

Dark clouds

Colours in the Storm is rousing, funny and heartbreaking; brings audience to their feet

The story of Tom Thomson's death is portrayed as elusively as the colours he tried so desperately to capture in his paintings of the north country of Algonquin Park.

It is this hauntingly elusive quality that seeps into every crevice of Jim Betts's play *Colours in the Storm* (playing through Sunday and continuing next week at Fields on West Lake).

The story, richly presented through music, song, humour and longing tells of the last few years of Thomson's life—before he mysteriously disappeared on Canoe Lake on July 8, 1917. Though nominally a story about Thomson, *Colours in the Storm*, seeks to show how Thomson affected those around him; those who cared for him.

The portrait Betts paints is of a passionate but narcissistic artist, played masterfully by Stephen Sparks. Thomson is consumed with his craft but neglectful of the consideration, needs and feelings of those who care most for him. The depth of his carelessness is etched deep into the face of his lover Winnie Trainor, beautifully and delicately performed by Elizabeth-Jane Scott. It is also reflected in the anguish of his



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Stephen Sparks shines as Tom Thomson with Randi Helmers portraying Annie Fraser.

rival for her affections — an American named Martin Bletcher (Michael O'Hara). If Thomson was murdered on Canoe Lake that July day, Bletcher was widely suspected as the culprit.

Once again the Festival Players have pulled off a stunning production filled with great performances, beautiful singing and thoughtful, artful accompaniment.

Inexplicably the house was just half full on Saturday night — an ominous sign for the future of summer theatre in the County. For, despite their small numbers, the enthusiasm and appreciation the audience showed to the performers and production was real and heartfelt.

It is an accessible work, with great songs, well performed.

Colours in the Storm runs every night through Sunday with a matinee added on Sunday afternoon. It continues next Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Call 613.471.1991 for ticket information or visit their website at: festivalplayers.ca