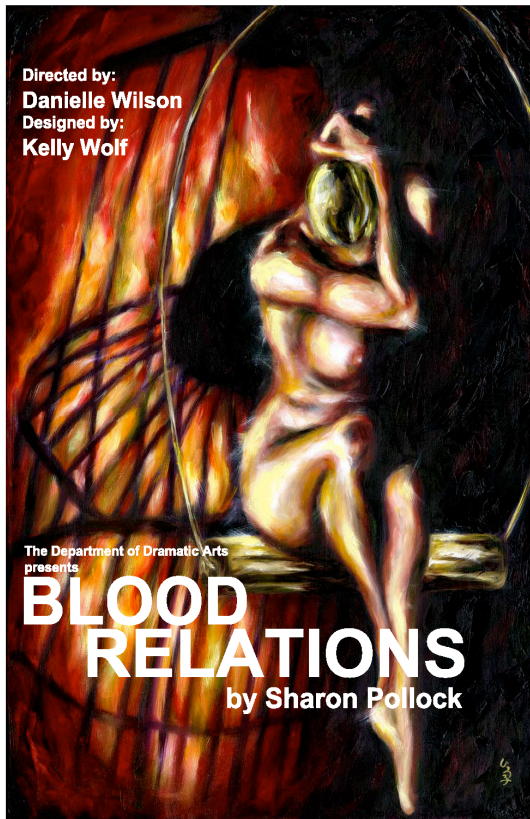


September 21, 2010

**Department of Dramatic Arts 2010/11 Season**



***Blood Relations***

Written by Sharon Pollock

Directed by Danielle Wilson / Designed by Kelly Wolf

November 11, 12, 13, 2010 at 7:30 p.m.

**Student Matinee: Friday, November 12, 2010 at 1:00 p.m.**

**The Play**

Based on the legend of Lizzie Borden, who was acquitted of the 1892 murders of her father and stepmother in Fall River, Massachusetts. The play begins ten years after the murders, when Lizzie's friend named only as the Actress (based on Lizzie's real life actress lover, Nance O'Neil) insistently asks Lizzie to tell her the truth about the murders. Lizzie invents "a game" in which the Actress is to play the role of Lizzie while the real Lizzie "paints the background" of her home and family life while filling the actress's mind with images to guide her performance at the subconscious level.

First performed in 1980, Blood Relations won the Governor General's award, has been produced across Canada, throughout the States and from Tokyo to Australia to

England and remains to this day Canadian playwright Sharon Pollock's most popular play.

### **Artistic Direction**

Pollock's metadramatic treatment of the story transforms the historical facts into a tautly woven psychological play within a play. We are treating the play as "theatre of the mind" as the Actress engages with all the members of the Borden household through Lizzie's memory and the collective imagination of both women. Throughout the play, the only "real" people on stage are Miss Lizzie and The Actress. The rest of the characters are all figments of their imagination conjured through Lizzie's memory. As the Actress begins to inhabit her role, one of the questions the play investigates is whose truth are we witnessing? Lizzie's truth or the Actress's version of Lizzie's truth? Role playing becomes an important theme that is explored throughout the action.

As we watch the Actress play out her role, the emotional truth of Lizzie's circumstances are revealed. We witness the actress responding to the events of that hot August day in 1892 and as she is drawn further into "the game", it becomes clear that the question the Actress faces is not only whether Lizzie did it, rather, what will she do when faced with circumstances such as Lizzie's? On a universal scale, the actress becomes our collective will forced to respond to the question: what would any of us be capable of when faced with the denial of our independence and sense of self? As Lizzie says to her father "I'm supposed to be a mirror. I'm supposed to reflect what you want to see, but everyone wants something different. If no one looks in the mirror, I'm not even there, I don't exist!"

Because this is "theatre of the mind" where anything can happen, certain liberties have been taken with the addition of a character not originally in the script. Lizzie's will is personified through an additional character who will perform her role entirely on aerial circus silks, thus underscoring and physicalizing key moments of action. This physical action will also be highlighted with original music specially composed for this production by Brock music graduate Max Holten Andersen, giving it a "Hitchcockian" suspense/thriller feel to it.

### **Curriculum Ties**

This theatrically engaging show has some mature themes and is recommended to students in grade 11 or 12 who are interested in history, psychology and women studies. It poses questions about the nature of role playing, the role of men and women in 19th century Victorian America, the plight of "otherness"; what are the choices for someone who does not fit within the societal norms of the time?

### **Student Matinee Booking**

The student matinee for *Blood Relations* is **Friday, November 12, 2010 at 1:00 p.m.**, held in the Sean O'Sullivan Theatre. Tickets for the student matinee are \$10 for each student and teacher. To book your school, please telephone the Centre for the

Arts Box Office, 905-688-5550 ext. 3257, long distance toll free 1-866-617-3257, and reserve your group tickets.

The deadline for reservation by telephone is Friday, November 5, 2010 for *Blood Relations*. Once you have made your booking through the Centre for the Arts, I will confirm your reservation by telephone on Monday, November 8, 2010.

**Study Guide/School Outreach**

Study guides contain background information and research articles that provide critical information for use in the classroom. A study guide will be available online at the end of September and can be viewed at:

[www.brocku.ca/humanities/departments-and-centres/dramatic-arts](http://www.brocku.ca/humanities/departments-and-centres/dramatic-arts)

Sincerely,

Marie Balsom, Communications  
Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts  
Brock University  
573 Glenridge Ave., Rm. GLN 114  
T: 905.688.5550, ext. 4765  
E: [mbalsom@brocku.ca](mailto:mbalsom@brocku.ca)