



The Savoy Company
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For Immediate Release

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The Savoy Company Announces Cast for The Pirates of Penzance

Stephen Caldwell (Frederic): Stephen Caldwell has received critical acclaim as a singer, conductor, and composer alike, and is a well-respected musician in the Philadelphia area. He holds degrees from the University of Northern Colorado, University of Paris – Sorbonne, and Temple University. He is currently the Artistic Director of the Rainbow Chorale of Delaware, Music Director of the Temple University Music Prep Children’s Choirs, as well as Director of Choirs at the Central High School of Philadelphia. He has prepared choirs for many leading conductors and ensembles including the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Delaware Symphony. He has adjudicated many vocal and choral festivals for the ICCA and Music in the Parks. An accomplished singer and composer in addition to his conducting, he has been heard in concert, recital, and opera with many leading companies. His interpretation of leading man Ralph Rackstraw in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *HMS Pinafore* delighted audiences at the Academy of Music, and he was hailed for his stylistic accuracy in performances of several Bach cantatas with the Philomel Baroque Orchestra.

Veronica Chapman-Smith (Edith):

Ms. Chapman-Smith has sung roles with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Birmingham, Opera Colorado, Opera Delaware, and Opera Theater of The Rockies to name a few. She recently returned from singing Liu in Opera Birmingham’s *Turandot* where Michael Huebner of *The Birmingham News* said “(she) sang passionately in the tear-jerking aria, *Signore, ascolta*, her final high pianissimo notes suspended in pure beauty.” She is a winner of audience favorite and 5th place in the Opera Birmingham vocal competition, The Harold A. Norblom Award for excellence in opera performance, and has been a semi-finalist for several national and international competitions. This is her second appearance with The Savoy Company, having sung the title role in *Princess Ida* in 2002.

John Chesney (Major-General Stanley): John has performed at such world-renowned venues as the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden and La Scala. Having long outlived any plausibility he might ever have had as a romantic lead, John has more recently played – or, in the words of one of his more flattering reviews, “perpetrated” – comic and patter roles. Most recently, he appeared as Ko-Ko in GSSCC’s 2006 production of *The Mikado* and last year he made his Savoy debut as Bunthorne in *Patience*. In addition to his work in The Savoy Company John is a member of the Orpheus Club of Philadelphia. John is a partner in what one of his late, great colleagues described as “the best of all possible law firms,” Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP.

Todd Florin (Samuel): Todd is thrilled to return to the stages of the Academy of Music and Longwood Gardens in his third Savoy production! Previous roles with Savoy include Archibald Grosvenor in *Patience* (2008) and the Boatswain in *HMS Pinafore* (2007). Todd’s musical career as singer and conductor spans the genres of opera, oratorio and musical theatre. He has been part of the professional core and soloist with several Philadelphia choral groups, including Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia and Vox Ama Deus. Todd’s love of operetta and Gilbert & Sullivan began on Cape Cod, where he has been a principal conductor with the College Light Opera Company for almost a decade. Shows conducted include *Candide*, *The Secret Garden*, *West Side Story*, *Guys & Dolls*, *Carnival*, *Iolanthe* and *HMS Pinafore*. In his professional life as a pediatrician, Todd is proud to be joining the Division of Emergency Medicine at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia as a Fellow in July 2009.

Donna Gefen (Isabel): Donna Gefen returns this year for her second production with The Savoy Company, and her first as a lead. In 2008, she graced the stage as a love-sick maiden in *Patience or Bunthorne’s Bride*. Donna also sings with The Counterparts, a mixed voice a cappella group that performs around the Philadelphia region at private parties, retirement/nursing homes, charity functions, and national sporting events. Donna is a Commercial Effectiveness Consultant at IMS Health in Blue Bell, PA. She holds a B.S. in Elementary Education from Penn State University and an M.S. in Reading Specialist Education from St. Joseph’s University. She is returning to St. Joe’s to pursue an MBA in Executive Pharmaceutical Marketing.

Samuel W. M. Griffin (Sergeant of Police): A member of the Savoy Company of Philadelphia for 29 years, he has been President of The Savoy Company and stage director of numerous productions. Sam performed the role of The Sergeant in both the 1987 and 1999 Savoy productions of “Pirates”. It is a role he particularly enjoys and was delighted to try it again under Roberta Morrell’s creative direction. Sam has performed the comic baritone lead in every one of Gilbert and Sullivan’s operas (including the Bruce Montgomery production of *Thespis*). He has demonstrated the breadth of his stagecraft by playing several different roles in each opera (though not at the same time). In addition to his work with Savoy, Sam has appeared with The Gilbert and Sullivan Players, The Rose Valley Chorus, The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Chester County, The Arden Singers and even with the Reading Grand Opera. He has just been invited to return as stage director for The Rose Valley Chorus which will be presenting *Pinafore* in the fall.

