



LaJoye creates magic on stage at Manitoba Theatre for Young People. (Supplied Photo)

## **Brilliant clown transforms garbage into sad, stunning tale of homelessness**

November 4th, 2008  
Theatre Review

**By Demetra Hajidiacos**

MICHIGAN-BASED solo performer Gale LaJoye puts a human face on the companionless souls who call the streets their home.

After five years, the celebrated new vaudeville clown returns to the Canwest Performing Arts Centre with his mesmerising portrayal of a homeless man named Snowflake, who has a special gift of transforming other people's junk into things of beauty.

Having performed his poignantly self-penned silent act thousands of times across the globe since its original inception in 1990, LaJoye is at home on stage among an eclectic array of unwanted items thoughtlessly tossed aside by others but delicately treasured by Snowflake as vessels that transport him into a world of possibilities.

### **Snowflake**

Manitoba Theatre for Young People

Until Nov. 9

Tickets \$13.25

☆☆☆☆☆

The 70-minute tour-de-force begins with a black-and-white film narrated by LaJoye, depicting the real Snowflake, a solitary gentleman by the name of Don Stenglein who aimlessly walked the snow-covered streets of the performer's hometown in Marquette, Mich.

If you're the sentimental type, pack some tissue, because while children four and older will be utterly captivated by LaJoye's master clowning, adults will embrace a deeper meaning that provides insight into the lives of discarded individuals who crave basic understanding and a secure place in a world that disposes not only of unwanted items but also of unwanted people.

Combining physical humour with spot-on moments of absolute silence, LaJoye takes the audience on a journey filled with laughter and sadness and speaks to the power of human kindness without ever uttering a single word.

Performing to a nearly packed house on the weekend, LaJoye pulled out all his skilled clown moves as he randomly popped up behind a rundown fence, played tennis without a partner, pulled off a disappearing act with an oversized venetian blind and turned a broken fan into a boomerang that he flung into the audience.

But when a discarded ventriloquist's doll is shaped into a forsaken young boy who innocently looks beyond the surrounding garbage heap to an illuminated billboard depicting the iconic American family, a sadness swept the theatre as even the youngest of onlookers took in the wooden doll's shame and disappointment.

Parents should be prepared to answer a host of questions on the car ride home, including why the funny old man on stage lives in a broken car beside a pile of garbage.

But if these questions don't scare you, this show will be a treat for you and your kids.