

FEATURE

NEW YORK
Jewish Montreal Broadway producer adds Tony Award to his mantel

Mike Cohen
 QUEBEC BUREAU CHIEF

Adam Blanshay has loved musical theatre for most of his life. These days, the 32-year-old Jewish Montrealer is living his dream on Broadway and London as a producer. He already has a Tony Award to his name.

Blanshay is the CEO of JFL Theatricals, launched just over a year ago as a new division of the prestigious Montreal-based 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 is co-producing more

than a half-dozen shows.

The storyline for *Kinky Boots* revolves around Charlie Price (Andy Kelso) 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) who inspires him to turn the business around.

STILL PINCHING HIMSELF

"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."

Blanshay is still pinching himself regarding the Tony Award.



Adam Blanshay proudly showcases his Tony Award.

"There was no clear sign that night we were going to win," he said. "So we sat there for

four hours and the last award of the night was for best new musical. When our name was

announced I jumped out of my chair. It was surreal to say the least. The show is a huge success. I hope it runs forever. We have no closing date."

Blanshay grew up in the tony Montreal island suburb of Westmount, attending two prominent private schools – 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.

SURROGATE MOTHER

His Broadway dreams were perhaps jump-started via Montreal's legendary Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre. He enrolled in theatre at McGill University and helmed a production of *Evita*. Years later, when he moved to New York, he co-produced a Broadway version with pop icon Ricky Martin. One of his confidantes in New York today remains a

lady named Anita Waxman, who has been a fixture on Broadway for decades. She took him under her wing early on and today he considers her a Jewish surrogate mother.

The state of Israel is close to Blanshay's heart. His mom Roni is from Ramat Gan and as such he has spent countless summers there. His younger brother is studying at The Interdisciplinary Centre (IDC) in Herzliya.

You can see *Kinky Boots* on Broadway from Tuesdays through Sundays, with two shows each on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The running time is 2 hours and 20 minutes, which includes one 15-minute intermission. It is appropriate for ages 10 and up. Children under the age of four are not permitted in the theatre. Tickets can be purchased online or by calling Telecharge at (212) 239-6200. The *Kinky Boots* tour will also play at the Royal Alexandria Theatre in Toronto in June 2015.

B'NAI BRITH CANADA

HONOURS RENDRE HOMMAGE A

Eric Bissell

HONORARY LIFETIME PRESIDENCY PRESIDENT HONORIFIQUE A VIE

"Lighting the Way"

Dinatoire

Musée des beaux-arts

April/Avril 3 2014 • 18:00-21:00 h

Glass Court/Atrium

Montreal

For information:

514-733-5377 # 127 • hlevine@bnaibrith.ca

Hold the date / Réserver la date

The Alzheimer's Centre for Excellence

We are not taking a family member with Alzheimer's off your hands. We are taking them into our arms.

As part of our nurturing environment, we provide:

- an attending **physician** on site • 24-hour emergency registered **nursing services** • new technologies, products and services through our affiliation with the **Ivey International Centre for Health Innovation** • help with the **activities of daily living**, including dressing and personal hygiene • managing and assisting with **medication** • **personal monitoring** of each resident • **bedroom call bell monitoring** • **supervision** at meals, if required • **mental stimulation programs** • activation programs • **Shabbat** and holiday programs • **in-house catered meals**
- everything is included in **one monthly charge** – there are no hidden fees, no extra costs.

To arrange a family visit and meal, call 647-932-7913

B'NAI BRITH CANADA

Serving the Community since 1875

IMMEDIATE OCCUPANCY AVAILABLE