

Calamity Jane! • May 2003 • Minack Theatre

REVIEW

HOLLERIN' hyenas! As the eponymous heroine in the BROS Theatre Company's production of "Calamity Jane" says about "Men!", so I must say "Rain, rain, rain. I've said it before and I'll say it again."

Yet, in the words of another of the show's several catchy numbers, while "Everyone complained about the weather" on its opening night, it failed to dampen either the spirits of the cast who played with all the courage of the pioneers of the west, or its huge audience all of whom, along with one particular pioneer who all but got the Deadwood stage rolling on her own minutes before its scheduled arrival in town, and despite the fact that there was no sign or hope of a "Beautiful sky" or a "Wonderful day", were hell-bent on having a wonderful Bank Holiday Monday night out.

And, tarnation! As they say in the Black Hills of Dakota, that's just what they had courtesy of director Elizabeth Ross, choreographer Matthew Chandler, musical directors Philip Shute and James Mablin, and the Band, not forgetting Paul Francis Webster and Sammy Fain who wrote the words and music in the first place, and, of course, the already mentioned courageous cast.

Between them they have "brung" us a "Hive Full of Honey", a musical show loaded with many "mighty purty" moments which is as "High as a Hawk" and one which, on Monday, to tweak the words of another of the show's songs a little, was "Wetter than a Well".

A good-natured, romantic, sanitised version of the wild and woolly west, which began life half a century ago as a vehicle for Doris Day, and you can't get cleaner than that, it is fun.

As well as having courage its large cast has the talent to make it all seem "as easy as skinning a possum" but "a durn sight" more pleasant.

While there are good performances from every saloon gal, dancer, cowboy and Indian - no Deadwood anywhere, if you'll forgive the pun - the show belongs to Sarah Trotman who as the buckskin clad gal, or fella, Calamity "call me Calam" Jane is superb. Kinda "Careless with the Truth", she slaps leather, handles her Colt .45 with all the skill of a seasoned gun slinger and could not be more at home on the range. Indeed, no one does more to convince us that Chicago is a "Windy City" and a half, to make us believe that this is a "Whipcrack away, whipcrack away", show, and that, as she did on Monday, to make us feel that we were not "plumb loco" to have sat there for two and a half hours in the rain lapping up every minute of this "horse opera" with the same relish that she sank her "sarsaparilly" and revealed her "Secret Love".

Frank Ruhrmund
The Cornishman
