***Pirates of Penzance*   
by Gilbert and Sullivan**

**Cast**

* Mabel (soprano)
* Frederic, pirate apprentice (tenor)
* Pirate King (baritone)
* Ruth, Frederic’s nurse and pirate maid of all work (alto)
* Police Sergeant (bass)
* Major-General Stanley (baritone)
* Edith
* Kate
* Isabel
* Pirates (males or females)
* Police Officers (males or females)
* General Stanley’s daughters (females)

**Synopsis**

**Act I** on a rocky seashore on the coast of England

Now celebrating his 21st birthday, Frederic was in his youth indentured to a band of pirates. (His nurse, Ruth, who through his apprenticeship stayed with him as the pirates’ maid, had misheard the instruction that he was to be apprenticed to a pilot.) Having come of age, Frederic announces that he loathes piracy and, since his term of indenture is complete, he will be leaving. He hopes to find a suitable wife for himself, being skeptical of Ruth’s assertions that she herself is young and pretty enough for that role.

Almost as soon as Frederic goes ashore, he happens upon a group of young women, wards in chancery to Major-General Stanley. At first, the girls are cautious of Frederic, but one—Mabel—receives him more kindly, and romance is born.

While Frederic has been chatting with the girls, the pirates have crept up, intent upon finding their own sweethearts. They are on the verge of abducting them all when the opportune appearance of Major-General Stanley saves them. His recitation of his notable skills derails their plan, and, when he declares himself to be an orphan with no one in the world but these court-appointed daughters, the pirates depart empty-handed. Themselves orphans, they have pledged never to harm other orphans.

**Act II** in a ruined chapel by moonlight

The Major-General, having admitted to the girls that, in fact, he is no orphan, is pleased to hear from Frederic that the young man wants to join a band of policemen against the pirates. Before Frederic can do so, however, Ruth and the Pirate King come to inform him of a new discovery. Frederic, it seems, was born on Leap Day (February 29), a day that occurs every four years, and so, though he has lived 21 years, he has had far fewer birthdays. His indenture papers commit him to remain a pirate until his “21st birthday,” not his “21st year.” This will not occur for more than half a century. Frederic—a “slave of duty,” as the operetta’s subtitle has it—acknowledges his duty and returns to the pirates, first extracting Mabel’s promise to wait for him until he officially comes of age.

The policemen hide as the pirates approach. Having learned that Major-General Stanley diverted them with a lie, the pirates assault his house and pounce upon the Major-General and his daughters. A melee ensues, brought to a close only when the Police Sergeant demands that the pirates yield “in Queen Victoria’s name.” Declaring themselves to be loyal to their queen, the pirates give in and are nearly led away to prison. Ruth, however, saves them by declaring that all are “noblemen gone wrong,” a class of people whom the English admire. The Major-General gives the girls in marriage to the various pirates, though Mabel is reserved for Frederic.