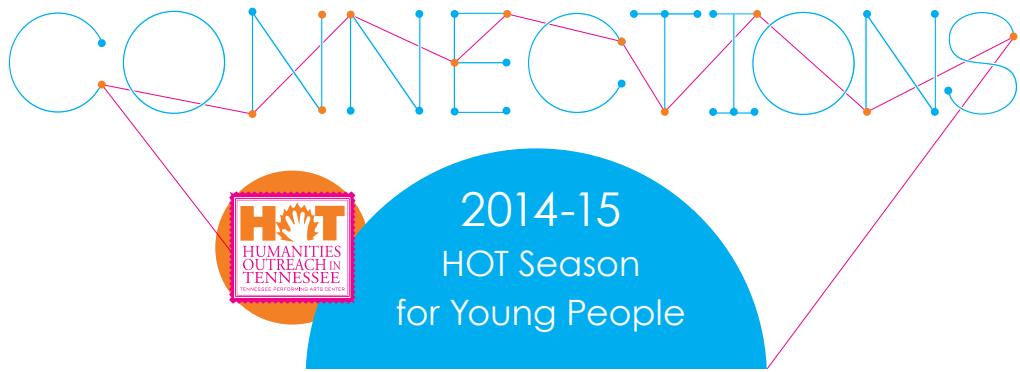


For over 130 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our area has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to support TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is – reaching over 25,000 students and teachers – some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

Jim Schmitz
Executive Vice President, Area Executive
Middle Tennessee Area



Dear Teachers

We are so pleased to be able to partner with Nashville Opera to bring students to the invited dress rehearsal of *The Pirates of Penzance*. We thank Nashville Opera for the use of their extensive study guide for adults. It will aid you in preparing your students for the performance with a synopsis, opera background, and musical information. Additional information and short explorations are included in this booklet for you to share with students.

Please look particularly at the opera rehearsal information, which will help students understand the special factors present in an invited dress rehearsal.

Enjoy!

**TPAC
Education**



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Nashville Opera Guidebook written by Chandra McKern
TPAC Guidebook compiled by Lattie Brown



Opera Dress Rehearsal

Most final dress rehearsals are almost exactly like a performance. The director will stop the action if needed, but it is exceedingly rare and generally only for a technical malfunction on the stage. Like theatre, an opera dress rehearsal is the final chance before the performance to make a complicated collaboration come together seamlessly.

In the Studio

The Nashville Opera's rehearsal schedule begins with two weeks at the opera rehearsal space in the Noah Liff Opera Center. Stage action is mapped out, the performers experiment with their characters, and the director's ideas for the flow of the opera are shared with the cast. The time period may seem short for such a large production. It only works because opera singers begin rehearsals knowing every bit of their music by heart and having rehearsed it themselves over a period of months, sometimes years. If they do not know the role on the first day, the director has the right to replace them immediately. The opera company will fly in a new singer to take over their part. Once opera singers learn a particular role, they keep it in their repertory and play the role many more times at different opera companies around the world.

In the Theater

Four to five days before the first performance, the set is "loaded in" to the theater, and the lights are hung and focused. Students will notice a table in the middle of the orchestra level seats for the stage manager, the director, and the designers.

This serves as a central location for communicating with the singers and crew on stage, the conductor in the orchestra pit, and the technicians in the lighting booth. During the final dress rehearsal, students may notice lighting changes as the designer makes final adjustments.

Technical Dress Rehearsals and Dress Rehearsals

Opera rehearsals use a skilled piano accompanist, but once the company moves into the theater, the performers will have a *Sitzprobe* rehearsal (a German word meaning to sit and try out.) The *Sitzprobe* is a "sing-thru" with the orchestra and conductor, concentrating on the nuances of the music only without staging. It is the first time that the orchestra and singers put together the work that they have been doing in separate orchestra rehearsals and staging rehearsals.



TPAC's Jackson Hall stage

A piano tech rehearsal is held without costumes to let the singers get used to the set and give the set crew their first chance to practice scene changes. The next rehearsal is a piano dress rehearsal that adds costumes. Finally, the orchestra dress rehearsal puts all the elements together: lighting, set changes, costumes, the orchestra, and the supertitles (the English translations of the lyrics, called the libretto.) The supertitles will be in operation at the final invited dress rehearsal.

Final Dress

The final dress rehearsal allows the last polish before the performance, and invited dress rehearsals add the final important element to the opera, an audience. Because of the strenuous nature of the singing, a singer may choose to "mark" on the final dress rehearsal in order to preserve his or her voice for all the performances. "Marking" does not have the same meaning in opera as it does in theatre. In theatre, it means just going through the blocking and the words of the lines. In opera, it specifically means that the singer may choose not to sing at full volume, not pushing their voice to the utmost. All of their acting and vocal expression will be at full power, however, with all the passion and conviction that opera requires. You will be their first audience; they are ready and excited to give you the story and the music.

Opera 101 ~ Hints to get the most out of opera

Angela Lansbury as Ruth, Rex Smith as Frederic, and Kevin Kline as the Pirate King in the 1983 movie version of the Broadway revival of *The Pirates of Penzance*.



Step 1~Know the story!

In opera, it is important to know as much as possible about what is going on beforehand, including the ending. By all means, read the synopsis and libretto; listen to a recording! Once the music, the voices, the setting, the lights, and the dramatic staging come together at the performance, audience members will be better able to integrate all the elements together into the plot. The plot then becomes the springboard for the real power of opera, the music.

Step 2~Experience the music!

