

NDC performs Dahl comedy

By Alyssa Burnham
TIMES REPORTER

Months of scene construction, blocking and memorization finally paid off this week as the curtain rose for Notre Dame Collegiate's production of *The Twits*.

Veering away for the first time from the musical genre, the students have spent the last three months perfecting a comedy by beloved children's author Roald Dahl. *The Twits* features a miserable, mean-spirited and obnoxious couple, played by Jaden Holle and Cameron MacCormack, who attempt to train a family of wild monkeys, called the Muggle-Wumps, to perform in a circus. While the Twits are distracted by playing a series of never-ending nasty tricks on one another, the Muggle-Wumps, hatch a plan to escape and teach their captors a lesson.

"This is like a bread and butter play," said Dan Guenette, director and drama teacher. "It is really just a good play for everyone in the family."

The production was not without its challenges, however. Bringing to the stage a story from the imagination of the author who penned such larger-than-life stories as *James and the Giant Peach* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* took a series of "small miracles," as Guenette puts it.

"The biggest challenge was just how physical the comedy is and how acrobatic it's supposed to be," he said. For example, "The 'Roly Poly Bird' is supposed to enter on a trapeze.

"What is getting easier is having (drama) supplies starting to accumulate," he said. "It's a growing program. The culture of the school is starting to get more excited about drama, so that makes my job a little easier."

The cast of *The Twits* is made up of ten student actors and actresses with a handful of others working behind the scenes to perfect the lighting, sound and other details.

see NDCCOMEDYPage 7

Western Wheel Scene

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T H E A T R E

Local play a big winner at one-act festival

Love story about rock star Meatloaf wins best actor and play

By Tamara Neely
STAFF REPORTER

When rock star Meatloaf had to choose between his career taking off and the love of a woman who really understood him (Karen Carpenter) the audience at the Foothills One Act Play Festival bought in and felt the sting.

The judge at the competition felt it, too, and awarded first-time playwright Paul Rancourt the top prize of the festival, Best Play, for the fictional story called "Michael and Karen." Male lead Matt Molyneux, who played Meatloaf, was also bestowed with the judge's favour, winning Best Actor.

"I wrote it, directed it, had seen it over and over hundreds of times in the last few months, but when I watched it I still felt like I was being punched in the guts."

-- Paul Rancourt
playwright

It was a coup for Rancourt as most of the plays at such festivals are tried and true, having been written by accomplished and renowned playwrights.

Rancourt started writing "Michael and Karen" last spring and fuelled by his own real and pent up emotions, he completed it later in the year.

When a creative pursuit stirs emotion in the creator, that is a good sign audiences will also be moved.

The story has been plucking at Rancourt right from the writing phase on through to directing the play on stage.

"When I wrote (Meatloaf's monologue) I was sitting in a pub in Brandon, Manitoba and it's the one part of the play I have never revised — the

entire thing came out in one piece," said Rancourt, an Okotoks resident. "As I sat there writing it I was bawling my eyes out. The waitress comes by and she said, 'Are you okay?' I'm like yeah, yeah, oh, yeah. I'm just a writer."

When rehearsals began and Rancourt had an opportunity to see Molyneux and Anne-Marie Cotton (as Karen Carpenter) bring his story to life a wall of emotion again hit him and it simply didn't stop.

He figured if it had that intense of an effect on him there was a good chance the play would move the audience as well.

"You never want to go into a competition thinking you've got it, that it's a cinch, but I knew we'd do well because we had been rehearsing for months and in the last few weeks I was still being moved by it," said Rancourt. "I wrote it, directed it, had seen it over and over hundreds of times in the last few months, but when I watched it I still felt like I was being punched in the guts."

In Rancourt's story, Meatloaf, whose real name is Michael Lee Aday, and Karen Carpenter fall in love. Meatloaf is looking into a future of international success as a rock star, while Carpenter wants to be the focus of her man's world.

The story of love and loss took on a life of its own as the crew prepared to perform the play for an audience.

At one point Rancourt and Molyneux were trying to figure out why Meatloaf was so unhappy and it was Molyneux who came up with the answer. Molyneux told Rancourt that Meatloaf is miserable because he has to choose between the two things he loves most in the world.

"In the end, neither (Meatloaf nor Carpenter) would have been happy," said Rancourt.

