



PO Box 403 Millbrook, ON, L0A 1G0
Administration phone: 705-932-4448 Box Office phone: 705-932-4445 Fax: 705-932-3347

For Immediate Release November 2, 2011
Media Release and photos attached (credits in file name)

4th Line Theatre announces its boldest summer season

Millbrook, ON – 4th line Theatre, Canada’s premier outdoor theatre company, has announced its boldest season ever with world premieres by two of Canada’s most accomplished and award-winning playwrights. The theatre’s 21st summer season kicks-off July 3rd with ***Queen Marie***, by Shirley Barrie and is followed by Sky Gilbert’s ***St. Francis of Millbrook*** on August 13th. “2012 will be our most important season to date,” says Artistic Director Robert Winslow, “***Queen Marie*** is about Cobourg-born Marie Dressler, a strong, successful Hollywood star fighting against the odds who refused to be stereotyped and ***St. Francis of Millbrook*** is about the challenges of growing up gay in rural Ontario. I commissioned Sky Gilbert two years ago to write this play, set in 1991, because I felt it was important to explore these issues. As with *The Cavan Blazers* and *Doctor Barnardo’s Children*, we are not afraid of tackling difficult social questions in order to promote understanding and acceptance. In spite of the serious themes, both plays are extremely funny and highly entertaining.” These plays were developed through the theatre’s New Play Development Program which promotes new, original works by Canadian artists. They explore local history and issues that affect every community.

Queen Marie is based on the life of Marie Dressler, one of the greatest and best loved stars of Broadway and Hollywood who won the Academy Award for Best Actress in 1931. She was considered the toast of Vaudeville and one of the greatest comediennes of her generation. At her peak Dressler was the highest paid actor in Hollywood earning more than Greta Garbo or Mickey Mouse. Dressler was born in Cobourg and moved to Lindsay where she made her stage debut. “Dressler,” said playwright Barrie, “refused to play by the rules, took great chances and rarely backed down from a fight. Even her failures show us about how to survive, thrive and be successful women.” This play with music will be directed by 4th Line Theatre Artistic Producer Kim Blackwell who directed last season’s smash hit *The Berlin Blues*. Playwright Barrie wrote 4th Line Theatre’s 2007 spine-tingling production of *Beautiful Lady, Tell Me...* Barrie is also the co-founder of Straight Stitching Productions in Toronto and won two Chalmers Awards and a Dora Award for her plays *Straight Stitching* and *Carrying the Calf*. Long-time 4th Line Theatre Musical Director Justin Hixcox will once again create original music for this production.

Queen Marie will run Tuesday to Saturday on the Barnyard Stage from July 3rd until August 4th. Previews are Tuesday July 3rd and Wednesday 4th, opening night is Thursday July 5th and there will be an added performance on Monday July 30th.

St Francis of Millbrook is a story about Luke. Luke is a son and a brother who plays hockey and loves working on the family farm. Luke is just like everyone else except for one little thing – his parents are concerned that he likes the pop star Madonna a little too much. This stunning coming of age story is the first play that groundbreaking and award-winning Canadian playwright Sky Gilbert has written for 4th Line Theatre. “I want to capture the audience with the ordinariness of the emotions presented,” says Gilbert, “I want them to be touched and moved by Luke’s human situation.” Gilbert co-founded Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Canada’s oldest gay theatre, and is currently the Artistic Director of Hammertheatre. He is also an Assistant Professor at the School of English and Theatre Studies at Guelph University. Gilbert has won the Pauline McGibbon Award for theatre directing, the Margo Bindhardt Award from the Toronto Arts Foundation, The Silver Ticket Award from the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts and three Dora Mavor Moore Awards, most recently the 2011 award for Outstanding New Play for *The Situationalists*.

St Francis of Millbrook will run Tuesday to Saturday on the Barnyard Stage from August 13th until September 1st. Previews are Monday August 13th and Tuesday August 14th, opening night is August 15th and there will be an added performance Monday August 27th.

Justin Hiscox returns as Musical Director for his 13th season and once again he will create original scores and music for both 2012 season productions. Director Blackwell is thrilled to be working with Hiscox once again saying "Justin is an essential part of each production, his music helps tell each play's story and every summer his music fills our outdoor stages, often using wonderful, unconventional instruments."

Queen Marie

By Shirley Barrie

Directed by Kim Blackwell

July 3 – August 4

Previews: July 3, 4

Opening Night: Thursday, July 5

Tuesday to Saturday at 6pm

Additional performance Monday July 30

St. Francis of Millbrook

By Sky Gilbert

August 13 – September 1

Previews: August 13, 14

Opening Night: Thursday, August 15

Tuesday to Saturday at 6pm

Additional performance Monday August 27

4th Line Theatre's Box Office is now open for 2012 Season Subscription and Gift Certificates. Give the Gift of Summer this holiday season. Call 1-800-814-0055 or 705-932-4445 or visit 4thlinetheatre.on.ca

BIOGRAPHIES

Shirley Barrie, Playwright – Queen Marie

Playwright Barrie wrote 4th Line Theatre's 2007 production of *Beautiful Lady, Tell Me...*, and has written and produced plays for young, family and adult audiences including several plays about fascinating women from history. She is the co-founder of the Tricycle Theatre in London, England and Straight Stitching Productions in Toronto. Barrie has received two Chalmers Awards and a Dora Mavor Moore Award for her work with Straight Stitching. Her award-winning one-act play *Revelation* is one of a series of short plays that have been widely produced and published.

