

On Anniversary of Spanish Flu Catastrophe, Alberta Theatre Projects examines effects in Canada

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 17th 2008, Calgary, AB – Ninety years ago, the Spanish Flu killed between fifty and one hundred million people around the globe. This fall, Alberta Theatre Projects examines “the pandemic that history forgot” (*Globe and Mail*, September 16th 2008).

In an article printed September 16th 2008, Helen Branswell of the *Globe and Mail* revisits the illness that plagued the world at the end of the First World War. Despite its catastrophic consequences, Branswell observes the absence of mention in history books of the outbreak, with very few books devoted to the topic itself.

Playwright Kevin Kerr says the turning point for him in writing *Unity (1918)* was reading *The Silent Enemy: Canada and the Deadly Flu of 1918* by Eileen Pettigrew. What shocked him beyond the pure devastation of the period was that he felt he hadn't known much about it previously. He was “**flabbergasted by the enormity of the event** and the global impact... how devastating and terrifying it was” and asked “**why isn't this event more totally present in our collective conscience?**” From this experience, Mr. Kerr wrote *Unity (1918)*, an exploration of “the nature of fear, panic and community... glorious death vs. inglorious death”. Mr. Kerr feels that while one can moralize WWI, there was no moral context to the flu and therefore it is harder to comprehend.

Unity (1918) follows three young women on the cusp of adulthood in Unity, Saskatchewan, struggling to cope and comprehend the destruction of WWI and the threat of the Spanish Flu. Mary (**Julie Mortensen**) waits for her soldier fiancée to return from the war and Beatrice (**Ellen Close**) dedicatedly knits socks for the boys overseas while Sissy (**Georgina Beaty**) prepares for the end of the world. The arrival of a blind veteran (**Tyrell Crews**) upends the town, as a strange flu quickly descends.

A winner of the Governor General's Award for Drama, Kevin Kerr's *Unity (1918)* courageously examines growing up at the end of the world, when one is faced with the loss of community; an amusing, touching and intensely human portrait of small town life on the prairies.

To read Ms. Branswell's article, please visit

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080916.wflu16/BNStory/National/>

For more information on *Unity (1918)*, please visit
www.ATPLive.com

Unity (1918) runs from **September 23rd through October 11th 2008**, with shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at 7:30 PM and Saturdays and Sundays at 2:00 PM. All performances on the ConocoPhillips STAGE in the Martha Cohen Theatre, 215 – 8 Ave SE. For tickets, please call our **Ticket Office at (403) 294-7402**, Ticketmaster at (403) 299-8888 or visit www.ATPLive.com

Alberta Theatre Projects thanks our sponsors for their support of *Unity (1918)*: **ConocoPhillips Canada** (Naming Sponsor of the ConocoPhillips STAGE), **Calgary Herald** (Season Sponsor), **Rogers Communications** (Presenting Sponsor of the 2008/2009 Season) and **Just the Ticket** (Cameo Appearance Sponsor – *Unity (1918)*).

-30-

For more information or interview requests, please contact
Amy Widdowson, Marketing and Communications Associate (Publicist)
Telephone: (403) 294-7433 ext. 1118 • Facsimile: (403) 294-7493
Email: awiddowson@ATPLive.com
www.ATPLive.com