

Broadway review: Come from Away provides uplifting Canadian story from 9/11 tragedy

Article by Alexandra Cohen, Photography Matthew Murphy



Come From Away the new Broadway musical by Canadian husband and wife duo Irene Sankoff and David Hein, tells the often-forgotten story of the 38 planes that were diverted to Gander, Newfoundland on September 11, 2001. While the tragedy of 9/11 does not sound like the most uplifting premise for a musical, the show's creators refer to it instead as a story about 9/12 and the days that followed. Come From Away, to put it simply, is a 100-minute musical celebrating human empathy and kindness. It is showing at Broadway's Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre (236 West 45th Street).

The small town of Gander nearly doubled its population, turning itself upside down to accommodate the visitors, many of whom spoke different languages and came from different cultural backgrounds.



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Come From Away, which was nominated for seven Tony Awards including Best Musical, features an outstanding ensemble of actors who work together to tell this deeply moving story. Each performer plays multiple roles, and they transition seamlessly from Newfoundlanders to the people on the planes under the expert direction of Tony Award-winner Christopher Ashley.

Of particular note in the cast is Tony-nominee Jenn Colella, who amongst other roles, plays Captain Beverly Bass. Bass was, as sung by Colella, "the first female American captain in history", and her plane flying from Paris to Dallas was one of the 38 diverted to Gander. She has been to see Come From Away a whopping 61 times thus far. "I never get tired of it," Bass told the New York Times, also adding "I can't believe I've seen it that many times – but I'm ready to go back".

Leaving the theatre following the show, I couldn't help but feel exceptionally proud to be Canadian. Come From Away is laced with inside jokes meant just for us, like references to Tim Hortons and Molson beer, along with stereotypical jokes like a moose standing in the middle of the road and the communal disappointment felt when hockey is cancelled.

While history largely forgot about the incredible people of Gander, that cannot be said anymore. In June, it was announced that for their hospitality and kindness, the town of Gander will be honored as the first municipality to win an international humanitarian award from the Values-In-Action Foundation.

Run, don't walk, to see this incredible Broadway production. Come From Away will also launch a North American tour across the United States and Canada at Seattle's 5th Avenue Theatre in October 2018, and a third production has been announced to play Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre beginning on Tuesday, February 13, 2018. ■

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