Composers use many tools to communicate with music. They create melodies that evoke a variety of emotions. They use tempos (how slow or fast) and dynamics (how loud or soft) and rhythms (the frequency and pattern of beat.) They choose particular instruments to add color to the music they have written. Think of instrument choice as a type of painting for your ears! The term “soundscape” is often used in describing the music of an opera, and it can set the atmosphere and give information about character and plot. What is it telling you?

Step 3 ~Understand the singers!

Opera singers are vocal athletes. They practice every day to exercise their vocal chords and their extensive breath control. The combinations of notes that they have to sing are very difficult, and the things that they can do with their voices are extreme. You can easily compare a regular singing voice and an opera singing voice to a weekend jogger and a gold-medal-winning Olympic track champion! BUT, the reason that their voices are prized is that they can express so much emotion on a grand scale.

Step 4~Plunge in!

This is the most important step. Everything about opera is over-the-top, on the edge, enormous in every way. It's an art form that thrives on its intensity and passion. Opera stories portray people at their most extreme, and the singers and the music communicate in ways that words alone cannot. You have to let go, allow yourself to stop thinking and analyzing and simply FEEL THE EMOTION!

(with acknowledgements to *Opera 101* by Fred Plotkin for idea organization above)

Short Explorations

Society Satire

The *Pirates of Penzance* was first performed in London in 1880, near the end of the Victorian Era (1839-1901,) and Gilbert and Sullivan were the popular entertainers of the day. Though we may not understand every reference to the extent an 1880 audience would, we can still enjoy the way the two men lampooned the misuse of key aspects of their time. Victorian society was known for its attention to high morals, modesty, and extremely proper decorum, as well as the importance placed on duty and social responsibility. Gilbert and Sullivan approved of these worthy pursuits, but elegantly mocked following them to an excessive degree or for the wrong reasons.

To fully appreciate the humor in *The Pirates of Penzance*, it will be helpful for your students to know the story before attending the performance. The humor and dialogue are so fast-moving that when he was alive, Gilbert always insisted the entire libretto be printed in each program so the audience could dutifully follow along! The Boise State Math department keeps an excellent G&S website where you can find an easily printable copy of the libretto here: diamond.boisestate.edu/gas/pirates/pirates_lib.pdf

ASK STUDENTS -

- to choose a quality they most admire in their peers for use in satire through exaggeration. Brainstorm and invent a funny situation set-up of a few sentences with one or all of the following:

- the character has too much of the quality
- the character uses the quality in an inappropriate way or setting
- the character is dedicated only to the quality itself, not the reasons it is a good quality.

Use confidence as an example to further explain this process.

Encourage students to go way over the top with their set-ups.

Patter Songs

Patter songs are characterized by a fast tempo with a rapid succession of rhythmic patterns, in which each syllable of text corresponds to one note, with tongue-twisting, rhyming, and alliterative language. Performing many of the songs in *The Pirates of Penzance* requires rigorous vocal practice in enunciation, breathing, and rhythmic speed. Patter songs are usually wordy, lightning fast, and are half spoken, half sung. The singer's main focus is making sure they use perfect diction, allowing their audience to understand the text.

Before singers begin to work on patter songs, they first need to warm-up their mouth and lips. Ask your students to warm-up by trying the tongue-twisters below.



Broadway star, George Rose, as the Major-General

ASK STUDENTS:

Start out saying the tongue twisters slowly with perfect English diction (you can even try an English accent). Speed them up, repeating each at least 3 times. Can students still maintain their diction enough for another person to understand what they are saying?

The big black bug, bit a big black bear, and the big black bear bled blood-ugh!

Round and round the rugged rock the ragged rascal ran. (try rolling your R's!)

