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Where the Blood Mixes: The Perfect Blend

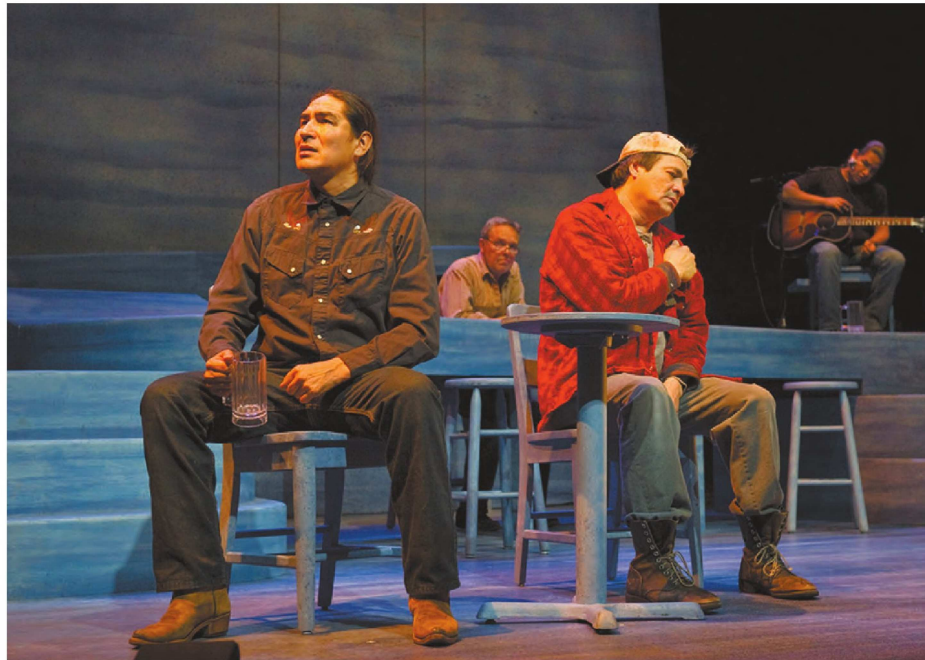
Award-winning play makes stop in Victoria during national tour

» Stacey Curtis

In a perfect combination of humour and heartache, *Where the Blood Mixes* tells the story of a shared past full of painful events and a present of unprocessed grief. It opens with a couple of long-time (since childhood) friends and drinking buddies: Mooch (Ben Cardinal), who continually steals from his wife, June (Margo Kane), to pay his bar tab; and Floyd (Billy Merasty), whose daughter, Christine (Kim Harvey), was taken from him by social workers as a young child. It then adds a dash of bartender, George (Tom McBeath), whose acting is so on point I nearly stood and requested a drink myself.

It is not McBeath's acting alone that is so harmoniously believable. *Each* cast member holds their place. In true Fernwood style, it is a community of characters on stage, where each member shares the weight equally for producing a well-balanced play. In this cast, there is no weakest link and the male-female energy is equally charged.

The play is 90 minutes, *sans* intermission. The time soars by like a chinook. The action is accompanied by the musical soundings of



Top: Billy Merasty, Tom McBeath, Ben Cardinal, Jason Burnstick; Right: Kim Harvey, Billy Merasty; Left: Kim Harvey, Margo Kane, Ben Cardinal. Photos by David Cooper.

Juno-award nominee and CAMA Award winner Jason Burnstick, who plays the weissenborn and lap slides, which, he claims, "may be his final musical resting place."

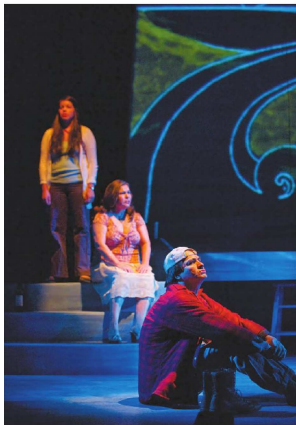
The script is simple, with dialogue that is real and relaxed. Within minutes of the play's beginning the history of relationships between characters is evident. Both the complexity of human beings and the simplicity of small truths are touched upon throughout. These elements weave in and out of one another like the currents of the river, a character all of its own in *Where the Blood Mixes*, whose importance is reinforced by the play's flowing stage design.

The story's humour glows in characters whose outward appearance of dysfunction is obvious to them and is yet no match for the love and loyalty that binds them. When Floyd's long-lost daughter returns, he



dresses in all black to spiff himself up and impress this city girl. "You look like a bum going to a funeral," Mooch tells him (my paraphrase). In this play, where friends are like family and family—and history—are like sicknesses we cannot release, it is not

from those around them that the characters try to hide, but from themselves. Through tomfoolery, music, brawls and fishing tales, humour and acceptance triumph over all things dreary. *Where the Blood Mixes* runs at the Belfry until February 21, 2010. ☺



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