



Larry MacKillop in a scene from Chekhov's Trout.

## Windmill Theatre prepares to host provincial festival

By Joanne Newton

HIGH RIVER — In just a few days, dozens of actors, directors, stage crews and supportive friends will arrive in High River to take part in the 1994 Provincial One Act Play Festival.

The six plays in the competition have each won their own regional play festival and look forward to the chance to perform in competition at the provincial level. Each of the entries will be publicly adjudicated, then one will be chosen to represent Alberta at the national festival.

These productions are the work of independent amateurs who look upon the festival as a chance to try something on their own which may not be typically offered in mainstream theatrical works. The festival gives these individuals the opportunity to develop new talents and new insights in theatrical production.

These efforts will elicit the opinion of a professional in theatrical arts who will consider the success of the acting, direction and production elements to represent the intention of the playwright. This year's adjudicator is Pat Benedict, professor at University of Calgary, and professional actor and director.

This year's selection of entries include three works by local Alberta playwrights — two by Calgarian Gordon Pengilly and one by Larry MacKillop of Nanton.

Windmill Theatre Players' own entries will include one of each of these two playwrights' works which tend to reflect the values, the hardships and the humor of rural Albertans.

In addition to Windmill Theatre Players' two performances, six other plays will be presented. Since not all zones held festivals this year, two region's will perform their runner-up plays, but they will not be judged in the competition.

Because of the varied and

independent nature of each production, Windmill Theatre Players neither promotes nor censors any of the works in assuming its responsibility as host of the provincial competition.

In fulfillment of this role, the Windmill Theatre Players wish to provide the attending public with indication of the nature of the content of each play, to assist them in deciding whether or not to attend.

Further information may be obtained at the festival, March 11 and 12. Weekend passes to the festival which include receptions or tickets for individual sessions may be obtained in advance at Pickersgill's Clothing in High River at 652-2252.

The festival begins on Friday at 7:30 p.m. with an introduction, followed by these plays:

• *The Actor's Nightmare* (Lethbridge) — A madcap comedy as an actor copes with some unsettling situations on stage.

• *The Problem* (Calgary) — A comedy of one-upmanship. A man deals with his wife's unexpected pregnancy.

• *They Don't Call Them Farmers Anymore* (High River) — Written by Gordon Pengilly, a farmer deals with the impending loss of his farm.

These performances will be followed by a reception.

A parade to celebrate World Theatre Day will take place at 10:30 a.m. Plays begin at 2 p.m.

• *The Author's Voice* (Edmonton) — The story of an author's dilemma and how he attempts to resolve it.

• *Seeds* (Medicine Hat) — Written by Gordon Pengilly. A southern Alberta farmer deals with a troubled marriage to a young woman in the 1950s.

• *The Eye of the Beholder* (Calgary) — This performance will not be adjudicated. A situation involving three men (two painters and a model) in an artist's studio. WARNING: This play contains some nudity.

A second set of Saturday

plays begins at 7 p.m.

• *Sorrows and Sons* (Spruce Grove) — Difficult moments are faced on Parents' Day in a college dorm room. WARNING: This play may contain offensive language.

• *Chekhov's Trout* (High River) — Written by Larry MacKillop. This play will not be adjudicated. It is a modern-day reflection of Chekhov's *The Marriage Proposal* set in rural Alberta.

Following these three plays will be the closing ceremonies, awards and a reception.

## Opposes nudity in theatre

The Editor:

I am writing this letter to protest against the play *The Eye of The Beholder*, which is coming to the Memorial Centre.

I will probably be listed as a "fuddy-duddy, narrow-minded, old-fashioned crank", and maybe more, but I'll risk it!

I realize that Mr. Penman may have no control over the content of the play, but seemingly higher authorities must condone this nudity.

I was asked by a minister if there was an age limit (meaning young people) who are allowed to view this?

