



Charles Aitken and Oliver Beamish to star in *Billy Bishop Goes To War*

Jermyn Street Theatre, 16b Jermyn Street, London SW1Y 6ST
Wednesday 31st October – Saturday 24th November 2018
Press Night: Friday 2nd November, 7.30pm

Coinciding with the centenary of the end of World War I, Proud Haddock are reviving *Billy Bishop Goes To War* as part of their War Season and Jermyn Street Theatre's Rebels Season. This striking drama is based upon the true story of young Billy Bishop, a failing military college student who became Canada's indomitable flying ace, the most successful pilot of his generation.

Billy Bishop Goes To War will star **Charles Aitken** (*The Knick*, Cinemax; *Happy Death Day*, Universal Pictures; *King Lear*, Royal Shakespeare Company) as Billy Bishop with **Oliver Beamish** (*Coronation Street*, ITV; *Blood Brothers*, Lyric Theatre; *War Horse*, The New London Theatre) as the Older Billy Bishop, who will also provide the piano and musical accompaniment. Between them they will play a further 17 parts as they recount this extraordinary tale.

In 1914, Billy Bishop, aged only 20, signed up to fight in the Great War. A failing and bullied student, he overcame intense prejudice and astonishing danger to receive his wings and become the top fighter pilot. Through a combination of bravery and sheer luck, Billy was able to find his place and prove his worth. He became a true Canadian hero.

Brought to life with songs of the period, *Billy Bishop Goes To War* vividly transports the audience across the landscape of World War I, from the thick mud of No Man's Land to the drawing rooms of the British aristocracy. This compelling and darkly comic drama interrogates the nature of heroism

and its cost while shining a light on the often-neglected complexities of Britain's colonial past during the War.

Written by John MacLachlan Gray in collaboration with Eric Peterson, the play returns to London for the first time in over 35 years. *Billy Bishop Goes To War* is the deceptively moving and totally gripping account of one man's life in World War I.

Director Jimmy Walters comments, *Proud Haddock's War Season continues with Billy Bishop Goes To War. This is a true story with lots of heart. Billy wasn't the most academic student, was bullied at school and faced prejudice when he arrived in England during the First World War yet he overcame all of this to become the greatest fighter pilot of his generation. It's an inspiring story that is a privilege to revive.*

Notes to Editors

Title	<i>Billy Bishop Goes To War</i>
Performance Dates	Wednesday 31 st October – Saturday 24 th November 2018 Monday – Saturday, 7.30pm Saturday matinees, 3.30pm
Running time	2 hours 10 minutes including interval
Age Guidance	16+
Twitter	@JSTheatre, @proudhaddock, #JSTBillyBishop
Director	Jimmy Walters
Designer	Daisy Blower
Lighting Designer	Armin Friess
Sound Designer	Dinah Mullen
Musical Director	Adam Gerber
Billy Bishop	Charles Aitken
Older Billy Bishop	Oliver Beamish
Location	Jermyn Street Theatre, 16b Jermyn Street, London SW1Y 6ST

How to get there	Jermyn Street Theatre is located at the Lower Regent Street end of Jermyn Street, next to Getti (Italian) Restaurant. The nearest underground station is Piccadilly Circus (on Bakerloo and Piccadilly lines). The nearest rail station is Charing Cross.
Box Office	Tickets are available priced £30 £20 concessions Preview tickets are £15 A limited number of tickets at £10 for under 30s are available to book online and by telephone. Available from Jermyn Street Box Office and www.jermynstreettheatre.co.uk , 020 7287 2875.

Proud Haddock

Proud Haddock celebrate unearthed stories from classical playwrights. Previous productions include *Square Rounds* (Finborough Theatre), *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (Jermyn Street Theatre), the sold-out hit *Mrs Orwell* starring Cressida Bonas and Peter Hamilton-Dyer (Old Red Lion Theatre, Southwark Playhouse) and *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus* and *A Subject of Scandal and Concern* (Finborough Theatre).

Jermyn Street Theatre

Jermyn Street Theatre is an art-house theatre in the heart of London's West End. The 70-seat studio opened in 1994, and has since won numerous awards and transferred many productions to the West End and Broadway. In summer 2017 Tom Littler became Artistic Director. Littler relaunched the venue as a producing house. Jermyn Street Theatre is a signatory to the Equity Fringe Agreement.

During the theatre's first year as a producing venue, it has staged world premieres of five full-length plays (including Howard Brenton's *The Blinding Light*), five one-act plays, two European premieres, and several revivals including the complete cycle of Noel Coward's *Tonight at 8.30*. Jermyn Street Theatre has also reported that its weekly sales are up by over 50%, and it has employed 28 female and 26 male actors.

All enquiries, high res images and further information:

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