

## CALENDAR

Friday, July 23, 2004

## THEATER REVIEW

## 'Root Beer Bandits' is effervescent

The 'Rootin' Tootin' Wild West Musicale' is another kid-oriented winner from the Falcon Theatre folks.

By LYNNE HEFFLEY  
Times Staff Writer

The Falcon Theatre has turned out to be a one-stop destination for family-friendly romps this summer. Complementing its well-received production of "Snoopy, the Musical" — primarily a nighttime ticket — the theater has added a sunny weekend afternoon treat for the younger crowd, "The Root Beer

Bandits, A Rootin' Tootin' Wild West Musicale."

This impeccably timed, mildly vaudevillian-style musical comedy — about benign desperados, a handsome sheriff, a purty dressmaker and a spunky gal Pony Express rider-songwriter in the Old West — is presented with attention to every good-humored, good-natured detail.

Under Joseph Leo Bwarie's assured direction, the fine adult actors — Susan Dohan and Britt Prentice as comical root beer thieves Copper Penny and Zeke, respectively; Tom Hines as the show's mellow narrator and sheriff of Sarsaparilla City; Erin Matthews as the pony-less Pony Express rider; and Fawnda McMahan as western fashionis-

## 'The Root Beer Bandits'

**Where:** Falcon Theatre, 4252 Riverside Drive, Burbank

**When:** 1 and 3 p.m. Saturdays; 1 p.m. Sundays, through Sept. 5

**Price:** \$10 (12 and younger), \$12

**Contact:** (818) 955-8101

ta Sally Sue — are a hoot, each with standout comic moments.

Lori Marshall's and Bwarie's effervescent, unsugary book and lyrics are cleanly constructed with no false notes to jar the simple tale's time and place, even when the action requires group audience advice to further the plot.

Rachael Lawrence's tuneful score very nicely integrates original music and traditional period songs, including "Sweet Adeline" in three-part harmony. Colorful, well-crafted design elements include the simplicity of Sherry Santillano's storefront set, Lou Carranza's 19th century-style western costumes and deft contributions from lighting designer Nick McCord and sound designer Robert Ramirez.

It's a pleasure to see a legit theater fully commit to a children's theater production with respect for its audience and unstinting professionalism.



Left to right: Zeke (Britt Prentice), Polly Peppercorn (Erin Matthews), Copper Penny (Susan Dohan), Sheriff Bailey (Tom Hines) and Sally Sue Tucker (Fawnda McMahan)

Photo by Wesley Horton