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TOP STORY

Review: Pirates of Penzance at Pauls Valley shouldn't be missed

By Elaine Warner | For The Transcript
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Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* has been around for almost a century and a half, but with its clever lyrics and rousing choruses, it's still delighting audiences.

The Garvin County Choral Society and Sinfonietta, aided and abetted by collegiate opera students, members of local choirs, musical theater students from Moore High School and a professional orchestra, received a standing ovation from the audience at Tuesday night's performance in Edmond. Another performance will be given on Sunday afternoon, April 24 in Pauls Valley – details below.

The two-act comic opera tells the story of a young man, Frederick, who was accidentally apprenticed to a band of pirates. The story opens with the pirates landing in Penzance on the Cornwall coast. Frederick, released from his indenture, meets and falls in love with Mabel, daughter of a major-general. As a man of honor, he must protect her family from the marauders.

He faces a dilemma as the Pirate King comes to him and explains that through careless wording in his indenture, he was to serve until his 21st birthday. While he has chronologically turned 21, because he was born in a leap year, he has only had five birthdays.

Mayhem ensues between the Penzance police and the pirates, but all is resolved in their mutual love of Queen Victoria. True love triumphs and all — especially the audience members — leave happy.

Dr. Jack Bowman, whose resumé includes international conducting and recording, is the conductor and artistic director for the production. Alan Wager, with experience working in theater, television and films, provided stage direction. In this presentation, only the lead actors appear in costume and character while the chorus acts as backup.

Frederick is played by tenor Reece Phillips, a junior majoring in vocal performance at the University of Oklahoma. He is convincing as the perplexed Frederick, and he wins hearts with his beautiful lament, "Oh, Is There Not One Maiden Breast?" as he sings to convince Mabel and her sisters that he is an honest suitor.

Emily Pope's stunning soprano voice is a delight as she tosses off intricate cadenzas and bell-like high notes as Mabel. She is sophomore studying with Professor Mark McCrory as a vocal performance major at OU.

OU gets credit for another star performer in Xander McRae, bass-baritone, who plays the Pirate King. He delivers the lyrics with clarity and feeling and brings great energy to the role.

As the senior member of the cast, Alan Marshall shines in the impossibly rapid patter of "I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General." Ethan Eagle, a junior at Moore High School, shows off his deep baritone voice as the Sergeant of Police. Supporting cast members and chorus provide solid backing and join with the principals in a grand finale.

Sunday's final performance will be at 2 p.m. in the Pauls Valley High School Auditorium, 601 N St. Tickets, available at the door, are \$25 for adults and \$5 for students. This is a real treat, an opportunity that shouldn't be misse

