

THE PIRATES OF FENZANCE

A FANNISH MUSICAL IN TWO ACTS

By John Pomeranz

Additional Lyrics by Mary Bentley

With apologies to Sir W.S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan

Cast

Frederic, a handsome young fan

Ruth, Frederic's nurse

The Party King, the leader of...

The Pirates of Fenzance, a group of energetic fen

The Fannish Individual, the leader of...

The Scientifiction Amalgamated Society of Afficionados, a group of serious fen

Mabel, a young member of StfASA

Act I

Frederic, Ruth, the King and the Pirates enter.

- King:** Today, Frederic, you handsome young fan, begins the twenty-first Worldcon since you joined our crew. Your indenture is over. You are now a full fledged member of our merry band of fannish pirates.
- All:** *(Pirate cheers)*
- Frederic:** I thank...
- King (interrupting):** Your dues are now due and payable.
- Frederic:** *(Looks pained, but pays dues, which the King gleefully pockets)* My friends, I thank you all, from my heart for your kind wishes and friendship. Would that I could repay them as they deserve.
- King:** What do you mean?
- Frederic:** Today I am out of my indentures, and today I leave you forever.
- Pirates:** *(Shocked murmurs)*
- King:** But how can this be? We were counting on your keen wit and strong arm to help us capture the Baltimore Worldcon!
- Frederic:** Yes, I have done my best for you all these years, but despite my affection for all of you, your debauched idea of fandom disgusts me. I would never have been a part of all of it — terrorizing hotel managers with your all night parties, mocking serious devotees of the high art of scientifiction, utterly failing to meet your financial obligations to honest convention centers. Yet I am a slave to duty, and I was honor bound. For I was duly apprenticed to you, and it was my duty to help you even though my indenture was the result of a ghastly error.
- King:** An error?
- Frederic:** I cannot speak of it. It would reflect unfavorably on my dear nurse Ruth, to whom I have a duty as one might have to a mother.
- Ruth:** Oh, my dear Frederic, you handsome young fan! I cannot keep this terrible secret any longer. I will tell you all what happened. *(She sings...)*

Song: *When Frederic was a Little Fan*
(to the tune of *When Frederic was a Little Lad*)

When Frederic was a little fan,
He so adored his reading.
He'd sit inside, despite our chides,
And read though we were pleading.
Resigned that Fred would never be
A normal working feller,
His father vowed that he'd be proud
If Fred were a book seller.
The huckster's life, where greed is rife,
Was not what he'd been dreaming,
But Fred'ric's dad, knew that Fred had,
A soul too pure for scheming.

I was a stupid nursery maid,
An easily confused one.
I did not fully understand
His vision for his dear son.
For when I heard, the father's words
Of mere greed and corruption,
I truly thought that what he sought
Was a more criminal option.
So I bound you to this rowdy crew,
And this was your bad luck, sir.
And thus were you apprenticed to
A pirate, not a huckster

Frederic: And so you see, I was never destined for a life of fannish revelry. All that I've ever wanted to do was read and study scientifiction.

King: But you can do both! Certainly we love parties and having fun, but we read sci-fi too!

Frederic: Please! Those of us who are trufen, call it "scientifiction" or, if you must abbreviate it, "stf" (*which Frederic pronounces as "stiff"*).

King: "Stiff"?

Frederic: Stf.

(One of the pirates holds up a sign reading: "Insert scatological joke here.")

Frederic: So you see, while I love each of you individually, collectively your way of life fills me with revulsion. Why don't you join with me? Give up your life of meaningless frivolity and your plans to take over the Baltimore Worldcon. Devote your efforts to literary criticism and the use of scientifiction to teach fundamental scientific principles.

King: Never! We are the Pirates of Fenzance! (*He sings...*)

Song: *Oh, Better to Stay Up All Night*

(to the tune of *Oh, Better Far to Live and Die* (The Pirate King's Song))

Oh, better to stay up all night
And greet the morning's early light
Than to go to bed at half past eight
Like SMOFS too old to stay up so late.
When the business meeting types arise,
I'll be the first site that greets their eyes.
As I retire, they'll hear me sing:
"I'll live and die a Party King."

Chorus:

King: I am the Party King!
And it is a terribly fannish thing
To be the Party King.

Pirates: I am the Party King!
(Yo ho! Stay up with the Party King!)

King: And it is a terribly fannish thing
To be the Party King.

