

## Ohio Light Opera: *H.M.S. Pinafore* or *The Lass That Loved a Sailor*

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Following the greeting to the audience in Freedlander Theater at the College of Wooster, the pit floor slowly rises until the orchestra is even with the stage, and an invisible voice invites everyone to rise and sing *God Save the Queen*. That tradition dates back to 139 years ago in London, when *H.M.S. Pinafore* first set sail. The world has changed drastically during the intervening years, but the musical charms of Gilbert & Sullivan continue to delight.

Ohio Light Opera's sailors are young and handsome in their naval blues, and the young ladies are light and colorful in their pastels with parasols at the ready. Those ladies are the sisters, cousins, and aunts of the Right Honorable Sir Joseph Porter, KCB, first lord of the admiralty, who has never been aboard ship, as he is prone to sea-sickness.

At his advanced age, Sir Joseph has decided to take a wife, and Josephine, the young woman who catches his eye, is the daughter of Captain Corcoran, the commanding officer of the Pinafore. In Sir Joseph's mind, this puts Josephine in an appropriate social rank to be his bride. However, she has her eye set on the able seaman and part-time poet Ralph Rackstraw. Not surprisingly, the Captain is not happy with her choice.

Little Buttercup, perhaps the best known of all the characters in the show, has advanced to the position of bumboat woman or supplier of miscellaneous goods to the sailors, while harboring a secret of her own. She and Dick Deadeye provide most of the comic relief, aided by boatswain's mate Bill Bobstay (where *did* they find these names?) Alexa Devlin, Nathan Brian and Ted Christopher bring these characters to life in brilliant style.

Boyd Mackus returns to fill the shoes of Sir Joseph in fine style, and even though he's age-appropriate to the role, he doesn't lose a step while keeping up with the younger

folk. Daniel Neer is a handsome Captain Corcoran, while Hilary Koolhoven is winsome and slightly flirtatious as Josephine. Benjamin Krumreig was a stalwart Ralph Rackstraw.

Finally revealing her secret, Little Buttercup — who was once a ‘baby farmer’ — suddenly admits to having switched two infants who were in her care some years ago. Just ignore the age difference involved in this confession, for the two babies were the Captain and Ralph! This guarantees there will be three happy marriages in the future, including Sir Joseph’s cousin, Hebe (Gretchen Windt), who will happily become his bride, as she is of the proper rank!

In the meantime, however, we are treated to some glorious music. Forming a grand trio, Sir Joseph, the Captain, and Josephine sing the melodious “Never Mind the Why and Wherefore.” Earlier, Sir Joseph explained his career in “When I was a Lad.”

Artistic Director Steven Daigle was stage director, ably abetted by conductor J. Lynn Thompson and the OLO orchestra. Spencer Reese not only played one of the able seaman, but was also the excellent choreographer. Daniel Hobbs created a terrifically life-like quarterdeck of the H. M. S. Pinafore. Costumes were designed by Charlene Gross and Jennifer Ammons. Lighting was by Brittany Shemuga and sound by Samantha Palumbo.

*H. M. S. Pinafore* plays in repertory through August 12. For ticket information, visit the OLO [website](#) or call the box office at 330.263.2345.

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