

# **Sheridan College**

## ***Come From Away***

### **Appendices: Work Samples**

**Section 1: Tactics, key messages and speeches**

**Section 2: Paid advertisements and promotional material**

**Section 3: Media advisories**

**Section 4: MRP report, selected news clippings and endorsements**

**Section 5: Blog stories**

**Section 6: Social metrics**

**Section 1:**  
**Tactics, key messages and speeches**

**Tactical Roll-out Plan:**

Strategy	Tactics	Timeline
<p>Raise awareness of the existence of CMTP and its role in expanding Canada's catalogue of musical theatre works</p>	<p>Promotional photography of new CMTP musicals            CMTP and Festival e-vite to industry, alumni, patrons            Creation of 4 pop up banners for CMTP            Launch of new CMTP website &amp; subscription eNews            #SheridanCMTP and @SheridanCMTP twitter established            Social media aggregator page created for Sheridan web            Advertorial in Oakville's Perspectives news digest            Media advisory to Festival of New Musicals            CMTP and Festival promoted in employee eNews            CMTP "the first five years" hard cover coffee table book created</p>	<p>Sept. – Oct. 2016            Sept. 20, 2016            Sept. 22, 2016            October 5, 2016            October 5, 2016            October 5, 2016            October 6, 2016            October 11, 2016            Oct. 11, 2016            Nov. 20, 2016</p>
<p>Communicate Sheridan's connection to the origin and development of <i>Come From Away</i></p>	<p>Local MPP reads statement in ON Legislative Assembly re: Sheridan connection to CMTP and Broadway milestone            Promotion of Sheridan Night in employee &amp; alumni eNews            Cases designed/printed for cast recordings (brunch gift in Gander)            Media advisory to theatre critics/national news to Gander brunch            Sheridan ad in program booklet for Gander benefit concert            Full page thank you ad in Gander Beacon            Speeches for Gander brunch            Photography capture in Gander            Blog post recap on Gander (promo on social &amp; Sheridan TV)            Invitation postcard to Sheridan Night at <i>Come From Away</i>            Sheridan ad in <i>Come From Away</i> theatre booklet in Toronto            Insertion of <i>Come From Away</i> content on home page slider            Full page ad in ntnl. paper (Globe) on CMTP &amp; <i>Come From Away</i>            Host Sheridan night fundraiser at the Royal Alex Theatre            Blog post on <i>Come From Away</i> Toronto closing            Sharing <i>Come From Away</i> news by others, drawing link to Sheridan</p>	<p>May 31, 2016             Oct. 10, 2016            Oct. 14, 2016            Oct. 21, 2016            Oct. 26, 2016            Oct. 27, 2016            Oct. 27, 2016            Oct. 29, 2016            Nov. 3, 2016            Nov. 4, 2016            Nov. 15, 2016            Nov. 17, 2016            Nov. 19, 2016            Nov. 22, 2016            Jan. 9, 2017            Entire campaign</p>

### **1. *Come From Away* began its life and development at Sheridan before making it to Broadway**

- *Come From Away* was the first musical developed through the Canadian Music Theatre Project (CMTP) incubator at Sheridan.
- Sheridan helped secure a travel grant from the Canada Council for the Arts for David Hein and Irene Sankoff to visit Gander on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11 in September 2011.
- The first 45 minutes of *Come From Away* was presented at Sheridan in April 2012.
- *Come From Away* appeared at Theatre Sheridan in 2013 as a fully realized, two-act performance.
- It appeared at two festivals of new musicals in the US before being optioned by Junkyard Dog Productions, a Tony award-winning, Broadway-producing team. The musical then had its co-world premiere at the LaJolla Playhouse in San Diego and the Seattle Repertory Theater in 2015.
- Junkyard Dog Productions is bringing the show on a three-city tour: Ford's Theatre in Washington DC (September 2 – October 9, 2016), Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto (November 15, 2016-January 8, 2017) and Broadway's Gerald Schoenfeld theatre opening March 12, 2017
- The benefit concerts at 3pm and 8pm on October 29 in Gander feature the current cast, with proceeds being directed to local charities in Gander and the 5 surrounding towns that hosted stranded passengers in 2001.
- One Sheridan alumna is part of the company. Susan Dunstan is an understudy.

### **2. The Canadian Music Theatre Project (CMTP) is making Sheridan a hotbed for the development of new musical theatre works in Canada**

- CMTP is Canada's first incubator and permanent headquarters dedicated to the development of new works of musical theatre.
- CMTP drew its inspiration from the successful American Music Theatre Project at Northwestern University in Chicago
- Three to four scripts are accepted per year by Canadian and international composers, lyricists and book writers, based on subject matter, style and content.
- Sheridan provides a writer's fee and a five-week workshop that offers up to 170 hours of rehearsal by a cast of fourth-year students who audition for the part. The workshops culminate in staged readings in front of a 200-person live audience of industry professionals and theatre enthusiasts.
- The collaborative process provides writers with immediate insight into character development and allows for material to be continually refined and tested.
- 15 projects have been incubated since our 2011 launch, 4 of which have had a professional premiere.

### **3. CMTP ensures that Canada's most poignant stories and prolific moments are captured and shared for the world to enjoy.**

- Musicals are the time capsules of history. They reflect our values and help to bring meaning to society. Canadians have important stories that define who we are as a nation that deserve to be told. A number of these are the subject of musicals thanks to the help they're receiving from CMTP.
- ***Come From Away*** is a story about humanity. It's a musical about the people of Gander and its surrounding towns, who opened their hearts and homes to 6,500 international passengers who were stranded for a week after their planes were diverted there on September 11.

- ***Prom Queen*** is the story of Toronto teen Marc Hall, who fought for and won the right to bring his boyfriend to his high school prom.
- ***Marathon of Hope*** is the story of legendary Canadian Terry Fox and his run across Canada in 1980 to raise money and awareness for the fight against cancer.
- Sheridan will co-develop a new musical with the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre based on the life of **Dr. Norman Bethune**, the Canadian physician who left a lasting impression on the Chinese people through his voluntary medical service during turbulent times in the country in the 1930s.

#### **4. CMTP nurtures new musicals that foster creativity and innovation in musical theatre**

- ***Brantwood*** was the largest production of immersive, site-specific musical theatre in Canadian history. This choose-your-path adventure let audiences decide which storylines to follow as they wandered through halls and classrooms of Brantwood High School, in a musical that spanned 9 decades and featured 90 characters (portrayed by 40 actors), 200 scenes, and 40 musical numbers interwoven with clockwork precision by a crew of 40 students from Sheridan's Technical Production program. The show received the Audience Choice Dora Mavor Moore Award in 2015.
- ***The Theory of Relativity*** is a show that was specifically written for and about college-aged students, based on their actual experiences. The show celebrates the profound effect of our intersecting lives, covering joy and heartbreak, liaisons and losses and the inevitability and wonder of human connection. The show is now available for licensing by Music Theatre International. Its soundtrack is available through iTunes and is part of the in-flight entertainment on Delta Airlines.
- ***Senza Luce*** is a fable of a village deep in the mountains of Northern Italy, where residents are thrown into turmoil after a forward-thinking youth devises a way to bring sunlight into the village that has lived in perpetual darkness for centuries, in the shadow of the Italian Alps. The show spurred a joint project with students from Sheridan's Bachelor of Animation, who over three summers are bringing some of the music and lyrics to life through the art of animation, sponsored by Corus.

#### **5. Sheridan is a leader in musical theatre development and performance**

- Our Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance is Canada's first such degree. Each year, we receive approximately 450 applications for 45 spots.
- 160 students have participated in the creation of new musicals at Sheridan through CMTP
- Upon graduation, 80% of students in the Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance degree immediately find representation by major agents and/or contractual employment.
- Our alumni work across Canada, at the Stratford and Shaw Festivals, on Broadway and in London's West End. They've been in musicals that include: ***Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, The Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ Superstar, Jersey Boys, Rent, Les Miserables, Mama Mia! and Kinky Boots.***
- Students from Sheridan's Advanced Special Effects Makeup, Prosthetics and Props program and its Technical Production for Theatre and Live Events program ensure the professional quality of six shows per year at Theatre Sheridan, starring our Bachelor students.
- Famous alumni of our music theatre performance program include Chilina Kennedy & Scott Campbell (Carole King), Aaron Wapole (Les Miserables, Kinky Boots), Michael Lomenda (Jersey Boys), Michael Therriault (Lord of the Rings), and Stephanie Gorin (casting agent)

**Remarks for Mr. Bryan Dawson  
Chair, Sheridan Board of Governors  
Sheridan Brunch – North Atlantic Aviation Museum, Gander NF  
Saturday, October 29 at 10:30 am**

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- **Thank you, Michael**
- **Ambassador Heyman, Mayor Elliott, and honoured guests**  
**... It gives me great pleasure to be here today, speaking**  
**on behalf of Sheridan’s 22,000 students, 3,500 employees**  
**and 160,000 alumni.**
- **As Chair of Sheridan’s Board of Governors, I have the**  
**pleasure of attending events such as this one, in which I**  
**get to share wonderful news about Sheridan’s renown**  
**for creativity and innovation.**
- **Sheridan is Canada’s largest arts school and home to**  
**winners of Emmys, Oscars, Annie Awards, Canadian**  
**Screen Awards, and Dora Awards.**

- **Our four-year, Bachelor degree in Music Theatre Performance – the first of its kind in Canada -- combines the intensive professional training of an acting school with the academic discipline of an honours-level drama degree.**
- **The highly competitive program receives 10 times the applications for each space available, with our students being taught and mentored by dedicated and caring faculty who are drawn from the creative industries.**
- **This exceptional program has made Sheridan no stranger to Broadway.**
- **Alumni of the program include Chilina Kennedy & Scott Campbell who recently starred opposite one another as Carole King and Gerry Goffin in the musical “*Beautiful*”.**

- We've also had countless other alumni play in Broadway musicals such as *The Book of Mormon*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Jersey Boys*, *Rent*, and *Les Misérables*
- But what makes today so special, and so very worth celebrating, is the fact that Sheridan is now making it to Broadway, not just as performers but also as a creator.
- We will always be exceptionally proud of the fact that *Come From Away* began its life and development at Sheridan.
- In 2012, *Come from Away* was the first musical to go through the Canadian Music Theatre Project – our on-site incubator for the creation of new musicals
- In 2013, it was on the playbill of our Theatre Sheridan line up



- **Sheridan is proud to be an official sponsor of the show's run in Washington, Toronto and New York – and we're delighted that Michael Rubinoff is co-producing this weekend's benefit concerts.**
- **Mayor Elliott – thank you once again for opening up your town to so many of us “Come From Aways”**
- **We're honoured to help steward your story . . . and very excited to be in the community whose extraordinary generosity moved the world and made us all deeply proud to be Canadian.**

## Sheridan Night at *Come From Away*

### KEY DETAILS

Date:	Tuesday, November 22, 2016
Time:	8:00 pm Curtain 9:50 pm Post-Show Reception
Location:	Royal Alexandra Theatre, Yale Simpson Lounge – Lower Lobby 260 King Street West, Toronto

### SPEECHES

#### **Dr. Mary Preece Remarks**

Welcome to this incredible celebration! I am not going to ask if you enjoyed the show because the standing ovation we all just participated in is proof of the profound impact *Come From Away* is having on audiences, everywhere it plays.

Thank you for joining us tonight to celebrate the success of *Come From Away*. For many of us who have watched its trajectory from Sheridan, it has been an amazing journey to follow. It's hard to believe that just a few short years ago, our students were just bringing those extraordinary

characters to life for the first time.

Tonight's opening night party is sponsored by Kaldor Brand Strategy and Design. We are grateful for their support and for helping us celebrate this milestone in Sheridan's history. Through the support of Kaldor and everyone attending the show tonight, we raised about \$30,000 to support the Canadian Music Theatre Project. THANK YOU! We have many special guests joining us tonight. First, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the cast and creative team of *Come From Away* – you are definitely among family in this room! I think I speak for everyone here when I say that we are in awe of your performance this evening. How about another round of applause for the cast and creative team?

I would also like to welcome Sheridan's Board of Governors including:

- Board Chair Bryan Dawson,
- and Board members ... Joanne Rivard,
- Tanya Leedale,
- Bianca Tino,
- Tony Depascal,
- John Fleming,
- Crystal Bennett,
- and our Board Secretary, Elizabeth Benson.

Also joining us are Sheridan Vice Presidents

- Lisa Piccolo,
- Ian Marley,
- and Megan Mascarin

as well as the Dean of our Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design – Ronni

Rosenberg and the Associate Dean of our Musical Theatre Performance program, Michael Rubinoff

There are many donors and supporters of Sheridan in the room tonight along with alumni from our music theatre performance program.

Some of these alumni had the privilege of being the first to bring *Come From Away* to life by being a part of the first two workshops held at Sheridan in 2012 and 2013. Others continue to make us proud with their performances on stages around the world. A warm welcome to Susan Dunstan, part of the company of *Come From Away* and a proud Sheridan graduate.

It is now my pleasure to invite Sheridan's Chancellor and former long-time Mississauga Mayor, Hazel McCallion forward to say a few words.

Chancellor McCallion, I have no doubt that this musical will have struck a deep chord with you. Throughout your career, you've always been the

first one to jump in when there's a call for help. You're known for putting the needs of others first, and for acting with great grace and humility – much like the people of Gander and its surrounding communities.

### Chancellor Speaks

Thank you Chancellor McCallion.

In just five years, Sheridan has become the leading force for the development of new musicals in Canada. We attract Canadian and international writers who bring their scripts to Sheridan where they continue to be refined and tested by our students, in front of live audiences, to help them get to the next stage in their development. In fact, with fifteen musicals workshopped, and four having enjoyed professional premieres, we may just have the secret recipe for success.

One of the CMTF musicals finding success is *Prom Queen*, currently in

production at the Segal Centre in Montreal. The writers of that piece, Colleen Dauncey and Akiva Romer-Segal, just had their second workshop at Sheridan with a new show called *Rumpringa Break! An Am-ish Musical*. When writers are returning to the CMTP to workshop new works, we'll take that as another sign that we are doing something right.

I would also like to acknowledge that *The Theory of Relativity*, a musical commissioned by the CMTP in 2013, was recently signed by Music Theatre International. This means that schools and community theatres across the world can stage productions of this musical that takes a joyous look at the interconnectedness of our lives. Its writers, Brian Hill and Neil Bertrand, are now on their third pass through the CMTP, with *Senza Luce* being staged by Theatre Sheridan in April, and a new musical about the life of Norman Bethune kicking off development in China in December.

It's the writers who are at the heart of CMTP – they have to entrust their

work to our students, who in turn, bring these new characters to life. The CMTP has created a tremendous opportunity for our students who learn about the creative process of writing and developing new musicals, which in turn, may inspire them to become the next generation of musical theatre writers.

And who better to serve as an inspiration for our students, than Irene Sankoff and David Hein, the writers of *Come From Away*? While they joke that they were not the first writers who Michael Rubinoff approached with idea of creating this musical, time has proven that there could not have been a better choice. Irene and David— all of Sheridan is proud of your outstanding accomplishments. We are tremendously grateful that you entrusted us to help bring this musical to life. I would invite you to come forward and join me at the podium.

It's my pleasure to present you with this commemorative photo, taken at



the very first performance of *Come From Away* at the Panasonic Theatre on April 12, 2012 – featuring our talented class of 2013 music theatre performance students – at the start of a moment.

David and Irene, I invite you now to please say a few words.

### David and Irene speak

Thank you David and Irene and congratulations on all your success.

I know many of you join me in being grateful that *Come From Away* has been brought back home to Canada – where the journey began. First to Gander, Newfoundland and the benefit concerts last month, where the story played to those very people whose extraordinary kindness form the basis of the musical. And now to Toronto, where the development of *Come From Away* began and where the very first presentation was staged at Sheridan.

For those decisions, we thank the producers – Junkyard Dog Productions. Randy and Sue -- your generous support of Sheridan and our theatre programs is greatly appreciated, as was your invitation for all 400 of them to attend the dress rehearsal of *Come From Away* last Sunday. It is my pleasure to invite Sue Frost from Junkyard Dog Productions to say a few words.

### Sue Frost speaks

Thank you Sue. All of the extended Sheridan community takes tremendous pride in the role we had in bringing *Come From Away* to life and to reading one rave review after another in every venue where it has been staged.

The vision of Michael Rubinoff to create the Canadian Music Theatre

Project goes hand in hand with the development of *Come From Away* as it was one of the inaugural projects workshopped – it was also his idea to write this musical. Who would have thought he would have nailed it on his first try?

Michael came to Sheridan and set lofty goals for our theatre programs and students, that were already in high demand. With 10 applications for every available spot and alumni who work on and off stages around the world - where else could his impact be felt?

It did not take long. The creation of the CMTP has become one of the most important activities he has undertaken, and this credit is being bestowed by writers and theatre critics across Canada and beyond.

CMTP offers a meaningful, applied learning experience that serves as a capstone project for our degree students.

Through CMTP, Michael also produced *Brantwood*, the largest immersive site-specific production in Canadian history for which it won the audience choice award for favourite production at the 2015 Dora Awards.

Sheridan students have performed at the Lincoln Centre as part of the ensemble for Jason Robert Brown's presentation of *Parade* in 2015, an invitation extended after a masterclass at Sheridan, organized by Michael.

Now, part of the regular curriculum that every music theatre performance student experiences, is the opportunity to bring new characters life, helping to create roles, rather than to just perform in them.

And, on March 12, 2017, *Come From Away* – a musical that was born at Sheridan, will open at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre – on Broadway.

Michael, on behalf of all of us at Sheridan and in this room tonight – thank you and congratulations.

Will you please join me at the podium and accept this commemorative photograph, detailing How *Come From Away* made it to Broadway which the Toronto Star so richly told in last Sunday's paper.

Michael, please say a few words.

Michael speaks.

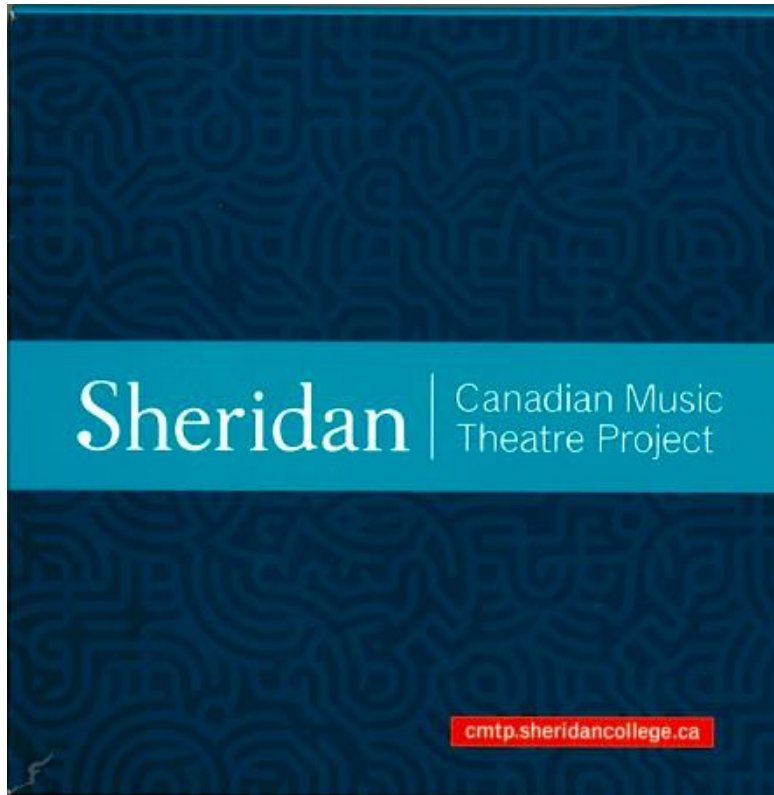
Thank you Michael .. and thank you to everyone who joined us here this evening.

Immediately following our formal remarks, I'd like to invite the cast members of all of the *Come From Away* productions – past and present - to the podium for a group photo.

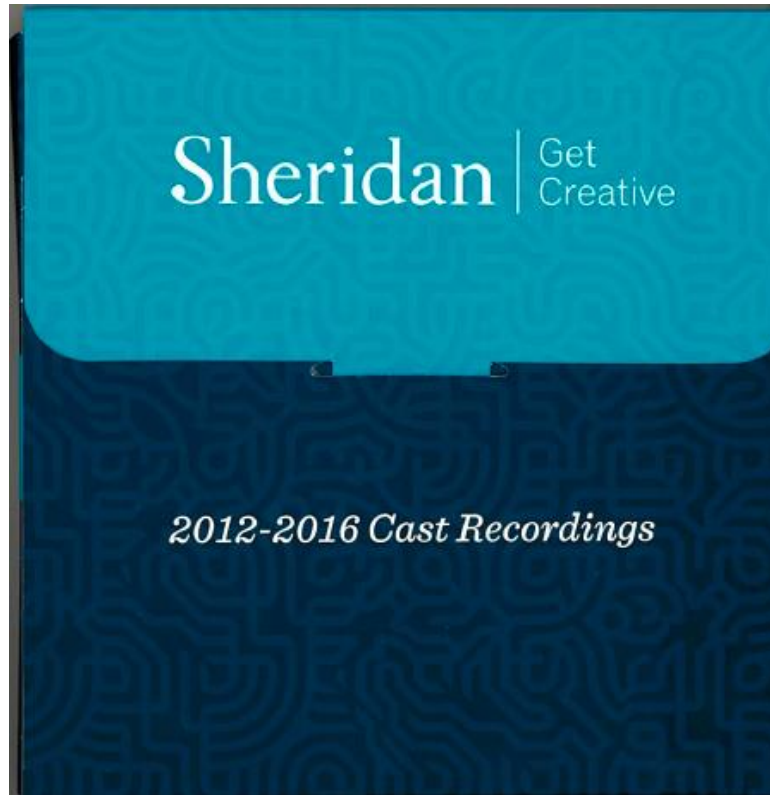
Thank you once again for supporting Sheridan and this extraordinary musical! I wish you all a good night.

**Section 2:**  
**Paid advertisements and promotional material**

CD Box Set of CMTP Cast Recordings (swag)



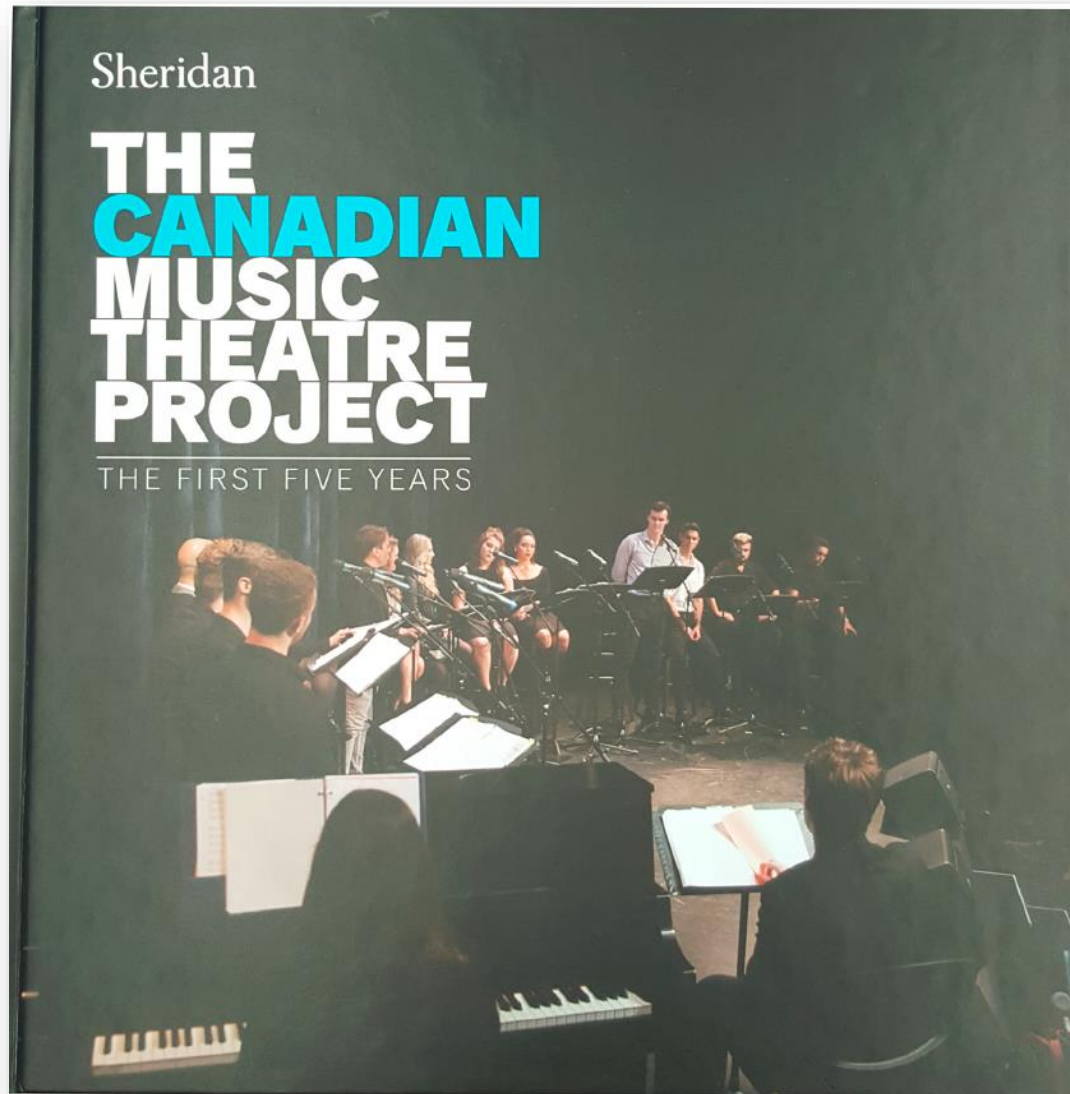
Front



Back



CMTM Hard Cover Book (swag)




## Advertorial

Perspective™  
Oakville | 2016

### From Sheridan to Broadway

New musicals find success  
with help from Sheridan.



