

MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE, 174 MARKET AVENUE, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

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The Manitoba Theatre Centre was nominated to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) in 2006 and designated a National Historic Site of Canada in 2009. Of the current 953 National Historic Sites of Canada, the Manitoba Theatre Centre is one of only two sites designated for its Brutalist architecture. Built at a time when exposed concrete and interior-oriented buildings were fashionable, its architectural values, from today's standpoint, were a challenge to convey as heritage. Nevertheless, the site was commemorated for its Brutalist design and the important interrelationship between the form and function of the theatre. The architect of the building was Michael Kirby, who was working under principal designer Allan Waisman, partner in the firm of Waisman Ross Blankstein Coop Gillmor Hanna. Eddie Gilbert, the artistic director of the Manitoba Theatre Centre at the time, was heavily involved in the design process.¹

The Manitoba Theatre Centre is of national significance because:

- it is an excellent expression of small-scale Brutalist architecture in Canada in its poured concrete forms, solid massing, interior layout, and exposed design;
- it is an exceptional theatre building because it was designed to create an intimate atmosphere in the auditorium and foyer for its patrons, and encourage, through its architecture, a stronger relationship between audience and actor by allowing theatre-goers to observe, behind the curtain,



FIG. 1. MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA; BUILT 1969-1970; ROBERT KIRBY WITH AL WAISMAN OF WAISMAN ROSS BLANKSTEIN COOP GILLMOR HANNA, LATER KNOWN AS NUMBER TEN ARCHITECTURAL GROUP, ARCHITECTS. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA.

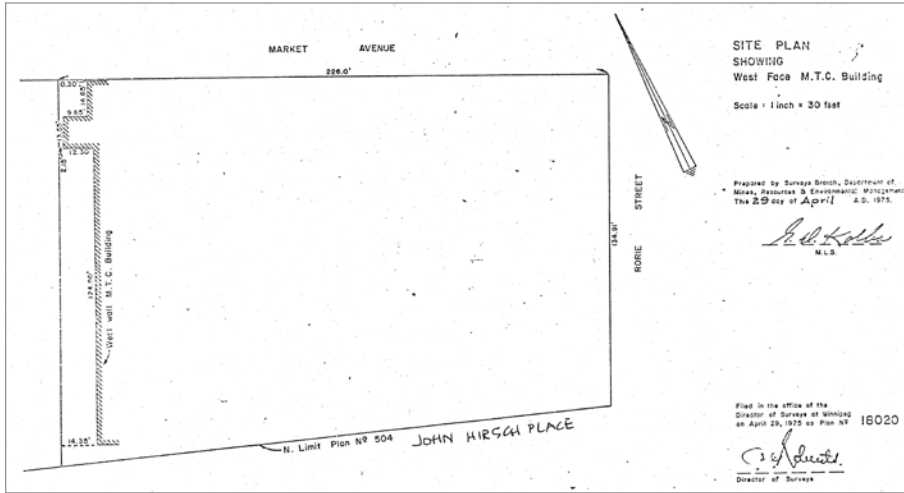


FIG. 2. LEGAL LOT PLAN OF THE MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE. | CITY OF WINNIPEG, 1975.



FIG. 6. STAFF ENTRANCE TO THE THEATRE (NORTH FAÇADE). | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 3. THE PARKING LOT BETWEEN THE MTC AND THE PANTAGES THEATRE. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 4. PANTAGES THEATRE, BUILT 1913-1914. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 10. EAST SIDE OF THE BUILDING DURING CONSTRUCTION. | MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE, 1970.



FIG. 5. VIEW OF MARKET AVENUE (NORTH FAÇADE). | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 7. THE MAIN ENTRANCE AND MARQUEE (NORTH FAÇADE). | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 8. THE MAIN ENTRANCE AND MARQUEE (NORTH FAÇADE). | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 9. THE NORTH AND EAST FAÇADES. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 11. REINFORCED CONCRETE FORMWORK ON THE EAST SIDE. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 12. FORMWORK DETAILING. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 13. FORMWORK DETAILING. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 14. SOUTHEAST EXIT WITH PLAQUE TO JOHN HIRSCH MOUNTED ON THE WALL. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 15. WEST FAÇADE AND THE PARKING LOT WHERE THE BALLET SCHOOL WAS INTENDED TO BE BUILT. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.

stage activity and sense the players' anticipation of the performance.

- it is associated with the Manitoba Theatre Centre group, which was judged to be a model regional theatre by the Canada Council for the Arts, and played an important role in popularizing the regional theatre movement in Canada.

DESCRIPTION

Setting and Site Resources

The Manitoba Theatre Centre building (MTC) is located in downtown Winnipeg, off of Main Street, within the Exchange District National Historic Site of Canada. It was built in 1969-1970 for the MTC regional theatre group, which was established in 1958 (fig. 1). The MTC group has occupied the building since it officially opened on 2 November 1970. The building is an exposed reinforced concrete Brutalist structure, which was built as part of an urban renewal project to create a

complex of modern public buildings.² It was the last building to be erected within this complex (fig. 2).

The MTC is on a property bound by Market Avenue, Rorie Street, a parking lot, and John Hirsh Place. A parking lot adjacent to the building was originally intended to be for a school for the Winnipeg Ballet (fig. 3). Farther west is the similarly scaled Pantages Playhouse Theatre, built in 1913-1914 (fig. 4). Across from the building's rear laneway are former warehouse and factory buildings from the early 20th century. These buildings have been converted into condominiums and ground-floor retail shops. The MTC is dwarfed in scale by the large concert hall across Market Avenue. Built a few years earlier, this building is a monumental modern concert hall, establishing the cultural centre of the urban renewal scheme. The MTC, in contrast, is smaller, less imposing, and yet distinctive in its design from the surrounding Edwardian commercial and warehouse buildings of the Exchange District.

Exterior

As a Brutalist building, the MTC's sculptural form of exposed concrete, undressed formwork and substantial massing are the key features of the style. The east and north façades of the building are designed to allow in natural light and are cast in sculptural concrete forms (figs. 5-6). On the north side, facing Market Avenue, the building's ground storey is punctuated by four semi-circular concrete projections, which originally housed coat racks—one has been converted into office space and another into a wet bar. A neon sculpture resembling a flag is mounted on the concrete face of the fly tower. A large marquee, not original to the building, is mounted above the entrance at the building's northeast corner (figs. 7-8). Double-height angled windows on the east side of the building allow light into the public foyer (figs. 9-10). The semi-circular projection of the box office and stairwell frames the east side windows. The unadorned south side of the building serves as the loading area (figs. 11-15).

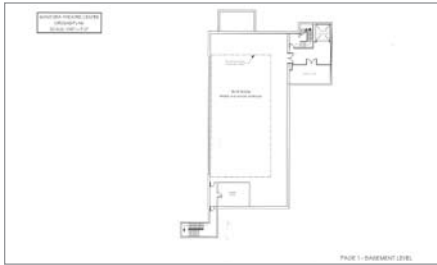


FIG. 16. BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.

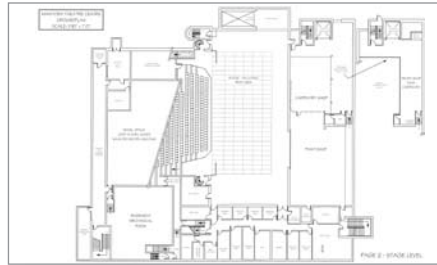


FIG. 17. STAGE FLOOR PLAN, BELOW GRADE. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.

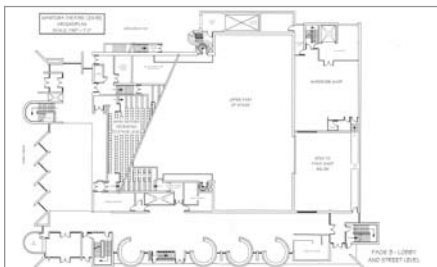


FIG. 18. GROUND FLOOR PLAN. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.

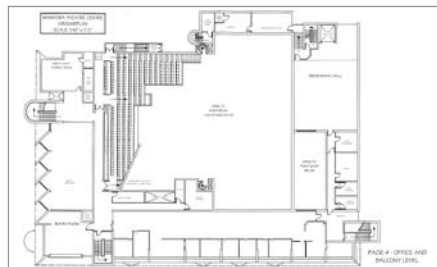


FIG. 19. PLAN OF OFFICE AND BALCONY LEVEL (THE FIRST FLOOR). | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 20. GALLERY LEVEL. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 21. THE FLAG PATTERN, WHICH REPLICATES THE EXTERIOR NEON SCULPTURE, IN THE FOYER. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.

