

D R A M A

Windmill Theatre Stepping Out

Dramatic comedy in High River March 27 to April 4

By Tamara Neely
STAFF REPORTER

Drawing audiences deeper into what makes people tick is the focus of Windmill Theatre Players' new play.

The comedy, called Stepping Out, features an ensemble cast of 10 characters who get to know each other through taking tap-dancing classes. The characters' personalities, the dynamics between them and what makes them the way they are — both the immediately likable or unlikable — unfolds through nine scenes that represent six months in their lives.

"Some of these people we find we like and some of them we find we don't like — then as they interact with each other we see reasons why they are the way they are and why we shouldn't be quite so hard on them," said Stepping Out director Steve Penman. "We take the time to figure out why they're behaving the way they are... it's like walking a mile in their shoes — or in this case their tap shoes."

Stepping Out, which was written by Richard Harris in 1984, is not a tap dancing show, Penman emphasized. It's a show about people who happen to tap dance.

Alberta High School of Fine Arts graduate Breighanne Brandford had never tap danced before landing a role in the play. She did have

singing, dancing and acting experience, having participated in the Mainstage program during high school, but Stepping Out has expanded her skills.

Brandford said she plans to build up more theatre skills through courses and acting in community theatre before studying education to teach theatre in the future. Being involved with Stepping Out is a step towards her goal.

She is playing a character who is not very good at dancing and struggles with her self-confidence.

"I've never (had an opportunity) to explore these specific weaknesses that my character has," said Brandford. "I just find it fantastic to learn something new."



Okotokians take to the stage in High River for Windmill Theatre Players' rehearsal for Stepping Out. Left to right, Laura Myers, former Alberta High School of Fine Arts teacher, and school graduate Breighanne Brandford rehearse a scene with Nina Cameron on Sunday.

photo by Don Patterson

Windmill, continued from page 35

Another new experience for Brandford is she is sharing the stage with her high school drama teacher. High River resident Laura Myers, who taught the Mainstage program at the Alberta High School of Fine Arts for many years, is putting her director and producer roles aside and acting in the play. The play is also showcasing the talent of Erica Harding, who is the director of the Alberta Dance Academy in Okotoks and also

a graduate of the Alberta High School of Fine Arts.

Windmill Theatre is presenting six performances of Stepping Out at the Highwood Memorial Centre in High River, four of which are a dinner theatre. Dinner theatre nights are Friday, March 27, Saturday, March 28, Thursday, April 2 and Friday, April 3. For the dinner theatre, doors open at 6 p.m., curtain time is 8 p.m. Dinner theatre tickets are \$40 for

adults, \$30 for youth 14 years old and under. Performances of Stepping Out without dinner take place on Sunday, March 29 at 2 p.m. and Saturday, April 4 at 8 p.m. Tickets for the matinee on March 29 are \$12 and for the performance on April 4 tickets are \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors and students. To order tickets contact Celia Penman at 403-652-7913.

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Windmill 'Stepping Out' with comedy

Mar 13 '09
H.R. Times

■ *Curtain rises*

Mar. 27

BY ALYSSA BURNHAM
TIMES REPORTER

The cast and crew of the Windmill Theatre Players' spring production are hard at work with just two weeks to go until opening night.

This year, the community theatre troupe will perform the 1984 Richard Harris play 'Stepping Out,' a comedy that follows a group of want-to-be dancers as they attend weekly beginner dance classes in the basement of a church and prepare for a charity finale performance.

"The audience is looking in on a dance class as they are learning and getting confidence, so we see them, to start with, working through some basic stuff, but we also see the personalities start to emerge and the kind of interaction there are between people," said Windmill Theatre Players director Steve Penman, adding that the end-product is a very amusing, funny story with a "few serious moments" thrown in for good measure.

The person-cast consists of nine women and one lucky man, who range in age from 19 to 50-some years old. The production's choreographer, Alberta Dance Academy owner Erica Harding, makes an appearance in front of the curtain as the group's talented dance instructor.

The remaining cast members have varying degrees of dance

"One of the big challenges with this show is that every one has to tap dance," Penman said. "Some people had experience and some had none, but they've embraced the challenge."

"We've got a bunch of tap-dancing fools now."

