



**Regina  
Little Theatre**

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*Celebrating 80 years of exciting live theatre!*

For immediate release: October 2005

## **RLT opens season with Saskatchewan play**

Celebrate the Centennial with an evening of homegrown theatre!

Regina Little Theatre is pleased to present the first play of its 80<sup>th</sup> season, *The Shipbuilder*.

Written by Saskatchewan playwright Ken Mitchell, the play is based on the life of Tomi Jannus Alankola (known as Tom Sukanen), a homesteader near Birsay, SK.

The play takes place in the 1930s on the dusty prairies. Jaanus (Sukanen) has walked over 600 miles from Minnesota to set up a homestead near his brother, Jukka. No longer in contact with his wife and children, Jaanus becomes obsessed with building a ship that will take him to Finland, his homeland. This obsession leads to discord and conflict with the nearby townspeople, who eventually ostracize Jaanus.

The play focuses on the human nature of early settlers and how they struggled to survive during the Depression. According to play director Nora Berg, it is this struggle, combined with a natural apprehension of the unknown that causes the townspeople to fear Jaanus, an ingenious but misunderstood man.

"Oddly enough, many of the settlers who immigrated to Canada felt a deep-seated prejudice to those who came after them, in particular those who were not of the same nationality," said Berg. "The 'DPs,' or dispossessed persons, were often ostracized and feared, as they were seen as the poor, uneducated 'rabble' of Europe."

A veteran of RLT, both onstage and off, Berg hopes to incorporate elements of Finnish culture into the staging of the play. "Not only is this play an opportunity for audiences to learn more about the nature and social mores of early Saskatchewan, it also allows them to see aspects of Finnish culture," Berg said.

Cast of *The Shipbuilder* includes Scott McGillivray as Jaanus, Tony Cuyllie as Jukka, Dan Carr as Bender and Jolaine Huber as Anna-Marie.

*The Shipbuilder* runs October 12 to 15 at the Regina Performing Arts Centre, 1077 Angus Street. For ticket information, call the box office at 779-2277.

More information:  
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[www.reginalittletheatre.com](http://www.reginalittletheatre.com)