Come From Away is a breathtaking new musical originally developed at Sheridan College. It's coming to Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre, Nov. 15 - Jan. 8, before opening on Broadway in March 2017.

Health Science & Technology + Pucateri's Fine Foods + ErinoakKids to Open

[Click here for online edition](#)

Full page ad in  
Gander Beacon -  
October 27, 2016

# To the people of Gander, Appleton, Gambo, Glenwood, Lewisporte and Norris Arm:

Fifteen years ago, you opened your hearts and homes to a world of stranded airline passengers in need.

As we look forward to the *Come From Away* benefit concerts on October 29, we'd like to thank you for allowing us to help steward your story. Our incubator for the development of new musicals exists to ensure that a multitude of perspectives are heard and that important moments in Canadian history are captured and told.

We're honoured to be in the communities whose extraordinary generosity moved the world and made us all deeply proud to be Canadian.

*From your friends at Sheridan*



@SheridanCMTF

[cmtf.sheridancollege.ca](http://cmtf.sheridancollege.ca)

Sheridan | Get  
Creative

The future  
of musical  
theatre is  
being created  
right now.



As *Come From Away* opens in Toronto at Mirvish's newly renovated Royal Alexandra Theatre, we are proud to celebrate the next step in a journey that began at Sheridan. The musical was developed in 2012 as part of the Canadian Music Theatre Project and will go on to Broadway in 2017.

Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project is Canada's largest incubator of new musicals. Together with students from Sheridan's renowned Honours Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance program, writers develop and test their work over the course of a five-week workshop, culminating in a staged presentation.

Now, new stories about Canada are making their way from school to stage, ensuring that a multitude of perspectives are heard and that important moments in Canadian history are captured and told.

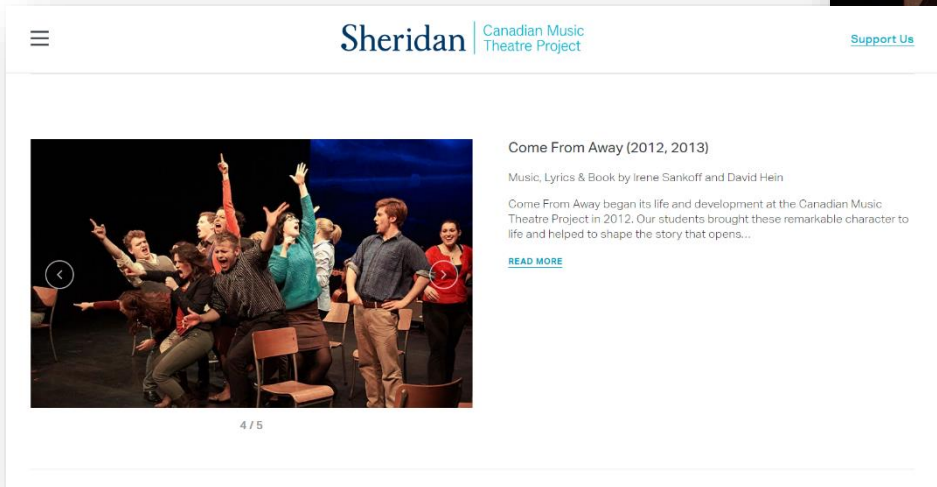
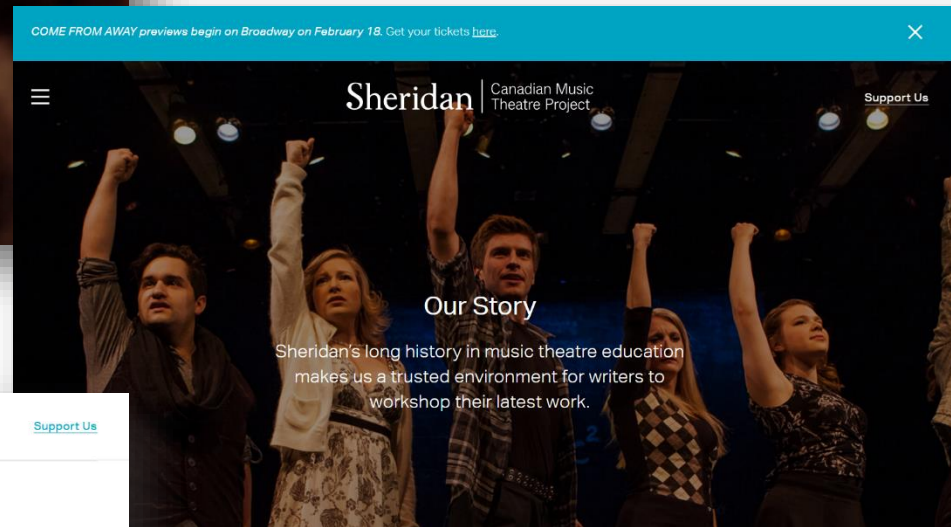
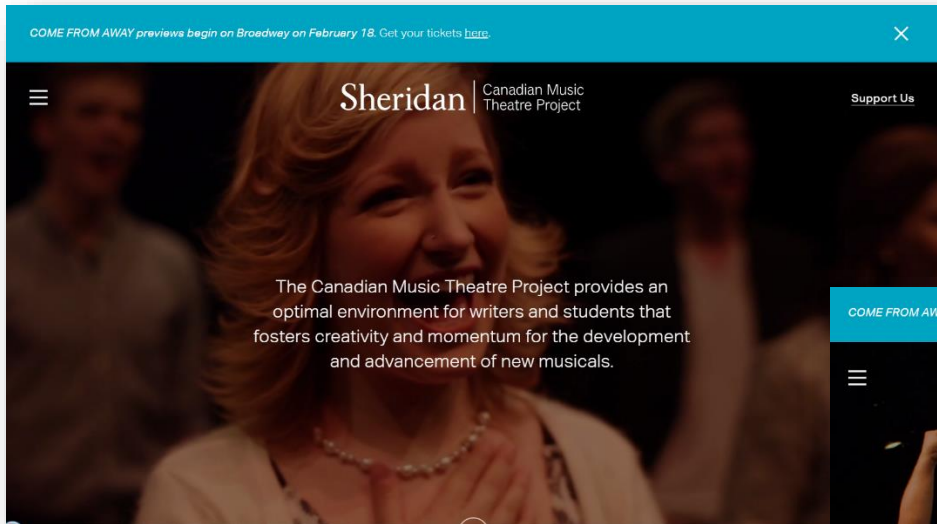
*"Come From Away* going to Broadway is a dream come true. This journey can be traced back to where we first developed the show – at Sheridan's incredible Canadian Music Theatre Project."

Irene Sankoff and David Hein  
Writers, *Come From Away*

Sheridan | Get Create

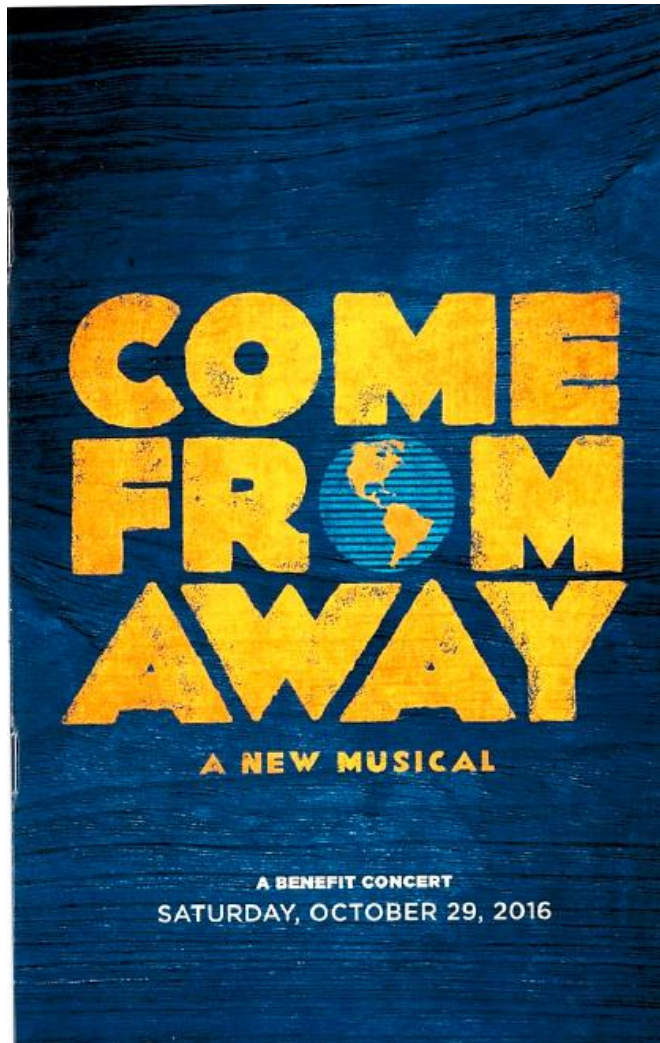
[cmtp.sheridancollege.ca](http://cmtp.sheridancollege.ca)

## Sheridan's CMTP Website



AD in Programme booklet for the Sheridan Event in Gander, NL

Cover



Ad

**From Gander  
to Sheridan**

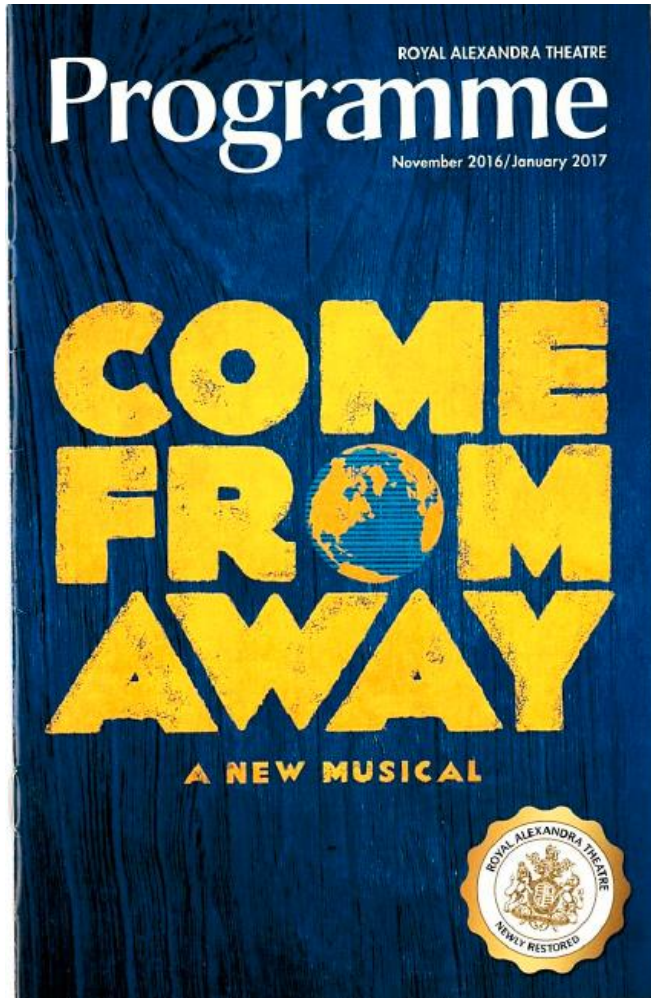
We are honoured to develop musicals about  
the proudest moments in Canadian history.

Congratulations to our *Come From Away* family.

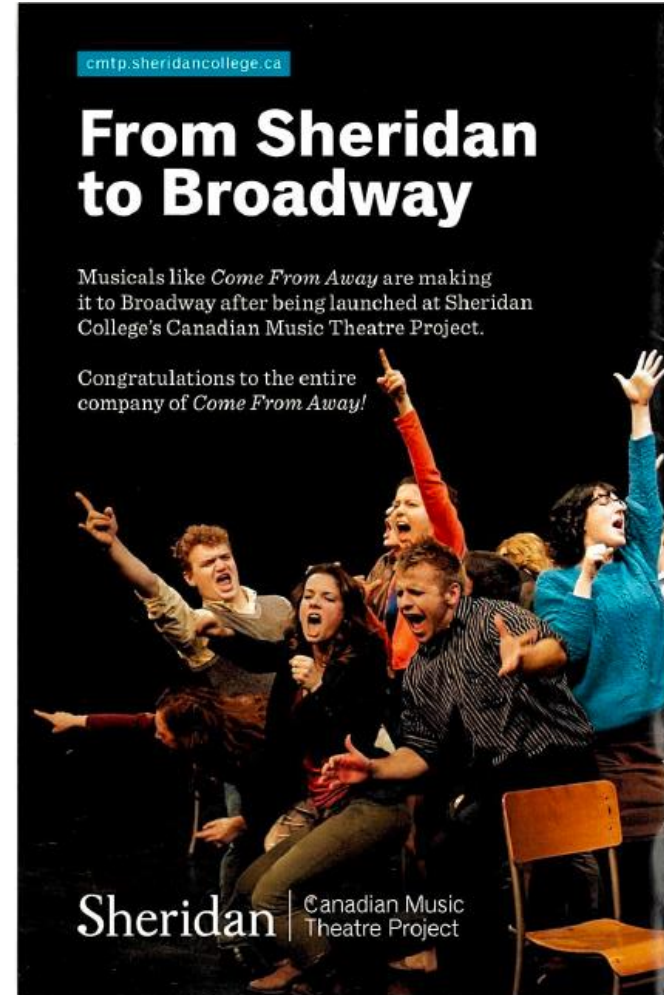
**Sheridan** | Canadian Music  
Theatre Project

Sheridan Ad in Mirvish Productions Programme

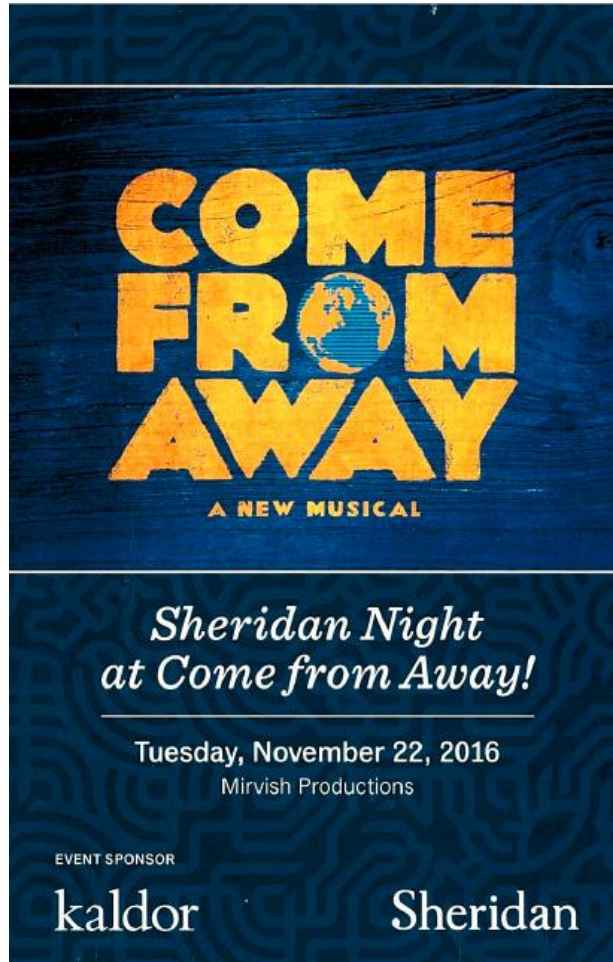
Cover



Ad



Invitation Post Card to Sheridan Night in Toronto

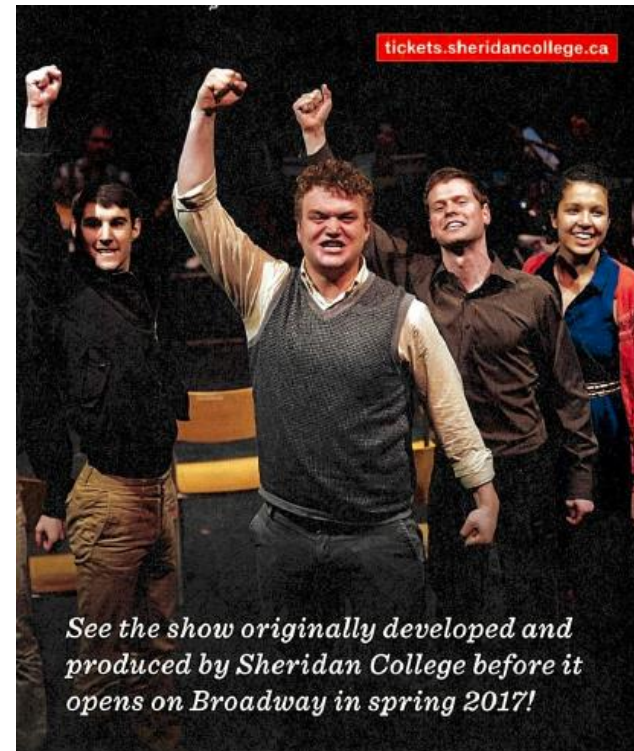


**COME FROM AWAY**  
A NEW MUSICAL

*Sheridan Night  
at Come from Away!*

Tuesday, November 22, 2016  
Mirvish Productions

EVENT SPONSOR  
**kaldor** Sheridan



[tickets.sheridancollege.ca](http://tickets.sheridancollege.ca)

*See the show originally developed and produced by Sheridan College before it opens on Broadway in spring 2017!*

*This event is in support of the Canadian Music Theatre Project.*

EVENT SPONSOR

**kaldor**

**Sheridan**



## **Section 3: Media advisories**

## Latest News



### As Come From Away heads to Broadway, Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project launches three new musicals

**October 06, 2016**

Sheridan College's [Canadian Music Theatre Project \(CMTP\)](#), under the leadership of Michael Rubinoff, Associate Dean of Visual and Performing Arts, is an international centre of excellence for the development of new musicals in Canada. Since its inception in 2011, 15 shows have been incubated, with four having enjoyed their professional premieres (*Come From Away*, *The Theory of Relativity*, *Prom Queen* and *Marathon of Hope*) and one opening on Broadway in 2017 (*Come From Away*). To learn more about the CMTP and the works developed to date, click [here](#).

The CMTP Festival of New Musical provides the public with the chance to be among the first to witness new works in development. Sheridan's Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance Class of 2017 has been workshoping three new musicals this semester, under the guidance of leading theatre practitioners.

Forty-five minute, staged readings of the following three musicals will be presented with each creative team introducing their projects:

#### **Rumspringa break! An Am-ish Musical**

**Book by Matt Murray, Music by Colleen Dauncey, Lyrics by Akiva Romer-Segal  
Direction by Steven Gallagher, Musical Direction by Wayne Gwillim**

When Amish twins Hannah and Ruth leave the comfort of their strict, sheltered community to explore the outside world for the first time, things don't go as planned. Desperate, penniless, and stranded in the big city's roughest neighbourhood, the naïve sisters must rely on their faith, the outlandish locals, and each other to survive. As chaos and hilarity ensue, their faith and their relationship are tested. This musical contains strong language and mature themes.

**Small Wonder**

**Book by Morris Panych  
Lyrics by Morris Panych, Anika Johnson and Britta Johnson  
Music by Anika Johnson and Britta Johnson  
Direction by Morris Panych, Musical Direction by Paul Moody**

Ambrose Small, the famously disappearing Toronto theatrical entrepreneur, faced with debts and obligations to both the gangsters and the cops, decides to cash in his considerable holdings and escape, somehow by magic, into thin air. Set in 1919, the musical embraces a period of Toronto history, seemingly upright and sober, whose underbelly is anything but. Ambrose Small is in the final planning stages of his departure, when a young woman from a small town shows up looking for a part. It's what else she's looking for that places her centre stage in this criminal misadventure.

**The Journey That Saved Curious George**

**Book by Jen Shuber, Music and Lyrics by Nicky Phillips  
Based on the Book by Louise Borden  
Direction by Ann Hodges, Musical Direction by Aaron Eyre**

Curious George, the beloved monkey of children's books, is famous for his narrow escape from danger in his well-known stories. What is not well known is how he symbolically safeguarded his own creators in times of danger. Margret and H.A. Rey were Jewish immigrants who fled Paris in 1940 with not much more than the Curious George manuscript on their backs. This is the story of how they escaped Nazi occupied Europe and brought Curious George safely to America narrowly escaping danger themselves. A husband and wife finding a way against all odds to find joy in a time of despair through creating their artwork and stories, determined to get to safety while protecting their life's work and ultimately bringing a little monkey to millions of children for years to come.

**WHEN**

October 13 at 7:30 p.m.

October 14 and 15 at 7:00 p.m.

**WHERE**

Sheridan College, Macdonald Heaslip Hall

1430 Trafalgar Road, Oakville, ON, L6H 2L1

**TICKETS**

<https://tickets.sheridancollege.ca>

*Pictured at top of page: A Canadian Music Theatre Project (CMTTP) workshop in progress with Sheridan Bachelor of Music Theatre - Performance students.*

share this

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## Latest News



Join CMTP as we go back to where *Come From Away* began

**October 20, 2016**

Sheridan College's Canadian Music Theatre Project (CMTP), under the leadership of Michael Rubinoff, Associate Dean of Visual and Performing Arts, is an international centre of excellence for the development of new musicals in Canada.

**Media are invited to join us for a special brunch on Saturday, October 29 from 10:30 am to noon at the North Atlantic Aviation Museum, 135 TransCanada Highway, Gander, NL.**

The brunch will showcase the CMTP's contribution to a number of new musicals in Canada, including *Come From Away*, which will play as a special benefit concert in Gander at 3pm and 8pm on October 29, before opening on the Mirvish stage in Toronto on November 15 and on Broadway at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre on March 12, 2017.

Three Sheridan alumni who performed in the original Sheridan production of *Come From Away* will be at the brunch to meet the real-life person they portrayed in the play and speak about their first-hand experience in the show's development process. A true "Come From Aways" or "plane person" who is featured in the musical, Kevin Tuerff, will also attend.

*Come From Away* is a musical about the people of Gander and its surrounding towns, who opened their hearts and homes to host over 6,500 international passengers who were stranded for a week after their planes were

diverted to Gander on September 11, 2001. The benefit concerts on October 29 are being co-produced by Michael Rubinoff, with all proceeds supporting local charities.

The show began its life and development at Sheridan's CMTP. CMTP is Canada's first incubator and permanent headquarters for the development of new musical theatre works by Canadian and international composers, lyricists and book-writers. CMTP connects creative teams with talented students who help bring new characters to life, creating an environment for material to be tested and rewritten. Three or four projects are selected each year, with a five-week workshop period culminating in staged readings in front of a 200-person audience of industry professionals and theatre enthusiasts.

Since its inception in 2011, 15 shows have been incubated through CMTP, with four having enjoyed their professional premieres (*Come From Away*, *The Theory of Relativity*, *Prom Queen* and *Marathon of Hope*)

**[Visit the CMTP webpage for more information.](#)**

*Pictured top right: Bachelor of Music Theatre - Performance students in the 2013 Production of Come From Away at Sheridan*

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**Section 4:**  
**MRP report, selected news clippings and endorsements**







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21-Oct-16	Kcbd.com	National	CDN	Website		10,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
21-Oct-16	Newschannel6now.com	National	CDN	Website		10,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
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21-Oct-16	Hawaiinewsnow.com	National	CDN	Website		12,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
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21-Oct-16	erietvnews.com	National	CDN	Website		15,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
21-Oct-16	cwrichmond.tv	National	CDN	Website		5,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
21-Oct-16	cw-gabama.com	National	CDN	Website		5,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
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21-Oct-16	globeadvisor.com	National	CDN	Website		61,000					✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
20-Oct-16	Broadwayworld.com	National	CDN	Website		103,000					✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12-Oct-16	finance.yahoo.ca	National	CDN	Website		1,972,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
11-Oct-16	business.am-news.com	National	CDN	Website		1,000					✓			✓		✓		✓		✓
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11-Oct-16	business.thepostandmail.com/thepostandmail	National	CDN	Website		3,000					✓			✓		✓		✓		✓
11-Oct-16	theprovince.com/business	National	CDN	Website		265,000					✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
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11-Oct-16	business.bentoncourier.com	National	CDN	Website		1,000					✓			✓		✓		✓		✓
11-Oct-16	theseeker.ca	National	CDN	Website		35,000					✓			✓		✓		✓		✓
11-Oct-16	thestarphoenix.com/business	National	CDN	Website		35,000					✓			✓		✓		✓		✓
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11-Oct-16	markets.financialcontent.com/mi.myrtlebeach	National	CDN	Website		6,167					✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
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11-Oct-16	markets.financialcontent.com/townhall	National	CDN	Website		20,000					✓			✓		✓		✓		✓
11-Oct-16	bizjournals.com/triangle	National	CDN	Website		5,000					✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓

11-Oct-16	markets.financialcontent.com/mi.sanluisobispo	National	CDN	Website		6,000				✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
11-Oct-16	business.timesonline.com/timesonline	National	CDN	Website		1,300				✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		
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11-Oct-16	The Vancouver Sun	Vancouver	BC	Daily		353,000	M-F			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
11-Oct-16	investor.wallstreetselect.com	National	CDN	Website		1,000				✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		
11-Oct-16	business.wapakdailynews.com/wapakdailynews	National	CDN	Website		1,000				✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		
11-Oct-16	bizjournals.com/washington	National	CDN	Website		10,000				✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		
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11-Oct-16	The Windsor Star	Windsor	ON	Daily		107,000	M-F			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		
11-Oct-16	markets.financialcontent.com/wral	National	CDN	Website		28,200				✓			✓		✓		✓		✓		
11-Oct-16	Finance.yahoo.com	National	CDN	Website		1,622,000				✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		
21-Jul-16	The Globe and Mail	National	CDN	Daily		1,233,000	M-F			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
17-May-16	Broadwayworld.com	National	CDN	Website		103,000				✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Report Totals:						43,771,550				0%	100%	0%	0%	100%	79%	94%	36%	99%	19%	100%	
Number of Stories:						143															
Budget:						\$0															
Total Reach:						43,771,550															
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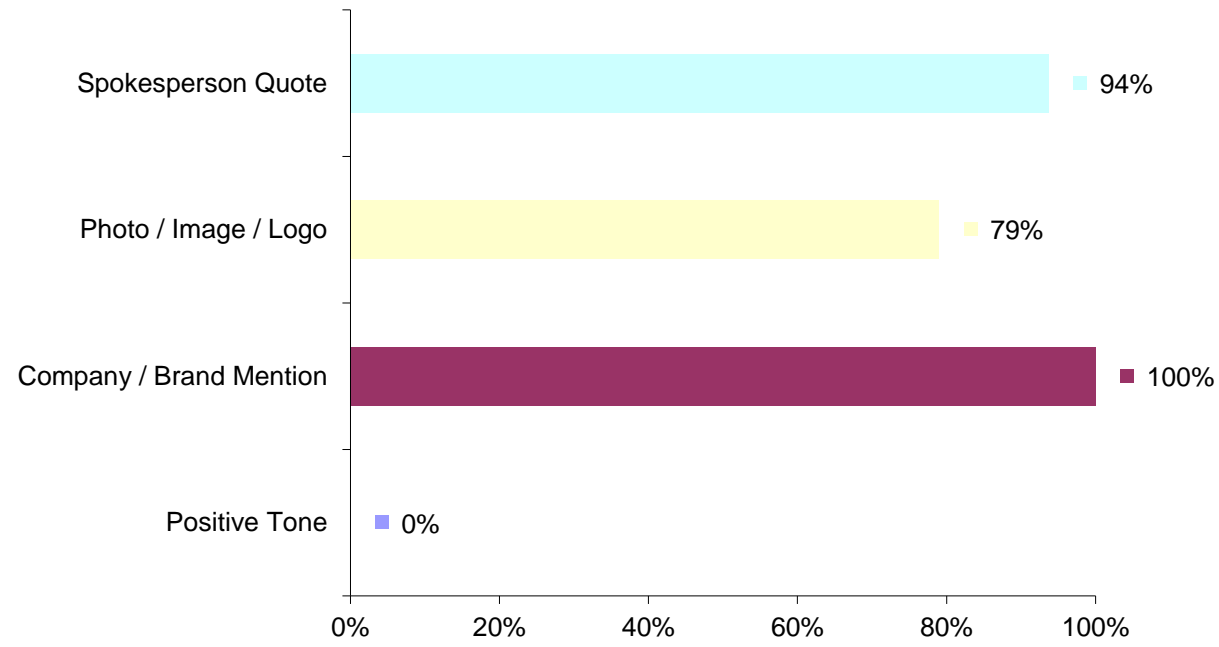
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David Hein, left, and Irene Sankoff, the husband-and-wife writing team behind the musical *Come From Away*, hold take a selfie on the tarmac of the Gander International Airport in Gander, N.L

DARREN CALABRESE/FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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[J. KELLY NESTRUCK](#)

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

LAST UPDATED: FRIDAY, FEB. 17, 2017 11:49AM EST

1 Comments

For Valentine's Day week, here's a love story, times two.