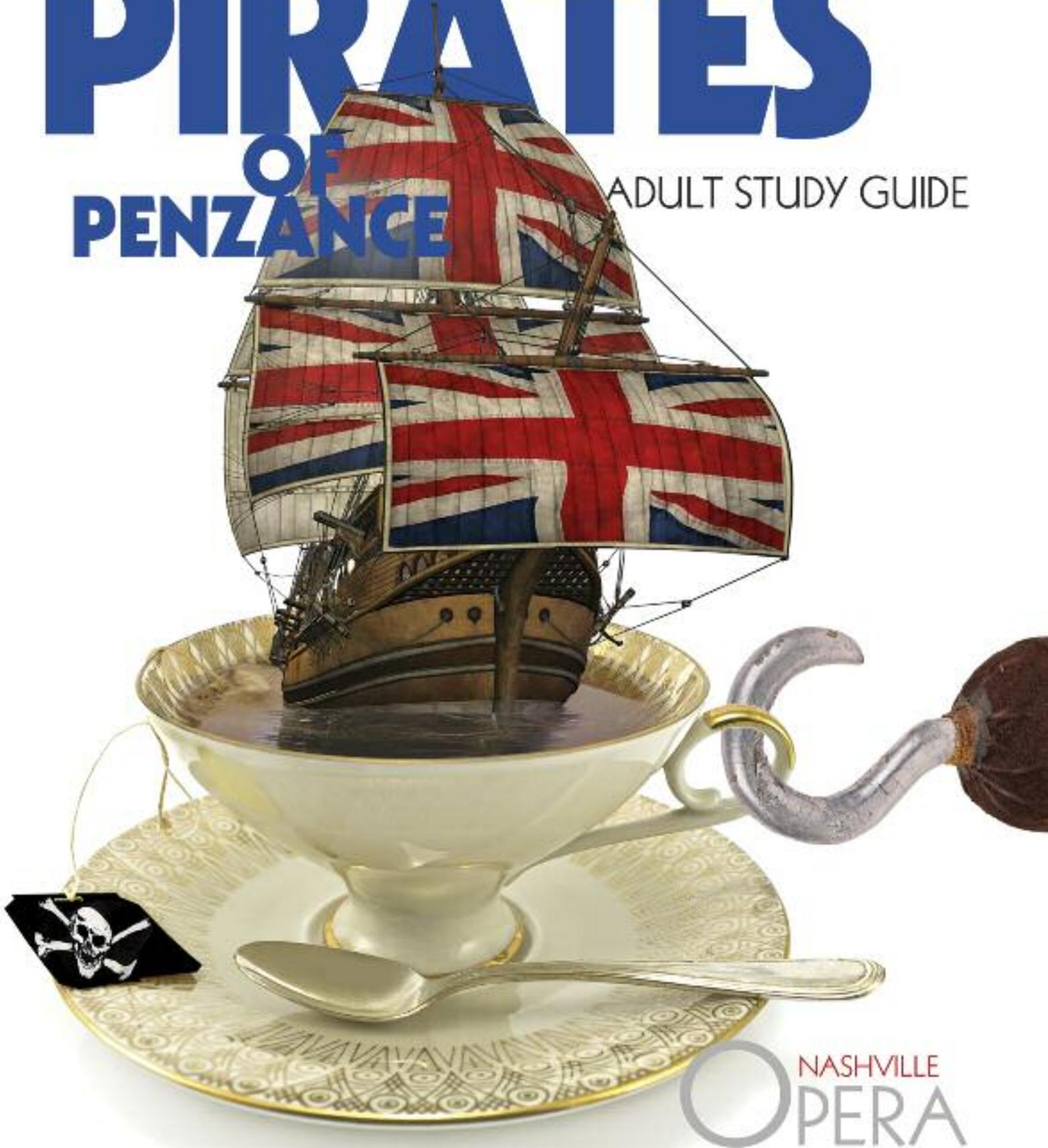
Red leather, yellow leather

A Proper Copper Coffee Pot

Next, ask students to read out loud the most famous patter song in the English language from *The Pirates of Penzance*, "I Am the Very Model of a Model Major-General." They should read at least two to three verses to feel the build of difficulty. You can find a copy with a simple Google search, and there are many YouTube videos to watch as well, after students have attempted it themselves.

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

ADULT STUDY GUIDE



NASHVILLE
OPERA



presents

THE PIRATES OF PENDZANCE

Music by Arthur Sullivan • Libretto by W. S. Gilbert

First performance December 31, 1879, Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York, New York

Thursday, April 9, 2015, 7 p.m. • Saturday, April 11, 2015, 8 p.m.

Andrew Jackson Hall, Tennessee Performing Arts Center

Directed by Dean Anthony

Conducted by William Boggs

Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

CAST & CHARACTERS

Pirate King	Craig Irvin, baritone
Ruth	Maria Zifchak, contralto* <i>The Bovender Principal Artist</i>
Frederic	Christopher Nelson, tenor*
Major-General Stanley	Curt Olds, baritone*
Sergeant	Aaron Sorenson, bass*
Samuel	Alex Soare, baritone*
Mabel	Hanna Brammer, soprano*
Edith	Christine Amon, mezzo-soprano*
Kate	Brooke Hazen (Chorus)
Isabel	Emily Apuzzo (Chorus)

* Nashville Opera debut

TICKETS

Available at all Ticketmaster outlets or at 615.255.ARTS
Nashville Opera, 615.832.5242, nashvilleopera.org

MORE INFORMATION

Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit nashvilleopera.org.

Study Guide Contributors

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THE STORY

Act I – Cornish coast of England, 19th century

It is Frederic's twenty-first birthday and he is being congratulated for completing his apprenticeship with the local band of pirates. They have been put ashore on the rocky coast of Cornwall and the all-male chorus of pirates presents the number, "Pour, O pour the pirate sherry." The pirates now expect him to join them as a full-fledged member of the group. Frederic, however, states that he does not wish to be a pirate, that he chooses pirate work and stayed on all these years only because he was a slave of duty and he had to honor his contract. He plans to leave the band without delay and devote himself to the elimination of the pirates from the region. His former nurse Ruth speaks up and explains in her entrance aria "When Frederic was a Little Lad" that she misunderstood Frederic's father to train him as a "pilot" and apprenticed him to a "pirate" instead. The heavy quality of the punctuated orchestral accompaniment lends itself to the clumsy, stout character of Ruth. She continues to explain how she loyally remained with Frederic becoming a maid-of-all-work for the pirates. Now that Frederic wants to leave she hopes he will take her along and marry her.

The Pirate King makes his entrance with his famous solo aria, "I am the Pirate King." Frederic implores the pirates to join him in renouncing piracy, but the Pirate King replies that would be impossible. He then reminds Frederic that since he will not be twenty-one until 12:00 noon, he must honor the interests of the pirates until then and answer why the pirate band cannot seem to make piracy pay. Frederic dutifully replies that it is because the pirates are too tenderhearted and word has gotten out that they never accost an orphan. It seems that every pirate in the group is an orphan and they always take pity on anyone of similar background. Unfortunately, the last three ships they raided were manned entirely by orphans, so they had to let them go.