Pirates: (It is a terribly fannish thing
To be the Party King!)

For other fen it's not so nice
If their bathtub's filled with beer and ice.
If you wanted to be clean, you fools,
Take off your clothes and jump in the pool!
And if security starts to flip
About our nocturnal skinny dip
We'll give 'em drinks, and soon you'll see
Them all in the pool and they'll sing with me:

Chorus

Our parties always cost a lot.
We may not pay for what we got.
You can never put a price on mirth.
We give fen more than their money's worth!
Though bill collectors might give us grief,
And SMOFs are stunned in disbelief,
To our creed we'll be forever true,
And when they forget we'll run Connie II.

Chorus

Frederic: I see that nothing I can do can dissuade you from your path of fannish debauchery. But because you have been such friends and because I am still your apprentice until the start of opening ceremonies, I must do you one more service before I leave you and explain to you why you keep losing money on conventions.

Pirates: Tell us! Tell us!

Frederic: You are all too tender-hearted. You must stop taking pity upon people and offering them free memberships to your conventions.

King: But we only offer free memberships to those who share our pitiful state. We only give free memberships to...

(One of the pirates holds up a sign reading: "Incredibly witty Gilbert & Sullivan pun coming up.")

King: Baltimore Fans.

Pirates: *(Groans)*

(The pirate flips the sign and the back reads: "Get it? Orphans=BaltiMORE FANS. Ha ha.")

Frederic: Well I see there is nothing I can do to change your ways. I wish you well. Farewell, my friends.

King & Pirates: Farewell, Frederic!

King, Ruth, & Pirates exit

Frederic: Now that I am free of my indenture, I must seek out a group of true fans to share my love of scientifiction.

Mabel & the members of StfASA enter.

Mabel: Hello, you handsome young fan. Who are you?

Frederic: I am Frederic, a handsome young fan recently released from my indenture to the Pirates of Fenzance.

StfASA: The Pirates of Fenzance! Eeek! *(and similar sounds of dismay)*

Frederic: No, no! Do not be afraid! I have foresworn my previous life of revelry and am dedicating the rest of my life to the pursuit of serious scientifiction fandom!

Mabel: Why then you are in luck! For we are the Scientifiction Amalgated Society of Afficionados, and we are on our way to the Worldcon in Baltimore. Why don't you join us?

Frederic: You would accept me, despite my past?

Mabel: *(She sings...)*

Song: *Poor Wand'ring Fan*
(to the tune of *Poor Wand'ring One*)

Poor wand'ring fan,
Though you've been wild in the past,
Plotted with cads,
Farewell those lads!
Poor wand'ring fan...

Poor wand'ring fan,
If you would mend your ways,
Then take my hand.
Join our poor band,
And come with us to the Worldcon.

StfASA: Join us! Forget past days.
Join us! Change your bad ways.

Mabel: Join us! Bid them begone.
And come with us to Worldcon.

StfASA: Join us! Forget past days.
Join us! Change your bad ways.

Mabel: Join us! Bid them begone.
And come with me to Worldcon.
(cadenza, which she cuts short when it gets too high)

Mabel: *(Aside)* What do I look like? Beverly Sills? *(To Frederic)* Yes, you may join us, for you are a handsome, err, um serious young fan. Of course, you'll have to pay for your share of the room.

*The **King**, **Ruth** and the **Pirates** enter*

King: Ah ha! Frederic, I knew you wouldn't let us down. You've found a likely looking group of stuffy fen that we can keep up all night filking!

Frederic: That's stfnal fen, not stuffy fen, and I'm going with them to the Worldcon where we'll attend business meetings and create fanzines on hectographs.

Frederic: *(To audience)* How many of you get that joke? Raise your hands.

All: *(To audience members who've raised their hands)* You're old!

King: Not 'til we've shown you and your new friends a good time, my handsome young fan!

*The **Pirate** grab **Frederic** and **Mabel**, and the **Fannish Individual** enters*

F.I.: Unhand those fen, you brutes.

King: Who are you?

F.I.: I am the sole Director of the Scientifictional Amalgamated Society of Afficionados.

King: You mean?

F.I.: Yes. I am the StfASA Board.

