

ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS BRINGS W.O. MITCHELL'S CURLING CLASSIC BACK TO THE MARTHA COHEN THEATRE STAGE

CALGARY, February 20, 2024 – After over 25 years, [Alberta Theatre Projects](#) (ATP) is thrilled to be bringing W.O. Mitchell's hilarious smash-hit comedy, *The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon*, back to the Martha Cohen Theatre. A nod to the company's past, and a springboard into ATP's 50th Anniversary Season next year in 2024-25, this new take on Mitchell's classic rural Alberta play about curling is running from February 20 until March 10. Calgary will be awash with curling action and curling stories this February: the first week of ATP's production coinciding with the final week of the 2024 Scotties Tournament of Hearts.

"We are excited to bring back a classic Canadian play with a fresh twist," says ATP Artistic Director Haysam Kadri. "*The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon* takes centre stage (ice) as the Scotties Tournament of Hearts sweeps its way into our city! Amidst the hustle and bustle of Calgary in February, all eyes will be on the long-standing traditions of curling and ATP's storied history, as two iconic institutions coincide to create an unforgettable bonspiel experience."

The play follows Wullie MacCrimmon, a shoemaker in the 1930s foothills town of Wild Rose. When one day, Wullie muses aloud that he would give anything to skip his curling team in the MacDonald Brier, the Devil (a travelling salesperson who deals in wholesale souls and retail sin) suddenly appears and makes him an offer. Wullie makes a counter offer, and one of the greatest matches in curling history is on – the Black Bonspiel! When the Devil appears with a curling team—Judas Iscariot (second), Macbeth (third) and Lizzie Borden (skip)—Wullie and his team are in for one hell of a match.

ATP first produced *The Black Bonspiel* in 1997 in association with Mount Royal College (Department of Theatre and Speech). The first two professional stage productions were done by the Peterborough Festival of Canadian Theatre in 1977, and Theatre Calgary in 1979. To date, there have been over seventy productions of W.O. Mitchell's classic play.

"To me, this show is a celebration," says *The Black Bonspiel's* director, Christian Goutsis. "It's a celebration of ATP's past, while also celebrating a new dawn for ATP as the company heads toward a 50th Anniversary. It's a celebration of an amazing cast of Alberta actors, and of a renowned Western Canadian writer, who himself was celebrating the prairies, and the characters who inhabit it, with this play."

"Most of all though," Goutsis adds, "It's a celebration of the great game of curling!"

The play's scripted bonspiel requires the characters to hit certain shots, so the large cast of ten Alberta actors took to the rink earlier this month at the Acadia Recreation Complex to prepare for the curling action in the play. Scott Reid's set includes a fully functioning curling sheet – not of ice, but of a combination of materials that together, achieve the right amount of slipperiness – complete with real curling rocks and 1930s curling brooms for the actors to use.

Calgarian Christian Goutsis directs *The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon*, and the cast includes Kevin Corey (Wullie MacCrimmon), Kira Bradley (Clock Shirley Brown), Sheldon Elter (Pipe-Fitting Charlie Brown), Natascha Girgis (O. Cloutie), David Haysom (Macbeth), Emily Howard (Lizzie Borden), Valerie Planche (Annie Brown), Trevor Rueger (Reverend Pringle), David Sklar (Judas Iscariot) and David Trimble (Malleable Charlie Brown).

***The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon* runs from February 20 – March 10 at the Martha Cohen Theatre at Arts Commons. Tickets at albertatheatreprojects.com.**

ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

Written by W.O. Mitchell

Directed by Christian Goutsis

Cast (Alphabetical):

Kira Bradley – Clock Shirley Brown
Kevin Corey – Wullie MacCrimmon
Sheldon Elter – Pipe-Fitting Charlie Brown
Natascha Girgis – O. Cloutie
David Haysom – Macbeth
Emily Howard – Lizzie Borden
Valerie Planche – Annie Brown
Trevor Rueger – Reverend Pringle
David Sklar – Judas Iscariot
David Trimble – Malleable Charlie Brown

Creative Team:

W.O. Mitchell – Playwright
Christian Goutsis – Director
Conrad Belau – Assistant Director
Jane MacFarlane – Dialect Coach
Scott Reid – Set & Props Design
Caroline Broadley – Costume Design
Narda McCarroll – Lighting Design
Andrea Wettstein – Music/Sound Design
Sara Turner – Stage Manager
Ferne Hudson – Assistant Stage Manager
Stacy Vanden Dool – Apprentice Stage Manager

-30-

About Alberta Theatre Projects:

We create world-class contemporary theatre in Calgary from our home in the Martha Cohen Theatre. We are a national leader in new play development. Programming is selected from the finest Canadian and international plays driven by the collision of diverging ideas, points of view, class, gender or cultural perspectives. Our productions radically explore our space, blurring the line between the audience and the artist through multiple seating configurations each season.

Twitter: @ABTHEATREPRJCTS

Instagram: @ABTHEATREPRJCTS

Facebook: ALBERTATHEATREPROJECTS

For media inquiries, please contact:

Kara Sturk

Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Email: ksturk@atplive.com

Phone: 587-441-9489