As music industry icons, Meatloaf and Karen Carpenter carry instant recognition. That is why Rancourt chose them as the protagonists in the story, rather than random people. Their iconic personalities allowed Rancourt to create a story of strange bedfellows.

Continued on page 38



Okotoks playwright Paul Rancourt, left, is pleased audiences are connecting with his first play. The tender and sad love story explores choices people don't want to make, as Meatloaf, played by Matt Molyneux, middle, and Karen Carpenter, played by Anne-Marie Cotton, right, juggle their love and their careers.

photo by Rick Northrop

One Act Plays, from page 36

"I chose them because they are polar opposites," said Rancourt. "Meatloaf is a huge man, with a big voice, he's motorcycles, rock 'n' roll, bats. Karen Carpenter is slender, petite, and love songs with very gentle melodies. Who could be more opposite? That's why I chose them."

Rancourt's play, which was produced by Gypsy Cabaret founder Derek Losoncy, was up against six other plays at the regional festival.

Kathy Wilson of Cochrane's Vision Theatre Players won Best Director for the comedy "In Juliette's Garden".

Laura Ferguson of the High River Windmill Theatre Players won Best Actress for her role as The Wife in "The Problem."

Okotoks' Dewdney Players Group left empty-handed.

Taking Best Play, "Michael and Karen" will compete against one-act plays from other regional festivals in the provincial round of the One-Act Play Festival, to be held in Whitecourt in May.

Rancourt said he expects to put on a couple more presentations of the one-act play "Michael and Karen" in April, to gear up for the provincial festival, however, neither dates nor a location have yet been chosen.

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Highwood Memorial Centre
High River, Alberta**

**AFTERNOON SESSION
EVENING SESSION**

**1:00pm
7:00pm**

Windmill's one-act plays on tap



Regional One-Act
Festival in High
River March 13

By Alyssa Burnham
TIMES REPORTER

Windmill Theatre Players are the defending regional one-act play winners, and they'll take the stage again this year with *The Problem*, a two-person piece directed by Karen King.

The Problem is the High River troupe's only entry for the Foothills Regional One-Act Play Festival at the Highwood Memorial Centre on March 13.

Six other plays from Okotoks and Cochrane will also participate in the competition, which will be adjudicated by Theatre Calgary's resident Scrooge, Stephen Hair.

"The competition is an educational experience," said Windmill Theatre Players' Celia Penman.

"There will be a public adjudication after each play so that people know what he (Hair) is looking for and what he thought of the play."

At the end of the night, Hair will announce the winning play, best actor/actress and best director. Last year, Windmill Players was recognized in each category for its performance of *Courage Mr. Greene*.



The competition has
become an educational
experience.

— Celia Penman,
Windmill Theatre Players

The winner of this year's Regional festival will go on to compete in Provincials in Whitecourt, Alta. in May.

The Problem stars Laura Ferguson and Dave Burton.

As has become tradition, *The Problem* will be performed for a smaller, local crowd prior to the festival.

On Saturday at the High River Centennial library, the community is invited to watch the approximately 25-minute play, enjoy some homemade cookies and local music.

"This weekend is just a chance to present the play for an audience before going to the competition and being judged," Penman said. "It's going to be fairly small and laid back because it's just one play...and then some musical entertainment to round out the evening."

The curtain rises on *The Problem* at 7:30 p.m., and after a

short intermission — time to grab a refreshment and help yourself to some cookies — the Holy Os will take the stage.

The Holy Os, a group of local women who are involved with the Windmill Theatre Players, will perform a variety of musical selections.

Admission to Saturday's presentation is \$5 at the door.

Tickets to the Foothills Regional One-Act Play Festival at the Highwood Memorial Centre are also available at the door, and can be purchased for one or both sessions. The first session begins at 1 p.m. and the second begins at 7 p.m.

The Problem will be performed in the afternoon session.

Windmill Theatre Players



Opening Night

April 23 - May 1, 2010

Highwood Memorial Centre, High River

24

\$45.00

OPENING NIGHT by Norm Foster
Presented by
Windmill Theatre Players

Saturday, Apr 24, 2010
8:00 PM, Doors at 6:00 PM

Tables
Sect Row/Box Seat

23

\$45.00

OPENING NIGHT by Norm Foster
Presented by
Windmill Theatre Players

Saturday, Apr 24, 2010
8:00 PM, Doors at 6:00 PM

Tables
Sect Row/Box Seat



Opening Night

Windmill Theatre
Players rehearse
for spring
production.