All: (*Groans*)

F.I.: And I know a little something about fandom. (*singing...*)

Song: *I am the very Model of a Fannish Individual*
(to the tune of *I am the very Model of a Modern Major-General*)

I am the very model of a fannish individual.
I've knowledge literary, cinematic and political.
I know the names of all who've won the Hugo and the Nebula,
And I've attended every con they've held in Philadelphia.

I love Arthur C. Clarke, Terry Prachett, C.J. Cherryh, Frederik Pohl,
J.R.R. Tolkien, Andre Norton, Barbara Hambley, read 'em all.
Marion Zimmer Bradley, Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov,
Of reading science fiction I can never ever get enough.

StfASA: (Of reading science fiction he can never ever get enough.
Of reading science fiction he can never ever get enough.
Of reading science fiction he can never ever ever get enough.)

F.I.: I've read Niven, Foster, Silverberg, Zelazny, Card and Donaldson.
McCaffrey, Herbert, Chalker, Eddings, Dickson and Poul Anderson.
In matters literary, cinematic and political,
I am the very model of a fannish individual.

StfASA: (In matters literary, cinematic and political,
He is the very model of a fannish individual.)

F.I.: I've seen every science fiction story captured by a camera.
Metropolis, 2001, Forbidden Planet, Gamera.
Close Encounters, Things to Come and Bambi Meets Godzi-illa,
Alien III, Superman, The Fly and Barbare-ella.

I've taped every single episode of *Twilight Zone* and *Dr. Who*.
My anime collection is the envy of all fandom too.
I'm fluent in Minbari, Bocci, Klingon, Betazoid and Narn.
And I know every detail of the Federation Uniform.

StfASA: (And he knows every detail of the Federation Uniform.)

And he knows every detail of the Federation Uniform.
And he knows every detail of the Star Trek Federation Uniform.)

F.I.: I've seen Will Robinson grow up and now I watch him as Lenier.
I've travelled throughout time and space to galaxies both far and near.
In matters literary, cinematic and political,
I am the very model of a fannish individual.

StfASA: (In matters literary, cinematic and political,
He is the very model of a fannish individual.)

F.I.: I vote on every Worldcon site that's ever been or's yet to be.
I've gone to business meetings and had Robert Sacks defer to me.
I know the details of the Worldcon site selection voting zones.
And when I work on any con, I get a beeper *and* a phone.

I've been to Torcon, Chicon, Discon, Aussiecons both I and II.
Constellation, Confiction, Pacificon and Big MAC too.
Conspiracy, Denvention and the secret one in '42.
I don't know much 'bout how cons run, but I'm sure I know more than you.

StfASA: (He doesn't know just how cons run, but he's sure he knows more than you.
He doesn't know just how cons run, but he's sure he knows more than you.
He doesn't know just how cons run, but he's sure he knows so much more than you.)

F.I.: I worked at every job from lowly gopher to division head.
And I'd have chaired a Worldcon too, but other big name fen all said,
"Your knowledge is impressive, but your business skills are pitiful,
You are the very model of a fannish individual."

StfASA: (His knowledge is impressive, but his business skills are pitiful,
He is the very model of a fannish individual.)

King: I'm not impressed. Take him away too, me mateys!

F.I.: No, wait! You can't take me!

King: And why not, may I ask?

F.I.: Because... I, and the rest of my club, are...

(A StfASAn holds up the sign reading: "Incredibly witty Gilbert & Sullivan pun coming up.")

F.I.: Baltimore Fans.

(The StfASAn flips the sign to the side reading: "Get it? Orphans=BaltiMORE FANS. Ha ha.")

All: *(Groans)*

F.I.: *(Aside)* Actually, we're from Dundalk.

King:

Blast! *(To Pirates)* Well, there's nothing for it, mateys. We'll have to let them go. *(To others)* But we'll see you at the Baltimore Worldcon. And don't try to stop us from taking it over and turning it into our kind of party, or we may forget our tender feelings for fellow Baltimore fans and force you to drink Captain Morgan rum all night.

All exit, to the strains of the chorus of the Fannish Individual's song.

Act II

Frederic, Mabel, and the members of StfASA enter.

Mabel: We're finally here at the Baltimore Worldcon, Frederic! Isn't it wonderful?

Frederic: It's more fabulous than I could have imagined! What do we do now that we're here? Meet famous authors? Discuss the great themes of scientifiction? Imagine the great scientific advances yet to come?

