

Arts & Entertainment

Talented cast of 'H.M.S. Pinafore' delivers big laughs

By Katie Venit
Assistant A&E Editor

In one of the most familiar scenes in *The Simpsons*, Bart convinces the murderous Sideshow Bob to "sing him to heaven before he sends him to hell" by performing a one-man rendition of the entire score of *H.M.S. Pinafore*. That was funny. The real thing is even funnier.

James Dodding directed W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore*, which ran March 31 - April 1, and April 5 - April 9 on the Mainstage in Scales Fine Arts Center. Centering around a forbidden love between Josephine Corcoran (junior Natalie Cordone), the daughter of the Captain of the H.M.S. Pinafore, and Ralph Rackstraw (senior Matt Mundy), a common sailor on the ship, the comic operetta makes a sarcastic commentary on love, marriage, opera and the British Navy in Victorian England.

Though she loves another, Josephine's father, Captain Corcoran (freshman Jonathan Horvath), arranges for her to marry Sir Joseph Porter, a British nobleman (sophomore Aaron Bokros). She rejects Sir Joseph and, despite the efforts of the fantastically ugly Dick Deadeye (senior Bill Diggle), who does not seem truly evil, just bitter, Josephine and Rackstraw get together at the end. This seemingly impossible ending is thanks to a *deus ex machina* by Little Buttercup, wonderfully portrayed by senior Peden Fitzhugh, who reveals that Corcoran and Rackstraw were switched at birth. No mention is made of the incredible age difference between Josephine and the now-noble Rackstraw, who can marry whom he wishes, and he wishes it to be Josephine.

The Captain marries his true love, the poor Little Buttercup, and everyone is happy at the end. Even Josephine's snubbed suitor, Sir Joseph, ends up marrying his cousin.

It sounds like some sort of twisted Jane Austen novel, but it is much, much bigger and better. Nothing was done on a small scale. Dodding and his crew transformed the Mainstage into an English ship, complete with mast and a crow's nest that lowers Little Buttercup onto the stage.

The acting was big, too. Sir Joseph played the biggest of them all, hamming it up for the audience. His facial expressions, dances and voice inflection all pieced together wonderfully to keep the crowd in stitches. In one particular scene, Dodding had a little fun and directed Josephine, the Captain and Sir Joseph to perform four encores to "Never Mind the Why and Wherefore." Bokros never lost the energy that pervaded his performance throughout the show, even when his character became exhausted, and he had to sit down while Josephine and the Captain finished the encores. The crowd screamed and applauded loudly after each rendition of the song.

Bokros stole the show, but he could not have carried it if the rest of the cast was not fantastic. Horvath played his role as a beloved captain just a hair smaller than Bokros, but he was just as funny with his slightly more-subtle humor.

Horvath got his laughs mostly from his amusing facial expressions and choreography, which Beth Beatty designed exceedingly well. Choreography might not have seemed to be a comic element to many people before they saw this show. It was not only a comic element, it got some of the biggest laughs, especially during "Never Mind the Why and Wherefore."

Cordone has a lovely voice, and she handled the arias with precision. She and Mundy played perfect suffering lovers, torn apart by class and fate. Mundy also sang wonderfully.

His rendition of the intellectual, but poor, sailor would have stolen the heart of any Josephine, though he did seem to



Kelly Murdoch-Kitt/Old Gold and Black

The cast and crew of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* pauses between songs for a bout of applause. The operetta was a tremendous success, selling out most of the days it showed and keeping its audience in stitches.

be a bit too young to play someone as old as her father. This paradox only augmented the artful sarcasm inherent in the operetta and increased by Dodding's direction.

Though he's not ugly, and had to invent some interesting facial expressions to appear so, Diggle played the jaded Dick Deadeye perfectly. He somehow

turned him into a pathetic character, one deserving pity and not condemnation. Fitzhugh turned Little Buttercup almost literally into a fairy godmother. She floated across the stage (and descended from the rafters) with the ease of a ballerina. If her crystal ball actually worked, the illusion would have been complete. The chorus in any musical is supposed

to support the main actors, and they did that with gusto in *Pinafore*. The members retained the same energy that pervaded the entire show right up to and including the curtain call.

Pinafore ended the theater season on a high note. All parts of the play worked as flawlessly together as would a crew on a ship of the English navy.

Eclectic band sets the tone in Wait

By Travis Langdon
Arts and Entertainment Editor

For the first part of the April 10 performance by Béla Fleck and the Flecktones, the Wait Chapel audience seemed just a little indecisive.

