



## Dare to leave your seat belt unbuckled

By JESSICA FREIMAN

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The setting for Toronto theatre artist **Julie Tepperman's** play *Rosy* is a grey sedan in a parking lot.

Audiences won't have to use their imagination to feel part of the action, though: they will sit inside actual cars to view *Rosy* and six other short plays at *AutoShow*, a theatrical production for the Fringe Theatre Festival in Toronto.

The action of each play, written by seven different Toronto playwrights, takes place inside and around cars themselves.

*AutoShow* is presented by the **Convergence Theatre**. "The idea for *AutoShow* came when we were refused the rights to produce *Autobaun* [a cycle of short plays set in cars by American playwright Neil Labute]. We wanted to actually put on the plays in cars themselves, and The Fringe Theatre Festival liked that we wanted to set our plays in cars," 26-year-old Tepperman said.

"There are so many talented peers in this local theatre community, so we asked some to write ten-minute pieces that could take place in a car.

"What we've ended up with are seven wildly diverse pieces. We're still a little bit terrified of how we're going to execute everything," she said.

The goal of *AutoShow*, said Tepperman, is to make people feel like they have been invited to an event.

"We want the audience to feel like it's an actual auto show, where anything can happen. We were just fascinated by this car culture. It's not until I started working on this show that I realized how many car commercials we're bombarded with in today's society.

"It's the idea that your car will change your life. The kind of car you drive will reflect the life you have."

*AutoShow* also tries to capture the private moments that occur inside of one's automobile.

“What goes on inside the car is very different, very private,” Tepperman said. “We’re trying to get very intimate in the spaces in the cars. We want to give people the feeling of, ‘Ooh, maybe I shouldn’t be watching this.’”

*AutoShow* has been a huge undertaking for the theatre artist. “I’m acting in, writing one of the seven plays, and co-producing this massive project,” she said.

Just how massive? The endeavour involves two directors, one choreographer, seven writers and 18 actors, all splitting the box office profits. “These people come on board for the artistic experience, not for the money. We’re really grateful for those who have jumped on board for the idea,” she said.

This project also marks the first production of the Convergence Theatre, and Tepperman is thrilled to be presenting *AutoShow* through the Fringe Theatre Festival. “The Fringe offers a great opportunity for artists at any stage of their careers to expand with new pieces. We are participating in the ‘bring your own venue’ category. We really like being under the Fringe umbrella – we’re one of 130 companies doing shows in an 11-day period. It’s a wonderful, collective feeling,” she said.