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Pirates!

A one-act nonmusical by

JON JORY

Freely adapted from *The Pirates of Penzance*

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JON JORY

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(PIRATES!)

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I wrote this adaptation because the operetta's glorious but demanding musical score and large cast means that productions in the modern era are relatively few. By restructuring the piece without music and singing, one finds it remains a gloriously funny play that actors and audiences can easily enjoy. It is to be hoped that this one-act adaptation will also incline audiences to seek out the original operetta.

—Jon Jory

Pirates!

CHARACTERS

Pirates:

Pirate King	Sharp
Frederic	Samuel
Sharkey	Ruth

Major General Stanley

Daughters: Of Major General Stanley.

Edith	Isabel
Kate	Mabel
Georgette	One nonspeaking

The Police: Two or three should be women.

Police Sergeant

Police Officers: Four of them.

SETTING: A few stage rocks for the first scene. A single garden chair for the second. A ladder for the finale.

COSTUMES: They should give a romantic and amusing nod to the late nineteenth century.

Pirates!

Scene 1

(Lights up on a rocky coast. Two or three rocks will do. There is no music in this adaptation although some lyrics are spoken. At lights up, PIRATES are lounging about. All of them except for RUTH are onstage.)

PIRATE KING. More drink I say!

(FREDERIC moves among them, pouring.)

PIRATES *(spoken in unison)*. Pour, oh pour the pirate sherry,
Fill, oh fill the pirate glass.

PIRATE KING. Over here, Frederic, my lad.

PIRATES. And to make us more than merry,
Let the pirate bumper pass.

(FREDERIC sits.)

PIRATE KING. Stand up, Frederic.

(FREDERIC stands.)

PIRATE KING *(cont'd)*. A cheer, gentlemen.

PIRATES. Huzzah!

PIRATE KING. For today our young apprentice, rises from
indenture freed.

PIRATES. He's a pirate now indeed!

PIRATE KING. Yes, Frederic, from today, you rank as a full-
fledged member of our band.

PIRATES. Huzzah!

FREDERIC. My friends, I thank you all for your kindly wishes. Would that I could repay them as they deserve!

PIRATE KING. What do you mean?

FREDERIC. Today I leave you forever.

PIRATE KING. But this is quite unaccountable; a keener hand never wielded a handspike.

FREDERIC. Yes, I have done my best for you. And why? I am a slave of duty. As a child I was apprenticed to your pirate band. It was an error, but no matter.

SAMUEL. An error? What error?

FREDERIC. I may not tell you. It would reflect on my well-loved Ruth.

RUTH (*entering*). But I may tell you.

PIRATES. Our Ruth!

RUTH. When Frederic was a little lad, he proved so brave and daring—

FREDERIC (*simply*). It's true.

RUTH. His father did apprentice him to a career seafaring.

I was, alas, his childhood nurse and so it fell to my lot, to take and bind this promising boy apprentice to a pilot.

Unfortunately, I confused the word and apprenticed him ...

PIRATES. To a pirate. (*Laughter.*)

RUTH. I confess it.

PIRATES. Huzzah!

(*RUTH kneels.*)

RUTH. Oh pardon, Frederic, pardon!

FREDERIC. Rise, sweet one, I have long pardoned you.

RUTH. The two words were so much alike!

FREDERIC. But this afternoon my obligation ceases. (*To the PIRATES.*) Individually I love you all with affection unspeakable, but, collectively I look upon you with disgust. Ah, my beloved friends, once out of my indentures, I must devote myself heart and soul to your extermination.

PIRATE KING. Well, Frederic, if it is your duty to destroy us, you must act on that conviction.

SHARKEY. We can offer you little temptation to stay.

SHARP. We don't seem to be able to make piracy pay.

PIRATE KING. I'm sure I don't know why, but we don't.

FREDERIC. I could stay, but alas, I mustn't; it wouldn't be right.

PIRATE KING. But why? Until the clock strikes twelve, you are one of us.

PIRATES. Hear, hear.

FREDERIC. You are too tenderhearted.

PIRATE KING. There's some truth in that.

FREDERIC. For instance, you will never attack a ship carrying an orphan.

SHARKEY. We are orphans ourselves and know what it is.

FREDERIC. Yes, but it's got about. Every ship that we capture says that they are orphans.

