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National Post

## Kosher Jokes revue offers hilarity for the holidays

**Juanita Bawagan** Dec 16, 2011 – 5:15 PM ET | Last Updated: Dec 20, 2011 4:32 PM ET

Did you hear the one about the Jewish and Muslim comics performing in a church during Christmastime? It may sound like the set-up for a particularly bad punchline, but it's actually the premise of Kosher Jokes for the Halaladays, a multi-faith stand-up revue that's now making its way across the country.

"There's no greater bond than Jews and Muslims at a strip club at Christmas," says co-producer Jeff Schouela, joking about how nothing is open Dec. 25 for those who don't celebrate Christmas.

But now Jews, Muslims and anyone else looking to escape carolling have the option of taking in the comedy show, which kicked off last year at a Montreal church. With almost 400 people in attendance, the nearly sold-out debut inspired the 33-year-old Schouela to take the show on the road, with additional stops in Ottawa and Toronto.

"[We] wanted to shed some light on Jews and Muslims getting along together in Montreal," says Eman El-husseini, a Quebec comedian and Schouela's producing partner. "I figured it was such a beautiful thing that these groups get along so well in a comedy setting, so we should celebrate that."

The Jewish and Muslim comedians scheduled to perform will not just be catering to audiences from their own faith, either. While there will be a wealth of cultural-specific material, the performers can wring just as many laughs from rabbi puns as they can from the pains of being single.

All joking aside, performer Jessica Saloman says comedy is an easier way to tackle bigger issues in an effort to unite both communities. Taking a less conventional path than most comedians, Saloman quit her job as a United Nations war crimes lawyer to pursue a career in stand-up. Still, Saloman says she's essentially in the same line of work: helping people to get along with one another. "Comedically, I can deal with bigger issues," she says.

Ali Hassan, who will be hosting the show in Montreal and Toronto, says he would like to see the revue expanded to the Middle East. In 2008, he performed at the Amman Stand-Up Comedy Festival in Jordan, the first comedy fest in the region.

Recalling how the mayor of Amman welcomed visiting comedians ("I want to thank you all for coming here, and bringing joy and laughter to a region that is in dire need of both"), Hassan says he hopes the new show will work in a similar fashion to bridge two communities.

If the current tour is successful enough, Schouela says he will expand to other cities across Canada, possibly even a show in Jerusalem on Christmas Day.

Until then, Schouela says he's still going to be alone this Dec. 25, and will likely spend the day recovering from this year's shows ...



Kosher Jokes for the Halaladays' co-producer Craig Bannerman and Eman El-husseini.

and maybe making his annual pilgrimage to to a strip club.

*Kosher Jokes for the Halaladays runs in Montreal Dec. 21 and Toronto Dec. 22. For tickets to the Dec. 21 show, call 514-861-4036. For the Toronto show, call 416-924-6211, ext. 0.*

Posted in: **Arts, On Stage** Tags: **Comedy, Kosher Jokes For The Halaladays, Stand-Up Comedy**



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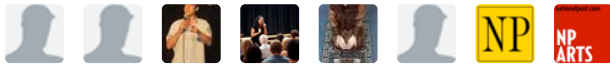
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