

# Clark, Cassidy have passionate roles in *Blood Brothers*

By Rita Faye Smith

*Blood Brothers*, starring Petula Clark and David Cassidy, opened a two-week run at the Music Hall at Fair Park Sept. 6. With book, music, and lyrics by Willy Russell (*Shirley Valentine* and *Educating Rita*), it is a melodrama based on the true story of the Johnstone twins, born to a poverty stricken mother who, at the urging of her wealthy employer, gave up one of them to rear as her own.



The lives of the twins, unaware of their relationship, became intertwined with tragic results.

Speaking with Clark and Cassidy prior to rehearsal, I was impressed with their intensity and commitment to their characters. They shared some interesting and surprising perspectives. Clark said she almost turned down the role of Mrs. Johnstone. She had seen the play three times and had a problem with the character.

She asked herself: "How could she do that?" i.e. give up her child. However "after having played her for 10 months, I understand her," Clark said.

"Willy (the author) is true to his roots. Everything he writes is from reality, and *Blood Brothers* is

about inequities of class in Britain."

She spoke nostalgically of her work opposite Fred Astaire in *Finian's Rainbow*. Although America discovered this pop singer in the 1960s with such hits as *Downtown* and *I Know A Place*, she was a child star in Britain and became England's number one singer.

Cassidy, at age 44, said he has had a difficult time getting people to stop seeing him as 1960s singing idol, Keith Partridge, of the popular TV series, *The Partridge Family*, in which he starred with his step-mother, Shirley Jones.

Cassidy said that working with brother, Shaun, in *Blood Brothers* on Broadway was a wonderful experience: "As a life experience we became closer and better friends as a result of what we did in the play," Cassidy said.

Of his role as Mickey, the twin from the wrong side of the tracks, Cassidy said: "This is the most definitive and important piece I've done. It is the best role I've ever had; it has led to two TV pilots."

Cassidy is the first American actor to assume this role.

When I asked him about his work with George Abbott,



DAVID CASSIDY and Petula Clark star in *Blood Brothers* at the Fair Park Music Hall through Sept. 18.

Cassidy suddenly rose from his seat and became super-animated about the legendary director.

"He discovered me when I was 18 and just six months out of high school," he said. "He was 80 then. About six months ago I was doing a run-through for the Tony awards, and I hadn't seen him in 15 years. From 40 rows back in the theater I heard a voice: 'David Cassidy, I told you, you were good.'"

The voice was that of 106 year-old George Abbott. For Cassidy, this was his ultimate validation as an actor.