



Come From Away (9/18/17)

00:00:26

Reporter: 56 minutes after the North Tower is struck, an unprecedented decision has been made: every non-military plane must land immediately.

Man: Must now land at Gander, turn right heading 3-2-0.

Reporter: With almost no warning, Gander's vast tarmac was filled with dozens of airplanes. In Gander alone, 38 airplanes, 7,000 stranded passengers and crew, in a small town of less than 10,000, all with open arms. The bonds that formed during those remarkable days between the Ganderites and those who, as the show's title suggests, came from away, have endured, and now play out on the stage every night.

00:01:04

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau attended last night's performance. And I think this story encapsulates so much, what we shared through great times, and also through extraordinarily tragic times. It was a great story. It is, it moves me to this day. You know, when we ran it in Vancouver, I've never had a story, quite honestly, not one, that lit up both countries as much as that one did. And I continue to hear from it, and every performance ends with a romping, stomping standing O from everybody who sees it.

# Part of you behind #

(applause)

- 00:02:09 Jessica Chen: Good evening, everyone. My name is Jessica Chen, and I'm the director of public programs here at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. It's my pleasure to welcome all of you to tonight's program, which kicks off our fall 2017 programming schedule. As always, we welcome our museum members and those tuning into our live web broadcasts on Facebook and at [911memorial.org/live](http://911memorial.org/live).
- 00:02:32 I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge two members of our audience tonight: 9/11 Memorial & Museum board member Anthoula Katsimatides and Kevin Tuerff, whose story inspired one of the characters in the musical we are discussing tonight. Thank you so much for joining us.
- (applause)
- 00:02:53 On stage, we are joined by four special individuals who are instrumental in bringing "Come from Away's" moving story of human kindness to the Broadway stage. Irene Sankoff and David Hein are the Canadian married writing team behind "Come from Away," which enjoyed a record-setting world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse and Seattle Repertory, followed by Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC, the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto, and since March, the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre on Broadway. "Come from Away" has been named Best Musical all across North America.
- 00:03:25 Claude Elliott was the mayor of Gander on 9/11. He oversaw the welcome of 38 planes and 7,000 stranded airline passengers and crew to Gander: population 9,651. Captain Beverley Bass, the first female captain in American Airlines history, flew and landed one of the diverted planes. Both Mayor Elliott and Captain Bass inspired characters in "Come from Away."
- 00:03:51 In tonight's conversation with the museum's executive vice president and deputy director of museum programs, Clifford Chanin, Captain Bass, Mayor Elliott, Irene, and David will discuss their 9/11 experiences and how their stories became a Broadway musical.

We'd like to thank our special guest speakers for sharing their time and insights with us tonight, as well as the whole "Come from Away" team for the show and for their assistance in putting together tonight's program.

00:04:18

We are also deeply grateful to the David Berg Foundation for supporting the museum's 2017-2018 public program season. Before I turn it over to them, I would like to ask everyone to kindly silence your phones and please refrain from taking photographs during the program.

Without further ado, please join me in welcoming Beverley Bass, Claude Elliott, Irene Sankoff, and David Hein.

(applause)

00:04:47

Clifford Chanin: Thank you, Jessica. Welcome, everybody. I cannot imagine a better way to start our fall programming season than this wonderful, wonderful play. I was telling Beverley in particular, I told you we were going to have a friendly audience here tonight, so there is no reason to be concerned because how many of you have seen the play?

(laughter)

Woman: Nine!

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin: I think Beverley's the winner in how many times. This... how many times is it, Beverley?

(no audio)

(cheers and applause)

00:05:23 Clifford Chanin: And I think part of the fun of doing this is-- as we will hear-- the relationships that have been forged through the creation of the play, the people who were at Gander, returning to Gander. And I was saying before, it felt like a reunion, as everybody was gathering here. And I know some of the members of the audience here tonight are really part of that reunion, as well. So it's really a pleasure to be here.

00:05:49 I think to start, it seems such an unlikely turn of events that out of 9/11, something like this would have happened. But I want to start with the creation of the play. It starts-- David and Irene-- with the tenth anniversary of 9/11. There was a reunion in Gander of the folks-- some who could make it back-- to commemorate and rekindle these relationships. And you guys went up there to record and interview people who were part of this reunion. What made you think that this was something worth doing?

00:06:31 David Hein: A friend of ours had, had introduced us to the story, and we started researching it, and we found out there was going to be a commemoration ceremony there that year. And all of these amazing people-- Captain Bass, Kevin Tuerff—and so many people had returned ten years later to commemorate what had happened. So we applied for a Canada Council for the Arts grant, and were fortunate enough to go out there.

00:06:55 We got to go out there for about three weeks, and we got to go extend it a little bit because people wouldn't let us stay in hotels or eat... They kept saying, "Ah, don't be spending money on a hotel, come stay with us, here's the keys," and then they'd leave, and...

(laughter)

David Hein: And it was amazing. And it was just an extraordinary opportunity, not only to meet everyone from Newfoundland, but also all of our "Come From Away" friends. And we went out there with very little idea what we were doing. The town was filled with all this press, looking for five-second sound bites, but we were just looking to hear stories.

00:07:31

And so we would speak to people for hours at a time. We interviewed Captain Bass on the morning of September 11, 2011, for hours. And she told us her entire life story. (laughing): I don't know why you did, but...

Irene Sankoff: It was very kind, yes.

David Hein: It was wonderful. And we came away not only with hundreds of stories, but we also came away with so many friends, and it was just a remarkable experience that we wanted to share with the world.

00:07:58

Clifford Chanin: Now, you both had worked as performers, and writing music and theater pieces. Did you go there thinking, "This is a natural theater piece," or was it really part of the discovery of the interviews that led you in the direction of creating the play?

00:08:13

Irene Sankoff: I think it was through the interviews. I mean, at one point we were thinking about "Laramie Project." I don't know if people are familiar with that, and it's also a town's reaction to a tragedy. And it uses real people and their stories, and we thought, "Okay, well, you can't tell a story about Newfoundland without using the music." So we can do "Laramie Project," and we'll just incorporate music in it, and then it'll be a musical. (laughing)

00:08:39

David Hein: It's that easy.

Irene Sankoff (chuckles): Yeah. But, you know, we just became so involved with, with what had happened out there. I think especially for

us, having lived just uptown on September 11, 2001. Hearing these stories sort of made us remember what New York was like in the days following. And we were living in a residence at the time with 700 students from 110 different countries.

00:09:05           And the way we all took care of each other then, I sort of thought, "Oh, my goodness, like, look, this is the... this is, like... it's kind of the same thing," but the stakes are... I guess not really heightened because we were in New York. But it just seemed more natural in terms of telling that story as a musical. It just was just so remarkable.

00:09:26           Clifford Chanin: Beverley, do you remember that... You spent hours-- I assume you do remember that first interview and subsequent interviews-- but did you actually think, "Gee, this is going to turn out, and I'm going to be a character on a Broadway stage"?

