



THE SCOTSMAN
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The Pirates of Penzance

THEATRE

MARTIN GRAY

THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE ****
KING'S THEATRE, EDINBURGH

IT'S easy to be forgiving about casting choices when it comes to amateur companies; why avoid a great show just because everyone isn't precisely what the role demands?

Sometimes, though, it's impossible to turn a blind eye. Case in point, the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Edinburgh's new production of Pirates. The action turns on the fact that apprentice buccaneer Frederic has reached 21, but it's obviously been a while since the actor playing him, Darren Coutts, picked up the key to that door. I'd say it's long since rusted.

Odder still, his 47-year-old nurse, whose attentions towards him we're supposed to find comical, is Susanne Horsburgh, apparently young enough to be his daughter and an awful long way from anyone's idea of unattractive.

They're both excellent, with great voices, acting chops and stage presence to spare, but you just can't forget that the age difference is the opposite to what it should be.

Elsewhere, we were treated to delightful turns by Fiona Main, Scott Thomson and Simon Boothroyd - as Mabel, the (modern) Major-General and Police Sergeant respectively - while Ian Lawson charmingly channelled the spirit of Jack Sparrow into his Pirate King. There were spiffing sight gags, the production design was witty, the direction zippy, chorus creditable and orchestra rousing. The best of the well-known songs on the night was With Cat-like Tread but, basically, if you like G&S, you'll love this show.

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