Interior

Backstage, public lobbies and offices surround the 785-seat auditorium (figs. 16-20). Administrative offices, library and meeting rooms are on the first floor. These are grouped on two sides of the building and unified by a continuous skylight around the auditorium (figs. 21-23). Floor openings between ground and first storey allow for spaciousness in the public areas (fig. 24). To create a large theatre while retaining a special relationship between the audience and the actors, the architects set the stage two storeys below grade, allowing for a lower fly tower. They also chose an

asymmetrical continental (no centre aisle) seating arrangement on two levels. The intimate relationship between the audience and the actors is reinforced by the flexible stage: it projects and recesses through the frame of the proscenium arch. The scenery preparation room behind the stage is open to viewing by theatregoers through a window, allowing a glimpse behind the stage. Workshops, storage, green room, wardrobe, rehearsal space and make-up are located on the west side behind the stage, and on the north side below the ground floor (fig. 25). The administrative offices, which run along the north side first floor, were once open to the foyer

by a light well. While consistent with the building's original overall concept or parti, the office noise was too distracting to both the public and administrators, and it was closed off in the 1990s. The use of exposed concrete, solid massing, and a uniformity of texture, colour, and form, create a well-designed intimate theatre for audiences, actors and staff.

JUSTIFICATION

Applicable HSMBC Criteria/ Guidelines

The building is being submitted under general criterion 1a), as a place that potentially illustrates an exceptional creative achievement in concept and design, technology and/or planning, or a significant stage in the development of Canada; and 1b), as a place that potentially illustrates or symbolizes in whole or in part a cultural tradition, a way of life, or ideas important in the development of Canada.

Specific guideline 3.14, Built Heritage of the Modern Era, is applicable to the MTC because of its date of construction and architectural values. The guideline states that a building that was created during the modern era can be considered of national significance if it is in a condition that respects the integrity of its original design, materials, workmanship, function and/or setting insofar as each of these was an important part of its overall intentions and its present character; and

1) It is an outstanding illustration of at least one of the three following cultural phenomena and at least a representative if less than an outstanding illustration of the other two cultural phenomena of its time:

- changing social, political and/or economic conditions;

- rapid technological advances;
- new expressions of form and/or responses to functional demands; or,

2) It represents a precedent that had a significant impact on subsequent buildings, ensembles, or sites.

Historic Values of the Place

The opening of the Manitoba Theatre Centre building in November 1970 culminated a long tradition of theatre building in Winnipeg. As part of a cultural renaissance of the city's arts facilities in the 1960s, the MTC building would be the home of Canada's first professional regional theatre group. At a time when "Centennialism" was sweeping the country, and an indigenous English-Canadian performing arts scene was emerging, large modern theatres and concert halls were opening up across the country. Built by one of Winnipeg's leading architectural firms, the MTC was designed not as a monumental theatre, but as an intimate space that permitted a close relationship between audience and actor.

Very different from a traditional theatre, the MTC building's final design drew from the independent origins of the MTC theatre group. There are two aspects of the building that are important values of the place. First, as architecture, the theatre is a Brutalist building, reflecting features of an architectural movement that had originated in early post-Second World War England but had evolved as the aesthetics of the style spread to Canada in the early 1960s. Second, as the home of a theatre group, the MTC building represented—and was the model for—the regional theatre movement in Canada. Begun in 1958 with the merger of the Winnipeg Little Theatre, run by Tom Hendry, and the semi-professional Theatre 77, run by John Hirsch, the Manitoba Theatre Centre was the country's first large



FIG. 22. VIEW OF THE PUBLIC FOYER SHOWING THE ANGLED WINDOWS. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 24. A VIEW OF THE FOYER FROM THE FIRST FLOOR. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.

regional theatre group with educational programming and shows touring through rural Manitoba. The newly founded Canada Council funded the theatre and promoted it as the exemplary model of how to create a successful regional theatre. These two aspects, style and associations, reflect the building's historic value.

The Manitoba Theatre Centre Building: A Work of Brutalist Architecture

Premier Duff Roblin's vision of a revitalized Winnipeg included support for the



FIG. 23. CONCRETE FORMWORK, MOUNTED WITH PHOTOS OF MTC'S PAST PRODUCTIONS. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 25. THE ACTORS' REHEARSAL SPACE WITH THE LIGHTWELL ABOVE AND WINDOWS ACROSS TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.

creation of a new arts complex on Main Street. Because of the success of John Hirsch and Tom Hendry's theatre group, which was in search of a new home after the Dominion Theatre at the corner of Portage and Main was demolished, it was time for the regional theatre to have its own modern facility. The site given for the new project on Market Avenue was small and tight for an 800-seat theatre. After several meetings between the architects and the Manitoba Centennial Committee in the premier's office, the cost—a small budget of \$2 million—and site were finalized.³ It

was a very difficult site, with many doubts on the part of the architects on how to fit a theatre onto the property. In the end, the architects created a small and intimate theatre, which pleased both the owners and the public.⁴

What Was Brutalism?

In the architectural literature of the postwar period the term “Brutalism” was very rarely used. It was first defined as a satirical term amongst young British architects in 1950s London, who were drawing part of their inspiration for a new aesthetic from French art of the late 1940s. Alison and Peter Smithson, when describing their “bare concrete, brickwork and wood” Soho neighbourhood house, originally called it “New Brutalism.” Their intention for the house was to have “the structure exposed entirely, without internal finishes.”⁵ The term then spread into mainstream society to describe concrete buildings of postwar reconstruction in Great Britain. New Brutalist architecture’s origins can be found among London’s young avant-garde architects and artists. They were interested in presenting an anti-International style architecture. Inspired by the postwar reinforced concrete architecture of Le Corbusier, this group affected a generation of postwar modernist architects throughout the world. A few Canadian architects working in London in the early 1950s brought back with them the New Brutalist style, yet it was not until the early 1960s that New Brutalism had morphed into an accepted style and was recognized as the best answer to major infrastructure projects. By the mid 1970s, however, architectural theory had shifted architecture in a new direction; Brutalism was seen as banal, and gradually disappeared from the built environment.

Exposing building materials, form, function and internal structure were key elements of Brutalism. *Art Brut*, the French postwar

art movement led by Jean Dubuffet, employed children’s art and art of the disenfranchised as the inspiration of a primal art, rooted in a postwar traumatized world and a willingness to expose the “under-side” of everyday life.⁶ In architecture, it was not the clean façades of the prewar Modern Movement or the rectilinear steel grid that inspired the New Brutalists; it was Le Corbusier. His reinforced concrete buildings exploited the plasticity of concrete, unlike his prewar buildings.⁷ While French art and architecture inspired the young English architects to work in concrete, Louis Kahn in the United States had a deep impact on Brutalism because of his concentration on the spatial experiences of users through simple geometric concrete form. Dutch structuralists of the 1950s and 1960s were also major proponents of an architecture designed around experience, psychology of users (Gestalt psychology) and topology, or interrelationships of shapes and forms.

New Brutalists also sought inspiration from marginalized society, including the lower classes, to directly counteract the romanticism and historicism that was creeping back into postwar architecture, while also trying to come to terms with mass production and popular culture in Western society. Building in concrete was a simple means to an end. This end was that “human associations should determine the formal elements”—not the other way around.⁸ While “New Brutalism” was partly an exclusive joke to the young British avant-garde architects, Brutalism quickly became a style and spread to many countries, including Canada.

Canadian modern architects were less enthusiastic and relatively ignorant of the term “New Brutalist” until the early 1960s. A few notable exceptions were the Canadian architects who had worked in 1950s London and had returned, or architects interested in the aesthetic who had

immigrated to Canada. By the early 1960s, “New Brutalism” had become an established architectural aesthetic. The “new” was dropped and the aesthetic was codified by stylistic, functional and material elements. By the time the MTC building was constructed, Brutalist architecture buildings had been built across Canada in a wide variety of forms, especially in public buildings and on university campuses.

Brutalist buildings in Canada can be divided into large-scale monumental buildings, serving many functions with a complex internal logic, and smaller scale buildings, where formwork and details are of greater interest. The former type includes many educational buildings, housing complexes, monumental multi-purpose civic and cultural buildings, and large urban buildings integrated into the existing urban fabric. These buildings feature massive sculptural forms, shapes responding to the interior circulation patterns, unadorned concrete shells with textured formwork, exposure of the internal structure, and an interior layout that is informal and more responsive to the user’s experience.

Brutalism as a style, in the Canadian context, typically features these elements:

- sculptural form,
- overlaid topology of shapes, which follows the circulation pattern,
- exposed reinforced concrete (though sometimes built of steel or brick),
- internal structure and mechanisms of the building revealed,
- overall informality and asymmetry to the building,
- response to the reality of the user’s experience.

The earliest Brutalist buildings in Canada were constructed in the early 1960s. John Andrews, an Australian architect who studied at Harvard, designed Scarborough College for the University of Toronto in 1962-1963. While the building has been altered over the decades, it contained the elements of the style on a monumental scale. Many other monumental Brutalist buildings soon followed Scarborough College. The master plan for Simon Fraser University by Arthur Erickson and Geoffrey Massey; Ray Moriyama and Ted Teshima's Ontario Science Centre; Place Bonaventure in downtown Montréal, designed in 1964-1967 by Ray Affleck, Eva Vecsei and Daniel Lazosky at ARCOP; and the Confederation Centre for the Arts in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, designed by Fred Lebensold (fig. 26), are several of the most notable designs of the early 1960s. By the late 1960s, Brutalism was entrenched and was especially favoured by clients interested in constructing buildings rapidly using inexpensive materials.

