

Sensitive performance will delight you

By Mel Malton

The Forester

Charly Chiarelli can spin a story in mid-air, filling the room with dozens of warm personalities and making his audience laugh and cry at the same time.

The product of what he calls "a Sicilian/Canadian reality," Charly grew up in Toronto, surrounded by his colourful, often anachronistic relatives.

His one man show, "Cu' Fu?" (So, who did it?) is coming to Huntsville February 14, brought here by Michele Bateman's Decent Exposure, the Burk's Falls agency that co-produced the Heritage River music series last season.

Chiarelli's show began as a series of vignettes told individually in various forms, including the Toronto Festival of Storytelling. The stories centre around the author's experience

growing up Sicilian/Canadian - woven against the backdrop of his father's death in hospital.

Far from being maudlin or depressing, the setting celebrates life and love, peopled with characters that come to life through Chiarelli's deliciously funny delivery.

Interspersed between the stories, virtuoso harmonica-playing and "Anglo/Sicilian blues" link the scenes and establish the mood, which can shift from hilarity to tender emotion in a moment.

The passing of Chiarelli's father marked the end of an era for him, he says. "A longing to preserve the feelings born of our family's cultural transplantation compels me to perform 'Cu' Fu'."

Audiences do not need to be familiar with the Sicilian language to understand the fre-

quent outpourings, often screamingly funny, as the characters struggle to communicate with each other. With a mother and father who spoke little English, the young Chiarelli was often called upon to translate for his parents. The translation scenes are some of the most comical in the show.

Like most immigrants, the Chiarelli family found the new world a challenge, which gave rise to some important questions:

"Why is my son smoking 'Mario Lanza' and laughing like a pazzo at nothing?"

"Who stole ma's purse?"

"Why is pa hooked up to hospital machines when he was ready to die three days ago?"

Go see "Cu' Fu" and find out.

