

'Tis not human

Amy House brings her wacky cast of characters to LSPU Hall

Don't be surprised if you recognize some of the characters in Amy House's new play.

That's because House draws her inspiration from the people that make up small-town Newfoundland, and the characters often make people laugh in recognition.

"My parents came from Port Saunders on the Northern Peninsula and a lot of my material comes straight from growing up and spending holidays down there," she said. "In a small town you get to know characters intimately."

The characters from her one-woman show, *'Tis Not Human*, which runs from May 21-25 at the LSPU Hall, are also familiar to any fan of House's work over the last 20 years.

There's Marguerite, the "brazen"

and outspoken former fish plant worker who "grabs aolt of opportunity by the t'roat"; Ida, the long-suffering old lady, chatting with her neighbors from her front porch; Vicky, just back from Toronto looking for a good Newfoundland man; and the classic "all-seeing and ever-wise" Mimi Benoit of Cape St. George.

The characters give House the opportunity to do what she does best — make people laugh.

"Marquerite is a character who is over the top," she said. "So it gave me an opportunity to be over the top and to say ridiculous things that somebody might find funny."

And for House, the people she's observed over the years find a way into her act.

"There are several people in Ida

and several people that Ida talks about that are real in my mind, that are really people, but of course with a twist here and there."

But the show is not just about Newfoundland, the characters are universal because they speak to truths about humanity.

"These are real people and you can identify with them no matter where you are," said House. "It's a local show, but I do plan to take it national. I do plan to break out across the country next year or in the fall."

House has been involved in the-

**BY DAVID
SORENSEN**
EXPRESS STAFF

atre since high school, but never intended to make it her living. That's because she never imagined that acting could be a full-time job.

"Theatre for me just evolved," she said. "It's not like I got out of school and said, 'Oh, I'm going to be an actress,' because I didn't know you could."

But when the Stephenville Festival began, and with the help of the festival director, the late Maxim Mazumdar, House found an outlet for her creative talents.

"It was through the Stephenville Festival and the work that Maxim did out there that we got to meet professionals and work with them and understand the way that theatre worked," she said. "We worked damn hard for it for summers on end but it paid off."

"It made you get things out of yourself that you didn't know were in you."

House performed at the first five festivals and started to develop some of her current crop of characters there when she performed *The Seven Faces of Amy* in 1981.

Mimi Benoit came out of this show.

Then, House got a call from Rising Tide Theatre to tour with David Ross's play *After Joey*.

"That was kind of the beginning," she said.

She moved to St. John's in 1987 to do some *Bust-a-Gut* comedy with Lorne Elliott. It was here she hooked up with long-time collaborators Berni Stapleton and Jeff Pitcher.

PLEASE SEE PAGE 22

House's characters familiar to many

FROM PAGE 17

Working with partners made the writing process easier to get a handle on, said House.

"When the three of us were together, we'd get together, we'd go out and have a drink and brainstorm about ways to do things," she said. "That's how we came up with ideas on how to do a show, where could we do a show."

House finds the toughest thing about being on her own is knowing whether her work is going to make people laugh.

"That's one reason that I always did like to work with people because I never knew what to write down," she said. "It's taken me this long to be able to sit down by myself and write anything because I'd be frightened to put anything on paper, frightened it wouldn't be any good."

Despite the difficulty in creating comedy, House said the rewards are more than worth the long hours of preparation.

"Making people laugh is just the ultimate for me, I love it," she said. "I just love to hear people laugh, I love to hear people having a good time."

While she's hired a promotions company to help promote *'Tis Not Human*, House does virtually all the planning, managing and writing for her



Amy House as herself

shows and gets help from wherever she can.

"You do what you've got to do to make a living."

She said the years working with Stapleton was rewarding, the pair have decided it's time to fly solo. (They are probably best known for their

commentaries on *Here and Now*.)

"We're trying to break out on our own and find our own way," she said, but isn't ruling out future collaborations.

House will be touring the show as a dinner theatre across the province this summer