F.I.: Well, actually, we don't have time for any of that. We're in charge of running registration.
(*He sings...*)

Song: *When the Fen All Stand in Line*

(to the tune of *When the Foeman Bares His Steel (Tarantara)*)

F.I.: When the fen all stand in line,

StfASAns: (Stand over there. Stand over there.)

F.I.: No one ever reads the signs.

StfASAns: (Stand over there.)

F.I.: And you'd think if they could read,

StfASAns: (Stand over there. Stand over there.)

F.I.: Our instructions they'd not need

StfASAns: (Stand over there.)

F.I.: When we ask them for IDs.

StfASAns: (Stand over there. Stand over there.)

F.I.: They come without them and say, "Please."

StfASAns: (Stand over there.)

F.I.: And while everyone complains

We will patiently explain.

We will patiently explain.

StfASAns: (Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there.

Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there.

Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there. Stand over there.

Stand over there.)

Mabel: Yes, its thankless work we're doing

Joy and fun we are eschewing

The day we volunteered we're rueing

Why'd we take re-spon-si-bi-li-ty?

Though at times this seems the worst,

And we're sure our lives are cursed

At least we're reimbursed

And get a t-shirt for our pains!

StfASAns: Our memberships get reimbursed

Our memberships get reimbursed.

Repeat, with F.I., Mabel and the StfASAns sing the first and second halves in counterpoint

Mabel, the F.I. and the other members of StfASA march out, leaving Frederic on stage.

Ruth and the Party King enter.

King: Ah, Frederic, my handsome young fan! Good to see you made it. How are you enjoying the Worldcon?

Frederic: You shouldn't be here! I know for a fact that you can't afford at-the-door memberships. As a member of the registration staff, it is my duty to ask you to leave.

Ruth: Ah, Frederic, it's odd that you should mention duty, for that is precisely what we need to speak to you about.

Song: *When You had Left Our Pirate Band*

(to the tune of *When You had Left Our Pirats Fold (The Paradox Song)*)

Ruth: When you had left our pirate band,
It left us all without a clue.
Our Worldcon taking-over plans
Depended all on you.
We'd thought your 'prenticeship too brief
Which drove us to our filing box
We read your contract and, relieved,
We found a paradox.

Frederic: A paradox?

Ruth: A paradox,
A truly fannish paradox.
Our calendars this Worldcon mocks,
And so creates this paradox.

All: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Chorus:

All: A paradox
A paradox
A truly fannish paradox
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha,
A paradox.

King: 'Twas twenty-one Worldcons ago
When first your nurse apprenticed you.
And with this Worldcon set to go,
We'd though your term was through.
But then we calculated days
And found that all was not as thought
Though usually on Labor Day
This year's Worldcon was not

Frederic: A paradox.

King: A paradox,
A truly fannish paradox.
Our calendars this Worldcon mocks,
And so creates this paradox.

All: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

Chorus

Ruth: You see, Frederic, my handsome young fan, although your apprenticeship was to last for twenty-one years and this is the twenty-first year since I apprenticed you to these pirates at Suncon, your apprenticeship is not yet complete.

King: Yes, my boy. For the Baltimore Worldcon is not being held over Labor Day weekend, as has been the tradition for Worldcons for many years. It is being held in early August.

Frederic: And thus, my apprenticeship will not be complete for another three weeks! Oh woe is me!

King: Welcome back to the Pirates of Fenzance, Frederic! And now, as I'm sure your conscience has already told you, it is your duty to let us all into the Worldcon for free.

Frederic: 'Tis true, 'tis true. I am bound by my duty. Gather our comrades, and I will use my position on the registration staff to procure badges for all of them.

(Ruth & the King exit. Frederic begins to weep, and Mabel enters.)

Mabel: Frederic, I've registered in the hotel. Here's your key -- you get the bathtub... Why whatever is the matter?

Frederic: Oh, it is almost too horrible to tell. I must return to the Pirates of Fenzance.

Mabel: But, Frederic, my handsome young fan, why?

Frederic: I am bound to my apprenticeship for twenty-one years. Although this is the twenty-first Worldcon since I first joined their rowdy crew, the early date of this convention leaves me short of completing my apprenticeship by three weeks! My duty obliges me to help them with their dastardly scheme to capture the Worldcon.

Mabel: *(In tears)* But Frederic, what about me? Whatever will I do without you?

Frederic: *(Moving to comfort Mabel)* There, there. 'Tis only three weeks. I will soon return to you.

