

St David's Players
'The Grand Duke' 2019

Information about Principal Characters

General Comments

- The notes below are produced in order to give company members who wish to audition for principal parts some ideas about the characters in this operetta.
- The comments in the right hand column below represent initial production thoughts, but at this early stage, nothing is 'set in stone' and the auditions are entirely 'open'. Hence, if you have other ideas about the way in which you might portray a character, please feel free to inspire us.
- Any comments below about ages are only general suggestions and relate to how the characters might appear on stage (not to actual ages!)
- In terms of accents, although this is set in a Bavarian style Duchy, the members of the acting troop and the inhabitants of Pfennig Halbpennig will speak with English accents.

The French contingent will speak with French accents.

In the original production, because the part of Julia Jellico was played by the Hungarian Ilka Palmay, the decision was to present this in a typically Gilbertain topsy-turvy way with the residents of Pfennig Halbpennig speaking with English accents and Juila - described as an English actress, speaking with a German accent. The decision about whether to follow this tradition in our production will be made later together with whoever is cast as Julia. (Hence it is possible to audition with or without an accent, and please do not worry that it will make any difference to the panel decision). If any accent is used eventually on stage, it will only be very slight and will not be necessary in the sung elements.

What is of absolute importance - given the complex nature of this plot, is that everyone's diction is crystal clear.

If you wish to audition for a principal part on 26th May, please complete an application form, and make sure that we receive it by Tuesday 21st May at the latest.

Continued...

Vocal Range	Extent of the Role	Notes
Rudolph - The Grand Duke of Pfennig Halbpfennig		
Comic Baritone 	2 main solos, and several solo lines in other numbers, duet with the Baroness, trio lines with Ernest and Notary A number of speeches (of some length!) and dialogue with the Baroness and with Ludwig	A comic character, getting on somewhat in years and a miserly, pompous and somewhat moralistic hypochondriac, but clearly quite excited at the thought of his impending marriage to the Baroness (not least because of her wealth). Penny pinching with his household and his citizens, on the lookout for ways to make money, and angry when things do not go his way. Needs to be able to move nimbly (in spite of his age) - will have a tango with the Baroness and a trio dance with Ernest and the Notary.
Ernest Dummkopf - The Manager of the Theatre Company		
Tenor 	Solo, duets with Julia, 2 quintets with Julia, Lisa, Notary and Ludwig, trio lines with Duke and Notary Speech with his troop and dialogue with Julia	Could be any age over 40, the posing, colourful Director figure who likes to be loved 'dahling', but whose troop are not entirely sure that he will make a good Grand Duke. Attracted to Julia. Confident in his ability to lead people. Will need to move nimbly and be expressive in his song 'Were I a King' and will dance with Julia when a 'ghost' and in a trio at the end of Act 2 with The Duke and the Notary.
Ludwig - Leading Actor of the Company		
Baritone 	Several solos, several solo lines in other numbers duet with Lisa, duet with Baroness, 2 quintets with Julia, Lisa, Ernest, and Notary. Dialogue with various characters	Needs to look older than Lisa, but younger than the Baroness and the Grand Duke. The 'amiable everyman', the lead actor of the company and clearly in love with the beautiful Lisa (though seems able to transfer his allegiance to others). Lisa describes him as quite fragile in her lament at their parting, but this does not really come over in his actions when he is able to be decisive, energetic and take the lead. Ludwig holds much of the action of the plot together and needs very clear diction for some songs containing a lot of words.

Dr Tannhauser - a notary - legal advisor to the theatre company (and others)

(High) Baritone 	Solo song, solo lines in chorus numbers, 2 quintets with Julia, Lisa, Ernest and Ludwig, trio lines with Duke and Ernest. Dialogue with members of the acting company	The serious and upright advisor who keeps the group in line legally and explains things clearly and patiently. Although a central and 'still' figure on many occasions in the show, he clearly enjoys being in good company and will need to dance in a trio with the Duke and Ernest at the end of the show.
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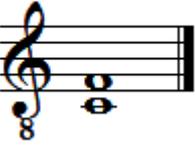
The Prince of Monte Carlo - Father of the Princess betrothed in infancy to the Grand Duke

Baritone / Bass 	2 solos Dialogue with French party and with Ludwig	The slightly mature (but still 'distingué') French noble figure, who adores his daughter and is keen to make sure that his entourage behaves appropriately in the Grand Duchy. Very upright and formal in conversation (with a French accent), but clearly excited about his invention of the game roulette and lights up the temporary casino as the commanding but amiable croupier. At the end of the show, we need to see him 'attracted to' the Baroness and delighted at the potential for a romance in his senior years. Can be in the chorus until part way through Act 2.
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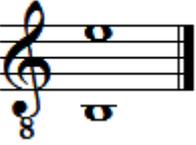
Viscount Mentone

Spoken part only	One line!	See notes below about the French nobles
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A very well known costumier (named in the libretto as Ben Hashbaz ... though not in this production!)

