



All-Star Cast Announced for ELF: The Musical at the Hamilton Family Theatre Cambridge

Popular Panto Performer Tim Porter to Play Buddy The Elf

Monday, September 16, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear! Fall has arrived and with the autumn leaves comes the countdown to the holiday season (100 days until Christmas!). Drayton Entertainment is pleased to announce that actor **Tim Porter** will don the iconic yellow tights when he takes on the coveted role of Buddy the Elf in the company's highly-anticipated production of *ELF: The Musical*. The production will run at the **Hamilton Family Theatre Cambridge** from **November 20 to December 22**.

Audiences will recognize Porter as the comical sidekick in many pantos – in *Jack and the Beanstalk*, he was Jack's silly brother Super Simon; in *Cinderella*, he was the princess' charming companion Buttons; in *Aladdin*, he was the hero's trusted pal Wishy Washy; and in *Snow White*, he was the heroine's loyal woodsman Woody. This holiday season, Porter will take centre stage in the lead role of Buddy the Elf, the character made famous by Will Ferrell in the 2003 hit holiday movie.

"Through his loveable panto characters, Tim has become an audience favourite with families," says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment. "He's got just the right goofy charm and joyful spirit to fill the green shoes of Buddy the Elf. Audiences are going to love him."

In addition to his work in the panto productions, Porter has also appeared in *Man of La Mancha*, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *HONK!*, and many other shows for Drayton Entertainment. Porter also performed five tours as Rooney Doodle in *The Doodlebops Live*, and is the creator of the musicals *Hastings!* and *Aleck Bell* with Tweed & Company Theatre, which he founded in his hometown.

Based on the popular 2003 New Line Cinema film, *ELF: The Musical* follows the fish-out-of-water tale of Buddy, an infant discovered at Santa's workshop, who is raised to adulthood by the elves. Unaware that he is actually human, his enormous size and poor toy-making abilities make him wonder if he is actually an elf. With Santa's blessing, Buddy travels to New York City to find his birth father and discover his true identity. Faced with the harsh realities that his dear old dad is on the naughty list, and his half-brother doesn't even believe in Santa, Buddy is determined to win over his new family and help everyone remember the true meaning of Christmas.

Porter will pass through the Candy Cane forest and the sea of swirly twirly gum drops to join an all-star cast for this lavish holiday musical. Comedian and community leader **Neil Aitchison** will trade his familiar Mountie uniform for another iconic red suit as he takes on the role of Santa Claus (shhh, don't tell the kids!). Aitchison is beloved by audiences for his alter-ego Constable Archibald F. Inkster, a character that has appeared in several Drayton Entertainment productions including *Canada 151*, *Sorry ... I'm Canadian*, *Canadian Toonie*, and more.

Katie Kerr makes her Drayton Entertainment debut as Jovie, the feisty Macy's toy store elf who needs to revive her holiday spirit. Among her many credits, Kerr is a staple at the Charlottetown Festival, where she has appeared as both Anne Shirley and Diana Barry in *Anne of Green Gables*, Sophie Sheridan in *Mamma Mia!*, and other notable roles.

Brad Rudy takes on the role of Walter Hobbs, Buddy's real father, who is so focused on keeping his job that he has lost his connection to his family. Rudy has appeared in fifty-five productions over twenty-two seasons at the Stratford Festival, and previously appeared in *Twelve Angry Men*, *Priscilla*, *Queen of the Desert* and *West Side Story* for Drayton Entertainment.

Robin Hutton is Buddy's sweet and upbeat new stepmother Emily, who would prefer her busy husband to spend a little more time at home. Hutton has appeared on stages across Canada with the Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Theatre Aquarius, The Grand Theatre, Neptune Theatre, Charlottetown Festival, and others. She previously appeared in *Dance Legends* and *Little Me* for Drayton Entertainment.

Fresh from his roles as Les in Disney's *Newsies* and Benji in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, 11-year-old **Thomas Winiker** brings his earnest energy to the role of Walter and Emily's smart and skeptical son Michael, who needs to reaffirm his belief in Old Saint Nick.

