

Greater Saint John

Partridge Island history hits the stage

NOUSHIN ZIAFATI
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SAINT JOHN • A local play inspired by the history of Partridge Island is coming to Saint John this week.

No Man Is An Island is about doctors who clash over the treatment of patients in a quarantine centre. The play is inspired by the actual stories of Dr. James Collins, Dr. George Harding and Dr. William Harding, who bumped heads in the quarantine centre on Partridge Island in the 19th century.

It runs Wednesday to Sunday at BMO Studio Theatre.

The play explores a number of themes including immigration, sacrifice and belief, facing fears of the other, and what it takes to make a community.

The play is written by Thomas Hodd, a playwright of Irish descent who was born and raised in Saint John, and directed by Natasha MacLellan, the artistic director of Theatre New Brunswick.

Hodd said he wanted to tell the story because of his own personal connection to Saint John and because it's an old story in history that also speaks to today's Saint John and today's Canada.

"The relevance of a story from 1847 in Saint John and the waves and waves of Irish immigrants to Saint John speaks to us today in the waves and waves of immigrants from Syria or Afghanistan or other parts of the world, and these problems that we're seeing, with the acceptance or not, of people from different parts of the world," he said.

Hodd added that the story speaks to a number of aspects of the human condition that "speak beyond a cultural-historical context."

"It's a story of five characters who find themselves in very difficult, straining situations and have to find a way to make it work."



Actors Jeff Dingle, Sarah O'Brecht and Kyle Gillis performing a scene from No Man Is An Island, the inaugural production of the Atlantic Repertory Company that is inspired by the history of Partridge Island. PHOTO: COURTESY OF BRIAN GOODWIN/SAINT JOHN THEATRE COMPANY

No Man Is An Island is the inaugural production of the Atlantic Repertory Company (ARC), a professional theatre residency program recently launched by the Saint John Theatre Company (SJTC).

According to SJTC artistic director Stephen Tobias, ARC aims to give emerging theatre artists with ties to Atlantic Canada employment opportunities and to build professional theatre capacity in southern New Brunswick.

"Southern New Brunswick has been a little underserved overall, I mean [Theatre New Brunswick] has done great work, but we need more than one company to create the kind of employment opportunities that will make

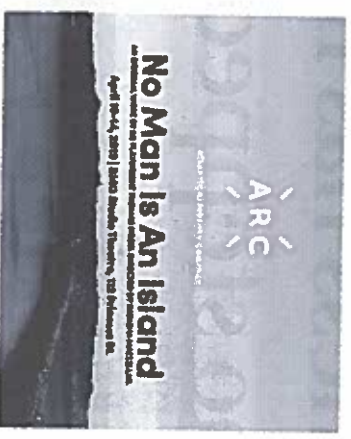
people, young artists want to live here," he said.

Tobias said the ideas for ARC and No Man Is An Island converged about a year ago, when they decided that the play would be a "really interesting choice" to be the first production for the new theatre program, as the play is a "made in Saint John story" with broader implications in terms of newcomer issues in the community.

No Man Is An Island is showing from April 10 to 13 at 7:30 p.m. and April 14 at 2 p.m. at the BMO Studio Theatre.

Tickets are \$32.50 for adults and \$20 for students.

They can be purchased online or in person at 112 Princess St.



No Man Is An Island, a play inspired by the history of Partridge Island, is showing at the BMO Studio Theatre at 112 Princess St. from April 10 to 14. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SAINT JOHN THEATRE COMPANY