Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company’s swashbuckling show

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A LONG-TIME participant in the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival made his debut as a director this year.

John Savournin made his first appearance aged just 11, and has graduated not only to directing one of the festival’s professional productions, but also to playing principal roles. His Pirate King in The Pirates of Penzance last weekend had style, panache and flamboyance.

The production by the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company, was fresh and witty, with imaginative chorus work which had bags of vitality and excellent interaction. The fierce, bespectacled daughters and dancing policemen needed no help from the principal players to raise laughs, and the popular anthem Hail Poetry was exquisitely sung.

Quality principal voices are a given, and these were top-class; in particular the diction from all the leading players was clear and crisp in both songs and dialogue. Especially enjoyable among the minor principals was Amy Payne’s bossy Edith.

The production’s more memorable touches included a hilarious fight between daughters and pirates, a resentful butler and maid who accompanied the Major-General (Richard Gauntlett) when he first appeared, a crafty cuppa in mid-battle towards the end.

Taken all round, this ranks among the best Pirates I’ve seen in many years as a G & S aficionado.

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