

# Men, love quarry of Parker's incisive wit

**THERESE OWEN**

A *CERTAIN Lady* is a painfully funny and unromantic look at romance. If you thought you were the only woman to go through what you're going through, this one-woman show will convince you otherwise.

The play is based on the short stories of Dorothy Parker, and Emily Child (**pictured**) delivers an energetic and sometimes alarming interpretation of five stories dealing with issues facing Parker in the 1920s jazz age.

This was a time when women in the US were emancipated. They could vote, wear short skirts and voice their opinions. Yet women were, and still are, at the mercy of their emotions.

The opening scene sees Child waiting desperately for a phone call from him. Her desperation for that call is cringeworthy, yet the dialogue is brilliantly challenging. "It's so easy to be sweet to people... before you love them," she exclaims

## A CERTAIN LADY

**DIRECTOR:** Greg Karvellas

**CAST:** Emily Child

**VENUE:** Alexander Upstairs Theatre

**UNTIL:** March 1

**RATING:** ★★★★★

with extreme bitterness.

The second scene takes place at a dinner party where Parker is incredibly bored with the man seated next to her. While the wit is there, the pace is somewhat lacking. It's not so much the failure of Child. She is a great actress who has a deep understanding of her characters and whose physical acting is as good as her emotional acting. With this play, there is not much physical acting except for her shop-window male dummy that has no head or legs – a witty reference to how Parker viewed men.

Unfortunately, in the second story it is the script that fails the

audience. Perhaps this is because 100 years later, Twitter, the internet and a three-second memory are shaping our concentration.

The action picks up when Parker agrees to dance with the headless, legless dummy. It is then that you witness just how great a physical actress Child is.

Her relentless energy is channelled into a sardonic female who realises her true, free potential, but is unable to turn it into a reality. Her character ends up dancing for 35 years.

While women are able to relate to the five stories, what is apparent is how self-indulgent the character is. Again, it is not fault of Child, but towards the end the self-indulgent ego that was sometimes Dorothy Parker goes on a tad too much.

What is glaringly apparent, however, is that many of the issues that faced an emancipated Parker are still issues with the supposedly emancipated 21st-century women.

A painfully funny, unromantic look at romance indeed.

