

He's the Man

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Majdi Bou-Matar, director of the multicultural theatre troupe MT Space, says *Seasons of Immigration* is based on tales submitted by immigrants to the region.

Immigration stage

By Colin Hunter, Record staff

KITCHENER — An immigrant couple stands in a grocery store, dumbfounded by their options.

They only want a can of tomatoes. But which can? Diced? Chopped? Crushed? Spiced? Stewed? Brand name or no-name?

Back home, they were never faced with such a surplus of possibilities. Paralyzed by indecision, the couple begins to bicker. They never imagined that coming to Canada, the land of plenty, would create such challenges at every turn.

This particular couple is fictional — two characters in a play — but their feelings of confusion and alienation are universal, and are among the fundamental themes in the play *Seasons of Immigration*.

The show, which has a special one-night-only staging at Centre in the Square

Stage

Seasons of Immigration

Centre in the Square
Tuesday, March 18, 8 p.m.
\$35



Tuesday, is the creation of MT Space, a multicultural troupe founded three years ago by Majdi Bou-Matar.

"The show looks at the common themes of the immigration experience," says Bou-Matar. "The language barriers, the coldness and vastness of the new land, conflicts between parents who are of one culture and children who are raised in another . . . the doctors and engineers driving cabs in their new country."

It may sound like heavy, depressing

fodder for a play, but it's quite the opposite, Bou-Matar says.

"It's all done in a very lighthearted way. The issues are much more complex than the ways we portray them."

The six actors in the cast come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, and they portray characters in the show with even more diverse histories. The goal is to highlight and celebrate cultural uniqueness, not simply bemoan the hardships of immigration. "As artists we can work together, using our differences to create something greater collectively," Bou-Matar says.

The show was created in early 2005, when Bou-Matar, himself a new immigrant to Kitchener from Lebanon, put out a call for submissions of stories about the immigration experience.

Dozens of immigrants responded with tales about their own experiences, and

Bou-Matar looked for elements common to all.

An eight-week "creation workshop" followed, during which Bou-Matar and a crew of co-writers pieced together the vignettes that make up *Seasons of Immigration*.

The play has since been staged three times at The Registry Theatre, and Tuesday's performance at Centre in the Square will be its debut at a large mainstream theatre.

Other theatre companies around the province have recently expressed interest in staging productions of *Seasons of Immigration*.

"I hope this is the beginning of the play's real success story," says Bou-Matar. "I hope audiences will be touched by it, they will smile from their hearts, and they will connect with this play."

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One more reason to hate the Leafs?

By Lee-Anne Goodman

TORONTO — As if the dismal Toronto Maple Leafs haven't been heaped with enough scorn by hockey fans, the struggling squad may also be to blame for the recent cancellation of several high-profile CBC shows including, ironically, the steamy nighttime NHL soap *MVP*.

The producer of *MVP* says she was recently warned by CBC programming director Kirstine Layfield that if the Leafs failed to

make the Stanley Cup playoffs this year, the public broadcaster's entertainment division would take a \$10-million hit that would put some of the network's much-heralded new shows at risk.

CBC broadcasts a considerable number of playoff games and the Leafs are traditionally the leading ratings generator, particularly in the post-season.

While the team isn't out of the playoffs yet, hopes are dim that it can stage a last-minute rally. It would be the third season in a row

that the Leafs failed to make the playoffs.

"We talked to Kirstine a couple of weeks ago and she said with that (\$10 million) cut, either everyone had to do their shows for less or at least one series was going to have to go. Wouldn't that be insane if the Leafs were to blame?" Mary Young Leckie, who's also the creator of *MVP*, said Monday.

"It's just another good reason to hate the Leafs."
The CBC announced Friday that *MVP*, *JPod* and *Intelligence*

had been cancelled.

But Layfield denied Monday that Mats Sundin and the boys were entirely to blame, and added later in the day that the Leafs are "just one of many factors going into how much money there is."

The whackings were puzzling to all of the show's producers, especially since at least two of those shows were drawing younger viewers — something the CBC has long been trying to do.

"This show accomplished what it set out to do, which was to attract

a huge youth demographic," said Leckie.

J.B. Sugar, executive producer of *JPod*, was also perplexed. He said the numbers for the black comedy, about a group of Vancouver video game programmers, were rising among young viewers.

"We did find that the numbers went up and stayed up and maintained and were actually steadily growing a little bit," he said in an interview from Vancouver.

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