And, though the actresses and actor will stand in the spotlight, more than a dozen people are working behind the scenes — working on set design, lighting, sound, costumes and more — to help make 'Stepping Out' the quality community theatre experience that Windmill Theatre Players has become known for.

In order to be prepared for opening night, the cast has been rehearsing three times a week since January, totaling about eight hours of practice every week, on top of the time the actors have spent reciting lines and perfecting dance steps on their own.

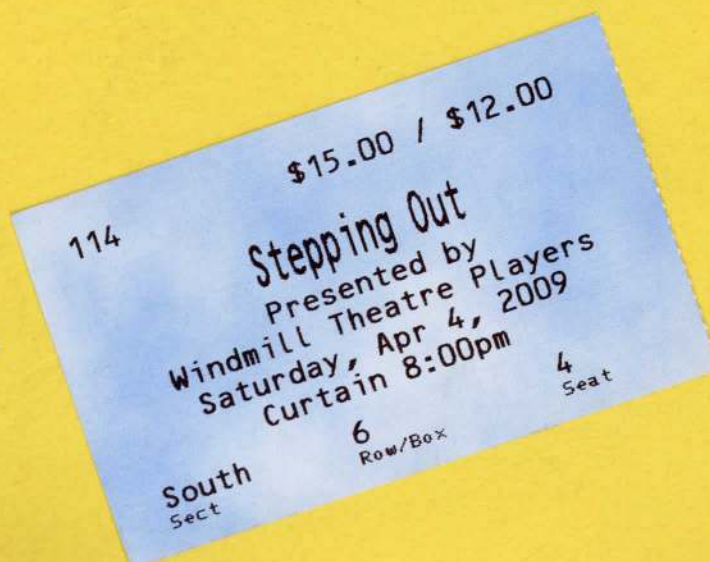
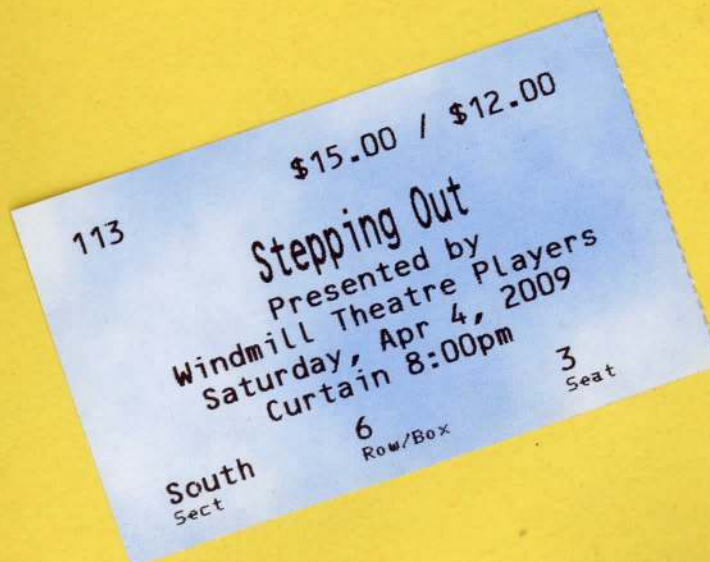
Penman said audiences should expect to "be pulled into the world of these (characters), to be amused by them, and even moved by them at times." But, most importantly, "to have a good time."

All performances are at the Highwood Memorial Centre.

Show times are as follows:
Dinner theatre: Mar. 27, 28, Apr. 2, 3. Doors open at 6 p.m., production at 8 p.m. Tickets \$40/adult, \$30/for child 14 and under.

Regular theatre: Mar. 29 at 2 p.m. \$12, and Apr. 4 at 8 p.m. \$15/adult, \$12/senior or student.

For tickets, call Celia Penman at 403-652-7913.