Jessica C. Gruver (Mabel): Jessica Gruver is thrilled to be a part of *Pirates of Penzance* with The Savoy Company. An active soprano throughout Philadelphia, Jessica has recently been seen

in *Lakmé* with ConcertOpera of Philadelphia as Miss Rose, and in the Arden Theatre Company's production of *Candide*. Other roles include Mi in *The Land of Smiles*, and Papagena in *The Magic Flute* with the Delaware Valley Opera Company, as well as Frasquita in Capitol Opera Harrisburg's production of *Carmen*. Jessica has recently completed her MM in Voice from Temple University, and has performed the roles of La Chauve-Souris in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, and Ora Prima in *L'Egisto* in their mainstage productions, as well as Despina, Susanna, and Carolina for the graduate scenes program. When she's not performing, Jessica enjoys teaching private voice and piano lessons throughout the Philadelphia area. Jessica studies voice with Carlos Serrano.

Barbara Rayer Humes (Kate): Barb is returning for her eighth season with Savoy, having played Peep-Bo (*The Mikado*), Constance (*The Sorcerer*), Gianetta (*Gondoliers*), Kate (*Yeoman of the Guard*), Hebe (*H.M.S. Pinafore*) and Lady Saphir in last season's *Patience*. A community theater veteran, she includes the roles of Marguerite (*The Scarlet Pimpernel*), Anna (*The King & I*), and Marian (*The Music Man*) as some of her favorites. Barb is a past member of Savoy's Board of Directors. By day she teaches music at Penn Wynne Elementary School in the Lower Merion School District, having directed her fifth grade students this spring in their own pirate-y musical. Barb studies voice with Diana Borgia-Petro.

Julie C. May (Ruth): Julie is thrilled to be making her Savoy debut. Her love of theatre goes back to her childhood in Washington DC where she was enthralled by its magic at an early age. She is an active member of the G&S Society of Chester County, West Chester, serving on their Board; as producer of many shows, and most recently, as director –*Gondoliers* in 2008 and their upcoming *Pirates* in November 2009. She also directed the Philadelphia G&S Union's 2007 and 2008 productions for the Annual International G&S Festival in Buxton, England and has performed in and directed productions for the Ardensingers of Arden DE and Thespis, Etc. of Media. Julie has performed at Footlighter's in Berwyn, The Rose Valley Chorus and Orchestra in Media, as well as at the Forge Theatre in Phoenixville, where she earned three Golden Anvil awards for Best Performance in a Supporting Role. At the 2008 International G&S Festival in Buxton, she was nominated for Best Performance by a Supporting Actress, for her Lady Blanche, in Savoynet's *Princess Ida*. She studies voice with Kathryn Armour of Wilmington, Delaware and New York City.

John Nicholas Peters (The Pirate King): Baritone John Nicholas Peters has performed roles in opera, musical theater and oratorio on both sides of the Atlantic. He appeared as *Don Giovanni*, Marcello in *La Boheme* and Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the National Lyric Opera of Greece and performed the roles of Olin Blich in Floyd's *Susannah* and Belcore in *The Elixir of Love* with the Mozart & Friends Opera Festival of Southern New Jersey. He also performed the role of Danilo in *The Merry Widow* with The Stratford Operatic Society at The Royal Shakespeare Theater, Stratford-Upon-Avon, England, created the role of Archdeacon Frollo in the world premiere of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* with the Player's Club of Swarthmore, appeared as Maximilian in *Candide* with the Living Arts Repertory Theater in Westmont, New Jersey and as Mr. Black in the premiere of *The Wonderful O* with the American Music Theater Festival. He was a soloist in such varied works as Bach's *Cantata #82*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Britten's *War Requiem* with various choral groups in the UK. He is also an accomplished opera stage director, directing *Madame Butterfly* for Lancaster Opera, *The*

Magic Flute, The Tales of Hoffman, Die Fledermaus, The Bartered Bride and La Traviata for The Mozart & Friends Opera Festival (where he also spent six seasons as Artistic Director) and *Lucia di Lammermoor, Il Tabarro, L'Elisir d'Amor, Pagliacci, Moniushko's Halka* and Verdi's *Otello* for The Little Lyric Opera Theater of Philadelphia. Mr. Peters is also a Master Voice Teacher and has been training students out of his studio in Philadelphia since 1984. His web site is: www.Vocaltechnician.com