The pirates leave Frederic alone with Ruth who is still trying to convince Frederic to marry her. Frederic is concerned that since he has not seen a female from the time he was eight, he has no way of knowing if Ruth is beautiful. She assures him she is and Frederic agrees to marry her. Just then he hears the sound of female voices and from his vantage point observes a group of young women arriving on the beach. He realizes at once what true female beauty is and renounces Ruth on the spot in a melodramatic duet. After Frederic conceals himself, a chorus of girls enters singing "Climbing over rocky mountain". Frederic watches as the young women cavort on the beach and begin to take off their shoes and stockings. Frederic's sense of honor does not allow him to observe them unannounced in this state of undress, so he comes out of hiding. He addresses the girls and asks the young women if one of them would not take pity on him and marry him. One of the girls, Mabel, pipes up with a resounding "yes." Mabel continues, singing her aria, "Poor wand'ring one," confirming her choice to wed Frederic. Frederic cautions the sisters that there are pirates about and suggests they

leave the area. However, before they can do so, the girls are surrounded by the band of pirates and seized!

Mabel steps forward and informs them that they are all daughters of Major-General Stanley. The pirates are momentarily subdued and before they can recover the Major-General strides into their midst! The long-awaited entrance of the Major-General provides the opportunity for the most famous Gilbert and Sullivan patter songs, "I am the very model of a modern Major-General." The Act I finale follows directly with the Major-General beseeching the pirates to release his daughters because he is an orphan. The pirates immediately take pity on him. The Pirate King then releases the girls and makes them all honorary members of the pirate band. There is general rejoicing and dancing to celebrate the impending marriage of Frederic and Mabel. Everyone is happy except Ruth who continues to implore Frederic not to leave her.

Act II

Major-General Stanley is feeling great remorse because the story he told the pirates about being an orphan was a lie. He has come to the tombs of his ancestors to ask forgiveness for bringing dishonor on the family name. His daughters try to console him. Frederic reminds him that since he brought the property only a year ago, the ancestors in these tombs are not his. The Major-General replies that he is their descendent by purchase. He would like to tell the pirates the truth but is afraid of the consequences. He gains some solace from the fact that Frederic will be leading the local police against the pirates that very night to wipe them out for good. Then the marriage of Frederic and Mabel can take place because Frederic's conscience will be clear.

The police arrive to deal with the pirates. The police seem less enthusiastic about their quest after hearing the young ladies put it in those terms, but they finally move out in search of the pirates. Frederic is about to join them when he is startled by the arrival of Ruth and the Pirate King. They have come to share with Frederic that they have uncovered an amazing situation—a paradox. In an amusing trio, they relate that Frederic was born on February 29, 1856, which was twenty-one years ago. However, his actual birthday comes around only once every four years because he was born in a leap year. Therefore, he won't actually have twenty-one birthdays until 1940! So, now he has no choice but return to the pirates and fulfill his apprenticeship.

Frederic is taken aback and protests strongly until he is reminded of his sense of duty. He capitulates immediately. He also feels duty-bound to reveal that Major-General Stanley is not an orphan. The Pirate King shouts that they will attack the estate that very night and exact a terrible retribution for this falsehood. He and Ruth leave to assemble the pirate band. Frederic bids farewell to Mabel, telling her that duty calls him and he must obey. He

promises to return for her in 1940. The police return to the estate empty-handed and simultaneously the pirate band creeps silently toward the slumbering household. The police hide as the pirates come into view.

Meanwhile, Major-General Stanley is pacing about in his sleeping gown too tormented by his falsehood to rest easy. He is joined by his concerned daughters who have risen from their beds. Thus, they are all together when the pirates attack. The pirates are seizing their prey when the police jump out of their hiding places and begin to struggle with the pirates. The pirates are gaining the upper hand when the Sergeant of Police stops them in their tracks by invoking

the name of Queen Victoria. The pirates immediately kneel down in submission. They are about to be lead away by the police when Ruth steps forward and reveals that these men are not ordinary pirates but “noblemen who have gone wrong.” Major-General Stanley is suitable impressed. With a grand gesture he pardons them all and gives them his daughters in marriage. There is general rejoicing as the Major-General strides majestically among the newly-betrothed couples, giving his blessing, and feeling pride that in the task of marrying off his daughters he has been the very model of a modern major-general. The finale music is a reprise of the waltz, “Poor wand’ring one,” sung by the entire company.

A SHORT HISTORY OF OPERETTA

While the term “operetta” is sometimes described simply as “light” opera, in reality it is a genre of musical theater with a developmental history that traces its roots to eighteenth-century comic opera. During the seventeenth-century, the opera world was dominated by Italian opera seria. Within the opera seria, comedic episodes were frequently interspersed within the serious subject matter. Early in the eighteenth-century this practice was discontinued when comic scenes in serious opera were determined to be inappropriate and not relevant to the plot. However, comic scenes and plots still survived in the opera house.

Operettas were presented in between the acts of the serious opera and were called intermezzi. Eventually the plots of the two individual intermezzi performed during the intermissions of a three-act serious opera were linked together to form one continuous plot. One example of the merging of two intermezzi in this manner is Pergolesi’s *La Serva Padrona*, written in 1733 and still performed today. This new concept resulted in the development of a distinctly separate operatic form called the opera buffa.

Opera buffa was the comic opera of Italy. This form of opera was a reflection of national popular culture and as such it manifested itself in distinct ways when it crossed national borders. The French developed opéra comique, the English created the ballad opera. In Germany comic opera developed as the Singspiel and in Spain the form was called the zarzuela and the tonadilla. For all their national differences they shared many common features: plots that featured the common people, a less complicated musical style, and

spoken dialogue rather than sung recitatives (with the exception of Italian opera buffa).