I also know it is a choice, but do we need this kind of choice? Just for the record: Genesis Chapter 3, verses one to 21 is very interesting reading, particularly verse seven and 21.

Betty Smith  
High River

H.R. TIMES, MARCH 8, 1994



*Windmill Theatre Players*  
hosts



Friday, March 11  
at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 12  
at 2:00 and 7:30 p.m.

Highwood Memorial Centre  
HIGH RIVER

Tickets: \$8.00 per session  
or \$20.00 weekend pass

Available from Pickersgill's Clothing,  
High River, or at the door.

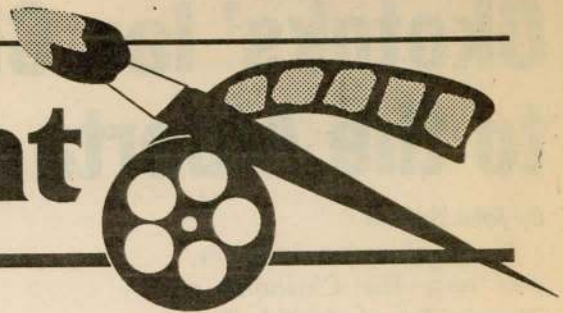


**PROVINCIAL  
ONE  
ACT** FESTIVAL

**WARNING:** Content of some plays may be offensive to some people.  
Individual show warnings will be posted at the festival.



# Arts & Entertainment



## Spruce Grove play receives top honors

By Paul Hanner

As the curtain descended on the 1994 Provincial One Act Drama Festival, on Saturday evening, the Alberta Drama

Festival Association's top award for Best Play went to the Horizon Players of Spruce Grove, for its production of *Sorrows and Sons*, by Stephen Metcalfe.



*The Actor's Nightmare* received runner-up honors.

Photo by Marnie Taylor, SAIT

and it was several seconds before anyone realized this was not part of the play's action. Paramedics treated Wanner prior to being taken to High River Hospital, where he was held overnight for observation, and released Sunday morning.

Benedict also handed out special mention to Christopher Cinnamon (director of *Actor's Nightmare*); George Stone's acting and Larry MacKillop's writing (*Chekhov's Trout*); Steve Penman's set design (*They Don't*

*Problem*, a one-upmanship comedy by A.R. Gurney Jr., presented by Animis Productions of Calgary as well as Gordon Pengilly's *Farmers* (Windmill).

Windmill's showcase performance (out of competition) of *Chekhov's Trout* closed the festival to a rousing ovation.

A second showcase entry, *The Eye Of The Beholder* from Calgary, withdrew at the last moment, eliminating any possible controversy arising from the play's nudity content.

Dallas Wolbaum of Lethbridge's McMillan and Company, picked up Best Male Acting kudos for his lead role in *The Actor's Nightmare*: Best Actress honors were accorded Medicine Hat's Doreen Judge for her portrayal as a Southern Alberta farm wife in Gordon Pengilly's *Seeds*.

Windmill Theatre Players, marking its 20th year as a community theatre group, hosted the 1994 Provincial Festival as part of its anniversary celebrations. Windmill can take much pride in its organization of the many weekend activities that complemented the six competing plays and one showcase performance.

Pat Benedict of the University of Calgary's Drama Department was the festival's adjudicator. Her assessments, opinions, praise and criticisms, all delivered with an off-the-wall humor, were much appreciated by the good crowds on hand Friday and Saturday at the Highwood Memorial Centre.

Benedict's choice of Spruce Grove's *Sorrows And Sons* was based on its ability "to entertain, to provoke thought, and prove that theatre is alive and well."

This play, about a father and son relationship, was also singled out for its outstanding ensemble cast, its set, and disciplined direction.

The winning play also received an invitation to appear for five performances at Edmonton's popular Fringe Festival in August. This presentation was made to the play's director, Barbara Courtney Weaver, by Theatre Alberta's Jan Streader (who co-ordinated High River's World Theatre Day parade Saturday morning.)