7

Arts & Entertainment

Windmill Theatre Players prepare for *Opening Night*

➤ Norm Foster's characters come to life in this Canadian comedy

By Angela Hill
TIMES EDITOR

Once described as a play that "explodes like a time bomb of hilarity," *Opening Night* is Windmill Theatre Players' latest must see production.

Opening Night begins as Jack and Ruth Tisdale celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary at the theatre. It's a dream come true for Ruth and an imposition for Jack who would rather be watching the World Series. Meanwhile backstage the director, Richard has to deal with the actors, the wannabes, the has-beens and his girlfriend who in the midst of it all wants to talk about their relationship. After the events both on and off the stage, the lives of all involved are irreparably altered.

Opening Night is directed by local thespian Carol Knox. Knox has been a part of Windmill Theatre Players since 1981 and said it's her "distinct pleasure" to bring the High River audience one of her favourite Norm Foster plays.

"I'm a fan of Norm Foster," said Knox. "He's done over 50 plays, and he's able to capture the human condition using Canadian humour."

Foster has been called Canada's answer to Neil Simon with both his rich humour and warm characterizations. His plays include *The Love List*, *The Melville Boys*, *The Foursome*, *Office Hours* and *Self-Help*.

Knox first brought her cast of

eight together for rehearsals on Jan. 13 at the Highwood Memorial Centre. The cast of characters includes a mixture of local and out-of-town actors who are so believable that theatregoers will see bits of themselves reflected on stage.

Included are Steve Penman as the director, the Eagle 100.9FM's Shelley Harder as Libby Husniak and Leah Ritz-Smyth as the director's jealous girlfriend Cilla. *Opening Night* will be Ritz-Smyth's 29th Windmill production.

Along with those familiar names is Calgary teacher Mark Aitcheson who plays Jack Tisdale to a "T." Jack is a stereotype of the hopelessly clued-out husband who views watching TV with a beer as "culture," and his one liners such as, "learn to walk the schnauzer" will be sure to get a smile out of every audience member.

Opening Nights' examination of romance and reconciliation is just pure fun and should not be missed.

Dinner theatre performances run on April 23, 24, 29 and 30 with doors open at 6 p.m. at a fee of \$45 for adults and \$35 for children 14 and under. On April 25, there will be a matinee with doors open at 1:30 p.m. at a cost of \$12 for all ages. In addition, an evening performance will be held on May 1 with doors open at 7:30 p.m. at a fee of \$15 per adult and \$12 for students and seniors.

To purchase tickets, contact Celia Penman at 403-652-7913 or e-mail wtp@shaw.ca. All performances will be held at the Highwood Memorial Centre.



Angela Hill High River Times
Ruth and Jack Tisdale, played by Helen Rogers and Mark Aitcheson are celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary by spending the night at the theatre; however, Jack would rather be at home watching the World Series on TV.



Angela Hill High River Times

Actor Clayton Fry played by Herb Norman Haekel tries to talk some sense into Actress Libby Husniak played by Shelley Harder during the opening night of the play *Whisper on the Wind*. *Whisper on the Wind* is the play within the play *Opening Night* put on by Windmill Theatre Players.

Regional ~ Mar 28, 2010

Windmill Theatre Players began rehearsing for its spring production *Opening Night* in January. *Opening Night* is about an evening at the theatre that goes horribly wrong. Performances will run April 23 to May 1 at the Highwood Memorial Centre in High River. In the play, Actor Clayton Fry, played by Herb Norman Haekel, tries to talk some sense into Actress Libby Husniak, played by Shelley Harder, during the opening night of the play *Whisper on the Wind*. *Whisper on the Wind* is the play within the play *Opening Night*.



