

Co-producers bank on show

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Lichtenstein began working on "Shot Thru the Heart" a year and a half ago. He selected the property and optioned it for Broadway. Then he asked Bloch, with whom he had worked on

"Boatman" and other endeavors, to join as co-producer. The partners are still raising money from New York, through institutional and corporate investors. They want to take "Shot Thru the Heart" to Broadway in the spring, in time to be consid-

ered for the Tony Awards. Opening the show at the Birmingham Theatre is a lot less expensive than having it premiere at a bigger house, such as the Fisher or the Masonic Temple. Lichtenstein said, "The scales are a fraction — 25 percent — of what it

would be if done on a production (Broadway) contract, to take it into the Fisher or Masonic." He said Harry Niderlander was looking for another musical to put on this season's schedule, and so they got together.

Musical shot through with fun

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istent verve and heart. As the whore Blanch, alias Dirty Em, Coulet is disheveled and convincingly saucy. She gains self-esteem when given a chance to use her brains instead of her body, but she rejects the offered redemption of love.

Dismissing "All This Talk 'Bout Love" as impractical, Blanch com-

plains that you can't eat love, pay the bills with it, or depend on it.

Liz Corrigan as the sharp-tongued Jenny also excels at putting a lot of feeling into her songs. In the cynical "The American Way" she urges her cohorts to grab for all they can, and she painfully bares her soul in "Blood and Shame."

Tim Barber is effective as Billy, the chivalrous, kindly cowboy. Donna Bul-

lock is fine as the schoolteacher who learns to let her hair down and revel in love. Robert Stillman is credible in the pivotal role of Cash and handles his songs competently though not particularly stylishly.

Jerry Scurluck is convincing as Red, the one-eyed tough Blanch is fleeing from. His resonant voice stands out whenever he joins the many ensemble numbers, and one wishes he had more solo time.

IN SMALL roles, Christopher Curry and Matthew Kimbrough do nice character work as the swaggering, leering Pinkerton detectives.

The spirited chorus of mining camp denizens is excellent in the footstomp-

ing numbers "The Evils of Whiskey" and "Party Tonic," then shifts gracefully into crooning the little song, a plaintive lament for deflated dreams. Compared to all the fun of the first act, the second act takes itself a bit too seriously and could use some trimming. Giovanni's direction is generally smooth and the pacing crisp.

Costumes by Julia Van Nutt are colorful and perfectly suited. Dawn Chang's lighting works well, and Martin LaPlante has staged the barroom brawl expertly. Lynn Peckalt and Robert Van Nutt's interior scenery looks fine, but the outdoor set looks unimaginative.

At times, both the orchestration and the chorus seem overwhelmingly loud.

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Matthew Kimbrough (left) is Rufus Buck and Alan Brasington is Chauncey O. Truesdale in "Shot Thru the Heart," a musical set in the Old West.

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