SAMUEL. But, hang it all! You wouldn't have us be absolutely merciless?

FREDERIC. Until twelve I would, but after twelve I wouldn't.

RUTH. And Ruth, your own Ruth who you love so well and who has won her middle-aged way into your boyish heart, what is to become of her?

PIRATE KING. Oh, he'll take you with him.

FREDERIC. I have been with you since I was eight years old, but I have never had the opportunity to compare you to other women. What a terrible thing it would be if I were to marry Ruth and then find out she is, on the whole, plain.

PIRATE KING. There are the remains of a fine woman about Ruth.

FREDERIC. Then I must not be so selfish as to take her from you. I will leave her behind.

PIRATE KING. No, Frederic, this must not be. There is not one of us who would rob you of this inestimable treasure!

PIRATES. Not one!

PIRATE KING. Well, it's the top of the tide, and we must be off. Farewell, Frederic. When you exterminate us, let our deaths be as swift and painless as you can conveniently make them.

FREDERIC. Will you not accompany me back to civilization?

PIRATE KING. No, Frederic, it cannot be. I don't think much of our profession, but, contrasted with respectability, it is comparatively honest. I shall live and die a pirate king! (*He sweeps out. He sweeps back.*) Come, me hearties!

SAMUEL. To the ship.

SHARKEY. To the ship.

SHARP. To the ship!

(They are gone, leaving RUTH and FREDERIC alone.)

RUTH. Oh, take me with you, Frederic.

FREDERIC. Ruth, I will be quite candid with you. You are very dear to me, but considerably older.

RUTH. I have many attributes, Frederic, you will find me a wife of a thousand!

FREDERIC. I think I shall find you a wife of forty-seven.

RUTH. Forty-six, Frederic.

FREDERIC. Dearest Ruth, compared with other women—I'm not quite sure how to put this—how are you?

RUTH. Truthfully, master, I have a slight cold but otherwise I am quite well.

FREDERIC. I was referring rather to your personal appearance compared with other women, are you beautiful?

RUTH (*shyly*). I have been told so, dear master.

FREDERIC. Ah, but lately?

RUTH. No, some years ago. But I think I am a fine woman.

FREDERIC. Thank you, Ruth, I believe you, for I am sure you would not practice on my inexperience. Thus, your age shall be no obstacle to our union.

(Voices of girls talking and laughing from offstage.)

FREDERIC (*cont'd*). Voices! Who has ventured to approach our all but inaccessible lair.

RUTH (*aside*). It is the voices of young girls! If he should see them, I am lost.

FREDERIC (*looking off*). By all that's marvelous, a bevy of beautiful maidens!

RUTH. Lost, lost!

FREDERIC. How surprisingly lovely is the plainest of them! What grace, what delicacy, what refinement! (*Turns to RUTH.*) False one, you have deceived me!

RUTH. I have deceived you?

FREDERIC. Yes, deceived me! For now I see you're plain and old.

RUTH. I am sure I am not a jot so.

FREDERIC. Your face has lines, your hair is grey.

RUTH. It's gradually got so. Do not crush me with disaster, master.

FREDERIC. Faithless woman, to deceive me, I who trusted so.

(RUTH runs off.)

FREDERIC *(cont'd)*. Before these gentle maidens I dare not show in such alarming costume.

(He hides. All of MAJOR GENERAL STANLEY'S DAUGHTERS appear except for MABEL.)

EDITH. Climbing over rocky mountain.

KATE. Skipping rivulet and fountain.

ISABEL. Passing where the willows quiver.

GEORGETTE. By the ever rolling river.

KATE. What a picturesque spot! I wonder where we are?

EDITH. And I wonder where Papa is? We have left him ever so far behind.

ISABEL. Oh, he will be here presently.

GEORGETTE. But how thoroughly delightful it is to be entirely alone.

KATE. Why in all probability we are the first human beings who ever set foot on this enchanting spot.

ISABEL. Except the mermaids—it's the very place for mermaids.

EDITH. Who can't be strictly said to set foot anywhere.

(Gay laughter.)

GEORGETTE. Tails they may but foot they cannot.

(Gay laughter.)

KATE. But what shall we do until Papa and the servants arrive for luncheon?

EDITH. I know. Let us take off our shoes and stockings and paddle.