Gabrielle Jones is Walter's spry secretary Deb, who has the big responsibility of keeping her boss and the whole office happy, despite the stress of the season. A veteran actress, Jones has appeared in many productions throughout the country including *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, *The Miracle Worker*, *The Birds & The Bees*, *The Drowsy Chaperone* and more for Drayton Entertainment.

George Joyce is Mr. Greenway, Walter's cranky and controlling boss who has no time or patience for Christmas. Joyce has appeared in a number of productions in Waterloo Region including *Boiler Room Suite* with Lost & Found Theatre and *Death of a Salesman* at Theatre of the Arts.

Ray Hogg is the hilariously harried Macy's Store Manager, who's doing everything he can to make sure all the employees stay in line while maintaining the expected holiday cheer. Hogg is an accomplished performer, who has appeared in many productions at Winnipeg's Rainbow Stage, Stratford Festival, and Shaw Festival. He previously appeared in Drayton Entertainment's productions of *Guys & Dolls* and *Sweet Charity*.

There's room for everyone on the nice list! **Annie Chen, Vanessa Cobham, Ryan Gifford, Anthony MacPherson, Luke Opdahl, Gregory Pember, Ainsley Allyssa Roy, Joel Taylor, Jennifer Thiessen** and **Margaret Thompson** round out the impeccable company.

This holiday spectacular will be led by renowned Director and Choreographer **Michael Lichtefeld**, who has helmed many productions for Drayton Entertainment including the classic Irving Berlin shows *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas*, as well as *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Anything*

Goes, The Music Man, and others. Lichtefeld will be joined by Music Director **Steve Thomas**, Set & Costume Designer **Ivan Brozic**, Lighting Designer **Kevin Fraser**, Stage Manager **Beth Bruck**, Assistant Stage Manager **Jasmyne Leisemer** and Apprentice Stage Manager **Charlotte Peters**.

ELF: The Musical features songs by award-winning composing team Matthew Sklar and Chad Beguelin (*The Prom, The Wedding Singer*), with a book by Tony Award® winners Thomas Meehan (*Annie, The Producers, Hairspray*) and Bob Martin (*The Prom, The Drowsy Chaperone*).

The musical adaptation officially opened on Broadway for a limited holiday engagement at the Al Hirschfeld Theatre in 2010. A North American Tour played major cities during the holiday seasons of 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016, and a new production of the musical opened in London's West End in 2015. An animated TV special starring Jim Parsons as the voice of Buddy the Elf aired on NBC in 2014. The original Will Ferrell film airs annually during the holiday season and is considered the most successful Christmas movie of the 21st century.

ELF: The Musical runs for four weeks only from **November 20 to December 22** at the **Hamilton Family Theatre Cambridge**. Regular performance tickets are \$48 for adults and \$29 for youth under 20 years of age; \$39 tickets are also available for select Discount Dates. The production is already over 60% sold out, so audiences are encouraged to purchase tickets as soon as possible.

Tickets may be purchased in person at the Hamilton Family Theatre Cambridge, online at www.draytonentertainment.com, or by calling the Box Office at (519) 621-8000 or toll free at 1-855-drayton (372-9866).

ELF: The Musical is proudly sponsored **Cambridge Volkswagen** and **The Region of Waterloo International Airport**. Media Sponsors are **96.7 CHYM FM, 570 News** and **106.7 Country**. Design Sponsors are **Primerica Robert Weinhardt** and **E.V.O. Kitchen**. The Hamilton Family Theatre Cambridge is proudly sponsored by **Jerry & Terry Hamilton**. The Auditorium Naming Sponsor is **Mattamy Homes**. The Youth Theatre Education Sponsor is **TD Canada Trust**. The 2019 Media Season Sponsor is **CTV**.

-30-

For more information, please contact:
Amanda Kind, Director of Marketing
Phone: (519) 621-5511 ext. 235
amanda@draytonentertainment.com

To set up an interview, please contact:
Angela Gascon, Marketing Associate
Phone: (519) 621-5511 ext. 239
angela@draytonentertainment.com