

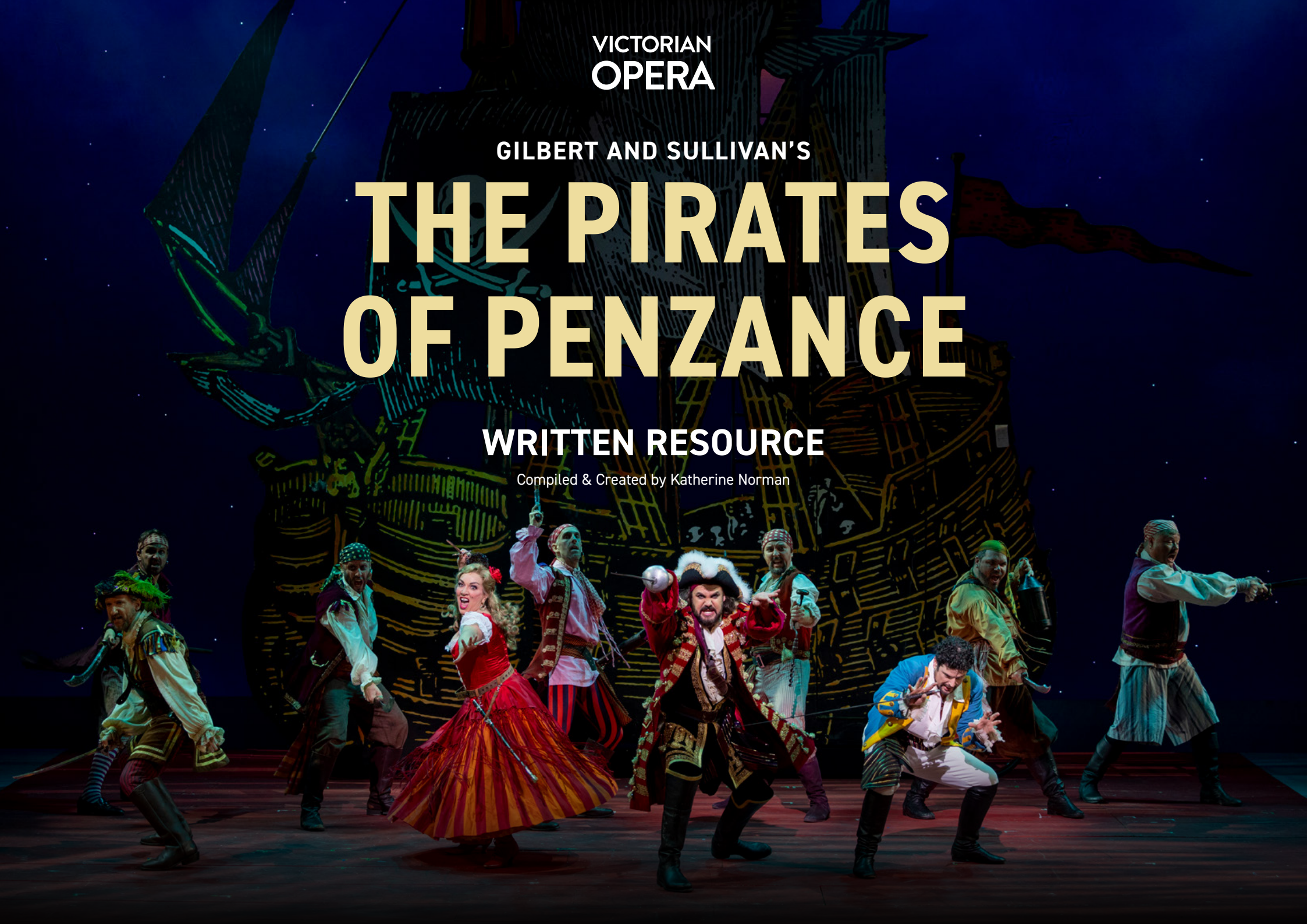
VICTORIAN  
OPERA

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN'S

# THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

WRITTEN RESOURCE

Compiled & Created by Katherine Norman



**Victorian Opera respectfully acknowledges the people of the Eastern Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the unceded land upon which we work and create.**

**We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent and their continuous connection in Caring for Country.**

**We reflect on our shared responsibility to honour and respect this land and its stories, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.**

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# ABOUT US

Victorian Opera is Victoria's state opera company.

We honour the centuries-old history of opera's boundless creativity while captivating audiences with relevant, creative and accessible work.

We create productions that inspire, challenge and stir the soul. Since our inception in 2005, our annual commission program has seen 40 new Australian works written, produced and performed.

In 2021, Victorian Opera was admitted to the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework in recognition of our outstanding contribution to Australia's artistic landscape. This acknowledgement and added financial investment enable us to deepen collaborative ties throughout the industry, and stage productions across the state, the country and beyond.

In 2026, our 21st anniversary, we are delivering more productions and concerts that showcase and promote Australia's vibrant performing arts scene. We employ

hundreds of singers, instrumentalists, theatre-makers and technicians to bring our creative vision to life, and engage audiences with this glorious art form.

A key focus of our organisation is to uncover and develop the talent of emerging artists, both on-stage and behind-the-scenes. From singers to prop makers to costumiers and everyone in between, artists work on productions with Victorian Opera to enrich their career. We delight in the hunger of these practitioners to learn and, ultimately, give back to the future of opera and music theatre.

