

Car Hop

By JON KAPLAN

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AUTOSHOW by Marie Beath Badian, Alan Dilworth, Brendan Gall, Jason Mitchell, Rick Roberts, Erin Shields and Julie Tepperman, directed by Aaron Willis and Rebecca Benson. Presented by convergence theatre collective at Royal St. George east parking lot (120 Howland). July 6-16 at 8 pm.

Think a car is about getting to the theatre rather than experiencing it? Then you'd better cruise toward **Convergence Theatre's *AutoShow***, in which seven playwrights each offer a 10-minute play centred on automobiles. Cars provide the sets, the backdrops, for the comic and dramatic works, which include a riff on the myth of Orpheus.

"We originally wanted to do a **Neil LaBute** show but couldn't get the rights," explains **Rebecca Benson**, who directs with **Aaron Willis**. "So we found writers we wanted to collaborate with and asked them to contribute pieces exploring the intimacy of working with real cars.

"Then we came up with the idea of a car show, of salespeople as guides and hosts, as the glue for holding the pieces together. When we read the copy for car ads, we were struck by the fact that the language was selling an experience, offering self-actualization. Having a car gives you freedom to define and express yourself."

AutoShow grew out of long-ago talks between Benson and Willis, both grads of the University of Alberta and George Brown Theatre, about wanting to work collaboratively with a group of other artists.

"Creating the piece was totally organic," says Benson, a member of Actors Repertory Company who's also performing in one of the plays. "I think we have the largest Fringe show, with nearly 30 people working on it."

The audience will watch the first and last pieces together and be split up into rotating smaller groups for the other five. Sometimes viewers will sit in the back seat, at others they'll be clustered around an automobile. One piece is heard rather than seen; its two characters are locked in a car trunk.

There's a neat parallel between audiences putting themselves in the hands of the theatre collective and passengers turning over control to a driver.

"You have to put active trust in the driver, just as drivers themselves trust other drivers on the road," smiles Benson. "That's something we don't think about every day, or maybe we wouldn't get into those machines."