(laughter)

00:09:40           Captain Beverley Bass (laughing): Never in a million years. And I remember the interviews so well because, you know, like they said, all the film crews that were there on the tenth anniversary, they all wanted, like, you know, just a few seconds of an interview to put on the evening news. And I can't remember which one of you asked me if you could interview me at the Comfort Inn, the morning of September 11, and I said, "Of course," you know. So I went down for what I thought was just going to be a short interview, and first of all, I saw that they were so young.

(laughter)

00:10:17           Captain Beverley Bass And I was, like, "Oh, okay, well, whatever." So we sat there...

(laughter)

Captain Beverley Bass...for four hours, I think the interview lasted. And, you know, if you saw the transcript from that interview that morning, and if you've heard the song "Me and the Sky," you can literally take paragraphs out of that transcript, and it is verbatim from our talk with each other. It's really incredible. I don't know how they did it.

00:10:48 Clifford Chanin: Now, Mr. Mayor, you sort of became the point person as all of this was happening on September 11, and then for the reunion. And I think in interviews I've read with you before, you said you really didn't go home for five days just managing all of this. Was the reaction of your fellow Newfoundlanders-- Ganderites, I'm guessing-- was this something that surprised you, or was this just the general expectation that 38 planes, 7,000 people show up, there is this tragedy south of the border, we cannot move them, so naturally, this is what we do?

00:11:29 Mayor Claude Elliot: Oh, yeah, it's no question, it's our nature. And it was no big deal for us. I mean, we were told earlier in the day to expect as much as 75 planes. Because once you leave Europe in the mornings, and you get over halfway across the ocean, the nearest airport is Gander. And, but because some of them had not been across halfway, they were sent back. So 7,000 people was no big deal.

(laughter)

00:11:58 Mayor Claude Elliot: You know, one thing about the Newfoundlanders is, the greatest resource that any community is going to have is its people. I don't care what else you got, but as people, we had people looking for passengers before the last plane was landed. Calling into our office to say, "If those people are staying, we want to take them into our home." That's our nature, that's our generosity.

- 00:12:21           And we believe that that's the way the world should be, but unfortunately, it's not like that everywhere. But it's something that we have and we're very proud of. And when we saw the smiles on people's faces, and the tears of joy when they left Gander, we were paid in full. We didn't need anything else, we were paid in full. And our people would do the same thing again today, and wouldn't even think twice about doing it.
- 00:12:48           Clifford Chanin: Beverley, I do want to ask you about that morning. You are flying from Paris to Dallas, so obviously, you're not all that far along in your flight because you were able to get to Gander. But what did you hear, aside from the order to land? Were you told what had happened? Were you aware of all the events that were unfolding?
- 00:13:11           Captain Beverley Bass Sure. All international airplanes that are flying across the North Atlantic or the Pacific, you are required to monitor what we call an air-to-air frequency. And it's really just pilots talking to each other. We tell each other about a good ride up, you know, at 33,000, or weather up ahead. So it's not a frequency that is controlled by air traffic controllers-- we just talk amongst ourselves. And so the very first thing that happened was-- I think it might have been a U.S. Air airplane, but I'm not even sure about that-- came on the radio and said that an airplane had hit the World Trade Center.
- 00:13:52           And the co-pilot and I were just sitting there, having lunch, it was a beautiful day. And you know, we talked about it, but we just assumed it was a light airplane, and we just thought it was so odd because we knew the weather was nice in New York, and that was it. We went back to eating our lunch.
- 00:14:09           And then, I guess it was about 20 minutes later, the next radio transmission said that an American 737 had hit the second tower. And with that came the word "terrorism." Well, it... we were curious to know if they meant an American-registered airplane or American Airlines, since we're with American. And so we didn't really know at the time. It ended up not being a 737, but anyway. You know, so when they said terrorism,

even that was such a foreign term to me because in my mind, that was something that happened very far away from the United States.

00:14:56 So that was very odd to me at the time. And then we also learned on that frequency that as we approached 50 degrees west longitude, which is the first time that we'd come in contact with Gander Control, and then when we came in contact with Gander, that's when we were told to land immediately in Gander.

00:15:18 Clifford Chanin: Remarkable. Now, you are, of course, are coming into this-- speaking now to Irene and David-- you're coming into this ten years later, but that doesn't change the reality of, you are dealing with a story that's rooted in 9/11, this extraordinary tragedy. And all of the stories that become part of that. And yet you're doing something else. You're willing to take that burden on because you feel you have another story to tell?

00:15:48 David Hein: Yeah. We had fallen in love with the stories out in Newfoundland that we had heard, and those were the stories that we wanted to tell. We... I think partly it was because we had lived in New York at the time-- my cousin was in the towers, but fortunately got out. We wanted to tell a story that had inspired us, and you know, coming through the museum here, there's a section called "The 9/12" section, which is the response to what had happened on 9/11, what happened in the days following.

00:16:20 And that really spoke to us about... This story is not a 9/11 story, this is a 9/12 story. It's how this small community responded to a larger tragedy, and it taught us a lot about how we can respond, you know, not just in response to a tragedy-- which, you know, so many are happening these days-- but often, you know, just day to day by reaching out to strangers and showing kindness in our everyday experiences.

00:16:47 So that was the story we wanted to tell, and in writing the show, we tried really hard to be careful about trigger words that were used. And to really say whatever you're worried about, don't-- come with us, come

with us to Newfoundland. This incredible thing happened in response in the way this community responded, and we want to share that story with you.

00:17:08 Irene Sankoff: And, and we also were aware that we weren't the first. In the year or so following September 11, 2001, that we still lived in New York, we'd seen some pieces that reflected what had happened. And, you know, in the years following, there was another musical, "Ordinary Days." That's a bit of a spoiler, but at the end. And some of... "The Humans," which is not a musical, but was in our theater just before us. So we...

00:17:35 David Hein: As well as Tom Brokaw's documentary, and several book, Jim DeFede's book, and Kevin Tuerff's book, which is available in the gift shop here.

Irene Sankoff: I think they both are, I think they both are, yeah.

Clifford Chanin: You do it all, don't you?

Irene Sanoff: Yeah. So we didn't really think of ourselves being the first, and we sort of thought about things like "Cabaret," which is about the Second World War, but it's not directly about the Second World War. Or even "Indecent," which was on Broadway this past year, or "Bandstand." You know, it's also about-- they're also about tragedies. And they look at different aspects and different people's experiences. And aside from that, we really, really thought that it would be performed in Canadian high schools and colleges.

(laughter)

00:18:21 Irene Sankoff: And... they would be forced to do it because there was Canadian content.

(laughter)

Irene Sankoff: And so, yeah, just each step along the way we've been completely surprised, and overwhelmed, and grateful. I mean, including today, being invited here, it's a big honor.

Clifford Chanin: So we'll get to when it comes to Broadway, but with the material that you were gathering, did it occur to you immediately that this was the makings of the play that you would write, or how long did you have to work through this material, come up with a plotline, all of this? Was it a standard approach for doing this that you have, or was something different about dealing with this kind of material?