Our community of Patrons, funding partners and creative industry professionals is truly remarkable. This vibrant network continues to champion Victorian Opera's artistic vision in its vital role sustaining and advancing our creative practice.

We invite you to join us in 2026. See you at the opera!



# MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



**JAMES PRATT**

Conductor



**STUART MAUNDER**

Director



**RICHARD ROBERTS**

Set Designer



**ROGER KIRK**

Costume Designer



**TRUDY DALGLEISH**

Lighting Designer



**ELIZABETH HILL-COOPER**

Choreographer and  
Assistant Director



**ANNA TSIRIGOTIS**

Revival Choreographer



**SAMUEL MOXHAM**

Sound Designer



# MEET THE CAST



**BEN MINGAY**

The Pirate King



**ANTOINETTE HALLORAN**

Ruth



**NICHOLAS JONES**

Frederic



**NINA KORBE**

Mabel



**RICHARD PIPER**

Major General Stanley



**CHRISTOPHER HILLIER**

Sergeant of Police



**DOUGLAS KELLY**

Samuel



**RACHAEL JOYCE**

Edith



**ALESSIA PINTABONA**

Kate



**SYRAH TORII**

Isabel



**VICTORIAN OPERA ENSEMBLE**

Ensemble



**ORCHESTRA VICTORIA**

Orchestra

# BRIEF HISTORY OF OPERA AND OPERA SINGING

Opera is a complex European art form that has been around since about 1600. It was very popular in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Today there are many styles of opera performance, but simply, an opera is a play that is sung.

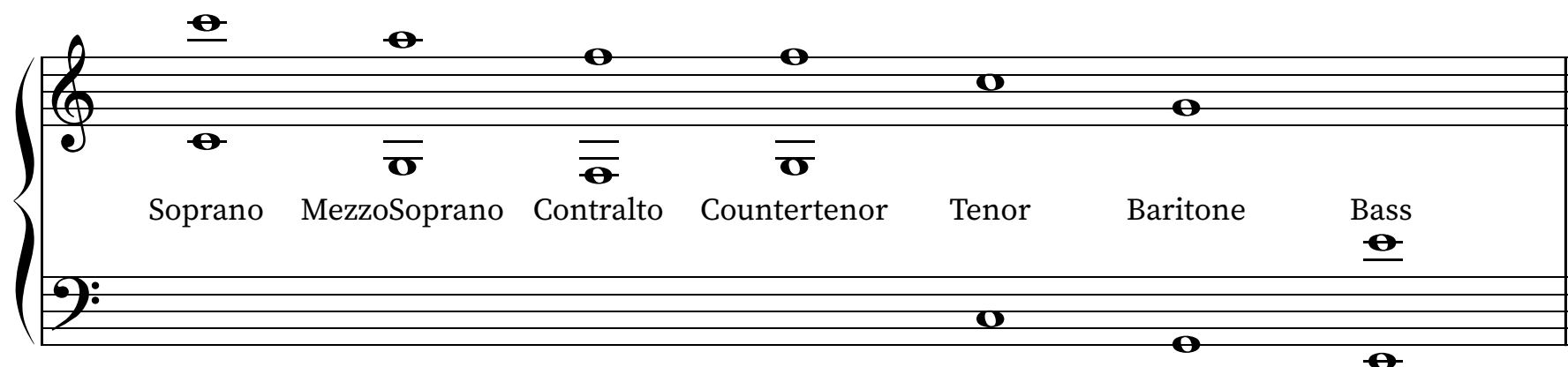
The countries in which European opera first developed are Italy, France, Germany and England. Therefore, the main four languages of European Opera are Italian, French, German and English. Other countries have become significant in the opera world since.

## WHAT ARE THE COMMON VOICES AND VOICE TYPES IN OPERA?

There are seven types of voices in opera/music theatre. These are defined by the range of notes they can sing and a vocal quality. There are three female opera voices, although most operas only have soprano and mezzo-soprano roles. There are four male voices although the countertenor voice is usually only heard in Baroque operas.

- Soprano, the highest sounding female voice
- Mezzo-Soprano, the lower sounding female voice
- Contralto, the lowest sounding female voice, but not common in opera
- Countertenor, the highest sounding male voice
- Tenor, a high sounding male voice
- Baritone, the middle sounding male voice
- Bass, the lowest sounding male voice

# VOICE TYPES AND RANGES



The composer will often choose voice types to highlight the different characters. There are further categories of voice defining the kind of voice quality and the type of music they can sing. A few of these are:

- Coloratura – a very high range with the ability to sing with agility, complicated parts
- Dramatic – a heavy sounding, powerful voice
- Lyric – an average sized voice with the ability to sing long beautiful phrases
- Heldentenor – this is often seen as the heroic tenor, a very big role that requires a powerful sound

Here are some examples of what these voices sound like.



**Classical Female Voices**



**Classical Male Voices**





## GILBERT & SULLIVAN AND THEIR IMPACT ON OPERETTA / MUSICAL THEATRE

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Gilbert & Sullivan are one of the most successful creative partnerships of all time. So much so, they are frequently recognised by their initials 'G&S' alone. Throughout this resource, they may be referred to as either Gilbert & Sullivan or G&S.

G&S specialised in Operettas – variations on the more traditional Opera – which allowed for the use of dialogue / spoken text. Other key adaptations include more dancing, a typically shorter duration but most importantly, a generally lighter or more comedic tone with an emphasis on satire and wit. G&S were trailblazers in this artform, transforming the previously bawdy burlesques to a more elevated and sophisticated art form on the stages of London.

