

# 'Brothers' evokes emotion

By Alice T. Carter  
Staff writer

Petula Clark and David Cassidy give such mesmerizing performances I almost forgot how much I dislike "Blood Brothers."

The Willie Russell musical that opened Tuesday evening at Heinz Hall is a British under class tale of passive resignation, gilded over with mythic pretensions and portents.

It's dark and maudlin, and it hits you at every turn with ironic children's games of gunplay and innocent rhymes that heavily-handedly foreshadow what's ahead.

Clark plays Mrs. Johnstone, a poor Liverpoolian charwoman who discovers she's once again pregnant, this time with twins.

— Since she can't support two more babies, she gives one to her upper class and barren employer, promising never to reveal the secret.

Though separated by class, income and geography, the two boys become best friends and "blood brothers."

As though we didn't know nothing good could come of these bad bargains, a narrator threads through the plot ominous comments on the undercurrents of superstition and symbolism as the boys edge ever closer to disaster.

But a chance to see Clark, the woman best known for exhorting us to go "Downtown," almost makes this grim tale worth watching.

She's 61, but still is convincing as a woman some two decades younger. Clark seems to be



Pittsburgh Broadway Series

Petula Clark



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David Cassidy

## Review

restraining a feisty and energetic persona that could easily surmount some of her character's problems.

Her voice makes appealing work of the show's theme song, "Tell Me It's Not True," the lament "Marilyn Monroe" and the upbeat "Bright New Day."

Cassidy, still recognized as a member of TV's Partridge Family, should be better known for the strong acting and vocal talents he displays as Mickey Johnstone.

As his more fortunate twin Eddie, TV Luckenbill looks far too much like Britain's Prince Charles to convincingly play act one's 7-year-old Eddie.

Cassidy and Luckenbill, and indeed, the whole play, improves in Act 2 when the boys grow appealingly into early adulthood.

Linda, the luscious, long-legged object of both their affections, is played with great immediacy by Yvette Lawrence.

Audience members either love or hate this show, and there's always a fair amount of sniffing and nose blowing at the climax.

But if one of the goals of live theater is to evoke strong emotion, then, at least at that, "Blood Brothers" is a complete success.

*Alice T. Carter reviews theater for Got*

