COME FROM AWAY

By

Irene Sankoff and David Hein

Saturday 13th April @ 2.30

Good afternoon and welcome to the audio described performance of this deeply moving depiction of **Come From Away,** the award-winning musicalby Irene Sankoff and David Hein, and as directed by Christopher Ashley.

The show lasts for approximately one hour and 45 minutes with no interval.

I will begin this introduction by giving you a brief synopsis of **Come From Away,** followed by descriptions of the set, characters, costumes and finally the cast and credits.

Come From Away tells the true story of when seven thousand people from across America and around the world landed on the doorstep of Gander, Newfoundland, and how the people of Gander “put the kettle on,” and welcomed them. When 38 planes were diverted to this small Canadian community on the 11th September 2001, the town’s population doubled in an instant. While the world witnessed the worst acts of humankind, the stranded passengers had their faith in humanity restored by the spirited people who comforted those who had come from away.

**Set, Characters and Costumes**

This musical, based on hundreds of real-life stories is played out on a single, simple set. A wooden platform about 12 metres across and 10 metres deep, has planks running from front to back. The wood patchily stained with aquamarine paint. At the back is a wall of horizontal wooden slats, these stained a chalky white.

On both sides of the stage are tall, slim, branchless tree, their trunks disappearing out of sight. There are about a dozen to the left, with the shattered remains, reminiscent of a war zone, of two more on the right. Nestled between the trees are musical instruments, stands and chairs. The eight band members are on stage, within the trees, for the whole of the show, occasionally venturing into the centre of the stage with the actors. Attached to the trees, instead of branches, are theatre lights and a few other things, such as neon signs indicating, Tom Horton’s Café or bars, and a lantern.

On stage are two rectangular wooden tables with an assortment of ten-mismatched chairs scattered about in the centre with two more standing either side near the trees. Eleven of the chairs are kitchen-style and are reconfigured by the cast into different arrangements for the various locations around Gander. The seat used by one of the pilots, however is a modern, black office chair on wheels.

The action moves seamlessly from place to place, often with just a change of lighting or a movement of the chairs to indicate the new scene. The chairs are used for everything - scattered around the tables for the inside Tim Hortons, the local cafe, arranged in rows to create the inside of a plane, or lined up in a curve to create a high mountain pathway. Gaps between the slats in the back wall allow light to filter in, and for a night scene, tiny pin pricks in the slats create a haze of stars. There are also two doorways that open up in the back wall, one at stage level, the other raised a meter up with a door that flaps up - suggesting the doorway into the hold of one of the grounded planes.

The cast of 12 all play multiple roles - both as residents of Gander and as a variety of passengers who have ‘Come from Away’. They all wear simple, modern-day clothes to which they may add a jacket, cardigan or hat to change character. There are hundreds of characters in all, some of whom have only one line. Others are more developed, their stories woven in and around each other during the action.

In the opening scene in Gander, we first meet **Claude**, the gregarious and well-liked **Mayor of Gander**. He's tall, in his sixties, with a bit of a tummy and short grey hair. He wears a light blue jacket over a yellow check shirt, with grey trousers and brown shoes. To play the mayor of Appleton, he pulls a green fishing cap low over his ears and walks with a lumbering gait. Both men are played by Nicholas Pound.

Next to speak will be **Oz** the local policemanplayed by Oliver Jacobson. He's a large man in his 40s, in dark jeans and black short-sleeved uniform shirt with button-down breast pockets. He wears glasses and a blue peaked baseball cap marked Police, and later he will appear as a **Rabb**i in a skull cap.

Then we meet **Beulah,** who’s a school teacher andhead of the Gander Legion,with a firefighter son.Beulah’s in her late forties and as tall as she is round, with shoulder-length grey blonde hair swept back from her face. She wears a loose cotton shirt of tiny flowers over baggy grey trousers and trainers. Adding a colourful cardigan, she becomes an anxious passenger on the plane, and an enthusiastic karaoke singer.

Also, in the opening scene we meet **RSPCA** worker **Bonnie**, a no-nonsense mother of three who is determined to ensure the safety of the various animals on board the aircraft. She is a plum young woman with a rosy complexion and shoulder length fair hair. She wears a yellow hoody over a pale blue polo shirt, jeans and trainers.

**Janice,** played by Natasha Barnes,is an eager, if somewhat nervy new local TV reporter who finds herself thrown into the deep end on her first day at work. She’s in her twenties with long blonde hair cut with a full fringe dressed in a crisp white shirt with the logo of the TV station on the breast pocket, dark blue jeans and suede boots. Adding a blue forage cap and matching jacket, she becomes a stewardess on the airplane.

