



Normanhurst Uniting Church Musical Society  
C/- Kent Blackmore  
8/33-35 Muriel St, Hornsby NSW 2077  
Ph. 9476-5242 (home)

## AUDITIONS FOR 'THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE'

Thank you for your enquiry regarding auditions for our next production, 'THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE'. Our website ([www.nucms.org](http://www.nucms.org)) will have any news updates. Please take the time to read the enclosed information sheet since it contains important details regarding the Society and your participation.

Auditions will be held on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December** at Normanhurst Uniting Church. If you have not already booked an audition time, please contact me on 9476 5242. If we would like to offer you a principal role, you will be contacted by phone, otherwise you will be contacted by email.

If you are unable to attend the auditions due to very special circumstances a different audition date may be organised at the discretion of the production team.

Auditions, rehearsals and performances will be at the Uniting Church, 2 Buckingham Avenue Normanhurst. Rehearsals are held **Tuesdays** and **Thursdays** at 8 – 10:30 pm and will commence **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February**. **Performance dates are 15/16 and 21/22 June**.

Membership of NUCMS is \$10 for the production and the show fee is \$60 per cast member.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any more information.

Yours sincerely

Kent Blackmore, NUCMS Secretary

[kblackmore@sydneymagic.net](mailto:kblackmore@sydneymagic.net)



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## **BACKGROUND, SYNOPSIS, CASTING & REHEARSAL INFORMATION**

### ***Background***

Frederic, a pirate's apprentice, falls head-over-heels in love with Mabel, the daughter of Major-General Stanley. Frederic is due to be released from his apprenticeship on his 21st birthday, but there's a snag. Born on 29th February, Frederic discovers that he is technically still a youngster. Although very much in love, his dedication to duty is unshakeable. Can he find a way to live happily-ever-after with Mabel?

The fifth Gilbert and Sullivan collaboration and the only one to receive a New York premiere, this parody of grand opera is packed full of sentimental pirates, blundering policeman, absurd adventures and improbable paradoxes.

The Pirates of Penzance has become a favourite of performers and audiences as it features some of Gilbert's most loveable characters and Sullivan's most famous and singable melodies.

### ***Characters***

Detailed character descriptions are given in the attached sheet.

### ***Auditions***

For the vocal audition, please prepare a two-to-three-minute song from a Gilbert & Sullivan opera, or any other light operetta, **excluding The Pirates of Penzance**.<sup>\*</sup> Please bring printed music, in the correct key and clearly marked where you would like to begin and end.

For the speaking audition, please prepare a short monologue.

**\*If you are auditioning for the role of Mabel, please also sing the section of Poor Wand'ring One (rehearsal B to E on the attached music) including the cadenza.**

### ***Contributing to the Production***

NUCMS expects all members of the cast to contribute to the production by assisting building the scenery at Working Bees (usually held on Saturdays) and making costumes. We also run a fundraising BBQ at Bunnings on one weekend.

### ***Attendance***

'THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE' will require a commitment to attend rehearsals from all of the Company. A detailed schedule will be available when rehearsals start. Please let us know at the auditions if you expect to be unavailable for particular rehearsals as it may be possible to accommodate individual requests for absence. The following dates will require the full cast

### ***Important Dates***

- Sitzprobe – TBC
- Technical Rehearsal & Full Show Run – 4 June (TBC)
- Dress Rehearsals – 6 & 11 June (TBC)
- Performances – 14/15 and 21/22 June. (TBC)



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### **Synopsis**

On the coast of Cornwall, a gang of pirates play and party as Frederic (a pirate apprentice) reminds the pirate king that his obligation to the gang is soon over. He was apprenticed to the pirates only until his twenty-first birthday, which is that day, and he is leaving them. Ruth (Frederic's nursery maid when he was younger) explains that Frederic should never have been a pirate except for her mistake: She was told to apprentice Frederic to a pilot, but she misunderstood and placed him with a pirate instead.

Frederic tells the pirates that, after he leaves the gang, he intends to destroy them, not because he doesn't love them, but because he loathes what they do. He is a slave of duty and, when no longer a pirate, it will be his duty to destroy them. The pirates understand, and also complain that they cannot seem to make money. Because Frederic is a slave-of-duty to the pirates until noon, he tells them why: Because they are all orphans, the pirates will not rob another orphan; and since all their potential victims are aware of this, they all claim to be orphans!

Because Frederic has spent his entire life with the pirates, he has never seen another woman; thus he thinks he may want to take Ruth with him as his wife. He asks Ruth if she is beautiful, and she responds that she is. Frederic, a very trusting young man, says that he believes Ruth and he will not let her age come between them.

