

Pirates of Penzance- Character Breakdown

Samuel

Samuel is a pirate and serves as the second in command to the Pirate King. Where the Pirate King is self-assured, assertive, and strong, Samuel is more bookish. Think of him as the accountant to the Pirates. Samuel has some featured solos and it is a good role for a performer who is showing good promise.

Pirate King

The Pirate King is a great comic lead for a boy who is self assured, a bit of a ham, and great at physical comedy. He is inventive, fearless and willing to take positive risks. The Pirate King should sing reasonably well, but he doesn't need to be a polished singer.

Frederic

Frederic is the male ingénue of the show. He should have a great voice that is polished. Frederic should also have looks that qualify as "dreamy" if at all possible. Frederic can be a better singer than an actor, but it's great if he can be both.

Ruth

Ruth is a humoristic tour-de-force for a young comedian. She should be able to play matronly but still be vibrant and full of energy. Ruth has a featured solo, but doesn't have to be a polished singer.

Kate, Edith, and Isabel

Kate, Edith and Isabel are the leaders of General Stanley's wards, with Edith serving as the leader among the three. Of the three, Kate and Edith have solos. Traditionally, Edith wears glasses and is more bookish, Kate is aggressive and tomboyish, while Isabel is younger and more naïve. However, these three roles are open to interpretation.

Mabel

Mabel is the female ingénue to Frederic. She must have a polished, operatic or legitimate voice. Mabel should be attractive and a reasonable actress. She's the female star of the show, and the character who takes the biggest risk.

Major-general Stanley

Major-General Stanley is one of the signature character types in any Gilbert and Sullivan show. For Pirates the Major-General is the character who delivers the rapid fire patter song. An excellent part for a young performer who may not have great pitch, but has great rhythm.

Sergeant

The Sergeant of Police should be a good singer and a great dancer. Think "Key Stone Cops" as your inspiration.

Police Chorus

The Police Chorus can be boys and girls. The police are traditionally portrayed as "Key Stone Cops"; so performers who are physically adept are desired.

Daughter Chorus

These are the wards of Major General Stanley and can range in type and talent as broadly as required.

Pirate Chorus

Pirates can boys or girls. (In fact sometimes girls make the best pirates!)