By the late 1960s, a small number of smaller-scale, more delicate Brutalist buildings, featuring all the elements of the style, were being built in the country. The MTC building possesses the elements cited above, but on an intimate scale. Its semi-circular forms and large angled windows are sculpted out of the flat façades. The cylinder and the rectangular prism of the building are evident in the exterior façades. Well-delineated vertical and horizontal impressions on the exposed concrete are seen throughout the building. The structural form of the building is readable inside and outside. The corner entrance (instead of a grand central entrance), the alcoves of the coat racks and the first-storey open area of the foyer reflect the internal overlay of spaces, respond to the user's needs and create interior spaces suited to each individual.



FIG. 26. CONFEDERATION CENTRE FOR THE ARTS, CHARLOTTETOWN; BUILT 1963-1964; ARCOP, AND FRED LEBENSOLD, PROJECT ARCHITECT. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2005.

Manitoba Theatre Centre's Intimate Brutalist Architecture

At a time when Brutalist architecture was being well received publicly as modern design, the MTC building introduced a new concept of intimate Brutalist architecture. Rather than a formal event space, the architects and theatre director worked together to create a space that bridged the separation between profession and the audience. This allowed for the audience to observe and understand the development of a production. This integration of spectator and performer, in a Brutalist building, was a new form of expression and response to theatre design, and very different from larger contemporary concert halls and theatres. Brutalist ideas created a balance and connection between personal/intimate space and public/open event space.

The preliminary drawings for the building were different from the final ones (figs. 27-29). Initially an expressive form that clearly articulated the function of each space, the architects went back to the drawing board and devised a much less expressive building, opting for solidity, substance and subtle workmanship to achieve the intimacy the theatre sought.⁹ Al Waisman, who led the project team, worked with the clients from 1966 until

the final drawings were approved in 1969. While he was leading the project, it was Robert Kirby (then known as Michael Kirby), recently returned from MIT, who worked with Eddie Gilbert, the artistic director, to finish the details of the project.¹⁰ This fruitful relationship produced a small-scale, intimate Brutalist design.¹¹

As opposed to large-scale Brutalist buildings, whose designers were concerned with the movement of people through inner "streets" of the building, small-scale Brutalist building architects were intent on creating intimate and informal interiors. The MTC building was well received when it opened. It featured sculptural massing, roughed-in ply formwork, and a functional plan that responded to the needs of the audience by creating intimate spaces off to the side of the theatre and on the balcony level in the foyer. The architects paid attention to diffused natural lighting in the building by incorporating skylights and large angled east-side windows. And, most importantly, the architects visually bridged the audience and performer outside of the auditorium through the windows and open levels.

This idea of intimacy and connection between audience and actors was present

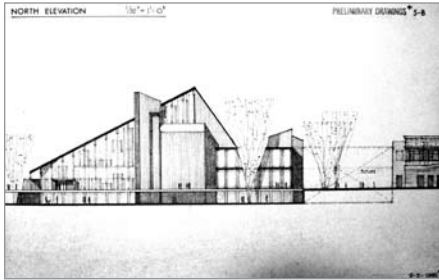


FIG. 27. PRELIMINARY ELEVATION DRAWING DESIGNED BY AL WAISMAN. | MANITOBA ARCHIVES, P4480.

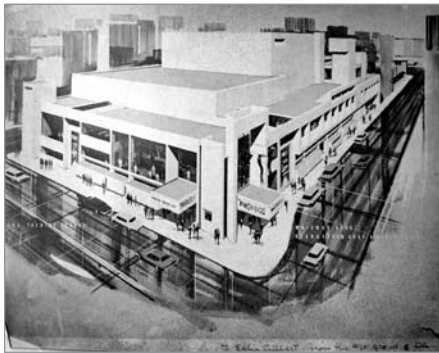


FIG. 28. PERSPECTIVE SKETCH OF THE FINAL DESIGN (THE BUILDING IS NOT TO SCALE). | MANITOBA ARCHIVES, P4480.



FIG. 29. PERSPECTIVE SKETCH OF THE FINAL DESIGN. | MANITOBA ARCHIVES, P4480.

from the beginning of the design process. John Hirsch's thoughts in 1965 on what a good theatre should be like foreshadowed the final design for the MTC building:

Usually communities have not consulted with artists, directors, designers, who are practical people of the theatre. Many communities go ahead and build theatres which are impractical and not quite suitable as they could be if practical theatre people were consulted. But there are, on the other hand,

quite a few buildings going up, and the one in Ottawa is a case in point, as well as the one that is going to be built in Toronto, which are interesting, functional schemes. The relationship between the audience and the players is intimate, the very shape of the playing area is flexible.¹²

When Eddie Gilbert was informed in 1968 that his theatre, the old MTC building at Portage and Main, was slated for demolition, the MTC's board and the provincial government were already planning for a new building. To many, the loss of the theatre might mean the demise of the MTC group.¹³ The new building was to be imbued with the qualities and atmosphere of the old theatre. That is, while the old theatre was cramped and too small, Gilbert brought to the new design the experiences of the old theatre. According to set and costume designer Peter Wingate,

The old theatre was so cramped that you knew what everyone was doing, like a large family. Eddie tried to recreate this in the new building. The new house has a feeling of a Georgian house, brass balcony and all. It is conducive to doing plays. The old theatre was always full late into the night, people with nothing else to do, going back to be with other people with similar attitudes, tastes and interests. You lose something as theatre becomes more of a business, but theatre costs money. People in it can't always be counted on to bring love and devotion without pay.¹⁴

The concept for the new theatre was well suited for the Brutalist aesthetic. Gilbert aspired to Hirsch's hope in the building:

We are not building a theatre—we are building a theatre centre and a building which will accommodate all the operations of the Manitoba Theatre Centre and which will embody in bricks and mortar the guiding principle of the Manitoba Theatre Centre, which has always been diversity and activity.¹⁵

Gilbert proposed that the theatre have "a proscenium stage which we hope will be flexible, but we are not trying to design a building which will allow a full range of forms of presentation (open stage proscenium and so on) at the same time in the same facility. We find that all the attempts to be adaptable have turned out to be compromises."¹⁶ Allan Waisman, describing the design in 1970, said that the building was to be "a basic experience between the actor and the audience." In the foyers, "There are places where you can strut, stand and watch the crowd mingling. But there are also alcoves where just a few can gather and talk about the play in privacy, and there are even places where you can hide and not be seen."¹⁷ Brutalism, with its sculptural forms and shapes punctuating the building and providing places for discreet conversations as well as overpasses for seeing and being seen, is ideal for this type of intimate and informal theatre atmosphere. The building's fundamental concept was communication between public, staff, director, and designers. It was hoped that,

To achieve this end we grouped rehearsal hall, offices, stage and workshops into an extremely compact group of space which will allow both physical and visual contact. In other words, people working in the various departments will always be able to see and talk to each other during the development of a new production.¹⁸

Linking the spectator with the actor was an important aspect of theatre design that rarely had been employed in earlier theatre buildings. To achieve that, the architects opened the foyer space on the north side with a skylight and to the sounds of the staff working on the first floor. Along the north side, the architects stretched the foyer to reach the rear stage and incorporated viewing windows to the back stage and workshops, and past them

to the rehearsal space. As remarked at the time by architectural historian William Paul Thompson,

The problem of most concern to architect and thespian was to move from a small theatre to a larger one without destroying the close working relationship between various members of the design team. What the audience sees is literally the face to the world of the theatre company. The space in which they sit is matched by a large well of space behind the stage in which actor, carpenter, costumer and stage designer are meant to work together. In keeping with the theatre of modern realism, the building stands in concrete nudity exposing its inner self through large glass openings.¹⁹

In the original proposal there was a corridor and organization of the space to allow for the addition of a theatre school (which was never built), but the public spaces were nonetheless arranged so that there was enough open area for galas and social events, yet intimate enough to allow for private conversations.²⁰ This balance was achieved by innovative design elements, the most important being the semi-circular walls used as coat racks, which were intended to break down the public areas into spaces for smaller groups. The intimacy of the public spaces followed through into the auditorium, where the architects designed a traditional proscenium stage with a large ground floor below grade and a small, irregularly shaped balcony. Continental seating, which permitted easier and faster exit to the foyer, allowed for more comfortable seats.²¹ There were no box seats or loges, and the seating reached the stage. The overall effect in the auditorium is to draw the audience close to the stage and the actors.

