

Writer MacIvor wins \$75Gs theatre prize

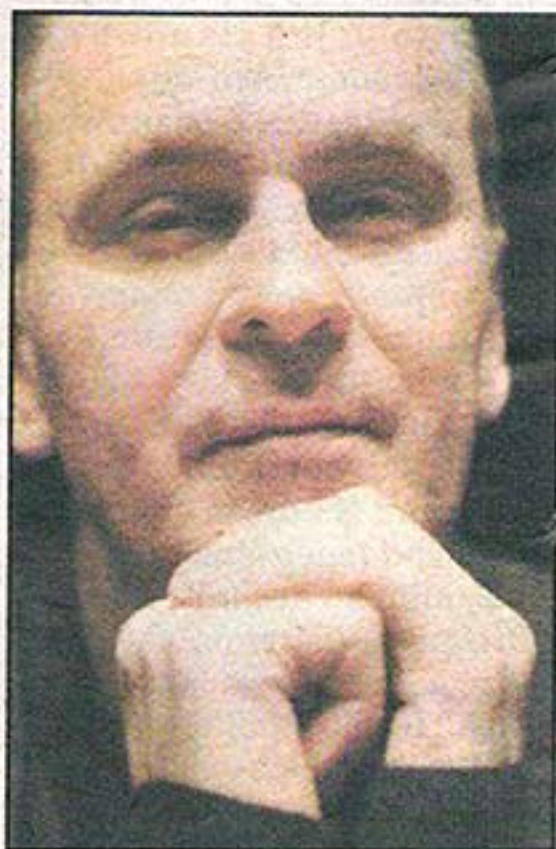
JOHN COULBOURN
Sun Media

Toronto playwright Daniel MacIvor emerged from a field of five finalists last night to claim the prestigious 2008 Elinore and Lou Siminovitch Prize In Theatre, a prize that not only leaves the playwright himself richer by \$75,000, but gives him an additional \$25,000 to bestow on the developing artists he chooses to name as his proteges.

"As an artist in Canada, the idea of being awarded that kind of money, you immediately feel guilty," the author of nearly 20 plays, including *Here Lies Henry*, *Monster*, *You Are Here* and *A Beautiful View*, said yesterday. "But the sting is taken off it because you immediately get to give \$25,000 away — and that's the best part."

Chosen by a jury headed by TheatreBooks' Leonard McHardy, MacIvor beat out fellow playwrights Morwyn Brebner, Daniel Danis, Colleen Murphy and Larry Tremblay, becoming the third Canadian playwright to win the coveted prize.

Named to honour scientist Lou Siminovitch and his late wife Elinore, a playwright, the



DANIEL MACIVOR
Wins Siminovitch Prize

have to take a job for now.

"For now, I can focus on the stuff I want to do."

For now, MacIvor simply wants to enjoy the validation.

"I'm a pretty spiritual person and it says to me that I've made the right decisions and I'm on the right road," he said.

And he credits Brooks, who won the first ever Siminovitch Prize and who is currently col-

laborating with MacIvor on a new show, for putting him on that road.

Siminovitch Prize in Theatre was introduced in 2001 and is awarded annually in a three-year cycle, recognising the contributions of directors, playwrights and designers. Previous winners include director and long-time MacIvor collaborator Daniel Brooks, playwright John Mighton and designer Dany Lyne — and MacIvor is aware that he's joining a prestigious crew.

"It feels great that I will forever be on a list with all those great people," MacIvor said, adding that the award comes at a perfect time in his career. He ended his longtime collaboration with producer Sherrie Johnson and their production company, da da kamera, last year and has been working freelance since, creating and directing new works.

"The money is one thing, but the thing about the award, as a person who has just gone freelance, is the idea that I'm getting a vote of confidence at this point," he said. "I'm in a life-changing situation here and it just feels great."

But the money isn't going to go to waste, MacIvor says.

"Immediately, it means I can sleep better. It means I'm not worried about my debts. All of a sudden you become freed. I don't

laborating with MacIvor on a new show, for putting him on that road.

"Over the years, he's allowed me to make so many mistakes and he's never judged me for those mistakes," MacIvor said. "I've never really had that from someone who wasn't immediate family. He loves me and he didn't need anything from me."

In fact, MacIvor claims he chose the recipients of his protege award — Daniel Arnold and Median Hahn, Vancouver-based writer/actors in *Dual Minds* — because they reminded him of the way he and Brooks work together.

"They are able to stay friends and I just don't know anybody else who is doing that," he said.

But MacIvor is also grateful to BMO Financial Group and everyone else involved in the awarding of the Siminovitch Prize — not just for the honour and the money, but for the attendant publicity it provides for Canadian theatre.

"Somewhere in a whole lot of newspapers tomorrow, there will be something about a playwright who got something," he said.

"And it just raises people's consciousness."