

For Immediate Release July 20, 2011

**BILLY
BISHOP**
GOES TO WAR

Gananoque, ON

"We were off to fight the Hun, and it looked like lots of fun. Somehow it didn't seem like war at all, at all, at all....Somehow it didn't seem like war at all" - Billy Bishop Goes to War

Billy Bishop, the celebrated Canadian flying ace from WWI, may be familiar to all Canadians – but how often do we realize how determined, scrappy, and young this “hero in progress” was at the height of his career? In a fresh, specially staged production of ***Billy Bishop Goes To War***, opening at the Firehall Theatre on August 6, the Thousand Islands Playhouse brings a new generation of performers to the stage to paint the portrait of a “23 year-old ordinary kid from Owen Sound” who followed his instincts into the skies and the history books. To make the story even more accessible, the Firehall itself will be set up as a Legion Hall, with the performers staging the play in the centre of the “lounge.”

Accomplished Kingston-raised actor **Jacob James** is tasked with capturing all the brashness, cheekiness, charm, and rebelliousness that might have been a pain-in-the-neck to Bishop’s superiors and teachers– but are the very qualities that may have helped him to succeed. James and fellow performer/pianist/director **Sandy Thorburn**, tell the stories, sing, and capture a variety of colourful characters from Bishop’s early life – while providing a highly moving perspective on the precarious future that pilots and soldiers faced (and still face) daily.

Billy Bishop Goes To War, the enduringly-popular and demanding play that was created more than three decades ago by John Gray and Eric Peterson, takes audiences back to the earliest days of Bishop’s career – including his time as the “worst student in the history of Kingston’s RMC”, into the war as a cavalry officer and then into the skies, as Bishop realized that life would be “cleaner” and more independent as a pilot. Bishop’s no-holds-barred style brought him 72 victories, the Victoria Cross, and an audience with King George V himself.

Jacob James is currently based in New York City, and spent six seasons as a leading actor at the Stratford Festival, in addition to having performed at the Playhouse in productions such as *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *The Russian Play*, and *The 39 Steps*. Thorburn has musically directed countless shows for the Playhouse, including *Anne & Gilbert*, *Blood Brothers*, *Forever Plaid*, and *Anne of Green Gables*. Robin Fisher, who has just designed set and costumes for *Lend Me A Tenor*, with lighting design by Adair Redish.

Billy Bishop Goes to War plays from August 5 until September 3, Tuesday-Sunday at 8 p.m. with matinees Fridays and Saturdays at 2:30. Tea for Tuesday talkbacks featuring special guests follow the Tuesday shows, and there are also Military and Under-30 rates. Tickets, 613 382-7020 www.1000islandsplayhouse.com

- 30-



Thousand Islands Playhouse
Box 241 Gananoque, ON K7G 2T8
Artistic Director: Greg Wanless
General Manager: Richard Van Dusen
(P) 613.382.7086 (F) 613.382.7088
Box Office: 1.866.382.7020 / 613.382.7020
1000islandsplayhouse.com
SHARE THE FUN!

