

## The West Valley Chorale will sing a scene from *The Pirates of Penzance*

**Law and Identity** are the primary elements of Gilbert confections. "Gilbert's obsessions are the arbitrary nature of society's absurd rules and regulations...(He) saw the world as a chaotic place, in which our lives are brutal accidents of birth, fate, and human blunder, a jungle of confusion and delusions, where we all aspire to be other than what we are, and where nobody is really who or what they seem to be... (He) holds up a mirror to the world, and reflects on its madness...(He) tells a perfectly outrageous story in a completely deadpan way. "(Glinert)

The **differences between opera, operetta, and musical** include:

- **Structure:** An operetta is a lighter version of opera that includes spoken dialogue, while a musical typically has more emphasis on song and dance. Gilbert & Sullivan called their operettas "comic opera".
- **Complexity:** Operettas are generally shorter and less complex than traditional operas, often featuring satirical and witty themes.
- **Cultural Origin:** Operettas are more associated with European traditions, whereas musicals are closely tied to American culture and are considered an offshoot of musical comedy.
- **Storytelling:** Operettas often have frivolous stories, while musicals can cover a wider range of themes and narratives.

### Gilbert & Sullivan

Together librettist W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and composer Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900) collaborated on fourteen operettas between 1871 and 1896, of which *H.M.S. Pinafore* 1878, *The Pirates of Penzance* 1879 and *The Mikado* 1885 are among the best known.

Gilbert created fanciful "topsy-turvy" worlds where each absurdity is taken to its logical conclusion: fairies rub elbows with British lords, flirting is a capital offense, gondoliers ascend to the monarchy, and pirates emerge as noblemen who have gone astray.<sup>[2]</sup> Sullivan composed melodies<sup>[n 1]</sup> that could convey both humor and pathos.

Gilbert and Sullivan introduced innovations in content and form that directly influenced the development of musical theatre through the 20th century. The producer Richard D'Oyly Carte brought Gilbert and Sullivan together and built the Savoy Theatre in 1881 to present their joint works (which came to be known as the Savoy Operas) and founded the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, which performed and promoted Gilbert and Sullivan's works for over a century.

Fiction and plays about pirates were ubiquitous in the 19th century. Walter Scott's *The Pirate* (1822) and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Red Rover* were key sources for the romanticized, dashing pirate image and the idea of repentant pirates. Both Gilbert and Sullivan had parodied these ideas early in their careers. Sullivan had written a comic opera, *The Contrabandista*, in 1867, about a hapless British tourist who is captured by bandits and forced to become their chief. Gilbert had written several comic works that involved pirates or bandits. In Gilbert's 1876 opera *Princess Toto*, the title character is eager to be