These aspects reflect the larger social attitudes of the early 1970s, when there was a greater desire for a less structured and

informal society. This attitude is evident in many buildings of the era. At a period when social mores and issues had dramatically changed general society, Brutalism and the MTC building echoed the increasingly relaxed nature of Canadian society. The building's design emphasis on creating more communication between the audience and the actors, and interactions between patrons, was also reflective of a wider interest in the social dynamics in Brutalist buildings.

While the theatre's Brutalist design was well conceived for the type of theatre productions staged, the building did not introduce any exceptional or new technological innovations. The acoustical design of the auditorium was ordinary for the era, and state-of-the-art technology for such a small theatre was unnecessary and costly. The MTC did not rely on innovative new technology for its design. The building materials were commonplace and the building had standard mechanical systems. Only the exterior walls were thickened to provide additional sound insulation for the auditorium. Overall, the theatre's technology was typical of the era.

While this intimate theatre space was housed in an excellent Brutalist building, sensitive to theatregoers' needs while embodying the ideas of Brutalism in its layout of secluded and open areas, its sculptural exposed reinforced concrete and its informal layout of the auditorium, did it have a significant impact on future theatres? Four years after the completion of the MTC building, Edmonton's Citadel Theatre, designed by architect Barton Myers, opened as a regional theatre equivalent to the MTC group. The building is a much larger theatre complex, but it does reflect elements of the MTC design in its informal entrance, use of glazing, overlaid levels, and exposed structure. However, Barton Myers' design was much

more complex, eventually tying in three theatres, a cinema and a large atrium. Other theatres built for regional theatre groups were not constructed until the late 1970s and 1980s—long after Brutalism had fallen out of fashion.

The Manitoba Theatre Centre Building's Association with Canada's Regional Theatre Movement

John Hirsch (1930-1989), a young Hungarian Jewish immigrant who arrived in Canada in 1947 destitute and with no understanding of English, became one of the country's leading directors and pioneers in English-Canadian theatre. He worked in children's theatre during the 1950s, but wanted to realize a professional regional theatre group for Winnipeg. In 1958, Hirsch and Tom Hendry co-founded the Manitoba Theatre Centre as a new type of theatre group, one created and supported by a local community, employing professional actors and setting a high standard of quality. Regional theatre was not amateur "Little Theatre." From the beginning, the Manitoba Theatre Centre was a huge success. It was Canada's first large regional theatre and became a model for other regional theatres in the country. It was a theatre group that enjoyed support from the city and the province. Strong arts patronage in Winnipeg in the 1960s guaranteed that when it was in search of a new theatre building, the group would be well supported and funded.

When the MTC group was established there were few professional theatres in Canada. Professional and touring theatre had almost completely died out by the late 1930s. With visions of reviving professional theatre, Dora Moore established the New Play Society in Toronto in the late 1940s. In 1952, Tyrone Guthrie's Stratford Festival opened, and various other summer festivals were founded across the country. By

the mid 1950s there was a healthy group of Canadian thespians, many starring in film and television. However, the idea of a regional theatre had yet to find support in Canada. For the theatre critics, government support was necessary.

In 1951, the Massey Commission recommended that the Canada Council for the Arts be established and that the Council's role should be to provide grants, encourage the arts through commissions, underwrite tours and establish awards for talent, and promote Canadian art at home and abroad. Six years later, the Canada Council Act was passed and the Council began, with private endowment funds, to donate to existing organizations in the field of performance. The MTC, as the first regional theatre group in the country, received a small operating grant in 1959. To encourage other regional theatres, the Canada Council promoted the MTC as a model for other theatres to adopt. In 1961, the Council's thoughts on theatre reflected the MTC model:

In a country with the configuration and population of Canada, a truly national theatre is not likely to be created in any one city—however much money might go into a building. Stone walls do not a theatre make nor licensed bars a stage. The essential of a national theatre, as we see it, is that it should reach a national audience—even if this audience must for convenience be broken down into regional audiences. A regional theatre must first be situated in a city with a population capable of giving it support and bearing the brunt of its expenses.²²

The MTC model was clearly a good one. When John Hirsch and Tom Hendry formed the theatre, they kept the young people's theatre as an essential part of the programme, while also bringing in off-season actors to work on winter productions.²³ In the early seasons, Hirsch, as artistic director,

chose to balance plays, alternating light comedies with classic dramas and production of some local plays.²⁴ In the first season, *The Diary of Ann Frank*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Glass Menagerie* were produced amongst other contemporary plays. In the following seasons, many Shakespeare plays, both comedies and tragedies, works by Henry Miller and Berthold Brecht, and many Broadway musicals were staged. This balanced fare also included Canadian plays. In the first season, Patricia Joudry's *Teach Me How to Cry* was premiered at the MTC.

The early years of the MTC attracted international attention and were the envy of performing arts groups across the country. The Canada Council stated that "We have always considered the Manitoba Theatre Centre as an admirable example of what the North American regional theatre should be. Its steady growth and development has also been an admirable example of how a theatre can serve its community."²⁵ Hendry and Hirsch had been very successful at laying the foundation of a regional theatre before their departure from the MTC to work at Stratford. Other cities adopted their MTC model—creating original plays, offering a balance of traditional and new plays, taking plays out to schools, educating the young, creating a welcoming and professional atmosphere for the actors and building very strong community support and patronage. These ideals were transplanted in new regional theatres established across the country, with varying degrees of success.

Part of the balancing act of running a regional theatre was to produce an acceptable range of plays each season. While the MTC would have a new home in 1970, the mid- to late-1960s period leading up to construction was turbulent, perhaps in part because of the youthfulness of the theatre during this period. After Hirsch left

in 1965, Eddie Gilbert was hired as artistic director.²⁶ Groomed by Hirsch, Gilbert, as Hendry later said, "attained a degree of production sophistication" as opposed to Hirsch's innovations and originality.²⁷ Under Gilbert, the theatre turned to more mainstream and international plays, with a diminished interest in Canadian plays, although the MTC produced Ann Henry's *Lulu Street*, commissioned by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire in 1966 for Canada's Centennial.

Gilbert's tenure lasted until after the designs were completed for the new building. Gilbert's period as artistic director was a difficult one. He had to produce theatre in the old Dominion Theatre, knowing full well that the building was soon to be demolished. He had to produce plays in the MTC's temporary home, the 2263-seat Concert Hall, during the 1967-1968 season while also trying to help create the best design for the new theatre. By 1969, Gilbert was in dispute with the Board and left. According to one source, "Although there were several reasons for Gilbert's resignation as artistic director, the most important one was the continuing delays with the new building."²⁸ The next director did not fare any better. Directing in the large Concert Hall, Kurt Reis, a well-regarded director, lasted one season.²⁹

Another aspect of the MTC's productions was balancing the programme between old and new tastes. After Reis was fired, the Board found a director from inside the theatre. Much of the theatre's staff was under 30, and its new director, Keith Turnbull, was hired at the age of 23. Now in the new building, Turnbull's brief time as artistic director was important for the direction regional theatre was heading in the early 1970s. Gilbert had come under criticism for his lack of Canadian plays and his international bent. Turnbull, on the other hand, was deeply committed to

Canadian plays. In the 1971 season, of the seven major regional theatres then operating across the country, only two produced Canadian plays. Turnbull wanted to see one half of the MTC programme dedicated to Canadian plays:

What I wanted out of the MTC is what I want out of any regional theatre in Canada. I want it to reflect to the people in that community something about their community, and that can be their gift, their donation to the rest of the world. Variations on Shakespeare's comedies, West End hits and slightly revolutionary Berthold Brecht's now and then are in my mind, a complete rejection of the validity of the lives of the people that are in that community. I can see that there are real cultural needs in terms of seeing how other people see their world, but until you start seeing your own world you don't realize a very specific vision.³⁰

The MTC's first two years in the new building were difficult and challenging. Keith Turnbull evidently did not fully consider the financial implications of his decisions. His contract was not renewed after two seasons and Eddie Gilbert was invited back. Gilbert accepted because he felt that Winnipeggers were beginning to blame him for the financial troubles. "I began to be aware that they were saying... it's all Eddie Gilbert's fault. I had built a theatre that was too large and too expensive to operate. And since the size of the theatre was my decision, the things to that extent could be fairly pointed at me."³¹ After two years of popular productions, including *Godspell* and an adaptation of *The Dybbuk* directed by returning director John Hirsch, Gilbert left again; the MTC was then in sound financial condition but many cultural nationalists commented on the lack of support for Canadian plays. This would eventually change with the artistic directorship of Richard Ouzounian after 1980.

The MTC group was the model for the other professional regional theatres established in Canada. Regional theatre was, obviously, theatre for a region. It was not experimental theatre or artist-run theatre. It was professional theatre that was to be popular, yet challenging to its audience. It was to extend into the community, through educational programming and teaching of young actors. The MTC's international reputation and promotion by the Canada Council attracted other regions to create theatres in the 1960s. Each regional theatre was founded under different circumstances, and therefore none completely mimicked the MTC model. Nonetheless, each was indebted to the MTC as a pioneer of regional theatre and showing the others how a successful theatre could be run.