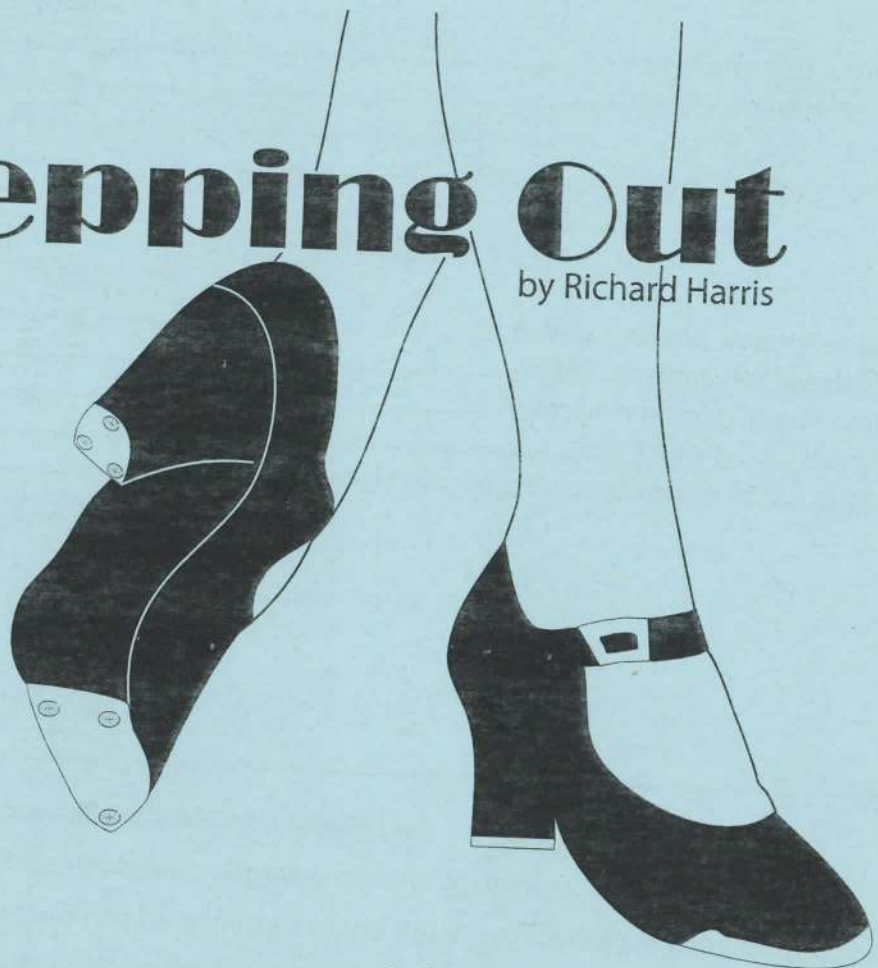




Windmill Theatre Players
presents

Stepping Out

by Richard Harris



Stepping Out is presented through arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

March 27 - April 4, 2009
Highwood Memorial Centre, High River



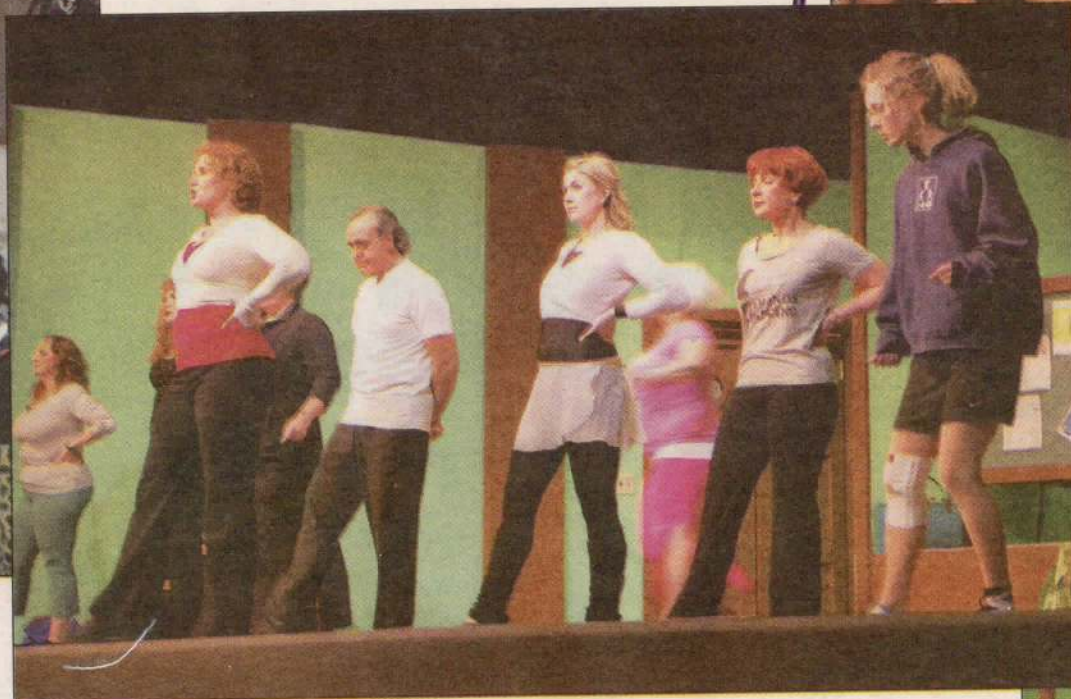
STEPPING OUT — On Sunday night, Windmill Theatre Players rehearsed for their upcoming production.