At this point, however, Frederic hears a chorus of girls in the vicinity. He sees a group of beautiful young women, realizes he was betrayed by Ruth, and rejects her. Frederic informs the girls that he is a pirate, but not for long. He asks if any of the girls will marry him, and the youngest, Mabel, agrees.

The pirates enter the scene, and each grabs a girl. Major-General Stanley enters and identifies himself as the girls' father, demanding to know what is taking place. When the pirates tell Major-General Stanley that they intend to marry his daughters, he objects, saying he has an aversion to having pirates for sons-in-law; the pirates respond that they are opposed to having major-generals as fathers-in-law, but that they will put aside the objection.

Knowing about the pirates' weakness, Major-General Stanley tells them he is an orphan and, thus, disarms the pirates and takes his daughters, along with Frederic, away to his family chapel and estate. The major-general, who actually is not an orphan, soon feels guilty about the lie he told the pirates. Frederic, however, has a plan to lead a squad of zany policemen against his old gang.

Before he can act, however, the pirate king and Ruth arrive to tell him that he is still obligated to the pirates. Because Frederic was born on February 29 of a leap year, he has served only five birthdays, not the twenty-one required by his contract. A strong sense of duty forces Frederic to relent, and, because he is a member of the pirate band again, to reveal the truth that Major-General Stanley is not an orphan. The pirate king vows that he will have revenge on the major-general.

Mabel enters and begs Frederic not to go back to the pirates, but bound by duty, he leaves. The police ready their attack on the pirates, while the pirates creep in to take revenge on the major-general.

The pirates defeat the police. However, when Ruth divulges that the pirates are really noblemen and they swear their allegiance to the queen, the tables are turned--and the police take the pirates prisoner.

However, because the pirates have never really hurt anyone, they are soon forgiven. The ex-pirates win the girls, Frederic wins Mabel, and everyone lives happily ever after.



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## **A Few Notes for Candidates from the Directors**

Normanhurst Musical Society is a friendly and enthusiastic group and you can be assured of a warm welcome at all times. The audition process can sometimes seem like a heartless system that can make you feel exhausted and miserable. However, nobody has devised a better system for letting directors and producers envision each applicant, one by one, in the roles to be filled. The only thing wrong with the system is that it relies on human beings – on actors trying desperately to embody the director's vision of the part (with no way of knowing what that is) and the imagination and patience of the casting committee.

If you don't get the part, don't be hard on yourself. You may be terrific. Trouble is, directors don't just want talent; they want talent in the right package. Most of all, be positive about the experience. Look on the audition as further experience and as beneficial in itself. Remember that the worst that could happen is that you won't get the part you already don't have!

### ***The Song***

- Choose a piece that is appropriate for the type of show and role that you are auditioning for.
  - For example, if you're auditioning for *Rent*, don't choose a song from *Showboat* as your audition piece.
  - If you are auditioning for a real "character" role (for example, "Matron Mama Morton" in *Chicago*), don't use a piece intended for an ingenue character (meaning a sweet romantic lead, like "Marion the Librarian" from *The Music Man*).
- Choose a song from musical theatre repertoire.
  - Pop songs generally do not allow you to present your ability at its best.
- Choose something that you've already practised and have thoroughly prepared.
- Choose a song that is easy for you to perform under stress circumstances.
  - Avoid patter-type songs ("Giants in the Sky", "Seventy Six Trombones"), which are notoriously difficult and require careful coordination between pianist and singer.
  - Avoid songs with difficult pitch intervals or challenging rhythms.
- Choose a song that is easy for the accompanist to play
  - The audition accompanist has a very difficult job. They are presented with a wide range of music and may have little more than a few moments to prepare.
  - Bring sheet music in the correct key and with all cuts or repetitions clearly marked.
  - Place your music in a binder or tape the sheets together accordion style for the benefit of the accompanist.
- Never sing a cappella.
- Avoid songs that are:
  - Associated with a particular person (e.g. *Over The Rainbow*). Comparisons are inevitable.
  - Overly familiar. There is a wealth of material from which to choose without resorting to songs from *Les Miserable*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Cats* etc
  - From the current Broadway smash or revival. These songs are simply performed too often at auditions to work to your advantage.
- Be in good voice. If you haven't sung in a while, you can't expect to go into an audition and perform well.



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- If you're so sick you have a fever, or can hardly sing, don't put yourself (and everyone else!) through an audition.
- If you just have a cold or allergies, you may decide to audition anyway, especially if it's for a show you're dying to be in. Tell the audition panel ONCE that you are sick... but only ONCE! Don't use your sickness as an excuse... it gets old really fast.
- If the audition panel requests a song of a particular length, don't sing anything longer than that.
  - Have the section of song you want to sing picked out in advance.
  - Even if there are no restrictions on length, don't sing a long song.
  - Something 2 to 3 minutes is just fine; any longer, and you may get fidgety directors.
- Sing out. This is no time to be shy.

