

## Play Selection Committee Report for 2004-2005 AGM

This year's Committee was made up of five members of RLT: Bonnie Senger, Dan Carr, Tom Stickland, Andrea McNeill and myself. Thank you to all of them for working so hard on developing such a wonderful season! It was definitely tough going at times as attaching directors to plays is sometimes a challenging task and we definitely had an interesting time of it this year! However, we are delighted with the season we are offering our members. Here is our saga...

The committee spent a great deal of time reading plays. In all, about 15 plays were read after an initial list was scrutinized and narrowed down. From these plays the following list was originally decided upon:

### Play #1

**Who Has Seen the Wind** by W.O. Mitchell, adapted by Lee MacDougall – would be a possible nice connection to the province's centennial. There may be grants available for this as a project celebrating the centennial

### Play #2

**Dad's Christmas Miracle** by Pat Cook – includes Christmas in the title and may be a good draw. Entertaining piece that should have nice appeal to a variety of ages.

### Play #3

**The Cemetery Club** by Ivan Menchal– a very funny play with great roles for gals.

### Play #4

**Rope** by Patrick Hamilton – an intriguing mystery with some fabulous roles. Somewhat edgy and definitely engrossing. Apparently based on an actual murder that took place in 1924 by Leopold and Loeb.

### Play #5

**Table Manners** Alan Ayckbourn– A very funny look at bad relationships. Would make an excellent addition to the season no matter the placement

This left us with a tally of: 1 “nostalgia” play, 3 comedies and one mystery. Three and maybe four involve players under 30 years of age, one and possibly two, involves children.

Unfortunately, we were denied the rights to produce *Who Has Seen the Wind*, so the committee suggested The Shipbuilder by Ken Mitchell. We felt it is very important to have a Saskatchewan play in the season to reflect the centenary and think opening with such a play will be great for promotion. However, attaching a director was a challenge. After offering the piece to three directors, the Committee felt we felt were out of options for directors, especially given the fact we were already into April. In light of this situation the executive was asked to appoint a director for the play. I was asked to fill the role and accepted. The executive's vote was unanimous in favour.

Also, we approached three directors for *Dad's Christmas Miracle*, all of whom turned us down. We decided to consider another play and after discussion with Ken Spencer, realized that a play version of *A Christmas Story* was in print! A copy was ordered, read by the majority of the committee and was agreed upon. We offered the play to Jean Taylor, who readily accepted. Yippee! The Play Selection Committees job was done! Here is the final list of plays for the 2005 – 2006 season:

**The Shipbuilder**, by Ken Mitchell,  
Director: Nora Berg

Cast: 7 men and 2 women plus the Greek Chorus and one percussionist

The play is a drama about a Finnish immigrant to the prairies who dreams of building a ship in which to sail the Saskatchewan River to Hudson's Bay, then homeward to Finland. The play is rich in Saskatchewan themes as it takes place during the dirty thirties on the prairie. It has several light hearted moments and is quite fantastic in staging opportunities as a percussionist is present during the entire play and punctuates the drama with a variety of rhythms and intensities while a Greek Chorus is representative of the town and the times. Not to mention the ship that is seen in varying stages of construction!

**A Christmas Story**, adapted from the works of Jean Shepherd by Philip Grecian  
Director: Jean Taylor

Cast: 7 men and 4 women (several of who are children between 8 and 12 years of age)

This play is the theatrical version of the classic Christmas movie of the same name. It centers around the exploits of the young Ralphie, who wants a Red Ryder, double-action, bb gun for Christmas and his many schemes to make his dream come true. The play version is very similar to the movie but on stage we get to meet the adult Ralph who moves about the stage narrating the various scenes as they are played out. It is a funny, heartwarming play, which we believe will be very popular with the crowds due to its popularity as a movie. Those who aren't familiar with the movie will still enjoy this family appropriate play.

**The Cemetery Club** by Ivan Menchell  
Director: Warren James (Nora has agreed to mentor Warren as Artistic consultant)

Cast: 3 women and 1 man

This play is a very funny, yet at times poignant story of three widows and the often outrageously humorous lives they lead which beautifully balances out their various stages of mourning for their late husbands. A richly intelligent while extremely entertaining play that will appeal to all ages, especially those audience member over 40. Exactly what the majority of our audience is made up of! Some excellent roles for ladies "of a certain age" which we also seem to have a good number of!

**Rope** by Patrick Hamilton  
Director: Ed Willett (Equity member)

Cast: 7 men and 2 women

At the top of the play the stage is dark but we see light coming from the outside lobby and the voices of three men cheerfully having a good time - until we hear that one of these men is being murdered by the other two! Enter Wyndam Brandon and Charles Granillo, dragging the body of their friend, whom they have killed "just because they could". They stuff the body in a chest and wait for their party guests to arrive. This after all is a social event! This play is a psychological thriller and extremely well written! It was made into a movie by Alfred Hitchcock which he filmed in one take. A daring technique never before attempted for the movies. It starred Jimmy Stewart.

**Table Manners** by Alan Ayckbourn

Director: Tony Cuyllé (Nora has agreed to mentor Tony as Artistic Consultant)

Cast: 3 men and 3 women

An outrageously funny British play centering on the exploits of the rather useless Norman whose only claim to fame is adoration of women. The action evolves during a weekend getaway by Norman and his extended family and the many snits, taunting and outright buffoonery that ensues. A surefire crowd pleaser!

That gives our season: 1 drama, three comedies and one mystery/thriller

My thanks to this dedicated group of individuals on the PSC for their efforts and especially to Bonnie who helped me with the task given my novice status in regards to this committee and it's process.

Respectfully submitted by Committee Chair, Nora Berg for the Play Selection Committee

Suggestion: I'm not at all sure that this system of selecting plays is a good one. It was extremely frustrating on several levels with the major one being getting directors to accept the suggested plays. I don't know the solution to this. Going back to the "old" system of having directors submit the plays they want to direct is not necessarily a good one either as it takes way too long for them to be submitted in many cases and far too many plays for the committee to read in a reasonable amount of time. We also run the risk of having a poorly balanced season. I suggest the new executive brainstorm to see if a better system can be developed.