



# From Norfolk to the Frontlines: *Billy Bishop Goes To War*

**Musical to Feature Hampton Roads Native Arsenault**  
January 19 through February 7, 2010 at Norfolk's Wells Theatre

Virginia Stage Company is pleased to present *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, written and composed by John Gray in collaboration with Eric Peterson, as its first play of 2010. This musical tells the true story of a rough, young Canadian whose sharp eyesight and unemotional view of war thrust him into the role of WWI fighter pilot ace and Allied war hero. The show runs January 19 through February 7, 2010 at Norfolk's Wells Theatre.

Hampton native and Christopher Newport University alum Freddy Arsenault returns to Hampton Roads following his recent performance on Broadway in *The Royal Family* to tackle the challenging role as Billy Bishop and nearly 20 other characters. Arsenault will voice a host of characters ranging from King George V to the dour butler Cedric, who make their marks on Billy's passage from earnest young man to war hero. Bob Stillman, as the Piano Player, and Paul Lincoln, as the Accordionist, lend musical accompaniment and storytelling assistance.

One of history's most unlikely war heroes, Bishop nearly flunked out of military school in disgrace. His time in the mud as a cavalry soldier and in the air as a pilot's observer hardly prepared Bishop for the fame he would experience when he became the Great War's most-decorated Allied pilot.

*Billy Bishop Goes To War* has been a favorite of audiences since its premiere in 1978, touring nationally and internationally including a much-lauded production at VSC in 1991. The musical won the 1981 Los Angeles Drama Critics' Award, the 1982 Chalmers Canadian Play Award, and the 1983 Governor General's Award for drama. A CBC/BBC televised co-production of the musical won an ACTRA award for best television program.

In special recognition of their service, VSC invites all active-duty military members to a Military Appreciation reception and performance of *Billy Bishop* on Sunday, January 24, 2010. Service members in uniform will be admitted free to the performance, with a complimentary pre-show reception beginning at 1 pm. The performance begins at 2 pm. For tickets, service members should call (757) 627-6988, ext. 358.

Tickets for *Billy Bishop Goes to War* range in price from \$10 to \$45. Dress Rehearsal is Sunday, January 17 at 7 pm with a Suggested Donation of \$10, and the popular Best Ticket in Town performances are Tuesday, January 19 at 7 pm, Wednesday and Thursday, January 20 and 21 at 8 pm with all tickets at \$15. Opening night is Friday, January 22 at 8 pm. Tickets may be purchased through Ticketmaster by calling 800-982-2787 or at any Ticketmaster outlet, at the VSC box office, or online at [www.vastage.com](http://www.vastage.com).

Next, VSC will present *Around The World In 80 Days* adapted by Mark Brown from the novel by Jules Verne, running February 23 – March 14, 2010. The VSC's season will close with the American classic *A Raisin In The Sun*, by Lorraine Hansberry on the 50th anniversary of its Broadway premiere, running March 30 – April 18, 2010. Co-produced with the Virginia Arts Festival, VSC will also present *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)* April 21 - 25. Don't miss this wild, irreverent romp through 37 plays in 97 minutes.

Now in its 31st season, Virginia Stage Company is the region's only fully professional resident theater company, serving an audience of nearly 90,000 yearly. Since its founding, Virginia Stage Company has made significant contributions to the quality of life in Hampton Roads: presenting more than 125 plays through more than 2,500 performances; revitalizing and renovating the historic Wells Theatre; providing educational programs for students of all ages; and preserving the legacy of live theatre for future generations.

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Media Release

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mjohnson@vastage.com

Chris Hanna,  
Artistic Director  
Keith Stava  
Managing Director  
P.O. Box 3770  
Norfolk, VA 23514  
P: 757-627-6988  
F: 757-628-5958  
[www.vastage.com](http://www.vastage.com)