



Dame Judy wench?

NEW MUSICAL  
**JOHN PAUL JONES**

**Church Hill Theatre, Edinburgh,  
Mon 9–Sat 14 Jul.**

You've probably heard of the man of the title, a founder of the US navy who, with his ship shot to pieces by the British navy and taking in water, stood proudly by his wheel and said 'I have not yet begun to fight'. I always imagine that some wizened leading seaman next to him said, 'Well you'd better get cracking, we're sinking,' but this, like 'Kiss yer *what*, Lord Nelson?' was a great maritime aphorism lost to history.

And a dramatic recreation of history is what writer Julian Wagstaff aims for. Talk of the creative practice of history seen in such films as *Titanic* and *Pearl Harbour* might lead you to believe that many a contemporary director suffers from Jeffrey Archer style memory

problems, but not Wagstaff. 'What I've tried to do is stay as historically accurate as possible, without sacrificing dramatic narrative,' he says. 'If you're dealing with history, but the character is unrecognisable, you might as well just invent someone. But the story has to be entertaining. Most of all you have to be able to give your audience a good evening out.'

Wagstaff has worked on this musical for three years and his fascination with the Scottish-born American hero is self-evident. An amateur cast of 33 has been assembled and Wagstaff's seventeen-piece orchestration will be performed by professional musicians. He points to the relative rarity of native Scottish musicals on our stages and cherishes the ambition of sparking off more new work of this kind. He deserves much credit for this project and even more for its broader aims. (Steve Cramer)