Originally introduced in 1869, they worked on *Thepsis* in 1871. They parted ways and were re-introduced by theatrical entrepreneur Richard D'Oyly Carte in 1875. *Trial by Jury* ensued and thus one of the most successful creative partnerships was born.

G&S would go on to create 14 operettas together. Highlights include *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), *Iolanthe* (1882), *The Mikado* (1885), *Ruddigore* (1887), *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1888) and *The Gondoliers* (1889).

In 1879, a commercial partnership was created between G&S and Richard D'Oyly Carte and formed 'Mr Richard D'Oyly Carte's Opera Company' (later re-titled the 'D'Oyly Carte Opera Company') which became the sole authorised producer of G&S works. Carte bought property on the Strand in 1880 and built the 'Savoy Theatre' in 1881 to promote English comic opera. This state-of-the-art 1,300 seat theatre was the first public building in the world to be lit entirely by electric lights. Profits from *the Mikado* would fund the Savoy Hotel, which opened in 1889 – run by such famous personalities as manager Cesar Ritz and chef Auguste Escoffier. This led to many G&S works being titled '*The Savoy Operas*'.

### A MUSICAL SIDE NOTE:

While G&S were busy beginning their creative partnership, composer Richard Wagner completed his Ring Cycle Opera in 1876.

# THE STORY (SYNOPSIS): THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE

## ACT I

A rocky seashore.

A band of pirates offer a toast to Frederic, their apprentice, as he is 21 years old and his indentures are almost up. He loathed being a pirate and is looking forward to a more respectable career. The other pirates refuse to join him.

Meanwhile, Frederic's nursemaid Ruth, who had also joined the band as a piratical maid-of-all-work, wants to leave with him and become his wife. Frederic, who has seen very few women, agrees.

That is, until he sees the young daughters of Major-General Stanley arrive. The girls all reject his advances except Mabel. Her sisters are then seized by the pirates and threatened with marriage. The Major-General arrives and plays on the pirates' sympathy by telling them he is an orphan. The pirates release the General and his daughters.

## ACT II

A ruined chapel.

The Major-General is troubled by the lie he has told. His daughters comfort him and Frederic reveals a plan to march against the pirates with a squad of police.

The Pirate King and Ruth arrive with news of a technicality concerning Frederic and recall him to service. Frederic's sense of duty is so strong, he agrees to rejoin the pirates and bids farewell to Mabel. And being an obedient young man, he tells the pirates that the Major General is not, in fact, an orphan.

Attempting to attack the General, the pirates find him defended by police. The pirates win the skirmish and the General is taken prisoner. But when the Sergeant of Police commands the pirates to surrender in the name of the Queen, Ruth reveals yet another secret. The General pardons them and grants his daughters' hands in marriage.

## FROM THE CONDUCTOR – JAMES PRATT

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WS Gilbert's inspired story telling in *The Pirates of Penzance* speaks to the adventurous and playful child in all of us, just as its precursors Robinson Crusoe and *Treasure Island* did before it. But what are we listening to when we experience Arthur Sullivan's score?

The rollicking music, operatic parody, classic oom-pah and infectious patter songs all have unique origin stories. Here's a little list: Sullivan was a boy chorister at the Chapel Royal and later an organist at St Michael's Church in London. From these influences we get Victorian era anthems such as 'Hail Poetry'. In 1856, the Royal Academy awarded Sullivan the Mendelssohn Scholarship, enabling him to study at the Leipzig Conservatory and walk in the compositional footsteps of Mendelssohn. We hear this influence often in Sullivan's orchestration, such as the fluttering woodwind which accompanies the ladies chorus, 'How beautifully blue the sky'. While working at St Michael's in the 1860s, Sullivan recruited extra tenors and basses for the church choir from the local constabulary, his first real-life chorus of policemen.

Both Gilbert and Sullivan enjoyed lampooning the melodramatic opera singing of mid-19th century European operas, cue Mabel's gymnastic soprano entrance in Act 1. In post-industrial England, the rapidly growing boroughs of London became home to Music

Halls, a haven for rousing singalongs and comic acts. Music Halls are the birthplace of the call and response style songs, which regularly feature as the G&S comic character's introduction.

The most commercially successful song of the 1870s was Sullivan's 'The Lost Chord'. A gifted melodist, he reaches these heights again with the Pirates Act 2 duet, 'Ah, Leave Me not to Pine Alone'.

Sullivan learned to play all the brass band instruments thanks to his father, a professional bandmaster. He draws on this to great effect when his policemen sing their trumpet call 'tarantara' and in much of the militaristic oom-pah, which features throughout his operas with Gilbert.

The backstory is interesting, but the reality is that the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership created the perfect environment for a brilliant plot and timeless music. I first conducted *The Pirates of Penzance* in a season with Dennis Olsen as the Major General. His whip-smart stage presence and machine gun patter jump started an enduring love of Pirates, which, much like its catchy tunes, will never go away. This interpretation is also influenced by torch bearer Stuart Maunder and arranger Andrew Greene.



## FROM THE DIRECTOR – STUART MAUNDER

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*The Pirates of Penzance* was my first Gilbert & Sullivan experience. It was at Boggabri RSL Hall in 1965, and I so vividly recall the barrel with the skull and cross bones on stage, right as the local vicar Mr Taylor sang 'For I am a Pirate King'. And I loved it! I've loved it ever since – and I'm not alone.

