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STEREO

# Sargent The Pirates of Penzance

PRISTINE  
AUDIO  
XR

This set is to be welcomed with enthusiasm. It is the most musical performance of the Pirates that we have ever had on records. Having heard every complete recording from the first in the early 1920s I can say this with some authority. Sir Malcolm Sargent was a great conductor of Sullivan's operettas and here he has with him not only a superb cast of principals, but a first-class orchestra and a fine chorus. Incidentally, this was the first record in this series to exploit the potentialities of stereo to create atmosphere, positioning and movement.

Musically, however, does not deny us anything of the humour. George Baker, Owen Brannigan and James Milligan see to this. The hero, of course, is George Baker, who was 75 when the recording was made. His nerve and the immaculate clarity of his diction in the famous patter-song are something to marvel at, as also, by the way, is the beautifully rippling accompaniment to his "Sighing softly to the river". Being a reissue I am told I must be brief, but I cannot resist calling attention, as I did in January 1961, to the beauty of the duet "Ah, leave me not to pine" as sung by Elsie Morrison and Richard Lewis, the former's brilliant "Poor wandering one", and the splendid "Paradox" trio among other jewels. The sound is still remarkably fresh, immediate and realistically balanced.

W. A. Chislett, *The Gramophone* December 1971 (*LP reissue*)

## Transfer notes

This new transfer is taken from immaculate pressings of the 1971 LP reissue as reviewed here. It was indeed a superlative performance, nicely recorded with subtle and sensible use of stereo and very occasional and tasteful inclusion of minor sound effects. As has often been the case with recordings of this era, an apparent sonic veil over the voices has been lifted by the 32-bit XR remastering process, bringing a vibrance and immediacy to the sound and a clarity to the all-important words of W. S. Gilbert.

The duration of the recording allowed me to revisit Pristine's 2009 release of Sullivan Cylinder recordings, two of which hail from *The Pirates of Penzance* and have been programmed here as "Interval music" at the end of Act One on CD 1. At the time of transfer and remastering there was no available technology to allow an assault on the wow and flutter which bedevilled a number of those very early recordings, but the development of Capstan software in 2011 means a further improvement in sound quality is now possible, dealing with this precise issue. All of the cylinder recordings suffered from pitch drift of one kind or another, and some had particularly bad flutter issues, all of which here have been either resolved entirely or much improved. It is indeed amazing to listen to these wonderfully clear early recordings, which just overlap the life of their composer, and recall that all of them pre-date not just the First World War, but also - by over a decade - the recording microphone.

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FULL PROGRAMME NOTES CAN BE FOUND ONLINE AT [WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM](http://WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM)  
SARL Pristine Audio, Le Bourg, 24610 St. Méard de Gurçon, France - 'tel. (00) 33 553 821857  
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PACO 081  
STEREO

GILBERT & SULLIVAN

# THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

George Baker James Milligan John Gumeron Richard Lewis Owen Brannigan  
Elsie Morrison Heather Harper Margorie Thomas Monica Stueckert

Edinburgh Festival Chorus Chorus Master Peter Cellhorn  
The Pyralis Orchestra  
Conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent

Studio recording, 1959-60

PRISTINE  
AUDIO  
XR

## Gilbert & Sullivan *The Pirates of Penzance*

## CD One

- 1 Overture (7:42)

## Act 1

1. Pour, oh pour, the pirate sherry (1:42)
2. When Frederic was a little lad (2:47)
3. Oh, better far to live and die (2:49)
4. Oh, false one (3:21)
5. Climbing over rocky mountain (3:46)
6. Stop, ladies, pray! (1:30)
7. Oh, is there not one maiden breast (4:40)
8. Poor wandering one (2:53)
9. What ought we to do (0:41)
10. How beautifully blue the sky (2:00)
11. Stay we must not lose our senses (1:37)
12. Hold, Monsters! (0:54)
13. I am the very model of a modern  
Major-General (3:06)
14. Oh, men of dark and dismal fate (8:41)

"Interval"

- [16] **Airs from *The Pirates of Penzance*** (4:28)  
**Edison Light Opera Company**, recorded June 1914
- [17] **Selections from *The Pirates of Penzance*** (2:28)  
**British Military Band**, recorded early 1910

### CAST

Major-General Stanley  
The Pirate King  
Samuel, a pirate  
Frederic, an apprentice pirate  
Sergeant of Police  
Mabel  
Edith  
Kate  
Ruth, a pirate maid

**GEORGE BAKER  
JAMES MILLIGAN  
JOHN CAMERON  
RICHARD LEWIS  
OWEN BRANNIGAN  
ELSIE MORISON  
HEATHER HARPER  
MARJORIE THOMAS  
MONICA SINCLAIR**

## CD Two

## Act 2

1. Oh, dry the glist'ning tear (3:17)
2. Now, Frederic, let your escort lion-hearted (0:20)
3. When the foeman bears his steel (4:53)
4. Now for the pirates lair! (1:35)
5. When you had left our pirate fold (3:34)
6. Away, away! My heart's on fire! (1:26)
7. All is prepared (1:17)
8. Stay, Frederic, stay (5:25)
9. No, I'll be brave (1:24)
10. When a felon's not engaged (2:19)
11. A rollicking band of Pirates we (0:56)
12. With cat-like tread (2:40)
13. Hush, hush! Not a word (1:22)
14. Sighing softly to the river (10:25)

## More Sullivan Cylinder Recordings

- 15 First Selection from *The Rose of Persia* (2:51)  
London Regimental Band, recorded 1899
- 16 Selection from *HMS Pinafore* (2:17)  
National Military Band, recorded early 1904
- 17 *Airs from Patience* (4:23)  
Edison Light Opera Company, recorded November 1913
- 18 *Iolanthe - The Sentry's Song* (2:37)  
Harry Dearth, recorded July 1906
- 19 *The Willow Song* (2:14)

**THE PRO ARTE ORCHESTRA**  
**GLYDNEBOURNE FESTIVAL CHORUS**  
 Chorus Master: *Peter Gellhorn*  
 Conductor **SIR MALCOLM SARGENT**



XR remastering by  
**Andrew Rose**

Transfers from EMI SXLP  
30131 and SXLP 30132  
Cover artwork detail from  
1980 New York production  
promotional advertising

### The Pirates of Penzance

Recorded between January 1959 and January 1960 at EMI Abbey Road Studio 1, London, first issued as EMI LPs ASD 381/2 in 1961

Total duration:  
**1 hr 50:19**

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