

SEATTLE OPERA.



THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE SENSORY GUIDE

Runtime

The Pirates of Penzance takes place in 2 acts with an intermission after Act I. The first act is approximately one hour long, there is a 30 minute intermission, and Act II is approximately one hour long.

Environmental Considerations for *The Pirates of Penzance*.

1. This performance takes place in McCaw Hall. McCaw Hall is an expansive, 2,900 seat auditorium. The sensory experience is very much affected by the seat chosen in the performance space. There are three main seating areas: orchestra, first tier and second tier. Generally, the orchestra section is closer to the stage and feels more open with the ceiling rising over 100 feet above the seats. The first tier starts approximately 85' feet from the stage. All seats in this section look down on the stage. The second tier starts approximately 120' from the stage. This section feels more sheltered as it is closest to the ceiling and farthest from the stage. Please see the sensory seating guide for more specific information.
2. The lyrics of the opera are projected in English above the proscenium.
3. During Act II, a strobe light is used during the song *Tormented with the anguish dread*.
4. The border of the proscenium is created by many lightbulbs. Throughout the show, during most songs, the lights around the proscenium flash brightly. These moments are indicated by this symbol in the sensory guide:



Performance Content Considerations for *The Pirates of Penzance*:

1. Throughout the show, flintlock guns and swords are wielded by the pirates.
2. During Act II, Ruth briefly points a flintlock gun towards the audience.

Musical Considerations for *The Pirates of Penzance*:

1. *The Pirates of Penzance* features a 45-piece orchestra, including violin, viola, cello, double bass, flute, piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon, contrabassoon, horn, trumpet, cornet, trombone, timpani, and percussion instruments.
2. Musically, *The Pirates of Penzance* is dynamic and complex. At times the music and singers crescendo from a lower volume, soft and warm in timbre, to a robust, full sound with either a bright or resonant timbre. Volume ranges as heard from the front row of the orchestra level average around 75 dB and reach up to 90 dB briefly during some songs*.
3. The Pirates of Penzance features 6 singers:

Frederic - tenor, the highest range for male voices

The Pirate King - baritone, the middle range for male voices

Major General Stanley - baritone, the middle range for male voices

Mabel - soprano, the highest range for female voices

Sergeant of Police - bass-baritone, the lowest range for male voices

Ruth - mezzo-soprano, the middle range for female voices

*The dB scale does not take into account the timbre and resonance of a sound and is only one component of how pleasant or unpleasant one might experience a sound. Moments of music with outstanding timbre or resonance are noted below. Those who are sensitive to loud sustained notes from singers and orchestra may wish to wear noise dampening headphones. 70 dB is about the volume of a noisy restaurant. 80 dB is about the volume of a vacuum cleaner. 90 dB is about the volume of a lawn mower.

In the following guide, the performance is divided by major songs within the operetta, and moments of heightened sensory intensity are noted within each song.

Key to Symbols



Auditory Intensity



Emotional Intensity



Visual Intensity

Scene	Sensory Category	Heightened Sensory Moments
Act I		
Opening Chorus		
When Frederic was a little lad		
Better far to live and die		
Oh, false one		
Climbing over rocky mountain	 	-Near the end of the song, the girls blend together, singing high notes with bright timbre, reaching 85 dB.

Stop, ladies, pray		
Oh, is there not one maiden here		
Poor, wandering one		-Near the end of the song Mabel dynamically sings a series of notes, reaching 85 dB.
Stay, we must not lose our senses	 	-The girls shout suddenly when they see the pirates
I am the very model of a Modern Major General		
Oh, men of dark and dismal fate	 	-The chorus robustly sings, reaching 90 dB
Act II		
Oh, dry the glistening tear		
When the foeman bears his steel	 	- The chorus sings polyphonically, creating a complex musical arrangement
Now, for the pirate's lair	 	-The song ends with a great vocal and orchestral crescendo

Away, away!	 	- Ruth briefly points a flintlock gun towards the audience.
With cat-like tread	 	- At the end of the song, the full orchestra powerfully crescendos along with the pirates
Tormented with the anguish dread	 	-In response to the general, the men loudly shout “ha ha!” -Large stars project onto the stage and background, they scroll slowly across the stage - A strobe light briefly flashes on stage at the end of the song, when the men sing “Pretty brook, thy dream is over.”
What is this and what is that		-The girls punctuate the song with a bright, high note, reaching 85 dB.
Chorus and Finale		