There is no theatrical phenomenon in the Antipodes with the staying power of Gilbert & Sullivan. For generations of Australians, their first Gilbert & Sullivan in a theatre is a kind of formative experience. I have lost count of the number of people who've told me, "My aunt took me to see *HMS Pinafore* or *Pirates* when I was eight..." and how it got them hooked on theatre.

And so, with our 2026 production of *Pirates*, we look forward to building a whole new army of converts. Many will come to this show with absolutely no knowledge of the G&S tradition. G&S is no longer the 'go to' for schools and amateur production. This is no bad thing. We now have the opportunity to reassess and reinvent this repertoire without the weight of a century of performance practice.

The durability of G&S operettas is extraordinary, but not unexplainable. After all, Gilbert's dramatic situations are still funny. The way in which plots hinge on apprentices born on 29 February, or twins exchanged at birth, or ridiculous legal technicalities delighted the Victorians. But let's face it, stranger things happen on *Home and Away*.

Sullivan's music provides a kind of romantic foil to Gilbert's pervasive drollery and cynicism. This kind of friction was very much at the heart of Gilbert and Sullivan's creative relationship. They also shared a sense of humour. Nothing Sullivan wrote with others holds a candle to the music inspired by Gilbert's words. What Sullivan did to those words was to sabotage them and transform them by encasing them in glorious melody.

What other body of work, what other collection of 14 operas, reveals such riches – all of a type, a family, yet all different, thrilling, witty, satiric, gossamer thin, and with real heart. The fusion of gentle satire and genuine heartfelt emotion, so embodied in *The Pirates of Penzance*, is a combination that never ages. Indeed, perhaps it's something we need now more than ever.

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE — INCLUDING PREMIERE AND COPYRIGHT

Gilbert & Sullivan's first successful operetta *H.M.S. Pinafore* was so successful, it created a copyright dilemma with unauthorised versions being performed across America within years of its premiere. In the late 1870s, there was no formal copyright agreement between Britain and the United States.

G&S decided to not fall foul of that trap again for the premiere of *The Pirates of Penzance* and indeed 'strategized'. *Pirates* premiered in New York on 31 December 1879, at the exact same time (recorded the day before due to the time difference) a special matinee was performed in Paignton, England, specifically to secure British copyright. Immense levels of secrecy were required to achieve this on either side of the Atlantic.

The authors are now long since deceased (Gilbert died in 1911 and Sullivan in 1900), and given the work was published before 1912 (see copyright timelines below), its core elements are free from copyright restrictions in most countries, including the United States and Australia.

### **COPYRIGHT TIMELINE** [precis from 'History of copyright: a chronology in relation to music']

Copyright is not a new idea. Even scholars in Ancient Greece and Rome had to insist upon their right to be recognised as the authors of their works (the 'right of paternity') in an era when plagiarism was no crime.

**1455** - Johannes Gutenberg is the first in the Western world to print using movable type. In about 1455, in Mainz, he produces his famous Bible, the first complete typeset book extant in the West.

**1557** - Queen Mary I gives control of all printing and bookselling to a single guild, the Stationer's Company.

**1709/10** - The Statute of Anne is enacted in 1709 and becomes effective on 10th April, 1710. Copyright in books and other writings now has the protection of an Act of Parliament. The Statute of Anne (being a law passed during the reign of Queen Anne) is the first modern copyright law in England, and the first in the English-speaking world. Writers are given control of their works for a limited period of 14

years (with the option of renewing for another 14 years).

**1777** - Music (in the form of printed notation – as 'sheet music' – and not necessarily that solely published or included in 'book' form) is confirmed as copyrightable subject matter embraced by the Statute of Anne.

**1787** - The United States Constitution recognises the concept of Intellectual Property.

**1790** - Like the Statute of Anne in Britain, the US Copyright Act of 1790 gives writers of books, maps, and charts a 14-year copyright, with the option of renewing for a similar period.

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE — INCLUDING PREMIERE AND COPYRIGHT

**1875** – A Royal Commission in Britain suggests that present copyright-related Acts be improved and codified, and recommends that the government enter a bilateral copyright agreement with the United States of America

**1886/87** – The seminal Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works is signed (in Berne, Switzerland). It intends to give international copyright protection to the creative works of the citizens of European member state signatories. The UK ratifies the Berne Convention with effect from 5 December 1887. The US, however, remains governed by its 1790 Copyright Act, and is not subject to the Berne Convention. Longstanding US literary and musical piracy of works by European authors and composers (and vice-versa) continues to be an accepted way of life for publishers, until finally brought to an end by the establishment of separate bilateral copyright agreements with the US.

**1909** – A major third revision to the US Copyright Act is completed. More categories of protected works are included than ever before (effectively, all works of authorship). The renewal term is also extended from 14 years to 28, taking the total possible period of protection to 56 years.

**1911/12** – The great codifying Copyright Act, 1911, comes into force in Britain on 1 July 1912. For the first time, all provisions on copyright are unified in one Act. The Act adds to the composer's rights that of

controlling reproductions of the work by any mechanical means, and has the right to authorise performances. Sound recordings are now protected. Copyright duration is extended: it is granted for the life of the holder plus fifty years after death.