PHOTO BY ANGELA HILL, HIGH RIVER TIMES

Windmill Theatre Players
WTP *Opening Night*

Dinner Theatre
Apr. 23, 24, 29 & 30, 2010
Adults: \$45.00
Children 14 and under: \$35.00
Doors open at 6:00pm
Dinner Service 6:30-7:30pm
Curtain 8:00pm

Regular Theatre
Sunday Matinee: Apr. 25, 2010
All tickets: \$12.00
Doors open at 1:30pm, Curtain 2:00pm
Evening Performance: May 1, 2010
Adults \$15.00, Students & Seniors \$12.00
Doors open at 7:30pm, Curtain 8:00pm

All performances at the Highwood Memorial Centre, High River

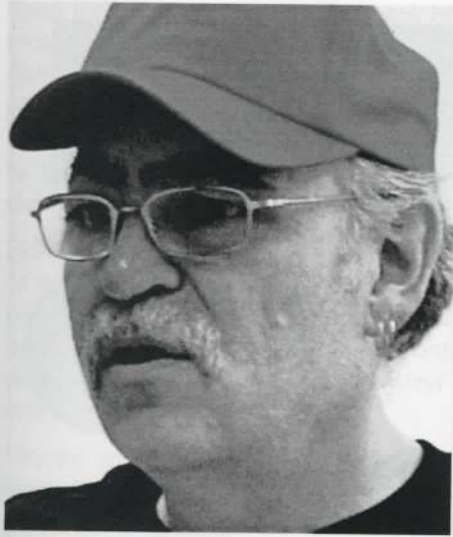
Presented through arrangement with Playwrights Guild of Canada

To Purchase Tickets
(Dinner Theatre & Regular Theatre)
Contact: Celia
Tel: 403-652-7913
Email: wtp@shaw.ca
www.windmilltheatreplayers.com

Alberta Foundation for the Arts 4086-CS9103322

THE REGIONAL MAR. 24/10

Biographies



Clayton Fry *Ol' Daddy*

The CKTNRH is delighted to welcome Clayton Fry back to tread the boards. Mr. Fry was last seen at the CKTNRH when he played *Squiggy* in our original stage adaptation of *Laverne and Shirley*. Other stage credits include *man number 2* in *Guys and Other Guys* (*San Francisco Back End Players*), *the old man* in *Old Women Don't Like Old Men* (*Angry Girl Productions*), *Hershel Cratchit* in the lesser known, *A Hannukah Carol* (*Little Known Play Productions*) and, of course, *Jughead* in *Archie Joins the Army* (*Shady Acres Retirement Home Company Players*), a role he made famous. While offstage, Clayton enjoys drinking tea, walking his schnauzer, collecting cocktail napkins and making prank phone calls and photography.



Libby Husniak *Missy Gal*

Libby Husniak is a recent graduate of the *William Shatner School of Acting* and is thrilled to continue her learning under the care of such a wonderful director. Her recent work has been at the *Starbucks™* on 12th and every weekend at *Tempest in a Teapot Cafe*. Her greatest assets are obvious, but in case you haven't noticed... it's her enthusiasm and charm. While in acting school, she was given the "Hooker" Award for scene work. This award, named after one of Mr. Shatner's most famous roles is given to the student who shows the greatest improvement over the year. A small town girl at heart, Libby knows she can bring heart and soul to the character of *Missy Gal* and show that she's more than a wet t-shirt and tight jeans. Much, much, more.



Richard Hyde-Finch Director

This is the 27th time that Richard Hyde-Finch has worked at the CKTNRH. A much sought after director, Richard H-F has given the theatrical world many wonderful productions under his skillful hand. Among his most memorable shows at CKTNRH are, *Death of a Salesman*, *12 Angry Men*, *Bobby Gould in Hell*, *Oedipus the King* and *Grease*. Of course he doesn't just work at CKTNRH, he spreads his skill to others, most notably when he directed *Hamlet* at the *Charlswood Dinner Theatre*. Richard is unmarried, has no children, and has no intention of settling down anytime soon. He currently resides with his partner in her beautiful home overlooking the river valley with their two dogs, *Felix* and *Oscar* and their five cats, *Mr. Tibbs*, *Marc Antony*, *Claw-opatra*, *Godot* and *Her Majesty Queen Victoria*.

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OPENING NIGHT by Norm Foster

Presented by
Windmill Theatre Players
Saturday, May 1, 2010
8:00 PM

North
Sect

1
Row/Box

2
Seat

10

\$12.00

OPENING NIGHT by Norm Foster

Presented by
Windmill Theatre Players
Saturday, May 1, 2010
8:00 PM

North
Sect

1
Row/Box

1
Seat

8

\$12.00

OPENING NIGHT by Norm Foster

Presented by
Windmill Theatre Players
Saturday, May 1, 2010
8:00 PM

North
Sect

1
Row/Box

3
Seat