Six regional theatres were established across the country in the 1960s. On the prairies, the Calgary Theatre group, Globe Theatre group, and the Citadel Theatre group were formed in the mid- to late-1960s, with varying degrees of success in the early years. The Calgary Theatre group, which struggled to establish itself in the early 1970s, followed the MTC model by trying to reinforce community support and local talent, while searching for a permanent home.³² In Regina, the Globe Repertory Theatre, which was established in 1970 out of the Globe Theatre touring company, produced plays at the Saskatchewan Centre for the Arts' Jubilee Theatre. Like the MTC, the goal of the Globe Theatre group was to create balanced seasonal programming, introducing audiences to new works while also performing several traditional plays each season. The touring troupe was well managed and travelled throughout the province, but the company always had trouble keeping professional actors, due to its financial limitations and its location. By the early 1980s, the Globe Theatre group had a new home and was in a better financial position. The prairies' other major

regional theatre group was the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton. It was somewhat different in organization from the MTC, since it was run and funded by millionaire real estate lawyer Joseph Schoctor. In 1965, when Schoctor opened the Citadel, the MTC was the only professional theatre between Ontario and Vancouver. The new theatre opened its first season with Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, a play that Edmontonians found offensive. A more balanced programme, with Canada Council-approved funding, was produced the following season. Modelled on the MTC, a young peoples' acting school was opened and a matinee series on theatre appreciation was produced.³³

In Vancouver, the Playhouse theatre group was a pioneer in supporting Canadian playwriting in the 1960s. In its earliest years, interest in contemporary theatre programming, rather than the balanced programming of the MTC, kept many people away from the theatre. By the early 1970s, however, the Vancouver Playhouse had adopted the MTC model to reach more Vancouverites. It opened a school, supported children's programming and fostered a strong subscription, all under the artistic directorship of Christopher Newton.

In central Canada, the regional theatre movement was not as strong, nor as successful, in the 1960s. Toronto and Montréal had theatre companies and venues, including the Crest Theatre in Toronto, the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde (TNM)³⁴ and Gratien Gélinas's Comédie-Canadienne in Montréal,³⁵ but these theatres were not involved in theatre appreciation and education.

In Atlantic Canada, the Neptune Theatre group in Halifax was modelled directly on the MTC. Like Winnipeg, Halifax was a regional capital and could potentially

support a strong regional theatre. The Canada Council recognized this, as did the local Halifax theatre community. In 1963, Tom Patterson was brought in to develop a regional theatre for the city. Early success was followed by many challenges in firmly establishing the theatre in the city. Nevertheless, by the 1970s the Neptune had made great strides and finally could achieve the status of a truly viable regional theatre.³⁶

Summary

The Brutalist design of the MTC building strongly reflects the social conditions of the time. It introduced a more intimate form of theatre space by eliminating the grand theatricality of larger stages and drew in an audience interested in Canadian performances by a regional theatre group. Brutalism was an effective style for the building because it responded well to the informality of the theatre's atmosphere, and shaped the spaces to suit the ideals of the artistic director and the audiences. It integrated the concepts of the architect and artistic director with references to regional theatre traditions, while having the full support of Winnipeggers.³⁷ Today, it continues to be a well-crafted small-scale Brutalist theatre with a delicacy and intimacy that became a model for future regional theatres.

When regional theatre began with the founding of the MTC in 1958, the Canada Council recognized the achievements of the theatre and supported attempts across the country to create similar successes in communities lacking professional theatre, although in many cities, regional theatre would not become a part of the culture until well into the 1970s. Taking the MTC as a model, other theatres nurtured local patrons, developed educational programmes, and supported local talent. In effect, the idea began in Winnipeg and

spread across the country. When John Hirsch had finished directing the inaugural play in the new MTC building, he noted: "the work we have done in building a model here for us and for all of Canada has somehow reached a peak."³⁸

Integrity

In terms of the building's integrity, the MTC conveys its architectural and associative significance through the design, workmanship, materials, setting and function of the building in its current state. It has housed the MTC group since it was constructed and possesses an enduring quality because of the theatre group's long history in the building.

The exterior is in excellent physical condition and its design features are intact. The addition of a larger freight elevator on the south side of the building and a larger marquee over the public entrance of the building do not impair the overall design of the building. Inside, the most important loss to the building's integrity was the reconfiguration of the office spaces by closing off the open upper level with a new ceiling and wall, thus blocking off natural light to the public space on the ground floor and compromising the designer's intent to connect the audience with the running of the theatre. The reason for closing off the light well was practical: to eliminate the mutually distracting noise created by the staff and the audience. Other minor alterations to the building include the addition of more bathroom facilities for women, several wet bars in the foyers, newer furnishings, local area network (LAN) computer lines and other wiring, the construction of a wall fountain in the main foyer, and the closing off of a carpentry shop because it created too much dust. The Brutalist elements of the building and its associative history have not been impeded by these changes.

Comparative Context

Numerous Brutalist buildings were constructed in Canada from the early 1960s through to the mid 1970s because of the building boom of the 1960s and the desire for economical buildings. Brutalism, as a style, was therefore adopted for many types of buildings. The MTC building is a small-scale Brutalist building, but it is informative to include large and small-scale buildings as a comparative context.

Brutalist Architecture in Canada

Examples of the large-scale buildings that feature many elements of the Brutalist style have already been cited above. Scarborough College, Place Bonaventure and the Ontario Science Centre are representative of large-scale works. Place Bonaventure is perhaps the most important Brutalist building in Canada because of its highly complex internal circulation system and the flexibility of its interior layout. It would later be identified as a "megastructure," which was an evolution of Brutalist ideas into a more complex urban building type. Ray Moriyama, one of Canada's best-known architects working in concrete in the past half-century, designed the Ontario Science Centre, which was very similar in concept to Scarborough College. He went on to work on the design of Erindale College in Mississauga in the mid 1960s, which was representative of Brutalist ideas. Many other campus buildings adopted a Brutalist aesthetic to erect large complexes like Scarborough College. For instance, John Andrew's South Residence at the University of Guelph, built in 1965, utilized a pod-like system of off-set stairwells and corridors stretching over a road and quadrants attached by corridors. Ron Thom and later Macy Dubois, designers of the main campus at Trent University, tried to create a more integrated and historicist architecture utilizing Brutalist ideas.

Many Brutalist buildings were designed with an overemphasis on appearing monumental, resulting in the appearance of impermeable forts built of concrete, with poor lighting and poor relationship to their settings. These buildings were clearly inspired by the work of Paul Rudolph and Louis Kahn, but designed by architects not fully understanding the complexity of Rudolph's plans or the Beaux-Arts influence in Kahn's works. Campus libraries at York University, the University of Toronto and Western University are very typical examples of this phenomenon.

For the Robarts Library on the University of Toronto campus, architects Mathers and Haldenby with Warner Burns Toad and Lunde raised the building by two windowless floors with bays of narrow-slit windows and very small floors. Opened in 1973, the Robarts Library is so imposing in its urban setting that it has often been criticized as a very poor building. Other Brutalist libraries, such as the University of Western Ontario's D.B. Weldon Library, which is smaller and more sculptural than Robarts Library, and the main library in downtown Ottawa, designed by George Bemi in 1974, have poor internal layouts. One campus building that is an almost full-scale replica of Boston City Hall, which has become an emblem of distaste for Brutalist architecture, is the Computer Science Building at the University of Waterloo.

Several performing arts complexes built in the 1960s applied Brutalist ideas and materials in their designs. Two exceptionally well-conceived performing arts complexes are the Confederation Centre for the Arts in Charlottetown (NHSC, 2002) and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa (NHSC, 2005) (fig. 30).³⁹ Both were recommended for designation because of their Brutalist style of solid volumes, reflecting their intricate internal logic and unified by materials and decorative motifs.

However, neither building fully embraced the raw exposure of poured concrete. The Confederation Centre for the Arts is clad in smooth sandstone panels, and the National Arts Centre uses mounted aggregate panels as a facing. These large complexes are much more refined in their expensive finishes and decorative programmes, and more monumental in form and integration of spaces. As theatres, they are also associated with their roles as national institutions.

Architecturally, the MTC building is best compared to smaller-scaled Brutalist buildings. Many of the defining elements of Brutalism noted above may be found in these buildings, without the overpowering monumental form. There were many small Brutalist buildings constructed in the early 1970s, because of the ease, speed and low cost of building in concrete. Indeed, it was partly the ubiquitous use of poured concrete that by the mid 1970s brought about a shift in taste and a reaction against Brutalism. While there are probably hundreds of examples of Brutalist architecture in Canada, there are several key examples of small-scale Brutalist architecture that give a good contextual understanding of the MTC.