00:19:01

Irene Sankoff: I think-- I think it was different. Sorry, it was entirely different because we wanted to honor the people whose stories we were telling so much, we said to ourselves, "We're not going to worry about musical theater structure. We are going to tell this story the way it needs to be told." So if that means that there's, you know, ten minutes between two songs-- usually in a musical that's, you know, they're like, "No, you can't do that, you gotta give this person a song." And you...

(laughter)

00:19:25

You know, that doesn't make any-- it didn't make any sense to us. We said, you know, what's most important is that the people who we are representing, and the people who were lost that day, their families, their friends, if they see this, that they are proud. So we... we kind of threw out the rule book a little bit, yeah-- totally, actually.

00:19:42

David Hein: We also came back with-- you know, we joke about it-- but we came back with what felt like 16,000 stories with, you know, 7,000

people on the planes, and approximately 9,000 in town. It was a lot. And we-- and we not only had access to our interviews, we were given access to thank you letters that came back, to articles that were written in the local paper. We interviewed people around the world-- Kevin we interviewed by Skype afterwards. But also, we interviewed, you know, people from as far away as Hawaii. Or there was a throat-- a heavy metal throat singer from Tuva, which is just south of Russia. His band had been diverted to the small town of Gambo, and he had had an extraordinary experience jamming with a Beatles cover band.

(laughter)

00:20:25

David Hein: Which was in the musical for a very short period until our producer said, "You cannot put a Beatles cover band in the musical."

Irene Sankoff: Rights issues.

David Hein: So we came back with all of these stories, and we spread them all out in a small cabin, and tried to find commonalities, common denominators, stories about faith, stories about food, stories about... love. And tried to find characters who were there at the very beginning when they were landed, and who were there at the tenth anniversary.

00:20:55

We, and tracked them through, and then told as many other stories as we possibly could fit in there. Our first draft was five hours long.

(laughter)

David Hein: Passengers were still not off the plane.

(laughter)

Irene Sankoff: And at that point, we put it away for about six months, because I think we got jobs, and... Also because we needed to get some distance so that we could make it into a piece of theater. So that we could theatricalize it, and... and again, make it a piece of theater that would be pleasing for people to see.

00:21:26

David Hein: But throughout it, we tried to fit in every possible story we could. There's one story about the air traffic controllers there who, for five days, there were no planes in the air, so they had nothing to do. So they made chili, nonstop, and would truck these huge vats of chili in there. And early in the process, we thought this deserved, like, several scenes of chili-making.

(laughter)

David Hein: Possibly a song.

Irene Sankoff: It was.

00:21:50

David Hein: Eventually, we cut it down to, just one of the air traffic controller characters comes in and says to his wife, "I brought you a bowl of chili." And what's important to us about that is that when the air traffic controllers come to see the show, they say, "You got in the chili!", you know? And that was always our goal, was to-- was, you know, even if characters needed to be amalgamated, or storylines needed to be combined together, we wanted the people who experienced it to come and say, "That's what happened. That the spirit was right about."

00:22:20

Clifford Chanin: Let me ask, Claude, you-- when did it get to you that you were about to become a character in a play?

(Mayor Elliott chuckles)

Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, I... Always thought of myself as a character, but never...

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot:...never in a play. You know, I grew up in a small town in Newfoundland of about 2,000 people, a fishing community. And it's about an hour's drive from Gander. So when I left Twillingate and went to Gander, it was like I went to the big city.

(laughter)

00:22:38

Mayor Claude Elliot: You know, there's 7,000 people living in Gander in 1974. So coming from 2,000 going to 7,000 seemed like you were going to a big city. So Broadway, all I've seen was on television, you see the stars, the movie stars on Broadway. I can reassure you that I never dreamt that one day I would be a character on Broadway. Or I would walk the red carpet and to be on stage. Because when David and Irene interviewed me about three or four hours, when they left I sort of said, "These two young people is going to end up on welfare."

(laughter)

00:23:39

Mayor Claude Elliot: Because how do you make a musical about sandwiches and bed clothes?

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: I have never seen a musical, and the first musical I ever saw was "Come From Away." But they knew what they were doing, I didn't know what they were doing, but they did. And certainly, you know...

David Hein: We figured out what we were doing.

(laughter)

00:23:58 Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, we're, we're very proud of that. But when I walked out on stage the first time on Broadway, and I looked out at the audience, and I saw their reaction, as I was interviewed when I got back home by the news media, and said, "What did you feel like when you walked out?" And I said, "It wasn't about me. It wasn't about how I felt. I was out there representing 16,000 people."

00:24:26 Because you see, when we start thinking about ourself, that's when it gets lost. Because it's about a group of people. It's not about me, how I feel. Yes, I felt proud, but I felt prouder for my community, and the people that live there, and the people that made this happen so's I could walk down Broadway. Now, I thought about playing myself.

(laughter)

00:24:50 Mayor Claude Elliot: But when they told me it was a musical, I was out.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: You know. But, you know, it's... it was different for us. What the musical has done to me, the first time I saw it, we didn't know what the people on the planes were going through, and the people on the planes didn't know what we were doing. So the musical brought that out for me to see, sitting aboard a plane for 28 hours... You know, to see that and what they were going through, we didn't understand, we didn't know, and they didn't know what we were doing. So at least the play, we've seen both sides of it.

00:25:26

Captain Beverley Bass: But I have to tell you about one of the greatest comments that Claude made. I think it was when we were all in town for the opening night of "Come From Away," and he stood on the corner in Times Square, and he said, "I think there are more people at this intersection than in all of Gander."

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: And that's true.

Clifford Chanin: Claude, I don't know, this feels a little bit like an audition for you, I have to say.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, I left the hotel today and drove up to Times Square in taxi. Man, I tell you. I think I take my chances walking.

(laughter)

00:26:09

Mayor Claude Elliot: You know, you got to realize, when you come from a community where we only have five streetlights. And they're all on one street.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: And you get in this tra... I'm amazed how people get around here, I'm amazed that the traffic, the people, I mean... You know, from one street to the other there's 5,000 people, and you don't know if you should hide away or run or what you should do, but you know

something? The one thing I've learned the few times I've been here, I find the people here very friendly. I do. I find them very friendly-- you, you know...

(applause)

00:26:44

Mayor Claude Elliot: And that's something to say for a large city. But, I think, too, that New Yorkers know tourists when they-- when they see one.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: When you're all looking around, someone said to me today, "What are you looking for?"

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: So it is different for us.

00:27:03

Clifford Chanin: Beverley, you, too, have become a character. What did that feel like for you as you learned-- what was the moment you learned, "Wait a minute, "they've taken this interview and they've turned it into something I didn't really expect"?

Captain Beverley Bass: Oh, gosh, you know, throughout the four years, I guess, that y'all were working on it, we talked a couple of times, but you know, I don't know a lot about theater. I don't know how it goes from conception to Broadway. And so I knew they were doing some workshops, and some festivals, but I didn't know what any of that meant.

