

MEDIA RELEASE



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***SCHOOLHOUSE* FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY**

(hi res photos available)

Prince Edward County, ON, (July 19, 2009): Hot on the heels of rave reviews from the press and the audiences for *Ship of Fire*, Festival Players is set to open the second play of their 2009 season. Leanna Brodie's *Schoolhouse* opens at Macaulay Heritage Park on Thursday, July 23rd at 6:30 pm.

Schoolhouse debuted at Blyth Festival in 2006 and enjoyed two hugely popular runs at 4th Line Theatre near Peterborough. It's the story of a young schoolmistress who meets her first class of students in a one-room schoolhouse in small-town 1930s Ontario. Things are mostly under control until a training school boy arrives. The teacher takes this boy under her wing, encourages him and believes in him when others do not. It's a charming play, very funny and well suited to families wishing to expose their children to "grown-up" theatre.

A play set in a school obviously calls for young players. For this show, Festival Players cast seasoned acting veterans from Ottawa and Toronto, but also took advantage of the surfeit of local talent available. The cast mixes young and old, professional and amateur for a delightful ensemble. In fact, the young actors have impressed everyone with their acting chops.

"You expect high-calibre acting from the professionals on board," says Festival Players Artistic Director Sarah Phillips. "But the kids are knocking it out of the park. They're fantastic. People are in for a real treat."

Playing the lead in *Schoolhouse* is Christine Brubaker of Toronto. She adds the role of Miss Linton the schoolmistress to an already impressive acting resume. The Dora award-winning actress has graced the stages of some of the biggest theatre companies in Toronto (The Canadian Stage Company, Nightwood Theatre, Factory Theatre and others) and Ottawa (National Arts Centre and Great Canadian Theatre Company) and has enjoyed principal roles in many Canadian television programs.

The role of Ewart Rokosh, the training school boy, has been filled by another Torontonion, George Brown College graduate Adam Cunningham. Adam is making his professional theatre debut with Festival Players.

Courtenay J. Stevens' acting career has taken him across the country and back, landing him on the stages of the Stratford Festival and Caravan Farm Theatre and onscreen for CBC and Sullivan Entertainment, among many other credits. In *Schoolhouse*, he plays the role of Clinton, a local fella who's maybe a bit sweet on the schoolteacher after all.

Paul Rainville, cast as the blustering Colonel Bunnett, the Inspector of Schools, is a native of Ottawa. A staple at the GCTC and NAC, Paul is well known in the Ottawa theatre scene and is an accomplished voice actor.

Schoolhouse Director Jennifer Brewin, another Ottawan, is joining Festival Players for a second season, having directed *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* in 2008. She recently completed three years as Artistic Associate of English Theatre at the National Arts Centre. Jennifer has previously served as Co-Artistic Director of the Caravan Farm Theatre in BC and has recently been named Artistic Director of Theatre Columbus, a highly respected theatre company in Toronto. Festival Players is excited to welcome her back.

The preview performance, on July 22nd at 8pm, is a benefit night for two local charities: Quinte Educational Museum & Archives (QEMA) and Macaulay Heritage Park. These charities receive discounted tickets and a percentage of the total ticket revenues for the night. In addition to supporting local organizations, preview tickets offer a 30% reduction over regular ticket prices. A limited number of tickets can be purchased directly through the charities themselves.

Schoolhouse plays July 22 – August 8, 2009 Wednesdays to Saturdays at 6:30 with matinees Wed & Sat at 1:30. The venue is the beautiful meadow outdoors at Macaulay Heritage Park in Picton. In the event of rain, an old fashioned "radio play" performance will take place in the church located on the grounds. Audience members should always dress appropriately for the weather.

Tickets can be purchased by calling 613.471.1991 or emailing boxoffice@festivalplayers.ca

More details about *Schoolhouse* and the entire Festival Players season can be found on their website: www.festivalplayers.ca

