

# Sometimes in life you've just gotta roll with it

## ROLLING WITH LAUGHTER

NEW END THEATRE

by JO CAIRD

ROLLING WITH LAUGHTER, although a clever title – Natasha Wood is both in a wheelchair and very funny – does not quite do justice to this touching and impressively performed one-woman play.

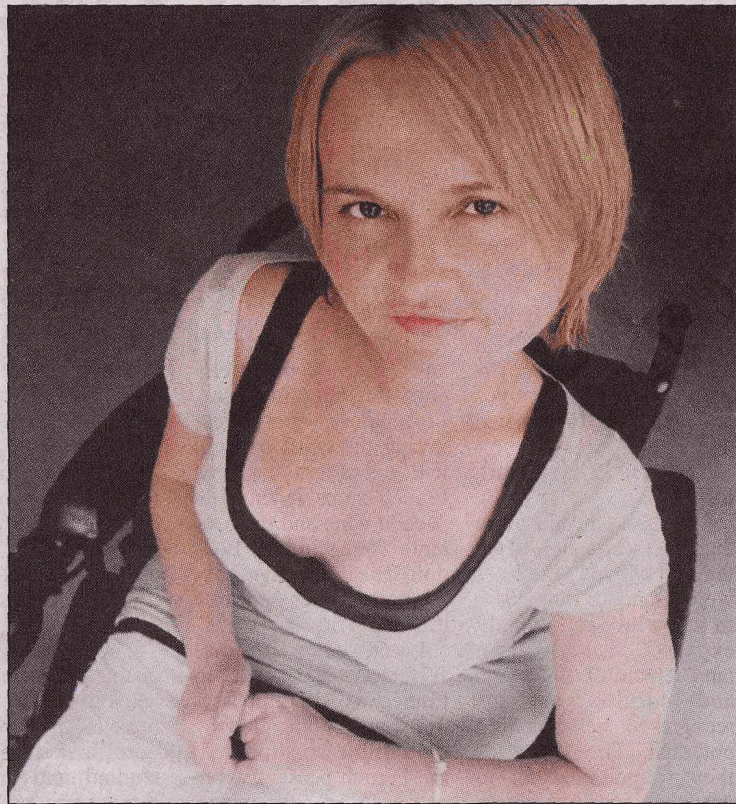
The autobiographical piece, which Wood co-wrote with Beverly Sanders, starts with her parents before her birth and continues up to the present day.

Wood suffers from the genetic disorder spinal muscular atrophy; unsurprisingly, much of her material focuses on the effect the disorder has had on her life.

The tone, however, is resolutely positive. The anecdotes around which Woods weaves her narrative frequently caused the small Tuesday night audience to laugh out loud, while at the same time drawing attention to aspects of an unusual life.

Through clever lighting and sound design and well-considered use of Wood's electric wheelchair, director Cameron Watson creates a series of different atmospheres and contexts that bring Wood's past to life. Wood's father, stoical yet loving, is a strong force in the play, as much of a support to her in the précis of her life as in her life itself.

Other characters also appear as a result of Wood's knack for charac-



terisation, both physical and vocal: her unambitious husband Duncan (from whom she is now separated), raucous New York commuters, and a patronising member of staff at Dogs for the Disabled (the charity which supplied Wood with her now retired assistance dog, Zoe).

The emotion that Wood accesses

and manipulates with skill for the majority of the play untangles towards the end, the highly personal subject matter becoming almost too much for her. This however, does not detract from an excellent performance by a promising actor.

**Until October 30**  
**0870 033 2733**