00:27:36 Captain Beverley Bass: So I think it was one day, Irene and I talked on the phone and she said that some students were going to be workshopping it, is that what it was? Okay. And that I could watch on the computer, but we were down in Florida, and our... We didn't have internet in our house at that time. So I was trying to steal the internet from my neighbor...

(laughter)

00:27:59 Captain Beverley Bass: ...to watch this. And it kept cutting out, so, really, I had no idea what was going on. And then in the summer of 2015, we got a phone call inviting us to the world premiere of the musical that the young couple you met in Gander have written. And you know, my husband and I are, like... Okay, I mean, we really did not know a whole lot about it. So we went to La Jolla, and I remember so well the night before opening, you know, my husband and I are telling them stories, just things like, we have this map on the wall that we put pins in for every destination that we fly to. And the producers were going, "Really? Really?"

(laughter)

00:28:48 Captain Beverley Bass: Because they know that is in the show, but we haven't seen the show.

(laughter)

David Hein: You have to understand, this was right before she had seen it, and we had been living with her interview-- we had transcribed it, we had shared it with everyone, we had turned it into text, we had turned it into song. And so she comes and verbatim things from our play that people have memorized are coming out of her mouth, and the entire cast was, like, "Oh, that's interesting."

(laughter)

00:29:14 Clifford Chanin (laughing): Let me... let me... so you guys, your premiere is in La Jolla, you've workshoped this before, but I take it this is the first time at least some of the interviewees are coming to see a performance. So what did that feel like as you're anticipating-- I don't know which of your characters are actually there, but some of them are there-- what did it feel like to think, "Okay, now they're going to see themselves through our eyes"?

00:29:38 Irene Sankoff: If I could have, like, turned into, like, a small little turtle... (laughs) and hid in my shell, I would have. It's a huge responsibility. It's, it's... you know, but even by the time they went to La Jolla, it was bigger than we ever thought it would be. I mean, Kevin came to see a workshop in Oakville, Ontario, in February, and he's from Texas. And when he came to that, I was, like, "Oh, my God, okay. Okay, come to Oakville, Ontario, in the middle of winter." (shivers) But yeah, every single time, it's just... I think my shoulder is, like, attached to my ears because it was-- it's just so stressful.

00:30:12 David Hein: And we spend the entire show watching them, like, watching the back of their heads.

Irene Sankoff: You do that-- I'm like this. I'm, like... yeah.

Captain Beverley Bass: Most of it was with our heads-- certainly I speak for my husband and myself-- you know, in about the first five minutes or so in the show, when Jen comes out and she picks up the phone and says, "Tom, I'm fine." He broke down completely. And it was the first time that I think that I realized that that day was actually much harder on him being at home not knowing where I was. He knew I was flying, but he didn't know where I was.

00:30:51                   And you know, the, the events happened at about 7:30 Dallas time, which is where we lived. And I wasn't able to really talk to him until about 4:30 that afternoon. And we have two young children at the time, they were nine and ten, and so it was a very long, hard day for him. And so that was the moment I realized that, that his day was tougher than mine. Because I had a job to do, I had an airplane to manage, I had a crew to manage, and I had 156 passengers.

00:31:24                   So, you know, I was just-- I was just doing what I could as far as my job was concerned. But he was at home, you know, suffering a lot more than me, I think.

Mayor Claude Elliot: I saw the show for the first time in Seattle. And I really didn't know what to expect. I always say I did not enjoy the first show because you don't know what's coming, you don't know how accurate it is, you don't know if the story is going to be told the way it is, the way it was. But the second time I saw it was in Washington.

00:31:59                   And I really paid attention to it. And to this day, everything you see in that musical happened. It could never be a truer story was ever told. Now, some of the words may have changed, some of the things, but it definitely all happened. When I was in Toronto to the show, I had a young man approach me, he was from Washington, he was 21 years of age. And he wanted to meet me, and he said, "I want to thank you, and your community, for what you did for my American friends to help them when they were stranded there, what you did for them."

00:32:41                   You see, he said, "My dad was on flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania." And man, I mean, that hit you right to the heart, is, in the midst of that storm where he lost his dad, he wanted to thank us for what we had done. And it was then that I realized that this story needs to be told more, and more, and more, because it was very moving. Look at that young man, you know, who went through a terrible tragedy.

00:33:14                   Clifford Chanin: Let me ask both Claude and Beverley, because it's so interesting. You have your experiences, they are turned into a theatrical

experience through the work that's done. Is it still yours, do you feel? Or has it become something else that as Claude said, is now a story for everyone? Is there a difference there?

Captain Beverley Bass: Well, for me, no, it is still wonderful. I'm still so-- well, I'll always be so proud of every part of it. I have a very close friendship with Jenn Colella.

Clifford Chanin: That's the actress who plays you.

00:33:51

Captain Beverley Bass: Who plays my role, yes. And you know, I can still remember the first night I met her in La Jolla, and I had seen a picture of her on Facebook, but that was the only thing I knew about her. So when we got to the party before the show that night, I saw her way across the room, and my daughter was with me, and I said, "You know, I-- I think that's who's playing my role." And I walked up to her, and I said, "I think you're playing my part in the show." And she said, "You don't say."

(laughter)

00:34:25

And we just became instant friends, we text, we email. I think I was the second phone call she made when she was nominated for the Tony. And we both just sat on the phone and cried. You know, she was so proud, and I was so proud of her. And she said, "But you know, the only reason I'm getting this nomination is because I get to tell your story." (voice breaking): So... It's emotional. But yeah, I'm proud of it every night, and I've never lost that connection with the show.

00:35:02

Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, certainly, it goes, it's the same for me. I mean, I'm glad that I'm a part of a team that made all this happen. And you know, it's nice to see someone playing you. I met Joel Hatch before, now, the only difference—he don't have any hair.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: But when this was talked about and who they were going to get to play you, my daughter, who lives in Hawaii, she called me and she said, "Dad, there's nobody in the world can play you."

(laughter)

00:35:31 Mayor Claude Elliot: I said, "Well, I'm sure there is. There's somebody for everybody." And he's done a great job. You know, there's no question about it. And, but it-- we live a unique life, and to see it being portrayed on a, you know, on a Broadway play is amazing. I remember, one night I got a call from a Detroit radio station. I had to stay up till 2:00 a.m. in the morning in Newfoundland, but, to talk to him. And I stayed up because to me, this story has got to get out as much as it can. And he was asking all kinds of questions.

00:36:06 Eventually, he said, "Is it true that you gave complete strangers your vehicles to drive?" "Yes." "Well, we would not do that in Detroit."

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: "No, I don't live in Detroit, I live in Gander, Newfoundland." And he said, "Were your residents, or were you scared that people were going to steal your vehicles?" I said, "Not really, sir, we live on an island."

(laughter)

00:36:31 So it's very di... we trust everybody. There's no question. I still go to bed at night now with the keys left in my vehicle. We don't lock our doors most of the time. Now, my wife makes sure the door's locked, but not...

You know, we go to the grocery store, the keys are left in the car. It's just the way that we are, you know.

