

T H E A T R E

Cu' Fu?

Until Saturday, April 3

St. Patrick's Hall, 180 Gloucester St.

8 p.m., \$15

I loathe sitting on plastic chairs for three hours. I hate craning to see around tall guys' heads because there is no incline in the house seats.

St. Patrick's Hall indulges in these "elementary school assembly" details, and I was therefore not primed to be enthusiastic about *Cu' Fu?* Adding to my annoyance was the realization the play is primarily in Italian — at least, the funny bits were (judging by the reaction of some intensely jovial people in front of me). But amid all of these irritations, I found myself captivated by the simple, charming tales being woven on stage.

Cu' Fu (Koo-Foo) literally translates as "Who did it?" and is the resounding theme in Charly Chiarelli's one-man show, recounting the often bewildered but poignantly comic experiences of his Sicilian immigrant family in Canada.

This autobiographical storytelling is sparked by Chiarelli's father's imminent demise, leading to a series of anecdotes all the more poignant and funny because you know they are true.

Unfortunately, enjoyment of these delight-

ful and bittersweet stories was hampered by imperfect delivery, somewhat contrived stage direction and streams of detailed, untranslated Italian. I felt cheated when Italian-speaking audience members roared with laughter, knowing from the English text the play is very comical and universal in its appeal. The songs, liberally sprinkled between scenes, were catchy and effective in creating mood, but dragged when Chiarelli duplicated them in both languages.

The play improved immensely in the second act, the English/Italian transitions becoming clear and effectively communicating the comic and heartbreaking elements of Chiarelli's stories. It was at this stage that I became entranced with Chiarelli's family and his obvious love for them — their poignancy and rascally charm.

So, in the end, though sore of bottom, I was sad when the play ended. It was a delightful peek into a fascinating life and family. Whether or not Italian is your forté, this play will make you guffaw with laughter and touch your heart.

—Kirstin Endemann