

'Pirates' parody tradition, morality

The Pirates of Penzance: by Gilbert and Sullivan, in a production by the Eugene Opera. Review by Floyd Snulharkus.

The Pirates of Penzance pokes gentle fun, in a light and witty manner, at much that was won't with the English at the time of Queen Victoria—their tendency to place legal obligations over moral, their love of beauty over intelligence, even their ideology of women as shy and desireless eunuchs. In the operetta, a young, handsome Frederick is apprenticed, by mistake, to pirates (his father had intended him to be apprenticed to pilots). So much store does Frederick hold in this contract that, though he detests piracy, he will honor his bond to the letter, even to the point of rejoining the pirates when a mere empty paradox in the contract is pointed out. Scant minutes later, Fre-

Play pokes fun at Victorian age

derick and the Pirates are defeated by a few Keystone Kops. All ends happily when the eight pirates and Frederick go off to marry the nine women they met scarcely two hours before.

A sniggering, ironic plot worth of Buchner, full of not-very-subtle Marxist points—the pirates wish to join society, but note it to be far more vicious than they first expected (they kill but a few, while the factories kill many); the women, whom society has long deprived of social intercourse with men, fling themselves instantly into sexual entanglements. Even the police are brought in, not to protect Frederick's long abrogated rights, but to protect property. The play becomes vicious, almost crazed satire of a vicious and crazed society. So why the light touch? Why the dancing maidens and prancing pirates? Why not strident discords and dissonant shrieking? Ya got me, brother.

And, as it was intended, this castrated, neutralized dream-version of England got me. How sweet the music, how pleasant all the character, with what strength am I pulled along by the hypnotic rightness with which Gilbert's words for Sullivan's music. How beautiful and convincing...

...Yes, yes, Snulharkus, but what of the performance? I've heard most of the Eugene Opera productions (and almost all of the proto-Eugene Opera performances), and the man who brings it all together, I am convinced, is the conductor, Phillip Bayles. Bayles has always managed to coax astounding sweetness, clar-

ity, and expression from his soloists, gotten his chorus to sing well and usually he gets good results from his orchestra. But unfailingly, he has used one violinist whose instinct for the jugular is amazing even to my insensitive ears. Who is this man or woman who, without surcease, clings to every possible wrong note? What perverse sense of humor drives Bayles to drag this character from one opera to the next? What the hell is going on here?

You'll be listening with a smile on your face, and suddenly this bow-wrenching clown chimes in. Listening becomes like trying to get to sleep while waiting for the

guy-upstairs next shoe to drop. Only the guy upstairs is a millipede. And yes, folks, you guessed it, he or she was there, right on cue, so to speak, there to raise the ugly spectre of discord throughout the evening.

Yours truly gives a gold star to Elwy Jones, the patter-song-singer, and two gold stars to Diane Eberts from some beautiful coloratura-cadenza work. The other principals, Ken Boling and Richard Lowen, don't get the opportunity to show off their vocal ability quite as much, but their acting shines through it all.

Pirates plays Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. (matinee). All performances are at the Sheldon High Theatre. For reservation call 485-2985.

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ask the sexpert

This column is sponsored by Planned Parenthood of Lane County and is written by Carole Kirkpatrick, a local psychologist.

Q. I have a friend who has had a practice or rather habit of regular ejaculation. He told me his mother told him if this wasn't stopped he would go sterile. She explained that he only had so much active sperm and now my friend is gaining interest in a family. Could you please dispell this rumor for my friend.

A. The notion that we have a limited quantity of sperm or orgasms or whatever never quite seems to die. Very well educated people still believe that you can "use yourself up." In olden times, of course, men were prohibited from having sex before battle because of this, and more recently, prior to athletic contests. (Notice that no one worried about the women).

The fact of the matter is that there is no sexual quota and sex

has no general weakening effect. Actually, the more one has sex the more consistent one's body tends to work sexually. Likewise, there is no age limit for enjoying sex as long as one has been regularly active. Studies have shown that people who started sex at an early age tended to continue sex the longest during their life span. On the other hand, many people who go through a period of sexual deprivation find difficulty in resuming sexual functioning.

There is, of course, the other extreme. If a male has sex every 24 hours his sperm count will be lower than if he waited two-three days. This has implications for fertility, depending on other factors. Perhaps this is what your friend's mother meant.

Q. I keep reading that women can achieve multiple orgasms. After I have only one, I get this "leave me alone, get away from me" attitude. Really, I just feel burned out. How come some

women can achieve many orgasms and some only achieve one?

A. Masters and Johnson claim that any woman can achieve multiple orgasms if she is stimulated appropriately while still in her plateau phase of orgasm. Furthermore, they indicated that men are not capable of such orgasms because of their inevitable resting period.

However, since these claims were first made, there has been considerable dispute. It appears that not only are some men (an estimated 7-14%) capable of multiple orgasms but some very satisfied women only have one intense orgasm followed by a rapid decline in desire (much like the typical male's). Whether this is physiological or due to cultural expectations no one knows.

Q. If spermacides are not 100 percent effective, and if sperms must battle their way through this sperm killer to reach the egg, how many malformed babies are the result of this type of birth control?

A. There really isn't a definitive answer to this question, as no one has ever studied "babies born as a result of foam failure" as a single research population. All we can tell you is that babies born as a result of contraceptive failure (excluding the pill) are not more subject to birth defects than "non-contraceptive" babies. This phenomenon may well reflect "survival of the fittest" sperm.

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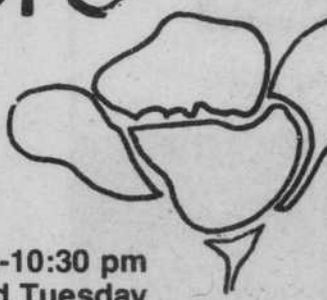
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