

NODA Report – Come From Away 25th September 2026

Welcome to the Rock was a solid opening to the show, featuring all 12 actors in their 'locals' role, and introducing the distinctive musical style that would feature throughout the production. I liked that the eight piece orchestra lead by Musical Director Clare Benson could be seen on the side of the stage, a very talented group that absolutely delivered on the folk-rock which dominates the show, as well as the traditional musical theatre ballads.

The story quickly moved into the action when US airspace is closed, and 38 aircraft head towards Gander International Airport. The residents of the small Canadian town start to make arrangements for nearly 7000 incoming passengers. The events of the next 5 days are then played out on a single set stage, with ever changing locations, and 40 different characters. This is a complex task for any Director, and Jimmy Hooper made a grand job of it on his directorial debut with the group. His use of the space, and vision for the roles, made it possible to bring the audience along as the story unfolded, and the actors constantly swapped from being residents to plane people, and back again.

All the actors showed great skill and versatility handling mannerisms and accents for multiple different characters, and adding role specific hats and jackets definitely helped to quickly identify them.

Some highlights for me were Cassie Estall as Diane, living all the emotions of a plane person for us to see. Diana Easton as Hannah, through her tense wait for news of her son. Lauren Freeman as Janice, the young and earnest local reporter. Robyn Gowers as Beulah, a model of practical thinking and determination. Joanna Quinney as Bonnie, taking on the care of the animals in transit. Elen Rowlands as Captain Beverley Bass, steadfast and dependable, singing a splendid version of Me and the Sky.

Michael Lambert as Oz Fudge, a very likeable police officer trying his best. Kieran Bacon as Garth, head of the bus driver's union, genuinely arguing with the mayor, and calming a passenger without a shared language. Kieran Bedwell as Ali, a sensitive portrayal of a man in difficult circumstances. Hayden Wagland as Bob, extremely anxious until experiencing the kindness of locals. Ian Benson as Claude, the very busy mayor, who encourages willing plane people to 'kiss the fish' and be adopted as a Newfoundlander. Michael Bardo as Nick, an endearingly quiet business traveller that finds a friend.

Many of the songs involved the whole company and were very strong, with slick timing, plenty of harmonies, and dynamic expression, a credit to the musical director. In the church scene, I would have liked the opening of 'Prayer' to be sung more simply and in regular time, to feel the calm sincerity of the moment a little more, just a constructive suggestion from me

There was clever use of chairs to show seating within the planes and buses, and some creative choreography for actors when seated which added interest to those songs. The movement and placements in the big musical numbers worked well. I

was impressed with how natural the actors looked when moving on the revolving stage section, with limited time to practice on it.

There were some nice lighting effects, and sound was well balanced, except for several points early on when the volume of the drumming, and then whole band underscoring sections made it a little hard to hear the dialogue. I liked the live animal noises that I understand some cast members provided, some hidden talents there! It was also lovely to see the band take centre stage for more music after the bows.

I'd like to thank front of house for the warm welcome and making the time to speak to me before and after the show, my guest and I were very well looked after. Congratulations to CAODS for telling this extraordinary story in such a beautiful way.