### ***The Monologue***

- Pick material that reflects your strengths as a performer, suits your age and demonstrates the image you wish to project.
- Differentiate between monologues that have literary value (good pieces of writing) and those that are dramatic (they play well). Opt for the latter.
- Select a piece that allows you to make strong acting choices.
- DO NOT select pieces that attempt to shock with their use of bad language or obscene physical action.
- Don't block the monologue, but don't give a flat reading – somewhere in between is ideal.
- If you don't know your monologue by heart, have the script at hand. Nothing is worse than watching someone struggling to remember words.

### ***Other Guidelines***

- Bring a photo (headshot) that you can leave with the audition panel.
  - This need not be fancy – a simple printed digital photo is all that is required so that the audition panel can put names to faces.
- Before you leave home, make sure that you have everything you will need.
- Be early. Leave yourself enough time to fill in the audition form, have a drink and use the bathroom.
- Enter with confidence.
  - Believe it or not, the way you walk on stage can either make a great impression on the director, or a very bad one.
  - Keep good posture (shoulders back!), your chin at a natural level, don't stare at the floor. Walk with confidence, even when you're terrified.
- Don't apologise. This goes along with having confidence.
- Dress well and comfortably
  - Don't come in costume, but don't miss the chance to "dress the part" a little, either.
  - For example, women auditioning for Oklahoma would do well to wear dresses with fuller skirts, and men auditioning for the role of Professor Higgins in My Fair Lady should wear slacks and a jacket.
- If there's going to be a dance audition, make sure you have appropriate shoes and are wearing something you can move in.

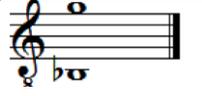
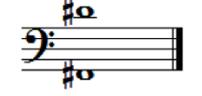
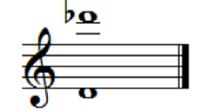
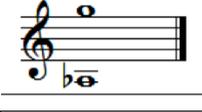
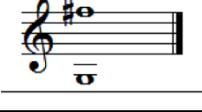


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- Be friendly. You don't want to be overly talkative, but you shouldn't be antisocial, either. Smile and be personable. The production team wants to know that they will be spending the next few months with people that are easy to get along with.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets.
- Turn off your mobile phone.
- Be patient. Auditions are, unfortunately, a long gruelling process for everyone.
- Enjoy yourself.

We will contact all candidates with our casting decision, but we will not enter into any further correspondence. Wishing you every success in your audition experience.

## CHARACTER DETAILS

Character	Description	Vocal Range
Major-General Stanley	The archetypal G & S patter-part. A “lightweight” General with a conscience who appears to have fought his battles from behind a desk.	
The Pirate King	A real flamboyant character in the Errol Flynn mould, and a dyed-in-the-wool pirate in appearance. However, his kind heart prevents him from doing little more than bluster. Should be comfortable singing in the baritone register.	
Frederic	Has been brought up to act in accordance with his conscience. A self-righteously moralistic young man of considerable charm, but something of an innocent, particularly in affairs of the heart.	
Samuel	The Pirate King's right-hand man, he is sincere, earnest, and simple-minded.	
Sergeant of Police	A small-town sergeant of a some-what nervous disposition.	
Mabel	The Major-General's “Number One” daughter. Something of a flirt, and definitely not the innocent she portrays.	
Edith	General Stanley's daughter.	
Kate	General Stanley's daughter.	
Isabel	General Stanley's daughter. Isabel is a speaking part, but we would like to cast someone who can sing the Edith/Kate parts so that we have cover.	Speaking
Ruth	Frederic's nursery-maid, whose mistake caused Frederic to be apprenticed to a pirate. Her love for Frederic is unrequited and she is determined to get her revenge when he rejects her advances.	

**B** CHORUS OF GIRLS.

Take heart, no dan - ger lowers ; Take a - ny heart but ours.

MABEL.

Take heart, fair days will shine ; Take a - - ny heart— take mine!

CHORUS.

Take heart, no dan - ger lowers ; Take . . a - - ny heart but ours.

MABEL.

Take heart, fair days will shine ; Take a - - ny heart— take mine! Ah! . . . . .

Ah! . . . . . Ah! . . . . . Ah! . . . . .

cre - - - scen - - - do. . .

**D**

Poor wan - - d'ring one, . . . . . Though thou hast sure - - ly stray'd.

Take heart of grace, Thy steps re - trace, Poor . . . wan - - d'ring

**E**

one! Ah, ah! . . . Ah, ah, ah!

CHORUS.

Poor wan - - d'ring one! Poor wan - - d'ring

Ah, ah! . . . Ah, ah, ah! Fair days will shine, Take . . . .

one! Take heart, Take *Sua.*