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Outdoor theater opens with opulent 'Pirates of Penzance' production

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Summer season with the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, "Pirates of Penzance," running through June 14.

Bob Compton and courtesy of Starlight Theatre

"Pirates of Penzance" at The Theatre in the Park

Rating: ★★★★★

Pirates, yes Pirates, but not the Somali kind of from the movie, *Captain Phillips*, nor those like Blackbeard or even Captain Hook, but singing pirates created by [Gilbert and Sullivan](#) for their whimsical operetta, "[Pirates of Penzance](#)" that

opened [Theater in the Park's](#) 2014 season, on June 6 inside Shawnee Mission Park.

Tim Blair, producing artistic director for [Theater in the Park](#), said prior to the opening curtain that the voices in the ensemble and the main characters were some



Bob Compton

of the strongest and best of recent years. His assertion proved correct, as performer after performer stepped forward with vocal performances that astounded the audience.

[“Pirates of Penzance,”](#) running weekends through June 14 provides family-friendly fun for all ages. The show centers on a band of unfortunate pirates who never seem to succeed in any confrontations or battles. The hapless band always loses any conflicts. They hope to marry the 12 daughters of the Major General, but through some mishaps, twists and turns their plans may not come to fruition, again.

Their indentured charge has now come of age and fallen in love with the fair Mabel, one of Major General Stanley’s daughters. But through

an unfortunate birthing situation, he finds he cannot marry and leave the pirates until after his official age of 21.

Unlike most modern [theater](#) pieces, “[Pirates of Penzance](#)” comes from the early times of musical theater and contains no objectionable language or situations. The light operetta features voices of the Nelson Eddy and Jeanette McDonald style, and the light plot contains similarities to such musicals.

Considered as a whole, “[Pirates of Penzance](#)” opens [The Theater in the Park](#)’s 45th season with panache. Outstanding casting, directing, technical aspects and orchestration bring the production to sublime heights. The performance stands equal to those at a competing outdoor venue in the metro that brings professional companies to the area. This production equals those. Hats off to the cast and crews for a wonderful performance.

One of the spectacular parts to [Theater in the Park](#)’s version is the amazing talent and voices that collaborate to make this show such a success. Curt Crespino dialed up his comedic delivery and sturdy stage presence to command the stage at each of his scenes. His performance of “I Am the very Model of Major-General” brought laughs from the audience and many smiles as the tempo accelerated through each chorus.

As for the singing voices of the female leads, Mabel as performed by Tausha Torrez, could break crystal with her high notes and pitch-perfect tones. Not quite as high-pitched, Kay Noonan displayed her powerful soprano vocal

cords as well.

For the men, Brian King as Frederick, showed a strong baritone range and a flair for comedy in his performance as the pirate apprentice. King's solos were outstanding. Along with King, Matt Richardson's pirate king belted out his songs with equal force and conviction.

Technical standout merits go to the costumes and sound team. The sound was spectacular as were the costumes. The direction, of the piece, was crisp and sharp for a season opener.

The balance of the cast and ensemble combines to show what depth of talent The **Theater in the Park** assembles for its shows. The cast includes: Curt Crespino, Matt Richardson, Scott Fagan, Brian King, Jakob Wozniak, Tausha Torres, Lindsay James, Betsy Bledsoe, Courtney Koval, Kay Noonan, Rachel Adcock, Lakin Allen, Bridget Angles, Shannon Daugherty, Ashley Harrell, Morgan Sterrett, Brooke Vinson, Hailey Young, Daniel King, Gabriel Lasley, Brian Percival, Stephen Marx, Daniel Schulte, Simon Schupp, Matthew Seck, Adam Segura, Landon Vinson, Daniel Austin, Sam DeVeney, Kristoph Gies, Reuben James, Nate Kochuyt, Ken Koval, Matthew McGaugh, Andrew Tippin.

The orchestra was led by Kevin Brogan and included: Kelly Sanford, Greg Nettler, Josh Lehi, Sarah Shipley, Zach Keyser, Crystal Kimmel, Kaylee Dietrich, Troy Armstrong, Steve Constance, Eric Hulse, Mark Lyle.

The creative team for **Theater in the Park's "Pirates of Penzance"** includes: Kevin Brogan, director and musical director; Kipp Simmons,

choreographer; Jason Harris, scenic design and technical director; Joanna Swieton, costumes; Frank Gentile, props; Zac Main, lighting designer; Josh Koan, Sound designer; John Hollan, hair and makeup designer; Sara McAdoo, production stage manager, Kelly Sanford, accompanist; Sarah Sangler, production manager; Korey Childs, assistant director; Lyndsey Agron and Bradley Turner, assistant stage managers.

The show is fun for the family. “**Pirates of Penzance**” is a crowd-pleaser and well worth an evening’s investment. Theater under the stars in a beautiful setting can’t get better than this. Take yours coolers, picnics, snacks, or purchase a box lunch to be ready for pickup on arrival. For ticketing and further information go the theater’s website: www.theatreinthepark.org

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Bob Evans

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