Mabel: *(Breaking away from Frederic's attempted embrace)* Who cares about that?! What about your share of the room? Do you have any idea what downtown hotel rooms cost these days?!

Frederic: Oh... sorry. Look, I'll cover my share of the room anyway. I'll hit up an ATM just as soon as I get membership badges for the dreaded Pirates of Fenzance.

Mabel: Oh, Frederic, you are a wonderful (and handsome) young fan. *(She kisses him)*

Frederic and Mabel exit. The members of StfASA enter, looking about, followed by the Pirates, who are all wearing membership badges.

StfASAn 1: There's a likely looking group of fen.

StfASAn 2: Hey, you over there!

Pirate 1: Who, us?

StfASAn 2: Yes, you. The StfASA Board has instructed us to impress, err, um, recruit some gophers for the convention. You folks look perfect for the job.

Pirate 2: I don't know... Is it fun?

StfASAn 1: Fun? Listen to this: *(he and the other StfASAns sing...)*

Song: *When a Fan is Not Pursuing His Enjoyment*

*(to the tune of *When a Felon's Not Engaged in His Employment*)*

When a fan is not pursuing his enjoyment. (His enjoyment)
Be it costumes, filking, games or other fun. (Other fun)
You can find him seeking other fan employment. (Fan employment)
Checking badges at the entrance to Hall 1. (To Hall 1)

In the con suite he is serving beer and cheeses. (Beer and cheeses)
And he cleans up all the mess when day is done. (Day is done)
While he babysits the guest of honor's nieces. (Honor's nieces)
Oh, a gopher's lot is such a happy one!

Chorus:

Oh, when there's running and there's schlepping to be done, (To be done)
Then a gopher's life is such a happy one. (Happy one)

During set-up she is hammering and drilling. (-ring and drilling)
She will check your backpack at the art room door. (Art room door)
Many varied and important roles she's filling, (She is filling)
Such as driving staffers to the hardware store. (Hardware store)

The assistant to the con vice-chair's assistant, (Chair's assistant)
Will be answering the phone for everyone. (Everyone)
Although benefits and pay are non-existent, (Non-existent)
Still, a gopher's lot is such a happy one!

Chorus

Pirate 1: Sounds kind of like work to me...

StfASAn 1: Did we mention the free access to the gopher hole? It's sort of an all day party where you can get soda, chips and bologna on stale bread with Miracle Whip.

Pirate 2: Party? Why didn't you say so? Count us in!

*The Pirates and the StfASAns exit together.
The F.I. and Frederic enter seperately.*

F.I.: You! Handsome young fan! I have just discovered a discrepancy with the membership funds. Have you been letting people in who haven't paid?!

Frederic: Although I am now once more a Pirate of Fenzance, I am too honorable to lie to you. Yes, I have given the pirates free memberships.

F.I.: Horrors! Shock! Fiscal irresponsibility! (Blah, blah, blah.) Call security! We will have those ruffians ejected immediately!

The King enters in his underwear.

King: No, wait! This convention is so wonderful that I have changed my ways. I have sold uniform to a very persuasive costumer, and I will use the money to buy full attending memberships for myself and my entire crew.

Mabel enters

Mabel: No, no, good sir. I am glad that you have changed your ways, but there is no need to buy memberships for your crew. So well have they performed their gophering duties that their supervisors have granted them quadruple credit for the time they have worked. Since, through careful financial management, we already know that the convention will make money, we have granted the entire crew complimentary memberships!

King: Then I will use this money to pay back all of the debts that we have accumulated from our years of rowdy partying! And Frederic, because you have shown us what fandom truly is, I release you from the remainder of your apprenticeship.

Frederic: Oh joy! Now Mabel and I can share a room. And afterwards, start up a small book-selling business, specializing in small press and first editions. (*Frederic and Mabel embrace*)

F.I.: And now all's right with the Worldcon. For it is not a convention only for serious literary fen or for all-night partiers. It is not only for costumers, or filkers, or gamers, or Trekkers, or SMOFs. It is for everyone -- the entire brilliant rainbow of fandom. A rainbow of many hues, but all sharing the same glowing inner light: The Sense of Wonder!

Reprise: *I am the very Model of a Fannish Individual*
(to the tune of *I am the very Model of a Modern Major-General*)

All (singing): We share a common bond that's ill-defined and almost mystical,
Each of us in some way is a fannish individual.

The End