Two city halls built in the same period as the MTC were Saint John's City Hall in Newfoundland and Labrador (fig. 31), and the Brantford City Hall and Court House in Brantford, Ontario (fig. 32). John B. Parkin Associates designed the Saint John's City Hall in 1968 as a Brutalist building with a clock tower and a massive glassed-in corner block with rows of setback floors of offices on the south side. It is not a sculptural form in its massing but a series of cubic volumes connected to each other along an axis. The exposed concrete's vertical formwork is very similar to the MTC, but has less visual variety of pattern. The open interior of the public space does

not have the structural expressiveness of other Brutalist buildings, but does possess a well-placed corner entrance leading into a two-storey foyer. The building is essentially a derivative design of Boston's City Hall, with open interior foyer and angled, shadowed windows.

Brantford's City Hall, built in 1969-1970 and designed by Michael Kopsa, was a Centennial-funded project to create a small quad for a city hall and a courthouse in downtown Brantford. The building's public space incorporates a raised open plaza, shielded by massive walls of poured reinforced concrete with a textured surface created by rough-sawn Douglas fir formwork. Here, the sculptural quality of the massing is well executed and there is a clear topology of interrelated shapes. The formwork and texture of the exposed concrete is interesting and varied, and there is an overall informality to the layout of the complex. Because of its raised podium and the inward orientation of the buildings, there is unfortunately a privacy to the buildings that does not reflect the public image of a city hall. This building is very similar in design to the MTC in the use of concrete formwork and interior logic on a small scale, but does not fulfill its functional role as well as the MTC.

One facet of the MTC's design is its sculptural quality, especially in its semi-circular projected stairwells and coat racks. Sculptural Brutalist buildings—those based less on an architectural programme and more on the manipulation of the material—are rarer expressions of the style. Two of these medium-sized buildings are the Calgary Planetarium, designed in 1967 by Jack Long of the firm McMillan and Long, and Canadian Jewish Congress Headquarters in downtown Montréal, designed by Fred Lebensold and completed in 1972. Both are very close in size to the MTC and both are on small lots. The



FIG. 30. NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE, OTTAWA, ONTARIO; BUILT 1964-1969; ARCOP, FRED LEBENSOLD, PROJECT ARCHITECT. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2004.



FIG. 31. SAINT JOHN'S CITY HALL, ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR; BUILT 1969-1970; JOHN C. PARKIN ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECTS. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2005.



FIG. 32. BRANTFORD CITY HALL, BRANTFORD, ONTARIO; BUILT 1969-1970; MICHAEL KOPSA, ARCHITECTS. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2005.

planetarium, which employs organic forms, is low to the ground with jagged edges and deeply slotted horizontal formwork. The integrity of the building's architecture was greatly compromised, however, with the recent addition of primary-coloured façades. The Canadian Jewish Congress Headquarters was a multi-purpose building with a library, archives and ground-floor exhibition space. Throughout, a sandblasted exposed concrete was favoured, with as much exposure of the raw material as possible. The articulation of each cubic volume, relating to the narrow triangular lot, reflects how Brutalist buildings could respond to a site in innovative ways. These two buildings possess all of the features of a small-scale Brutalist building, but the Calgary Planetarium

has undergone many changes, and the Canadian Jewish Congress Headquarters is less intimate and more colossal, with its large front columns.

Comparable Brutalist Theatres in Canada

Regional theatres in the Brutalist style are rare in Canada, despite a flourishing of the regional theatre movement across the country in the 1960s and 1970s, when this architectural style was in fashion. Many prominent architectural works, some in concrete, were built in response to the expanding economy and the cultural awakening of Canada as a result of 1967 Centennial celebrations. Across the country, new publicly funded theatres and concert halls were built to accommodate performing troupes and companies. In some cities, a new theatre was part of a larger performing arts complex, such as the National Arts Centre in Ottawa (NHSC, 2006), Place des Arts in Montréal, and the Confederation Centre for the Arts in Charlottetown (NHSC, 2003). In other cities, theatre troupes and companies performed in former movie theatres, opera halls and even churches. Although the performing arts were financially supported by the Canada Council, this support did not necessarily mean there was funding for construction of new theatres. The Manitoba Theatre Centre's funding was covered in part by generous private donations and by provincial funding through the Manitoba Centennial programme established by Premier Duff Roblin.

The Manitoba Theatre Centre is the earliest example of a fully developed theatre design in exposed concrete in Canada. It is contemporaneous with the Queen Elizabeth Hall and The Hayward on London's South Bank (Hubert Bennett, London County Council, architect), and predates the well-known Brutalist-

style Royal National Theatre in London (designed by Denis Lasdun in 1976). The Manitoba Theatre Centre exploits the sculptural possibilities of poured-in-place concrete, as well as the efficacy of building in this inexpensive material—an efficacy that opened up Canadian architecture to a brief, but widespread, era of construction in concrete.

Saint Lawrence Centre for the Performing Arts, Toronto, Ontario

The Saint Lawrence Centre (built 1970) was constructed to accommodate two small theatres. Designed by the Toronto firm Adamson Associates, the building is very similar in scale and urban setting to the Manitoba Theatre Centre. Its exterior of exposed poured concrete and sculptural shapes truly resembles the Manitoba Theatre Centre. The building's two theatres, the 483-seat Town Hall (later renamed the Jane Mallet Theatre) and the 863-seat Theatre (later renamed the Bluma Appel Theatre), were laid out perpendicular to each other along the axes of the building's corner lot. Originally, the Bluma Appel Theatre could be converted from a proscenium stage to a thrust stage, but this capacity was lost with major renovations in 1983. Paul Syme Architects completed another renovation of the building in October 2007.

The interior foyer has been significantly altered, but has always had a low entrance height and a large stairwell reaching from the ground floor to the second floor through the floor plate. There are no exposed concrete walls or ceilings. Instead, the interior is bland and uniform, without attention to the sculptural, aesthetic or tactile possibilities of poured-in-place concrete. Both theatres are very traditional in design. The Jane Mallet Theatre is a less formal theatre space, with lower seats close to a thrust stage. The Bluma Appel Theatre is laid out with a main seating area and a

balcony with boxed seats on each side, and it is almost the same size as the Manitoba Theatre Centre's stage and auditorium, but it does not possess the same intimacy and closeness that were achieved with that auditorium. Bluma Appel Theatre's formal auditorium, with side balcony seating and orchestra pit, is much more suited to a variety of performances. It does not possess the intimacy of performance of the Manitoba Theatre Centre, considering the depth of the seating from the stage and the central aisle (as opposed to the continental seating at the Manitoba Theatre Centre). Overall, the theatre does not have the conceptual sophistication and deft handling of materials present in the Manitoba Theatre Centre building's exterior formwork, sculptural form and expression of internal function.

*Hamilton Place Studio Theatre,
Hamilton Place, Hamilton, Ontario*

Hamilton Place is a large-scale Brutalist concert hall with a smaller performing arts space. Completed in 1972 and designed by Trevor P. Garwood-Jones, a Hamilton architect, the building is a multi-purpose space with two stages. The smaller one, the Studio Theatre, has no permanent stage and seats from 300 to 400.⁴⁰ It is adjacent to the larger concert hall, and is ideally suited for small theatrical productions and non-theatrical performances (lectures, presentations, sketch comedy, rehearsals, etc.) There is an intimacy to the space, but it is better suited to cabaret-style performances than a larger production of a regional theatre group. Hamilton Place was designed in the Brutalist style, but Brutalist elements were not incorporated into the interior design.

*St. John's Arts and Cultural Centre, St.
John's, Newfoundland*

Built in 1967 on the Memorial University campus by the Montréal architectural firm ARCOP (Fred Lebensold, principal

designer), the St. John's Arts and Cultural Centre is a much larger theatre space than the Manitoba Theatre Centre (fig. 33). Seating 1000 in its auditorium, it is a traditional design with little attempt to bring the audience close to the stage production. The building incorporates a public library and an art gallery with the theatre using exposed concrete and face-brick for the interior and exterior. In concept, it is very similar to the Confederation Centre for the Arts in Charlottetown, but on a smaller scale. In execution, it does not possess the workmanship of the Manitoba Theatre Centre or the Confederation Centre with respect to its sculptural form, relationship of volumes and expression of structure. It is essentially a series of setback brick cubic volumes in a university campus setting.

*Corner Brook Arts and Culture Centre,
Corner Brook, Newfoundland*

The small 400-seat proscenium theatre is affiliated with the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre. Built in 1968 for the community of Corner Brook and its region, the building has a pool in addition to the theatre. Using a blend of brick and concrete, it is very typical of a rudimentary Brutalist building. The brick and concrete of the exterior are also used in the foyer, which has a coffered ceiling. The auditorium space is traditional in plan, unlike the Manitoba Theatre Centre's auditorium.

