

Daily News of Los Angeles (CA)

HUCKLEBERRY FINN UP A RIVER WITH SOME NEW TWISTS

June 23, 2007

Tag: 0706250048

Section: U

Edition: Valley

rop

Page: U4

Source: Evan Henerson

Theater Critic

Illustration: photo

The mission of Diane Namm's West of Broadway -- simultaneously exposing kids both to literary classics and to live theater -- is certainly laudable. Even better: the original story that becomes the modernized play is not forgotten. It's even excerpted in the playbill.

In adapting Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" into "**Huck**," playwright/director Namm has certainly figured out how to keep the kids in the audience active. Spending an hour making frog noises or hurtling foam tomatoes at charlatans will do that. Adults? Well, they'll get to enjoy seeing their young ones having fun.

The modernized "**Huck**" keeps Twain's tale of a boy's adventures skeletally intact. The title scamp (played by Austin Jay Chadwick) heads down the river to escape his abusive father (Kevin Brennan), and encounters a couple of con-artist performers. Tom Sawyer (Tristan Price), who has been over-civilized since he and **Huck** found the gold, eventually turns up as well. Jim (played by Wallace Demarria) is no mistreated slave. The Widow Douglas (Chioma Nwosu) and the con man known as the King (Donnell Safford) are also black.

Mark Twain himself (Chris Bouffard) sits in the front row and intervenes in the action to ensure the story he wrote isn't over-messed with. Too late, but the especially young might take to it. More importantly, they may later be open to hearing the original tale.

Evan Henerson, (818) 713-3651

evan.henerson@dailynews.com

HUCK - Three stars

Where: Promenade Playhouse, 1404 Third St. Promenade, Santa Monica.

When: 5 p.m. today, 3 p.m. Sundays through June 29.

Tickets: \$10 to \$15. (310) 428-3343 or www.westofbroadway.com.

In a nutshell: Down the river once again with a present-day **Huck**.

Caption: Photo:

Austin Jay Chadwick, left, meets up with some interesting characters in "**Huck**," a retelling of Mark Twain's classic story of a young boy's adventures on the Mississippi.

Keywords: THEATER - REVIEW - **HUCK**



All content © 2007- Daily News of Los Angeles (CA) and may not be republished without permission.

All archives are stored on a system from NewsBank Media Services.