It's about how a Prairie dreamer with a guitar and a Toronto realist who always had a backup plan got together as romantic partners – and then, a decade later, saved their relationship and discovered a unique voice that would take them to Broadway by getting together again, as artistic partners.

Come from Away's creators David Hein and Irene Sankoff, whose Newfoundland-set hit about the 38 planeloads of people stranded in Gander after 9/11 opens in previews on 45th Street on Saturday, told it one morning before departing for New York, in the living room of the two-storey Toronto home they bought in 2006 with the help of their parents, day jobs and a 35-year mortgage no longer offered by banks.

A decade later, they have a three-year-old named Molly, are working as artists full-time – and, financially, the picture looks a heck of a lot different. Best-case scenario, if *Come from Away* sells out in Manhattan the way it did in Seattle and Toronto, as sole authors of the work, they could pull in \$27,000 (U.S.) a week – more every seven days than the average Canadian author or writer earns in a year.

That's my estimate based on industry standards – but money is the one topic these two children of divorce who both, at times, lived in humble circumstances with their single mothers are sheepish about. “We grew up without a lot of money, so the whole thing makes me really nervous,” Sankoff says.

Hein further cites the statistic that only one in five shows on Broadway makes a profit. “Literally, we're the fifth show out of five to go to Broadway from Canada – and one of them [2006's *The Drowsy Chaperone*] has already made it!”

## Falling in love

Their first love story is beautifully conventional: Hein, born in Regina, and Sankoff, from the Toronto suburb of North York, met on the first day of frosh week at York University in the 1990s. “Irene thinks it was a welcome barbecue; I think it was at a welcome pancake breakfast,” Hein says.

“Because it was outside, right?”

“You can eat pancakes outside.”

The aspiring songwriter and aspiring actress both loved theatre – but, musically, were divided. Hein, as a kid, through visits to the Winnipeg Folk Festival with his mother, had developed a taste for bands such as Blue Rodeo and Great Big Sea (a similar sound pervades *Come from Away's* score), while Sankoff was a musical-theatre nut who danced all her life and bonded with her mother over old movie musicals. “My mom would come back after working to 11 or whatever on Christmas Eve and we would start watching *Top Hat* ... or those old Gene Kelly musicals,” she recalls. “I was obsessed.”



Sankoff and Hein's journey into the world of musical theatre started as a love story.

CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

But Sankoff was also an academic overachiever feeling pressure from the science-focused side of her family – and, while she acted extracurricularly at York, she graduated with a double major in psychology and creative writing.

The young couple's first major fight was, as only a young couple's could be, about whether theatre could change the world. They went at it until the sun came up – the dreamer trying to convince the realist.

Hein didn't win the argument – but, on the verge of applying to do a master's in speech and language pathology, Sankoff did decide to at least give acting a try professionally.

## New York

So, in 1999, Sankoff and Hein moved to New York. Sankoff began studying at the Actors Studio – as seen on TV – and Hein, who has dual citizenship, began work as “assistant everything” at a music studio where The Muppets recorded, borrowing the equipment to record his own songs at night.

The pair lived in a residence called International House in Upper Manhattan along with grad students from 110 countries – and that's where they were when, on Sept. 11, 2001, planes were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. That night, windows shut to keep the smell of smoke out, scared students from around the world gathered around a piano in the residence for an impromptu concert – a moving experience Sankoff and Hein would later draw on for *Come from Away*.

But 9/11 had a more immediate impact on them. A month later, Hein woke up and said, “Hey, why don't we get married?” They were already engaged – but on Oct. 12, 2001, they headed down to City Hall and secretly eloped.

Playbills from Hein and Sankoff's New York years still hang on the kitchen wall of the house they share with their daughter and two cats, one named Elphaba (after the Wicked witch) and the other Gambo (after the Newfoundland town).

But it was not always a dream: Savings dwindled, the studio Hein was working at shut down, and Sankoff – who had an agent and was getting gigs – separated a shoulder in a dance class.

Uninsured, she took a trip to Toronto to see a doctor – and it turned into a move back home.



Sankoff and Hein drew on experiences from their lives to create their first musical *Wiccan Wedding*, and again for *Come from Away*.

DARREN CALABRESE/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

## The second love story

Back in Canada, Hein and Sankoff had to build an artistic community from scratch. She landed a role in *The Mousetrap*; he released an album called *North of Nowhere*. And so it went for years – pursuing art at night and paying bills through tutoring or graphic design. Soon, they were married homeowners, but they barely got to see each other and grew lonely, especially when Hein was off on tour. Was this living the dream?

And this – in 2009 – is where the second love story begins.

Hein had written a song called *My Mother’s Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding* – based on his own experience as the son of a woman who came out later in life and remarried – that was popular on tour. More than most of his work, it was influenced by the musical theatre that Sankoff had introduced him to over the course of their relationship. What if, he wondered, they could expand it into an actual musical – and, at the very least, spend some time together?

Marrying their skills, Hein and Sankoff began trying to turn their family’s story into a fictional musical – at first, a conventional “book musical” where an invisible fourth wall descends in front of the audience and scenes and songs alternate to tell a story.

But an epiphany Sankoff had on Valentine’s Day led the pair to a different writing style – one they later refined with *Come from Away*.

At the gym that day, Sankoff was talking with an enthusiastic friend about *Wiccan Wedding* – and heard her say, “The best thing about this is that it’s based on a true story.” A light bulb went on.

“I came home to David and said, ‘We’ve got to throw it out. Let’s tell the real story.’”

The new version the couple started working on during an unorthodox Valentine’s date would eventually feature Hein sitting on a stool in his *Glass Tiger* shirt, singing songs about his mother’s coming out, how he introduced his two moms to Irene at a *Hooters* and the history of same-sex marriage in Canada, using a troupe of actors that included his wife to tell the stories.

The sweet and direct show became a hit at the Toronto Fringe Festival that summer, then was picked up by producer David Mirvish to play at the city’s 700-seat Panasonic Theatre he had just purchased – and Sankoff and Hein’s career as commercial musical-theatre creators was launched.

When the idea to write a show about what happened in and around Gander, Nfld., in 2001 was proposed to them shortly thereafter by Michael Rubinoff at Sheridan College, it could not have been a more ideal project for them.



They had seen how strangers from around the world bonded, with music, on Sept. 11, and seen how music played a role in bringing them together – and they had found the right aesthetic for such a story, having learned that a musical could be a true story set in our times, told with plenty of direct address, and that authenticity was as important to winning over an audience as craft in lyrics and lines.



Hein and Sankoff are making final adjustments to the musical ahead of a March 12 opening on Broadway.

DARREN CALABRESE/FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Armed with a \$12,000 grant from the Canada Council, they headed to Gander for Sept. 11, 2011, to interview locals and “come from aways” returning to commemorate the 10th anniversary.

Hein and Sankoff’s subsequent five-year journey – buzz-creating workshops on both sides of the border, a bidding war by commercial producers at a showcase in New York, record-breaking runs in San Diego, Seattle, Washington and Toronto – has been told in these pages before.

Now, the last chapter is about to be written as final adjustments are made in a preview period ahead of a March 12 opening.

As the statistics show, *Come from Away* may not make them rich. Canadians who have had what are referred to as “flops” in the harsh language of Broadway – such as Cliff Jones, whose *Rockabye Hamlet* closed in a week in 1976;

and Neil Bartram and Brian Hill, whose *The Story of My Life* did the same in 2009 – have advised the couple to just enjoy the ride.

In any case, the two have a bigger goal beyond making money, Hein says, “Especially now, it feels important to talk about welcoming refugees off planes, strangers into our communities.”

Yes – he’s finally won the argument about whether theatre can change the world.

Sankoff came around after meeting senior citizens who changed their minds on same-sex marriage after seeing *Wiccan Wedding*, and receiving letters from *Come from Away* audience members about how it’s inspired them to be better people.

“I still have my moments where I’m like, ‘It’s a drop in the bucket,’” Sankoff says. “But at least it’s a drop.”

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## Finding his stage

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Cross Examined

Written by [Elizabeth Raymer](#)

Posted Date: February 6, 2017

Michael Rubinoff went from a legal career to teaching theatre and producing the hit musical *Come From Away*.

Michael Rubinoff is ebullient. The hit musical that was his brainchild, *Come From Away*, is playing to sold-out audiences in Toronto, and it will soon open in previews on Broadway. And for this Toronto lawyer, the transition from a legal career to theatrical producer and associate dean of Sheridan College's Visual and Performing Arts programs in Oakville, Ont. has been a fortuitous one.



Photo: Brayden Swire

### Cross Examined - Michael Rubinoff



Greeting a reporter at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto's theatre district, where the show opened to rave reviews in November, Rubinoff introduces her to the press and public relations manager for Mirvish Productions for a brief tour of the theatre, which was recently renovated. The seats are all new, Randy Alldread points out, in traditional plush red (about 200 of the old ones were lost to allow for more legroom), the plaster cleaned and re-gilded.

Rubinoff is in his element here. The former real estate and entertainment lawyer was first bitten by the theatre bug as a youngster, attending *Les Miserables* with his mother in this very same theatre. He later directed a staging of *Blood Brothers* in his last year of law school at the University of Western Ontario ("I was fortunate to have my articling job lined up" during that busy year, he quips). After graduating from Western law in 2001 (he had also earned a B.A. in political science from the university), Rubinoff started his articles at Goodman and Carr in Toronto that September.

"9/11 happened on the second day of my articles at Goodman and Carr; the second day of my articles!" Rubinoff exclaims. He heard stories about the passengers who had landed at Newfoundland's Gander airport after their flights were diverted from New York, and who had been taken in by residents of Gander and surrounding towns, and "the outpouring of generosity. As a theatre producer, I knew the best way to

tell the story was through a musical — which is part of the DNA of Newfoundlanders.”

Parallel to his law career — with his father, M. Lloyd Rubinoff, in the latter’s real estate law practice in Thornhill, Ont., and later with Robins Appleby & Taub in Toronto — Rubinoff had been producing off-Broadway-type theatre in Toronto.

“I became the person who was doing off-Broadway plays in Toronto; I started to get a lot of calls from producers on Broadway asking about producing in Toronto. *Dog Sees God* was about the Peanuts gang in high school. This was in 2008 or 2009,” Rubinoff says. “It starred an incredible group of young actors, including Tatiana Maslany” of *Orphan Black*. Another play he produced was *Love, Loss, and What I Wore*, by Nora and Delia Ephron, which ran for four months at Toronto’s Panasonic Theatre and starred Mary Walsh.

“But it was always a challenging existence,” Rubinoff says. “The law is demanding, and I would say the theatre is equally demanding. I spent a lot of time getting into my office at 5 a.m., when it was quiet, then running off to a theatre at 7 p.m.” It was a “dual existence” that was gratifying but ultimately not sustainable.

The idea of a musical about the Gander experience percolated for many years, but “most people didn’t think it was a good idea.” Then, around the time Sheridan College came knocking on his door, Rubinoff saw a staging of *My Mother’s Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding*, by Canadian husband-and-wife team David Hein and Irene Sankoff, and went out to dinner with the couple. “A little while later they said, ‘We’d be interested in doing that,’” and *Come From Away* began to sprout wings.

Rubinoff had already started discussions with Sheridan College about joining as associate dean of the Visual and Performing Arts programs. “I knew that one of my objectives was developing an incubator for new musical products, and had committed to David [Hein] and Irene [Sankoff] that *Come From Away* would be the first,” he says. The Canadian Music Theatre Project, which incubated *Come From Away*, provides professional directors with a show to stage; they then work with Sheridan’s fourth-year Bachelor students in musical theatre. At Sheridan, the students first gave life to the roles through two workshops for *Come From Away*, beginning with a 45-minute exploratory workshop.

The play was mounted in November 2016, with script, music and lyrics by Sankoff and Hein, directed by Christopher Ashley and choreographed by Kelly Devine; Rubinoff was a producer and the creative consultant. After closing at the Royal Alex in January, *Come From Away* will open in previews on Broadway in February and officially open there in March.

Rubinoff seems to have found his niche. He says he loved practising as a lawyer, and finds his legal training still useful. “It serves me well in garnering respect in the entertainment business.” But leaving law for arts academia was a big jump.

“On Dec. 31, 2010, I worked my last day at Robins Appleby & Taub, and then walked into Sheridan,” he says. “It was an enormous transition, walking out of a law firm at York and Adelaide [in downtown Toronto], then walking into academia in Oakville. It was not something I imagined doing, although I should say I knew that perhaps some of my passions lay elsewhere.”

Sheridan was a place where he could maximize his passions, he says. “What I’m best at.” Rubinoff oversees seven programs there, in Arts and Performing Arts areas. “It’s been incredibly fulfilling to work with this exceptional group of faculty and students, and then to develop shows that go on to Broadway. It’s been a really amazing journey that through Sheridan, by developing this at school, and then being involved with Broadway producers [now] is an extraordinary thing. For me, it’s a dream come true.

“We all have different passions, backgrounds, experiences,” he says. “For me, it was the theatre. When somebody asks me ‘How do you identify success?’ I say, ‘Identifying your full potential.’ . . . For me, it’s

allowed me to realize my full potential. This is a very tiny piece of the world where I feel most comfortable in and able to excel in.”

The practice of law involves theatre, Rubinoff notes, and he says he wouldn't be surprised if the legal part of his career some day makes its way to the stage. “Names to be changed!” There are certainly many ideas there from his days as a lawyer, he says — and he doesn't regret any of them.

“I am so happy that I went to law school, that I practised. Now, when I reflect back, I spent four years working with my father, and in retrospect I think that was very special. I was very proud when I was called to the bar to be admitted to my father's profession. There may have been a few pangs of guilt [in leaving the practice] . . . but he's proud,” Rubinoff says, noting that his father was bringing his law team to see the show that afternoon. “Very rarely do we get a chance to understand what our parents do,” he points out, adding that his younger brother, Jonas, is now in practice with their father.

Rubinoff hasn't forgotten his roots, either. The Thornhill native who now lives in Toronto says he loved Western's law school, and London, Ont. (where Western is based). At law school, he served two years as the Legal Society president, running for office at the end of his first year. He even ran for political office on the “Education Party of Canada” ticket in 1997 (beating the Marxist-Leninist party, he points out with some pride). “It was a wonderful way to get to know London.”

Soon he will be involved with some projects for the Grand Theatre there. London has a good performing arts high school, H.B. Beal Secondary School, and three or so of its students join the program at Sheridan each year.

“I'm always an advocate of pursuing legal studies,” Rubinoff says. “You acquire a certain number of skills that will help you excel . . . on and off stage.

“I am waiting for the first number of Sheridan students under my tutelage to go on to law school,” he adds. “They may find their stage . . . in the profession of law.”



[Elizabeth Raymer](#)

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Come From Away, the musical about Gander hospitality on 9/11, is Broadway bound and its producers are hopeful it will strike all the right chords.

## Come From Away looks to connect with Broadway audiences

MARTIN KNELMAN

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Will New York be ready to embrace a musical about how Newfoundlanders welcomed and befriended passengers on flights diverted there because of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001?

On that notorious day, 38 flights scheduled to land in the United States went instead to Gander, where 6,500 passengers and crew members were warmly welcomed by the town's 10,000 residents.

Come From Away has been cheered by audiences on both sides of the border. After its sold-out eight-week run in Toronto at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, it heads for Broadway, where previews begin in mid-February and opening night is set for March 12.

This is a huge gamble that the producers, including David Mirvish, are risking.

Mirvish is playing a key role to finance the New York opening, in partnership with the show's lead producer, Junkyard Dog Productions.

The cost for opening a musical on Broadway ranges from \$12-million to \$15-million (U.S.), or \$16-million to \$20-million Canadian.

Now, the big question is: Can a heartwarming story set in Canada achieve hit status on the Great White Way, where cutthroat competition is normal?

“This has been an extremely crowded season for musicals,” says Elizabeth Bradley, a professor in the drama department of New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, who moved from Canada to the United States 15 years ago. She says there are 19 new musicals in the running.

“The question producers have to be asking is whether or not there are enough people with significant disposable income to support all these shows,” she says.

Bradley grew up in Toronto and had experience in producing and marketing before she was named CEO in 1991 of what was then called the O’Keefe Centre, now the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts.

“New musicals without star names will have to work even harder to succeed at the box office. That is the challenge for those opening before April 27, the deadline for 2017 Tony nominations.”

Still, Bradley, who has seen *Come From Away* and witnessed its effect on an audience, thinks it will do well.

“Opening after the election of Donald Trump, I feel this show has more chance of success than it would have if it had opened under [Barack] Obama. Working in its favour at this point is the profound hunger of the audience for two things: first, any positive narrative of substance; second, a story that depicts Americans in a positive light. *Come From Away* really lands on those two points. And there’s another factor that helps: Justin Trudeau’s international fame and glamour are making Canada seem cool.”

Bradley says New Yorkers have an appetite for a humane, “feel good” story – especially one based in fact – and the passengers who were stranded in Gander provide an affirming legacy. “*Come From Away* hits a zeitgeist sweet spot. I am optimistic it will run successfully on Broadway.”

Des McAnuff, former artistic director of the Stratford Festival and director of several hit Broadway musicals, has not seen *Come From Away*, but says it has great buzz in the New York theatre world.

“All I can tell you is there is great excitement around here about this show,” says McAnuff, a dual citizen and Tony winner as best director for *Big River* (1985) and *The Who’s Tommy* (1993). He also directed *Jersey Boys*, which won the 2006 Tony for best musical.

The 2017 Tony Awards will be handed out on June 11 at the Radio City Music Hall in Manhattan.

“I hear nothing but good things about *Come From Away*,” McAnuff says. “The fact that it’s about Newfoundland and Canada, with that unique perspective, is good news. People are really looking forward to seeing it. It’s one of the shows people are talking about now. The others are *Dear Evan Hansen* and *A Bronx Tale*.” (Both have opened to good reviews.)

One reason for optimism is the track record of the show’s director, Christopher Ashley. He had previously staged the Broadway productions of *Memphis* – winner of four 2010 Tony awards, including best musical – as well as another prize-winner, *The Rocky Horror Show*. And at the Kennedy Center in Washington, Ashley directed revivals of two celebrated Stephen Sondheim shows – *Sweeney Todd* and *Merrily We Roll Along*.

“Not since *Mamma Mia!* have I seen a response like the one we got from our audience at *Come From Away*,” Mirvish says of the musical based on ABBA songs that opened in Toronto in 2000 and ran for five years. “It’s clear this new show has the potential to connect with big audiences.”

But even Mirvish admits: “Nobody tells New York what’s good and what isn’t.”

In Toronto, it did connect with audiences. According to John Karastamatis, communications director for Mirvish Productions, *Come From Away* set a box-office record in a certain category – shows that played for eight weeks or fewer in the long history of the Royal Alex.

Not counting the invitational opening night, every available seat on sale for 64 performances at the beautifully renovated historic theatre was bought.

Doing the math, I estimated that at regular ticket prices (including a select number of more expensive premium seats), the box office take was likely more than \$8-million.

The conception of *Come From Away* goes back to Michael Rubinoff, a lawyer. Rubinoff had been recruited by Sheridan College to become associate dean of visual and performing arts, with the objective of

establishing an incubator for developing new musicals.

After seeing My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding, Rubinoff got in touch with the play's writers – the Canadian-born married couple David Hein and Irene Sankoff. The three of them had a three-hour dinner, during which Rubinoff told Hein and Sankoff that he was looking for writers to create a musical.

Come From Away was the first show Rubinoff wanted to do at Sheridan College. He asked Hein and Sankoff to write the book, music and lyrics. They had been in New York on 9/11. Hein had a cousin who had been in one of the Twin Towers that day – and survived.

Credits for the show give the names of 40 producers, including individuals and organizations – listed in order of how much they invested. The minimum amount to qualify for the list was \$50,000. The top producers listed have invested heavily and Mirvish was high on the list.

With the help of a Canada Council grant, Hein and Sankoff went to Gander for the 10th anniversary – Sept. 11, 2011 – of New York's darkest day. The people of Gander were forthcoming and engaging; Hein and Sankoff stayed for almost a month to absorb their stories.

That was the start of what became a long and winding road.

Along the way, evolving versions of Come From Away were seen by audiences at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ont., East Haddam, Conn., (where Annie and Man of La Mancha had started), New York (at a festival of new musicals), Seattle and Washington (at a venue where the stage was too small to accommodate the show's set).

Perhaps the most memorable performances were the two (matinee and evening) at a 3,000-seat ice arena in Gander on Oct. 29, 2016 (prior to its Nov. 23 Toronto opening). The Gander ticket price was \$20 and all the proceeds went to local charities.

Whether this journey ends with a Broadway hit or a Broadway flop, the saga of how it was conceived and developed is a classic demonstration of the adage that there's no business like show business. The backstage tale has turned out to be as astonishing as the on-stage plot about the bond between Newfoundlanders and their surprise guests.

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## The year in theatre: A versatile and creative 2016

From non-traditional performances to remounts of classics to traditional heartbreakers, our critics assess the year.



A Line in the Sand with Morgan David Jones and Danny Ghantous. (DAHLIA KATZ)

By **KAREN FRICKER**  
**CARLY MAGA** Theatre Critics  
 Tues., Dec. 27, 2016

In the broad scheme of things, 2016 was a tough year. But we were impressed with the breadth of talent, versatility, creativity and intelligence found in Toronto's theatre scene.

There were brand new non-traditional performance pieces, revelatory remounts of classic plays and traditional period heartbreakers; plus any year that includes a big Canadian Broadway-bound musical is a success.

These are our favourite 2016 productions, in chronological order.

### Salt-Water Moon

Factory Theatre's Naked Season began 2016 with a sleeper [hit](#) in David French's 1984 two-hander, the third play in his Mercer family cycle and a well-trodden text famous for its 1920s rural Newfoundland setting. No one was screaming for another production, but this turned out to be a pivotal moment for both Factory and director Ravi Jain. Factory proved its "stripped-down" theme to be an intoxicating approach to old plays, especially in combination with its mandate to employ artists of colour. And Jain, artistic director of indie company Why Not Theatre, established himself as not only a master of new plays and non-traditional forms but of breathing new life into well-known stories. With a cast of Kawa Ada and Mayko Nguyen (and singer Ania Soul reading the script's stage directions), *Salt-Water Moon* was one of the most moving and beautiful pieces of theatre on a Toronto stage in 2016.

### A Line in the Sand

Factory's winning streak continued with this crystal-clear [production](#) of Guillermo Verdecchia and Marcus Youssef's 1995 anti-war play, directed by Nigel Shawn Williams. Through the allegorical story of an encounter between a Canadian soldier and a Palestinian teenager in the Qatari desert, the authors question Canada's role in international military interventions, specifically, Operation Desert Storm. Twenty-one years later, their scathing critique of the ethos of "peacekeeping" remains as acute as ever. Williams' approach, like Jain's with *Salt-Water Moon*, made the Factory season's

minimalist imperative part of the force of its meaning: the action took place on a square sandpit with the audience on two sides and the sand standing in for most of the objects in the play. The trio of actors all making their Factory debuts — Morgan David Jones, John Cleland and final-year Ryerson Theatre School student Danny Ghantous — were indelible.

