



Canadian Premiere of Knockout Musical at the Huron Country Playhouse in Grand Bend

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Yo Adrian! *Rocky: The Musical*, the adrenaline-fueled musical based on Sylvester Stallone’s Academy® Award-winning film is coming to the **Huron Country Playhouse** in Grand Bend. The production will run for three weeks from **July 18 to August 3**.

Rocky: The Musical is based on the famous 1976 movie of the same name conceived by Sylvester Stallone, who wrote and starred in the cult classic film. The film was a sleeper hit earning over \$225 million in global box office receipts ultimately becoming the highest-grossing film of 1976. *Rocky* went on to win three Oscars including Best Picture, and Stallone became an overnight movie star. *Rocky* is now considered to be one of the greatest sports films ever made, and has spawned seven sequels: *Rocky II* (1979), *Rocky III* (1982), *Rocky IV* (1985), *Rocky V* (1990), *Rocky Balboa* (2006), *Creed* (2015) and *Creed II* (2018). Stallone portrays Rocky in all seven sequels, wrote the first five, and directed four of the six initial installments.

To ensure the musical’s authenticity to the much-loved movie franchise, Sylvester Stallone worked with Broadway book writer **Thomas Meehan** (*Annie*, *Hairspray*) to adapt the story for the stage. The musical had its world premiere in Hamburg, Germany in the fall of 2013, and transferred to Broadway in the spring of 2014. The musical features a score by Tony Award-winning composing team **Lynn Ahrens** (lyrics) and **Stephen Flaherty** (music), writers of *Ragtime*, *Once on this Island*, *Seussical*, and many other musical theatre hits.

Drayton Entertainment is among the first professional theatre companies outside of Broadway to be granted the rights to produce the musical. This Canadian premiere production will be directed by Artistic Director **Alex Mustakas** and choreographed by **Phil Nero** with Music Direction by **Michael Lerner**. The creative team also includes Set Designer **Brian Dudkiewicz**, Lighting Designer **Kevin Fraser**, Costume Designer **Adrienne Pink**, Fight Director **Joe Bostick**, Stage Manager **Beth Bruck**, Assistant Stage Manager **Sadie Wannamaker**, and Apprentice Stage Manager **Stephanie Bignell**.

Up-and-coming Canadian performer **Alex Kelly** won hearts earlier this season in Cambridge in the coveted role of small-time boxer Rocky Balboa. After an exhaustive search, Kelly proved he had the voice, athleticism and underdog spirit to step into the ring and bring this beloved character to life. The P.E.I. native graduated from Sheridan College's prestigious Musical Theatre Performance program in 2015, and has since appeared in a number of musicals across Canada, including *Jersey Boys* at Stage West Calgary, *Beauty and the Beast* at The Globe Theatre Regina, along with several productions at Edmonton's Citadel Theatre, and *West Side Story* for Drayton Entertainment last season.

"Rocky Balboa is one of the most iconic characters in film history. In addition to searching for a young actor who had the vocal and physical stamina for the role, we knew we needed someone who could embody Rocky's grit, vulnerability and passion – we are happy to have found that in Alex Kelly," says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment, who directs the production.

Versatile actress **Jayne Armstrong** plays Rocky's love interest Adrian, the shy little sister of his best friend Paulie. Armstrong has appeared in a number of Drayton Entertainment productions including *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Rock of Ages*, *Legally Blonde*, and *Chicago*, among others.

Christopher James makes his Drayton Entertainment debut as Apollo Creed, the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. James has appeared on stage as Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, Rooster in *Annie* and Cinderella's Prince in *Into The Woods*. He is also a martial arts instructor, boxer, and certified combatant and stuntman for film and television.

Fresh from his multi-year run in the original cast of *Come From Away* on Broadway, **Lee MacDougall** takes on the role of Mickey, owner of the local gym and Rocky's eventual trainer. The veteran actor has appeared in numerous productions across Canada, including *The Foursome*, *The Odd Couple*, and *Brigadoon*, among others for Drayton Entertainment. He also directed *All Shook Up* in 2016.

Former Canadian Idol finalist and Broadway performer **Aaron Walpole** is Paulie, Rocky's best friend and Adrian's older brother. Walpole appeared as the hilarious MC Lonnie in *Rock of Ages*, and Sancho in *Man of La Mancha*, among other productions for Drayton Entertainment.

The knockout cast also includes **Carla Bennett, Justin Bott, Matthew Bradley, Jeremy Carver-James, Matthew Chenuz, Vanessa Cobham, Jacquelyn French, Ryan Gifford, Dani Jazzar, Marianne McCord, Daphne Moens, Dan Payne, Andrew Scanlon, Sash Striga, and Samuel Van Dusen.**

Rocky: The Musical is proudly sponsored by **Hay Communications**. Media Sponsors are **Business London** and **Classic Rock 98.1 FM** in London. The Design Sponsor is **103.9 CHOK FM** in Sarnia, and **White Squirrel Golf Club**. The 2019 Season Media Sponsor is **CTV**.

Rocky: The Musical is on stage at the **Huron Country Playhouse** in Grand Bend from **July 18 to August 3**. Tickets may be purchased online at www.huroncountrypayhouse.com, in person at any Drayton Entertainment Box Office, or by calling **519-238-6000** or toll free **1-855-372-9866**.

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