

Toews' novel-turned-play now on MTC Warehouse stage

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



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

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 irrepresible 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.



IN THE HOUSE

BY ARTHUR LUFFMANN

Been There, Bought the Breakfast Special

Recently, I spent a week away in Chicago (after all, a guy can only handle a certain amount of dual-promotional activities before he needs some rejuvenation). While I was contented to simply check out the beautiful architecture, the incredible stores and just enjoy the pulse of the city, my host was frantically busy making sure that my week included visits to every 'must-see' Chicago landmark we could cram in. That's not to say that we hit all the typical tourist traps; rather, the tour revolved around all the places we needed to go eat.

Brunches at Toast. Dinner at Firefly. Take-out deep-dish pizza from Lou Malnati's. When a friend suggested we visit the observation deck of the Sears Tower, we instead ended up enjoying \$13 martinis on the 96th floor of the John Hancock building (I wasn't complaining). On my final evening in town before returning home, my host was horrified to realize that we'd not made it to Margie's Candies for ice cream. It took me an hour to convince him that life would go on without a hot caramel sundae.

All of it made me think about the magic of legendary local restaurants, and it was reinforced last week as people from across Canada descended on Winnipeg for the Grey Cup. We felt it in every Salisbury House restaurant throughout the city, which were full of guests who, like me, were being given the all-important Sals experience by their hosts.



We felt it on Saturday from locals and out-of-towners alike as we handed out thousands of Sals donuts and hot chocolates at the Grey Cup/Santa Claus parade, both to the crowds and in boxes handed up to the floats of visiting fans. The Sals "WE ARE WINNIPEG!" mindset was truly evident all across the city... and nobody had to brave the 96th floor to experience it.

As for Margie's... I'm sending them a sample of our new 'Take Home' menu. Maybe they'll get the hint and I won't miss out next time.

ONLY ONE 75¢ TUESDAY LEFT! The Salisbury House "75¢ Tuesday" celebration concludes on Tuesday, November 28th! Hurry in for your last chance to enjoy 10 delicious Sals favourites offered for only 75¢ each. 6 AM - 10 PM, dine-in only. Details are available at all Salisbury House restaurants, in this weekly column, and at www.salisburyhouse.ca

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