#### Botticelli in the Fire & Sunday in Sodom

Playwright Jordan Tannahill saw a parallel between himself and the subject matter of one half of this Canadian Stage [double bill](#), the 15th-century painter Sandro Botticelli: two promising artists with major commissions that could be their undoing. This was the first debut with a major institution for Tannahill, celebrated in the indie world. Luckily, things went better for him than Botticelli: these plays satiated audience tastes while pushing the art form and his own practice forward. Directed by Matjash Mrozewski, *Botticelli in the Fire* was lush and extravagant. Under Estelle Shook, *Sunday in Sodom* was a lesson in restriction and stillness, led by the extraordinary performance of Valerie Buhagiar as Lot's Wife, who balanced the humanity of a mother in a time of war with the physical constraints of a pillar of salt. The result was a surprising evening of art that hinted at styles and forms to come.

#### All My Sons

Anyone who doubts that theatrical naturalism can still be totally gripping clearly didn't see Martha Henry's [revival](#) of Arthur Miller's modern tragedy at the Stratford Festival. It's a brilliantly wrought piece of dramatic writing, the story of a family ruptured from within by suppressed lies in the aftermath of the Second World War. While ostensibly the story of a fallen patriarch — Joe Keller (Joseph Ziegler), a factory owner tried but not convicted for selling cracked cylinder heads to the military, whose suspected culpability haunts him and the whole family — it was Lucy Peacock as wife Kate and Tim Campbell as son Chris who owned this production. Casting Chris's girlfriend Ann as black and the Kellers' neighbours as also of colour was arguably Henry's one deviation from real-life plausibility, but it opened up the play's consideration of the American dream and offered plum roles to others in the Stratford ensemble.

#### The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God

Short, sharp and hilarious. The briefest [production](#) at the Shaw Festival this year was its most inventive and most acutely political. The festival commissioned playwright Lisa Codrington, who is black, to wrangle with George Bernard Shaw's 1932 short story, in which an African girl rejects missionary tutelage and wanders the forest in a quest for religious truth. Codrington turned the story's problem — an old white guy ventriloquizing a woman of colour — into a meta-satire by having GBS try to hijack the play, only to be kicked off the stage by the Black Girl. Director Ravi Jain (what a year he's had!) brought his background in clowning and physical theatre to a riotous, 50-minute-long lunchtime production that let its diverse cast loose to play. In a contentious season for Shaw in terms of representation of difference, *Black Girl* was a high point, taking Codrington's career to a new level and offering the electrically talented Natasha Mumba the perfect platform for her festival debut.

#### A Doll's House

Debates about how to handle the classics — keep them in their original time periods or update to explore their relevance in more immediate terms — will forever rage and Daniel Brooks' contemporary [staging](#) of Ibsen's 1879 drama for Soulpepper divided Toronto's critics. But we loved his risky approach, setting the play in a coldly contemporary condo, with Katherine Gauthier's flighty, fractious Nora dressed up like a yoga mom and Christopher Morris's banker Torvald straight off Bay Street. These stereotypes were mobilized to explore the continuing relevance of the play's theme of women trapped in gender and class roles; the latter brought home in the daring choice to cast breakout Nigeria-born actress Oyin Oladejo as Nora's less privileged friend Kristine. Under expert direction and embracing the contemporary cadence of Frank McGuinness's translation, this cast dug deep, taking the audience on a harrowing psychological journey.

#### Father Comes Home From the Wars

In 2016, Toronto theatre maintained a strong showing of new work from Canadian artists, older plays from the country's canon and trusted standbys from the U.S. and Europe. The best example of contemporary American theatre in the hands of Toronto artists came in Soulpepper Theatre's [production](#) of Suzan-Lori Parks' trilogy *Father Comes Home From the Wars*. A strong ensemble under Weyni Mengesha's direction translated every bit of Parks' dense, complicated portrayal of "freedom" in all of its forms through the Odyssey-like story of Hero, a slave striving for autonomy during the Civil War. It was filled with genuine surprises, both sobering and joyful.

#### Bunny

Hannah Moscovitch's first new play after she won the prestigious Donald Windham-Sandy M. Campbell Literature Prize (worth \$150,000 U.S.) in March could not have served as better proof of her worthiness of such international accolades. *Bunny* [premiered](#) in August at the Stratford Festival, introducing late-summer theatregoers to Sorrel, personified beautifully by Maev Beaty in a production filled with empathy and honesty by director Sarah Garton Stanley. Inspired by Victorian romance novels read as a child, Moscovitch tells of Sorrel's evolution from girl to woman through her sexual relationships with men, while subverting the moralistic stereotypes those novels project by giving Sorrel an objective that falls outside of romantic, professional or child-bearing desires. *Bunny* was funny, sad, morally challenging and unafraid of its sexiness: a play with its roots in the 1800s unabashedly made in 2016.

#### Mouthpiece

So many narratives in pop culture feel obsessed with figuring out what's happening inside a woman's mind; just take the unfortunate title of the John Patrick Shanley world premiere Toronto nabbed in 2015, *A Woman Is a Secret*. Well, hopefully no more, since Amy Nostbakken and Norah Sadava of Quote Unquote Collective solved that mystery with *Mouthpiece*, a theatrical [exploration](#) of a young woman's mind on the day of her mother's death. Nostbakken and Sadava's demanding and precise style of physical movement and vocal performance was virtuosic; and their honesty in reckoning with what being a feminist means in 2016 was funny, anger-inducing, yet therapeutic. Though it premiered in 2015 in Why Not Theatre's RISER project

(winning two Dora Awards), that small run got sufficient attention to earn a cross-Canada tour and a remount with Nightwood Theatre at Buddies in Bad Times.

### Come From Away

It's one of the most uplifting Canadian entertainment stories of the year. Husband-and-wife team Irene Sankoff and David Hein, prompted by Sheridan College musical theatre supremo Michael Rubinoff, embarked on a creative journey five years ago to craft a show about the grounding on Sept. 11 of 38 jumbo jets in Gander, Newfoundland, temporarily doubling the town's population of 6,500. Sankoff and Hein crafted a strong ensemble story of community, hope and resilience, and road-tested it in co-productions with three American theatres. Its Canadian premiere on Nov. 23 lifted the roof off the Royal Alexandra Theatre, and the Mirvish organization had to add performances and standing-room tickets to cope with demand for the limited Toronto run. We can't be sure what big, bad New York will make of Come From Away. But this big dose of Canadian goodness may be just what the bruised American psyche needs right now.

This story has been edited from an earlier version that incorrectly named Morgan David Jones.

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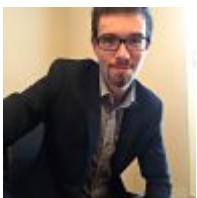


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Both masterful as musical theatre and profoundly deep in soul, [Come From Away](#), the new musical now playing at Toronto's [Royal Alexandra Theatre](#), is a great night at the theatre, and the best show Toronto's seen this year.

The new musical also has a special connection to the Oakville community. The show was workshopped here in 2012 at Sheridan College and launched the rapidly growing [Canadian Musical Theatre Project](#) by Michael Rubinoff. The Oakville audience was the first to see it, and helped shaped the musical into what it is today.

But since leaving here, the show has travelled to sold out runs in Seattle, Los Angeles, Washington DC and Gander, Newfoundland – the town that inspired the show's story. *Come From Away* has yet to have an unsold seat, and with good reason. Once you've been, it's hard not to encourage your friends to see it too.

Now the full production is on stage in Toronto before moving to Broadway in February, arriving after three years of workshops and out-of-town tryouts. Once the show opens in New York, it will be a serious contender for the prestigious Best Musical Tony Award.

If it does win the Tony, it would be the first Canadian show ever to win a prize for best production of any kind. But that's easier said than done, with fierce competition from two popular opponents: *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812* and *Dear Evan Hansen*.

But having seen *Come From Away* myself? I say it has a serious chance.



Jenn Colllela and the cast of *Come From Away*.  
(Mirvish Productions).

The musical tells the story of redirected airplanes from the American airspace when it was closed on September 11th, 2001. 38 jet planes were sent to the rural town of Gander, Newfoundland, and the town's population of 7,000 doubled in one day.

What follows is the remarkable true story about a town in eastern Canada that stopped everything to accommodate the lost travellers. From a bus drivers strike to the first week of school, even the local Tim

Hortons shut down (!) while Gander brought in thousands of "Come From Aways," showing compassion and generosity to strangers from around the world.

The result is a stirring and cathartic musical that moves with tremendous power and speed. The 100-minute play depicts a diverse community with several stories effectively. It's always brisk to build suspense, but calm enough to avoid being confusing. Sitting in the theatre, you feel such joy of the human spirit the audience is infused with rousing pride.

Balancing dark and uplifting, *Come From Away* is something special. Critical and commercial success is rare in the world of live theatre, more so than other kinds of entertainment. This is more true in Canada, where the thought of a Broadway run is like a dog playing piano; not an impossible idea, but highly unlikely.

In fact, there's only been two such cases in the last 25 years. The first was 2005's *The Drowsy Chaperone*, a Toronto musical that lost at the Tony Awards and didn't turn a profit. The other was Stratford Festival's *Jesus Christ Superstar* in 2011, which closed in just three months. Both saw positive reviews, but ultimately little audience interest in New York.

The good news is, *Come From Away* appears to have the right ingredients to make the show both unique and intriguing. Hopefully, the competitive Broadway market will embrace its soaring individuality.

Twelve courageous actors create one of the tightest ensembles who bring dozens of locals and strangers to life. They move deftly between characters, sometimes switching in seconds, and their vulnerability shows the colossal talent of the cast.



The cast of *Come From Away*. (Mirvish Productions).

Perhaps the most delicate element is that balance between slick Canadian humour and the sensitive, tragic history from 9/11. This is where the careful, expert direction from [Christopher Ashley](#) shines. Ashley knows exactly when and where to play every idea and emotion across the diverse spread. His staging is wonderful.

Ashley's team of designers bring their A-game to give a bold, exciting look to the stage, with production value rarely seen in Toronto theatre. Beowulf Boritt's charming sets, Toni-Leslie James' distinguished costumes, Howell Binkley's robust lighting and Kelly Devine's dynamic choreography all contribute to the show's rousing energy.

And finally, there's Canadian husband and wife duo [Irene Sankoff and David Hein](#), the show's writers for the book, music, and lyrics. While the music is far more impactful than the (occasionally tepid) lyrics, songs and score are integrated seamlessly into the story. It flows with ease and an Eastern Canadian soul.

August Eriksmoen's orchestrations certainly help, but the killer six-piece band rocks the house with a thunderous world and folk score that captures a genre rarely popularized. I'm from New Brunswick myself, and all night it felt reminiscent of home.

Home – that’s the source of the show’s beating heart. In a season with harsh political tones and the fear of who belongs where, *Come From Away* reminds us that opening our doors builds up our world. The only connection that matters in any time – peace or crisis – is that we are all human. It’s a message that comes with a dynamic relevance.

If you are interested in tickets, the show is close to sold out for the remaining seven weeks of it’s run. Mirvish has announced there are fewer than 10,000 tickets left, and there are no more subscriber or group discounts available due to demand.

But the hassle and the price is worth it. Don’t miss this spellbinding theatrical achievement before it heads to New York – *Come From Away* is one of the best original Canadian plays of our time. Sitting in the theatre, you’ll find everyone’s here to come together in a groundbreaking way.

**Come From Away**

**4 out of 4 Stars**

Rated 10+, 100 minutes, Musical History Comedy.

Directed by Christopher Ashley.

Starring [Jenn Colella](#), [Joel Hatch](#), [Chad Kimball](#), and Petrina Bromley.

Also with Geno Carr, Rodney Hicks, Kendra Kassbaum, Lee Macdougall, Caesar Samayoa, Q. Smith, Astrid van Weiren, and Sharon Wheatley.

Now Playing at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, 260 King Street West, Toronto, ON.

Runs until January 8th, 2017. Tickets at [www.mirvish.com](http://www.mirvish.com), range \$65-\$235.




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However, the show was in San Diego at Christopher Ashley’s La Jolla Playhouse – it did not play in Los Angeles



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# >>> Review: Come From Away tells an energetic, heartwarming tale about 9/11

Newfoundland hospitality is on display in this Broadway-bound musical

BY **JON KAPLAN**

NOVEMBER 25, 2016 5:13 PM

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Matthew Murphy

## Come From Away

**COME FROM AWAY** by Irene Sankoff and David Hein (Mirvish Productions and others). At the Royal Alexandra Theatre (260 King West). Runs to January 8. \$35-\$150. See [listing](#). 416-872-1212, [mirvish.com](http://mirvish.com). Rating: **NNNN**

Need a show to lift your spirits? Head over to **Come From Away**, an upbeat, inspirational and often rollicking demonstration of the hospitality of Newfoundlanders.

Based on the true story of how the residents of Gander provided food, lodging and warmth to the passengers of 38 planes forced to land at their airport immediately following 9/11, **Irene Sankoff** and **David Hein**'s musical is worth celebrating.

A Canadian show developed locally at Sheridan College with the help of **Michael Rubinoff** and heading to Broadway next year, it features a finely tuned ensemble of performers, backed up by first-rate musicians under **Ian Eisendrath**. The production gets a magical staging by director **Christopher Ashley** and choreographer **Kelly Devine**.

I wasn't drawn in right away, despite the lively opening number. I found the jokes corny, the characterizations broad. But when we met the passengers who land unexpectedly in Gander for reasons they don't yet know, the details of characterization grew sharper; natives and visitors all became more real.

The cast of 12 morph into dozens of characters, each actor creating memorable figures we believe in and care about.

There's **Petrina Bromley's** Bonnie, in charge of the local SPCA and worried about the animals on the planes; **Jenn Colella's** Beverley, a pilot concerned about her passengers as well as her family in the States; **Rodney Hicks** as a black American dubious about the local hospitality; **Kendra Kassebaum** as the town's only TV reporter; **Chad Kimball** and **Caesar Samayoa** as a gay couple, both named Kevin, uncertain about how unsophisticated backwater Canadians will react to them; **Lee MacDougall** and **Sharon Wheatley** as passengers drawn to each other, despite their differences; **Astrid Van Wieren** as a schoolteacher with a big heart; **Q. Smith** as a New York mother anxious about her son; **Joel Hatch** as Gander's multitasking mayor; and **Geno Carr** as its town policeman.

There are many fine, emotionally true moments, among them Van Wieren and Smith commiserating as mothers of firemen; the treatment of an Egyptian (Samayoa) who's looked on suspiciously because people think him a Muslim; different cultures who don't speak the same language communicating by means of a Bible; and Colella's feminist song about how she became a pilot and what the legacy of September 11 means for her.

This is a true ensemble show: there's hardly a song that doesn't become a group number, with everyone contributing to the storytelling.

And speaking of contributing, pay attention to **Beowulf Boritt's** design, which features a barnboard backdrop and a forest of trees with roots that spill over the stage into the audience; two of the trees, raggedly chopped off, suggest the World Trade Center's twin towers.

Sadly, the one aspect of the show that doesn't succeed is its tunes. While the lyrics are strong and the plot engaging, in many cases the music doesn't stand out. There are exceptions, such as the bar number where several visitors become honorary Newfoundlanders, and a multicultural prayer scene in the midst of this turbulent world, but there's little else that's memorable.

Even so, *Come From Away*, enthusiastically performed and splendidly staged, will bring you to your feet for the curtain call, applauding along with the rest of the excited audience.

🔖 Tags **Geno Carr, Irene Sankoff, Kelly Devine, Q. Smith, Kendra Kassebaum, Ian Eisendrath, Christopher Ashley, Jenn Colella, Mirvish Productions, Caesar Samayoa, Chad Kimball, Sharon Wheatley, Rodney Hicks, Lee MacDougall, Joel Hatch, David Hein, Astrid Van Wieren, Michael Rubinoff, Sheridan College, Petrina Bromley**

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REVIEW

## Come From Away: Heart-warming musical lives up to the hype

[J. Kelly Nestruck](#)

The Globe and Mail

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- Title Come From Away
- Starring Petrina Bromley, Jenn Colella, Chad Kimball, Caesar Samayoa
- Venue Royal Alexandra Theatr
- City Toronto

Here's a stop-over you will not want to miss: Go see Come From Away at the newly restored Royal Alexandra theatre in Toronto before it heads to New York.

Heart-warming and human-sized, this musical set in Gander, Nfld., in the week after Sept. 11, 2001, will remind you that, when things are at their worst, many people rise to their best.

Torontonians Irene Sankoff and David Hein wrote the book, lyrics and music for the Broadway-bound show – which has had tremendous buzz surrounding it since its first workshop at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ont., buzz that has turned out to be entirely justified.

It is based on hundreds of hours of interviews the artists conducted with the people from Gander and surrounding towns – as well as Americans, Brits, Egyptians, Moldovans and folks of just about every other nationality who were stranded when 38 planes were diverted to Newfoundland after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, effectively doubling the population.

With conversational lyrics and direct-address dialogue, Come From Away has the feel of a documentary play – and the look, too, with 12 actors (nine Americans; three Canadians) impressively switching back and forth between playing Newfoundlanders and come-from-aways (the local expression for non-Newfoundlanders).

Designer Beowulf Boritt's set brings a big-budget bucolic twist to what is essentially a group of chairs on a turntable that director Christopher Ashley expertly rearranges to evoke planes, legion halls, churches – and a school bus travelling down a highway full of moose.

The cathartic, emotional story told in this way is one of terror transformed by altruism, fear morphing into fellowship through simple acts of kindness from strangers – whether locals flooding the Lion's club with toilet paper, a teacher (a hearty Astrid Van Wieren) telling bad jokes to cheer up a stranded mother worried about her son, or an SPCA worker (bona fide Newfoundlander Petrina Bromley, as honest and grounded an actor as you will find anywhere) defying police orders to get into cargo bays and feed the animals.

Despite 9/11 being always in the background, *Come From Away* is a funny show, too – very funny, in fact, with much of the humour coming from how little the “plane people” know about where they have landed.

Culture clashes and fish-out-of-water stories have been long been the subjects of classic American musical theatre – from Rodgers and Hammerstein staples such as *South Pacific* and *The King and I* to Trey Parker and Matt Stone’s *The Book of Mormon*.

What is different and perhaps mostly noticeably Canadian about Sankoff and Hein’s musical is that this is the first I have seen exploring this dramatic zone where neither side is given short shrift or “othered.” While Newfoundland is portrayed as quirky and charming and filled with cod-kissing rituals as it is in real life, the Gander residents are real and struggling with the historic events unfolding elsewhere like everyone else; unlike everyone else, however, they can do something other than just watch the images on television.

Indeed, *Come From Away* breaks furthest from musical theatre tradition in having two collective protagonists: The CFAs and the Islanders.

The show’s powerful point about humans coming together is echoed in its form – an ensemble uniting to tell as many stories as possible.

The show has only one solo – Jenn Colella as American Airlines pilot Beverley Bass, singing about her love affair with flight, her fight to become the first female pilot of a commercial airliner – and the day her passion was turned into a weapon. An extraordinarily evocative actress, Colella broke 1,244 hearts with this on the sold-out opening night at the Royal Alexandra.

*Come From Away* may be a celebration of humanity – but it is not starry-eyed. Sankoff and Hein do an especially nuanced job of writing about what it was like to be a Muslim in those circumstances, actors Caesar Samayoa and Colella interacting in the musical’s most complex moment, one where otherness is not overcome and cultures conflict in an impossible way.

The accessible story, strong emotional core and gorgeous songwriting should not distract from how original and smart this gem of a musical is.

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# BWW Review: COME FROM AWAY Is A Loving Tribute To The Best In All Of Us

November 23 10:20 PM 2016



by Alan Henry

BROADWAYWORLD TV

VIDEO: Bernadette Peters Shares Voice Warm-Up Ritual on LIVE

Progress bar and play button icon



5 out of 5 stars

**Come From Away** is not a musical about the September 11th terrorist attacks - if anything it is the exact opposite. **Come From Away** is a musical about all that is good in people - compassion, care, love, acceptance, equality, and treating others

with kindness. Truly, it is a musical written for now.

What began as a short workshop in Toronto at Sheridan College's Canadian Musical Theatre Project (the initiative spearheaded by Michael Rubinoff creating new Canadian works) has become an incredible full scale, Broadway-bound production.

Written by David Hein and Irene Sankoff, the musical tells the tale of the 38 planes and their occupants which were diverted to Gander, Newfoundland following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

When passengers were finally permitted off the plane and taken to makeshift shelters in town, they didn't know what to expect. Many didn't speak English, and many had never been to Canada let alone a town like Gander.

But they were received, for a lack of a better phrase, like family. The town's population nearly doubled. Friendships were formed, romances ensued, and the greater good inside each of us prevailed.

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**Come From Away**, if anything, is a tribute to the people who changed 7000 lives over the course of five days. It is also the best new, original musical I've ever seen.

**Come From Away** is an ensemble piece - with the company practically on stage the entire time. Stage veteran **Jenn Colella** has the one solo standout moment with her moving ballad "Me And The Sky" which tells the story of the first American female flight captain Beverley Bass.

The company also features **Petrina Bromley, Geno Carr, Rodney Hicks, Chad Kimball, Lee MacDougall, Caesar Samayoa, Q. Smith, Astrid Van Wieren, Sharon Wheatley, Josh Breckenridge, Susan Dunstan, Tamika Lawrence, and Tony LePage.**

**Kendra Kassebaum** also stands out as first day on the job reporter Janice, and **Joel Hatch** as the most approachable and loveable Mayor you'll likely ever encounter. (The actual Mayor of Gander was in attendance and the characterization is incredibly accurate.)

**Kelly Devine's** choreography perfectly inhabits the world of Newfoundland and blends it with musical theatre staging. The production is brilliant directed by **Christopher Ashley** who perfectly paces the drama while bringing enough comedy to the piece to keep it from being overwhelming.

Sankoff and Hein's score is enchanting, and full of songs that will stay with you long after you leave the theatre.

You'll laugh, you'll cry, and you'll be a better person when you leave the theatre. Don't miss **Come From Away.**

**Come From Away plays Toronto through January 8th only, and begins performances on Broadway February 18th. For tickets and more information visit ComeFromAway.com.**

**Buy tickets now**  
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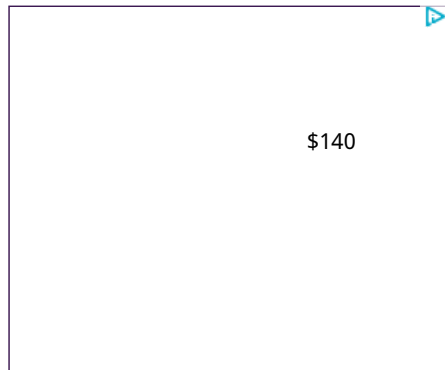


TV: Behind the Scenes w/ COME FROM AWAY in D.C.

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Alan is the Toronto Senior Editor and Social Media Manager at BroadwayWorld.com. Alan has been with BroadwayWorld since 2013 and became the Toronto Senior Editor ([read more...](#))



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# ON STAGE

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## Come From Away: A step-by-step guide to building a Broadway play in Canada

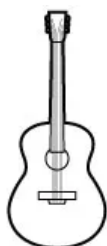
ALISON BROVERMAN & BRICE HALL, SPECIAL TO NATIONAL POST | November 22, 2016 9:39 AM ET  
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On September 11, 2001, two airplanes flew into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, a tragedy that devastated the world. That day, flights across North America were re-routed to make emergency landings. As a result, the Gander International Airport in Newfoundland opened its runways to 38 planes carrying 6,122 passengers and 473 crew members.

The people of Gander showed these unexpected guests, whom they called the “come from aways,” a warm welcome that brought comfort and hope on one of the darkest days in recent history.

15 years later, those stories have been brought to life in *Come From Away*, a new musical by the married writing team David and Irene Hein.

### HOW TO BUILD A BROADWAY PLAY. THE CANADIAN EDITION



1x

#### Guitar

“I’m still playing the same guitar I played during My Mother’s Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding and it’s what we wrote *Come From Away* on (whereas most musical theatre writers compose on piano).”  
 —David Hein



1x

#### Maple cookies from the airport Duty Free

“Everyone loves maple cookies, and it’s nice to bring a bit of Canada to the first day of rehearsal.”  
 —David Hein



1x

#### A baby

David and Irene’s daughter Molly was born in 2013, right smack in the middle of the development of *Come From Away*. “She and the show have kind of grown up together as siblings.”  
 —Irene Hein



1x

#### Molly’s Owl

“We have a stuffed owl from Ikea that Molly loves. It’s a little bit of constancy, along with us, in her life. Also, even though we haven’t had to yet, there are lots of backup owls at Ikea just in case...”  
 —Irene Hein



2x

#### iPhones

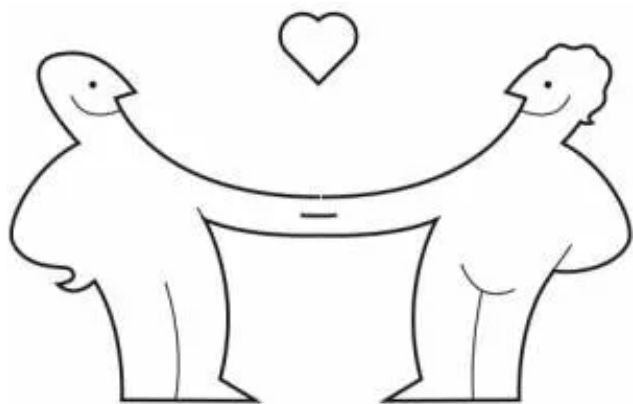
“We learned quickly in Newfoundland that we couldn’t write fast enough to take notes in our interviews and that we had to record everything on our phones.”  
 —David Hein

#### Rules for marriage and collaboration

“We never talk about the show when we’re tired, angry or hungry. And we try not to do it while we’re lying in our bed or early in the morning.” —David

#### Warning to other writers

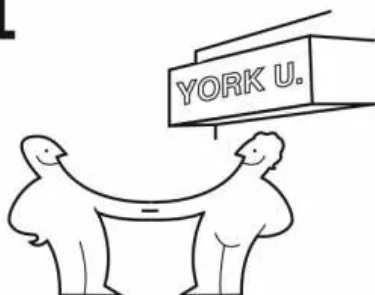
“Like furniture, this development path may not fit your show and is likely impossible to replicate.”  
 —David



“Sometimes we do a submission process – we write a scene, and we write what kind of feedback we’re looking for and the other person can read it and respond. That way it really focuses the work.”

