

Toews' novel-turned-play now on at MTC

By Elisha Cumbers
Staff Reporter

Taking a beloved story of a local celebrated author and performing it as a play in front of the author's hometown audience doesn't make Chris Craddock nervous.

"No, I don't think it makes me all that nervous. It's a great story and it's about Winnipeg and people should come see for themselves."

Craddock is the writer behind MTC Warehouse's production of *Summer of My Amazing Luck*, written by local author Miriam Toews. It tells the misadventures of Lucy, a naive 18-year-old single mother living "on the dole" along with her wild and spontaneous friend, Lish, another single mother determined to find her lost love. After getting fed up with *Half-a-Life*, the public housing complex in Winnipeg they live in, Lucy and Lish embark on a journey in a run-down van filled with children to track down Lish's street-performing lover (aptly named Gotcha) only to find what they're looking for is right at home.

Funny and heartbreaking, the story has a

way of breaking down the absurdities in the welfare system and showcasing them in the simplest terms without seeming trite or forced.

Craddock, an experienced playwright and actor who has done numerous Fringe Festival productions, said this was the first time he ever tried to adapt someone else's work.

"Miriam and I speak with very similar voices," said Craddock. "Our styles were very compatible."

It took five years for the play to evolve into its current incarnation, but it seems to have worked. The play has been produced in Edmonton and Kelowna and is winning rave reviews wherever they go.

Craddock, who plays every male character (and a few female), said anything on the carefully cluttered set can become a prop (a car, a telephone, anything).

"We wanted to create that feel of what a home looks like when the mother is a very busy woman and doesn't have time to clean."

Beth Graham and Caroline Livingstone round out the cast, with Graham playing the show's anchor, Lucy, and Livingstone playing



Chris Craddock, Beth Graham and Caroline Livingstone in MTC's *Summer of My Amazing Luck*.

irrepressible Lish and numerous other women in the show.

"This play is an unflinching gaze into the welfare system, but it's funny too."

Summer of My Amazing Luck runs at the MTC Warehouse until Dec. 2. For ticket information, visit www.mtc.mb.ca.



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