

A4 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2016 REGINA LEADER-POST

Disabled cast tells it like it is in new stage play

ASHLEY MARTIN

A drunk, John Leppky was successfully served, car-bow, in the McDonald's drive-thru one night. It almost never happens. McDonald's is strict about not serving pedestrians in the drive-thru, but Leppky was in a wheelchair.

This case of the former stories in *Neither Heroes Nor Ordinary People* presented by Laidin Tufts Community Arts Organization.

The play opens the Globe Theatre's 2016-17 Season at the University of Regina.

"It gives a different outlook on disability," said cast member Kelly Culbert. "We all have abilities. Our disability is not something that needs to be the centre of life."

Much of the play was written by the six-person cast. Through monologues and short scenes, music, beatboxing, dance and movement (choreographed by Anne Gashinski), the play explores the interactions people with disabilities have with able-bodied people.

The interactions that are at times funny, brutally honest, and tear-jerking — as four wheelchair-using people interact with two able-bodied women who insult them, push

them around and see them as less than.

The villain roles required Maria Doyle and Armandu Zelinski to "bring out your inner bitch," Doyle said.

"There's some really derogatory lines with them... Even as performers, it's hard not to laugh," said Natasha Urkow. "That happens in real life! All the time, constantly, it's pathetic."

When they screamed Nicole Bear with Betty Miller's *Wind Research My Wings*, it's an exaggeration, but the song comes up the message bear bears regularly from strangers on the street.

Disabled people are seen as inspirational just for getting out of bed in the morning.

Treating those experiences with humour "helps us pick ourselves up and start again," said Culbert.

Director Tracy Foster has witnessed the dismissal of her cast, when they've gone out as a group.

"She was taking 'what a good person I was to have these people out in public,' Foster remembered.

"Both women still intended, it was total naivety and ignorance, you could tell... Just uninformed human beings," said Foster.

"That's the sad thing because and that's what happened," Browne says.

Each of the details of his recent life remain murky — even to those who worked with him.

Reaton says she had not heard from him in the past year but knew he had been out of province.

Others say he was living in Alberta and Manitoba before returning to Regina just a few months ago.

"It's a shock to all of us," says Reaton.

It's unclear why he returned to Regina, but it ended in him becoming the city's 16th homicide victim of 2016.

"I hope if nothing else, this tragedy can be used to hopefully get me or two others thinking (about) getting out of that lifestyle," said Browne.

"It never leads to glory or being the dirtiest gangster. That sort of life, I've never seen it."

Crowe, like many others, is looking for answers into the death of a man she remembers as an animal lover with a good sense of humour.

"I didn't need to happen. It was unnecessary. Tragic," she says.



In the play *Neither Heroes Nor Ordinary People*, the cast and crew explore how the experiences and lives of disabled and able-bodied people interact in sometimes funny, sometimes emotional ways. In back, from left, are Maria Doyle, John Leppky, director Tracy Foster, Armandu Zelinski, and in front, from left, Nicole Bear, choreographer Anne Gashinski, Kelly Culbert and Natasha Urkow. PHOTO BY ASHLEY MARTIN

people don't mean anything by it," added Urkow. "They have naivety."

Part of the point of the show is to educate and break down some of those barriers.

"If we could create space and time for people to get over their fears and into the real heart and gut of the matter, there would be much less discrimination," said Foster.

"People should come and see the show to open their minds to the possibility, to not be afraid of someone with differences, with disability, in a wheelchair," said Urkow.

There are moments in the play anyone can relate to, disability or not. There's a scene about suicide,

and the characters are talked down to, everyone can relate because "nobody likes being condescended to," said Leppky. "There's a universality to it."

"We're all human beings," said Culbert. "In this chair but it doesn't define me. I'm a person, and I think that's a really strong message."

The seed for the play was planted 18 months ago in a U of R class called *Disability in the Theatre*.

Chancia Perry, Globe Theatre Sandbox Series co-ordinator and outreach facilitator, was familiar with the show, which has been

workshopped since its previous performances during Culture Days

and the Cathedral Village Arts Festival.

"We're looking at voices of a community that we often don't see on stage, unfortunately," said Perry.

"They really help us to question what is normality?"

Laidin Tufts has applied for tickets to Vancouver and Toronto, and hopes to tour high schools across Saskatchewan.

For tickets to *Neither Heroes Nor Ordinary People*, visit globe-theatre.org.

Note the play is not being performed at the Globe, but at the U of R, which has a larger and more accessible space.

annet@reginacommunityarts.org

Details of recent life still murky

KEITHANE FROM A1

When he was a young teenager, Koshane was shot and the injuries forced him to see a specialist myologist.

"I don't remember that, that wasn't enough for him to realize," says Browne, who says he would often question Koshane on what it would take for him to recognize continuing with gangs would likely end in death.

"He didn't get out of the gangs, and that's what happened," Browne says.

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