– Irene

**1**



### Meet the love/creative partner of your life

“We met on the first day of university. We disagree on the details: Irene thinks it was a barbecue, I think it was a pancake breakfast,” says David. “How could it be a pancake breakfast?” demands Irene. “It was the first day – you get dropped off in the afternoon!”

**2**

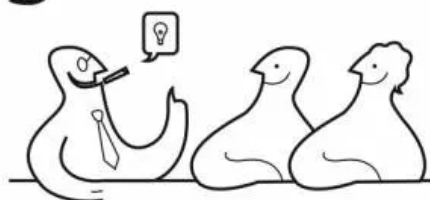


### Make time for one another by writing a Fringe show

“We realized we never saw each other and we missed each other, so we decided to write a Fringe show together so we could spend the summer together,” says David.

That show was the autobiographical *My Mother’s Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding*. On the third day of its sold-out Fringe run, David Mirvish saw it and immediately decided to include it in his upcoming season.

**3**



### Befriend producers with good ideas

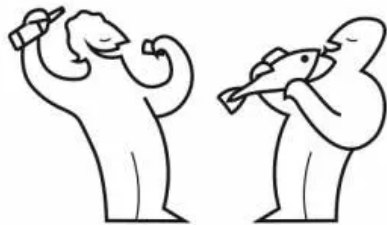
“Michael Rubinoff came to see *My Mother’s Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding* at the Panasonic. He invited us out for dinner, and he was becoming the associate dean at **Sheridan College**, and was starting the Canadian Musical Theatre Project. He eventually asked, ‘have you heard this story about what happened in Gander (on 9/11), and do you think it would make a good musical?’” says David. “Full disclosure,” adds Irene, “We weren’t his first choice! He won’t tell us who else he asked. No one else thought it was a good idea. But we lived (in New York), we’d lived it.”

In 2001, the Heins were living in an international residence in New York while Irene was attending acting school. “It was this community of people from all around the world, all waiting for news, all scared and worried,” says David. “And what we remember is



that a friend of ours sat down at the piano and we all came together around this piano. Music helped us come together as a community – so there was something that clearly resonated with us about what happened in Newfoundland, which is people from around the world coming together as a community, and using the arts to come together.”

## 4



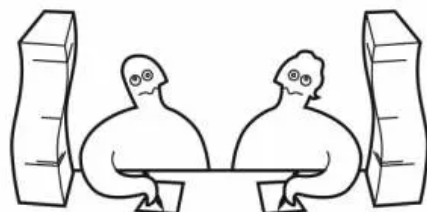
### Research (and get screeched in)

“The 10th anniversary was coming up, and we found out there was going to be a commemoration ceremony in Newfoundland and all the pilots, passengers and flight crew were coming back to commemorate the friendships they had made – people had fallen in love there, they had changed their lives. We started interviewing people on these four or five hour long interviews and made friends and then they invited us back to their house, and it just became this amazing experience where we saw a lot of the generosity that the come from aways did back in 2001.

There was this incredible pancake breakfast they had where the come from aways – everyone who had returned – was behind the table making pancakes and feeding the people there as a way of giving back. I think that really infused a lot of what we’ve been trying to do, right up until the Gander concert last month,” says David.

Beulah (Cooper, a Gander resident and volunteer) invited us to the legion to get screeched in, and we got screeched in with captain Beverly Bass and Nick and Diane who’d met and fallen in love there.”

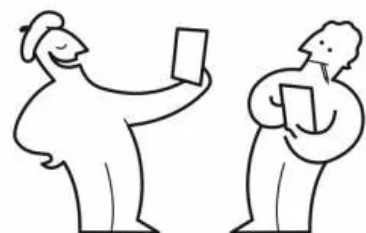
## 5



### Get writing

“What we came back with was hundreds of stories and all of these people we’d fallen in love with. We’d fallen in love with Newfoundland, we wanted to tell every single story and we came back and we went up to this cabin in Northern Ontario and just spread out everything, all the newspaper articles we’d found, all the interviews we’d transcribed...and tried to find out how are we going to tell 1600 stories in a 100 minute musical with 12 actors?’ And it was a real challenge. So we’ve had to amalgamate some characters, sometimes one person’s words come out of someone else’s mouth, but we’ve tried to really stay true to all of those interviews.”

## 6

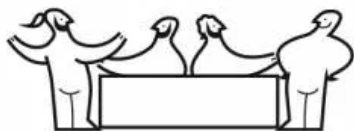


### Work with what you’ve got

“And we started the first day at **Sheridan** with hundreds of pages of script and the characters hadn’t even gotten off the planes. We had so much material....And we workshopped the show in two countries at the same time with students Skyping and Facebooking each other – it was this amazing show about cross-border collaboration done through cross-border collaboration.”

## 7

**COME  
FROM  
AWAY**  
A MUSICAL

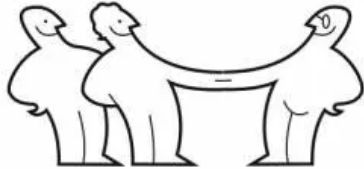


### Put the show on the market

“We were encouraged to go to the NAMT Festival in New York City, which is a sort of shopping market for theatre producers across the world. We were just happy to be there. What happens is you present the show and then you go stand outside and wait for people to come talk to you – and everyone came to talk to us! We were there with an eight-week-old. And we joked about it – you get to introduce your show and we said ‘and if you’d like to meet a baby afterwards, come talk to us!’ But yeah, we felt crazy – I remember Irene submitting the script two days after giving birth.”

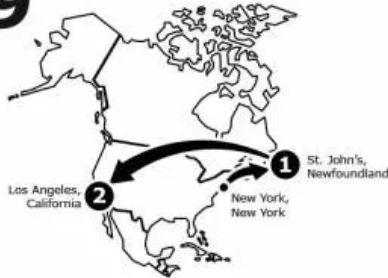
### Catch the eye of a dedicated producer

8



One of the first production companies to talk to the Heins was Junkyard Dog Productions. “What drew us to them was they were committed to getting the story right. They traveled out to Newfoundland with us multiple times. There’s a real sense of wanting to tell the story that we wanted to tell and stick to the true spirit of it. Our characters are inspired by real people and we were very clear that we didn’t want to include anything in the show that we wouldn’t be able to sit down over a cup of coffee and say ‘oh, your character does this now!’”

9



### Go west. But first go east.

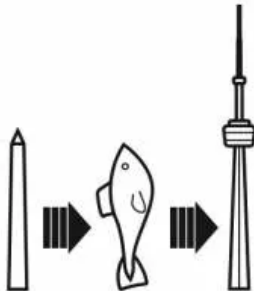
Junkyard Dog produced the Broadway show *Memphis*, which was directed by Christopher Ashley, who also happens to be the artistic director of the La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego (and the director of this production of *Come From Away*).

“That was the first time we had a fully produced show, first time we ever got reviewed — it was a big test of the show on the opposite side of the continent from Newfoundland to see if it still resonated. And it sold out. I remember coming in with the general manager one day and **she** said ‘there’s people lining up three hours

in advance — I haven’t seen that here since *Jersey Boys* was developed.”

But before the big premiere, David and Irene took their director and producers out to Newfoundland to get “screeched in.” “It’s kind of a once in a lifetime experience to say to your director and producers, ‘these are the people who inspired the show...and now kiss a fish.’”

10



### The road to Broadway

“The next step was Washington, D.C. We went to Ford’s Theatre there. It was resonant for a million different reasons. We toured the Pentagon with some of the survivors — it was the first town that we could share the show with those who had been directly affected by 9/11. It was powerful to watch them watching it, but also what they told us was that it felt like a tribute to the people they had lost, and it felt like a positive memory that they could associate with it that didn’t overwhelm or try to replace their memories, but added on something.”

In Gander, just last month: “They brought 140 people to do a show in the ice rink. I remember looking at the backdrop and what they were doing with the sound, and I remember thinking ‘they are treating this like it’s the Hollywood Bowl. It was so moving to hear the sound guys say ‘we want every person in this arena to hear every single word.’ The entire experience was insane. It was life-changing. It was so incredible to look out and see the U.S. ambassador talking to the mayor of Gander, while one of our actors who plays the mayor is right next to the real-life Beulah Cooper. We talked about it like a wedding — bringing our theatrical family and our Newfoundland family together and watching them all interact. And the concert! There will never be anything like that again. There’s a part in the opening number where the cast starts singing ‘I’m an Islander, I’m an islander’ and the audience started cheering, 3000 people started cheering.”

11



### On Broadway

The Heins are trying to live in the moment and enjoy the Toronto premiere for now, but Broadway is just around the corner: *Come From Away* begins previews at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre in New York City on February 18, 2017.

Toronto audiences can see *Come From Away* at the newly refurbished Royal Alexandra Theatre until January 8, 2017.

# How Come From Away made it to Broadway

With a lot of luck and some serendipity, Canadian musical about Sept. 11 heads to NYC

TONY WONG  
 TELEVISION REPORTER

Who would have thought you could create an uplifting musical out of the existential horror that was Sept. 11? Lawyer Michael Rubinfeld did. He believed that audiences would respond to the power of hope emerging through the tragedy. But most figured his concept — finding the bright side of one of the world's most notorious acts of terrorism — was too macabre.

Yet Rubinfeld's seemingly bad idea turns out to be the most compelling arts and culture story this year. His concept improbably underscores the power of the arts to imbue meaning in chaos and the value of sticking to a vision and mining your own history. It is the theatre equivalent of a rookie Canadian player making it to Wimbledon. And yes, it's heading to Broadway.

"If you had told me back then I'm making a play about Newfoundland and 9/11, and it's going to Broadway, I would think you're crazy," laughs Rubinfeld.

But the story of how *Come From Away* came into being is perhaps as interesting as the art itself. It underlines how much talent and work and not a little luck comes into play when making a world-class musical with the potential to resonate with audiences on the biggest and most competitive stage for theatre in the world.

Rubinfeld was in the office of his Bay Street law firm when he first heard that planes had crashed into the World Trade Center in New York on Sept. 11, 2001. It was his second day of articling.

The event would have global repercussions, but also a particularly Canadian slant: 38 planes would divert to Gander, N.L. The population of the town would virtually double. But the hospitality of the residents in feeding and housing the stranded would reverberate with the passengers, who never forgot the kindness of strangers.

"It just made me proud to be a Canadian," Rubinfeld says. "I kept thinking what a great story this was."

Rubinfeld wasn't a complete novice to theatre. Before being called to the bar he had formed a theatre company doing local productions in Toronto. Over the years his works have brought a Dora Mavor Moore Award and six nominations.

After Sept. 11 he approached several writers about his concept. They turned him down. But he kept pitching. "Most people didn't share my passion or enthusiasm. But I really thought it could work."

What happened next is virtually unheard of in Canadian musical history: an obscure, student-workshopped production that makes it to the big leagues. To put that in perspective, this is only the fifth original Canadian musical to make it to the musical capital of the world, according to Sheridan College. The last Broadway-bound musical was *The Drowsy Chaperone* in 2006.

But like most good art, it starts with lunch.

In 2009, Rubinfeld went to see the Mirvish production of the autobio-



Earlier this year, *Come From Away* played in Gander, N.L., where cast members met their real-life counterparts. It runs in Toronto from Tuesday until Jan. 8.

graphical comedy *My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wedding*, produced and written by the husband-wife team of David Hein and Irene Sankoff.

"I didn't know what to expect. It had this crazy title. But I was so moved by the show. It was such an honest, funny story about David's family." Rubinfeld sent a Facebook message to the couple congratulating them and asking to meet. A month later, at a Yorkville restaurant, they did.

"I told them I was trying to find people to write a musical."

Hein says they were happy to hear from Rubinfeld. And the concept, bizarre to just about everyone else, didn't sound strange at all to the couple, especially since they had been living in New York during Sept. 11. Plus, Hein grew up on the Celtic-influenced music of Newfoundland, which he loved.

"It immediately sang to me as a story," he says.

"It was so inspiring. We were in," Sankoff says. "As Canadians I always thought we should be sharing our stories, instead of stories about New York or Boston. But we had to figure a way how to do this."

Not only were the couple looking for their next project, Rubinfeld had been transitioning from full-time lawyer to associate dean of visual and performing arts at Oakville's Sheridan College.

Part of his vision was launching an incubator for Canadian musicals. While filmmakers, for example, have the Norman Jewison-founded Canadian Film Centre in which to workshop and develop stories, there is no comparable outlet for musical theatre in Canada.

"I knew we had talented students, a

great infrastructure and an academic and artistic objective. It was just to be able to institutionalize all of this at a college level," says Rubinfeld.

Before *Come From Away* was workshopped at Sheridan, Hein and Sankoff flew to Gander, where they spent more than three weeks interviewing key players.

"We would be talking to people for hours. We heard hundreds of amazing stories. And we experienced the same kind of hospitality that the people in planes did," says Sankoff.

"Newfoundland is based on this culture of freezing cold winters and just gathering in the kitchen and telling great stories," says Hein. "But they couldn't understand why we were doing a musical because for them this was not an extraordinary event by any means."

Reg Wright, the president of the airport, put it best: "You're doing a musical about people giving out sandwiches and letting people use their showers? Good luck with that."

*Come From Away* would be the first musical developed at Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project. The cast were students. Over five weeks, for seven hours a day, the writers honed the work. The first run produced a play of about 40 minutes. Students would stand onstage reading from music stands.

"As the saying goes, musicals aren't written, they're rewritten," says Rubinfeld. "It's really invaluable when a writer works on a song to be able to hear it immediately to see how certain things work. It's also interesting to see how those students left their own imprint on the show as it developed."

One of those students was Trevor Pratt. He played Gander Mayor Claude Elliott in the first full student

production of the show.

"I had never met Claude, but it was great to be able to inform the character by asking Irene and David what he was like," Pratt says. "It was truly one of the greatest joys I ever felt professionally, that you are at the beginning of a part of something that could be great."

"Ironically, most Canadian producers were not interested in what seemed to be the most Canadian of musicals."

"Our theatres take less risk in Canada and musicals are expensive to produce and develop," Rubinfeld says. "It's easier to do an existing production than take a chance, unfortunately, and that's the reality."

The breakthrough came in 2013. Goodspeed Musicals in Connecticut showcased it in their workshop program while the National Alliance for Musical Theatre in New York selected it for a showcase presentation.

"We were really concerned how the Americans would react. But it turns out they had an even stronger emotional connection," Rubinfeld says.

"People always ask why the story resonates," Hein says. "But there is never a bad time to tell a story about human kindness. Especially with the political climate right now, a story about welcoming strangers from other parts of the world and just being good to each other just makes sense."

The production caught the attention of Junkyard Dog Productions, the people behind the Tony Award-winning musical *Memphis*.

With Junkyard optioning the show, it had runs at the La Jolla Playhouse and the Seattle Repertory Theatre in 2015.

Earlier this year it played to emotional audiences at Ford's Theatre in

Washington, D.C., and most recently in Gander, where cast members met their real-life counterparts.

It plays at Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday until Jan. 8, before debuting on Broadway in March 2017.

"This is the work of a really talented husband-and-wife team. And it's also a story about patience and determination and luck," says John Karastamatis, director of communications for Mirvish Productions.

Karastamatis should know. He took a gamble on *The Drowsy Chaperone* after seeing it at the Fringe Festival in 1999.

"Nobody took me seriously. Shows from the Fringe just didn't go anywhere," Karastamatis says. With a \$100,000 loan from his boss, theatre impresario David Mirvish, Karastamatis went from promoting shows to producing them. He opened Theatre Passe Muraille that year.

"I hustled to sell every seat possible."

The show was a hit, which encouraged Mirvish to put it in the Winter Garden Theatre in 2000. It would eventually run on Broadway from April 2006 to December 2007.

On Broadway the show won five Tony Awards.

The show, like *Come From Away*, had defied the odds.

"The odds have been surprising us all along," Hein says. "The fact that Michael saw our first show. The fact he created the Canadian Music Theatre Project at Sheridan. And then we were lucky enough to get it into festivals in New York. That people ended up reacting the way they did. I think the lesson is that Canadian stories are such an untapped resource. And now we're finding that our stories matter more than ever."

MIRVISH PRODUCTIONS

# TORONTO STAR

In *Come From Away*, A Small Town's Legacy Soars

By Murray Whyte

November 12, 2016

## UP, UP AND AWAY

Gander's kindness to stranded 9/11 passengers is celebrated in 'Come From Away,' ET



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## UP, UP AND AWAY

Gander's kindness to stranded 9/11 passengers is celebrated in 'Come From Away,' ET



# SATURDAY STAR

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2016



It has been a year of tremendous blows for the music industry, which said goodbye to such legends as Prince, Leonard Cohen and David Bowie. Cohen, who was 82, died Monday night.

# THE LOST POETS

Cohen's death a staggering sucker punch at a time when we need our dreamers the most

**By Murray Whyte**

Just when you thought 2016 was done breaking our heart...

Leonard Cohen leaves us when we need him most. His passing at the age of 82, was announced Thursday night, the latest shock wave in a year of seismic sorrow for the music industry.

Could someone please check Bruce Springsteen's vital signs? Has that McCarthey gone for his annual check-up? Does Mick Jagger have a clean bill of health? Is everything cool with Steve Winwood and Stevie Nicks?

We can't afford to lose any more legends. Not this year, not after so many had the ultimate farewell, a list that includes Prince, David Bowie, Glenn Frey, Marissa White, Keith Emerson, Merle Haggard and many others.

We lost balled producer like George Martin, the visionary behind The Beatles. We experienced the anguish of mourning the living after Gord Downie, beloved frontman of the Tragically Hip, was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer.

And now this.

Cohen was 82. In Cohen years, that could be 42 or 92.

He was always younger and older than he seemed. This timelessness, this immensity to his whims of a culture forever in flux, is why his art — poetry, music, literature — endured and found new fans, year after year, generation after generation.

It's why his demise would always feel like a nuclear punch.

No cause of death was given, so if the details did not matter in our grief, that's fine. Period. But according to reports, including in the Washington Post, Cohen slipped away on Monday, a day before the U.S. election and three days before we were told.

He controlled the darkness even after the end.

To be in the presence of Leonard Cohen is art — poetry, song, literature — was to be put in a trance. Time and space ceased to exist. Melodies were spells.

Words turned into vivid images that refused to die, haunting and detached, candles glowing in an emotional labyrinth without walls.

*Dance me to your beauty with a burning side*

*Dance me through the pain: '82 I'm gathered 'nighly in*

*I'll put me on an ice branch and be my homeward drive*

*Dance me to the end of love*

And just when the world seems in line, most reliable our gains into journeys of the heart, to the end of love.

MEMOIR continued on A10

## Divided America unravels in the qualm after the storm

The Star's Daniel Dale, whose coverage and relentless 'fact-checking' of Trump's campaign put him on centre stage of the U.S. election, tracks the turmoil that has unfolded since the stunning result.

**By Daniel Dale, Washington Bureau Chief**

**Healthier Malick**  
An education system crumbles, so does the U.S. A20

**Anger spills into street**  
Protesters turn violence in some cities. A22

have marked the time-chaotic days since the stunning election victory of Donald Trump, with the jubilation of his largest supporters mixed with the horror of many members of racial and religious minority groups.

Trump has not directly addressed a spate of hate incidents. He and his team, though, have already signaled his plans to backtrack on several major policy pledges, from snapping Obama's case to leaving Mexico to pay for a giant wall on its border, adding to the feeling of a country assaulted.

What is obvious Barack Obama's policy the University of California, Los Angeles. Obama, Trump and defeated Hillary Clinton have all appealed for peace and unity. While there was no sign of major looting or fire, much of the country appeared to be on an emotional edge, wounds raw.

Dozens of racial incidents have been reported in the hours since the Republican's upset win. Though not all of them could be definitively tied to the election, many of them appeared to be connected.

Dale continued on A10

THE INDEX FOR SATURDAY A2

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# ENTERTAINMENT BOOKS & LIFE



CHRIS SO/TORONTO STAR

*Come From Away* co-writers Irene Sankoff and David Hein at Gander International Airport, N.L. The couple, who are married, spent more than a month in Gander researching the piece.

# A small town's legacy soars

Gander's post-Sept. 11 kindness is celebrated in *Come From Away*

**MURRAY WHYTE**  
ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

GANDER, N.L.—Out of a late-summer sky of spotless blue, they came, plane load after plane load, to this speck of a town scored into the low, flat rock of central Newfoundland.

Not one of them chose it. On that awful day a little more than 15 years ago, choice was luxury and survival enough.

But for the 7,000 people abruptly stranded here in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, this community of 9,000 people left a mark: of sympathy and of compassion for the humanity drawn forth by the worst of things, and of horror blunted with goodwill, yielding, against all reason, hope. Some were forever changed here.

"This place made me who I am today," says Kevin Tuerff, who was rerouted here that day on his way home to Texas from a vacation in France. "It just sets an example so few of us seem able to rise to."

On a recent day this fall, Tuerff was back for a very emotional convergence.

Under that same, unbroken expanse of blue, the airport, quiet at the best of times these days, bustled with a flood of arrivals.

This time, it was a homecoming of sorts. For Tuerff, for Beverley Bass, an American Airlines pilot who touched down here that day, and for hundreds of others, to see their memories filtered back through a strange new lens: a Broadway-bound musical, packed with stories of that awful day and the outpouring of

goodwill the stranded thousands found here.

It has taken almost five years, but those stories have evolved into *Come From Away*, a small experiment of a production born in Toronto through Sheridan College's Canadian Music Theatre Project in 2011.

It's grown, through small-scale workshops and theatre festivals from Connecticut to California to Seattle, to a full-blown, rip-the-roof-off musical epic.

GANDER continued on E11

# Sharing 16,000 stories in 100 minutes

GANDER from E1

*Come From Away* played most recently at Washington, D.C.'s Ford Theatre, on Sept. 11 and will reopen Toronto's storied Royal Alexandra Theatre on Tuesday.

In the spring, Broadway, the gold standard beckons.

But before the big time, *Come From Away* came home, here, in a local hockey arena for a pair of sold-out charity shows.

It's a thank-you to the town — for sharing their stories, for doing what they did, for having the patience and grace to allow any of this to be possible — but then barely begins to cover it.

"For those of us in the business, this is the kind of experience you dream of," says Kenny Alhadeff, one of the show's producers with New York-based Junkyard Dog Productions. "You dream theatre can tear down walls, touch the heart and the soul, make a difference. This? This is the epitome of all that. I know it sounds corny, but it's a privilege to be here with it."

☆☆☆

Diane Davis can stop right back to that arduous moment teaching conversation to her Grade 3 class of rambunctious 8-year-olds at Gander Academy, word came in of attacks in New York City. A decision was made quickly: school was closing and the children were going home.

"We told them they were safe, that it was far away," says Davis, a soft-spoken, no-nonsense type whose easy laugh unravels a boisterous, matter-of-fact warmth. Here, in her home, a bright-yellow bungalow across from the Academy, she hastily straightens a mound of books and magazines on the coffee table while her partner Leo smiles.

"You can't save the world and keep house at the same time," she laughs.

When she retired from the Academy after 30 years of teaching last June she didn't sit still for long. An organizer for the arrival and settlement of five Syrian refugee families here, her retirement is a daily experience of helping a couple of dozen newcomers find their feet in a strange new land.

"I retired on a Friday and the first Syrians arrived on a Tuesday," she smiles. "It's a wonder Leo didn't leave me right then."

Davis has always taken an interest in those on need. On that day more than 15 years ago, the skies fall of planes, she braced for what was to come. She called friends, who called friends, and soup and sandwiches were hastily thrown together.

"It's just kind of snowballed," Leo remembers. "We all went down to the town hall to see what we could do to help and, by the time we got back up the hill, there were dozens of us." The first bus arrived from the airport at about midnight. Davis brought them into her home and fed them whatever was on hand. They took turns using her platters to eat home, wherever that was the Middle East, Asia, Europe and beyond. "And they just kept coming," she said.

From the front steps of Diane and Leo's house, you can see the Academy, three churches and a community hall. Before the night was over, every one of them would be stuffed full with stranded passengers.

All over town, the same story: thousands of people with nothing more than the clothes on their backs and airline-issue pillows and blankets. The ravages of the attacks, not 24 hours before, meant sequestering all luggage in a secure hangar to check for threats.

They were hungry, exhausted and terrified.

"Just being in the airport here can still give me PTSD," Tuerff says. "Once you get out of there, everything changes."

In the dead of night, Gander was ready. Soup, sandwiches, blankets, air mattresses and toothbrushes started arriving in waves — so much food, in fact, that over the next few days, Mayor Claude Elliott started steering the excess to the ice sheet at the hockey rink, hoping it would keep.

Brian Mosher, host of a community television show, broadcast a plea to quell the flow of a particular generosity: "I had to go on air and tell people to please stop bringing toilet paper to the Legion hall because they didn't know what to do with it all," he laughs.

"It kind of was a blessing, really, for us to be able to feel useful in a moment where the world felt so helplessness," says Davis.

In typical local fashion, she shrugs off the accolades with a matter-of-fact cheer. "We just did what was common sense at the time. When you saw those planes hit, you really



CHRIS SO PHOTOS/TORONTO STAR  
 Chad Kimball, right, who plays Kevin Tuerff, in a scene with Q. Smith, left, and Rodney Hicks. The show had its Canadian debut in the town of Gander.



Leo McKenna, a school caretaker, and Diane Davis, a retired teacher, in their home across from Gander Academy.



Petrina Bromley is the cast's only native Newfoundlander.



Texas businessman Kevin Tuerff was diverted to Gander on Sept. 11.

understood how much these people needed help. So ... Her voice quavers. She takes a moment to compose herself. "So we helped."

☆☆☆

Davis's stories, and Mosher's, and Tuerff's, and dozens of others all made it into *Come From Away*'s final cut. But Irene Sankoff and David Hein, the show's husband-and-wife writing team, knew they couldn't capture more than a sliver of it.