ALL THAT JAZZ — Windmill Theatre Players show off their skills during rehearsal on Sunday for their upcoming spring performance "Stepping Out." Photos by Eleanor Robertson



Windmill Theatre Players Presents...

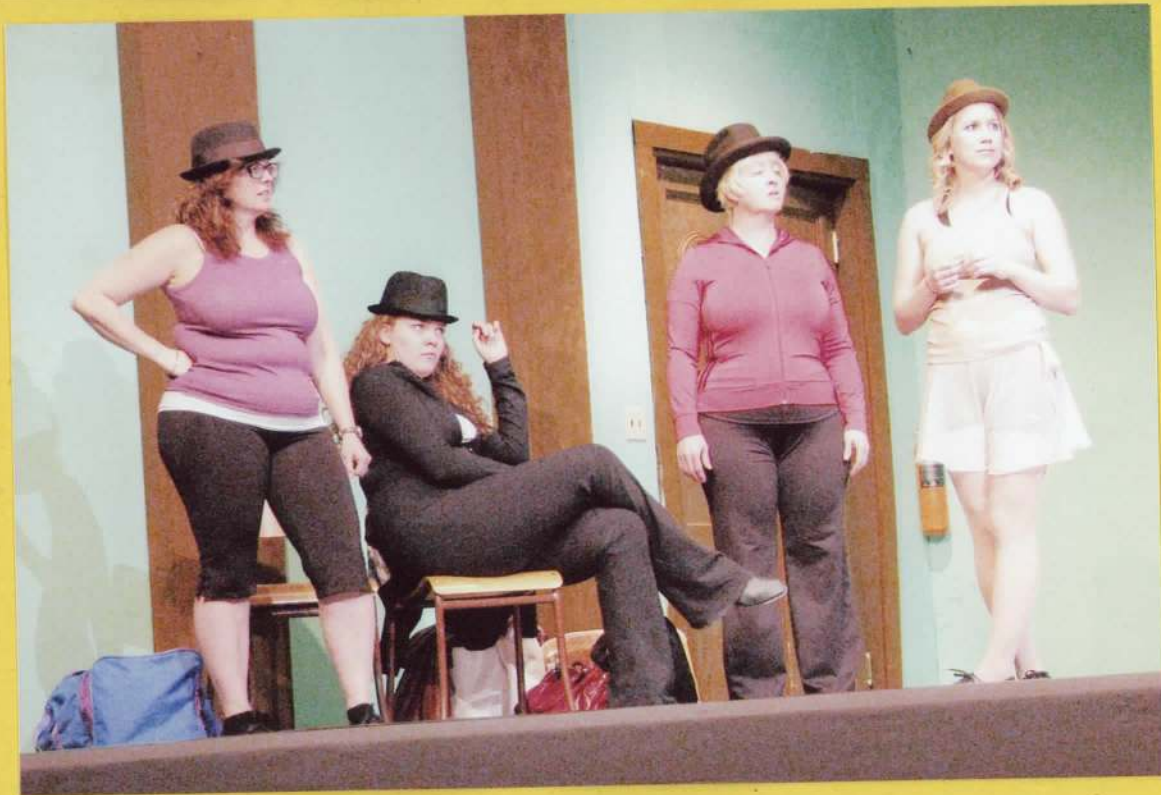


Stepping Out



Photos by Alyssa Burnham

The Windmill Theatre Players cast and crew dazzled the dinner theatre audience from start to finish at the opening night performance of *Stepping Out* on Friday. Directed by Steve Penman, the show follows a group of want-to-be dancers on their comedic struggle through weekly tap lessons. Remaining performances take place April 3, 4 and 5 at the Highwood Memorial Centre.