By the end of the eighteenth-century comic opera had become more sophisticated and refined in its subject matter and more complex musically. Eventually musical innovations found in comic opera, such as use of the bass voice, multi-character ensembles and ensemble finales were incorporated into serious opera. In the nineteenth-century French composers experimented with a more lighthearted version of the opéra comique, which stressed parody and wit to amuse its audience. This variation of the comic opera became known as the operetta. Composer Jacques Offenbach burst on the Paris scene in 1858 with his acclaimed operetta *Orphée aux Enfers* (*Orpheus in the Underworld*). This, and his hugely popular subsequent works, firmly established the operetta as a separate genre of musical theater.

Offenbach’s works had a wide-ranging impact that influenced composers of many other countries. Operetta flourished in Vienna from about 1870 under such composers as Von Suppé and Strauss, and the era of the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas in England commenced in 1871. Operetta crossed the Atlantic and found a welcoming home. American composers of European ancestry such as Rudolf Friml, Victor Herbert and Sigmund Romberg continued the operetta tradition in America, which prospered for many years. Operetta as an art form eventually gave rise to the Broadway musical, which continues today as a unique American contribution to the world of musical theater.

LISTEN FOR THIS!

Act I

“Pour, oh pour the pirate sherry” – Samuel and the pirates sing this to celebrate the end of Frederic’s apprenticeship.

“When Frederic was a little lad” – Ruth sings about her blunder; she binds Frederic to an apprenticeship with a pirate, rather than a pilot.

“Oh, better far to live and die” – The Pirate King and his crew sing about the joy being pirates.

“Oh, false one, you have deceived me” – This is a duet between Ruth and Frederic. Frederic realizes the mistake Ruth made and as Frederic leaves the pirates, Ruth asks to be his wife.

“Oh, is there not one maiden breast” – Frederic laments because none of the girls are interested in him. However at the very end of the song, one girl speaks up, Mabel.

“Poor wandering one!” – Mabel proclaims that the love that she has now belongs to Frederic. The other girls shy away and say Frederic can take “any heart but theirs.”

“I am the very model of a modern Major-General” – The major-general sings about his adventures and knowledge to prove that he is in fact a true major-general.

Act II

“Oh, dry the glistening tear” – Mabel and the girls sing to Major-General, inquiring as to why he is sad and why he does not sleep. Major-General announces that he lied about being an orphan and is concerned about the pirates returning.

“Now for the pirates’ lair!” – Frederic admits the crimes he committed as a pirate. Pirate King and Ruth come to take Frederic hostage.

“Away, away, my heart’s on fire” – Pirate King realizes the lie the major-general told and promises to take revenge.

“All is prepared” – Frederic laments to Mabel about his return to the pirates and that he must leave her.

“Stay, Frederic stay!” – Mabel desires for Frederic to stay with her, but he must join the pirates.

“A rollicking band of pirates we” – The pirates make their way to shore and the police prepare for the battle.

RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS & VIDEO

Label: Decca Music Group Limited (1989)

Conductor: Isidore Godfrey

Performers: Royal Philharmonic Orchestra &
D’Oyly Carte Opera Company

Label: TELARC (1993)

Conductor: Charles Mackerras

Performers: Welsh National Opera (Orchestra & Chorus)

Label: Suite 102 (2009)

Conductor: Alex Faris

Performers: Hamburg Radio Symphony Orchestra &
The Linden Singers of London

Universal Pictures released a movie adaptation of Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic operetta in 1983. This film was produced by Universal, St. Michael Finance Limited, and Timothy Burrill Productions.

ABOUT THE COMPOSER

Full Name: Arthur Sullivan

Dates: 1842–1900

Nationality: English

Period/Style: 20st Century

LIFE AND CAREER

Arthur Sullivan was born on May 13, 1842 in Lambeth, London. He was born to Thomas Sullivan, a clarinetist and a military band-master, and Mary Clementina. Sullivan, being born into a musical family, was immersed in music immediately and composed an anthem, "By the Waters of Babylon," at the age of eight. When Sullivan turned eleven, he was admitted to the choir of the Chapel Royal as a soloist. Sullivan learned under Reverend Thomas Helmore, the master of choirs, and composed many songs and anthems. Helmore assisted Sullivan in his composition of "O Israel," which got published in 1855.

At the age of fourteen, Sullivan received the Mendelssohn Scholarship from the Royal Academy of Music and therefore got training in the Academy for one year. Sullivan was successful and his scholarship got extended for two more years. During his third year, he studied at the Leipzig Conservatoire. In 1862, Sullivan gave a triumphant performance. From this performance forward, he began his career as a promising young composer in England.

Sullivan returned to England and began working as a church organist in addition to his compositional career. He was given the opportunity to compose several pieces for the wedding of the Prince of



Wales and later joined the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden where he composed L'Il Echante. The "Overture di Ballo" was Sullivan's most successful orchestral work. He composed this piece for the Birmingham Festival in 1870. In 1871, Sullivan composed numerous works. He created a series of incidental music for the Shakespearean plays by West End Theatre. Sullivan also composed a cantata, "On Shore and Sea," which was performed in the opening ceremony of the London International Exhibition. During this same year, Sullivan collaborated with W.S. Gilbert for the first time to compose a comic opera called Thespis. This project began a relationship that lasted a long time. Sullivan continued to have many successes and became a knight under Queen Victoria on May 22, 1883.

Arthur Sullivan some serious love affairs, but never got married during his lifetime. His brother, Fred, died at the early age of thirty-nine, leaving behind his pregnant wife and seven children. Sullivan visited his brother's family very often and even became the guardian of his children. Arthur Sullivan had suffered from various recurring kidney diseases. Later, he got bronchitis and died on November 22, 1900 following a heart attack.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Countless recordings have been made of *The Pirates of Penzance*, starting in 1921 with recording artists under the direction of Rupert D'Oyly Carte.