Runner-up honors went to the Edmonton entry *The Author's Voice*, by Richard Greenberg, a compelling drama that showcased a brilliant acting performance by Rob Moffatt as a misshapen cripple. (A role not unlike that of Hugo's *Quasimodo*.)

Dallas Wolbaum was a popular choice for Best Actor.

His was a riveting performance, as the hapless George Spelvin who experiences every "actor's nightmare" of going on stage as a last minute replacement without the slightest knowledge of the play, his part, or any of its lines.

This work, by controversial writer Christopher Durang, starts out as high farce, but as it develops, it takes on insidious overtones, trapping both its central character and audience in a plot

where it appears there is no escape.

For Best Actress, Benedict turned to Doreen Judge from the Medicine Hat production of *Seeds*. Her performance as a farm wife delivered "truth, dilemma and a sense of loneliness and passion."

This award was an emotional one, accepted under trying circumstances, as the play's only other actor, Bob Wanner (the husband), collapsed on stage, with less than five minutes remaining.

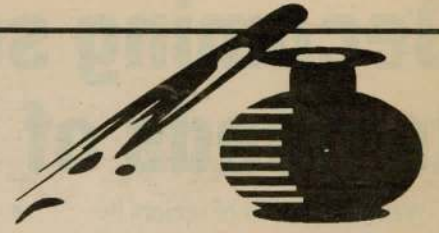
The audience was stunned, CONTINUED ON Page 9

## Prised by adjudicator





# Opinion



## Windmill Theatre Players a shining star in this community

**A** HUGE TIP OF THE HAT to organizers of the Provincial One Act Festival and the World Theatre Day parade.

Although the parade followed a "blink and you'll miss it" format, the costumes were brilliantly designed, bright and sparkling in the hot sun — if only Little Britches could capture the same weather!

Theatre Alberta sponsored the two free weekend workshops so that participants in the parade could prepare their costumes opening it up to anybody.

The plays were all well received by the audience and the adjudicator with special mention to locals George Stone, Larry MacKillop and Steve Penman for their work and talent.

More than once it could be heard from visitors how fortunate High River is to have such a pro-theatre town, and WTP who, after 20 years, is still going strong . . . and they are right. We are lucky. Thanks WTP.

**WINDMILL THEATRE PLAYERS**

**and**

**Alberta  
Drama  
Festival  
Association**

host the

**1994  
PROVINCIAL ONE ACT  
DRAMA FESTIVAL**

**MARCH 11 & 12**  
at the  
**HIGHWOOD MEMORIAL CENTRE**  
High River, Alberta

<b>SESSION ONE</b>	<b>March 11</b>
	<b>Curtain: 7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>SESSION TWO</b>	<b>March 12</b>
	<b>Curtain: 2:00 p.m.</b>
<b>SESSION THREE</b>	<b>March 12</b>
	<b>Curtain: 7:30 p.m.</b>

**SOME OF THE PLAYS ARE FOR A MATURE AUDIENCE**





# 'It's Murder in the Wings' at Windmill Theatre



Banker, Nelva Odell, (Shannon Simington) recovers from the shock of 'finding the body' while Doris (Debbie Waddell), Bobbie June Lydecker (Joanne Mercier), Kitty (Helen Rogers), Maxie (Jim Goodwin) and Bertha (Karen Lawrence) look on.



Tyrolia (Leah Ritz), Maddie (Ro Montgomery), Kitty and Doris all seem to have something to hide from Eddie the janitor (Neil Demers).

**WINDMILL THEATRE PLAYERS** in High River have been preparing *It's Murder in the Wings*, a hilarious murder mystery comedy in two acts, since January.

Their final dress rehearsal was Monday night and they are all set for the opening night performance at the Highwood Memorial Centre.

The show runs as dinner theatre Thursday, Friday, Saturday and continues with performances only Sunday afternoon and next week April 21 to 23.

For ticket information: Phone 652-7605.