**Doug,** played by Daniel Crowder is an Air Traffic Controller married to Bonnie, who tries to help his wife with the animals. He is in his fifties, tall and slim, with angular features and thinning brown hair dressed in a dusty pink shirt, fawn chinos and brown shoes. To become English passenger **Nick**, he adds a pair of glasses.

Dale Mathurin takes the part of **Bob** a rather highly strung and nervous passenger from New York. He's a young black man of medium height, wearing an orange plaid work shirt open over a grey T shirt, with faded jeans. He also plays an aircraft captain in a black leather flight jacket and peak cap, who walks with a slow, film-star strut.

Kirsty Hoiles plays **Crystal**, a waitress at Tim Hortons - the local cafe. She's in her fifties with dark shoulder-length hair who dresses in black trousers and a dark shirt patterned with red and yellow flowers. As Crystal she also wears a visor. To become passenger **Diane**, she tucks her hair behind her ears and puts on a smart sand coloured jacket.

**Dwight,** a tall Egyptian, is in his early forties with short, spiky black hair, played by Jamal Zulfiqar. In Gander, he's one of the regulars at Tim Hortons cafe. As passenger **Kevin J** he's confident and bordering on being cocky. He’s dressed in a smart blue polka-dot polo shirt, tight enough to show off his muscular torso - with grey jeans. To play Egyptian passenger **Ali**, he puts on an embroidered kufi or Islamic prayer cap, and has a very upright posture.

Mark Dugdale plays **Kevin T,** the other Kevin's partner. He's a white man in his thirties, with short brown hair and stubble. He wears a khaki shirt and jeans with a black leather jacket. Without the jacket and with his sleeves rolled up, he becomes **Garth,** a local bus driver in a union dispute with the mayor.

Bree Smith plays passenger **Hannah** who was on her way to New York where her son is a fire fighter. She's a black woman in her late forties with long heavily braided greying hair, dressed in a loose long sleeved purple top over jeans and wears glasses.

Sara Poyzer plays **Beverley,** a pilotof one of the stranded aircraftand the first female captain for American Airlines. She’s in her early fifties, tall, slim and pretty with a shoulder-length blond bob dressed in a dark blue uniform jacket and peaked cap. Wearing a white T shirt, colourful waistcoat and dark jeans, she also plays **Annette,** a teacher at the school.

In one scene six cardiac surgeons with appear wearing white coats and red rubber gloves, whilst in another, locals will sit in a row wearing yellow fishermen’s sour wester hats.

The story these characters recount has a strong community feel, and they tell it with an earthy energy. From the start, the Newfoundlanders share the narrative, first one and then another chipping in, till they all rush towards us, stamping and clapping to the beat of an Irish drum, and it becomes clear that everyone is of equal importance in the small town of Gander.

The show is fast paced with the style direct, often with the characters looking out at us. Most of the songs are sung by everyone, and where they aren’t, the others are generally active in the background, illustrating the story. The characters constantly interrupt each other making it difficult to tell you who is speaking or what is happening, however, the characters are usually introduced by each other or themselves.

The nine-piece band plays music which often has an Irish flavour.

The instruments are: keyboard, harmonium and accordion, whistles, Irish flute and Uilleann pipes, fiddle, guitar, mandolin, bazouki, bodrhan and other drums, and percussion.

As a point of interest, the ‘good news’ story of Come From Away, has irrevocably changed the lives of the ordinary people, both islanders and visitors, who were caught up in an extraordinary moment in time, and who now are in effect part of an extended family. They travel to see new productions of ‘their story’ and welcome new cast members as honorary Newfoundlanders through a ritual called ‘screeching in’, which involves drinking horrible island whisky and kissing a dead fish. They never tire of talking about this show, which was created from their lives, because in times of great division, it speaks of the power of simple human kindness.

**Cast and production credits**

Amanda Henderson plays schoolteacher Beulah

and Dale Mathurin is nervous passenger Bob.

Nicholas Pound is Claude, the mayor of Gander and also the Mayor of Appleton.

Rosie Glossop is RSPCA worker Bonnie, with Daniel Crowder her husband Doug – he also plays English passenger Nick.

Kirsty Hoiles plays waitress Crystal, and also passenger Diane.

Mark Dugdale is Kevin T, bus union man Garth and others.

Oliver Jacobson plays local policeman Oz and a rabbi

Natasha J Barnes is TV reporter Janice, and an air stewardess.

Jamal Zulfiqar plays passenger Kevin J, Ali and others

Bree Smith plays passenger Hannah and others.

And Sara Poyzer plays Pilot, Beverley and Annette, a local teacher.

All the cast play a number of other characters.

The Musical Director is Alan Berry

The sound is by Gareth Owen, and the lighting by Howell Binkley

The costumes are designed by Toni-Leslie James

And the set designer is Beowulf Boritt

And The Director is Christopher Ashley