00:36:52           And this is the way that the rest of the world should live to be able to pick up your neighbor, pick up your friend. And when all those people landed in Gander, we didn't look at their color, we didn't look at their religion, we don't look at their sexual orientation. It's people. And every time you get an opportunity to help people, you need to help them. And we don't hold no barriers. We help everyone that we can help.

00:37:18           And if 7,000 people showed up tomorrow, they'd get the same treatment as the last 7,000 got regardless. Because it's the right thing to do to help your fellow man or woman, regardless of where they're from in the world.

(applause)

Clifford Chanin: Let me... So the trajectory of this show-- the workshops, La Jolla, Seattle, Washington, DC, at Ford's Theatre. But there's a moment that I want you to talk about, because you mounted-- I think it's in concert format-- the show itself in a hockey rink in Gander?

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin (laughing): So tell us about that.

00:37:55           David Hein: So from the very beginning, we had two things-- we wanted to tell the story, but we also wanted to give back in some way to the community that had given the world so much, had shared their stories with us, and we wanted to pay it forward. When we first talked to our producers about this, we were sure they were—they were, like, "That's crazy. You can't bring a Broadway show to Gander."

00:38:16 And they did, and it was amazing. They somehow arranged to have 140 people fly out to St. John's. We couldn't get direct flights into Gander with all those people, we had to bus them up through St. John's. And it was life-changing for all of us. I mean, we talk about those moments when... when Captain Bass and Mayor Elliott saw the show, and those are amazing, but this was-- it was not only a unique opportunity that playwrights rarely get to introduce your cast and people working on your show to the people and the place that originally inspired you.

00:38:51 But to share a story that was told to you back to the same community, to share their culture, their music that I had grown up with and that I loved. And to say, "You may think this is ordinary, but to us, it's extraordinary, and we want to show you that." And it was life-changing for all of us. We smiled the entire weekend, we laughed the entire weekend, we sobbed the entire weekend. One of our actors, Lee, was on stage. He came on stage with the rest of the cast, and he said, "Guys, our job is just to tell the story. "We're not going to cry.

(laughter)

00:39:30 David Hein: We just tell the story, just do it." And we came out, and in the middle of the first song, we have a chorus that repeats "I'm an islander, I'm an islander," and the entire crowd-- so we had...

Mayor Claude Elliot: 2,500.

David Hein: ...two concerts of 2,500 people. So it's 5,000 people saw it, about half the town's population came out to see it. And they stood up and gave us a standing ovation and started cheering in the middle of the opening number. And everyone on stage and us, we just... (imitating blubbing)

(laughter)

David Hein: And it was so... you know, we had so many-- we so wanted to get it right. The actors so wanted to get the accents right, desperately.

00:40:08

Mayor Claude Elliot: You gotta work on that one.

(laughter)

David Hein: It is so much better than when it started.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: We talk fast in Newfoundland. I tell people it's like reading a book. When you're on page one, we're on page five.

(laughter)

00:40:27

Clifford Chanin (laughing): Irene, your... Your memory of the hockey rink?

Irene Sankoff: Oh, my gosh, once again, it was just completely overwhelming. We were in the front row, and I was so terrified to look behind me to see what people were thinking, but then I heard the crowd's reaction, and I just... You know, I was crying, and, you know, once again, trying to hide. And Caesar was-- one of the gentlemen in the cast-- was positioned right in front of me, and he just looked at me, and he started laughing at me because I was just-- I was just a complete mess. And it was-- it was... It was surreal the entire weekend.

00:41:00

I mean, we never imagined that we would actually-- that any of this would have happened. And to be there, and to have, you know, our assistant lighting designer be told by our stage manager to-- you know,

that she was trying to do stuff in the hockey rink at, like, midnight, trying to set some cues, and she was freezing, 'cause she's from San Diego.

(laughter)

David Hein: And it's a hockey rink.

00:41:25

Irene Sankoff: And it's a hockey rink. And it had been snowing, and so the stage manager was, like, "You know, you could go home." And she was like, "No, no, I want them to see as close to the real thing as possible. And I need to make sure that this is the best show that we can give them."

And then the next morning she's, like, "I just crossed Airport Boulevard and went to Shopper's Drug Mart." (laughing): And I was just, like... And everything about the town had become sort of, like, iconic. All of these little places that are so ordinary to the people there and for all Canadians. You know, Shopper's Drug Mart, it's, like... Target meets CVS sort of thing, yeah. Yeah, it-- it was just-- it was just so interesting to see ordinary things transformed into icons.

00:42:06

David Hein: We talk about it like a wedding sometimes.

Irene Sankoff: Oh, yeah.

David Hein: In that we had this Newfoundland family and "Come From Away" family, and we got to introduce our theater family to them. And there were all of these amazing experiences. So Geno Carr, who plays Oz Fudge, Constable Oz Fudge, he was made an honorary constable. He got to drive the squad car around Gander.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: I wonder, would I get one here in New York to drive?

Irene Sankoff: Yeah, good luck.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot (laughing): I don't think so.

00:42:31

David Hein: Kendra Kassebaum, our reporter character, was on air on the local radio doing reporting. Petrina Bromley, who's from Newfoundland, got to go to the SPCA. It was extraordinary. There's a moment in the middle of the concert where we have a traditional song called "Heave Away" in the middle of the show, and everyone who also sees the show says, "Oh, that's a nice traditional-sounding tune that David and Irene wrote." That clearly, even though it says in the program, but you play that out in Newfoundland, and the cast went... (singing tune) And, you know, 2,500 people all go "Heave away!"

(laughter)

00:43:07

David Hein: And the entire cast went... (cries out)

(laughter)

Irene Sankoff: It was so funny.

Clifford Chanin: Claude, what was it like to be on the receiving end of that performance? How-- what did the townspeople have to say about it?

Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, you know, I guess I'll tell you play at home so your own people can see it. I think David is right, almost from the beginning, you could tell that the people loved what they were seeing. And music is one of our passions in the province. One of the big things that we have is shed parties. That's where everybody get together on a weekend in your shed, you eat moose stew.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: Drink beer, get sick, and stay with you all night.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: But, the people...

00:43:48

David Hein: And we wanted to share that experience with the world. They like to-- we enjoy partying, we enjoy life. Life is so relaxing there, you know, and for somebody who don't understand it, it's hard to explain. And so when the people saw it, you could see the excitement in their face. You could see it by the way they were standing. I think the last 15 minutes of the show before they had finished, everybody was standing up with a standing ovation. And that said to me there, that you did the right thing. That means that the people—our own people love it, and let's show it to the rest of the world.

00:44:29

Captain Beverley Bass: And they were, they were so proud. You know, we have seen the show many times. So we know when the end of the show is. But the people in Gander did not know when the end was, and they were standing up like you say, screaming, and clapping, and yelling. They were so incredibly proud. So it was obvious that they had written the story correctly.

