



**The Blyth Festival Rides Again in 2023  
Bigger, Better, and Bolder than Ever**

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For immediate release

Blyth, ON

After two defiant years undefeated by the global pandemic, the Blyth Festival is back bigger than ever. Celebrating their 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, the 2023 Blyth Festival is set to present its largest season ever with seven productions, both indoors and outdoors, running June 14<sup>th</sup>-September 9<sup>th</sup>. Both Memorial Hall in the town centre and the newly built outdoor Harvest Stage will host the season.

Artistic Director, Gil Garratt, says “you’ve simply never had more reasons to come to Blyth.”

**A Quintessential Canadian Classic Reimagined**

It’s been twenty years since the fairgrounds in Blyth resounded with horse hooves, and were lit up with fateful fire in the night. And in 2023, the local legend continues in three landmark productions in an unparalleled setting.

Outdoors, on our Harvest Stage: ***The Donnellys Trilogy*** by James Reaney, adapted and abridged by Gil Garratt.

No other story from Huron County’s history burns as boldly, and this season audiences can see all three plays in three consecutive nights.

The three plays, ***Sticks and Stones***, ***The St Nicholas Hotel***, and ***Handcuffs*** will all be performed by one single company of ten actors, who will tell the tale from the killing of Patrick Farrell, to Johannah Donnelly’s march to Goderich to save her husband from the gallows, to the Stagecoach wars, to the Queen’s Hotel, to the Vigilance Society in the Cedar Swamp Schoolhouse, to the fiery February night when justice, revenge, and murder were left indistinguishable in the ashes.

With the blessing of the Reaney family, Garratt has newly adapted these three plays.

This will be the first time in decades that all three of these touchstone plays have been performed in repertory with each other, affording audiences the chance to take in the whole cycle over three nights.

Says Garratt:

*"I believe 2023 is the perfect time to re-ignite the telling of the Donnelly story in Blyth. At its heart, this is a story about grit, family, betrayal, the erosion of community, the rise of secret societies, the shadow of conspiracy, and the limits of faith. The show will be filled to the brim with folk music, stagecoaches, and live fire in the night. "*

Meanwhile, on the Festival stage at Blyth Memorial Community Hall, theatre goers will be welcomed back to our intimate, indoor setting, for four Canadian plays, three of them commissioned and developed right here at Blyth Festival.

The first show indoors is the long-awaited premiere of Sophia Fabilli's ***Liars at a Funeral***. This play was originally slated to open our 2020 season.

***Liars at a Funeral*** is the hilarious story of a grandmother who fakes her own death in a last-ditch hope to get her dysfunctional family in one room, but with catering and bouquets. Full of classic farce gags (who's in the casket? who's in the closet? who's in the kitchen?) the play builds to a hysterically funny pitch, and ends with an unexpected revelation, bringing the family together again...well sort of...mostly.

Cancelled in 2020, finally bringing *Liars at a Funeral* to the stage is a dream come true.

And speaking of delayed dreams: opening next is ***The Waltz*** by Marie Beath Badian.

*The Waltz* is a gentle romance about a young man on his way to University in BC, who stops for one fateful night under the Prairie stars, and meets a girl he will never forget.

Produced by Factory Theatre and directed by Nina Lee Aquino, (the newly-minted Artistic Director of English Theatre at the National Arts Centre), *The Waltz* is the second in a trilogy by Ms. Badian, the first being the hit *Prairie Nurse* which premiered in Blyth in 2013. This is the show that was cancelled in 2022, due to covid.

Up next, the world premiere of ***Chronicles of Sarnia*** by Matt Murray (formerly of Sarnia). This is a comedy about community, in all its, err, community-ness.

The play follows Erin, a passionate, retired history teacher, who has convinced the City of Sarnia to create a 100-year time capsule for future generations to open. She organizes a town-wide meeting for community input, with a replica of the capsule itself, ready to momentarily unveil. But in spite of homemade Nanaimo bars, only her husband, a department store employee, and a young woman who is there for... complicated reasons, show up. Oh, and the janitor. But refusing to reschedule, Erin, undaunted, takes this tiny group in hand and sets about distilling the essence of, well, of Sarnia.

Finally, the season closes with ***The Real McCoy*** written and directed by Andrew Moodie.

This play tells the biography of the inventor Elijah McCoy (1843-1929), whose name became a byword for quality, as in “the real McCoy.” The play tries to explain why we’ve all heard the expression and yet hardly any of us know why... And in answering that question, reclaims a fascinating man’s life from undeserved obscurity.

Born in Chatham, ON to runaway American slaves, McCoy showed so much promise as a boy in school that he won a scholarship to study mechanical engineering at Edinburgh University, where he developed an abiding love for large steam engines. After graduation, McCoy moved to the US where locomotives were radically changing the future of the growing republic. Only after emigrating did he learn that no one in the States believed a Black man could be an engineer, and so he was set to stoking boilers and shoveling coal.

Nevertheless, McCoy continued to dream and ultimately devised a solution to one of the greatest obstacles facing steam engines in his day. McCoy’s invention would go on to be sold all over the world, make him a household name and revolutionize locomotion on every continent; so long as he held to his partners’ proviso: to never tell buyers he was Black.

Award winning playwright, Andrew Moodie, last performed on the Festival stage in 2007’s *World Without Shadows*, and wrote the 1998 hit *Wilbur County Blues*.

The 2023 season will run June through September, 2023. Full season details will be available soon on the Blyth Festival website [www.blythfestival.com](http://www.blythfestival.com)

Tickets go on sale to members in the month of January, starting January 9, 2023 (depending on level of membership) at 9am by phone only. Sales will open to the General Public beginning April 3 at 9am, by phone and online.

Passes are back! Until February 4, 2023 passes are for sale for ***The Donnelly Trilogy*** for \$135 (a savings of \$5 per ticket). And until March 31, Bonanza weekend passes will be for sale for \$175, a savings of \$25.

Bonanza Weekend will run Aug. 4-6, 2023 and will include *The Donnelly Trilogy* and the world premiere of *Chronicles of Sarnia*.

If you would like to support the work of the Blyth Festival by becoming a member please call 1-877-862-5984 or visit [blythfestival.com](http://blythfestival.com) for details.

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Thank you to the following Government agencies for their continued support:

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The Blyth Festival was founded in 1975 and to this day remains true to its’ original mandate: To produce and present the best in Canadian storytelling.

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For more information regarding the Blyth Festival or the 2023 season please contact  
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