**1956/57** – The Copyright Act, 1956, comes into force on 1 June 1957. It takes into account further amendments to the Berne Convention, and also the Universal Copyright Convention, to which the UK is a signatory. Films and broadcasts are now protected in their own right.

**1988** – The United States finally becomes a signatory to the Berne Convention (more than 100 years later).

**1995/96** – The period of copyright is extended, in Europe and then America, to the life of the author plus 70 years for most printed works.

### COPYRIGHT SOURCES:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Pirates\\_of\\_Penzance#](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pirates_of_Penzance#)

<https://www.doylycarte.org.uk/operas/the-pirates-of-penzance>

[https://www.atlantaopera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pirates\\_EdGuide\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.atlantaopera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pirates_EdGuide_FINAL.pdf)

<https://eprints.chi.ac.uk/id/eprint/2350/1/Little,%20J.%20D.,%20History%20of%20Copyright%20-%20%20%20A%20Chronology.pdf>



# MUSICAL ANALYSIS – I AM THE VERY MODEL OF A MODERN MAJOR-GENERAL

Arguably the most famous G&S piece ever written is this wonderful 'patter song' called '*I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General*', towards the end of the first act. It's jam packed with obscure words and references and is fiendishly difficult to perform. There are many obscure references, so many indeed, there is a specific glossary here for the terms. And for further reading, the appendix has images pertaining to many of these (e.g. graphs demonstrating the difference between simple (linear) and quadratic equations - all will be revealed).

A full copy of the song's text is also included on the next page, so if you really want to swat up and show off, you can.

What is most ironic (even paradoxical) is that the song effectively boils down to a fop who talks the talk, but really is VERY ill placed to be a Major-General. Similar themes occur in G&S's first big hit *H.M.S. Pinafore* - where an incompetent First Lord of the Admiralty (called Sir Joseph Porter) is actually a cheeky satire of the First Lord in Disraeli's government, W.H. Smith.

## CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE:

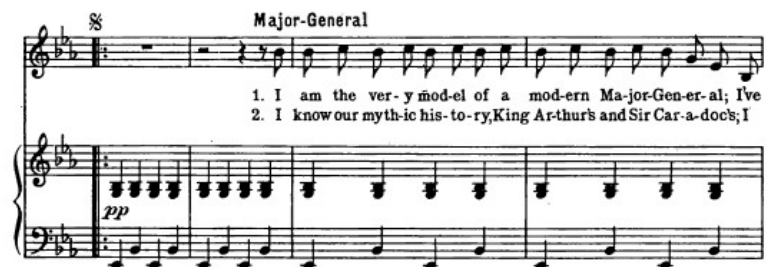
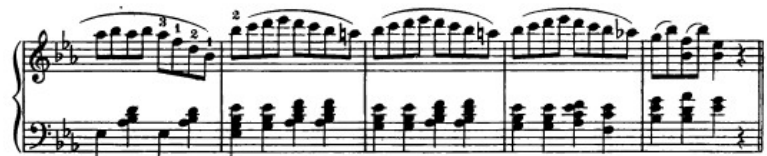
For arguments' sake, consider a contemporary leader, who may not be considered suitable for the role of leadership.

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### No. 13. "I am the very model of a modern Major-General"

Solo and Chorus

Major-General, Girls, and Pirates



## I AM THE VERY MODEL OF A MODERN MAJOR-GENERAL – LYRICS [text in bold can be found in the glossary below]

---

I am the very model of a modern Major-General,  
I've information vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I know the kings of England, and I quote the fights historical  
From Marathon to Waterloo, in order categorical;  
I'm very well acquainted, too, with matters mathematical,  
I understand **equations**, both the **simple** and **quadratical**,  
About **binomial theorem** I'm teeming with a lot o' news,  
With many cheerful facts about the square of the hypotenuse.

I'm very good at **integral** and **differential calculus**;  
I know the scientific names of beings **animalculous**:  
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

I know our mythic history, King Arthur's and **Sir Caradoc's**;  
I answer hard **acrostics**, I've a pretty taste for **paradox**,  
I quote in **elegiacs** all the crimes of **Heliogabalus**,  
In **conics** I can floor peculiarities **parabolous**;  
I can tell undoubted **Raphaels** from **Gerard Dows** and **Zoffanies**,  
I know the croaking chorus from **The Frogs** of **Aristophanes**!  
Then I can hum a fugue of which I've heard the music's **din afore**,  
And whistle all the airs from that infernal nonsense **Pinafore**.

## I AM THE VERY MODEL OF A MODERN MAJOR-GENERAL – LYRICS [continued]

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Then I can write a washing bill in **Babylonian cuneiform**,  
And tell you ev'ry detail of **Caractacus's** uniform:  
In short, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.

In fact, when I know what is meant by "**mamelon**" and "**ravelin**",  
When I can tell at sight a **Mauser rifle** from a javelin,  
When such affairs as sorties and surprises I'm more wary at,  
And when I know precisely what is meant by "**commissariat**",  
When I have learnt what progress has been made in modern gunnery,  
When I know more of tactics than a novice in a nunnery –  
In short, when I've a smattering of elemental strategy –  
You'll say a better Major-General has never **sat a gee**.

For my military knowledge, though I'm plucky and adventurous,  
Has only been brought down to the beginning of the century;  
But still, in matters vegetable, animal, and mineral,  
I am the very model of a modern Major-General.



