

One Book One Aurora is ?great honour? for author Kim Echlin



By Brock Weir

Aurora and Syria are now on the same page.

Earlier this week, Canadian author Kim Echlin was ?thrilled and delighted? to learn her popular novel *Under the Visible Life* is now making its way through the Arab world, thanks to a new Arabic translation courtesy of a Syrian-based publisher.

It's not necessarily the first new Canadian novel you would expect to be making the rounds in the war-torn Middle East nation, yet that's exactly what it's doing.

The story follows Katherine and Masha, who grew up leading very different lives in very different parts of the world, experiencing very different yet oddly similar battles against prejudice and intolerance, all the while united by a love of Jazz. It takes readers through the political battlefield of Montreal in the early 1970s, to the cosmopolitan Karachi of the same time period, capturing essences of an era time forgot.

?The translation was created by a Syrian publisher, which I find extraordinary,? Ms. Echlin told The Auroran this week. ?There is a war zone where women do not enjoy full rights and no one has human rights, yet there is this brave publisher who has selected this book to create an Arabic translation, which is just astonishing and very gratifying.?

As readers in the Middle East pick up the book, they will be following in the footsteps of many Aurorans who have spent the better part of this year delving into Ms. Echlin's story as part of the One Book One Aurora Campaign.

One Book One Aurora culminates in an author talk with Ms. Echlin at the Aurora Public Library this Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m. Reading passages from her book, accompanied by the live sounds of award-winning jazz musician Paul Neufeld, it will be an opportunity to get up close and personal with the author while exploring the heavy topics contained within it.

While the novel might now be making its way through a war zone, *Under the Visible Life* has its origins in a kind of a war zone here at home. Ms. Echlin says she was inspired to pen the novel when she first learned of Ontario's Female Refugees Act. Under this act, Ontarian women could be arrested for being ?incorrigible,? a word open for interpretation. The result? Women could be ? and were ? arrested for drinking in a public place, not going through the correct door in a tavern, playing cards in front of their children and, particularly for the purposes of *Under the Visible Life*, having relationships outside of their ?race.?

?It made me think that sometimes we feel we're much more liberal and our human rights are much more deeply protected but sometimes we haven't got to that place as early as we sometimes think we have,? says Ms. Echlin of the act, which was repealed little more than a few generations ago.

Infused by jazz, music has been an integral part of the One Book One Aurora campaign. In addition to Mr. Neufeld on Saturday, the event will be preceded the following evening at the Aurora Cultural Centre with a performance by the Barbra Lica Jazz Quintet at the Aurora Cultural Centre, starting at 8 p.m.

?It is a huge honour,? says Ms. Echlin of her book being chosen by the Aurora Public Library. ?I am a great devotee of the public library system. It does so much for community building. To be a part of something like this, which is really a community building thing for literature is just a great honour. This has been the most welcoming Public Library event I have experienced and I am just

immensely grateful. It has been so much fun.?

For more information on how to join in the fun this Saturday afternoon, please visit www.onebookoneaurora.com.