

# PECOS BILL'S WILD WEST SHOW

*by*  
*Lane Riosley*

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PUBLISHED BY

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**STORY OF THE PLAY**

An entertainment in the tradition of those great old Wild West shows that recreated the life of Pecos Bill, the first Texas Cowboy who was raised by coyotes, made the first lasso out of a rattlesnake, broke a cyclone down to a gentle breeze, tamed longhorn cattle and almost married Slewfoot Sue. A whopping good time with non-stop action and wonderful characters. Set in the present at a performance of Pecos Bill's Wild West show, patterned after the Wild West shows of the late 19th century. But Bill and the other performers still live in the past, believing everyone came to the show on a horse, and unsure why there are no horses out back to fill in the show. About 45 minutes.

**ORIGINAL PRODUCTION**

PECOS BILL'S WILD WEST show premiered: spring 1990 at EARLY STAGES of Stages Repertory Theatre. With the following staff and cast.

Barbara Sims	Karen Bull
Sarah Smith	Harold Hynick
Lisa Vollrath	Anders Johansson
Karen Bull	Alex Kilgore
Michael Gray	Albert Linton
Paula Boul	Lisa Singerman

**PROPERTIES**

White Horse- (*Widowmaker*.) See diagram at back of script.

Big Catfish- See diagram at back of script.

Covered Wagon	Cyclones
3 lassos	Harmonica
push broom	fry pan
2 sets of guns, one realistic one wooden	
bushes	rope
various disguises for Widowmaker	

### **PRODUCTION NOTE**

In the original production at Early Stages the tornadoes were designed as wire frames and gauze mounted on a moveable wagon. An alternative, which Early Stages ended up using, was two characters dressed in Native American style robes that were designed as tornado costumes. These two characters whooshed Bill around the stage while he stood on another anachronism, which was found "backstage" - a skateboard.

### **THE CHARACTERS**

*(3M 2F 1 puppet + 3 extras.)*

PECOS BILL: Colorful legendary Texas Cowboy.

SLEWFOOT SUE: She tames wild catfish broncs.

SHAKE: A rattlesnake. Bill's friend and lasso *(A puppet.)*.

STORM CLOUD: A Native American.

FRYPAN: the Old Trail Cook.

SHOWDOWN: The Gunfighter.

*(Optional Characters are non-speaking and assist in the action or the moving of scenery: CACTUS BLOSSOM, SAGEBRUSH & TALL HORSE.)*

### **SETTING**

It is the present at a performance of *Pecos Bill's Wild West Show*, patterned after the Wild West shows of the late 19th century. The performers still live in the past, believing everyone came to the show on a horse, and unsure why there are no horses out back to fill in the show. Each performer has several different roles to play and uses costume pieces from a chest, or pilfered from backstage, making certain scenes look slightly anachronistic. They are also unable to find the band, for there are several SFX and MUSIC cues. Showdown does not enter until very late in the play and serves as offstage assistance during the top of the show when there are several large set pieces rolled in and out.

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*(THE SETTING is an empty stage, but around the theatre are signs and red/white/blue bunting. The signs are colorful and elaborate scenes from the old West such as 'The Calling of the Buffalo' and 'The Longhorn Roundup' which are "reenacted here with all participants represented and in true and faithful recreation of those most notable events of yore in the wild and untamed West", etc., "those persons being of a fragile disposition will be alerted to the more exciting parts of our show and provisions will be made for their relief." And of course, "Do not try these feats at home, we are experts." FRYPAN enters pushing a broom dragging a small chest; he is a crusty old trail cook who is a few pots short of a full wagonload, but he is very happy, and sings to himself as he sweeps.)*

FRYPAN: *(Sings.)*

He was the skinniest horse that ever I seen.  
His ears was all muley and his eyes not half keen.  
I fed him on oats and on sweet summer hay,  
And he ate like a hog and got fat straight-away.  
Oh my horse, he is round and he rolls 'cross the plains.  
Got a wheel and a tiller and I don't need no reins.  
Oh he's stout and he's mighty and he goes the whole way.  
And he'll cross all of Texas in less than a day.  
Come a tiy-yi yippi-ay, tiy-yippi-ay tiy-yay!  
Come a tiy-yi yippi-ay, tiy-yippi-ay tiy-yay!