# MAJOR-GENERAL'S SONG – GLOSSARY

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## SIMPLE (LINEAR) EQUATIONS

“Straightforward” – they involve variables raised only to the power of one (like  $x$  or  $y$ ). Their graphs are always straight lines, representing a constant rate of change.

## QUADRATIC EQUATIONS

“Curvy” – they involve variables raised to the power of two (like  $x^2$ ) as their highest power. Their graphs are always U-shaped or inverted U-shaped curves called parabolas, illustrating a changing rate of change.

## BINOMIAL THEOREM

The binomial theorem gives us the general formula for the expansion of  $(a+b)^n$  for any positive integer  $n$ . Best illustrated by Pascal's triangle. [See Appendix with images below]

## INTEGRAL CALCULUS

The basic idea of Integral calculus is finding the area under a curve (e.g. areas, volumes and totals).

## DIFFERENTIAL CALCULUS

Finds instantaneous rates of change (slopes/derivatives).

## INTEGRAL VS DIFFERENTIAL

They are inverse operations, connected by the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus: differentiation breaks things down (change), and integration puts them back together (summation). Differential calculus tells you how fast something changes (like speed from position), and integral calculus tells you the total amount (like distance from speed).

## ANIMALCULOUS [ANIMALCULES]

Are tiny, microscopic organisms like protozoa, bacteria, or rotifers, first observed by 17th-century scientists like Leeuwenhoek and often called “little animals”.

## SIR CARADOC

**Caradoc Vreichvras** was a semi-legendary ancestor to the kings of Gwent. He may have lived during the 5th or 6th century. He is remembered in the Matter of Britain as a Knight of the Round Table.

## ACROSTIC

An **acrostic** is a poem or other word composition in which the *first* letter (or syllable, or word) of each new line (or paragraph, or other recurring feature in the text) spells out a word, message or the alphabet. As a form of constrained writing, an acrostic can be used as a mnemonic device to aid memory retrieval.

# MAJOR-GENERAL'S SONG – GLOSSARY

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## PARADOX

Is a statement or situation that seems self-contradictory but reveals a deeper, surprising truth or logic, often by pairing opposite ideas like “less is more”.

## ELEGIACS

Describes something that expresses sadness, mourning, or lament, often for something lost, past, or dead, like a mournful song or a sorrowful poem.

## HELIOGABALUS [ELAGABALUS]

Emperor of Rome, ruled from 218 (at only 14 years of age) to 222, famous for their religious reforms and the introduction of the cult of the Syrian sun god Elagabal. Their short reign was notorious for religious controversy and alleged sexual debauchery.

## CONICS

A conic section, conic or a quadratic curve is a curve obtained from a cone's surface intersecting a plane. The three types of conic section are the hyperbola, the parabola, and the ellipse; the circle is a special case of the ellipse, though it was sometimes considered a fourth type.

## PARABOLOUS

A daredevil or reckless person who exposes themselves to danger or who risks their life on any thing.

## GERARD DOWS [GERRIT DOU]

7 April 1613 – 9 February 1675 | He was a Dutch Golden Age painter, whose small, highly polished paintings are typical of the Leiden fijnschilders. He specialised in genre scenes and is noted for his *trompe-l'œil* “niche” paintings and candlelit night-scenes with strong chiaroscuro. He was a student of Rembrandt.

## ZOFFANIES [JOHAN ZOFANY]

13 March 1733 – 11 November 1810) | He was a German neoclassical painter who was active mainly in England, Italy, and India. His works appear in many prominent British collections, including the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery and the Royal Collection. You can even see an example of a Zofany at the National Gallery of Victoria. See the Appendix for an example.

## THE FROGS OF ARISTOPHANES

*The Frogs* is a comedy written by the Ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes. It was performed at Lenaia, one of the Festivals of Dionysus in Athens, in 405 BC and received first place. The play features the comical katabasis of the god of theatre Dionysus, with his slave Xanthias, in order to revive the late tragedian Euripides.



# MAJOR-GENERAL'S SONG – GLOSSARY

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## MUSIC'S DIN AFORE

A noise / the sound of music heard previously.

## PINAFORE

*H.M.S. Pinafore*; or, *The Lass That Loved a Sailor* is a comic opera in two acts, with music by Arthur Sullivan and a libretto by WS Gilbert. It opened at the Opera Comique in London on 25 May 1878, and ran for 571 performances, which was the second-longest run of any musical theatre piece up to that time. *H.M.S. Pinafore* was Gilbert and Sullivan's fourth operatic collaboration and their first international sensation.

• See section on Copyright intricacies around *Pinafore & Pirates*

## BABYLONIAN CUNEIFORM

**Babylonian cuneiform** numerals, also used in Assyria and Chaldea, were written in cuneiform, using a wedge-tipped reed stylus to print a mark on a soft clay tablet which would be exposed in the sun to harden to create a permanent record.

The Babylonians, were famous for their astronomical observations, as well as their calculations (aided by their invention of the abacus).

## CARATACUS

**Caratacus** was a 1st-century AD British chieftain of the Catuvellauni tribe, who resisted the Roman conquest of Britain.

Before the Roman invasion, Caratacus is associated with the expansion of his tribe's territory. His apparent success led to Roman invasion, nominally in support of his defeated enemies. He resisted the Romans for almost a decade, using guerrilla warfare, but when he offered a set-piece battle he was defeated by Roman forces.

