

Globe takes flight with billy bishop goes to war

BY JOE COUTURE, LEADER-POST OCTOBER 4, 2012

BILLY BISHOPGOES TO WAR

Globe Theatre Main Stage Oct. 10 to Oct. 28

Billy Bishop Goes to War is a show that will stick with the Globe Theatre audience members who see it, according to its director, Max Reimer.

"This particular production is going to be something that people are going to be able to remember lines from with a chuckle for years to come. This is a play that is more than just a couple of hours of great entertainment. It's going to be an experience they can run over with a smile, over and over again in their heads," Reimer said.

Billy Bishop Goes to War - a musical show that dramatizes the life of Canadian First World War fighter pilot Billy Bishop and features live piano playing on stage - was written and composed by John Gray in collaboration with Eric Peterson, now familiar to many Canadians as the cantankerous Oscar Leroy from Corner Gas.

The show premiered at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre in 1978 and has been revived more than 150 times since. The idea for the play came when Peterson lent a book to fellow actor and writer Gray while the two were working in Toronto. The book was *Winged Warfare*, an account of Bishop's first 48 air victories, written by Bishop himself.

Since its first staging, Billy Bishop Goes to War has become one of the most popular and often-produced theatrical works in Canada's history.

"Anchored by its haunted hero and his clear-eyed memories of war's tragedies and black comedies, this award-winning musical is given extra resonance by songs that are sometimes raucous, sometimes mournful, but always steeped in the realities of wartime," explain promotional materials from the Globe. "Experience Billy Bishop Goes to War and connect body and soul with a formative part of Canada's history."

The cast for the Globe's show stars Jacob James as Bishop and Zachary Flis as the piano player. This is James' second time playing Bishop. Flis was last seen on the Globe stage as the musical director/piano player in *A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline*.

The artistic crew is led by Reimer, who is from Vancouver and has a long history of directing, but is working at the Globe for the first time. Scott Penner is the set and properties designer and Robert Thomson is the lighting designer. Joining Globe Theatre as the resident costume designer for the 2012-13 season is Emma Williams.

Dianne Woodrow is the stage manager and Monika Dembowy is the apprentice stage manager.

"I can't tell you how much I've been enjoying the rehearsals and watching the creativity coming out," said Reimer, who is a friend of Gray's and has a long history of familiarity with the play. "There's a theme of youth and vitality and our Canadian youth in world conflicts, and there's a sense of adventure ... It's really fantastic. There's quite a haunting relevance to today. It's just really a beautiful evening of theatre."

Billy Bishop Goes to War will be featured on the Globe's main stage from Oct. 10 to Oct. 28.

© Copyright (c) The Regina Leader-Post