Kim Blackwell, Artistic Producer, Director – Queen Marie

Kim Blackwell is a veteran 4th Line director – 2012 marks her 18th year with the company. Selected 4th Line Theatre credits include: Artistic Producer (2009 – present), Artistic Associate (2001 – 2009), directing: *The Berlin Blues* (2011), *The Right Road to Pontypool* (2009, 2010), *Schoolhouse* (2007, 2008), *The Art of Silent Killing*, *That Summer*, *Crow Hill*, *The Cavan Blazers*, *Attrition*, *Gimme That Primetime Religion* and many development workshops; stage managing: *The Cavan Blazers*, *Crow Hill*, *1837: The Farmer's Revolt*, *Moodie Traill*, *The Farm Show*, *Stone Angel*, *The Winslows of Derryvore*, *The Orchard*. Other selected directing credits include *Once A Flame*; *Fire in the Stable*; *The Shadow of Genius* (Heritage Pavilion); *Getting Lucky* (Rhubarb!, 2005); *Unlucky* (Summerworks, 2003), *The Ugly Man*; *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*; *Poor Super Man*; *Unidentified Human Remains...* She also directed a sold-out run of *Freedom 85!* in the 2008 Fringe Festival and at the 2009 New York City Frigid Festival where it received excellent critical attention, the Audience Choice Award and the See It Twice Award. Kim was nominated for 2009 John Hirsch Award from the Canada Council. Kim is a member of Maja Ardal's Contrary Company.

Sky Gilbert, Playwright – *St. Francis of Millbrook*

Novelist, poet, filmmaker, director and actor, Sky Gilbert is one of Canada's most prolific and controversial artistic forces. He was the co-founder and Artistic Director of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre in Toronto, Ontario for 18 years and he continues to produce plays with his experimental theatre, The Cabaret Company, in Toronto, and at Hammertheatre in Hamilton. Gilbert has received two Dora Mavor Moore Awards, the Pauline McGibbon Award for theatre directing, the Margo Bindhardt Award from the Toronto Arts Foundation and The Silver Ticket Award from the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts. Dr. Gilbert is also an Assistant Professor at the School of English and Theatre Studies at Guelph University where he is also holds the University Research Chair in Creative Writing and Theatre Studies.

Justin Hiscox, Original Composition, Musical Director– *Queen Marie, St. Francis of Millbrook*

Justin Hiscox studied Composition with American avant-garde composer James Tenney, and free experimental improvisation with Casey Sokol while attending York University in Toronto, Ontario. His major writing works include a two-musician, two-actor/singer arrangement of Puccini's opera *Gianni Schicchi* for Toronto's Shoestring Opera and several compositions and arrangements for *Davey Jones' Locker* (The Peterborough Seashell Choir, of which he is the principal soloist and conductor). Justin has been with 4th Line Theatre for 13 years and he has composed and arranged more than 47 pieces of original music for 17 productions most recently for Drew Hayden Taylor's *The Berlin Blues* and Robert Winslow's *The Cavan Blazers*. He also plays various instruments during the performance and often acts as well.

Attached Photos:

1. Robert Winslow – 4th Line Theatre Artistic Director
2. Marie Dressler – Marie Dressler - 4th line Theatre - *Queen Marie* - photo from film *Dinner at Eight*
3. Shirley Barrie – Playwright of *Queen Marie*
4. Kim Blackwell – Director of *Queen Marie* and 4th Line Theatre's Artistic Producer
5. Sky Gilbert – Playwright of *St. Francis of Millbrook*

4th Line Theatre is committed to preserving and promoting our Canadian cultural heritage through the development and presentation of regionally-based, environmentally-staged historical drama. Our productions are made possible by the generosity of scores of donors and sponsors such as

TICKETS can be purchased at the 4th Line Theatre Box Office at 4 Tupper Street, Millbrook, online at 4thlinetheatre.on.ca, by phone at 705-932-4445 or in person through associated ticket outlets: **Peterborough Museum & Archives** on Armour Hill, (at Museum Drive off Hunter Street East) in Peterborough 705-743-5180 or **Kent Books** at 15 William Street North in Lindsay 705-328-1600.



– 30 –

Media Contact: Mark Stainback ♦ 705- 932-4505 ♦ pr@4thlinetheatre.on.ca ♦ www.4thlinetheatre.on.ca