

# TA's The Heart As It Lived: A Review

**By Scott Johnston**

Life was not easy in Saskatchewan during the Depression in the 1930s, as we discover in Theatre Aurora's current production of *The Heart As It Lived*.

The story unfolds through the perspective of Annie, an aging spinster living alone in the 1990s. Her quiet life is interrupted by the unexpected, and unwanted, arrival of hustler Zak, who turns out to be the teenaged grandson of Annie's estranged sister.

Through the split stage, the story shifts between Annie and Zak's interactions in her home in the present, and Annie's recollections of the turbulent times for her family in the 30s.

The story by Canadian playwright Mansel Robinson centres on events surrounding the Regina Riots of 1935 and the consequences of decisions that Annie made at that time.

Although she spends most of the play seated, Zara Stuart-Jones is a commanding presence as Annie. As her teenage foil, Thomas Cooper is excellent as unscrupulous Zak. The interactions between these two provide the most interesting interchanges of the play.

These are the only two characters based in the present. The remaining members of the cast are either based in, or ghosts of, the 1930s.

These include Katie Decorte as young Annie and Samantha Ballard as sister Flo. Their storyline helps set the stage for Annie's current situation.

The two very different men in their younger lives are played by Yerark Perret as Zakarchuk and Aaron Verwey as Mitchell. Zakarchuk is Flo's red-headed immigrant beau, while Mitchell is a young RCMP officer.

The simple set effectively allows for easy transitions as we segue from 1990 to 1930 and back again throughout the play.

This is a play with a strong message, and may leave you thinking about some of the decisions you've made in your own life.

Evening performances of *The Heart As It Lived* continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, December 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 12, with a matinee on December 6. Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.