

THEATRE REVIEW

Jamie Farr makes magic as a deeply moving Morrie

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.

RICHARD OUZOUNIAN

THEATRE CRITIC

The best part about live theatre is the way it can surprise you. *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 more than 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 that could hold its own on any stage in Toronto. It 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 from his college days, Morrie, 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**, stars as Morrie and he's absolutely amazing. Only someone with Farr's lifetime of experience 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,



Jamie Farr returns to Stage West Theatre in *Tuesdays with Morrie*.

and all of Morrie's sage observations are couched in a dry wit that he 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. 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.