

“So did y' hear the story  
of the Johnstone twins...”

## BLOOD BROTHERS

written by Willy Russell

directed by Greg Wanless, musical direction by Sandy Thorburn

At the Thousand Islands Playhouse Springer Theatre

June 17 to July 31

Now in its 25th season the Thousand Islands Playhouse produces a 25 week season in 2 beautiful theatres along the shores of the St Lawrence River. Under the leadership of founding Artistic Director Greg Wanless, the Thousand Islands Playhouse's guiding philosophy is to inspire a creative, dynamic community.

On June 17th the Playhouse 2010 season continues with Willy Russell's incredibly popular musical, *Blood Brothers*. Dubbed 'the standing ovation musical' *Blood Brothers* has earned legions of passionate fans, won over by its powerful anthems, a tragic and romantic plotline, and the humour discovered amidst biting social commentary.

In *Blood Brothers*, as in his plays *Educating Rita* and *Shirley Valentine*, Russell uses the economic inequality in England as a backdrop and catalyst for the journeys of his characters. It tells the story of a working class mother of six, Mrs Johnstone, pregnant yet again and abandoned by her husband. When she learns that she is carrying twins, Mrs. Johnstone faces the possibility of losing her children to social services. She strikes a reluctant bargain with her childless employer, Mrs. Lyons, to give her one of the babies and never reveal the truth. Ironically, as if drawn to one another by forces larger than geography, economics or superstition, the boys meet. Despite the differences in their background, they become best friends, fall in love with the same girl, and remain united until the secret of their birth right is revealed, with tragic results.

At the heart of the story is the compelling figure of Mrs. Johnstone, played in this production by Kristen Galer. Ms Galer was recently seen as Rosie in the Toronto production of *The Lord of the Rings*. As the dark and prophetic Narrator, the Playhouse welcomes Kyle Dadd, a former member of the renowned Reduced Shakespeare Company. Daniel Falk and Graham Parkhurst fill the roles of the winning but doomed twins Mickey and Edward. We meet these characters as 7-year olds, again during their adolescence and finally as young adults, and the actors must master the physical aspects of the different ages as well as the humour and likeability with which Russell has imbued these characters. Laura McCarthy appears as the fiery Linda, the boys' common love interest. The ensemble also includes Laura Burns, Wendy Fox (2 past members of the Playhouse Young Company), Joey Frohlinger, Seanna Kennedy, Adrian Proszowski, Peter Van Wart and Marlene Handrahan as Mrs. Lyons.

The production is directed by Greg Wanless with musical direction by Sandy Thorburn. Wanless and Thorburn have teamed up on many Playhouse hit musicals, including the record breaking productions of *Anne & Gilbert* and *Les Misérables*. Ramona Gilmour-Darling is on board as assistant director. The set and costumes are by Gillian Gallow, lighting by Michelle Ramsay, and the production is stage managed by Todd Bricker, assisted by Sandi Becker. Judy Fisher is on hand as dialect coach, working with the actors on their 'scouse', a very particular accent, and a big indicator of the economic divide explored in Russell's script.

*Blood Brothers* previews June 17, opens Friday June 18 and plays until July 31 at the Springer Theatre.

Performances: Wednesday to Saturday at 8 pm, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday & Sunday at 2:30 pm

Tickets: \$32 65+: \$30 Under 30: \$25 Stu/Chil: \$16

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