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COLOURS IN THE STORM – A MASTERPIECE

Prince Edward County, ON, (August 7, 2009):

"This show is the kind of theatrical experience people will talk about for weeks after."

So says Jack Evans, local freelance journalist, in his review of *Colours in the Storm*. He calls it a "gripping, dramatic, tuneful and humorous musical show" and praises the "awesome talents of a cast of five who could sing, dance, act and bring the characters to life."

The musical, by Jim Betts, is a study on the life and mysterious death of Algonquin painter Tom Thomson. It is the third and final production in Festival Players' 2009 Season, and kicked off its run August 6th in the beautifully restored barn at Fields on West Lake.

Colours in the Storm debuted at The Muskoka Festival in 1990, and has enjoyed many successful productions over the years. The play, about the life and mysterious death of one of Canada's most famous painters, tells the story of Thomson's life with a variety of colourful characters, a number of whom have been implicated in his possible "murder". The musical, which Betts calls "A Gallery of Scenes and Songs on the Life of Tom Thomson", features a hilarious blackfly-swatting stepdance and an exhilarating ride down a whitewater river.

Festival Players Artistic Director Sarah Phillips, who is directing this production, declares the show "witty, playful, theatrical – thoroughly enjoyable."

It took a lot of hard work to get to this point. In true repertory style, most of the actors in *Colours in the Storm* were rehearsing the show during the day and performing *Ship of Fire*, the first play in the season line-up, at night. The challenge went beyond a physical endurance test.

"It kept me invigorated all day and all night", said Stephen Sparks, the actor cast as Tom Thomson. "My brain was cooking." He explained that when a show reaches performance, an actor's days are usually empty save the couple of hours on stage each evening. Repertory theatre provides constant challenges, but also the opportunity to keep working and exploring. Sparks, who has played stages across Canada including the Stirling Festival Theatre, is enjoying his first trip south of Belleville. "I'll be back."

Other cast members include *Ship of Fire* favourites Michael O'Hara, Martin Julien and Eliza-Jane Scott. Randi Helmers joins the company as do three musicians from the Toronto improvised music scene: Tania Gill, Victor Bateman and Rob Clutton. Music Director John Millard, a longtime performer and a composer in Canadian theatre, rounds out the troupe.

***Colours in the Storm* plays August 5 – 21, 2009** at Fields on West Lake near Bloomfield. The last week of the run is already filling up although earlier performances still have some room. Book soon to avoid disappointment.

Tickets can be purchased by calling 613.471.1991 or emailing boxoffice@festivalplayers.ca

More details about *Colours in the Storm* and the entire Festival Players season can be found on their website: www.festivalplayers.ca

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