00:44:53 Mayor Claude Elliot: I was in there when the prime minister was there in Maymont, and we had Canada Night. I sat with the prime minister and his wife, and a former prime minister, Chretien, who was the prime minister at the time, and we were sitting there, and plus Ivanka Trump, the president's daughter, was sitting with us. And I'm watching the two prime ministers when the show is over, 'cause I've seen react, but I want to see what their reaction was. And former prime minister, he reached over, and he shook hands with me, and he said, "Thank you. You've done Canada proud."

00:45:27 And I could see that the present prime minister was never no prouder to be the prime minister of a country than what he was that night at that theater. And you could see the tear trickling, you know, down his cheek. And how proud he was of not only a province, but of a country. They were very proud. And so we're not only affecting people in the world, but we're also affecting people in our own country, and they're feeling different. 'Cause not every place in Canada is as friendly as what Gander is.

(laughter)

00:46:00 Mayor Claude Elliot: I mean, if you went downtown Toronto or downtown Vancouver, it wouldn't be the same, in fact, as what it would be in Gander. But for most part, Canadians are good, honest people that like helping people.

Clifford Chanin: I do want to point out that the 38 planes in Gander, there were in all, 255 aircraft that landed across Canada on that day. So the remarkable hospitality and the story of Gander was recreated in places all across Canada because of the closing of the American air space.

00:46:29 Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, the difference in Toronto and Vancouver and Montreal, you have a lot more hotel rooms. We only got 500.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: So what do you do with 7,000 people with 500 hotel rooms? And we needed those hotel rooms to keep the crew. We wanted all the crew to be well-rested when they were ready to go out. So where do we put them? People's homes, and churches, and schools, and different organizations. And our neighboring communities helped out, also, you know, took some passengers. So it's much different, so you land in Vancouver, you're probably all, you know, they have 1,200 people to be put in hotels. It's much different than a small...

00:47:08

Clifford Chanin: Beverley, let me just ask, what-- what was the contact like with American Airlines headquarters to get a sense of when this was going to be fixed and you were going to be able to get back in the plane and fly out?

Captain Beverley Bass: I actually had very little contact with American during the four or five days that we were there. And not to fault American, but they had a huge domestic operation to deal with. They had so many crew members and so many airplanes on the ground all over the U.S. So the international airplanes were... we were kind of left to fend for ourselves because, you know, there wasn't anything they could do for us, really, until the airspace opened up.

00:47:48

And you have to remember, we had just lost two airplanes, so American had a lot on their plate at that time. And really, what I did is, I stayed pretty much confined to the Comfort Inn because I never knew when I was going to get the call to leave. So I stayed at the Comfort Inn, and there's a restaurant connected to it via a tunnel called Jungle Jim's.

(laughter)

Captain Beverley Bass And I ate every meal for five days at Jungle Jim's.

(laughter)

00:48:21 Captain Beverley Bass Yeah, you know, 'cause really, we didn't have cellphones, we didn't have pagers. So I couldn't venture out too far other than going to the Knights of Columbus Lodge everyday because I wanted to brief my passengers. Not that I had anything new to tell them, because I didn't, but they wanted face time. So I would go to the Knights of Columbus Lodge and I'd take two of my flight attendants with me, who were speakers, because we were coming from Paris, and so I needed a French speaker, and I needed a German speaker. Because, you know, you had so many different people on the airplane. So I did go there every day.

Clifford Chanin: David, I think you wanted to come in with something?

00:49:02 David Hein: I was just going to say about people helping each other. One of the things that we've learned, you know, starting from thinking that Canadian high schools would do this production, and starting thinking about it as a Canadian story that we were proud of. We also realized it was an American story, and related to how we felt.

Irene Sankoff: Obviously.

00:49:21 David Hein: Obviously, but what happened in Newfoundland because there were so many Americans there, as well, and American pilots and crew. But what we've realized over time is that it's a universal story. That across the world at that time, so many people wanted to help. That was certainly what we felt here in New York, and what we saw constantly. You know, the outpouring of trying to help one another, to donate blood, to do anything.

00:49:45 That there was a sense of kindness in New York that was extraordinary in response, and reaching out to anyone. You know, the divisions fell away. You could reach out to anyone on the street and say, "Are you okay?"

And in so many of our interviews, what we were told was, it was a gift to be able to help in some way. They had something to do.

Irene Sankoff: Yeah, the Ganderites said it was a gift, yeah.

00:50:06

Clifford Chanin: Let me ask—cutting ahead a little bit-- so you wrote this because you wanted to provide material for Canadian high schools and colleges. Okay. (laughing): And at what point did Broadway come onto the scene?

Irene Sankoff: Um... Okay, wow. Okay, how do we do this quickly?

David Hein: So it's been an extraordinary journey, and our-- we went through a number of student workshops, we did go through a festival called NAMT Festival, which was an amazing opportunity to present to producers. From there, we partnered with Junkyard Dog Productions, who are extraordinary Tony-award-winning producers, who connected us to Chris Ashley, our Tony-award-winning director.

Irene Sankoff: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

00:50:47

David Hein: And suddenly it seemed, you know, we clearly weren't taking it to Canadian high schools, or we would eventually.

Irene Sankoff: Any time soon, yes, yes.

David Hein: And then they plotted out this amazing course to take the story and see how it would resonate on the opposite side of the continent as far away as we could possibly could get. And then to track it through Washington, DC, where we could test it in a city that was directly affected by 9/11, take it through Gander, into Toronto, which was important to us as Canadians.

Irene Sankoff: Mm-hmm.

00:51:17 David Hein: And then to bring it back to New York. Coming to Broadway is a really complicated process. And so all the way along—you know, our producers talk about coming to La Jolla at the start, and they say they're coming in with a show that no one could remember the title of, that had no stars in it, and it was always going to be called "the 9/11 musical." And so they were, I think justifiably, concerned about, you know, what, how the show would do.

00:51:43 But in each town-- and I think this is a testament to the story that we're sharing, it's the... The response has been incredible. In La Jolla, people lined up for hours in advance. The general manager said she'd never seen anything like that since "Jersey Boys." In Seattle, the phone lines shut down, they literally couldn't phone out because so many people were phoning in.

00:52:06 And so along that time, they started to talk about whether Broadway might be a possibility. And it's been a very competitive season-- or, you know, I mean, we like to say it's been a really wonderful season. All of these incredible shows have been here, and there's a limited number of theaters that you get to come into. And it's partly because Junkyard Dog Productions have produced "Memphis" before, and they had wonderful relationships, and it's partly because people came out to see the show, and eventually they narrowed down on a theater that we were given, and we were given a date when we would open.

Irene Sankoff: Yeah.

00:52:44 David Hein: And share it. I think opening night on Broadway was one of our proudest moments, because at the end of the show, we brought out everyone who we had interviewed-- as many people as we possibly could-- and brought them on stage. We didn't even have to say anything, and the entire audience, they were up on their feet, but they started

cheering for them. And to have New York, and the world, say, "This is an extraordinary story," was... was amazing.

