

# Westmounter Adam Blanshay makes a name for himself on Broadway



Mike Cohen

NEW YORK- Adam Blanshay has loved musical theatre for most of his life. These days, the 32 year old native of Westmount is living out a dream on Broadway and London, England as producer and he already has a Tony Award statuette to his name.

Blanshay is the CEO of JFL Theatricals, launched just over a year ago as a new division of the Just For Laughs Festival. The Tony Award, in fact six of them, came from the smash Broadway hit Kinky Boots (www.kinkybootsthemusical.com) which nabbed best new musical. It continues to play before capacity crowds at the Al Hirschfeld Theatre. His division is also behind the popular double bill of Twelfth Night and Richard III. Next on the agenda in New York are Rocky the Musical and Woody Allen's Bullets Over Broadway. As for London, where Blanshay now spends half the year, JFL Theatricals has invested in over half-dozen shows.

While in New York recently I went to see Kinky Boots and it quite spectacular. Grammy winner Cyndi Lauper made history with Kinky Boots as the first solo woman ever to receive the Tony Award for Best Score. The storyline revolves around Charlie Price (Tony nominee Stark Sands) who has suddenly inherited his father's shoe factory, which is on the verge of bankruptcy. Trying to live up to his father's legacy and save his family business, Charlie finds inspiration in the form of drag queen Lola (Tony winner Billy Porter). A fabulous entertainer in need of some sturdy stilettos, Lola turns out to be the one person who can help Charlie become the man he's meant to be.

"Two years ago I attended workshops for Kinky Boots that the lead producer gave," Blanshay explained. "I initially came aboard as an independent producer. When I founded JFL Theatricals this became part of the package. I really connected with the score of this

show and the message of acceptance, which resonated with me profoundly. I was not accepted by my peers growing up."

By signing on as a producer Blanshay had to raise a substantial amount of money from investors. Based on the percentage he brought in, JFL Theatricals owned that portion of the show. He attends meetings with the other producers every few weeks and has seen the actual show more times than he can remember. He shared with me the fact that a national tour will soon be announced for the fall of 2014 while international productions are also in the mix. Will it be coming to his hometown in Montreal? "I have nothing to confirm right now," he said. "But given our Montreal connection, I hope so."

While growing up, Blanshay attended Selwyn House and St. George's. He left the former after not being accepted as a gay teenager. However, upon a recent return visit, he was pleased to see how things have changed and that the school now had a gay-straight alliance.

You can read my complete interview with Blanshay in the March 14 edition of The Suburban Magazine.

**COHEN CHATTER:** Former Conservative candidate Neil Drabkin had X Factor judge Simon Cowell, his girlfriend, Lauren Silverman and their newly born baby Eric basking in the sun right next to him down in Bal Harbour Florida recently. Drabkin, who is a well known local lawyer, said that Montrealers on the beach lined up to take pictures with Cowell who was very generous with his time... Hillary Clinton will speak in Montreal on March 18. Her husband, former US President Bill Clinton, has spoken here many times. But now comes word that their daughter Chelsea will be in town on November 23 to deliver the keynote address at the annual Israel Cancer Research Fund Women of Action brunch.

Have you got something to share? Email [mcohen@thesuburban.com](mailto:mcohen@thesuburban.com) or call 514-484-9203, ext. 307. Follow me on Twitter @mike-cohencl and on my blog at <http://blog.thesuburban.com>

## EMERALD ASH

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both the initial host as well as for any susceptible tree in its immediate vicinity. Although there is no known method (as yet) to eradicate the toxic insect, it is possible to protect susceptible trees by injecting them with an ecologically safe pesticide that will provide them with some measure of immunity over a two year period after which they must once again be inoculated if they are to survive the pest. As opposed to doing little except cutting down trees once they are known to be infected, Ménard said that the city's new spring offensive will now include immediate plans to inoculate every susceptible tree within a diameter of anywhere between 200 to 300 meters away from an infected tree.

"We could not afford to hesitate," said Ménard. "We had to take immediate action if we did not want the situation to

become a serious problem."

While the city has already spent over \$3 million over the past three years in order to deal with the growing problem, Ménard's pro-active approach indicates that everybody, including the city's new mayor, understands what the insect's presence could mean for the more than 300 000 ash trees that cover the island of Montreal.

While Ménard (and the rest of the city's leading politicians) recognize the immediate problems posed by the bug, questions were raised about the threat posed by infected trees located on private properties.

"We're still working on it," Ménard said, referring to attempts to get private property owners to participate in the inoculation program. "I'm hoping that 'Montreal Inc.' will understand how serious we are about this problem and help us find the money we need to fight this bug," he said. ■

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