In addition to the 1983 film based on the 1981 Broadway production, *The Pirates of Penzance* has inspired a number of other movies, TV shows, musical comedies, and theatrical events and has been a pop culture reference for decades.

"I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General" is perhaps the most famous song in all of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas. It has been used numerous times in commercials, been referenced in a plethora of popular movies and television shows, and is a mainstay audition song among performers.

OTHER OPERAS BY G&S

- Thespis*, 1871
- Trial by Jury*, 1875
- The Sorcerer*, 1877
- H.M.S. Pinafore*, 1878
- Patience*, 1881
- Iolanthe*, 1882
- Princess Ida*, 1884
- The Mikado*, 1885
- The Yeomen of the Guard*, 1888
- Gondoliers*, 1889
- The Grand Duke*, 1896

ABOUT THE LIBRETTIST

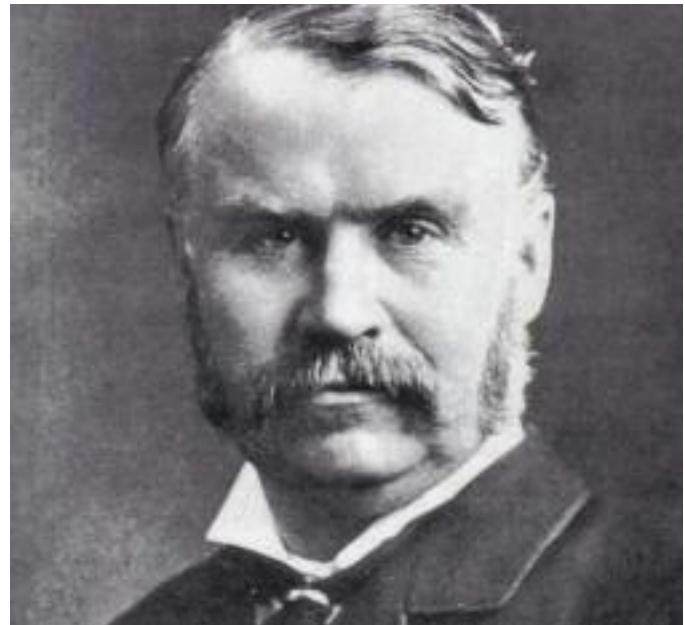
Full Name: William Schwenck Gilbert

Dates: 1836–1911

Nationality: English

LIFE AND CAREER

William Schwenck Gilbert was one of the most original dramatists of the nineteenth century. He is best known today for having been the “words man” behind the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, but, while this was indeed his greatest achievement, it was far from being his only achievement. Much of his work remains practically unknown today, and even his best-known works such as *The Mikado* and *The Pirates of Penzance* are rarely considered worth serious study. W.S. Gilbert was a dramatist, poet, and satirist before composing the lyrics for the operas that brought him to fame. Gilbert was born on November 18, 1836, in London to a retired naval surgeon. He began his studies at the Great Ealing School and then continued at King’s College. Gilbert began by studying law but did not receive enough wealthy clients to be successful financially. After leaving the field of law, he began a comedic freelance writing career. Gilbert’s first professionally produced play was *Uncle Baby*, which premiered at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in London on October 31, 1863. Some other satirical plays that Gilbert wrote include *Hush-a-By-Baby* (1866), *Dulcemara* or *The Little Duck and the Great Quack* (1866), and *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871).



Gilbert’s writings for theater included farces, operetta librettos, adaptations of famous novels such as Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, and translations of French drama. Gilbert wanted his plays published and the first volume of his plays was published in 1875 by Chatto and Windus in a bound, well-printed volume. Gilbert eventually published three more volumes of his original plays, and because of his rising fame, he made a profit from them.

Gilbert and Sullivan worked together for twenty-five years and had many successful works. After Sullivan’s death in 1900, Gilbert began a collaboration with Edward German to produce *Fallen Fairies* (1909), which was not received well. Gilbert was knighted by Edward VII in 1907. Four years after the knighting ceremony, he died in 1911, at age 74, while attempting to save a drowning woman.

G&S TRIVIA

Gilbert and Sullivan were very successful when they collaborated, so their manager built a theater just for their works called The Savoy.

Penzance is a town on the shore of Cornwall, England, that has been inhabited since the Bronze Age. It was invaded by the Spanish in 1595. The name means “holy headland” in the Cornish language.

Beyond the awards it has won, *The Pirates of Penzance* was nominated for an additional 4 TONY Awards, 3 Drama Desk Awards, and 2 Olivier Awards including one for “Outstanding Musical Production.”

Before *The Pirates of Penzance*, Gilbert and Sullivan had just had an incredible smash with *H.M.S. Pinafore*. The entire world was singing its tunes on the streets. According to one count, there were no fewer than a dozen companies of *H.M.S. Pinafore* playing in New York at the same time, none of them legal. Since copyright laws were virtually nonexistent for British authors in America, to get a firmer hold on their property the great Gilbert and Sullivan decided to premiere their next work, *The Pirates of Penzance*, in New York.

When Gilbert and Sullivan set sail from London to New York to mount the premiere of *The Pirates of Penzance* they real-

ized that they’d left the nearly finished score at home. The team spent the next few weeks furiously rewriting for the premiere.

The Pirates of Penzance was the fifth Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration and the only one to have its official premiere in the United States.

