



For fun, visit Nell Gwynn

June 8, 2018 by Colin Thomas

“If you’re not having a good time onstage, you shouldn’t be there. Everybody in this cast of *Nell Gwynn* deserves to be onstage: they are having a fucking laugh riot. And their pleasure is infectious: the evening is infused with joy” ...

In this United Players production, director Adam Henderson has cast the confident, charismatic Charlotte Wright as Nell Gwynn. It’s a crucial casting choice and it pays off big time. Playing Hart, Emmett Lee Stang is similarly generous—honestly openhearted, yet able to put full comic spin on elements such as the Spanish-inspired song he sings. As the self-dramatizing Kynaston, Brian Hinson is called upon to chew the scenery, which he does with the enthusiasm of a starving beaver. Mattie Shisko brings a wry sensibility to a company member and reluctant actress named Nancy. And, especially in Act 2, Matt LeBlanc has fun as Charles: “Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. A lot!”

Wisely, Henderson and set designer Chris Bayne give us a colourfully accessorized thrust stage, which keeps the action virtually in our laps...

But the triumph of this production is that it releases the essential joy in the script. The lion’s share of the credit for this stylistic consistency must go to Henderson.

And the historical material is phenomenal. Charles II’s last words, which are repeated here, were, “Don’t let my poor Nellie starve.”

NELL GWYNN By Jessica Swale. Directed by Adam Henderson. A United Players production. At the Jericho Arts Centre on Thursday, June 7. Continues until June 24.