*(Looks up at the audience, speculatively.)*

Huh. *(Then it registers.)*

Bill! Bill! Th' audience is here! Th' audience is here!

*(He exits. MUSIC and DRUM ROLL. PECOS BILL Enters on his white horse, Widowmaker, a soft-sculpture horse on wheels with fine tack and saddlebags. BILL is dressed in a fancy cowboy outfit but wears no guns. He enters rocking and rolling ... and waving his hat. BILL is a very outgoing good old cowboy and eats up the attention without a trace of self-consciousness.)*

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BILL: *YYEEEEHHHAAAA! (He waits for the audience to respond. Then.) YEEEEEEHHHAAA! (He waves his hat for the audience to respond and this is repeated until he is satisfied.)* Friends and neighbors, welcome, welcome one and all to the Pecos Bill Wild West Show! Today you will see wonders and marvels from the old West, reenacted here with all the participants represented in true and faithful recreation of these most notable events of yore! Any persons being of a mild or fragile disposition will be alerted to the more exciting parts of our show and provisions will be made for their relief. I am Pecos Bill and this here is my horse Widowmaker. Now, you may be wondering where my horse got a name like that! You will learn all about Widowmaker here and other amazing true episodes of my life in Texas as my friends and associates assist me in the dramatic re-creation of the story of my life, Pecos Bill, the first Texas Cowboy! Let me introduce you to my friends now ... Frypan...

*(He enters, frypan in hand, he cheerfully hits himself on the head with it ... GONG! ...this is a running gag.)*

BILL: Storm Cloud ...

*(She enters, a no-nonsense Native American who walks center, stands, and with a gesture that would make a Shaman pale and bring delight to the heart of a symphony conductor, conjures SFX Thunder.)*

BILL: ...and of course my best gal, Slewfoot Sue!

*(SUE enters, but she has a 12-foot rattlesnake coiled around her, and the snake has on a little red cowboy hat.)*

BILL: And look who she has with her! My old pardner Shake the Rattlesnake!

*(Shake shakes his head and it rattles... he is a puppet operated by SUE.)*

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BILL: Now, Frypan, if you'll take old Widowmaker, here ...  
(*Dismounts.*) and lead him away ... whoa! Watch that he  
doesn't kick you! (*FRYPAN gives the horse a doubtful  
look, then leads the horse off and returns.*) Now, if you will  
all just sit back and let loose your imagination with me  
here, now ... it's long ago in the days of the Old West ...  
before any towns or cities and before any people lived  
here in Texas. This whole place was empty ... not even  
very many Indians back then...

STORM CLOUD: Native Americans.

BILL: Uh ... yeah, not many of them, back then, either.  
Anyhow, this is the Life Story of Pecos Bill as told by  
himself. Just so you know how it all began, I'll start from  
when I was born. Long ago, when the West was still  
almost empty, out on the open plains there was this one  
lonely wagon train makin' its slow and difficult way across  
Texas. Just a wagon and a horse and ... (*The OTHERS,  
in settler hats and bonnets, bring on the covered wagon  
which has been hitched up to Widowmaker.*) Whoa there!  
Hold on! What is my horse Widowmaker doing hitched up  
to the covered wagon! Where's the wagon horses?

FRYPAN: There warn't no other horses back there, Bill!

BILL: There weren't any horses anywhere?

FRYPAN: No, Bill! I ain't seen no horses 'sept yourn since  
we come here!

BILL: Wull ... we can't use MY horse! Everyone will KNOW  
it can't be MY horse that's pulling the covered wagon! I  
don't find my horse until later in the story!

SUE: Frypan, I think Bill wants you to do something to  
disguise Widowmaker so he looks more like a wagon  
horse.

FRYPAN: (*The light dawns suddenly.*) Why, shore! (*He  
runs off.*)

STORM CLOUD: I know you have high hopes, but that  
man's solution will be as bad as his grammar.

BILL: (*To Sue.*) What'd she say?

STORM CLOUD: Little man with frypan got pancake for  
brain.

BILL: Oh.

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