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## Theatre

### John Paul Jones

Mention John Paul Jones to folks of a certain age and they may think of either a musician with Led Zeppelin or the brains behind classic 1978 track Love Is In The Air.

However, for some the name is synonymous with a Scottish gardener who ran away to sea at 13 and fought on America's side during the War of Independence against Britain.

He may not be well known in his native

country, but Jones is a revered figure in the States, and was labelled the 'father of the American navy'.

His eventful life formed the basis of Julian Wagstaff's 2001 musical, which has latterly been revamped into a new, improved version.

Julian started writing in the mid-1990s, a time when devolution was a hot topic. And when Madonna's version of Evita was released, he started looking for a rich, intriguing topic for a musical.

"Ironically it was an Englishman that suggested John Paul Jones," he laughs, reflecting on the time his flatmate gave him the idea for this show.

"I thought something historical and political would be good. And Braveheart was out as well."

Julian adds: "There was this whole kind of Scottish nationalist spirit in the air and all these questions about identity and belonging, and here is this guy who was born in Scotland, took up arms for America - for a different country - I thought: 'Well this has got everything. It was rags to riches. It was triumph over incredible odds. Everything that a musical needs'. I thought: 'I can't believe

this hasn't been done before,' but it appeared it hadn't and so John Paul Jones the musical was born."

This tale of triumph and tragedy and the effect of one man's consuming ambition on those closest to him is the stuff great stage shows are made of.

Boasting an accessible score and memorable lyrics, this new concert version, especially written for the occasion, features musicians from the internationally renowned Scottish Chamber Orchestra. They will be joined on stage by the critically acclaimed ensemble Consort Of Voices, together with guest soloists in period costume."

Regarding the improvement of the older version, Wagstaff remarks: "I think the script's a lot tighter. The arc of the story is much clearer."

"We think the show does speak to universal themes of home and belonging and of family and of ambition and of love gained and lost, so it is a very human story about a fallible yet incredible man."

Roger Crow

Tonight, The Queens Hall, Edinburgh,  
7.30pm, £15 and £16, £12 and £14 concs.  
Tel: 0131 668 2019. www.thequeenshall.net



Picture: ©John Paul Jones

John Paul Jones: Runaway success