

## Review: *Girl From The North Country*

By Amber Roderick

### ***Girl From The North Country* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

*Girl from the North Country* is a double Olivier and Tony award-winning West End and Broadway production. Theatre Royal Plymouth is lucky to host this fantastic, bold, dramatic musical.

Playwright Conor McPherson has bravely written a new, unique and deep story, to go hand in hand with the famous music of Bob Dylan. The songs are like you've never heard them before, but the way they are sung and composed is truly beautiful.

The story is about family and love, set in the winter of 1934 in America during The Great Depression. The narrative covers a wide range of characters of all backgrounds, shapes and sizes. They cross paths in a guesthouse, all of whom seem to be at dramatic crossroads in their lives.

The narrator and local doctor, Dr Walker (Chris McHallem) introduces the story, with warm and comedic words we rely on him to keep us up to date with aspects of the story we haven't seen. Nick Laine (Graham Kent), love him or hate him, is the beating heart of the story; he runs the guesthouse, which is on its last legs. His wife Elizabeth (Frances McNamee) suffers from dementia, but actor McNamee is a constant light of life on the stage. Your eyes will be drawn to her fantastic comedic timing and exceptional physical characteristics. Not to mention her outstanding voice and child-like dance moves.

Meanwhile, their son Gene (Gregor Milne) and adopted daughter Marianne (Frankie Hart) have quite big issues of their own. It's hard for the audience not to have sympathy for them through their struggles. Marianne is a black girl who was found abandoned in a bag 19 years earlier. She is now pregnant, and Nick is determined to arrange her marriage to an older man. Gene longs to be a writer, but he is struggling with alcoholism and faces difficulty in getting over his ex-girlfriend, who plans to marry another man.

While the Laine family carry the story, other faces bring some fantastic moments, voices and generosity to the stage. In particular, Joe Scott (Joshua C Jackson), a friendly giant who graces us with his low, beautiful voice, and becomes a love interest for Marianne. Mrs Neilsen (Maria Omakinwa), a guest at the Laine's household, brings us warmth, beauty and charisma. Her vocal tone and musicality bless the ears of the audience.

Ahead of your trip to the theatre, your knowledge of what you're about to witness may just be the music from Bob Dylan, whose musical talents have blessed our ears over the last 60 years. However, even if you're not a Bob Dylan fan, this story will leave you

with a whole new impression of its own. The insanely talented cast do an outstanding job of doing the music justice.

Emotive, powerful and fresh. *Girl from the North Country* is a show like you've never seen before, but overall, the actors and musicians are world class, and for them alone, this should not be missed.