NEWS

Little Chicago wins!

■ **Museum documentary receives petroleum award**

BY ANGELA HILL
INTERIM EDITOR

A documentary entitled *Living in Little Chicago*, recently received a multi-media award from the Petroleum History Society.

Dara Murphy, assistant director for the Museum of the Highwood, made the film, which allows former Little Chicago residents to tell their tales.

Murphy said the idea formed when the museum was approached to take care of the monument found on the road to Longview. After listening to the tales of days gone by, she said she knew their stories had to be recorded.

She and Irene Kerr, curator, went to the Glenbow Museum in Calgary for archival footage on Little Chicago and convinced museum staff to cut them a deal. If they gave them footage for \$25 they would supply the Glenbow with a copy of the DVD for their archives.

Little Chicago was an oil boomtown during the great depression.

People rushed to the area with hopes and dreams of finding black gold. Sadly, in the late 1940s when Leduc struck oil, residents moved north leaving Little Chicago in the dust.

Their stories are not lost, but are stored on film and on display at the Museum of the Highwood. The documentary is 10 minutes in length and is captivating from beginning to end.

"It's kind of neat," said Murphy. "People sit down and watch it for the whole 10 minutes."

According to Murphy some of the tales told include the dangers involved in working in the oil industry at that time.

"They would live under the rigs and took their heating off the gas line," she said. "When

the oil fires, they used dynamite to put it out."

When interviewing the former residents of Little Chicago, Murphy said they

were all sad that era ended.

Doug Cass, director of library and archives at the Glenbow, enjoyed the DVD so much that he secretly entered it into the Petroleum History Society for an award.

"It's nice that someone else recognized the quality," said John Reid, chairman of the Highwood museum board.

Murphy received her award with her mother by her side on March 25 at the prestigious Petroleum Club in Calgary. Murphy moved to High River in 1995 and graduated from film studies at S.A.I.T.

If you are interested in viewing the film, it is available as a part of the Little Chicago display at the museum and it is also available for purchase.

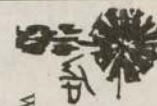
It's nice that someone else recognized the quality

John Reid
Chairman of the museum board



Photo by Angela Hill

The Museum of the Highwood's Assistant Director Dara Murphy recently won a multi-media award for her documentary on Little Chicago.



Windmill Theatre Players presents:

Cookies and Plays

April 17 & 18

7:30 p.m.

Friday:

W.O. Mitchell Theatre in the High River Centennial Library
Bral House by Karen King, directed by Jim Goodwin
Courage Mr. Green by James P. Ferguson, directed by Carol Knox

Saturday:

Ferris Wheel by Mary Miller, directed by Carla Schmidt
Freedom Fighters by George Stone, directed by Nicole Lejeune
Special Guests: Riverwind

Tickets: \$10.00 per night or \$15.00 for both, available at the door

One act plays

Windmill Theatre Players
and the

Alberta Drama Festival Association present:

Footfalls Zone One Act Play Festival

April 24 & 25

Highwood Memorial Centre, High River

Three sessions:

Friday, 7:00 pm

Saturday afternoon, 1:30 pm

Saturday evening, 7:30 pm

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

Details in next week's paper

For more information call Celia at 403-652-7913

787-HRT149602

WTP showcases local playwrights' works

SUBMITTED

Windmill Theatre Players is once again preparing a night of tasty treats and one act plays at the Centennial Library.

This year, they are pleased to present two plays written by local playwrights Karen King and George Stone.

King has had many plays produced by Windmill Theatre Players over the past 23 years and hopes that her comedy, *Brat House*, about a group of 20-somethings

sharing a condo, will be fun for the audience.

"It's the first play I've written specifically for actors in their twenties," said King. "And I especially enjoyed the challenge of getting my 50-year-old brain to think like a young'un."

Stone's play, *Freedom Fighters*, a comedy about a girl who is fed up with the system and decides she is not going to take it anymore, is his first play to be produced

on stage.

It is being directed by first time director Nicole Lejeune, who says, "The experience has been out of this world! I have never worked with such consummate professionals in the field and I am so proud to be a part of this group."

Four plays will be presented over two evenings: Friday, and Saturday.