Some folks sat quietly, evidently trying to figure out how the Flecktones were creating the unique sound that filled Wait Chapel for the duration of the evening. Other fans tapped their feet, clapped their hands or attempted to dance in their seats (until persuaded otherwise by always-cordial university police officers). Still others abandoned their seats altogether for the extra space around the Chapel to let the groove-inspiring music move their bodies freely.

But there was one thing that very few in the attendance could dispute — these guys are good.

In all honesty, *good* hardly does justice to four musicians whose technical mastery and subtle interplay is seldom matched in today's concert halls. For about three hours Béla Fleck, Victor Wooten, Futureman and Jeff Coffin took Wait's sizable crowd on a musical journey encompassing virtually any musical style imaginable. Moreover, they did it with the showmanship of veterans and the approachability of close friends.

The show was scheduled for 7:30 p.m., and, to some people's surprise, it started fairly promptly. For the first several tunes, a steady flow of late comers kept people shuffling around as they searched frantically for their seats. Seemingly oblivious to the confusion, the Flecktones opened up the first set with a high-energy number, distinguishable by its calypso feel.

As Fleck explained later on in the set, much of what was played throughout the evening was music they plan to record for an upcoming album on the band's new label, Sony Records. But unfamiliarity didn't stop people from listening with unbridled enthusiasm.

The thundering notes from one of music's most celebrated bassists abruptly filled the Chapel to start the third tune, leaving many audience members awestruck. Wooten has always played an integral role in the Flecktones, but, with his numerous solos and fills in this performance, he demonstrated that he may have become *the* dominant force in the band. From the soothing harmonics in



Rick Van Veen/Old Gold and Black

ABOVE: The Flecktones lured a sizable crowd to its April 10 show. **RIGHT:** Percussionist Futureman was able to showcase his invention, the synth-axe Drumitar.

Wooten's rendition of "Amazing Grace" to his violently-slapped muted notes throughout the evening, Wooten bore testimony to the reason Fleck dubbed him, "V2K — the bass player of the new millennium." Wooten shined during the first set, with a lengthy solo from his album, *Yin Yang*.

After an intermission, Futureman, the band's eccentric percussionist, took the stage for a solo to start the second set. Using his own synth-axe Drumitar, a partial drum set, a wooden box and a number of other percussion instruments, Futureman redefined the traditional role of a drummer.

The band eventually joined him for what would be the bulk of the evening's music. Fleck doffed his banjo for the guitar in two songs, but, whatever it played, the quartet never failed to deliver excellence.

Another striking element of the Flecktones lies in the way they communicate onstage — musically and verbally. In addition complicated musical exchanges, the musicians take

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Alum-directed films come home for festival

Two honor-winning filmmakers will showcase their talents on campus.

By Katie Venit
Assistant A&E Editor

Sometimes it's hard to get started in a line of work. Even Steven Spielberg had to start at the bottom before he could win the big awards.

Ben Tomlin, '94, has a pretty good start, though. As his thesis for graduate school at New York University, Tomlin directed a short film about a dispute between a rancher and the farm road encroaching on his land. Enlisting the help of junior Tish Harrison as a co-producer, Tomlin filmed the short in Texas over the summer of 1998, which Harrison called "the hottest summer on Texas's record."

"When Ben asked me to help make a short movie, I just thought it would be a fun summer project," Harrison said.

It may have been fun, but it turned out to be the award-winning film, "6 Miles of 8 Feet." Tomlin's film competed against 2,000 other short films for a spot in the prestigious Sundance film Festival and won that spot. Last week, "6 Miles" won NYU's Wasserman Award for best graduate short film.

Tomlin's next project is a feature, "All Saints," which is set to shoot next year. In the meantime, "6 Miles" will be shown this week on campus along with the work of another university alum.

Gail Segal, '74, created "Arguing the World," which is about New York's intellectual movement of the '30s and '40s. Segal focuses on authors such as Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Bell.

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"These people had a tremendous impact on a whole generation and there's no replacement for them," Segal said.

Segal graduated from the university with a degree in politics. After volunteering for a movie crew in the Outer Banks, she found a love of film and decided to attend graduate school for film at UNC-Chapel Hill. After that, she moved to New York and began to make movies.

"Arguing the World" took nine years to make. Segal sees it as "a chance for me to reconcile myself with history."

"In some way," Segal said, "that's what all my work is. That's what all good art is — an act of reconciliation."

The film successfully touched the hearts of the critics. The *New York Times* described it as "one of the deepest portraits ever filmed on the fluidity of ideas."

Segal's next project will be a documentary about "the God-fearing farm country of southwest Georgia," according to Segal.

"Arguing the World" will be shown 7:30 p.m. April 13 in the Annenberg Forum in Carswell Hall. "6 Miles of 8 Feet," along with other Sundance prize-winning shorts, will be shown 7 p.m. April 14 in the Annenberg Forum.

