

arts watch

Ottawa's arts news and notes

By ANITA EUTENEIER

THEATRE

Charly Chiarelli unveils multiple personalities

Charly Chiarelli hopes to see Heritage Minister Sheila Copps in the audience of his acclaimed one-man theatre show **Cu' Fu?** when it opens in Ottawa tonight (Thursday, March 18).

She may even see herself in one of the 15 characters Chiarelli portrays in this autobiographical account of growing up in a Hamilton 'hood.

As teenagers Chiarelli and Copps worked at a local fast-food restaurant called the Chicken Coop. "I was a peasant Sicilian from the north end," he says on the line from his Hamilton home. "It surprised me that even the mayor's daughter had to work as a waitress."

Through his hometown memories, Chiarelli takes the audience on a comedic and poignant journey of cultural assimilation.

The play begins with the words of his dying father, "You can choose where you're going to be born. But you can't choose where you're going to die."

Scenes like this give the play its universal appeal.

"We are all transplanted," Chiarelli says. "If it's not from one country to another it's from one subculture to another."

The title **Cu' Fu?** (pronounced koo foo) is the Sicilian equivalent of **Who Did It?**

"Sicilians recognize things don't just happen," he says, "people do them. Part of it is vendetta — they get even — but it is tempered by the capacity for love that Sicilians have. If you do something kind they'll give it back to you twice as much."

In the rich tradition of his storytelling heroes **Spalding Gray** and **Mark Twain**, Chiarelli transforms the spoken word into richly coloured vignettes. Chiarelli's frantic gestures are interspersed with snippets of song and his virtuoso harmonica playing.

Cu' Fu? marks the debut of Ottawa's newest theatre company **Thompson Entertainment** and creative director **Brian May** says that the company is seeking suitable space. Meanwhile performances will be held at St. Patrick's Hall — home of the **Tara Players**.