

## REVIEW

# Immigrants find Space to be heard

## Coming to Canada an entertaining experience

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RECORD STAFF

## KITCHENER

Imagine feeling your first cold winter wind in Canada after spending your life in a tropical country.

Imagine taking your first long shower after living in a country where water was precious and scarce.

Imagine working as a dishwasher after being employed as an engineer in your home country.

These are just some of the immigrant experiences explored in a new experimental play called *The Season of Immigration to the West* at the Registry Theatre.

The play, staged by the MT Space theatre company, is a series of short, light-hearted vignettes that bring to life the experiences of new Canadians.

MT Space asked immigrants from across Waterloo Region to submit stories about their experiences. The theatre company took the responses, 23 in total, and blended them into a one-act play.

"The objective was not to stage the stories from start to finish," artistic director Majdi Bou-Matar says.

"We wanted to get to the heart of their experiences, find the issues they had in common and show the feelings newcomers face when they come to Canada."

The vignettes are fast-paced and fun to watch. In one clip, we see a handful of immigrants sharing a Tim Horton's double double coffee and trying to figure out what's so great about it. In another, a woman takes her first shower and is delighted to see how much water pours out of the showerhead.

There are poignant moments inter-

## CONCERT

Who: **MT Space**  
What: **The Season of Immigration to the West**  
Where: **Registry Theatre, 122 Frederick St., Kitchener**  
When: **Through Sunday**  
Time: **7:30 p.m.; 3 p.m. on Sunday only**  
Cost: **\$18**  
Phone: **578-1570**

twined in the humour, like when a woman arrives at the airport in Canada and wonders if she'll ever see her pregnant sister again, or when a man searching desperately for a job wonders why Canada has been pegged the land of opportunities.

The play wasn't scripted but it was born out of improvisation. The actors, writers and director worked together for seven weeks to create the play. They smoothed out their ideas, but never created a precise script.

"It's an alternative kind of theatre where the writer is not the major power," Bou-Matar says. "It's the actor who creates, the actor who makes choices. Everyone else supports the actor."

The six actors in the production give solid, convincing performances. Many had prominent careers abroad.

Badih Abou Chakra, who now lives in Mississauga, had major roles in movies and television shows in his native Lebanon. In 2002, he won a Murex D'Or award, which honours Lebanese and Arab actors.

Carolina Miranda acted with a reputable theatre company, AGORA-CTD, in her home



MICHAEL SARDINE, PROMOTIONAL

Immigrants, including (from left) Athena Guy, Badih Abou Chakra, Nicholas Cumming, Coleen MacPherson and Carolina Miranda, stage their experiences at Registry Theatre.

country of Brazil. Since immigrating to Canada in 2003, and settling in Hamilton, Miranda has had roles in several Canadian films.

She and Abou Chakra are joined by Lost & Found Theatre actor Andrew Lakin, Kitchener native Athena Guy, UW graduate Nicholas Cumming and local actor and dancer Tanya Williams.

The six performers interchange roles constantly. Dressed in white, they act on a stark black stage, conveying their settings with gestures, movements and a few props.

There's a lot going on as they perform, which adds to the entertainment. Painter Aziz Yousefi, an Iranian refugee, stands on a ladder on one corner of the stage and paints a picture of a moonlit sky during the entire show.

On the other side of the stage, musicians Nick Storrington and Priyanka Sinha accompany the actors. Storrington blends cello and electronic music to create an array of sounds, from jazz to middle eastern. He's joined by Sinha's haunting voice, which brings an east-Asia feel to the music.

The only drawback is the length of the play. It runs without intermission for well over an hour, which is hard to take on the uncomfortable Registry Theatre seats.

MT Space is a two-year-old theatre company founded by Bou-Matar, a Lebanese immigrant who has an extensive theatre and film background. He wanted to create a company that explores people's cultural experiences and draws together artists of different disciplines and backgrounds.

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The upcoming cover of Rolling Stone magazine shows outspoken rapper Kanye West as Jesus Christ with a crown of thorns atop his head. Along with the controversial cover, the accompanying article reveals that he is not happy that one of his songs, *Gold Digger*, did not receive a Grammy nomination.



## West makes 'great' statement as Jesus and Muhammad Ali

Kanye West, with a crown of thorns atop his head, poses as Jesus Christ on the cover of the upcoming issue of Rolling Stone.

The outspoken rapper defends his brash attitude inside the magazine's pages, on newsstands tomorrow. He is also pictured posing as Muhammad Ali.

"In America, they want you to accomplish these great feats, to pull off these David Copperfield-type stunts," he says. "You want me to be great, but you don't ever want me to say I'm great?"

West also says his hit song *Gold*

*Digger* was the best song last year and that it should have been nominated for the Grammy's best rap song category: "That's a gimme Grammy."

Nevertheless, the 27-year-old is nominated for eight awards, including album of the year for his sophomore album, *Late Registration*. The Grammys will be presented Feb. 8.

West has always been forthright in saying what he feels, most famously when he said, "George Bush doesn't care about black people," during a telethon for hurricane Katrina victims.

"If I was more complacent and I let things slide, my life would be easier, but you all wouldn't be as entertained," he says. "My misery is your pleasure."

The strangest tangent of the Rolling Stone story, however, is when West says he's addicted to pornography. He remembers first seeing his father's *Playboy* magazine when he was five years old.

"Right then," West says, laughing, "it was like, 'Houston, we have a problem.'"

• Associated Press