Friday's lineup will include two plays — *Brat House* and *Courage Mr. Greene*.

Saturday's show will feature the plays *Ferris Wheel* and *Freedom Fighters*, as well as a performance by special guests Riverwind.

Tickets can be purchased at the door, \$10 per session or \$15 for both nights.

Doors open at 7 p.m. with cookies, coffee and tea available and the plays begin at 7:30 p.m.

Call Karen or Laura at 403-258-0877 for more information.



Windmill Theatre Players present

**Cookies and Plays
2009**

Two evenings of One Act Plays
and delicious and delectable
Cookies!

Special performance by
RIVERWIND
Saturday only

Friday, April 17th & Saturday, April 18th
at the High River Centennial Library



Photo by Angela Hill

Actor Alyshia Hobday expresses her anger during the rehearsal for 'Brat House', which is a play about a group of 20-somethings sharing a condo.

Okotoks plays will have an edge at annual festival

April 15 09
Western Wheel

Preview of five one-act plays this weekend

By Tamara Neely
STAFF REPORTER

The annual one-act play festival is around the corner and two Okotoks theatre groups are preparing for the competition with live previews of their performances this weekend.

The Dewdney Players Group Theatre and The Gypsy Cabaret, both of which raked in awards at the one act play festival last year, are presenting an Evening of Five One-Act Plays on Friday and Saturday at the Rotary Performing Arts Centre in Okotoks.

The plays are between 15 and 40 minutes long, which presents several challenges for the actors.

Dewdney Players vice-president Ed Sands explained the one-act plays ap-

peal to actors because they challenge the actors' abilities to communicate emotion and plot in a short time frame. Further adding to the challenge is the one act plays tend to have sparse sets, sometimes as little as a table and chairs, so the work of character development and painting a scene in the audiences' minds falls completely on the actors' shoulders - two actors' shoulders, that is, since typically the one act plays feature just two characters in a story.

"The challenge for actors is to reach down and get emotion, to be able to, for example, cry on stage. You're developing tensions and conflicts in a very short time," said Sands. "One of the plays is 15 minutes, so the setting has to be made, the emotions have to be scaled and some form of resolution has to be made really fast.

"It's challenging. It's finding new aspects of your art - and that is the attraction for the one acts."

Continued on page 26

26 • Wednesday April 15, 2009 • Okotoks Western Wheel



Anne-Marie Cotton shows off one of the many characters she plays in *The Ladykiller*. The *Ladykiller* will be one of five one act plays performed this weekend at the Rotary Performing Arts Centre in Okotoks by The Dewdney Players and Gypsy Cabaret. The plays will then be presented at the one act play festival in High River next weekend.

photo by Candice Ward

One act plays, continued from page 23

The one-act plays also appeal to the actors because the stories being told tend to be edgier and often darker than the main stream plays produced in community theatre, so much so, the performances are for adults only.

The Dewdney Players will be performing *Hour Glass*, *Free Range Chickens* and *The Lady Killer* and Gypsy Cabaret will be performing *For Whom the Southern Belle Tolls* and *DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) Tyrant* this weekend in Okotoks and again the following weekend at the Foothills Regional One-Act Play Festival at the High-

wood Memorial Centre on April 24 and 25 in High River.

The Evening of Five One-Act Plays is an opportunity to see all the plays the Okotoks groups will be presenting in one evening - between 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. and tickets are \$10.

At the festival in High River there will be a total of 10 one-act plays performed, the additional five are productions by Windmill Theatre Players, based in High River, and the Bragg Arts Theatre Group, based in Bragg Creek. Performances will be broken down into three plays on Friday, beginning at 7 p.m., and

seven plays on Saturday, the first set running from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. and the second set running from 7:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 per session or \$20 for a weekend pass.

The Evening of Five One-Act Plays takes place on Friday, April 17 and Saturday, April 18, at the Rotary Performing Arts Centre in Okotoks. The show will begin at 7 p.m. and tickets can be purchased at the door. Note that the performances are restricted to 18 and over due to adult situations and language.

tneely@okotoks.greatwest.ca



Anne-Marie Cotton plays Millie Wilkins in the Dewdney Players production of *The Ladykiller* which will be presented in Okotoks this weekend and at the one-act play festival in High River the following weekend.

photo by Candice Ward



One act plays

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