

TREASURE ISLAND  
Rain or Shine Theatre Company  
Sandford Lido, Cheltenham  
Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014

This temperamental 2014 summer is drawing to a close, but to sustain us through the even chillier months to come, Rain or Shine served up two hours of tropical tomfoolery, conjuring up comforting images of distant sun-drenched isles as autumn moves in. Aboard the schooner *Hispaniola*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* met *Carry On Jack* in this entertaining reworking of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale of buccaneers, betrayal and buried gold. Even the squadrons of seagulls squawked appropriately overhead, briefly lending an atmosphere of authenticity, before graciously heading south for the winter, prompted no doubt by the rapidly decreasing temperature.

Gallivanting round the minimal, yet remarkably adaptable set, rearranging the many fixtures to fashion taverns, ships and stockades, the eight-strong cast kept up a steady pace through this cheery, almost pantomimish production, pausing for a quick "*Shiver me timbers!*" here, racing round the Lido lawn there and convincingly re-creating any number of shoot-outs in between. Mercifully, there were strictly limited instances of the obligatory war cry "*Ah-hah!*" and no "*Me hearties!*" at all, but given how this troupe regularly involves spectators in its on-stage antics, enquiries about the location of hidden booty and the requisite audience reply "*It's behind you!*" would not have come amiss.

No matter, the whole was still greater than the sum of its parts, and central to it all was another masterclass in multiple role-playing, precise diction and judicious timing, with a few standard sea-shanties to maintain the joviality. Strong performances abounded, particularly Tyler Coombes as the imperious Captain Smollett, and if ever someone was custom-built for a role, it was James Reynard as crusty Long John Silver. Yet it was the supremely capable Anthony Young whose assured performance of Squire Trelawney afforded proceedings a stable anchor throughout. Clear and confident, he kept everything on an even keel, and hats, headscarves and tricorneres off to his crowning moment as the ship's comely figurehead.

There was a wealth of theatrical treasure on display tonight. The mercury count may have been falling, but the enjoyment factor remained high. "*Yo-ho-ho, and a jewel of a show*".

Simon Lewis

