LIFEBOAT US Tour Spring 2015

Broadwayworld.com Coverage of Lifeboat- 13th March 2015

http://www.broadwayworld.com/los-angeles/article/LIFEBOAT-Runs-313-22-at-The-Wallis-20150312

Wallis [Annenberg Center](http://www.broadwayworld.com/people/Annenberg-Center/) for the Performing Arts presents Catherine Wheels Theatre Company of Scotland's production of Lifeboat by Nicola McCartney and directed by Gill Robertson. The show will run for eight performances only, tonight, March 13 through 22, 2015 in the Lovelace Studio Theater, and is recommended for ages 9 and up. Last season, The Wallis presented Catherine Wheels' innovative White to great acclaim and sold-out audiences. In addition to the eight public performances, The Wallis continues its educational outreach mission by providing 12 school matinee performances for underserved school children in Greater Los Angeles.

Winner of the Barclays Stage Award for Best Show for Children and Young People, Lifeboat is a true story of courage, survival and enduring friendship set during World War II. In September 1940, a ship, the City of Benares, set sail from Liverpool for Canada. On board were 90 evacuees trying to escape the relentless bombing and dangers of war-torn Britain. Four days into its journey, the ship was torpedoed and sank. Only eleven of the evacuees survived, including two fifteen-year-old girls, Bess Walder and Beth Cummings (played by Ashley Smith and Hannah Donaldson, respectively). Bess and Beth spent 19 terrifying hours in the water on an upturned lifeboat during a harsh, relentless storm. Through their will to survive, they endured to tell their story.

Bess Walder, who died in 2010, said she wanted young people today to hear how the dramatic events of September 1940 influenced the rest of her life. "Everybody has deep within them a facility to overcome danger - it is not often called upon, but the sense of survival is strong. What happened to me at age 15 gave me the gift of how to use my life. I hope that all young people who see Lifeboat take away the message 'don't let go' - we can all achieve remarkable things."

Playwright Nicola McCartney said, "Out of all the plays I have written, this one was a real gift in every sense of the word. The story behind the play - true, inspiring and life affirming - was told to me by both Bess and Beth. When Bess was in her 80s, she crossed the Atlantic by ship for the first time since the tragedy, and was finally able to cast flowers into sea where the City of Benares and the majority of its young passengers were lost. Bess and Beth never forgot them - and through Lifeboat we remember all of them, also."

Catherine Wheels Theatre Company founder Gill Robertson said, "Bess and Beth credited their survival on being together, willing each other to survive, and their youth, which made them less aware of the direness of their situation. I started to think about what a wonderful show it would make for young people -- the story of a great friendship set against The Great War, anchored by the unbelievable courage and will to survive shown by the two girls. On top of it all, they remained firm friends for another 60 years."

The New York Times' Lawrence van Gelder said, "The play's high adventure and touching lessons in family, fortitude and friendship are conveyed with exceptional theatrical skill."

Edinburgh Guide said, "Catherine Wheels has honored the girls' bravery by saving this story from oblivion in such fine form."

Tickets are available at [www.thewallis.org](http://dcpublicity.us2.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f9f80ab7f0256358374b8676e&id=72c1fb7341&e=d995184a19) or by calling 310-746-4000 or in person at The Wallis Ticket Services located at 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., [Beverly Hills](http://www.broadwayworld.com/people/Beverly-Hills/), CA 90210.

Lifeboat is designed by Karen Tennent; composer is Dave Trouton; lighting by Jeanine Davies; costumes by [Alison Brown](http://www.broadwayworld.com/people/Alison-Brown/). The Catherine Wheels team is artistic director Gill Robertson, senior management team Louise Gilmour Wills and Craig Fleming; projects manager Anna Derricourt and stage manager Suzie Normand.

Catherine Wheels Theatre Company, lead by founder and artistic director Gill Robertson, is Scotland's most prolific producer of work for children and young people, having produced 24 new productions in 16 countries over the last 16 years. The company has received 12 celebrated awards and 15 nominations, including two prestigious Drama Desk award nominations for Unique Theatrical Experience on Broadway and a Helpmann Award nomination (Australia's Tony Awards). Catherine Wheels shows have toured the globe with inspirational and original productions, including innovative residencies in New York, when the promenade show Hansel and Gretel took over the entire [New Victory Theatre](http://www.broadwayworld.com/people/New-Victory-Theatre/). The company was the first Scottish children's theatre company to perform at Australia's Sydney Opera House, and has now played at the iconic arts venue three times. Back on home turf, Catherine Wheels tours in schools, theatres and festivals from Highland glens and remote Scottish islands to the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as to London's Southbank and the [Barbican Centre](http://www.broadwayworld.com/people/Barbican-Centre/).