

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AWARD-WINNING playwright makes *Risky Claims* at the Theatre Royal in Barkerville

Barkerville, BC, September 2nd, 2009 - For one night only Barkerville Historic Town's renowned Theatre Royal will present a staged reading of *Risky Claims* - the brand new play about Barkerville written by award-winning playwright and director Peter Boychuk. This is the one and only chance for theatre-lovers and theatre-novices alike to catch an exclusive first look at this exciting and entertaining new play - performed Newman & Wright Theatre Company's talented 2009 cast - on Friday, September 4th at 7:00 pm.

Set in Barkerville in 1867, *Risky Claims* tells the story of Cora Mills, a plucky young woman who comes to Williams Creek disguised as a man in order to liberate her sister from the clutches of an evil *Madame*. While in Barkerville Cora catches the eye of Jin Wei Lee, a handsome Chinese gold-seeker who may be more than he appears. A tale of romance, mystery and adventure, *Risky Claims* is about the unbreakable bond between two sisters, and the extraordinary lengths we go to for love.

Peter Boychuk wrote the play this summer while in Barkerville directing three productions for Newman & Wright's 2009 Theatre Royal season - *The Gold Rush Revue*, *Firestorm* and *'Tis a Grand Adventure*. Mr. Boychuck is the author of four other plays: *Afterglow*, published in the anthology *Two Hands Clapping* by Signature Editions and lauded by the Montreal Gazette as "charming and competent"; *Chainmail Bikini*, produced at the Calgary Fringe Festival and described as "witty and thoughtful" in the Calgary Herald's four-star review; *Crossing*, a new play in development with Rolling Stock Theatre in Vancouver; and *Fortunate Son*, which has been described by the Vancouver Sun as "evidence of a rising young talent" and was the recipient of the Stanley Mills Purchase Prize, an Honourable Mention in the National Playwriting Competition, and Best of the Fest at Theatre BC's 2007 ACToberfest Festival. Peter Boychuck will return to Barkerville next summer to direct the Theatre Royal's 2010 season.

Come "*Feel the Rush*" at Barkerville's Theatre Royal on Friday, September 4th at 7:00 pm, and enjoy this one-of-a-kind, special presentation. Admission is only \$5.00. You'll treasure the experience.

- 30 -

ABOUT THE THEATRE ROYAL IN BARKERVILLE

Barkerville's first Theatre Royal was built in 1868, soon after the great fire that wiped out most of the town. The Cariboo Amateur Dramatic Association marks its beginning around 1865 when community members like James Anderson, John Bowron, Emily Pemberthy, Mrs. Catherine Parker, Joseph Hough, J.S. Thompson and Florence Wilson formed a group to present music and drama to the Williams Creek townsfolk.

They originally used a saloon as a venue, but when that burned down in the September 1868 conflagration they embarked on the ambitious task of building a theatre for Williams Creek.

The CADA partnered with a newly formed Williams Creek Fire Brigade and erected a brand new, two-storey building - with the theatre on the top floor and the fire brigade on the bottom.

This worked out well for a few years, but Barkerville had an unusual problem. Spring freshets often caused Williams Creek and its bulkhead to overflow, bringing torrents water and gravel washing down the main street. The gravel gradually raised the level of the street itself, and building and boardwalks had to be jacked up to keep ahead of the rising valley floor.

Apparently this was not done with the fire hall - and by 1876 the building was half buried. Joe St. Laurent was subsequently hired to cut the building in half, put in new foundations, and to build a stairway to the second floor. This semi-new building was used until 1934 when, ironically, it was condemned by the Fire Marshall and summarily demolished. The Theatre Royal was rebuilt in 1937 as a community hall. During recent years it was again renovated and a new façade added to resemble the original fire-hall/theatre building.

This raising of buildings in this manner may seem a little far fetched - but several years ago a pit was dug on one side of the current Theatre Royal building, and at a depth of 10 feet the foundations of the original building were found below - and immediately below those foundations was a layer of ash from the great fire of 1868.

Today's Theatre Royal continues a tradition begun in Barkerville 1865 - a tradition of entertainment that Newman & Wright Theatre Company is pleased to continue.

ABOUT NEWMAN & WRIGHT THEATRE COMPANY

Known in Barkerville as the Newman & Wright Theatrical Troupe, Amy Newman & Richard Wright continue to build a theatre company of actors and technicians who believe in entertainment and interpretation of the past.

Newman & Wright are well aware that they are following in some large footsteps, like those of the original Cariboo Amateur Dramatic Association and the later productions of Fran Dowie, Arden Craig, Taylor-Wood Productions and Eureka Theatre Company.

Newman & Wright's vision is to tell the stories of the Cariboo goldfields, to recreate some of the entertainments of the day, to present to Barkerville visitors a feeling of being in a gold rush theatre of the 1870s.

The vision of Newman & Wright, using the Theatre Royal in Barkerville, is to recapture those "Victorian qualities" that were so important to gold rush theatres of the era. By presenting theatre similar to that of the CADA and various travelling troupes, a mixture of music hall material - "a truly popular entertainment for all classes" - and the amateur theatricals that were so much a part of Victorian life, Newman & Wright hope to open a window to Barkerville during its early decades. The Victorian audience "wanted to be

diverted. Rich or poor, educated or ignorant, they wanted “something odd, something new and startling.” In short, they wanted entertainment. In its most Victorian incarnation the theatre was a social necessity, not an artistic luxury.

Amy Newman and Richard Wright are both life-long entertainers, and blend their mutual skills and passions with a belief in the authenticity of interpretation at Barkerville Historic Town. Their goal is to continue to present what is now being called “retro theatre” - theatre set in the past that uses modern technical supports to a limited degree.

ABOUT BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN

BARKERVILLE HISTORIC TOWN is the largest historic site in Western North America (www.barkerville.ca). Barkerville is provincially, nationally and internationally recognized for its historic significance associated with its place in western Canada's gold rush era and the role the gold rush played in BC joining Canada. Barkerville is widely known as a “must see” for travel itineraries in western Canada. The historic town is also a significant contributor to the Cariboo regional economy and is widely regarded as a unique component of the regional identity.

The Barkerville Heritage Trust, as Barkerville's operating and managing partner, works in conjunction with the Province of British Columbia, the owner and statutory guardian of Barkerville's heritage resources, to ensure that Barkerville is efficiently managed, entertaining and educational to visitors, and financially stable as the premier heritage resource and tourism attraction for the Cariboo. The ultimate aim is to maintain and enhance Barkerville's position as a nationally significant heritage resource and tourism attraction for British Columbia and Canada.

Barkerville is situated 80 km east of Quesnel, British Columbia in the foothills of the Cariboo Mountains, close to Troll Mountain Ski Resort and Bowron Lake Provincial Park. The nearby community of Wells (8 km from Barkerville) is the service and housing centre for the area (www.wellsbc.com) and is itself a dynamic cultural community, home of Island Mountain Arts, the acclaimed Toni Onley Artists' Project, the International Celtic Harp School (www.imarts.com), the dynamic indie music festival ArtsWells (www.artswells.com), and the Sunset Theatre (www.sunset-theatre.com). Wells is also situated close to a wide variety of winter and summer outdoor activities.

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