



Button says writing about what you know is a great place to begin. He is seen here as his character, Lucien, during a performance of his latest play, *Helter Smelter*. (Contributed photo)

Marshall Button bringing Lucien to JMH tonight in new production

by Edna Williston

Published Friday November 23rd, 2007

Appeared on page A1

This evening, Miramichiers will have the opportunity to spend quality time with a fabled Acadian star.

Once again, well-known comedic actor Marshall Button is bringing his alter ego, Lucien, to the James M. Hill stage in his latest production, *Helter Smelter*.

Button's Lucien character has been described as a cultural icon. Button says he originally conjured Lucien up out of his imagination when entertaining at house parties with friends. Lucien has grown from those humble beginnings and is now a fully developed persona, known and loved in households across the country.

"I believe every writer starts by writing what they know," explains Button. "I grew up in Dalhousie, in a bilingual family, and put myself through university by working at the local paper mill."

Button added that he drew on this background to create his comedic material.

"I take my humor out of my own experiences. All my stories come from the region. When something happens, whether it has any real comedy in it at the time, I find humor ... I guess it goes back to such things as someone slipping on the banana peel ... it's often making light of an intense situation," said Button.

Helter Smelter is Button's fourth production featuring Lucien. He said it is based on a real event.

"It was one of those very mild winters and many of the ice shanties on the waterways [in the northern part of province] had broken through the ice. The situation ... added to the ever growing focus on global warming. It was the impact this had on me personally that I drew from when creating Helter Smelter. Once again, it was making light of an intense situation," he said.

Button said he is very familiar with the Miramichi area and has many friends here.

"In fact, Donnie Bowes, the artistic director of the Upper Canada Playhouse, is a Miramichier who I have known both as a friend and worked with for over 20 years. I often work off his life stories as well."

Button said although Lucien was initially a casual creation, eventually friends and colleagues convinced him to develop the character further and in the spring of 1986 Lucien, A Labour of Love in Two Acts premiered in Fredericton.

"The trick as a writer is to retain events that have happened. It is recalling an event accurately. I have an uncle who I have drawn material from. Uncle Gilbert was a storyteller and it would be later when I was looking for material that I realized that I was recalling many things he had been talking about," Button said.

On a trip to Afghanistan to entertain the troops there, Buttons said, he spoke with a couple of soldiers from the Miramichi area and some of the material from the trip ended up in one of his shows. On one occasion after he had delivering a performance containing the Afghanistan material, a man from the audience approached him to thank him for his support of the troops.

"That is by far the best type of review ... it is no-holds-barred honesty ... and I am most proud of these reviews," he said.

Button, has been featured on CBC Radio and Television many times and has made a guest appearance on The Royal Canadian Air Farce. He also appeared on Sportsnet during the 2006 Memorial Cup Hockey Tournament.

Button says he has portrayed Lucien well over 1,500 times from coast to coast and has appeared regularly during Moncton's HubCap Comedy Festival.