The original Broadway production of the MTI version of *Pirates of Penzance* boasted an all-star cast led by Rex Smith and Linda Ronstadt with Kevin Kline, Estelle Parsons, and George Rose. Kevin Kline won a Tony Award for his performance of the Pirate King.

OPERA ETIQUETTE

ALWAYS BE EARLY!

It is always a good idea to arrive early to the opera to ensure you are able to find your seat and get settled before the performance begins. The orchestra may be tuning, so it is important that you find a seat as quickly and quietly as possible. If you are late, you may miss the first overture or even the first act!

OPERA IS FOR ALL AGES TO ENJOY!

Opera is full of emotion, passion, human conflict and discovery. Whether it is your first time, or a die-hard opera fan, you will have a great time. Especially with the invention of the ‘Supertitle,’ where the text is projected above the stage on a screen, you are able to follow everything being sung on stage. All operas are performed in their original language.

WHAT TO WEAR

Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and an excuse to bring out the fancy attire. But, it is also acceptable to dress comfortably and be you. If a sequined dress or a tux isn’t your thing, come in whatever you think is appropriate for an evening out. For dress rehearsals, the casual attire that students wear to school is perfectly acceptable. A light jacket is suggested because the theatre is air-conditioned.

USE THE RESTROOM

Once in the theatre it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theatre unless there is an emergency.

PLEASE BE COURTEOUS...

to everyone in the audience and on stage. Theatre is live performance, so any talking, cell-phone use (including texting) or other noise/light disruption takes away from everyone’s experience at the opera. Remember that this is a live performance and unlike many staged performances, the opera singers do not use microphones. This makes it essential to wait until intermission to unwrap gum/candy, talk to your neighbor or use electronic devices that may distract others. Be sure to turn off cell phone and pagers.

APPLAUSE WELCOME!

There are several times during a performance when it is appropriate to applaud the performers. The first opportunity to applaud takes place when the conductor takes the podium at the very beginning of the performance and when he/she returns to the podium following intermission(s). It is also acceptable to applaud after an overture or aria in the middle of a performance. Applaud when the performance moves you. If you are not sure when it is appropriate for applause, follow the lead of the rest of the audience. When you feel comfortable at a performance you may show your appreciation to the performers by shouting “Bravo!” for a male performer, “Brava!” for a female performer, or “Bravi!” for an ensemble. At the conclusion of the performance, singers who performed principal roles in the opera will take their “curtain call.” It is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause. Sometimes, when audience members are so impressed with the overall performance of the opera they will stand and applaud the entire ensemble, which is referred to as a “standing ovation.”

NO FOOD, DRINKS, OR GUM IN THE THEATRE.

This rule is strictly enforced.

NO CAMERAS OR TAPE RECORDERS

The artists’ images and performances belong to them and we ask you to respect that by refraining from recording their work in any way.

A SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all – and each composer develops his or her own preferred combinations of these options.

THE OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. The overture generally includes themes that will be heard throughout the opera, and can be anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes long. Before 1800, house lights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audiences would continue to talk, drink, and even play cards. This changed in the nineteenth century when the overture began to take its place as an integral part of the operatic performance. Usually, at the end of the overture, the curtain rises and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes, which are usually organized into acts.

ARIAS

Italian for “air” or song. Arias are solos performed to the accompaniment of the orchestra. They allow the character to express his or her feelings and reflect on the events of the drama. The focus of an aria is emotions rather than actions, and provides an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate his or her vocal or artistic skill. Some of the most successful composers of arias, such as Mozart, Verdi and Puccini were able to achieve a remarkable balance between memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice, and making the music reflect the drama of the text.

RECITATIVES

Recitative is a type of singing unique to opera, and is used when characters are conversing, or introducing an aria. The text is delivered quickly in a musical way that imitates speech, and has a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody and its rhythms follow those of the spoken word. Recitative is meant to carry the action forward and can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case in opera written before 1800, by a harpsichord or keyboard instrument.

ENSEMBLE (“TOGETHER”)

In operas, ensemble singing is when two or more voices of different ranges perform together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and in one or two instances, even a sextet! In each of these, the way the composer blends the voices will depend on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, in a duet where the characters singing are in love, a composer may show this musically by having each performer sing different music at different times, and gradually bring both lines of music together in harmony as the duet culminates. Conversely, if the characters are in conflict, their music might never be brought together. Georges Bizet used this technique in Carmen: if you listen to the duets sung by Carmen and Don José, you might notice that their musical lines are never completely blended, and this foreshadows their tragic ends.

CHORUS

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes as many as 40 or more) called a chorus. The chorus appears on stage most often in crowd scenes. The chorus can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female (this is in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre).

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra is an important part of any opera, and not only because it accompanies the singing and introduces the opera in the overture. The themes (both musical and emotional) of the opera can appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses, but sometimes the orchestra becomes a character in the story, and has music to play by itself outside of the overture or introduction.

ON OPERATIC VOICES

All classical singers fall into one of the categories listed below. A singer cannot choose his/her voice-type...it is something he/she is born with. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for examples.

Women

SOPRANO

This is the highest female voice and has a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the *prima donna*), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue, and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is from middle C through two octaves above middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos. The role of Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance* is a soprano.

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Also called a mezzo; this is the middle female voice and has a range similar to an oboe. A mezzo's sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano's. In opera, composers generally use a mezzo to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys. Mezzo-sopranos also often serve as the friend or sidekick to the soprano. The mezzo-soprano's normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it. The roles of Edith and Kate are sung by mezzo-sopranos.

CONTRALTO

This is the lowest female voice and has a voice similar in range to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare—some believe they don't exist at all! In *The Pirates of Penzance*, the role of Ruth is sung by a contralto.

