



Media Release

April 27, 2011

Fun and laughter as you experience the world of classical music in a whole new way

Prescott will be the venue for a blast from the past as the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival brings the comedy, *Toad – the Anna Russell Story* to town in May.

2011 marks the centenary of the birth of Anna Russell, the celebrated Canadian musical comedienne in the tradition of Victor Borge, PDQ Bach and Mary Lou Fallis. Miss Russell is remembered by adoring fans as an “International Concert Comedienne”, a “Musical Cartoonist” and the “The World’s Greatest Musical Satirist”.

Anna Russell began her stellar career with Sir Ernest Macmillan in the Toronto Symphony’s Music Box concerts over sixty years ago. In this production of *Toad* – a family nickname for Miss Russell – we find the delightful Denise Oucharek portraying the grande dame herself; backstage relating the story of her life, interspersed with recreations of Anna’s classic routines, including her infamous discourse on Wagner’s Ring, in which she performs the entire Cycle in twenty minutes! Even if you are not an opera lover, you will recognize and love these classical themes revisited with a comic edge.

Artistic Director Ian Farthing: "This is such a wonderful show. Denise is hilarious in bringing this Canadian comic icon to life - it's going to be a real treat for us."

TOAD - THE ANNA RUSSELL STORY

By Marc Richard

Friday May 13th, 7.30pm

Saturday May 14th, 7.30pm

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 425 Centre Street, Prescott, ON

All tickets \$25

Available by calling 613 925 5788 or online at www.stlawrenceshakespeare.ca

Starring DENISE OUCHAREK as Anna Russell

Accompanied by ANTHONY BASTIANON on piano

More about Anna Russell:

Anna Russell, (27 December 1911 – 18 October 2006) was an English–Canadian singer and comedienne. She gave many concerts in which she sang and played comic musical sketches on the piano. Among her best-known works are her concert performances and famous recordings of a humorous 30-minute version of Richard Wagner’s *The Ring Cycle* and her parody *How to Write Your Own Gilbert and Sullivan Opera*.

More about Denise Oucharek:

Denise Oucharek, most recently enchanted Prescott audiences at the Festival’s annual Valentine’s Dinner this past February. The award-winning actress has appeared in over 100 productions including *The Sound of Music* with Ian Farthing and a two-year run in *Mamma Mia*, both in Toronto. Other performances include *Joseph, My Fair Lady, Fiddler on the Roof, HMS Pinafore* and many other shows in theatres in Halifax, Kingston, Toronto, Calgary and other Canadian cities. Denise is also the Artistic Director of the Mississauga Youth Theatre and received her Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Education from Queen’s University.

SPRING SPECIAL:

Purchase your 2011 Season Pass to the Festival’s summer Shakespeare season and receive a complimentary ticket to TOAD – The Anna Russell Story.

Coming Soon:

St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival presents *Jake’s Gift* June 6th at St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church - back by popular demand.

The St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival’s 2011 season featuring *Twelfth Night* and *All’s Well That Ends Well* runs July 9 to August 13 at the Kinsmen Amphitheatre at Sandra S. Lawn Harbour in Prescott.