Maddie accuses Bobbie June of the murder while Eddie keeps them from murdering each other.



TV reporter Helen Thorndyke (Shirley Hartig) interviews Maxie about his plan to hide a body while Sara (Carol Knox) mugs for the camera.



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# High River Times

90th Year No. 16

Tuesday, April 12, 1994



### On the hot seat

Maxie played by Jim Goodwin is given the task of finding a way to covertly sneak a dead body out of the office by Maddie (Ro Montgomery, seated), and Doris (Debbie Waddell, l), Kitty (Helen Rogers, c) and Tyrolia (Leah Ritz, r). The play *Murder in the Wings*, performed by the Windmill Theatre Players, will be

presented as a dinner theatre at the Memorial Centre Thursday to Saturday, supper at 6 p.m. and the play gets under way at 8 p.m. There will also be a Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. For ticket information call Marlene at 652-7605.

Photo by John Barlow



# Windmill tickles audience with comedy mystery

By Paul Hanner

Windmill Theatre Players spring production of *It's Murder In The Wings* is a murder mystery with a twist. The twist being that the whole thing is played for laughs, and the eventual denouement is only secondary to the story's comedic situations.



Maddie (Ro Montgomery, r) tries to calm Doris (Debbie Waddell) during rehearsal of *Murder in the Wings* by the Windmill Theatre Players April 10. Photo by John Barlow

The *Wings* of the title is The Wings Publishing Company, a second rate operation that is relying on the signing of a famous playwright to turn around its failing fortunes. You get an idea of the company's substance (or lack thereof) from its advertising slogans: "Remember, your best play

is just waiting in The Wings" . . . "Remember, if it's not in The Wings, it's not in the theatre" and "Remember, if you want your theatre to fly, don't forget The Wings."

The action opens in the company's reception area where final preparations are being made for the press party to announce the contract signing of Lionel Upshaw (Wally Geres), and the publication of *Done In*, his latest play. Also invited is a bank executive who on the strength of the signing, has promised a loan that will save the company.

Maddie, Wings editor (Ro Montgomery), a stylish, fast-talking career woman is the catalyst around whom the action revolves. She discovers Wings boss Elgarth Moon dead in his office, apparently poisoned. Realizing the implications, she sets about covering up the murder until the contract and bank loan have been signed.

Also at the affair is Maddie's boyfriend, reporter Donald McShane (Gordon Scott), and a television news crew (Shirley Hartig and Karen Lawrence). As the time approaches for the contract signing, more ingredients are stirred into the plot.

Handling the catering arrangements is former actress Sara Liles Hampton (Carol Knox) who attended college with Upshaw and the murdered man; Eddie (Neil Demers), a substitute janitor who isn't all he seems to be; Bobbie June Lydecker (Joanne Mercier), who claims to be the dead Moon's fiancee; Maxie Dunsill (Jim Goodwin) a hack writer, and Nelva Odell (Shannon Simington), matronly wife of the bank executive.

Then there's Maddie's staff at Wings, a trio of zany characters who frantically orchestrate situation after hilarious situation to delay the discovery of the body. These include receptionist Tyrolia (Leah Ritz), script reader Kitty (Helen Rogers) and office girl Doris (Debbie Waddell), Kitty's klutzy younger sister.

With a cast of 13 (nine women

and four men), the stage is continually busy, with little opportunity for the murder mystery aficionados to watch for clues as to the murderer's identity.

One of the suspects, playwright Lionel Upshaw comments that ". . . in a good play, like one of mine, all the clues are given to the audience in the dialogue, usually in the first act." In the case of *It's Murder In The Wings*, the key clue isn't revealed until early in the final act, so the audience can relax and enjoy the steady flow of laughs dished up by a competent cast.

Ro Montgomery is at the top of her form, and her well defined Maddie, the prototype '90s career woman, carries most of the dialogue through to the frenetic con-

clusion.

