

Deeply personal trip to Morocco

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Whether by design or through economic necessity, the one-person show format looms large in the recent history of Calgary professional theatre. In the past two weeks alone we have seen three versions of the one-actor-plays-all genre — all memorable.

First, there was Valerie Planche in Morwyn Brebner's *Music for Contortionist*. Then came Jennie Esdale in Doug Curtis' *Confessions of a Paperboy*, still riding a cool bike at Vertigo Studio.

The third very winning solo performance is by Calgary playwright Ken Cameron, playing himself in his deeply personal travelogue through grief and loss as a stranger in a strange land — *My Morocco*.

The play, shaped and directed by another master storyteller, Andy Curtis, opened Thursday at the Big Secret Theatre.

Cameron, past executive director of the Alberta Playwrights' Network (and as such, a kind of midwife in the birthing of stage-worthy scripts by numerous other writers across the province), is currently batting two for two on the local theatre scene.

His one-act two-hander, *Harvest*, debuted to a positive response last week at Lunchbox Theatre; and now *My Morocco* — like *Harvest*, a well-written excerpt of family history, full of unpredictably funny and telling



Courtesy, Sean Dennie

Ken Cameron in his one-man show *My Morocco*.

comic detail — shows every reason for being accorded a similarly happy fate.

The play began life as a short story in early 2005, following a two-week trip to Morocco by Cameron and his then-fiance, Rita Bozi, in the course of which Cameron learned of the sudden death of his estranged only sibling, Beth.

By way of a prologue, the playwright escorts us to Morocco: *The Land and its People*, which includes the country's history as both a movie locale and a mid-century hideout for

American Lit bad boys and expats like Paul Bowles, Allan Ginsberg, and of course, *Naked Lunch* author William Burroughs.

We also get a modestly audience-interactive lecture on common Muslim greetings, from which springs the subject of the family tragedy responsible for our journey with Cameron in the first place — an Everyman trip through everything from tourist constipation, to the hyperbole of rug-salesmen in the souks (or markets), to Muslim philosophies on the

REVIEW

My Morocco by Ken Cameron,
through April 14
at the Big Secret Theatre.

soul and art, and the evils of a bus to Casablanca.

The Morocco episodes are in turn enlivened by interspersed dialogues between Cameron and his representation of Bozi — whose views on his bereavement and on life in general seem to have counterbalanced the playwright's uptightness under somewhat trying circumstances — as well as by some very engaging, revealing, and ultimately moving instances of soul-searching on the part of our guilt-ridden narrator, especially in the moments that precede the play's epilogue.

Elsewhere, too, the quality of this Ground Zero Theatre production stands out. To lend unobtrusively authentic atmosphere to the geographical location for Cameron's story are sound designer Peter Moller's subtle use of Moroccan music, and Bozi's photographs — projected onto four large swatches of cloth (one blue, the others white) stretched between the floor and the ceiling of the Big Secret stage.

And Terry Gunvordahl enhances his minimal set with lighting that adds a pleasing visual dimension to the illumination cast by Cameron's honest and consistently entertaining play.