## MAMELON

**General:** A mound suitable to use in an ambush

**In volcanology:** A mound of thick, sticky lava that congeals around a vent, building up over successive eruptions. Hanging Rock (near Woodend) in Victoria is an example.

**Military Fortification:** A fortified hillock - used by the Russians in the Crimean War (Siege of Sevastopol).

# MAJOR-GENERAL'S SONG – GLOSSARY

## RAVELIN

A **ravelin** is a triangular fortification or detached outwork, located in front of the inner works of a fortress (the curtain walls and bastions). Originally called a demi-lune, after the lunette, the ravelin is placed outside a castle and opposite a fortification curtain wall.

## MAUSER RIFLE

A **Mauser** rifle is a renowned German-designed bolt-action rifle, famous for its robust, reliable, and copied design, particularly the military Gewehr 98, which became the basis for many sporting rifles, including the iconic Kar98k, and continues today with modern hunting rifles like the Mauser 18, known for precision, strength, and classic features like strong locking lugs and cold-hammered barrels. Mauser, originally a German arms manufacturer, developed these rifles starting in the 1870s for German forces.

## COMMISSARIAT

A **commissariat** refers to a military or government body responsible for supplying troops (food, equipment) or, in French/European contexts, a police station. Historically, it also denotes early colonial supply depots.

## SAT A GEE

"Sat a gee" is an old-fashioned, slang phrase meaning **to ride a horse**, where "gee" or "gee-gee" was a colloquial term for a horse, especially in 19th-century Britain, likely stemming from children's language.

## MAJOR-GENERAL SOURCES:

<https://www.mathzai.com/blogs/linear-vs-quadratic-equations-differences-explained>

[https://www.amsi.org.au/ESA\\_Senior\\_Years/SeniorTopic1/1\\_md/SeniorTopic1c.html](https://www.amsi.org.au/ESA_Senior_Years/SeniorTopic1/1_md/SeniorTopic1c.html)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian\\_cuneiform\\_numerals#/media/File:Babylonian\\_numerals.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_cuneiform_numerals#/media/File:Babylonian_numerals.svg)

[https://gsarchive.net/pirates/html/pirates\\_glos.html](https://gsarchive.net/pirates/html/pirates_glos.html)

## DEEPER DIVE INTO PATTER SONGS

As mentioned above, '*I am the Very Model of a Modern Major-General*' is arguably the most famous G&S song and is an excellent example of 'Patter Song'. Let's take a slightly deeper dive into this wonderful corner of music.

The **patter song** is characterised by a moderately fast to very fast tempo with a rapid succession of rhythmic patterns in which each syllable of text corresponds to one note. It is a staple of comic opera, especially Gilbert and Sullivan, but it has also been used in musical theatre and beyond.

The lyric of a patter song generally features tongue-twisting rhyming text, with alliterative words and other consonant or vowel sounds that are intended to be entertaining to listen to at rapid speed. The musical accompaniment is lightly orchestrated and simple to emphasise the text. The song is often intended as a showpiece for a comic character. The singer should be capable of excellent enunciation while singing quickly to perform the song to maximum effect.

### ETYMOLOGY

The word "patter" derives from the *Pater Noster*, or Lord's Prayer, which Catholics recited in its original Latin. The habit of rushing through the words as quickly as possible gave rise to the term in England.

### FURTHER LISTENING

Some key examples throughout history (pre & post G&S) are:

**Mozart (1782):**

*Solche hergelaufne Laffen*



**Lerner & Loewe (1956):**

*Why Can't the English?*



**Lehrer (1959):**

*The Elements*



**Sondheim (1979):**

*The Worst Pies in London*



**Shaiman and  
Wittman (2023):**

*Which of the Pickwick  
Triplets Did It?*



### PATTER SONG SOURCES:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patter\\_song](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patter_song)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_patter\\_songs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_patter_songs)



## DESIGN ELEMENTS

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This original production by Opera Australia premiered in Sydney in 2006. Set designer Richard Roberts and costume designer Roger Kirk partnered to create this wonderful production that has seen many stage successes. Some crafty design elements include a boat that concertinas (expands and compresses) on and off stage to create an illusion of scale and distance.

Here are some costume concept drawings by Roger Kirk and set storyboards by Richard Roberts ahead of the 2006 premiere, as well as some previous production photos to observe how the creative process unfolds from sketch to stage.

### COSTUME CONCEPT DRAWINGS BY ROGER KIRK



PIRATE



FREDERIC



RUTH



MABEL



MAJOR-GENERAL

## SET STORYBOARDS BY RICHARD ROBERTS & SUBSEQUENT PRODUCTION IMAGES 2006

### 'FREDERIC AND RUTH'





## 'THE GIRLS ENTER'



## 'THE MAJOR GENERAL AND HIS DAUGHTERS'





## 'I SEE A LIGHT INSIDE'



## 'POOR WANDERING ONE'



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Many thanks to Matt Bebbington, Sarah Jackson, Scott Whinfield and Stuart Maunder for their help compiling this guide. Several sources have been utilised in the creation of this resource and the below are recommended for further reading.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Pirates\\_of\\_Penzance#](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Pirates_of_Penzance#)

<https://www.doylycarte.org.uk/operas/the-pirates-of-penzance>

[https://www.atlantaopera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pirates\\_EdGuide\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.atlantaopera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pirates_EdGuide_FINAL.pdf)