00:53:12

Clifford Chanin: Let me ask each of you: I think it's obvious the show tapped into a nerve of some kind. What do you each think that nerve is? What put people in line in San Diego, or La Jolla, and breaking the phone lines in Seattle, and cheering on Broadway, what was it that the show touched, do you think?

00:53:35

David Hein: I think, for me, I mean, certainly, you know, as parents, and personally, it reminds us that we are good at our core. There's a wonderful quote that we love by Mr. Rogers, who, his mother used to tell him, when you see something scary on television, to always look for the helpers. There's always helpers in the background. And I think it reminds us that in these times when there's... Everything you see online, everything you see on the news is scary and divisive, and pulls us away from each other, this story reminds us that we have so many more things in common.

00:54:14

That we are, at our hearts, we want to be helpers, we want to respond to tragedies, and respond in general with kindness. And so it's reminded us of that, and I think that that's what we wanted to share with the world, and that's what I hope they see every night.

00:54:32

Irene Sankoff: I was speaking with a fairly... a fairly high-up producer about-- just a couple of months ago, well after any of this had been started-- and what he said was unique was that-- and he's not the only person in the entertainment industry who's said that-- he said what the unique thing is that there's no twist, like the other shoe doesn't drop.

And I think that's very relieving for people, I think. I think we have so many shoes dropping on us, you know, just in daily life, that to see... to see the way this played out. I mean, and when you think about, you've got 7,000 scared and angry people. As Oz Fudge said to us in an interview, he said they had every right to be the most miserable sons of bitches who ever walked the face of the Earth.

(laughter)

00:55:19

Irene Sankoff: And they weren't. And trust me, we got told, and got turned down by producers, directors, theaters, because there was no-- there was nothing big that happened. And by big, they mean terrible, they mean something awful. Nothing awful happened to anybody. And so we went looking for it, and it just it wasn't there. I mean, there was a lot of, you know, sort of, like, you know, "What's this vial?" Oh, it's someone magnesium, or insulin, or, you know, or, "What did this mean on a chalkboard?" Oh, it's a bad translation of something. And so... you know, at one point we tried to put it into the script to satisfy what we thought was going to be needed in order to move it beyond the high school realm.

00:56:00

And it was just ridiculous, it just... it just... You know, you can't be, like, "Oh, look, something terrible almost happened. No, but it didn't." (rattling gibberish) You know, it just-- at some point, we said, "Let's..." Again, let's go back to what we said, which is, "Let's do this story justice, "which is to tell it like it happened, and highlight the helpers that are always in the background." Like, "Let's put them in the foreground for a change, because it just doesn't happen enough." And I think that makes the show unique.

David Hein: It is an extraordinary story. You don't need that.

Irene Sankoff: Absolutely, no. That's so amazing, yeah.

Clifford Chanin: Beverley?

00:56:33

Captain Beverley Bass: Well, I think when you mention the 7,000 scared and angry passengers, I think we also need to tell you that there were some people who didn't want to leave...

(laughter)

Captain Beverley Bass (laughing): ...when it came time to leave Gander. They didn't, you know that there were some. I mean, they were very sad about leaving. And, you know, I once read a letter where a passenger said, "We landed in the most peaceful place on Earth." And I think that really says it all, because lifelong friendships have been formed as a result of it. I still have passengers from my airplane who will contact me privately on Facebook that I'm still communicating with, which, you know, I just love, and they come to see the show.

00:57:21 But I think as far as promoting the show, so much of it has been word of mouth. Because some people are hesitant when you tell them, you know, it's a 9/12 story, it's about all the wonderful things that were happening just north of the border when our country was suffering so greatly, and that it truly is a beautiful story. And once they see the show, and they tell ten of their friends, and they all keep coming, I am literally inundated with emails and Facebook messages every single day from mostly airline crew members who want to come see the show. So I love that it is spreading the way it is.

00:58:06 Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, for me, it was probably different. It was no big thing for us, it's what we do. So I don't see it from someone else's perspective, and I was told last year in Maymont when I was there, talking to a gentleman in the front of the hotel I was staying at. And I had my shirt on, "Come From Away," and he said, "I saw the show." And he said, "It's a beautiful musical." I said, "Yeah." And he said, "The standing ovations," he said-- he said, "The actress and the actors are good," but he said, "The standing ovation is for the story." He said, "It's a good story."

00:58:45 So that's nothing new for us. We-- that's just natural. But when I walked down here to the memorial, and I walked around, and I looked at the names of everybody that lost their lives, to me, it's like I was walking on sacred ground. And, my former life, I was a paramedic for 30 years. And to see so many first responders and volunteers who lost their lives during that tragedy, and still losing people from that tragedy for probably years to come, I thank God every day for where I live. And I wish everybody

could live where I live. And as I said to my daughter, I'd love to take my two grandchildren from Hawaii and bring them to Gander. I know they would freeze, but...

(laughter)

00:59:39 Mayor Claude Elliot: But, for that safety net, but we can't do that. You know, terror—terrorists are not going to win the war. They're going to win some battles, but they're not going to win the war. 'Cause every time we get knocked down, we'll come back up bigger and stronger. And I tell you, and as I said on the first day, we had 7,000 strangers. On the third day, we had 7,000 friends. And on the fifth day, we lost 7,000 family members. Because they became part of the community, lifelong relationships that will go on forever.

01:00:14 And that's what I take away from this is, I'm thankful for where I live, but there's also a lot of beauty. And I know that the people—I mean, I had people say to me, "I don't know if I want to go back home. I don't know what my country is going to be like in the future. I'm scared." And I would say, "Go back. You're, you're, you're a big country. You're not going to be defeated. Don't worry, you'll be okay. But yeah, you'll probably be knocked down a few knocks along the way, but we're not going to be defeated." 'Cause, you see, love and compassion will outdo evil at any time anywhere, anywhere in this world, there's no question about it.

(applause)

01:00:58 Clifford Chanin: Let us take a moment and see if we have any questions from the audience. We don't have a mic because we're using the mics up here, so if you stand up and speak...

Man: Hi. Thank you all for (inaudible) to us. When you spoke about some of the issues, the challenges you had trying to mount this project. What things just (inaudible) to know more about (inaudible). I'm not in the

industry. If someone had said to me-- presented to me, "Oh, we have this lovely, inspiring story about reactions to 9/11, and oh, it's a musical." I'd run to the next room.

(laughter)

01:01:38 Man: It doesn't sound like something on its face that would be marketable, but yet here we are. How did you get past something like that? (inaudible) there are many challenges. How did you get past this to convince producers and others to be able to see this is something that's worth doing, that it needed more attention. How did you do it?

01:01:57 Irene Sankoff: I think it was being lucky enough to have had a couple of productions with the students in Canada, and then from that, we got another student production at Goodspeed Musicals, which was just-- it was a reading, so it was the students with scripts at stands-- at music stands, I should say. And it was in Connecticut-- and Goodspeed is in Connecticut, so a lot of people-- including the students in the show-- had direct connection to what had happened.

01:02:26 And the students weren't sure that they wanted to be in it, and they read the script, and they said, "Oh, actually, I do want to do this." And then we had the students convincing audience members to come in.

