

~ WE'RE 90! COUNTING DOWN TO OUR 100TH SEASON ~

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 5, 2010

*"Don't be theatrical."  
"I'm not theatrical ~ I'm wounded to the heart."*

## HAY FEVER

BY NOËL COWARD

*Directed by Kevin John McDonald*

*Hay Fever* debuted in London in 1925, to critical and public acclaim, and has been entertaining audiences ever since. Celebrated British playwright **Sir Noël Coward** was inspired to write the play (in just three days!) after spending a shattering weekend at the home of the legendarily eccentric American actress Laurette Taylor. He admitted that *Hay Fever* has "no plot at all and remarkably little action", relying on broadly drawn characters expertly realized by talented actors with precise comic timing to convey the humour.

Each member of the Bliss family - retired theatre diva Judith Bliss, her novelist husband David, and their quarrelsome offspring Simon and Sorel - has invited a guest to spend the weekend at their country house, without telling the others. Naturally, this does not please Clara, who was Judith's stage dresser and now serves somewhat grumpily as the Bliss' housekeeper. The visitors - stylish vamp Myra Arundel (Simon's guest), dapper diplomat Richard Greatham (Sorel's guest), aspiring boxer Sandy Tyrell (Judith's guest), and the shy and awkward Jackie (David's guest) - don't know what to make of the dramatic and impetuous family, to whom normal behavior is completely foreign and social graces are an absurd concept.

"I've always loved the irreverent banter and over-the-top characters in *Hay Fever*," chuckles **Kevin John McDonald**, director of Alumnae Theatre's production. "And I have been blessed with a superb cast that brings those characters to vivid life. With the guests as eccentric in their own ways as their Bohemian hosts, and Judith and David feuding like Oberon and Titania, there's even an interesting parallel to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It's so easy to remember Coward as a stylish and sophisticated playwright and completely forget that his plays like *Hay Fever* should be hysterically funny - it's true situational comedy."

**Sir Noël Coward**, playwright, actor, composer and personality, could be considered the first British pop star, known as much for his witty and sharp personality as his extraordinary plays, songs and musicals. His style and witticisms have been copied and paid homage to time and time again, and his works continue to be reproduced on stage and adapted in a variety of media. His many well-known plays include *Blithe Spirit* (1941), *Private Lives* (1930), *Cavalcade* (1931) and *Easy Virtue* (1926).

Alumnae Theatre Company's production of *Hay Fever* features **Dinah Watts** (recently seen here in Albee's *A Delicate Balance*) as drama queen Judith Bliss; **Hereward Pooley** as her husband David; with **Ken MacAlpine** and **Tamara Lubek** as their children Simon and Sorel. **Kaitlyn Riordan**, **Tina Sterling**, **Leete Stetson** and **Jonathan Thomas** play the hapless guests; and **Anne Harper** is Clara the housekeeper.

## The Details - *Hay Fever*

**Running Time:** approx. 2 hrs 20 mins; including two intermissions

**Opening Night:** Friday January 15, 2010

**Performances:** Friday January 15, 2010 - Saturday January 30, 2010

**Schedule:** Wednesday - Saturday 8:00pm; Sunday matinée at 2:00pm

There will be a Talkback with cast & director after the matinée on January 24.

**Tickets:** Wednesday 2-for-1; Thursday, Friday & Saturday \$20; Sunday PWYC

**Location:** Alumnae Theatre, 70 Berkeley Street, 3rd Floor Studio, Toronto

**Box Office:** 416-364-4170, box 1 email [reservations@alumnaetheatre.com](mailto:reservations@alumnaetheatre.com)

Box Office opens one hour prior to each performance

**Please note:** Box Office does not accept credit or debit cards

Production photos for *Hay Fever* are available for download on Alumnae Theatre's Media page at [www.alumnaetheatre.com/media.html](http://www.alumnaetheatre.com/media.html).

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For more information or to set up an interview please contact:

Tina McCulloch at 416-967-4416 or [contactus@alumnaetheatre.com](mailto:contactus@alumnaetheatre.com)

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Check our website at [www.alumnaetheatre.com](http://www.alumnaetheatre.com) for press releases, production photographs, and a retrospective on how Alumnae Theatre shaped Toronto's theatre scene.