*Western Manitoba Centennial
Auditorium, Brandon, Manitoba*

The Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium was constructed at Brandon College as a Manitoba Centennial project. In 1962, Premier Duff Roblin's government gave the city permission to develop a plan for the theatre, which eventually received funding from the Manitoba Centennial Corporation.⁴¹ The design was developed in 1964 and not completed until 1967. As one enters into the foyer, the low ceiling

of the entranceway gradually rises upward in the foyer to the wall facing the auditorium doors. The auditorium may seat 817 as a concert hall and can be reduced in size to hold 500 for more intimate performances. The seating is on one level, and does not draw the audience closer to the stage.

*Dalhousie Arts Centre, Halifax, Nova
Scotia*

A contemporary of the Manitoba Theatre Centre is the Brutalist-style Dalhousie Arts Centre (built 1969-1971) (fig. 34). Designed by Charles Fowler, with input from Junji Mikawa—a Japanese architect working in Halifax on a work exchange—the arts centre was built for Symphony Nova Scotia and Daltheatre, Dalhousie's student theatre group.

The Dalhousie Arts Centre consists of an auditorium (the 1000-seat Rebecca Cohn Auditorium) and theatre (the 230-seat Sir James Dunn Theatre), with complex levels interconnected by arching staircases. The Dunn Theatre is very small and unremarkable in design, employing a traditional seating arrangement. The lobby and foyer of the Arts Centre, however, is much more interesting as a Brutalist building, with exposed arching stairwells and open staircases reaching the upper floor.⁴² It is very different in concept from the Manitoba Theatre Centre. Separated into two levels, part of the lower portion of the lobby opens to an outdoor patio in the summer. That area can hold 400 people for receptions.⁴³

Its overall programme and appearance suggest the influence of contemporary Japanese architecture in parts of the design. However, Mikawa did not complete the design, and several of his intended "Metabolist" elements were not incorporated into the final project.⁴⁴ It therefore is a building that possesses



FIG. 33. JOHN'S ARTS AND CULTURE CENTRE, SAINT JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR; BUILT 1967; FRED LEBENSOLD OF ARCOP, ARCHITECT. INSET PHOTO OF INTERIOR. | A. WALDRON, PARKS CANADA, 2007.



FIG. 34. DALHOUSIE ART CENTRE, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA; BUILT 1969-1971; FOWLER AND ASSOCIATES, ARCHITECT. | WIKIPEDIA.COM, 2007.

elements of the Japanese modern movement, with parts of the interior left architecturally unresolved, such as the bridges that would cross the street, but were never built and are now exterior balconies.⁴⁵

Salle Octave-Crémazie, Grand Théâtre de Québec, Québec City, Québec

The Grand Théâtre de Québec was opened in 1971 as a large concert hall and theatre for Québec City. Designed by Victor Prus, it is a very good example of a large-scale Brutalist building. Included in the design was a smaller theatre for the Théâtre du Trident. The Trident was established in 1970 as a new theatre group from several former local companies that had disbanded (notably Théâtre de l'Estoc). The Salle Octave-Crémazie is a small theatre (33 by 33 metres), located one floor below ground level, with a stage of 13.5 by 21 metres and a total of 719 seats. It is an intimate space, with almost the same capacity as the Manitoba Theatre Centre, but holds only one level of seating and does not draw the audience closer to the

stage by including a balcony, as does the Manitoba Theatre Centre.

Shaw Festival Theatre, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario

The Shaw Festival Theatre is an 860-seat theatre designed by renowned Canadian architect Ronald J. Thom and built in 1973. Not a Brutalist-style theatre *per se*, the brick-clad building was nonetheless designed with a massing and minimal form similar to concrete Brutalist buildings of the time. This building is included in this comparative analysis because it houses a similar-sized theatre space for a professional theatre group.

The Manitoba Theatre Centre and the Shaw Festival theatre spaces have similar designs in that they both use balconies to draw the audience forward and create an intimacy with the actors. The Shaw Festival's balcony was designed with seating stretching along both sidewalls closer toward the stage. The idea was to have all audience members no more than 65 to 70 feet from the stage.⁴⁶ Thom tried to obtain this proximity to the stage by raking the seating. While he achieved the desired closeness, the seating is very steep, especially in the balcony, which in turn means an extreme curvature of the theatre ceiling.⁴⁷ While the Shaw Festival theatre was very well designed, because of the configuration of the theatre space it does not possess the same degree of intimacy that was successfully achieved at the Manitoba Theatre Centre.

CURRENT STATUS

Threat(s)

The building is not under threat.

Other Designations

None.

Community Value

For 50 years, the Manitoba Theatre Centre has been an important theatre group in Winnipeg. Each season the theatre stages eight plays, which include dramas, comedies, and one musical. The MTC is a highly valued theatre in the city and has been a vital part of Winnipeg's culture for over half a century. Since its creation in 1958, there has been strong patronage from many of the city's most important citizens. The MTC is known internationally for its productions and its success as a regional theatre. Winnipeggers recognize the theatre's reputation in the theatre world, and take pride in its productions.

As a Brutalist building, Leslie Maitland, Jacqueline Hucker and Shannon Ricketts featured it in *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles*, characterizing it as an "unpretentious" example of Brutalism in Canada. In Winnipeg, it is most appreciated by the design community for its quality of concrete formwork and integration within the Exchange District.⁴⁸ It was recently featured in the exhibition "Winnipeg Modern: Architecture 1945-1975," held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2006.

NOTES

1. Robert Kirby, telephone interview, 18 September 2007.
2. Buildings in the project include Winnipeg's new City Hall (built 1964), the Concert Hall (built 1967), and the Planetarium and Natural History Museum (built 1970).
3. Architect Al Waisman suggested enclosing Market Avenue as a solution to the small size of the lot, but at an April 1966 meeting in the Premier's office with Duff Roblin, Maitland Steinkopf and others on the Manitoba Centennial Committee, it was agreed that the site on Market Avenue was acceptable as is. (Manitoba Archives, Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, P4480, File 17.)