"I always say we wanted to tell all 16,000 stories, but it's a 100-minute musical," says Hein.

Locals and passengers alike were amalgamated into composite characters Brian Mosher became Janice Mosher, a mash-up of him and another local, Janice Goodie; Diane Davis became Bethah Davis, a merger of her and Bethah Cooper, another local woman who worked tirelessly to feed the arrivals. ("It's an honour," says Davis, wryly, "though how someone could play me as half a character, I can't imagine.")

In 2011, Sankoff and Hein came to Gander on a fact-finding mission. Armed with a Canada Council development grant and a promise from Michael Rubinfeld, the head of Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project, they started knocking on doors.

"It was tough. I mean, we're the outsiders," Sankoff said. "I just kept telling myself, 'This is important, you're supposed to be here.'" Quickly, they became absorbed. "Irene and David and I would have check-in calls every few days," Rubinfeld says, "and they would be like, 'We've moved out of the hotel and into somebody's house; they gave us their car; they told us where they were going on vacation and to take care of the cats.' It's just like that here."

After a month, they were swash in possibility. "We kept getting invited for dinner, or for tea, or to go hunting. And we came away with thousands of stories, literally thousands," Hein says. "But we also came away with friends."

☆☆☆

No production makes it to Broadway without endless development, testing, writing and rewriting, and *Come From Away* is no exception.

After a test-run at Sheridan in January 2012, Rubinfeld, Sankoff and Hein started the festival/conference circuit. First stop was the Goodspeed Festival of New Musicals in Connecticut later that year — the first

time the show would be seen by an American audience.

"I remember David and Irene were sullen-faced," Rubinfeld says. "I kept saying, 'No, no, no, it'll be great!' But the truth is, I was completely freaking out. I thought, are they going to run us out of the theatre? But once it got going, I thought the roof was going to blow off. That's when I knew: Americans can get this."

It was as important to Sankoff, Hein and Rubinfeld that Newfoundlanders could also get it, the fact of which Petrina Bromley, the only Newfoundlander in the cast, was acutely aware.

"I will admit openly that I had reservations at the beginning," she says. "Newfoundlanders know that they're seen as the hillbillies of Canada, so I went in thinking, 'Is this going to be all rubber boots and yes/lys? Are we going to look like yokes?' But David and Irene wanted these people to feel honoured and not be a cartoon for other people's amusement. And they've done that."

"I can't imagine how a bowl of soup, a sandwich and a blanket could turn into this."

CLAUDE ELLIOTT  
 MAYOR OF GANDER

After Goodspeed, the show travelled in the fall of 2013 to the National Alliance for Musical Theatre's annual Festival of New Musicals in New York, a front-line marketplace for shows in development to hook up with production-company suitors.

Alhadeff, who was there for Junkyard Dog, remembers a surge of elation and panic both.

"My wife said, 'You run up there and be at the front of the line,'" he said, recalling a scramble to the stage with applause-thundering all around. "I don't usually push like this, but I just said, 'Hello, I'm Kenny, a Tony Award-winning producer and I want to do your show.'"

More than 30 production companies tried to woo *Come From Away* to their stable, but Junkyard Dog won out. "This isn't the case of a bunch of Americans coming in to take over," Rubinfeld says. "They have this incredible heart and respect for the story. It's been beautiful."

☆☆☆

Gander, for better or worse, has always tied its fate to the skies. Main

streets here are named after famous aviators — Amelia Earhart, Charles Lindbergh, Marc Garneau — and the local high school's team mascot, the Concorde, tells you much about the unrequited dreams of a jet-age whistle-stop that outlived its usefulness almost as quickly as it had been established.

The Second World War made Gander's airport a strategic asset, used by the Allies as a base for thousands of missions to Europe. But it was the postwar aviation boom that made it blossom. Transatlantic commercial flight was growing, but planes still needed a fuel stopover and Gander was it.

Local lore boasts of the Beatles' first touchdown in North America, in 1964, being not in New York but Gander, where they stopped for a fill-up en route.

Gander's runways grew in size and number. Soon, it could accommodate the biggest planes in the skies. But as jets increased their range, Gander became a flyby. The international terminal, a Mid-Century modern capsule of low-slung, boxy vinyl furniture and crisp wood panelling brimming with jet-age optimism, was largely mothballed; Gander became an outpost once more.

Then, that bright September morning when it was needed most, Gander was there: a town long in search of a defining moment had one foisted upon it.

On a chilly autumn evening this October, it had another. Outside the local hockey arena, a lineup — polite, patient, huddling against a rising, icy wind — shuffled two by two inside, the rink remade for the night into a makeshift opera house. The room was packed and another crowd just like it was waiting for show No. 2, later the same night. "I can't imagine how a bowl of soup, a sandwich and a blanket could turn into this 15 years later," said Elliott, elated.

The cast, in their best Newfoundland brogues, shifted easily from character to character, setting up the ordinary foibles of ordinary life in an unremarkable small town — the school bus drivers are on strike, the school needs a new roof — about to be thrust into the realm of the extraordinary.

An opening number, "Welcome to the Rock," built to a taut, declarative refrain ("I am an islander/I will not be drowned"), all but bringing the crowd to its feet. It was a good sign;

the piece wasn't five minutes old.

*Come From Away* moves like that: brisk, agile, never lingering on low notes long enough to be maudlin, nor on its many laughs (and make no mistake, there are many) long enough to be corny. By the end of the second performance, not only was the entire audience standing, stomping and clapping along, some of them were on the stage: Elliott, for one, dancing a jig with Jenn Colella, the actress who plays Beverly Bass.

Bromley, milling in the crowd, admitted to aubt bleeding into a little more than planned. "There were a few tears up there that weren't in the script," she said. "We were really just trying to keep it together."

Nearby, Rubinfeld, cheering loudly from his seat about 10 rows back, stood up, agog. He shifted from foot to foot, dabbling at his eyes. "We didn't know how they'd react. We didn't know. Would they just be polite? But this ..." He shook his head.

A few rows away, Hein and Sankoff were overcome with people offering handshakes and hugs, and much more of the latter. "We've seen this show 33 times now," said a tearful Sankoff. "But never like this."

☆☆☆

Davis, in the second row, sat quietly in her chair, transfixed by the elation around her. She had brought about a dozen of the Syrian refugees in her care to see the show, giving them the front row. One of them, a spirited 3-year-old girl, kept wandering near the stage to dance. When Davis finally stood, she let go a big, deep breath, her eyes moist and red.

"Some of the stories they told up there were word for word. Word for word. It put me right back there. They really listened," she said. "It's overwhelming. I think for the first time in my life, I don't have the words."

In the final moments of *Come From Away*, the planes alight and keen homeward, and the bright sunshine of their time here becomes crowded out by dark, thunderheads. Outside the arena, this very night, the sparkling blue sky above was giving way to a stiff wind that, by morning, would bring a key, sideways min.

Now, like then, Gander's moment in the sun was ending. But its legacy is written for good.

*Come From Away* is at Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre Nov. 15 to Jan. 8. See [mivish.com/shows/come-from-away](http://mivish.com/shows/come-from-away) for tickets and information.



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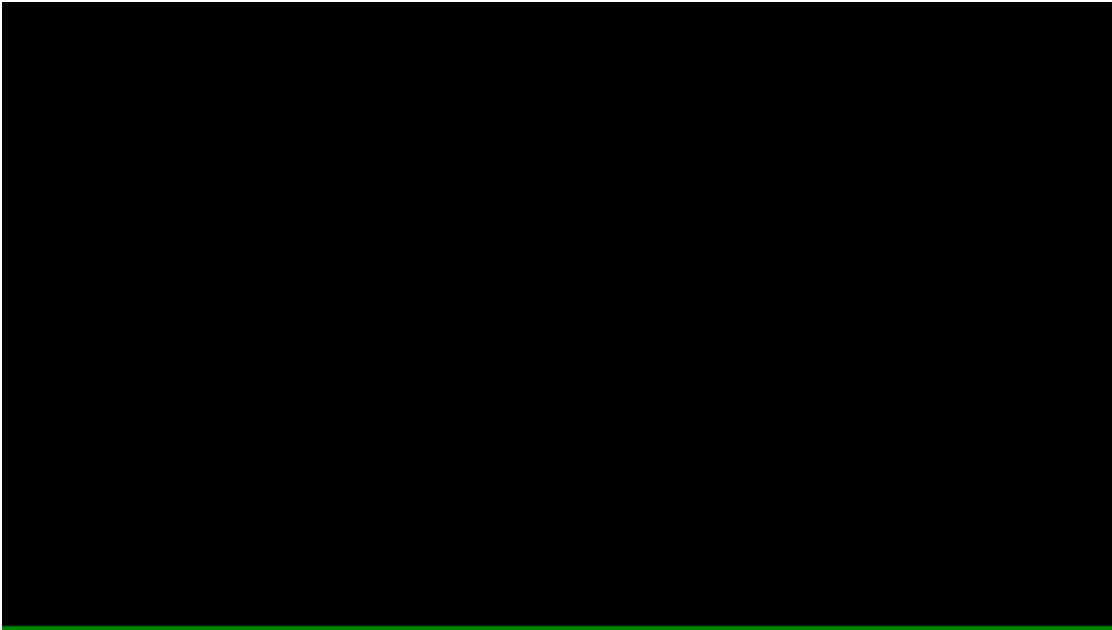


## **Come From Away Shows Kindness and Laughter at Time of Need**

Just a few years ago a friend told me about a play reading they'd attended at Sheridan College in Oakville. There was this story about 38 flights from all over the world diverted from their U.S. destinations to Gander. It was in response to the September 11 attacks. My friend didn't know what to make of it, didn't know how to react. It's such a tragic story, but the reading had such humorous points and overall happy tempo.

Watching this story come alive on stage, I reacted quite differently than my friend did those years ago. I laughed, I laughed really hard and at moments I was moved and felt the anguish of those passengers. But overall, I rejoiced in the simple fact that, yes, people in New Foundland really are that nice and everyone should know that.

Torontonians Irene Sankoff and David Hein wrote the book, lyrics and music for the Broadway-bound show, in which over 6,500 people are stranded in Gander New Foundland reliant on the hospitality of a city with a population fewer than 10,000.



The first song "Welcome to the Rock" sets the stage for this fast paced musical. It provides the audience with an east coast flare and welcomes the full cast, which combined play about 30 different parts. And, as the show progresses the writing and musical numbers incorporate humour and laughter within the play, allowing the audience to feel at ease, let out a few laughs and find humour in what overall was a tragic day across the world.

The characters highlighted provide a cross cultural view, highlighting moments of tension, fear, sadness and joy. The story of the two new found lovers adds a sweetness that cuts through the tragedy and provides an underlying thread of hope. In such a short 110 minutes (no intermission) you truly feel like you've gotten to know each of the characters and feel you've been watching them from afar. The way the musical breaks the forth wall also helps in pulling you in and again allowing you to find joy in the stories.



[http://thesceneinto.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/dl\\_COME\\_FROM\\_AWA](http://thesceneinto.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/dl_COME_FROM_AWA)

Jenn Colella, left, Kendra Kassbaum, right and the company

One of my favourite quotes on Come From Away is from Beverly Bass, an American Airlines pilot who needed to divert her plane and a major character in the story line (portrayed by Jenn Colella). She said "It's not about the sadness of 9/11, it's about the goodness that came out of it." And would add, it showcases the spirit of the east coast and the general kindness people can share with one another in a time of need



people can share with one another in a time of need.

Come From Away will begin performances on Broadway on Saturday, February 18, 2017 at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre (236 West 45th Street) and officially open Sunday, March 12, 2017, following Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre run ending Sunday, January 8, 2017.

The Broadway, Toronto and Gander cast of Come From Away features Petrina Bromley (Stratford's As You Like It); Geno Carr (The Old Globe's Dr. Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas); Jenn Colella (If/Then); Joel Hatch (Annie); Rodney Hicks (The Scottsboro Boys); Kendra Kassebaum (Wicked); Tony Award nominee Chad Kimball (Memphis); Lee MacDougall (Stratford's The Music Man); Caesar Samayoa (Sister Act); Q. Smith (Mary Poppins); Astrid Van Wieren (North American premiere of Mamma Mia!); Sharon Wheatley (Avenue Q); Josh Breckenridge (The Scottsboro Boys); Susan Dunstan (The Lion King US National Tour); Tamika Lawrence (If/Then) and Tony LePage (Rock of Ages).

Tickets are available via the Mirvish box office, [www.mirvish.com](http://www.mirvish.com) (<http://www.mirvish.com/>) and calling 1.800.461.3333.

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## How Come From Away made it to Broadway

With a lot of luck and some serendipity, Canadian musical about Sept. 11 heads to New York after its Toronto stop.



Music students at Sheridan College in 2013 perform an early workshop version of *Come From Away* (SHERIDAN COLLEGE)

By **TONY WONG** Television

Mon., Nov. 14, 2016

Who would have thought you could create an uplifting musical out of the existential horror that was Sept. 11?

Lawyer Michael Rubinoff did. He believed that audiences would respond to the power of hope emerging through the tragedy. But most figured his concept — finding the bright side of one of the world’s most notorious acts of terrorism — was too macabre.

Yet Rubinoff’s seemingly bad idea turns out to be the most compelling arts and culture story this year. His concept improbably underscores the power of the arts to imbue meaning in chaos, and the value of sticking to a vision and mining your own history. It is the theatre equivalent of a rookie Canadian player making it to Wimbledon. And yes, it’s heading to [Broadway](#).

“If you had told me back then I’m making a play about Newfoundland and 9/11, and it’s going to Broadway, I would think you’re crazy,” laughs Rubinoff.

But the tale of how *Come From Away* came into being is perhaps as interesting as the art itself. It underlines how much talent, hard work and not a little luck comes into play when making a world class musical with the potential to resonate with audiences on the biggest and most competitive stage for theatre in the world.

Rubinoff was in the office of his Bay St. law firm when he first heard that planes had crashed into the World Trade Center in New York on Sept. 11, 2001. It was his second day on the job articling.

The event would have global repercussions, but also a particularly Canadian slant: 38 planes would divert to Gander, Newfoundland. The population of the town would virtually double. But the hospitality of the residents in feeding and housing the stranded would reverberate with the passengers, who never forgot the kindness of strangers.

“It just made me proud to be a Canadian,” says Rubinoff. “I kept thinking what a great story this was.”

Rubinoff wasn’t a complete novice to theatre. Before being called to the bar he had formed a theatre company doing local productions in Toronto. Over the years his works have brought a Dora Mavor Moore Award and six nominations.

After Sept. 11 he approached several writers about his concept. They turned him down. But he kept pitching. “Most people didn’t share my passion or enthusiasm. But I really thought it could work.”

What happened next is virtually unheard of in Canadian musical history. An obscure, student-workshopped production that makes it to the big leagues. To put that in perspective, this is only the fifth original Canadian musical to make it to the musical capital of the world, according to Sheridan College. The last Broadway-bound musical was *The Drowsy Chaperone* in 2006.

But like most good art, it starts with lunch.

In 2009, Rubinoff went to see the Mirvish production of the autobiographical comedy *My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding*, produced and written by the husband and wife team of David Hein and Irene Sankoff.

"I didn't know what to expect. It had this crazy title. But I was so moved by the show. It was such an honest, funny story about David's family."

Rubinoff sent a Facebook message to the couple congratulating them and asking to meet. A month later, at a Yorkville restaurant, they did.

"I told them I was trying to find people to write a musical."

Hein says they were happy to hear from Rubinoff. And the concept, bizarre to just about everyone else, didn't sound strange at all to the couple, especially since they had been living in New York during Sept. 11. Plus, Hein grew up on the Celtic-influenced music of Newfoundland, which he loved.

"It immediately sang to me as a story," he says.

"It was so inspiring. We were in," says Sankoff. "As Canadians I always thought we should be sharing our stories, instead of stories about New York or Boston. But we had to figure a way how to do this."

The serendipity part here: not only were the couple looking for their next project, Rubinoff had been transitioning from full-time lawyer to associate dean of visual and performing arts at Oakville's Sheridan College.

Part of his vision was launching an incubator for Canadian musicals. While filmmakers, for example, have the Norman Jewison-founded Canadian Film Centre in which to workshop and develop stories, there is no comparable outlet for musical theatre in Canada.

"I knew we had talented students, a great infrastructure, and an academic and artistic objective. It was just to be able to institutionalize all of this at a college level," says Rubinoff.

Before *Come From Away* was workshopped at Sheridan, Hein and Sankoff flew to Gander, where they spent more than three weeks interviewing key players.

"We would be talking to people for hours. We heard hundreds of amazing stories. And we experienced the same kind of hospitality that the people in planes did," says Sankoff.

"Newfoundland is based on this culture of freezing cold winters, and just gathering in the kitchen and telling great stories," says Hein. "But they couldn't understand why we were doing a musical because for them this was not an extraordinary event by any means."

Reg Wright, the president of the airport, put it best: "You're doing a musical about people giving out sandwiches and letting people use their showers? Good luck with that."

*Come From Away* would be the first musical developed at Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project.

The cast were students. Over five weeks, for seven hours a day, the writers were able to hone the work. The first run produced a play of about 40 minutes. Students would stand onstage reading from music stands.

"As the saying goes, musicals aren't written, they're rewritten," says Rubinoff. "It's really invaluable when a writer works on a song to be able to hear it immediately to see how certain things work. It's also interesting to see how those students left their own imprint on the show as it developed."

One of those students was Trevor Pratt. He was in his final year at Sheridan and played Gander Mayor Claude Elliott in the first full student production of the show.

"I had never met Claude, but it was great to be able to inform the character by asking Irene and David what he was like," says Pratt. "It was truly one of the greatest joys I ever felt professionally, that you are at the beginning of a part of something that could be great."

Ironically, it turned out most Canadian producers were not interested in what seemed to be the most Canadian of musicals.

"Our theatres take less risk in Canada and musicals are expensive to produce and develop," says Rubinoff. "It's easier to do an existing production than take a chance, unfortunately, and that's the reality."

The breakthrough came in 2013. Goodspeed Musicals in Connecticut showcased it in their workshop program while the National Alliance for Musical Theatre in New York selected it for a showcase presentation.

"We were really concerned how the Americans would react. But it turns out they had an even stronger emotional connection," says Rubinoff.

"People always ask why the story resonates," says Hein. "But there is never a bad time to tell a story about human kindness. Especially with the political climate right now, a story about welcoming strangers from other parts of the world and just being good to each other just makes sense."

The production caught the attention of Junkyard Dog Productions, the people behind the Tony Award-winning musical *Memphis*.

It was time to take the show to the next level. With Junkyard optioning the show, it had runs at the La Jolla Playhouse and the Seattle Repertory Theatre in 2015.

Earlier this year it played to emotional audiences at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C., and most recently in Gander, where cast members met their real-life counterparts.

It plays at the [Royal Alexandra Theatre](#) from Nov. 15 to Jan. 8, before debuting on Broadway in March of 2017.

"This is the work of a really talented husband and wife team. And it's also a story about patience and determination and luck," says John Karastamatis, director of communications for Mirvish Productions.

Karastamatis should know. He took a gamble on *The Drowsy Chaperone* after seeing it at the Fringe Festival in 1999.

"Nobody took me seriously. Shows from the Fringe just didn't go anywhere," says Karastamatis. With a \$100,000 loan from his boss, theatre impresario David Mirvish, Karastamatis went from promoting shows to producing them. He opened at Theatre Passe Muraille later that year.

"I hustled to sell every seat possible."

The show was a hit, which encouraged Mirvish to put it in the Winter Garden Theatre in 2001. It would eventually run on Broadway from April 2006 to December 2007.

On Broadway the show opened to decent box office but middling reviews, although it won five Tony Awards.

The show, like *Come From Away*, had defied the odds.

"The odds have been surprising us all along," says Hein. "The fact that Michael saw our first show. The fact he created the Canadian Music Theatre Project at Sheridan. And then we were lucky enough to get it into festivals in New York. That people ended up reacting the way they did. I think the lesson is that Canadian stories are such an untapped resource. And now we're finding that our stories matter more than ever."

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**MPP Kevin Flynn recognized Sheridan College, Canadian Music Theatre Program, Michael Rubinoff and *Come From Away* Producers at Queen's Park.**

**Transcript:**

**Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn:** Only five Canadian productions have ever made it to Broadway. I'm pleased today to introduce Irene Sankoff and David Hein, the producers of *Come From Away*, and Michael Rubinoff, who is the associate dean of the department of visual and performing arts at Sheridan College. Speaker, please welcome them to Queen's Park. They're opening on Broadway in 2017.

**YouTube link:**

<https://youtu.be/KKFbap9cZIU>

## **Section 5: Blog stories**

# Sheridan | Curiosities

EVENTS / NOV 3, 2016 / CHRISTINE SZUSTACZEK

## The Start of a Moment



Author Thomas King contends that history isn't the past, rather, it's the stories we share to recount it.

If that's the case, then the new musical *Come From Away* – first created and developed at Sheridan, and about to hit the Mirvish stage en route to Broadway – is making history, in more ways than one.

In 2011, Canadian writers Irene Sankoff and David Hein were approached by Michael Rubinoff, Associate Dean of Visual and Performing Arts at Sheridan with the idea of penning a musical about the extraordinary compassion and humanity that the people of Gander, Newfoundland and five surrounding communities showed to over 6,500 stranded



passengers whose planes were diverted there for a week following 9/11. According to the Dictionary of Newfoundland English, the name of the musical is the local term given to travelers to the province.



DAVID HEIN AND IRENE SANKOFF, COME FROM AWAY WRITERS, AT THE GALA DINNER AT GANDER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. PHOTO BY SHYAMA MCWHIRTER.

And while they joke that they were only asked because others turned him down first, Sankoff and Hein have created what many who have seen the show in La Jolla, Seattle, Washington, and in Gander this past weekend, consider to be not only a work of art, but a true reflection of history and culture, and a rare gift to the world.

A bit clichéd or over-the-top, you're thinking?

"Everything that was depicted in the show really happened," was the assurance I was given, no matter who I spoke with. It was similarly the refrain that kept echoing while I exited the arena where it played on October 29, atop covered ice, to a total of 5,000 people in lieu of regularly scheduled hockey games.

Others from Newfoundland posted sentiments of gratitude – and relief – on their social media accounts, thanking the writers and producers for not trivializing the events of that week or misrepresenting their accents, sense of humour, or way of life.

Accurate, fine. But a gift? Really?

Beverley Simmons, a long-time Theatre Sheridan supporter, who has seen the show in every market where it has played, told me that something happens to people who see this show. They may co

me rushing into the theatre to grab their seats completely self-absorbed, but when they leave, they're all a little bit friendlier, chattier, and more patient and kind toward the strangers around them.

She's not alone in her thinking.



THE AUDIENCE READY FOR THE SHOW TO BEGIN AT ONE OF THE BENEFIT CONCERTS IN GANDER. PHOTO BY CHRISTINE SZUSTACZEK.

Bruce Heyman, the US Ambassador to Canada told the actors, locals, producers and guests gathered in Gander for a gala dinner the evening before the performances, "I believe in the power of art to heal and to explain stories in ways that words alone cannot express. This musical is a powerful reminder that even in the darkest of times there are still good people who do good things for no reward other than knowing they made the lives of fellow human beings better."

"I believe in the power of art to heal and to explain stories in ways that works alone cannot express," – Bruce Heyman, US Ambassador to Canada

Even before Heyman and his wife Vicki visited Sheridan in 2015, they already knew about *Come From Away*. Friends of theirs had seen the show in La Jolla and told them the same thing that Heyman tells everyone he meets, "See this show."



THE CONTINGENT FROM SHERIDAN IN GANDER INCLUDING BEVERLEY SIMMONS (FRONT WITH SHERIDAN SCARF) AND COME FROM AWAY WRITER IRENE SANKOFF (FRONT ROW, THIRD FROM RIGHT). PHOTO BY SHYAMA MCWHIRTER.

At the Sheridan-hosted brunch, held on October 29, prior to the two benefit performances, real-life “come from away” Kevin Tureff, a US businessman who was on the fourth plane to land in Gander in 2001, urged everyone to learn from the generosity that he experienced as a stranded passenger 15 years ago. He’s taken a page from his own book. Literally.

Every year on 9/11 he gives his staff the morning off and sends them out into the

community in groups of two with \$100, tasked to pay it forward by doing something nice for others. He’s also publishing a book on his experiences and announced that 25% of the proceeds would be directed to the Gander Syrian Refugee project. The community of approximately 10,000 people that once rallied to help stranded airline passengers has now sponsored four Syrian refugee families. They were all given front row seats to see the show.

These are the stories that need to get captured and told. But please don’t expect those who were born and raised in Newfoundland to boast about themselves.

"The greatest asset a community has is its people" – Claude Elliott, Mayor of Gander

Claude Elliott, who's been the Mayor of Gander since 1996 looks at it this way, "We have to help our neighbours. That's something that's been bred into us since we've been children . . . The greatest asset a community has is its people . . . I'm glad we were given the opportunity . . . a simple thank you is enough." Or as the Mayor of Appleton says during the show, "you'd 'a done the same."



RETIRED AMERICAN AIRLINES PILOT BEVERLY BASS WITH US BUSINESSMAN KEVIN TUREFF. PHOTO BY SHYAMA MCWHIRTER.

Alongside the humility comes a sense of humour that challenges people not to take themselves too seriously either. When speaking about the actor who portrays him on stage, Mayor Elliott declared, "I know that Joel Hatch will never be Claude Elliott. For one thing, I got a full head of hair. And as he told me, I'm the only living character he's ever played. Everyone else is fictional or deceased. So Joel, you have a great challenge."



THE CAST AND THE PEOPLE WHO INSPIRED THE CHARACTERS THEY PLAY IN COME FROM AWAY. PICTURED CENTRE SHERIDAN ALUMNI TREVOR PATT (LEFT) AND MIKE COX (RIGHT) WHO PORTRAYED GANDER MAYOR CLAUDE ELLIOT (MIDDLE) IN SHERIDAN'S STAGING OF COME FROM AWAY (2012 & 2013). PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE SZUSTACZEK.

