

Review: Tuesdays with Morrie a winner every day of the week

The former MASH star is brilliant in Tuesdays With Morrie.



By **RICHARD OUZOUNIAN** Theatre Critic

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Tuesdays With Morrie
★★★★ (out of 4)

By Mitch Albom. Directed by Ron Ulrich, assisted by Luke Brown. Until July 3 at Stage West Dinner Theatre, 5400 Dixie Rd. Mississauga. 905-238-0042.

The best part about live theatre is the way it can surprise you and *Tuesdays With Morrie*, now playing at Stage West, is a prime example of that.

There was another production of the same show, an excellent one, in Toronto just over a year ago, so I wasn't sure I wanted to see this one, especially with an actor best known for his roles on TV sitcoms.

Boy, was I surprised. The Stage West version of *Tuesdays With Morrie* is a production which could hold its own on any stage in Toronto and actually manages to be even more moving than the last one I saw.

A few words about the show, first. It's a piece of autobiography from successful sports writer Mitch Albom about how he reconnected late in life with a sociology professor, Morrie, from his college days who is now dying of Lou Gehrig's disease.

I know it sounds like an exercise in tear-jerking sentimentality, but it isn't. Albom's writing is true, Morrie is a great guy and Ron Ulrich's production, with Luke Brown assisting, doesn't put a foot wrong.

Jamie Farr, best known as the cross-dressing Klinger from *M*A*S*H* is the star and he's absolutely amazing. Only someone with the lifetime of experience Farr has would know how to make Morrie so real, so funny and yet so profound at the same time. With Farr in control, there's nothing maudlin on stage, and all of Morrie's sage observations are couched in a dry wit that Farr delivers brilliantly.

Equally good is Rejean Cournoyer's Mitch, a guy who's become so successful in his career, he hasn't had time to really live. Looking like a young Tom Hanks and acting full out, Cournoyer

gives Farr a good, tough performance to play off, and the combination is killer.

Tuesdays With Morrie is only 80 minutes long, but I guarantee it will make you laugh, cry, think and feel, all in that limited time span.

Toss in prime rib, garlic bread and a Caesar salad, and it doesn't get much better than this.