And that's when casting directors from New York and the heads of festivals from New York came to see it, and really, we were just so lucky that it was presented. Because-- because they saw it, they were New Yorkers, and they came back to New York and said, "You need to see this." And then we got put into this NAMT Festival, which brought in regional theater representatives and commercial producers across the country and from New York.

01:03:11 And... you know, and, you know, the theater was not full when people came to see it. But after the presentation, we were overwhelmed with

offers, and we even got told that, you know, people, you know, dutifully came into the theater, sat down, looked to see what they would be seeing next, and then decided that they wanted to leave, and then, like, looked around and thought, "Okay, I'm not going to make a scene, I'm just-- I'm just going to stay." And some of those people who felt that way are now some of our biggest, biggest supporters.

01:03:43

So I really think it's because people got to see the piece and experience what we meant without us having to describe it. And Junkyard Dog took a huge chance, they really did, to take it on. You know, and I don't think it was one they took on lightly. You know, we had lots of conversations, and talked about how we would approach the material, and they came up with this, you know, "It's something you have to see and it's something we're going to have to rely on word of mouth for us." So they came up with, let's go around the country and slowly come back east.

01:04:15

David Hein: Yeah. Yeah, it was a really—coming into New York City with 250,000 people already having seen the show was amazing. And we saw-- we could see people's reactions online saying, "A 9/11 musical is in bad taste." And immediately people from Seattle, or La Jolla, or Washington, would say, "You need to see it. You need to-- you need to know that it's far funnier than you could ever imagine." I mean, Mayor Elliott is an example of, you know, he'll tell you...

(laughter)

01:04:42

David Hein: Newfoundlanders are extraordinary storytellers. And it was this amazing experience out there. They would tell you this story one minute, and you would start to cry, and then immediately they'd see that, and be, like, "Oh, no, no, no, here's a joke," you know.

(laughter)

David Hein: And I think everything about the show, I mean, because it is the story, and at the same time, it's this remarkable staging that Chris Ashley and Kelly Devine have created. It's this music, which, you know, is this hundreds-of-year-old traditional music, and you put it on a Broadway stage, and it's music that you've never heard before. It's, you know, it brings you together.

01:05:17

I remember, there was a kitchen party concert at the hockey rink when we were out there on the tenth anniversary, and this band The Navigators started playing, and everyone started dancing. You know, not just the locals, but the come from aways us, the executives from Lufthansa, who had returned. So it's the story, the performances are extraordinary.

One of the things that's a wonderful metaphor for me is that all of our actors play both locals and come from aways-- and there's something about that that says we could all be in each other's shoes at any moment, and that's important to see. So I think there's a number of different pieces that I hope people are responding to. But it's experiential. I think people need to come see the show.

01:06:04

Mayor Claude Elliot: One of the things that we've-- when this was all over and we went back to our lives, we decided that we would have a get-together for the community. And we have the largest hotel in Gander can probably in their-- you know, all can probably take 600, 700 people. So we said, "Let's send out an invitation to all the volunteer groups and community." We all get together and talk about our experience, and let's have a little party, and we had food and everything ordered...

01:06:34

The night of the function, we had 32 people show up. So I started asking people, "Why didn't you come out?" "Well, it was like I was coming out to be rewarded for something that I'd do naturally. I didn't want any rewards for what I did. And I feel that I only did it because I can get a free lunch or I can get a drink or a party."

And people back home take that very serious. They don't want to be... They don't want to be paid for anything. As I said, the smiles on people's faces is what they got. So, you know, the 30-something people that was there had a great evening.

(laughter)

01:07:19 Mayor Claude Elliot: But it was more about exchanging stories, and more about talking about your experiences. 'Cause you gotta realize, too, that it was very emotional for us after it was over, because the whole community was on hold for five days. And you know, then all of a sudden, they started watching what was on television. Because we never had time to look at what was happening in the United States. So, but you know, that's our people, and they're very proud people, but they're very generous.

01:07:46 Clifford Chanin: One more, in the back, please.

Man: David and Irene, it sounds like it's really a wonderful and remarkable (inaudible), taking interviews and having some sort of (inaudible).

(light laughter)

Man: And that's going to be donated to (inaudible) library, or some place else?

(laughter)

01:08:12 David Hein: We just had a meeting about that right before this.

(laughter)

David Hein: I hope so. I mean, you know, we always talk about the-- we tried our best to fit everything in, but there're stories that we couldn't fit in, and they're amazing. And hearing it directly from people we interviewed is a really wonderful experience that we return to personally. So I hope that we can share that. And it boggles my mind that anyone would want to see the scribbles that we wrote down initially. But if anyone wants to, we're happy to, you know, show it to people.

Clifford Chanin: I think museums are places that do that, aren't they?

(laughter)

01:08:49

Irene Sankoff: I think as always, it just comes back to us. You know, as Claude was just saying, no one did this to, to have, I mean, they really... They really saw us and were kind of, like, "Oh, these poor kids, let's talk to them for a little bit because what's going to become of them?"

And we wondered that ourselves, too, and-- we really did. And so it's just a matter of us, it's kind of going through and seeing-- seeing whose interviews they are, and going back to them, and having them see it again six, seven years later and say, "Are you okay with this?" That's the only thing, yeah.

01:09:22

David Hein: We're also thrilled that... to be continuing to share the story. We're about to open our second company up in Toronto, we're going to be Winnipeg first in January, then Toronto in February.

David Hein: And then in 2018...

Irene Sankoff: Cold.

David Hein: There's going to be a national tour, which is now into its second year of planning. So it's amazing that we get to share Newfoundland with the world. And so, you know, if we can do that more with some of the elements that we assembled, we'd love to.

01:09:51

Mayor Claude Elliot: Well, one thing we found this year, our tourism is up 25% over last year.

(laughter)

(applause)

Mayor Claude Elliot: You know, and it's all contributed to this "Come From Away." Most of our tours are Americans, our aviation museum has had over 1,500 more people this year than it had last year. And we are working, trying to work with some airlines to see if we can get a direct flight from New York to Gander.

(laughter)

Mayor Claude Elliot: And we can bring in more people.

(applause)

01:10:27

Clifford Chanin: Well, I can think of a group of people in front of me who might be interested in making such a trip. This has really been an extraordinary start for our program season. I do want to remind you, before I thank our guests, we have two programs coming up. A different tone, but you know, this is the breadth of what we're trying to do here. Thursday, September 28, Bernie Haykel, the Middle East expert from Princeton, who's been here a number of times and pretty much starts all

our seasons by updating us on the Middle East. And then on Monday, October 2, I think this is going to be his third public appearance, the new FBI director, Christopher Wray, is going to be here. So please, look into reserving tickets, bringing your friends.

01:11:07

But meanwhile, let me acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of our panelists: Claude Elliott, who-- I think your one-man show is opening in a couple of months from now.

(laughter)

(applause)

Clifford Chanin: Beverley Bass, Irene Sankoff, and David Hein, thank you very much.

(applause)