While it's normally the ordinary folks in the room like me who are star-stuck in the presence of actors, in Gander this past weekend, the roles were reversed. The actors themselves were humbled and awed to meet the real-life people whose lives inspired the characters they portray.

In another page of history, *Come From Away* will be the first musical incubated at Sheridan through the [Canadian Music Theatre Project \(CMTP\)](#) to make it to Broadway when it opens at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre on March 12, 2017. Like the characters sing in the show, this really is "the start of a moment" for Sheridan.

And I haven't even mentioned the Celtic-infused music that anchors the show and sends your feet tapping, or the way that the writers amalgamated 16,000 stories into a 100 minute performance. Or how about the unbelievable talent of the 12 actors who somehow manage to toggle seamlessly between multiple characters, keeping straight a myriad of accents and personalities?



THE AUDIENCE REACTS AT THE END OF ONE OF THE COME FROM AWAY CONCERTS IN GANDER, NL. US AMBASSADOR TO CANADA BRUCE A. HEYMAN PICTURED FOURTH FROM THE RIGHT. PHOTO BY SHYAMA MCWHIRTER.

It's evident, wherever you see it, that *Come From Away* hits the mark.

Personally, I found myself laughing and crying throughout the show,

often all at once. But don't take it from me. Check out what the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [Seattle Times](#), [Canadian Press](#), [CBC](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [Toronto Star](#) and [Gander Beacon](#) had to say by clicking on the embedded links. Or watch [this video by Guy Kwan](#), part of the show's production management team, who recorded what was said as his flight out of Gander was gearing for take-off.

I'm very fortunate to have been able to come along for the ride, to have been screeched in by the Mayor himself, and to have experienced even just a 48-hour taste of the town's legendary hospitality.

There's only one piece of unfinished business, as far as I'm concerned. When does the cast recording come out?



*Pictured at top of page: Performers on stage at the Come From Away concert in Gander, NL. Photo by Shyama McWhirter, Sheridan Applied Photography alumna (2006)*

*Written by: Christine Szustaczek, Director of Communications and External Relations at Sheridan*

COME FROM AWAY ACTOR JENN COLELLA AND I AT THE COME FROM AWAY FESTIVITIES IN GANDER AND IRENE SANKOFF AND JENN COLELLA ON STAGE (RIGHT) AT THE END OF THE BENEFIT CONCERT. PHOTO ON RIGHT BY SHYAMA MCWHIRTER.

[Music Theatre Broadway Canadian Music Theatre Project CMTP Come From Away Michael Rubinoff Bachelor of Music Theatre - Performance Gander Newfoundland](#)

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## Comments

# Sheridan | Curiosities

EVENTS / JAN 9, 2017 / CHRISTINE SZUSTACZEK

## The Musical that Stole our Hearts



By all accounts, the new musical *Come From Away*, which wrapped up its Toronto engagement on January 8, has been a smashing success.

Audiences consistently gave the show a raucous and prolonged standing ovation. Theatre critics from the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *National Post*, and *Now Magazine* described the show using words like big-hearted, original, masterful, inspirational, sensible, cathartic, gorgeous, nuanced, and engaging.

Following the enviable reviews and powerful word of mouth recommendations, the show broke a 109-year old record at the Royal Alexandra theatre (selling \$1.7 million in tickets in just one week and nearly crashing the Mirvish website). It prompted the introduction of new

standing room tickets and spurred repeated lament on social media by those who realized they waited too long to try to get a ticket.

That same admiration has been felt by many in the Sheridan community. But layered through our collective awe is a deep sense of pride, gratitude, and joy that stems from having a very special connection to the show due to our mutual connection to the place where it was first developed.



MEMBERS OF THE SHERIDAN COMMUNITY COME TOGETHER TO ATTEND SHERIDAN NIGHT AT COME FROM AWAY IN TORONTO.

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“From the very beginning, I was struck by Michael’s role as a producer – how he recognized so early the potential in this story . . . and that it took him another ten years to interest the right creative team to take this on, as generative material for a musical. His love and faith in music theatre as a medium to tell the most important human stories has been very inspirational to me.” – **Ronni Rosenberg, Dean, Faculty of Animation, Arts and Design**

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"During the Sheridan night of *Come From Away*, I had a flashback to something which few Sheridan people would remember. In November of 1979, a CP train carrying chemicals derailed in Mississauga, leading to the week-long evacuation of that city. Sheridan opened its doors to countless evacuees. The corridors at our Trafalgar campus were littered with sleeping bags, families camping out and children of all ages. We learned to share the washrooms with generations of strangers. Unlike the residents of Gander, we couldn't cancel classes to whip up dinners or take people moose-hunting. But we did provide refuge, running water, phone access, and diversion and conversation whenever possible. I like to think that the people of Gander and the people of Sheridan share the same Canadian instinct: open your hearts and your doors, help others in crisis how best you can, and remember that one day it might be you who needs help." – **Ron Cameron Lewis, Professor Emeritus, Musical Theatre**

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"I went to see the show with my daughter, son and spouse. We all loved the play. My son who is 16 and a bit critical said to me before the show that Canada doesn't have anything interesting. After the show when I asked if he liked it, he said he did and has now learned something interesting and honourable about Canada, Newfoundland and Gander. I'm very proud to be part of the Sheridan community. Michael Rubinoff – kudos to you." – **Jean Simpson, Co-operative Education Advisor**

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"I woke up singing 'I am an Islander'. When I heard this morning that Beverley Bass and the real-life Nick and Diane were in the audience last night, it gave me goosebumps. I am by no means a musical aficionado, but I think this will resonate with anyone who has the chance to see it and the fact that it was born at Sheridan is amazing. I am already wondering when I can see it again." – **Jane Leaver, Manager, Awards & Annual Giving**

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"As a member of the Sheridan community, I felt so proud that *Come From Away* was incubated and workshopped at Sheridan through the work of Michael Rubinoff and the Canadian Music Theatre Project. In my role, I don't have any direct contact nor any responsibility for a project such as *Come From Away* and yet I still feel so proud that I was a part of an academic community that embraced the challenge and produced a blockbuster show. A truly, uniquely Sheridan accomplishment!" – **Sara Rumsey, Vision Transition Project Manager**

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"As a parent, I am often challenged as I seek adequate and satisfying explanations for an exploitative and confusing world that seems to be mired in reverence for a lack of basic human decency. The message of *Come From Away* expertly captures everything I wish for

my children to have as a beacon of immeasurable human kindness, and a guide for their own moral compass! Out of horrific tragedy comes a message of hope, not only because of the heroism of the people in Gander, but also to the courageous and brilliant people who found a way to bring that beacon into a theatre production that transcends entertainment . . . My son Cooper and I attended the Canadian Music Theatre Project workshop of *Come From Away*. The breadth of emotion that we experienced together that day was profound . . . Over the years he'd speak of the show with a passion that indicated the production had a meaning-making experience for him . . . *Come From Away* has afforded me the opportunity to be proud to make a career and be associated with Sheridan, an organization that values the creativity and excellence that is the diversity of true education." – **Cathy Coulthard, Associate Dean, Faculty of Applied Health and Community Studies**

It's evident that *Come From Away* has left an indelible impact on the Sheridan community. Many of us will reel in a sense of withdrawal that's likely to emerge knowing that the show is leaving our country as it makes its way to Broadway. To those of you I say, fret not. There's comfort to be found in knowing that the next big Canadian musical may very well be unfolding now in our studios and on our stages.



CAST MEMBERS OF THE MIRVISH PRODUCTION OF COME FROM AWAY WITH BACHELOR OF MUSIC THEATRE ALUMNI WHO PERFORMED IN THE THEATRE SHERIDAN PRODUCTION OF COME FROM AWAY. PHOTO BY SHERIDAN ALUMNUS JONATHAN BIELASKI.

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*Pictured at top of page: Michael Rubinoff, Producer, Associate Dean and Founder of the Canadian Music Theatre Project at Sheridan, addresses attendees at Come From Away – Sheridan Night at the Royal Alexandra Theatre. Photo by Sheridan alumnus Jonathan Bielaski.*

*Written by: Christine Szustaczek, Director of Communications and External Relations at Sheridan*

[Theatre Arts and Design](#) [Canadian Music Theatre Project](#) [CMTP](#) [Come From Away](#) [Michael Rubinoff](#) [FAAD](#) [Bachelor of Music Theatre - Performance](#) [Sankoff and Hein](#) [Incubator](#) [Mirvish](#)

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Comments

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## **Section 6: Social metrics**

**TWITTER: Mentions of terms Sheridan + Come From Away and CMTP – October 1 – December 31, 2016**

**Source: Spredfast Intelligence**

During a 3-month period around time of Mirvish’s production:

Tweets including “Sheridan” and “Come From Away” yielded a potential reach of 33,762. Tweets using “Canadian Music Theatre Project” increased by 329%.

TERM	TWEETS	POTENTIAL REACH	PEAK	GROWTH	TPM
SheridanCMTP	217	484,455	27	-	
Canadian Music Theatre Project	30	42,587	8	329% ↑	
Michael Rubinoff	19	141,428	7	1,800% ↑	
Sheridan AND Come From Away	22	33,762	4	-	
Sheridan AND CMTP	24	44,327	6	-4% ↓	
Sheridan AND wecomefromaway	26	49,427	10	333% ↑	
total ⓘ	293	723,931		788% ↑	

**Sample posts from social media that connect Sheridan to Come From Away:**



**Kevin Y Wong**  
@kevinwong

 13 Oct 16

It is a truly exciting time to be in Canadian Musical Theatre! Incredible time at [@TheatreSheridan](#) [#CMTP](#) Canadian Music Theatre Project.

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3  
RETWEETS

13  
FAVORITES

616  
FOLLOWERS

5.9K  
TWEETS

EN  
LANGUAGE



**GAHS**  
@GahsYQX

6 Nov 16

A great review of a great weekend in Gander from the Globe & Mail. Something to be proud of and a special thank you to Michael Rubinoff  
[twitter.com/nestruck/statu...](https://twitter.com/nestruck/status...)



**J. Kelly Nestruck** ✓  
@nestruck

5 Nov 16

Newfoundland pride as Gander-set musical Come From Away sails to @Mirvish and then Broadway: [theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-a...](http://theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-a...)  
[pic.twitter.com/obrKMDv5y1](https://pic.twitter.com/obrKMDv5y1)

7 6 530 870 EN  
RETWEETS FAVORITES FOLLOWERS TWEETS LANGUAGE



**Acting Up Stage Co.**  
@ActingUpStage

13 Oct 16

What We're Reading Today: A look at @TheatreSheridan's incredible Canadian Music Theatre Project (CMTP) #CanadianMT- [ow.ly/1g483059NMm](http://ow.ly/1g483059NMm)  
[pic.twitter.com/BpqNtYRXXT](https://pic.twitter.com/BpqNtYRXXT)

2 3 4.4K 2.8K EN  
RETWEETS FAVORITES FOLLOWERS TWEETS LANGUAGE



**GAHS**  
@GahsYQX

16 Nov 16

We agree. A lot of credit goes to Michael Rubinoff for the production of "Come From Away". He has made Nfld'ers proud. [twitter.com/cmtwc/status/7...](https://twitter.com/cmtwc/status/7...)



**CMTWC**  
@cmtwc

16 Nov 16

Great article about our friend @mrubinoff and the creation of #comefromaway [thestar.com/entertainment/...](http://thestar.com/entertainment/...)

1 RETWEETS 6 FAVORITES 528 FOLLOWERS 866 TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**HK**  
@HeatherKosik

13 Nov 16

COME FROM AWAY tonight at the Royal Alex started at Sheridan in the Canadian Music Theatre... [instagram.com/p/BMxm4q2g7QX/](https://instagram.com/p/BMxm4q2g7QX/)

0 RETWEETS 3 FAVORITES 588 FOLLOWERS 11.2K TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**Julie Dixon**  
@JulieSDixon

13 Nov 16

Come From Away - I loved this powerful story of 9/11 groundings at Gander by Sheridan College students. Now playing at the Royal Alex. Go!

0 RETWEETS 0 FAVORITES 83 FOLLOWERS 1.9K TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**Marryl Smith**  
@marrylsmith

14 Nov 16

Hella happy I saw the original Come From Away at Sheridan four years ago. Hella sad I'm not in Canada to see it remounted professionally.

0 RETWEETS 8 FAVORITES 321 FOLLOWERS 3.3K TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**Lawson Vocal Studios**

@LawsonStudiosTO

13 Nov 16

What a show! Congratulations Michael Rubinoff, the writers and cast of this beautiful, funny and...  
[instagram.com/p/BMxiQKVjcgz/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BMxiQKVjcgz/)

0 RETWEETS 0 FAVORITES 114 FOLLOWERS 385 TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**EIN Music Industry**

@EINMusicNews

11 Oct 16

As "Come From Away" heads to Broadway, Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project launches three new musicals [s.einnews.com/Z5QQHsMocq](https://s.einnews.com/Z5QQHsMocq)

0 RETWEETS 1 FAVORITES 2K FOLLOWERS 27K TWEETS EN LANGUAGE





**Michael Coady**

@coadymichael

28 Oct 16

So proud of Irene Carl Sankoff and her husband for the achievement of #ComeFromAway ... and of Michael Rubinoff... [fb.me/6xorefdDk](https://fb.me/6xorefdDk)

0 RETWEETS 4 FAVORITES 1.2K FOLLOWERS 1.3K TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**PRNewswire Education**

@prnedu

21 Oct 16

Join #Sheridan's Cdn Music Theatre Project as we go back to #Gander where Come From Away began [prn.to/2etbEAH](https://prn.to/2etbEAH) [pic.twitter.com/LD3LIQcPMu](https://pic.twitter.com/LD3LIQcPMu)

0 RETWEETS 0 FAVORITES 1.4K FOLLOWERS 20.1K TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**tapeworthy**

@tapeworthy

15 Oct 16

And again, the Broadway-bound @wecomefromaway was in the first year of Canadian Music Theatre Project 4 years ago. NOW BROADWAY BOUND. BWAY! [twitter.com/tapeworthy/sta...](https://twitter.com/tapeworthy/sta...)



**tapeworthy**

@tapeworthy

15 Oct 16

Off to Canadian Music Theatre Project again which is being streamed again live starting at 7pm! New musicals workshopped to check out! [twitter.com/TheatreSherida...](https://twitter.com/TheatreSherida...)

0 RETWEETS 7 FAVORITES 2.3K FOLLOWERS 85.9K TWEETS EN LANGUAGE



**tapeworthy**  
@tapeworthy

13 Oct 16

Off to @SheridanCMT Canadian Music Theatre Project @theatresherdan while listening to alums! Including the Broadway bound @wecomefromaway! [pic.twitter.com/FXVI0jlkgd](https://pic.twitter.com/FXVI0jlkgd)

0

RETWEETS

6

FAVORITES

2.3K

FOLLOWERS

85.9K

TWEETS

EN

LANGUAGE



**Ryan Wilson** @Mr\_RyanWilson · 13 Oct 2016

As "Come From Away" heads to Broadway, **Sheridan's** Canadian Music Theatre Project launches three new musicals [... [fb.me/SdW9JxMo](https://fb.me/SdW9JxMo)



1



5



Erika Santillana @LittleBirdErika · 18 Dec 2016

SO PROUD of @SankoffandHein - & of @mrubinoff & @sheridancollege where the show first got its wings!! #sheridanpride



**Come From Away Finds the Humanity in Tragedy | ...**

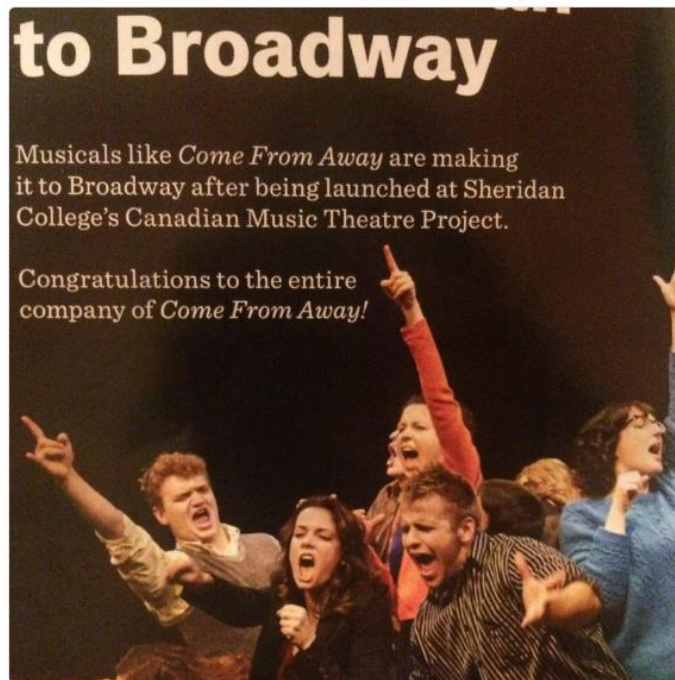
A musical about the meeting of strangers, whose flights were grounded in Newfoundland on 9/11, has the power to heal us all.

[playbill.com](http://playbill.com)



Rachel @rmspiar · 22 Dec 2016

How did I take me this long to notice the @TheatreSheridan cast on the inside cover of @wecomefromaway playbill?!





**Pam Damoff** @PamDamoff · 24 Nov 2016

If a show could have 5 stars out of 4, this is the one. Well deserved praise!

**Sheridan News** @NewsSheridan

4 stars from @globeandmail theatre critic @nestruck for @wecomefromaway first incubated @SheridanCMTP ... fw.to/gZdoEf



**Victoria Barber** @vicbarb\_\_ · 22 Nov 2016

Words cannot describe the brilliance that was witnessed. So proud of @SheridanCMTP and Canadian musical theatre. #ComeFromAway



**Victoria Bomben** @webmarkcom · 22 Nov 2016

Unforgettable performance. So proud to be Canadian and part of @sheridancollege . #cmt #ComeFromAway #SheridanNight



**Sheridan News** @NewsSheridan

A sea of familiar @sheridancollege faces in the audience. The show is about to begin! #ComeFromAway #SheridanNight





Sue Dunstan @TheSueDunstan · 22 Nov 2016

@wecomefromaway @SheridanCMT @TheatreSheridan  
@sheridanalumni





Rachel @rmspiar · 15 Nov 2016

Look at the handsome devils I found before first preview of @wecomefromaway! Break legs, @mrubinoff @SankoffandHein!



3 1 11



**Luc Trottier** @luc\_trottier · 13 Nov 2016

An electric night @wecomefromaway Dress Rehearsal! Bursting with so much #sheridanpride so thrilled to be working on this show!

← 1   ↻ 2   ❤️ 15



**Colleges Ontario** @CollegesOntario · 14 Nov 2016

The musical *Come From Away* that got its start at @sheridancollege is now a full-blown epic. on.thestar.com/2fPFgY4 via @TorontoStar #cdnpse



**In *Come From Away*, a small town's legacy soars | T...**

Gander's kindness to stranded Sept. 11 passengers is celebrated in a rip-the-roof-off musical, coming to Toronto Nov. 15.

thestar.com

←   ↻ 2   ❤️ 8



**nategardner** @nategardner · 15 Nov 2016

All my love to @wecomefromaway @mrubinoff for their first preview in Toronto @mirvish tonight! Get it!

← 1   ↻ 1   ❤️ 6



**Broadway Dreams** @bway\_dreams · 3 Nov 2016

A special moment with Canadian partner @mrubinoff as @wecomefromaway moves into their #Toronto home before they open on #Broadway



21





**Tony Batten**  
@BonyTatten

Follow

@mrubinoff @wecomefromaway Such a great experience from start 2 finish. I'll be in Toronto visiting during your first weekend. Might pop by!

RETWEET  
1

LIKES  
5



8:20 AM - 1 Nov 2016

Reply 1 Retweet 1 Like 5



**Erika Santillana** @LittleBirdErika · 31 Oct 2016

So happy so many ppl will get to hear this story. Congrats to all involved. So proud of u, @mrubinoff! [nyti.ms/2e6DhgK](https://nyti.ms/2e6DhgK)  
#comefromaway



**A 9/11 Parable, Resurrected in Newfoundland**

Residents of Gander are treated to an early look at "Come From Away," a Broadway-bound musical about how they welcomed travelers grounded ...

[nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)

Reply 1 Retweet 3 Like 11



**Mark Selby** @TheOtherSelby · 10 Nov 2016

The cast and crew of @weComeFromAway, led by @mrubinoff, brought their Broadway-bound show to the people of Gander:



**Come From Away: The Gander Concert**

The Broadway-bound, Canadian-made musical Come From Away tells the story of the events in Gander, NL, from September 11-15, 2001. To thank the citizens of...  
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)



**Sankoff and Hein** @SankoffandHein · 13 Nov 2016

Wow! Another big @wecomefromaway article in today's star after yesterday's! Great deserved props to @mrubinoff @TheatreSheridan @mirvish!



**Derrick Chua** @d\_chua

Loving Sunday Star's huge feature on @MRubinoff journey from idea of a 9/11 musical set in Gander current COME FROM AWAY by @SankoffAndHein!



 **Kevin Tuerff**  
@KevinTuerff

 Follow

.@SheridanCMTP Classy ad Letter to citizens of #Newfoundland from the founders of @wecomefromaway #Gander #kindness



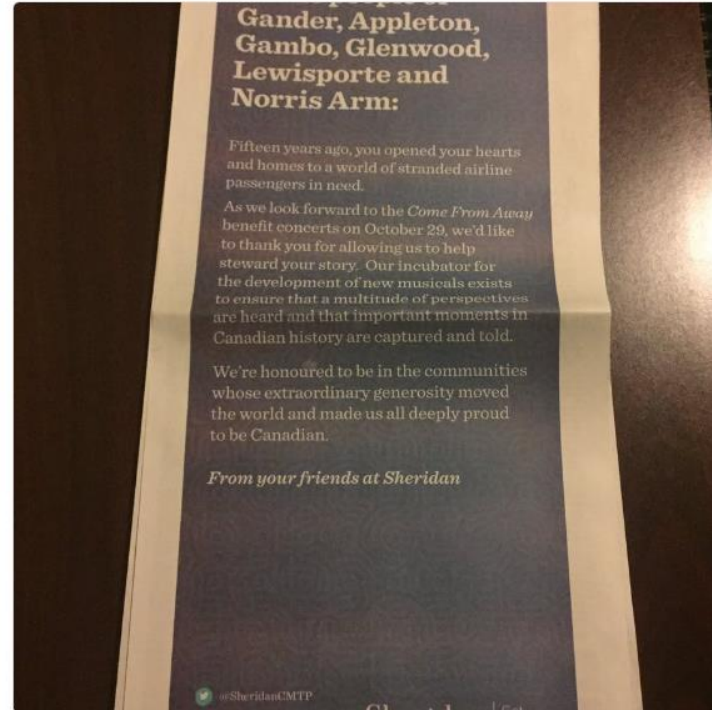
RETWEETS 5  
LIKES 9





**Michael Rubinoff** @mrubinoff · 27 Oct 2016

A full page ad in the Gander @beaconnl from the most incredible and classy employer @sheridancollege @SheridanCMTP #sheridanpride



  14  23

You Retweeted



**Michael Rubinoff** @mrubinoff · 27 Oct 2016

Working away in @townofgander at the hockey arena on @wecomefromaway In Concert. This is so exciting! It is going to be incredible! #cmtmp

1 9 30

Sample posts from the above searches that connect Sheridan to Come From Away from internal Sheridan accounts:



**SheridanCMTMP** @SheridanCMTMP · 29 Oct 2016

An epic visit to @townofgander and the @wecomefromaway concerts. A proud Sheridan moment. Thank you @mrubinoff!



9 32

Michael Rubinoff liked



**Sheridan Arts** @Sheridan\_Arts · 17 Feb 2016

ICYMI: **Sheridan's** musical **Come From Away** is headed to Broadway in 2017.  
Read more here. [sheridanartsblog.com/2016/02/17/she...](http://sheridanartsblog.com/2016/02/17/she...)



↩ 1 ❤ 1



SheridanCMT [@SheridanCMT](#) · 13 Nov 2016

Thrilled to be here, at the start of this moment, [@wecomefromaway](#) with [@SankoffandHein](#) & 400 [@sheridancollege](#) theatre students.  
#CMT #Proud



← 1   ↻ 7   ❤️ 21



SheridanCMTP @SheridanCMTP · 22 Nov 2016



Watch out @welcomefromaway - 400 of your biggest fans from @sheridancollege will be at the show tonight plus these alums from the #CMTP



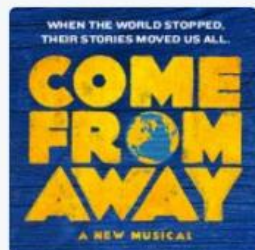
You, Sheridan Alumni and Michael Rubinoff





**Sheridan Alumni** @sheridanalumni · 14 Nov 2016

COME FROM AWAY hits Toronto before Broadway Nov 15- Jan 8.  
Congrats to grad @TheSueDunstan for joining for the cast!  
[bit.ly/2fS6sJA](http://bit.ly/2fS6sJA)



← ↻ 1 ❤️ 2



**SheridanCMTP** @SheridanCMTP · 24 Nov 2016

Proud to share the @Mirvish opening celebrations for @wecomefromaway with @SankoffandHein and the cast, past and present. #CMTF



Sheridan Alumni, Michael Rubinoff, Sue Dunstan and 5 others

← ↻ 5 ❤️ 17





**Sheridan News** @NewsSheridan · 30 Nov 2016

Tune in to @cbcradioq tomorrow for a performance of songs from #ComeFromAway, a musical incubated @SheridanCMTP



**The cast of Come From Away**

Tom Power hosts. Coming up on q, this Thursday December 1  
[cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca)

← 1   ↻ 6   ❤ 15   📺



**Viv Jean** @VivKJean · 30 Nov 2016

@NewsSheridan @CaesarSamayoa @cbcradioq @SheridanCMTP @cbcradio  
hopefully this be online after for those of us not in Canada lol

← 1   ↻   ❤ 2



**Sheridan News** @NewsSheridan · 22 Dec 2016

Musical workshopped @SheridanCMTP named as one of Toronto's Top 10 Arts and Culture Moments in 2016 by @torontoist |



**Toronto's Top 10 Arts and Culture Moments in 2016**

We take a look at Toronto's most significant cultural touchstones in 2016.