4. Al Waisman felt that the building, with extra floors and elevators to compensate for the small size of the property, would cost around \$4-5 million. The Committee saw the project differently, wanting the theatre to cost \$2 million and have 1200 seats. Waisman consulted with Fred Lebensold, who advised that the price of the building would be about \$4 million. It was a very difficult site, with many doubts on the part of the architects how to fit in a theatre, but ultimately, after consultation with Canada's leading theatre architect, Fred Lebensold, the project could be done on the small budget of \$2 million. The Committee stood firm, and the architects agreed to go back and redraw the plans. (Al Waisman to Chairman of the MTC building committee, 9 March 1967, Manitoba Archives, Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, P4480, File 17; "Inter-office memo, Waisman to Ogden Turner, February 1966," Manitoba Archives, Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, P4480, File 17.)
5. *Architectural Design*, vol. 342, no. 12 (December 1953). The Smithsonian's first and most important commission was Hunstanton School, Hunstanton, Norfolk, built 1949-1954.
6. The definitive book on "New Brutalism" was written in 1966 by one of its earliest proponents, Reyner Banham. His book, *The New Brutalism: Ethics or Aesthetic?* (London, Architectural Press, 1966), widely read by architects, essentially codified the style and wrote of its origins.
7. Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation* housing was very influential on architects worldwide. His monastery, La Tourette near Lyon, from 1960, was one of his last major works, but very important in terms of how concrete was manipulated and poured. Boston's city hall is a derivative of La Tourette.
8. See Jencks, Charles, 1973, *Modern Movements in Architecture*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, p. 256-258. Jencks studied architecture at London University under Reyner Banham.
9. To achieve the final working drawings, the firm had a working session with theatre consultant Ben Schlanger, lighting consultant Jean Rosenthal and acoustician Robert Tanner. (Manitoba Archives, Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, P4480, File 17.)
10. Robert Kirby (then known as Michael Kirby) is a semi-retired professor at the University of Calgary. He was invited by Doug Gilmore to help establish the urban design programme at the University in 1971. He remained with the Department his whole career. Brian Dewar, the project manager, is retired and living in Vancouver. Gilbert and Kirby met on a daily basis reviewing design ideas and models. (Robert Kirby, telephone interview, 6 January 2007.)
11. Robert Kirby was the lead designer for the MTC under Al Waisman. Kirby was involved on a daily basis with the project. While working at the firm he was still completing his studies at MIT. Each day, he would supply Eddie Gilbert with the latest design for the theatre. Gilbert was shown thirty-seven models and did not like any of them. The challenges facing the project were the back alley of the site and the placement relating to the Pantages (originally to connect with a ballet school). Airborne noise was also a concern and double walls and insulation were used. According to Kirby, Gilbert came up with the idea of the alcove areas—for introverts/extroverts. The front lobby was to be a "pre-theatre." Originally, shelves were included with slide projectors casting colour images on the wall. The neon "flag" on the fly tower was designed to be an Elizabethan flag, to draw attention from Main Street. (Robert Kirby, telephone interview, 6 January 2007.) Later, Gilbert stated, "it was essentially Allan Waisman, Kirby and me, plus technical advice from Eion Sprott (MTC Production Manager) who were involved in designing the new theatre." (Sprott was a Montréal theatre consultant.) (Yates, Sarah, 1978, *The First Twenty Years: Conversations with MTC people from 1958-1978*, Winnipeg, Manitoba Theatre Centre, p. 16.)
12. "Interview with John Hirsch in *Performing Arts Magazine*" 1965, Manitoba Archives, Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, P41, File 4.
13. According to Albert Cohen, chair of the Board of Governors, his efforts determined where the new theatre building would be located and he secured the financing of the provincial and federal governments. (Yates : 16.)
14. Yates : 18.
15. Stuart, E. Ross, 1984, *The History of Prairie Theatre: The Development of Theatre in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan 1833-1982*, Toronto, Simon and Pierre, p. 182.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Performing Arts in Canada*, 1970.
18. Letter from Alan Waisman to Ron Slater, March 8, 1968, Manitoba Archives, Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, P4480, File 17.
19. Thompson, William Paul, 1982 [rev. ed.], *Winnipeg Architecture*, Winnipeg, Queenston House, p. 55.
20. "The same organization of space will accept the addition of a theatre school between the new building and the playhouse. Corridors and openings will be provided along the back and front to allow such a future school to immediately become integrated into the main office workshops delivery and main entrance [...] The lobby, as described in our original qualitative statement, will be small and intimate while providing extra space for coat storage and a future refreshment area. Within the main space, there will be small niches for those who like to hide during an intermission and balcony for those who prefer to see and be seen." (*Ibid.*)
21. Continental seating was first employed in North America at the Stanford University Theatre and the Iowa State Theatre in 1935-1936. (Silverman, Maxwell, 1965, *Contemporary Theatre Architecture: An Illustrated Survey*, New York, The New York Public Library, n.p.)
22. Canada Council, *Annual Report 1961-1962*, p. 4.
23. Many off-season actors from Stratford performed at the MTC. (See Czarnecki, Mark, 1985, "The Regional Theatre System," In Anton Wagner (ed.), *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions*, Toronto, Simon and Pierre, p. 35-38.)
24. Hirsch and Hendry modelled the MTC partly on Roger Planchon's Théâtre de la Cité (or Théâtre de la Comédie) in Lyon, France, founded in 1952. The idea was to create a mix of classic and contemporary theatre programming for working class audiences. This "proletarian theatre" used a bare minimum of sets and chose plays that spoke to the common man.
25. Stuart : 177.
26. The MTC Board hired Eddie Gilbert in 1966 to lead the theatre until the opening of the new building. A law graduate from Oxford, Gilbert went to London to be an assistant director of the Sadler's Wells Opera Company, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, and the Oxford Playhouse before coming to Canada in 1963 to assume the role of artistic director of the English section of the National Theatre School. While Gilbert stayed only until 1969, when he married actress Deborah Kipp and moved onto a farm in the Maritimes, his impact on the theatre was significant. Indeed, after a short MTC directorship by Kurt Reiss and a young Keith Turnbull, Eddie Gilbert was re-hired for the 1972 season. ("MTC Publicity Department: Hirsch Founding Director of MTC Edward Gilbert Appointed new Artistic Director for 1966-1967 Season," Manitoba Archives, Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, P41, File 4.)
27. Stuart : 179.

28. Stuart : 180.
29. Kurt Reis turned the theatre over to the University of Manitoba for a candlelight protest against the Vietnam War. The local press and the Board felt this was inappropriate and fired Reis. Reis considered the period very difficult for him, although Nathan Cohen wrote a positive piece about the MTC taking a political stand. (Yates : 18.)
30. Buchanan, Douglas, 1999, *The Canada Council, The Regional Theatre System and the English-Canadian Playwright 1957-75*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Montréal, Québec, p. 279.
31. Yates : 20.
32. Theatre Calgary was formed in 1968 from an amateur troupe called the MAC-14 Club. It gained semi-professional status under the artistic directorship of Christopher Newton. He set about altering Theatre Calgary's organization by using the MTC as a model. In the early years, Theatre Calgary brought Stratford actors to the small city, but in a few years the theatre was struggling. In the 1970s it faced a mounting deficit, which was partly solved by hiring more local performers and renewing community interest in the theatre. The biggest challenge for Theatre Calgary was to find a permanent home. It was not until the mid 1980s that Theatre Calgary found a new home in the Max Bell Theatre in what is now the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts.
33. Stuart : 210-211.
34. The TNM was formed in 1951 by Jean Gascon, who was inspired by Jean Vilard's plays. The TNM produced a wide variety of plays in its first decade, including Greek tragedy, Shakespeare and Molière, and, later, feminist works and French-Canadian works in *joual*. The TNM was itinerant since it began, but Gascon's hopes to find it a permanent home in the mid-1960s were thwarted when it was denied a home in the new Place des Arts. Furious, Gascon left in 1966 to work at the Stratford Festival. The TNM finally found a permanent home at the Comédie-Canadienne at the corner of Saint-Urbain and Sainte-Catherine in 1972. The TNM is a successful regional theatre. However, its early years are not representative of the regional theatre movement. Instead, it was an early form of artist-run theatre company, without a permanent home. (Boulanger, Luc, *Théâtre Nouveau Monde*, [http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0007944], accessed 16 October 2007.
35. The Crest Theatre, founded by Don and David Murray in 1953, was Toronto's first commercially viable Canadian theatre company, producing 140 plays before it closed in 1966. One aspect of the Crest that the MTC adopted was its organization. "An enterprise that experimented with a mix of private and public funding, the Crest began as a limited-liability company and later reorganized itself to become a non-profit foundation run by a board of directors. This organizational model, which backs artistic independence with financial support from both public agencies and private subscribers, has been adopted by many arts organizations today." (Breon, Robin, *The Crest Theatre*, [http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0011624], accessed 18 October 2007.)
36. Walter Learning, one of Canada's pioneer artistic directors, and who had headed up the University of New Brunswick's summer drama sessions in the late 1960s, established Theatre New Brunswick (TNB) in 1968 at the Beaverbrook Playhouse. The TNB was very successful in the 1970s under the direction of Malcolm Black. Unlike other regional theatres, the TNB was in the fortunate situation of having a source of private funding from the Beaverbrook Foundation. It was also able to produce year-round. (Theatre New Brunswick, *History*, [http://tnb.nb.ca/aboutus/history.html], accessed 17 October 2007.)
37. Local Winnipeggers purchased 440 seats to raise funds for the building. (Manitoba Theatre Centre Collection, Manitoba Archives, P63-P131, P78, File 7.)
38. Stuart : 183.
39. The Confederation Centre for the Arts was recommended for designation "as one of a number of cultural complexes built in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada, and as a memorial to the Fathers of Confederation, it is an outstanding example of a national institution dedicated to the performing arts; when it was built in 1964, it was highly innovative in its stage design and acoustics, and featured state-of-the-art lighting and construction techniques; and it is a distinguished example of Brutalist architecture in Canada, which, for its era, is well-integrated with the city." (HSMBC, Minutes, December 2002.)
- The National Arts Centre was recommended for designation because it is an outstanding example of a performing arts centre in Canada for its overall design, its highly successful integration into its urban setting, its succession of interior spaces to create dramatic effect, its unique combination of performing spaces and the progressive designs of each one, and its integration of contemporary works of art as part of its design; it is an outstanding example of a building illustrating the positive consequences of Canadian federal policy on the performing arts during the second half of the 20th century, considered, in the words of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, as a "national institution"; and it is an example of state-of-the-art performing spaces and technology at the time of construction, in particular for the aesthetic and technical design of Southam Hall, which is an exceptional example of a medium-sized multi-purpose auditorium representing an inspired collaboration between architect and acoustician. (HSMBC, Minutes, June 2005.)
40. Betts, Lorne and Frederick A. Hall, *Hamilton Place*, Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, [http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=UIARTU0001519], accessed 10 April 2008.
41. Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium, [http://www.wmca.ca/], accessed 10 April 2008.
42. Named "The Sculpture," the foyer is an open area that is used for recitals, readings, trade exhibits, receptions and press conferences.
43. Dalhousie University Arts Centre, *Sculpture Court*, [http://artscentre.dal.ca/sc.html], accessed 10 April 2008.
44. See Manell, Steven (ed.), 2004, *Atlantic Modern: The Architecture of the Atlantic Provinces, 1950-2000*, Halifax, TUNS Press, p. 25. Metabolist architecture was a Japanese term for organic, flexible buildings that could evolve organically as a city developed.
45. *Ibid.*
46. "Shaw Festival Theatre, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario," *The Canadian Architect*, vol. 19, no. 1, January 1974, p. 25.
47. This steepness had to be adjusted after the theatre opened. (*Ibid.* : 26.)
48. Jim Wagner, OAA, MAA, conservation architect, Western and Northern Service Centre, Parks Canada.