Leah Ritz gives her usual dependable performance in the role of Tyrolia, the receptionist and Maddie's second-in-command of "Operation Cover Up".

Helen Rogers and Debbie Waddell play off each other well as sisters Kitty and Doris. Waddell's dim-witted Doris is a delight to watch, and produces a good proportion of the evening's laughs.

Wally Geres (A Windmill charter member, he joined in 1974) as the urbane Lionel Upshaw, exudes wit and charm, and his every move is brim full of confidence. His performance is reminiscent of Clifton Webb's portrayal of Waldo Lydecker in the 1944

CONTINUED ON Page 14



# Tickets still available for Windmill

CONTINUED FROM Page 9  
movie mystery *Laura*.

*Wings* is a tight two hours of fast-paced fun (including a 15-minute intermission). All the participants enjoy themselves including Gordon Scott, Carol Knox, Joanne Mercier, Jim Goodwin and Karen Lawrence.

Helen Rogers, Shirley Hartig, Shannon Simington and Neil Demers make satisfactory Windmill debuts.

The difficult job of directing *Wings* is in the dependable hands of Steve Penman, who never

allows his players to cross the thin line between comedy and broad farce.

Penman's set design is uncluttered, enabling his large cast to move in, out and around the four doors leading to the company's other offices.

Behind the scenes chores are capably handled by Bill Tupkal (stage manager), Celia Penman (sound) and Greg Smyth (producer).

*Wings* was written by Texan Pat Cook, who has had 15 plays published since his first in 1976.

He is currently involved with "Audience-Participation Murder Mysteries" produced in and around the Houston area.

*It's Murder In The Wings* is recommended for a fun evening out, and continues its engagement with regular performances Thursday, Friday and Saturday (April 21, 22 and 23) at the Highwood Memorial Centre. Curtain at 8 p.m. each evening. Advance tickets are on sale at Pickersgill's or by phone 652-7605; also available at the door prior to each performance.



## Are you hiding something?

Kitty (Helen Rogers, l-r), Doris (Debbie Waddell) and Maddie (Ro Montgomery) try to keep Donald McShane (Gord Scott) off the

trail during dress rehearsal of the Windmill Theatre's *Murder in the Wings* April 10.

Photo by John Barlow

High River Times  
MAY 3, 1994

## THANK YOU

Windmill Theatre Players would like to thank everyone who helped to make our silent auction a success. In particular we would like to thank our donors.

Mark Aitcheson  
Marnie Ball  
The Cottonwood Gift Grove  
T. Dawson Photo/Graphics  
Eamors Saddlery  
Stephen Evans  
The Flour Garden  
The Garden Emporium  
Sonja Hudson  
Inner Health  
Reach For Health  
Sheila Rowland  
George Stone

Also thank you to Ken Staves and Janet Nash for providing easels.  
Congratulations to the successful bidders.

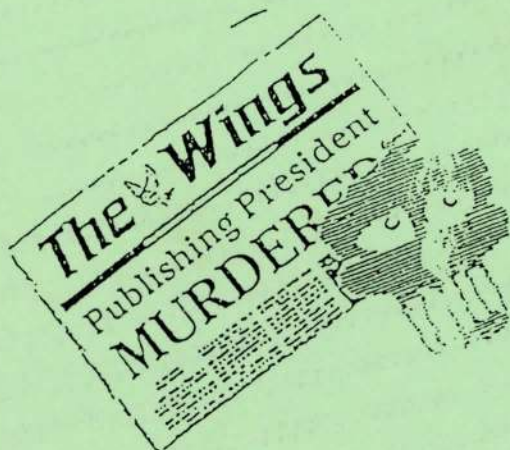




Windmill Theatre Players  
presents

# IT'S MURDER IN THE WINGS

A Mystery Comedy by Pat Cook - Directed by Steve Penman



Produced by special arrangement with The Dramatic Publishing Co.  
Highwood Memorial Centre  
April 14-15-16-17-21-22-23  
1994