[torontoist.com](http://torontoist.com)

↩ 1   ↻ 1   ❤ 1   📊



**AB**

@AriesMian

Follow

@NewsSheridan @SheridanCMTP @torontoist  
one more feather in the cap. Congratulations.



LIKE  
1



9:00 AM - 22 Dec 2016

↩   ↻   ❤ 1



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 28 Oct 2016

At the @wecomefromaway dinner- and now we met the 2 Kevin's! What a night #CMTP @sheridancollege



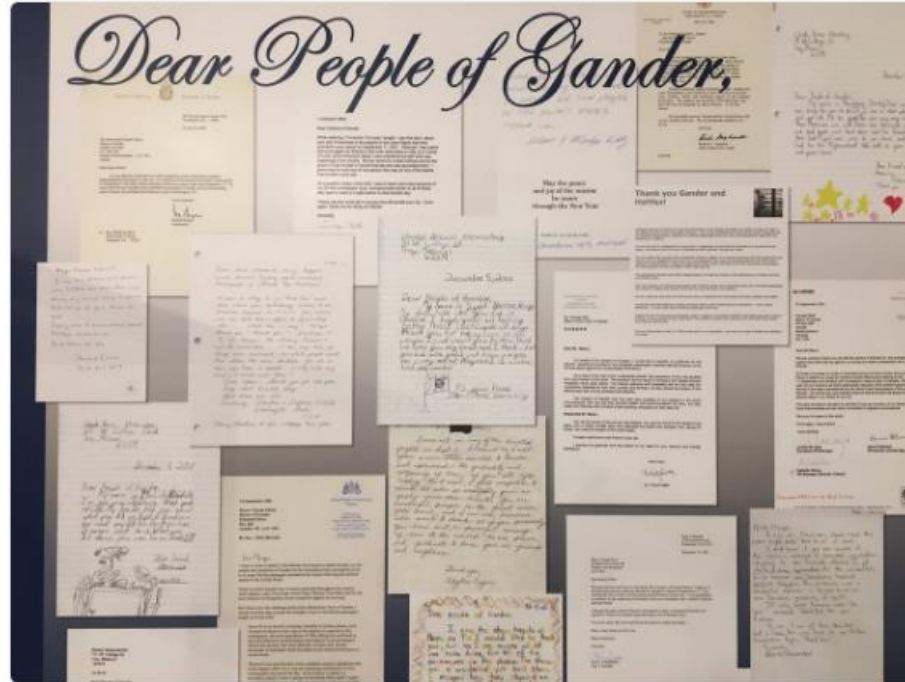
🔗 10 ❤️ 29 📊



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 29 Oct 2016



A snapshot of the thank you letters sent to @townofgander from "Come From Aways" the world over.. @SheridanCMTP brunch





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 30 Oct 2016



Before it hits Broadway @sheridancollege incubated musical gets standing ovation at home in Gander via @globeandmail



**Before heading to Broadway, Come From Away musical gets standin...**

Broadway-bound play set in Gander, Nfld., in days after 9/11, receives warm response at a special showing in the small Maritime town

[theglobeandmail.com](http://theglobeandmail.com)



You Retweeted



**Sheridan College** @sheridancollege · 31 Oct 2016

It was a weekend to remember with Sheridan in Gander, NL for #ComeFromAway festivities. Check out this recap [bit.ly/2eNs6gQ](http://bit.ly/2eNs6gQ) #cmtmp



**Sheridan's CMTP goes back to where Come From Away began**

**S** Sheridan College  @sheridancollege

Come From Away is a Broadway-bound musical about the people of Gander and its surrounding towns who opened their hearts and homes to passengers stranded on 9/11. It's the first musical developed...

 Moments





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 6 Oct 2016

As #ComeFromAway heads to #Broadway, Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project launches three new musicals. [bit.ly/2cXbbEc](https://bit.ly/2cXbbEc) #CMTP



Sheridan Arts, Theatre Sheridan, Michael Rubinoff and Sheridan College



Retweet 10

Like 13





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 20 Oct 2016



Media Advisory: @SheridanCMTP goes back to the @townofgander where #ComeFromAway began [bit.ly/2eydfFa](http://bit.ly/2eydfFa)



Sheridan College, Sheridan Arts and Michael Rubinoff







Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 3 Nov 2016



Like the characters sing in #ComeFromAway, this really is "the start of a moment" for Sheridan. [bit.ly/2flFunU](https://bit.ly/2flFunU)  
#SheridanCuriosities



Sheridan College, Sheridan Arts, Come From Away and 6 others





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 28 Oct 2016

A @SheridanCMTA shout out in @TimesSquareNYC! Read about the #ComeFromAway festivities getting underway in Gander: [bit.ly/2eydfFa](http://bit.ly/2eydfFa)



Sheridan College, Michael Rubinoff and Town of Gander



Retweet 21

Like 35





**Sheridan News** @NewsSheridan · 1 Nov 2016

.@sheridancollege, @SheridanCMTP and @mrubinoff mentioned in this @nytimes article on #ComeFromAway in Gander



**A 9/11 Parable, Resurrected in Newfoundland**

Residents of Gander are treated to an early look at "Come From Away," a Broadway-bound musical about how they welcomed travelers grounded ...

[nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com)



1



7





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 14 Nov 2016

How @mrubinoff cultivated the seed that is bringing @wecomefromaway to #Broadway #SheridanCMTP on.thestar.com/2gant20 via @torontostar



**How Come From Away made it to Broadway | Toronto Star**

With a lot of luck and some serendipity, Canadian musical about Sept. 11 heads to New York after its Toronto stop.

[thestar.com](http://thestar.com)





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 19 Nov 2016

Great to see these 2 full page ads in today's @globeandmail celebrating #SheridanCMTP & the show @wecomefromaway incubated @sheridancollege



10 26



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 22 Nov 2016

According to this 'guide to building a Broadway play in Canada,' it can't be done without @mrubinoff & @SheridanCMTP



**Come From Away: A step-by-step guide to building a Broadway play i...**

As told by the the married writing team of David and Irene Hein, the creators of Come From Away, a new musical at the Royal Alexandra Theatre until ...  
[news.nationalpost.com](http://news.nationalpost.com)





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 22 Nov 2016

.@wecomefromaway is the first production at the newly-restored, beautiful Royal Alex theatre #SheridanNight #cmtpt



Sheridan College, SheridanCMTPT and Mirivish Productions





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 22 Nov 2016

A sea of familiar @sheridancollege faces in the audience. The show is about to begin! #ComeFromAway #SheridanNight



Sheridan College, Come From Away and Sheridan Arts







Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 22 Nov 2016

#SheridanChancellor Hazel McCallion lauds @wecomefromaway and the innovative @SheridanCMTF at the post-show reception at The Royal Alexandra



Sheridan College and Mirvish Productions





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 24 Nov 2016

4 stars from @globeandmail theatre critic @nestruck for @wecomefromaway first incubated @SheridanCMTP ...



**Come From Away: Heart-warming musical lives up to the hype**

Broadway-bound show heart-warming, human-sized and – despite 9/11 always being in the background – is often delightfully funny

[theglobeandmail.com](http://theglobeandmail.com)



6



3





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 24 Nov 2016

Thank you Deputy Premier & Minister of @ONAdvancedEd Deb Matthews & MP Pam Damoff for coming to support a new Cdn musical born at Sheridan



Sheridan College, SheridanCMTP, Deb Matthews and 4 others



7



6





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 24 Nov 2016

Musical #ComeFromAway workshopped  
@SheridanCMTP receives ★★★★★  
in this @BroadwayWorld review



**BWW Review: COME FROM AWAY Is A Loving Tribute To The Best In ...**

Come From Away is not a musical about the September 11th terrorist attacks - if anything it is the exact opposite. Come From Away is a musica...  
[broadwayworld.com](http://broadwayworld.com)



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 24 Nov 2016

Accolades for @wecomefromaway keep rolling in #SheridanCMTP  
[torontosun.com/2016/11/24/com...](http://torontosun.com/2016/11/24/com...)





Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 25 Nov 2016

#ComeFromAway called relevant, authentic & a reason to be proud. Congrats @SheridanCMTP Review: [on.thestar.com/2fWfW5Z](http://on.thestar.com/2fWfW5Z) via @torontostar



**Come From Away finds joy in the darkness: review | Toronto Star**

The big-hearted, thoroughly enjoyable new musical celebrates the kindness of humble Newfoundlanders who welcomed thousands of travelers strand...  
[thestar.com](http://thestar.com)

← 8 ♡ 7 📊



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 30 Nov 2016

Another great review for @wecomefromaway, first incubated @sheridancollege @SheridanCMTP - [thesceneinto.com/2016/11/29/com](http://thesceneinto.com/2016/11/29/com)

← 2 ♡ 2 📊



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 30 Nov 2016

Tune in to @cbcradioq tomorrow for a performance of songs from #ComeFromAway, a musical incubated @SheridanCMTTP



**The cast of Come From Away**

Tom Power hosts. Coming up on q, this Thursday December 1  
[cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca)

← 1   ↻ 6   ❤ 15   📊



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · 1 Dec 2016

ICYMI check out the recording in the link below #cmtpp @SheridanCMTTP @sheridancollege



q @cbcradioq

"It's not very often a Canadian musical goes anywhere let alone to Broadway": @wecomefromaway brings their show to q [cbc.ca/1.3874427](http://cbc.ca/1.3874427)

←   ↻   ❤ 2   📊



Sheridan News @NewsSheridan · Jan 3

.@SheridanCMTP-incubated musical #ComeFromAway nominated for 5 Toronto MyTheatre Awards. Read via @MyEntWorld myentertainmentworld.ca/2017/01/2016-t...

5 6

Facebook posts connecting Sheridan to Come From Away:



Shyama Shoots Photography

28 Oct 16

782 fans

This year marks 10 years since I graduated from Sheridan College's Applied Photography program. And this weekend, in Gander, I am hired by the college to capture all the fun events being put off surrounding the Come From Away musical, based on Gander's role in the events surrounding 9/11. This musical was incubated at Sheridan and is having a big debut here in the town where it's legacy lives before heading to Broadway this coming February. Jazzed is not the word right now!!!

15 LIKES 1 COMMENTS 0 SHARES



Theatre Ontario

4.2K fans

14 Nov 16

The story of "Come From Away: From Sheridan College to Broadway", shared by Trevor Patt, one of the original cast members, on the Acting Up Stage "Musical Notes" blog.

8 LIKES 0 COMMENTS 0 SHARES



Sheridan Alumni  
3K fans

 6 Dec 16

Come From Away has opened to rave reviews in Toronto. It's the latest leg in the musical's long journey that began at Sheridan, and will end on Broadway in 2017. <http://bit.ly/2gzUaCq>




## Instagram posts connecting Sheridan to Come From Away:

From a Sheridan account:

Metrics:

2,779 impressions  
1,872 reach  
2014 engagements



 sheridan\_college

203 likes

9w

sheridan\_college That moment when a musical incubated at Sheridan's Canadian Music Theatre Project has its pre-Broadway run at The Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto. Last night we celebrated Sheridan Night @wecomefromaway and tonight is the official @mirvishproductions opening. #Sheridan #GetCreative #cmtpp #musictheatre #Toronto

toorrific Your profile is amazing!

 Add a comment...

⋮



julietomains  
Royal Alexandra The...

Follow

125 likes

10w

julietomains Pumped to see this show!!!  
#datenight #comefromaway #toronto  
#theatre #sheridanpride #broadwaybound

ferngullysun I saw it this afternoon! It was  
unreal! I cried literally the whole time.

melaiello08 Awww. I wish I saw this when it  
was here

♡ Add a comment...





Jeff Toste ( @jefftoste )

aaaahhhh finally seeing Come From Away w/ mamadukes! ••  
•••••••••• #comefromaway #welcometotherock  
#honorarynewfoundlander #sheridanpride

Royal Alexandra Theatre

12:51am 12/31/2016 0 73

Share 0

Tweet

iStock  
By Getty Images

10 IMAGES FOR \$40  
PLUS GET A 2-YEAR PRICE  
LOCK GUARANTEE

Buy Now



thesued  
Royal Alexandra The...

Follow

27 likes

9w

thesued #comefromaway #sheridannight  
@wecomefromaway @sheridan\_college  
@theatresherdan @sheridan\_alumni

♡ Add a comment...





thesued  
Royal Alexandra The...

Follow

33 likes

9w

thesued #comefromaway #sheridancollege  
@wecomefromaway @sheridan\_arts  
@sheridan\_alumni @theatresherdan



Add a comment...





alvintedjo  
Royal Alexandra The...

Follow

14 likes

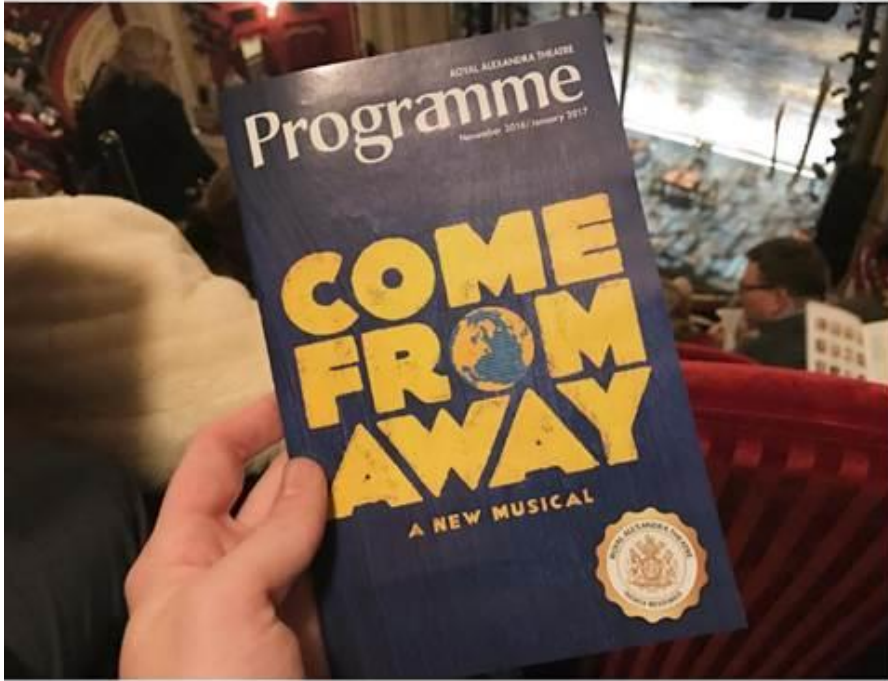
9w

alvintedjo Amazing opening night for #ComeFromAway. #SheridanCollege #Gander #Day328 #Photo365

burda1823 @alvintedjo I didn't know you we connected with this. Small world! Just saw it last weekend - it was amazing. My brother was at Sheridan when it was first being showcased

♡ Add a comment...





camayocarvay  
Royal Alexandra The...

Follow

57 likes

10w

camayocarvay So excited for this.  
#sheridanpride #comefromaway #toronto

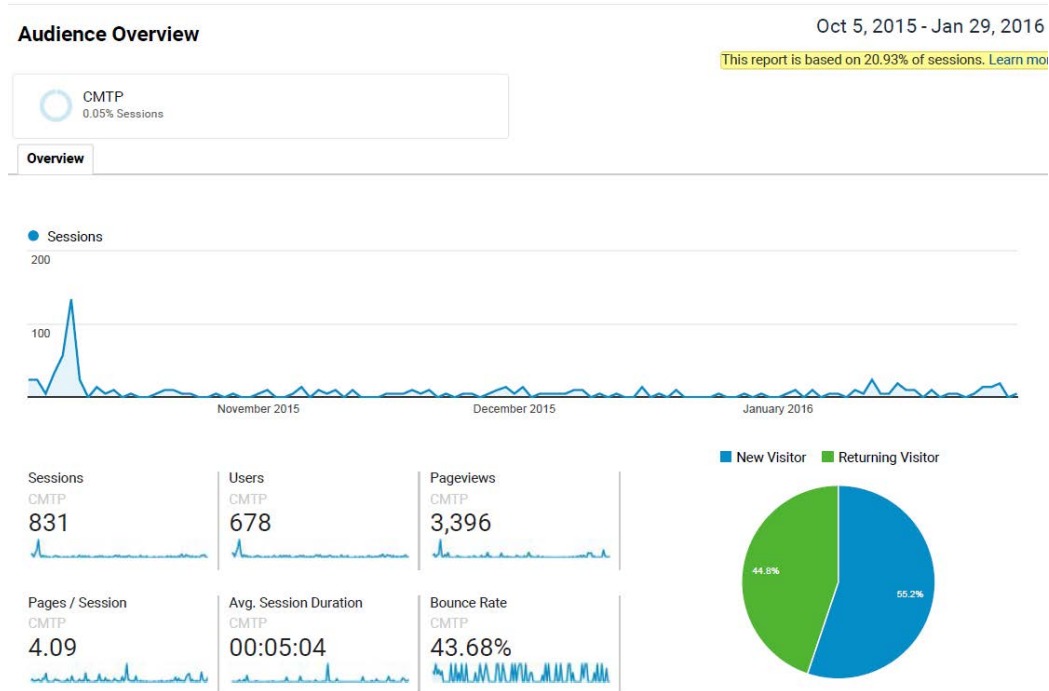
♡ Add a comment...



## CMTP page views / page views inbound from social

The re-launched, multimedia CMTP microsite received 3,687 page views since launching Oct. 15, 2016 (an overall 8.5% page view increase from the old web page when compared to the same, previous time period & inbound views from social increased by more than 700%).

Older CMTP web page:






### Acquisition Overview

Oct 5, 2015 - Jan 29, 2016

This report is based on 20.94% of sessions. [Learn more](#)

You are using a filtered view which may cause your ad-hoc channel grouping data to be inaccurate.

 CMTP  
0.05% Sessions

Primary Dimension:

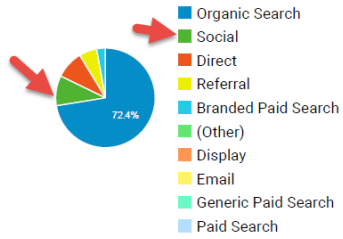
Default Channel Grouping

Conversion:

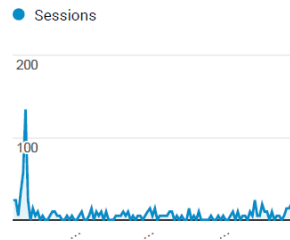
Goal 1: Apply Now

[Edit Channel Grouping](#)

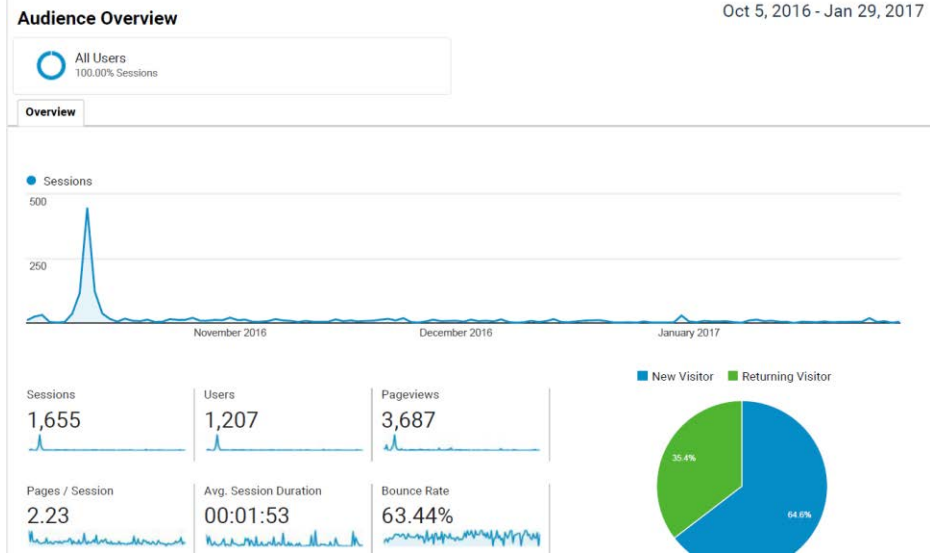
#### Top Channels



#### Sessions



New CMTP web page:



## Curiosities/Come From Away story metrics

Stories about CMTF/Come From Away on Sheridan's Curiosities blog received more than 750 page views by 635 unique visitors.

Page path level 1 ?	Pageviews ? ↓	Unique Pageviews ?
	443 % of Total: 3.47% (12,774)	366 % of Total: 3.57% (10,258)
1.  /the-start-of-a-moment/	443(100.00%)	366(100.00%)

## The Start of a Moment








Author Thomas King contends that history isn't the past, rather, it's the stories we share to recount it.

If that's the case, then the new musical *Come From Away* – first created and developed at Sheridan, and about to hit the Mirvish stage en route to Broadway – is making history, in more ways than one.

In 2011, Canadian writers Irene Sankoff and David Hein were approached by Michael Rubinoff, Associate Dean of Visual and Performing Arts at Sheridan with the idea of penning a musical about the extraordinary compassion and humanity that the people of Gander, Newfoundland and five surrounding communities showed to over 6,500 stranded passengers whose planes were diverted there for a week following 9/11

### You might also be interested in...

-  EVENTS / JAN 9, 2017  
The Musical that Stole our Hearts
-  EVENTS / JAN 4, 2016  
League of Bruins
-  EVENTS / OCT 8, 2015  
Exploring the Intricacy of Type Design
-  EVENTS / MAR 5, 2015  
Xin Nian Kua! Le – Happy New Year
-  EVENTS / DEC 16, 2014  
Students Line Up for 'Paw'sitive Reinforcement'

### Article Poll

Do you plan to see *Come From Away* on stage?

- Yes, I can't wait
- No, I'm not interested
- I already have!

Page path level 1 <sup>?</sup>	Pageviews <sup>?</sup> ↓	Unique Pageviews <sup>?</sup>
	98 % of Total: 0.77% (12,774)	83 % of Total: 0.81% (10,258)
1.  /plays-thing-theatre-sheridan-fan/	98(100.00%)	83(100.00%)

PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS / NOV 14, 2016 / SUSAN ATKINSON








## The Play's the Thing for this Theatre Sheridan Fan




Bob Cook is not entirely sure what prompted him to sign up for a [Theatre Sheridan](#) season six years ago, but he's sure of one thing – he was hooked from the first performance. From that day on, he has been a [regular donor to Theatre Sheridan](#).

In the years since, he has also been an enthusiastic patron, often attending multiple performances of the same show. "I like to see a show evolve, and witness the maturation of the artists over time. If I come to a dress rehearsal and see it later in its run, the difference is incredible."

### You might also be interested in...

-  [PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS / JAN 24, 2017](#)  
A Fixture of Mental Health and Wellness on Campus
-  [PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS / JUN 1, 2016](#)  
Artistry Meets Engineering at Sheridan
-  [PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS / AUG 31, 2015](#)  
Engineering an Opportunity to Improve Blind Hockey
-  [PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS / JUN 11, 2015](#)  
School by Design
-  [PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS / MAY 22, 2015](#)  
Small Red Ball

Page path level 1 <sup>?</sup>	Pageviews <sup>?</sup> ↓	Unique Pageviews <sup>?</sup>
	65 % of Total: 0.35% (18,444)	61 % of Total: 0.41% (14,902)
1.  /the-script-for-success/	65(100.00%)	61(100.00%)

RESEARCH / OCT 2, 2015 / CHRISTINE SZUSTAZEK



## The Script for Success



### You might also be interested in...



TEACHING & LEARNING / SEP 12, 2016  
Adding Some Colour to the In-Class Experience



RESEARCH / MAY 24, 2016  
An Inside Look at Secret Story



RESEARCH / MAY 11, 2016  
Health Espresso App Serves Up Mobile Health Management



ADMINISTRATORS/STAFF / APR 4, 2016  
Shifting the Paradigm on Aging




ADMINISTRATORS/STAFF / MAR 8, 2016  
Sheridan Wards off the Nian

How is it that the suburban town of Oakville, Ontario has become Canada's new hotbed for musical theatre development? To find out, I recently sat down with Michael Rubinoff, Sheridan's Associate Dean of the Department of Visual and Performing Arts, a lawyer and producer turned educator, and the brainchild behind the Canadian Music Theatre Project (CMTP).

### Appreciating the Art Form

Long before Rubinoff came to Sheridan in January, 2011, he practiced entertainment law and ran a commercial production company in Canada, bringing works to stage such as *Love, Loss and What I Wore* at

Page path level 1 <sup>?</sup>	Pageviews <sup>?</sup> ↓	Unique Pageviews <sup>?</sup>
	153 % of Total: 0.83% (18,444)	130 % of Total: 0.87% (14,902)
1.  /musical-stole-hearts/	153(100.00%)	130(100.00%)

EVENTS / JAN 9, 2017 / CHRISTINE SZUSTACZEK



## The Musical that Stole our Hearts



By all accounts, the new musical *Come From Away*, which wrapped up its Toronto engagement on January 8, has been a smashing success.

Audiences consistently gave the show a raucous and prolonged standing ovation. Theatre critics from the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *National Post*, and *Now Magazine* described the show using words like big-hearted, original, masterful, inspirational, sensible, cathartic, gorgeous, nuanced, and engaging.

Following the enviable reviews and powerful word of mouth recommendations, the show broke a 109-year old record at the *Royal Alexandra* theatre (selling \$1.7 million in tickets in just one week and nearly crashing

### You might also be interested in...

-  EVENTS / NOV 3, 2016  
The Start of a Moment
-  EVENTS / JAN 4, 2016  
League of Bruins
-  EVENTS / OCT 8, 2015  
Exploring the Intricacy of Type Design
-  EVENTS / MAR 5, 2015  
Xin Nian Kuai Le - Happy New Year
-  EVENTS / DEC 16, 2014  
Students Line Up for Paw'sitive Reinforcement

### Article Poll

Did you see *Come From Away* in Toronto?