'Male voice' 	Single sung line and dialogue with the Prince	To be played and dressed like the Herald (see below) - hence with a French accent and exaggerated poses. He will have some moves together with the Herald Could be in the chorus until half way through Act 2
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Herald - announcing the arrival of the Monte Carlo royal party

Baritone 	Solo with chorus	An absolute delight of a cameo role - a French fop of a character (Julian Clary meets Louis XIV!) Needs to be able to sing with a pronounced French accent and to move with very stylised poses. He will have some moves together with the costumier Could also be in the chorus until half way through Act 2
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The Princess of Monte Carlo - betrothed in infancy to the Grand Duke

<p>Soprano</p> 	<p>Solo lines in Prince's song Dialogue with French party</p>	<p>Stylised and haughty, precious 20- something year old daughter of a rather doting father. Keen to get her own way and marry someone with a good title. Formal in her movement and her manner. Could be in the chorus until part way through Act 2</p>
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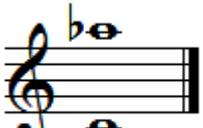
The Baroness Caroline Von Krakenfeldt - betrothed to Rudolph (in later life!)

<p>Contralto</p> 	<p>Solo song, solo lines and duet with the Grand Duke and duet with Ludwig Dialogue with The Duke</p>	<p>Not a 'spring chicken' - a dominant figure (imagine a combination of Hyacinth Bouquet and Boadicea). Plays in quite a flirtatious way with the Duke (not quite as a dominatrix!), but very angry when crossed and bad language from her is not unheard of. Needs to be able to sing a song becoming increasingly intoxicated and to dance a tango with the Duke.</p>
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Julia Jellicoe - The leading lady of the company

<p>Soprano</p> 	<p>Extensive solo work, duets with Ludwig, duets with Ernest, 2 quintets with Lisa, Ernest, Notary and Ludwig. 'Melodrama' lines over orchestra Dialogues with Ernest and Ludwig and lines elsewhere</p>	<p>The actress who has 'for some years' taken the lead roles with the company, the prima donna who possibly only knows how to react in a theatrical way (witness her great melodrama presentation). Certainly looks older than Lisa. Ruthlessly ambitious, cynical, calculating, at times almost seeming unbalanced. A musically and theatrically demanding part including a major 'aria' conveying differing emotions.</p>
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Lisa - a young actress (described in the libretto as 'a soubrette')

<p>Soprano</p> 	<p>Solos, duet with Ludwig, duet with Julia, 2 quintets with Julia, Ernest, Notary and Ludwig</p>	<p>Young, innocent, trusting, attractive. The dancer of the troop. Has been swept off her feet by the company's lead actor - Ludwig. Needs to be able to win our sympathy (not unlike 'Patience' in the opera of that name)</p>
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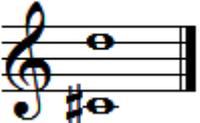
Olga - a member of Ernest's company

<p>Soprano</p> 	<p>Solo line and quartet line in opening chorus Solo line and trio line as 3rd girl in Act 1 finale</p>	<p>'Girl' in the acting troop - can be any age. Able to show excitement about Lisa's wedding and to portray comic mock sadness when Rudolph loses the duel. The group need to light up the stage when they appear</p>
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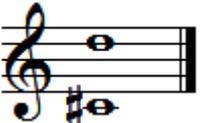
Gretchen - a member of Ernest's company

Soprano 	Solo line and trio line as first girl in Act 1 finale	As for Olga above
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Bertha - a member of Ernest's company

Alto 	Solo line and quartet line in opening chorus Solo line and trio line in Act 1 finale as second girl	As for Olga above
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Elsa - a member of Ernest's company

Alto 	Solo line and quartet in opening chorus	As for Olga above
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Martha - a member of Ernest's company

Spoken part only	One spoken line	As for Olga above - or could be a really comic cameo role as a slightly whimpering girl not always quite 'on the ball'
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Seven Chamberlains to the Grand Duke

Tenors and basses	Sing together at the Duke's entrance No dialogue	Comic characters who need to be snooty looking footmen, but also make it clear that they do not like the Grand Duke. Good acting needed. Can also be in the chorus for the opening numbers and across Act 2 (and some / all could double as the French noblemen)
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Six or seven nobles attending the Prince of Monte Carlo

Tenors and basses	Sing together a few lines in the song of the Prince and Princess	A hilarious group of characters dressed in an amazing set of different fancy dress outfits and attempting to be noblemen, though they are not really aristocratic. Good acting needed. Can be in the chorus in Act 1 and Act 2 opening number. Some / all could double as the notaries. (Viscount Mentone is one of these)
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- All chorus members will have and need to develop their own characters
- There will be a number of additional cameo and dance roles