Men

COUNTER-TENOR

This is the highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio. The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzo-soprano's voice and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare. There are no counter-tenors in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

TENOR

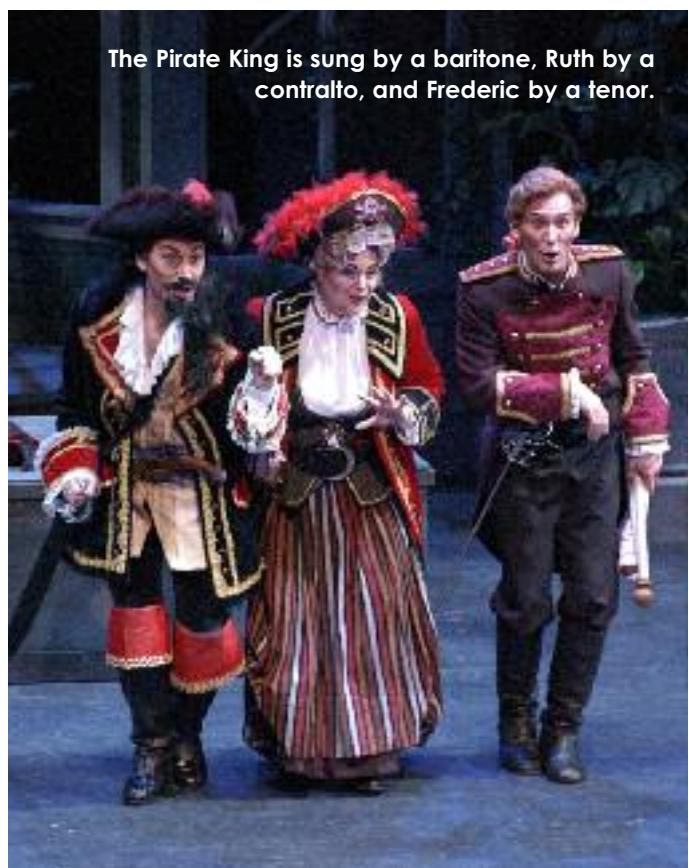
This is usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest. The role of Frederic is sung by a tenor. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the above.

BARITONE

This is the middle male voice and is close to a French horn in range and tone color. The baritone usually plays villainous roles or father-figures. In *The Pirates of Penzance*, the roles of Major-General Stanley, Samuel, and the Pirate King are sung by baritones. The range is from the G an octave and a half below middle C to the G above.

BASS

This is the lowest male voice and is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. In *The Pirates of Penzance*, the role of Sergeant is for basses. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C down to the F an octave and a fourth below



Nashville Opera last produced THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE in 2004. Photo by Marianne Leach

THE ARTISTS



Pirate King

CRAIG IRVIN

baritone

Nashville Opera:
Iolanthe
Fort Worth Opera
Lyric Opera
Kansas City
Minnesota Opera
Pensacola Opera
Wolf Trap Opera



Major General Stanley

CURT OLDS*

baritone

Arizona Opera
Edmonton Opera
Central City Opera
Opera Memphis
Virginia Opera



Ruth

MARIA ZIFCHAK*

mezzo-soprano

The Bovender Principal Artist
Metropolitan Opera
New York City Opera
Arizona Opera
Houston Grand Opera
Seattle Opera



Sergeant of Police

AARON SORENSEN*

bass

Austin Lyric Opera
Fort Worth Opera
Des Moines Metro Opera
Glimmerglass Opera
Wolf Trap Opera



Mabel

HANNA BRAMMER*†

soprano

Opera North
Oratorio Society of New York



Frederic

CHRISTOPHER NELSON*†

tenor

Des Moines Metro Opera
Ohio Light Opera
Amore Opera
Opera Santa Barbara



Edith

CHRISTINE AMON*†

mezzo-soprano
Opera Memphis
Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh
Toledo Choral Society



Samuel

ALEX SOARE*†

bass-baritone
Des Moines Metro Opera
Opera Saratoga
Aspen Music Festival



Stage Director

DEAN ANTHONY**

Director of Opera,
Brevard Music Center, Janiec
Opera Company
Opera Director,
Washington University, St. Louis
Opera Stage Director, University of Memphis
Florentine Opera
Fort Worth Opera
Opera Tampa
Tulsa Opera



Accompanist & Chorusmaster

AMY TATE WILLIAMS

Nashville Opera
1998-present
Nashville Opera:
Iolanthe, *Pagliacci*,
Elmer Gantry, *The Student Prince*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Madame Butterfly*, *The Pearl Fishers*
Capital Opera
Florentine Opera
Bay View Music Festival
Shenyang Symphony



Conductor

WILLIAM BOGGS

Nashville Opera:
Iolanthe, *Pagliacci*,
Elmer Gantry,
Samson and Delilah, *Salomé*,
The Fall of the House of Usher,
Andrea Chénier,
The Girl of the Golden West,
The Difficulty of Crossing a Field,
The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, *Romulus Hunt*, *Florencia en el Amazonas*
Arizona Opera
Florentine Opera
Lyric Opera
Baltimore



Artistic Director

JOHN HOOMES

Nashville Opera
1995-present
Nashville Opera:
Elmer Gantry,
Samson and Delilah, *Salomé*,
The Fall of the House of Usher,
Andrea Chénier,
The Girl of the Golden West,
The Difficulty of Crossing a Field,
The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, *Romulus Hunt*, *Florencia en el Amazonas*

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** Nashville Opera Directing Debut



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