<https://eprints.chi.ac.uk/id/eprint/2350/1/Little,%20J.%20D.,%20History%20of%20Copyright%20-%20%20%20A%20Chronology.pdf>

<https://www.mathzai.com/blogs/linear-vs-quadratic-equations-differences-explained>

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[https://gsarchive.net/pirates/html/pirates\\_glos.html](https://gsarchive.net/pirates/html/pirates_glos.html)

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[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_patter\\_songs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_patter_songs)

[https://www.atlantaopera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pirates\\_EdGuide\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.atlantaopera.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pirates_EdGuide_FINAL.pdf)

<https://utahopera.org/explore/2018/04/opera-vs-operetta-vs-musical/>

**And Victoria has it's own G&S Society:** <https://gsov.org.au/>



# APPENDIX – GLOSSARY IMAGES FOR THE MAJOR-GENERAL'S PATTERN SONG

Acrostic Poem Example | **L - O - V - E**

**L** is for the way you look at me

**O** is for the only one I see

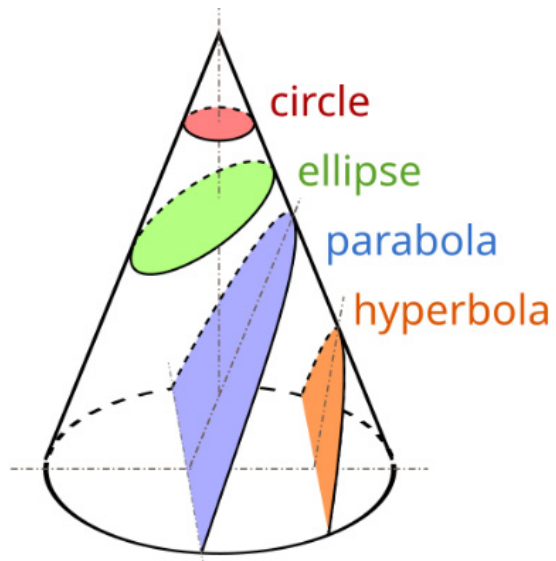
**V** is very, very extraordinary

**E** is even more than anyone that you adore can

## BABYLONIAN CUNEIFORM NUMERALS

𐎶 1	𐎵𐎶 11	𐎶𐎶 21	𐎶𐎶𐎶 31	𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 41	𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶𐎶 51
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## CONICS



Gerrit Dou



Self-portrait (c. 1665), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

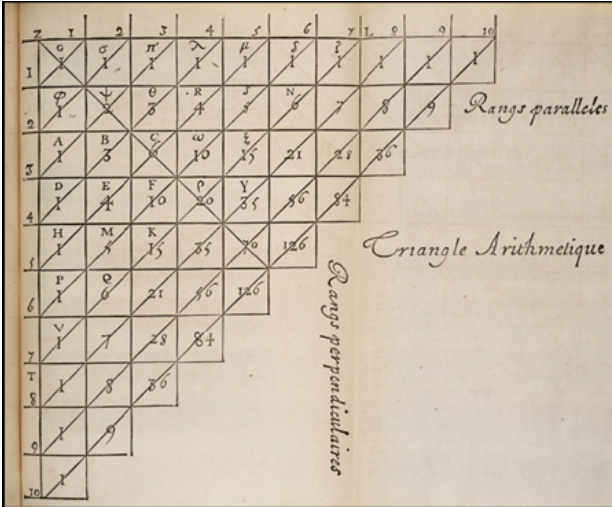
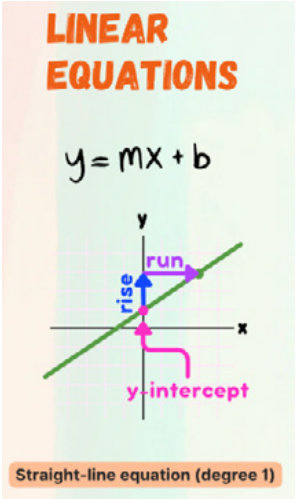
Freiherr  
Johan Zoffany  
RA



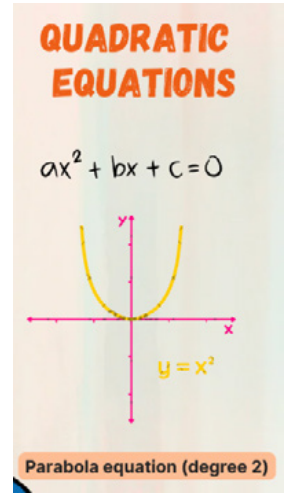
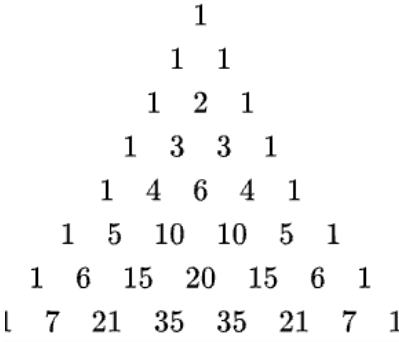
Self-portrait as David with the head of Goliath, c. 1756, National Gallery of Victoria, Australia

# APPENDIX – GLOSSARY IMAGES FOR THE MAJOR-GENERAL'S PATTERN SONG

## PASCAL'S TRIANGLE GRID



## PASCAL'S TRIANGLE



The Roses of Heliogabalus by the Dutch artist Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. (Photo by Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images)



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