

# Play asks, 'Who did it?'

Stories by GINA MONACO

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**T**he Sicilian immigrant experience is skillfully presented in a moving one-man play by Charly Chiarelli titled "Cu Fu?" Chiarelli, who was born on Racalmuto, Sicily and raised in the north end of Hamilton, has brought humour, warmth and compassion to the unique experience of learning to live and survive in a new country.

"It's about how Sicilians adjusted to Canadian culture — their hopes and aspirations and the pitfalls," says Chiarelli, "But it really encompasses the experience of non-Italian immigrants as well."

"Cu Fu?" or "Who Did It?" is the universal question, explains Chiarelli: "What is it about destiny that puts me into the situation that I'm in?" But it also speaks to the soul of Sicilians, whose lives in their own country was "so sweet, yet so poor, and so repressed." The question "cu fu" works on two levels for Italians — vendetta and love. It's about payback. Who did it, so that we can get him and who did it, so we can thank him.

"In our community, if you do a good deed then you get a better deed back," adds Chiarelli. "It's all about reciprocity."

Throughout the play, which is performed in two acts, and told through story, song and a blues harmonica, Chiarelli weaves a heartwarming tale that transcends all ages.

He mentions the new technology of the times that he experienced while growing up, such as when escalators first came to Hamilton and when stereos had automatic record changers. He touches on sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll as he carouses through the sixties.

Chiarelli's intensely personal story of cultural transplantation appeals to all cultures. He is an accomplished performer who has appeared on CBC's Cloud Nine and at the Toronto Festival of Story Telling, an event he helped develop, as well as many other venues throughout North America.

"Cu Fu?" will be performed on Sept. 18 and 19 at the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre. The Centre is currently developing a project acknowledging Italian Canadian workers in Hamilton.

Their research has found that of the more than 45,000 Italians living in the region, 25,000 of these are Sicilians from the town of Racalmuto. "In fact, there are more Racalmutesi living in Hamilton today than in the Sicilian town itself."

The exhibit should be ready by the spring of 1999 and will provide an historical view of the Italian presence and the contributions to the community.